



Conducted by
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“QUESTION BOX”

“Can you please explain what is meant by being ‘led by the Spirit’ (Rom. 8:14), and how does this apply in the Christian experience?”

This is an important, interesting, and difficult question. At first glance it would seem to be relatively easy to understand what is meant by ‘being led’. Initially we have a mental picture of a person who has sight leading a blind person, or of someone in authority leading others toward a certain objective, but when we ascribe ‘leading’ to the Holy Spirit then we encounter some difficulty.

In the first place, we **must** try to understand what has been revealed about the Godhead, i.e., the Divinity of God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. John Says, “For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word (Christ), and the Holy Spirit: and these three are one” (1 John 5:7). In practical terms, I would then expect that any revelation emanating from Father, Son, and Holy Spirit would not be in any way contradictory, but absolutely complementary.

Having said that, it becomes basic to understanding of truth that we should not be deluded by modern-day teachers who try to convince us that He, the Holy Spirit, **must** produce **miraculous** manifestations in us to indicate His presence with us. The Bible teaches us that when we are converted, the promise is that the Holy Spirit will **in-dwell** us (see Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 3:16). He will produce in us the fruits of His own nature, and because of His oneness in the Godhead He will not only be the **recipient** of all truth, but He will be able to guide us through the revealed Word into the truth it contains; this will be possible because if I am a child of God in the N.T. sense, then I become a partaker of the Divine nature (2 Pet. 1:1-4).

If my reasoning up to this point is correct, then there would seem to be no validity for the many denominations we see in the world, nor for the differences in practice which we experience in the Church of Christ. The problem, as I see it, is one which is not brought about by a unified revelation (i.e., by the Persons of the Godhead) but by disparate interpretation. Perhaps we would do better if we fully appropriated Jesus rather than appropriating advanced theological knowledge.

THE BASIS OF SPIRITUAL INTERACTION

One of the most fundamental aspects of growth and knowledge in the life of a Christian is surely the incessant interaction between the Holy Spirit who indwells the person, and the individual spirit of each such person; without such interaction I would contend that it is virtually impossible for the Christian to have the experience of being led by the Spirit. To be 'led' by the Spirit means to be 'borne along' by the Spirit willingly; there must be no resistance on the part of our spirit. The power of the Holy Spirit is illimitable; it is we who place limits on what He can accomplish in our lives. We need to stop seeing the Holy Spirit as someone who gives us periodic spiritual transfusions in the miraculous sense, and see Him rather as one who wants to produce in the life of the Christian those attributes which not only He, but also God and His Christ, would desire. To do this, He must constantly interact with our spirit. Such interaction is vitally necessary for the Christian.

WHERE WILL HE LEAD?

In the early days of our Christian lives, when we are new-born babes in Christ, He will lead us on to the full assurance of faith. Paul, in his letter to the Christians in Rome, says, "The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Rom. 8:16).

Here is a classic example of the type of spiritual interaction of which I have been speaking. There may be times when natural doubt will assail us. I may ask myself, 'How can I be sure that God, who I cannot see, has made me one of His children?' This natural doubt must not be allowed to develop into spiritual doubt. I must understand that if I doubt I am responsible for my own doubt. God is sure, and so can we be. Assurance becomes a matter of what I term 'perceptual consciousness'. Let me explain.

The Holy Spirit speaks through the Word, the Bible. It is His sword with which He cuts to the heart. He says through the Word, "believe in Christ, repent of your sins, be immersed into Christ in water confessing His name, and you will receive me into your life as the Holy Guest, the earnest of your salvation". These are His instructions through the Word, and it follows that I shall be conscious as to whether I have obeyed them or not. If I have, and the Holy Spirit has told me through the Word that if I do I shall be saved, and become a child of God, then the Holy Spirit bears witness **with my spirit** that I **am** a child of God. This is not mere textual assurance but Divine assurance, although it must be said that in the Bible Divine assurance comes by the text, which after all is the inspired Word of God. As Paul says, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Rom. 8:14).

The Holy Spirit will also lead us away from the flesh, with all of its natural passions and lusts, and into the rarified spiritual state, where we shall be able to bear fruit suitable to our new spiritual life in Christ, and in line with our Divine participation. This demands from us a close, interactive walk with Him. As Paul says, "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh" (Gal. 5:16). It must surely be the desire of every child of God to grow into Christ-likeness. To leave behind that fleshly nature which produces an arid desert of life, and to press on to those spiritually-watered green pastures where the fruits of love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, and all other spiritual virtues flourish. You see, dear brother, sister, it is not that God **forces** us to act like Christians, but He gently

leads us by His Spirit to want to become mature children of His; then we shall be able to echo the words of the hymn-writer,

Make this poor self grow less and less,
Be thou my life and aim,
O' make me daily by thy grace,
More meet to bear thy name.

THE PROBLEM OF INTERPRETATION

It is in this area that the Christian teacher needs most to be led by the Spirit. David prayed to God, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law . . . Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end . . . Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law" (Ps. 119:18, 33, 34). The authority of God permeates every page of the Bible; it is truly 'God's law'; therefore, the child of God needs to be led and taught by the Spirit.

A simple survey of the doctrines and practices of the Christian religion will show us how deep this problem of interpretation is. We know that God is not the Author of confusion. How can contradictory messages come from the same Persons in the Godhead? Elementary reasoning demands that a unified Godhead should reveal a unified doctrine, and a unified doctrine should produce unified practice. Why do we see such confusion?

Perhaps it is because we do not pray enough before we peruse the Word. James teaches, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all liberally" (James 1:5). It is foolish to attempt to sit down and read and try to understand the Bible as we would any other book. It is God's Word, and we need God's help when we study it, which help He gives through the Holy Spirit.

I have a feeling that many approach the bible and try to make it fit **their own** doctrine. Whose doctrine are we purporting to teach? God's, or our own. God forbid that we should ever use the Word in this way.

In all humility, we should approach the Word asking that the Holy Spirit will guide us. If we are not led of Him then we shall surely go astray.