

Led by the Spirit

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Date: 27 February 2019

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[0 : 00] And if we could, this evening, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling, if we could turn back to the last portion of Scripture that we read, Galatians chapter 5.

Galatians chapter 5, and if we read again at verse 16. So Galatians chapter 5, at verse 16.

Where Paul writes, And so on.

The divine breath of God the Holy Spirit.

Which means that this book which we read, and this book that we've come to know and love, it's a living book. And it's a book that speaks into our daily lives and into our daily situations.

[1 : 40] But more than being a living book, it's also an active book because the Holy Spirit is using this book to work in our lives and to shape us and to mould us into the image of God's dear Son.

But as we've also discovered in the Old Testament and under the Old Covenant, the Holy Spirit, he gradually revealed the plans and purposes for salvation. The progressive revelation of Scripture was revealed by the Holy Spirit in that the Holy Spirit, he dwelt in saints and he dwelt upon servants.

That was during the Old Testament. But now, after the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus, the Holy Spirit came upon the church at Pentecost. And now, as the New Testament church, we who are the New Testament church, we are God's people and we have the Holy Spirit in us as saints and we have the Holy Spirit upon us, all of us, as servants.

And we are to be witnesses for Jesus to the ends of the earth. And as we've also discovered, we've been looking at this subject for a wee while, that by God's grace, we've been baptised by the Spirit, we've received the gift of the Holy Spirit, which is the promise of salvation.

But as we continue our study on what theologians call pneumatology, the study of the Holy Spirit, the question that we're looking at this evening is, what does it mean to be led by the Spirit?

[3 : 12] What does it mean to be led by the Spirit? And this is an important question and an important subject to consider because there are many people who say that they're led by the Spirit.

They say that they're being led by the Holy Spirit to believe certain doctrines or to practise certain things or to go into certain places. But sadly, in many cases, they are in fact misled.

They're misled. They're misled not by the Holy Spirit, but they're misled by their own

misunderstanding of Scripture. They're misled. And because they're misled, they mislead others.

Because I want to state this from the outset. To be led by the Holy Spirit is to be led by the Word of God. Because as we've discovered already, the Word of God, it's inspired by the Holy Spirit.

The Word of God is God-breathed. It's Spirit-filled. It's the divine breath of God the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, the only way to walk in the Spirit, the only way to be led by the Spirit, the only way to keep in step with the Spirit, is to live your life and to shape your life according to the Word of God.

[4 : 29] Because to do anything else, and this is what Paul talks about in Galatians 5, to do anything else is to walk according to the flesh. And so to contradict Scripture by your Word or your witness is to walk according to the flesh.

Because there's one thing for sure, the Holy Spirit will never contradict the Word of God. And the Holy Spirit will never encourage the Christian to compromise their witness.

And so anyone who says that they're being led by the Holy Spirit to teach or to believe certain doctrine, or to practice certain things, or to do things that contradict Scripture, well, they're sadly being misled because they are misunderstanding Scripture.

And you know, that was actually the problem that was going on in the church in Galatia. And that's why Paul wrote this letter. Because the young church in Galatia, they were being misled by their misunderstanding of Scripture.

But more than that, they were receiving misinformation from the false teachers. False teachers, they were telling the Galatians that they needed something more than Jesus.

[5 : 47] They needed that. They needed Jesus, yes, but they needed Jesus plus. Jesus plus knowledge. Jesus plus good works. Jesus plus law-keeping.

Jesus plus circumcision. The false teachers, they stressed this message of Jesus plus. And it left, as it would, as you'd expect, it left the Christians feeling inferior and inadequate.

And that they lacked something in their Christianity. And the result was that the Galatians, they doubted their salvation. They questioned whether or not they were genuine Christians.

And they lacked confidence in the finished work of Jesus Christ. And so in his letter, Paul, he seeks to emphasize that the gospel of Jesus Christ, it's not a gospel of Jesus plus.

It's just a gospel of grace. It's a gospel of grace, he says. But then he teaches, as he comes to the end of his letter, he says that the only way to walk by the Spirit, the only way to live as a Christian, the only way to be led by the Spirit or to keep in step with the Spirit, is to live your life and to shape your life according to the Word of God.

[7 : 00] And so this evening, we're just going to ask the question, what does it mean to be led by the Spirit? What does it mean to be led by the Spirit? But I want us to answer this question by considering the whole of Scripture.

And it's important to consider the whole of Scripture when you're asking a question like this.

Because in the Old Testament, we see the Holy Spirit leading the covenant community.

Then in the Gospels, where we read in Luke's Gospel, we see the Holy Spirit leading the committed Christ. And then here in the New Testament, Paul's letter to the Galatians, we see the Holy Spirit leading the Christian church.

And there are three headings this evening. So the Holy Spirit, he leads, he's leading the covenant community, he's leading the committed Christ, and he's leading the Christian church.

That's what the Holy Spirit is doing in Scripture. He's leading the covenant community, leading the committed Christ, and leading the Christian church. So if we look first of all, at the Holy Spirit leading the covenant community.

[8 : 10] He's leading the covenant community. We'll read again in verse 16. Paul says, You know, in our study of the person and work of the Holy Spirit, we've seen so far that the Holy Spirit, he was present and active in the Old Testament.

We're told right at the beginning of Genesis 1, that he's hovering over the face of the deep, and he's bringing form and fullness into the emptiness and formlessness of creation.

We're told that he was present in the creation of mankind. He was there when the triune God was discussing among themselves, let us make man in our own image, after our own likeness.

But you know, the wonderful thing is that the Holy Spirit was not only present and active in our creation. He was also present and active in our redemption. And we particularly see that in the redemption of the children of Israel, when they were brought out of slavery and bondage in Egypt. Because as we were reading in Exodus 13, we were told that when Pharaoh finally let the children of Israel go, we're told that God did not lead them by the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was the nearest route out of Egypt.

[9 : 43] God didn't lead them away from the hands of the Egyptians into the hands of the Philistines. It wasn't that God led them. He wasn't going to lead them from the frying pan, as it were, into the fire. No, God led his people, we're told. He led them away from bondage.

He led them away from slavery, away from war. And he led them round the way towards the Red Sea. And as we read the passage, many of the Israelites, they wondered why the Lord was leading them towards the Red Sea.

Because to the human eye, coming towards the Red Sea was just going to be a dead end. And that's what many of them thought. They thought, well, this is our dead end. They questioned whether the Lord had brought them out here, out to the Red Sea, because there wasn't enough graves in Egypt.

But Moses assures the people, he says, fear not, stand firm and see the salvation of the Lord. And the Lord told Moses, he says, lift up your staff, stretch out your hand and the sea will divide, so that the people may go through the Red Sea on dry ground.

And that's what we were singing about in Psalm 106. The Lord rebuked the Red Sea. It became, it parted, it became dry land. And the Lord led them through the deep as well as into the desert.

[11:08] The Lord led them. And, you know, that's the story of the children of Israel. Throughout their wilderness journey, the Lord led them. The Lord led them. And he led his people through the wilderness for 40 years on towards the promised land.

But this is the thing. The Lord led his people for 40 years so that they would love the Lord more and love the world less. And that's what Moses actually explained to the children of Israel.

That when they reached the end of their 40 year wilderness journey, when they reached the banks of the River Jordan, they're just about to cross over into the promised land.

And Moses, he's preaching his sermon to them, his farewell sermon in the book of Deuteronomy. And Deuteronomy chapter 8, Moses says to the people, The Lord your God has led you these 40 years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not.

And the Lord humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know.

Nor did your fathers know that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.

[12:42] The Lord led the children of Israel for 40 years in order to teach them. And that's what the role of the Spirit is. His role is to lead his people.

The Spirit teaches his people to love the Lord more and to love the world less. But you know, how did the Lord lead his people for 40 years?

How did the Lord lead his people out of bondage and slavery, across the Red Sea, through the wilderness, all the way to the River Jordan, and then over the River Jordan into the Promised Land? How did the Lord lead his people for all those 40 years? And as we read in Exodus 13, we read that every day for those 40 years, every moment and every step that the Israelites took towards the Promised Land, the Lord led his people in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.

And you know, this is what we have to see, and this is what's remarkable. That this visible pillar of cloud and pillar of fire that led the children of Israel, it was actually the person of the Holy Spirit.

[14:00] Because the work of the Holy Spirit was to lead the children of Israel. He was to lead them out of bondage and slavery into a land flowing with milk and honey.

That was the work of the Spirit. He was to lead them out and lead them in. And in that 40-year wilderness journey, the Holy Spirit, he was to prepare a promised people.

He was to prepare a promised people. They were to be a new people for this new place in the Promised Land. The Holy Spirit was to lead them out and lead them in.

And you know, that's what the Holy Spirit is still doing. He's still leading his people out of darkness into the kingdom of light. He's still leading us away from danger and away from things that could harm us in order to protect us and prosper us.

The Holy Spirit is still leading us and teaching us to love the Lord more and to love the world less.

The Holy Spirit is still, this is the wonderful thing, he's still preparing us to be a new people for a new place.

[15:10] A land of rest. A land that flows with milk and honey. A land that is a promised land where Jesus says there is many mansions.

This is the work of the Spirit, what he's doing. He's leading us out and he's leading us in. And so when we consider the Old Testament, we see the Holy Spirit leading the covenant community.

But secondly, when we come to the Gospels, we see the Holy Spirit leading the committed Christ. He's leading the committed Christ.

Paul says in verse 16, I say, walk by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh.

For these are opposed to each other to keep you from doing the things you want to do. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. You know, when it comes to walking by the Spirit and being led by the Spirit and keeping in step with the Spirit, there's no one who did it more obediently than Jesus Christ.

[16:19] Because as Scripture reminds us, his very incarnation was the work of the Holy Spirit. Because Jesus, we're told, he was conceived by the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit was at work in the life of Jesus from a young age. He was, the Spirit was teaching him and leading him. The Holy Spirit, he was present at the baptism of Jesus. When Jesus was baptized in the river Jordan by John, we're told that the Spirit descended.

The person of the Holy Spirit descended in the form of a dove. But you know, as we read in Luke chapter 4, it was after his baptism that Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness for 40 days, being tempted by the devil.

Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness towards the temptation of the devil. And the first question that comes to my mind is, why would the Holy Spirit lead Jesus into the wilderness and towards the temptation of the devil?

Because what we saw with the children of Israel was that the Holy Spirit in the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night, the Holy Spirit led the children away from danger and away from temptation and away from bondage and away from slavery.

[17 : 46] He led them away from these temptations in order that they would be protected and prepared for entering the promised land. So why is Jesus, who is full of the Holy Spirit, why has he been led by the Spirit into the wilderness for 40 days to be tempted by the devil?

And you know, this is why we have to see that Jesus is the committed Christ. Jesus is the committed Christ because of his baptism.

We didn't read it, but near the end of Luke chapter 3, the previous chapter, Luke, he briefly records for us the baptism of Jesus. We're told in Luke 3 verse 21, now when all the people were baptized and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens opened, the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove and a voice came from heaven, you are my beloved son, with you I am well pleased.

Now in the act of baptizing Jesus, Jesus was identifying himself as the representative and substitute of his people.

In the act of baptizing Jesus, Jesus was identifying himself as our representative and our substitute. And this is important because as soon as Jesus is baptized, Jesus is the committed Christ.

[19 : 18] And with this Jesus, he identifies himself as the representative and substitute of those who have fallen in Adam. Adam. He identifies himself as those, as the representative and substitute of those who have fallen in Adam.

Now the late Douglas Macmillan, I'm sure he's well known to all of us as a great preacher. He's also the author of a well-known book, *The Lord Our Shepherd*.

But a book that Douglas Macmillan is not maybe so well known for is a book about how the Holy Spirit ministered to Jesus throughout his life.

And the book is called *Jesus, Power Without Measure*. It's a brilliant book. *Jesus, Power Without Measure*. It's a book that was actually given to me as a gift a couple of weeks ago.

And it's a brilliant book and I highly recommend it. *Jesus, Power Without Measure*. But in the book, Douglas Macmillan, he's explaining the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness.

[20 : 24] And he says, the very first thing that's required of the Lord Jesus as the baptized, declared mediator, saviour, and representative of his people, the first thing that's required of him is tempting and testing.

In baptism, he says, Jesus was declaring himself to be the representative man. And the very first thing that's required of him as the representative man is that he be tested.

And Douglas Macmillan, he continues by saying, he says, in the first commandment to Adam, so he brings us all the way back to Genesis, in the first commandment to Adam, Adam was put into a place of probation and testing.

Similarly, he says, the last Adam was put into a place of probation, you could say, and testing, where obedience is once more to be tested in human nature.

The first thing the father requires of his spirit-filled son, he says, the first demand of heaven put upon the last Adam is identical with what was required of the first Adam, obedience.

[21 : 33] And Macmillan says, it's amazing that the very first thing God does with this spirit-filled man is bring him into a place of probation where his obedience will be tried and tested by Satan.

The same thing that happened to the first Adam. And so when the Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil, Jesus was identifying himself as the representative and substitute of me and you, his people.

But more than that, we see it's not just us here today he was representing, he's also in many ways representing the children of Israel because we were told that he crossed back over the River Jordan, the same river the children of Israel crossed over.

He crossed back over the River Jordan, back into the wilderness, the same wilderness that the children of Israel travelled through. And even the length of time Jesus was in the wilderness, it's important.

Jesus, we're told, he was in the wilderness for 40 days and 40 nights. And as you know, the number 40 in the Bible, it's the number of the wilderness because the Israelites, they were in the wilderness for 40 years.

[22 : 45] But more than that, and Jesus, he's identifying himself as the representative and substitute all the time. More than that, we're told that Jesus was hungry, just like the Israelites were.

And the devil, he tempts Jesus to submit himself to the devil's authority. The devil says, if you are the son of God, command this stone to become bread.

But Jesus, he answers the devil. And he answers the devil from where? He answers him from the inspired, spirit-filled, God-breathed, word of God.

It is written, he says. And Jesus, he quotes just what Moses said to the Israelites on the banks of the river Jordan, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord.

But that wasn't enough for the devil. The devil comes again to Jesus. He commands Jesus to come and idolize him and worship him in exchange for all the kingdoms of the world. But again, from Scripture, Jesus answers him, it is written, you shall worship the Lord your God and only him you shall serve.

[23 : 57] But the devil, he comes again and he even tests to see if God will be faithful to him. The devil takes Jesus to the pinnacle of the temple and he says to him, if you are the son of God, throw yourself down from here.

And then the devil, he quotes Psalm 91 to him. Psalm 91 says, he will command his angels concerning you to guard you on their hands they will bear you up unless you strike your foot against a stone.

And even with the devil quoting Scripture to Jesus, Jesus again says to the devil, it is written, you shall not put the Lord your God to the test.

But you know, what we have to notice is that Jesus may have been led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And he was in, he was led into the wilderness, as we said, to be a representative, to be our substitute.

But he was also there as our example. Because through the temptation of Jesus, we are given the perfect example of how we are to deal with temptation and how we are to deal with the devil.

[25 : 08] And the example Jesus gave to us is that we're to deal with temptation and with the devil. We're to deal with both of them using the word of God.

because Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. But he was led by the Spirit to fight off temptation and to fight off the devil using the word of God.

Because as we read in Luke 4, every time temptation came, every time the devil came with another attack, Jesus said, it is written. It is written.

It is written. Every time Jesus had to deal with temptation and the devil, he was led by the Spirit when he went back to the word of God.

He was led by the Holy Spirit when he went back to the word of God. Because as we've said before, the Bible is inspired. It's the word of God, it's God breathed, it's spirit filled, it's the divine breath of God, the Holy Spirit.

[26 : 10] Therefore, the only way we can deal with temptation and the devil is to be led by the Holy Spirit through the word of God. Because we're not to be led by the flesh, as we shall see in a moment.

We're not to be led by our own imaginations, or our own thoughts and theories, or our own assumptions and conclusions. No, the only way to deal with temptation and the devil, the only way to deal with it is to be led by God the Holy Spirit and we do that by living and walking according to this God breathed, spirit filled word of God.

And you know, that's why our confession and even our catechisms, that's why they all state from the very outset that every doctrine they teach, it's all based upon not the ideas and imaginations of men.

No, they say that it's all from the spirit filled word of God contained in the scriptures of the Old and the New Testaments. And because of that they say the Bible is the only rule to lead us and to direct

us on how we may glorify God and enjoy him forever.

And so this evening we're asking what does it mean to be led by the spirit? And by looking at the whole of scripture we can see that when we consider the Old Testament we see the Holy Spirit leading the covenant community.

[27 : 41] And then in the Gospels we see the Holy Spirit leading the committed Christ. And then here in Galatians 5 we see the Holy Spirit leading the Christian church.

That's what we're looking at lastly. Leading the Christian church. Paul says in Galatians 5 at verse 25 If we live by the Spirit let us also keep in step with the Spirit.

If we live by the Spirit let us also keep in step with the Spirit. We said earlier that when Paul wrote his letter to the Galatians he was dealing with a young Christian church that was being misled by their misunderstanding of scripture and their misinformation from false teachers.

The false teachers they were telling the Galatians that they needed something more than Jesus. Jesus plus. And it left them feeling inferior and that their Christianity was inadequate.

That they were lacking something in their faith. And the Galatians they were doubting their salvation. They were questioning whether or not they were genuine Christians. But you know when Paul speaks about being led by the Holy Spirit as he does here in this chapter he draws attention to the fact that when the Spirit is working in your life and when you are being led by the Spirit there will be a struggle.

[29 : 11] There will be a struggle. There will be a struggle and a battle going on in your heart and your mind between the Spirit and the flesh. And Paul says to these doubting Christians who lack assurance Paul says that that struggle and that battle which rages in your mind and your heart and even your physical flesh he says it's clear evidence that you are a genuine Christian.

The fact that there's a struggle is evidence that the Spirit is working in your life because he says if there's no struggle if there's no battle between the flesh and the Spirit then you have to question if the Spirit is there at all.

If there's no desire to walk by the Spirit if there's no desire to be led by the Spirit if there's no desire to keep in step with the Spirit then the Spirit cannot be working in that person's heart.

And the sad reality is if the Spirit isn't working well they're walking according to the flesh. And Paul emphasizes that the flesh and the Spirit they are two opposing forces.

He says in verse 17 the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh. These are opposed to each other to keep you from doing the things you want to do.

[30 : 36] They're opposed to each other he says. This battle this struggle that's going on all the time. And then for clarity's sake Paul gives details on what it looks like to live according to the flesh.

He says in verse 19 now the works of the flesh they are evident. You can see them in someone's life he says. Sexual immorality impurity sensuality idolatry sorcery enmity strife jealousy fits of anger rivalries dissensions divisions envy drunkenness orgies and things like these.

I warn you he says as I warned you before that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. Paul says that when someone lives according to the flesh it's evident and it's evident in their character their conduct and their conversation.

And you know as Christians who say that the spirit has led them to do something that contradicts the word of God and compromises their Christian witness Paul is saying they are not walking according to the spirit no they're walking according to the flesh and he says that's evident it's evident in their life because as Paul goes on to say if we're walking according to the spirit if we're led by the spirit if we're living by the spirit if we're keeping in step with the spirit he says we will bear the fruit of the spirit and we will bear the fruit of the spirit in our character our conduct and our conversation that's what he says in verse 22 but the fruit of the spirit is love joy peace patience kindness goodness faithfulness gentleness and self control against such things there is no law and those who belong to

Christ those who are in union with Christ he says they have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires therefore therefore if we live by the spirit let us also keep in step with the spirit if we live by the spirit let us also keep in step with the spirit and you know having considered the whole of scripture that in the old testament we see the holy spirit leading he's always leading this covenant community towards the promised land in the gospels we see the holy spirit leading the committed christ he's leading jesus all the time and in the new testament we see the holy spirit leading the christian church and with each and every situation in the whole of scripture what we ought to

understand is that the only way to walk in the spirit and be led by the spirit and keep in step with the spirit is to live your life and shape your life according to the word of God and you know the greatest evidence of your Christianity tonight and the greatest evidence of the Christian church in the world is the battle and the struggle with temptation and the devil do you want to know that you're a Christian do you do you have a daily battle every day do you war with the world the flesh and the devil but you know my friend that's why

[34 : 13] Paul commanded the Ephesians he said to them as he brought his letter to a close he said put on the whole armour of God that's why he said to them put on the whole armour of God that you may be able to stand against the violence of the devil and he says put on the bracelet put on the shield pick up the helmet put it on but the last thing he says to pick up is the sword the sword of the spirit which is the word of God and you know my friend before you leave the house in the morning before you step out the door into a new day always ask yourself have I put my armour on today have I read the word of God am I prepared to go out am I being led by the Holy Spirit into a new day that's how we should live every day as a Christian am I being led by the

Holy Spirit into a new day because as we're being reminded here this evening if we live by the spirit let us also keep in step with the spirit and we do that by reading and living according to this spirit filled word the word of God so if we live by the spirit says Paul let us also keep in step with the spirit may the Lord bless these thoughts to us let us pray O Lord our gracious God we give thanks to thee this evening for thy word thy word that is the only rule to direct us and even to lead us and Lord we pray that day by day that as we read it and as we study it and as we meditate upon it that thy spirit would work in us that he would mould us and shape us that he would help us to submit to the will and to the word of God and Lord we confess that how often we are so stubborn how often we want to go the way of the flesh but yet

Lord help us to live by the spirit to walk in the spirit to keep in step with the spirit and to know that thou hast given to us this wonderful word that we might live according to it and bring glory to our father in heaven Lord remember us we pray help us Lord to be those who bear the fruit of the spirit and that that fruit may be evident in our lives or to have love the love of Christ shown to those around us Lord bless us we pray uphold us and strengthen us remember those Lord as we've mentioned those who are laid aside those who are receiving treatment those Lord who all who need the help and the strength of the Lord Lord we commit them to thy care and keeping for to whom else can we go for thou alone hast the words of eternal life hear us then we ask bless us as a people keep us we pray for we ask it in Jesus name and for his sake

Amen well we bring our service to a conclusion by singing the words of Psalm 25 Psalm 25 in the Scottish Psalter page 231 Psalm 25 we're singing in verse 4 and we're singing down to the verse mark 9 the psalmist he's asking for direction he's praying for leading he says show me teach me lead me and he knows that his teacher and his leader is the word of God that spirit filled book show me thy ways O Lord thy path so teach thou me and do thou lead me in thy truth therein my teacher be for thou art God that does to me salvation send and I upon thee all the day expecting do attend down to the verse mark 9 of

Psalm 25 to God's praise show me thy grace O Lord thy paths so teach thou me and do thou lead me my truth whom the Lord shall To me salvation send, and I upon thee all the day, expecting to attend.

[39 : 45] Thy tender mercies, Lord, I pray thee to remember.

And loving kindnesses, for they have been upon forever.

My sins and faults of youth do thou more forget.

After thy mercy, thank on me, and for thy goodness great.

God good and upright is the way he'll send us show.

[41 : 09] The meek in judgment he will guide, and make his path to low.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and forevermore. Amen. Amen.

Amen. For the torch, you will. Thank you. All right. Amen.

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