

LED BY THE SPIRIT_ Giving up Control

So far we have seen that God promised to place His Spirit in ALL of His people_ and that after Jesus sacrificed Himself on the cross for our sins, He ascended to heaven and sent the Holy Spirit to dwell within ALL those who put their faith in Him. Yet, as a young Christian, I was taught that the Holy Spirit came to empower the apostles and a select few that they hand picked_ but once the words of the Bible were all written down, He went back to heaven, leaving us pretty much on our own. Though I believe my teachers were very sincere, I'm afraid that is just not what the Scriptures teach.

Open your Bibles to **Romans 8** for some confirmation. The apostle Paul is not writing to the apostles_ or to just a few particularly blessed people in the church. He is writing to all believers, so listen carefully to what he says: ¹There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, ² because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. ³ For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so He condemned sin in sinful man, ⁴ in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but (live) according to the Spirit. ⁵ Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. ⁶ The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; ⁷ the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. ⁸ Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. ⁹ You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. ¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. ¹¹ And if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit, who lives in you. ¹² Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation--but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. ¹³ For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, ¹⁴ because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. ¹⁵ For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by Him we cry, "Abba," Father." ¹⁶ The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. ¹⁷ Now if we are children, then we are heirs -heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in His sufferings in order that we may also share in His glory.

Paul clearly says that those who accept Jesus' sacrifice as payment for their sin are to *live according to the Spirit*. In fact, he says in verse 14 the evidence that we are truly God's children is seen in how we live_ and that will be determined by who we follow. He calls this lifestyle being "*led by the Spirit.*" And ultimately the Spirit will lead us along a similar path as He did Jesus. Now, we may not like this_ but the testimony of the Spirit in verse 16 that we're truly God's children isn't a secret message borne on angel's wings to the ear of the Father. It's the conviction in our hearts as the Holy Spirit agrees with our spirits that we are indeed walking with Him.

But, don't miss Paul's assertions here. First He is not trying to guilt people into behaving themselves_ for he makes it plain that there is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus. Neither is he saying following the flesh is proof we're lost_ but rather that there's no visible evidence that we're saved. We are called to *be different*. We are not to be just like those who reject Jesus.

We are to be over-comers in this world. We are to live victorious lives. And please listen closely. Though it's fine to utilize the tools "*Weightwatchers*" or "*Alcoholics Anonymous*" or any other support group or self help organization might offer, if our self control is dependent on anything other than the Holy Spirit of God, we're approaching life's battles no differently than the world does.

Hear the word of the Lord on this matter. We cannot give adequate testimony that we are God's children without divine help. If we've been saved from our sins, we have also been equipped to overcome them. If not, have we truly been set free? Our text insists we would still be powerless to keep God's laws without God's Spirit. Jesus paid for our past sins, and if you will, left us a blank check to pay for any we may commit now or in the future. But, rather than that being a license to sin all we want, He left us His Spirit to give us power to live like God wants. We can have victory over sin's control. So, why then don't we?

I get to work with **Crossroad's kids club** each week and they are a lively bunch, to say the least. I've tried different methods to keep their attention, but the one I initiated last semester with the group of **2nd graders** I teach works like this. As soon as we got settled, I explained that the most attentive kid in the group would get a prize. The rest would get a lesser prize, as long as they weren't too disruptive. "*Who decides that?*" one boy asked. I told them I designated Mr. Curt to tag anyone with a pat on the head who he thinks is being too rowdy. Whomever he tags won't get a prize. Upon hearing this, another of the boys turned to Curt and said: "*You might as well just tag me out right now, 'cause I'm never gonna make it.*" He knew his limitations. I will tell you that though this reward system has worked quite well, every one of the kids could have been legitimately tagged out every week. None of them are perfect, so we extend a lot of grace. When it comes to **obeying the righteous requirements of the law**, we'd be in the same boat. "*Might as well tag us out right now, God, 'cause we aren't going to make it.*" Praise Jesus for His grace, amen?

My Honda has **cruise control**, but I have to choose to engage it. Whenever I'm traveling a fair distance, I usually do. It helps to keep me moving at a steady and legal pace. Of course, when I tap the brake because surrounding traffic is moving slower, or when I have to make a stop, it kicks off. In essence, I take control gain. I have to press "*resume*" once I get moving again. If I get disrupted too often, I may turn it off entirely. **The Holy Spirit is God's cruise control** for us. I have to choose to engage Him. He keeps me moving at a steady and legal pace. More than I care to admit, I let the influence of the world hinder my flow and cause me to disengage. And too often I fail to press "*resume*." The Holy Spirit is standard equipment for every born again believer. Yet, He is perhaps the most unused option.

So, I suggest we **get acquainted with the Holy Spirit**. Spend some time reading the manual (*the Bible*) and you'll find we are to receive and to be led by Him_ but it's an option we have to choose. Be controlled by the flesh or led by the Spirit. The Holy Spirit inspired scripture will offer a lot of practical advice as to how know which way to turn and what way to go...but we have to do more than just study the word.

We must also **be sensitive to the Holy Spirit**. When you sense His prompting, follow His lead. But, don't be surprised if He prompts you to do something you don't want to do_ or urges you not to do something you desperately do want to do. Paul says quite clearly that the Spirit and the flesh are in conflict with one another. But, when you sense the pull on your heart, respond to it. Is there anything you feel the Spirit leading you to do now? If so, give up control. **Let Jesus take the wheel.**