

Msg #123 of *Scripture Beneath The Surface*

“Led of the Spirit”

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Hello! Thanks for being with us. Today, I'd like to talk to you a little bit about the Holy Spirit. This is a subject which is really difficult for many Christians, but shouldn't be. However, I would appreciate it if you would focus your attention today on the work of the Holy Spirit as a guiding factor rather than a provider of spiritual gifts. Personally, I'm not opposed to Pentecostal ministry, but I am opposed to inordinate displays of spiritual gifts. Now notice, that I did not say I was opposed to spiritual gifts, but only to the inordinate display of them.

We basically have two major divisions in the church concerning the Holy Spirit. Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal. I guess for the record I'd like to make it clear right up front that I consider myself a Pentecostal Christian. However, I would like to emphasize that I am very conservative concerning Pentecostal Christianity. I certainly do believe that the Holy Spirit is real, and I certainly do believe that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are real, but I also believe that many of the manifestations in our Pentecostal churches today are false. No, I'm not pointing my finger at anyone specifically, but in general there is an overall misrepresentation of the Holy Spirit in our worship services.

It's understandable for Christians to have reservations concerning the Pentecostal aspect of churches. However, a significant problem exists in non-Pentecostal churches where people refuse to acknowledge the work of the Holy Spirit just because they fear the manifestation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. I don't know which side of the fence you are on, whether you consider yourself Pentecostal or non-Pentecostal. And, it's really not important to me whether you are or not. What is important to me is that you enter into a relationship with God the Father through his

Son Jesus Christ. However, a true relationship with the Father and his Son is impossible without the influence of the Holy Spirit.

John 4:24 tells us very plainly that God is a Spirit. It's important to recognize that God is a Spirit in order to also comprehend that without the Holy Spirit of God we can't make contact with God himself. If God is a Spirit and you refuse to acknowledge the Holy Spirit of God, then how can you say you have a relationship with God. No, once again, I'm not referring to the gifts of the Spirit, but to the guiding of the Holy Spirit. The second part of that verse, John 4:24, explains that because God is a Spirit, those who worship him must worship him in truth and in spirit. Now notice, that this Scripture refers to two specific parts of the relationship aspect with God. We come to God in fellowship, giving glory and honor to him, not only by the truth of God's word, but also in the very spirit of that word.

Now, here's another perspective from my point of view. One of the most destructive doctrines in the church today is that which emphasizes the Bible as the one and only guide to the truth. What I mean by this is that although every Christian would certainly agree that without God's word we would have great difficulty understanding who and what God is, yet we cannot look to the Bible as our only guide. In fact, the Bible itself contradicts that very doctrine in John 16:13 where it says that when the Holy Spirit comes to God's people, he, that same Spirit, will guide us into all truth. It is the Spirit of God which guides us into the truth, the understanding, of God's word. The Bible is the logos, which means it is the written or spoken word of God. But it is the Holy Spirit of God which brings understanding to this word of God.

You can possibly understand this concept when you think about professors in secular colleges and universities who attempt to teach Bible history from a non-Christian viewpoint. It's pretty simple to realize that they cannot possibly reveal accurately the word of God to their students if they don't have the Holy Spirit residing within them. It's this same concept for every Christian. In fact, without the divine influence of God's Holy Spirit there would be no Christianity.

Now, think about this for a minute. The Old Testament gives us a clear description of the historical events of the children of Israel. This specific race of people was chosen by God as a people he would use to demonstrate the righteousness of God and also to demonstrate the inability of humans to attain that righteousness without God. God made a covenant with the children of Israel. The covenant between God and Israel was a covenant of Law, and was based on Ten Commandments which God himself wrote in tables of stone. God's covenant with Israel was established on these Ten Commandments. In order for Israel to maintain their responsibility to the covenant, they were to keep these Ten Commandments along with the other rites and rituals associated with them. Now, we Gentiles can understand through New Testament teaching that the purpose of the covenant of the Law was to show man his inherent sinfulness, and to also demonstrate clearly that man was unable to attain the righteousness of God by his own strength. Therefore, what the Law did was to demonstrate Israel's continual failure. No matter how hard they tried, they failed to keep the Law perfectly. Of course, the Bible clearly tells us that if anyone fails in even one part of the Law, then they are guilty of breaking the whole Law.

Therefore, every man woman and child of Israel failed at keeping the Law. In either one way or many ways they broke the Law, and therefore could not attain the righteousness of God and could not enter into his presence. The Law only proved man's sinfulness. It did not give them righteousness, but rather condemned them. The sins of Israel remained, and therefore the barrier between them and God also remained. This barrier was represented symbolically by the veil in Israel's temple which separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place. It was a symbolic representation that our inability to establish our own righteousness would establish a division between God and us unless God intervened to remove the curse which came through the covenant of the Law of Commandments.

Now, God had not failed to provide a way for salvation just because Israel failed to keep the Law perfectly. God had never intended the Law to be the way to salvation. It would be a little silly to think that God looked down from heaven and said, "Oops! This covenant of the Law didn't work, so I guess I'll have to try something else." God doesn't make mistakes. If he seems to change his mind, it's really just because he wants you to understand the situation more clearly. God doesn't have to back up and fix his work. It's us he has to fix. The covenant of the Law, using the nation of Israel as the representative race, established the difference between mankind's wickedness and God's righteousness. It also effectively demonstrated man's inability to attain that righteousness within himself. But when the time was right, and the Law had fully accomplished its purpose, God brought the next stage of his plan to us. Jesus Christ was born. He was God manifested in the flesh. He was the Son part of the Godhead. And, because he was God in the flesh, he accomplished what the little nation of Israel had been unable to do. He kept the Law perfectly.

The covenant of Law was fulfilled by Jesus Christ. God's covenant with Israel had accomplished its purpose. The Ten Commandments, written and engraved in stone, had been, according to 2 Corinthians 3:7, a ministration of death to Israel, but now Jesus Christ overcame this ministration of death, causing it to cease. By his own righteousness he accomplished the perfection of the Law of Commandments, fulfilling its purpose. And when he had successfully fulfilled the covenant of Law, he then could usher in the next stage of God's eternal plan, the new covenant of Grace. This new covenant of Grace was not a covenant of Law. God had already proven that mankind was unable to attain the righteousness of God by keeping a law. Therefore, with the advent of the new covenant of Grace, righteousness would be given freely to those who believe God's word, and who receive Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, without the need of keeping the Law of Commandments.

Now, pay particular attention if you will. I want you to understand something very important concerning the two covenants. The first covenant was to the tiny nation of Israel. It was the covenant of the Law of Commandments. The second covenant went past the boundaries of the nation of Israel and included all the other nations also. Now God made a covenant, not just with the tiny nation of Israel, but with all the nations of the earth. But the covenant of Grace was not a covenant of Law just extended to the whole world, but a whole new covenant. And the very basis of this new covenant of Grace was - - -, now get this, the very basis of this new covenant of

Grace was the divine influence of God's goodness. In fact, the very definition of the word grace means, goodness of God which is given to man by God's influence. So many times, in the Christian church today, Grace is defined as, unmerited favor. Certainly we have not merited God's favor. But the definition of Grace actually has nothing to do with merit. It just means that under this new covenant God is going to bring his goodness to his people, not by requiring them to keep his law, but by influencing the hearts of men by his Holy Spirit. Grace is the divine influence of God's goodness. Under the New Testament covenant of Grace the goodness, the righteousness, of God is bestowed upon man by the direct influence of God himself. And, it is the Holy Spirit of God which is the conduit between God and man. It is the Holy Spirit of God which influences the hearts of men and moves men toward righteousness.

Now notice, it is the influence of God on the heart of you and I that causes our righteousness. And this might be difficult for you to comprehend, but think about this. Your heart cannot act physically. Your heart cannot accomplish a physical task. It is the body of a person that can act physically. But a heart cannot. The only thing a heart can accomplish is the intent. It is in your heart that you have the capability to will yourself to do something or not to do something. Your will, under the new covenant of grace, becomes the deciding factor of your righteousness. If you desire righteousness, if you want it, and if you want all that is good, then you have accomplished that which God desires you to accomplish. It is not in your flesh and blood that your righteousness exists. Your righteousness, under the New Testament covenant of Grace, is established because you have received the word of God, and believe it.

Think of it this way. Jesus was the earthly manifestation of God's word. In the first chapter of John, Jesus is referred to as the Word. When you receive God and his son Jesus Christ, then that means you have received the influence of God himself. This means that you have opened up your heart to the influence of God, and now his Holy Spirit will be the guiding principle to the thoughts, beliefs, and convictions of your heart, and will also be the moving influence for the words and actions of your body. Under the New Testament covenant of Grace you attain righteousness because you receive goodness from God through divine influence. That divine influence is God's Holy Spirit.

Now, we're not talking gifts of the Spirit here, although the gifts of the Spirit are certainly part of the influence that comes down from God out of heaven. But there is so much more to the Holy Spirit than just the gifts of the Spirit. The inordinate emphasis on the gifts of the Holy Spirit in Pentecostal circles has almost destroyed the concept of being led by the spirit. In Pentecostal circles Christians have come to believe that being led by the Spirit only means that the Holy Spirit will manifest himself in you in an outward fashion through the gifts. However, to be led by the Holy Spirit means much more than just a manifestation of miracles and signs. Manifestations of signs and wonders are truly a glorious gift of God, but the real work of the Holy Spirit is to come into a man's heart and abide there, and to move that man to manifest the goodness of God. Righteousness is the purpose of the Holy Spirit, not gifts. Even when the Holy Spirit does cause the signs and wonders to appear, they are only given to the church in order to establish God's righteousness. One of the greatest errors in the Pentecostal arena is when

people look for the manifestation of the Holy Spirit instead of seeking the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of men.

So, you might ask me the question, “Do I think that every Christian should be a Pentecostal Christian?” And the answer is, “Yes, I do.” But do I believe that every Christian should speak in tongues, or prophesy? No, I don’t. There is altogether too much falsehood in the Pentecostal environment. But it’s not because the gifts of the Spirit are in error, but it’s because the gifts of the Spirit have become the dominant doctrinal force of Pentecostal churches.

To a great extent, Pentecostal Christians have forgotten what it means to be led of the Spirit. But, Romans 8:14 says, “as many as are led by the Spirit, they are the sons of God.” Now, do you realize the implications of this scripture? It not only tells us that those who are led of the Holy Spirit are the sons of God, but it also implies that if you aren’t led of the Holy Spirit then neither are you a son of God. If you aren’t being influenced by God’s Holy Spirit, then you cannot claim to be a son of God. Now, that’s a scary thought.

We are a people who are under a covenant of Grace, a covenant of divine influence of God’s goodness. We are a people with whom God has made a covenant to receive his goodness in our hearts. Unlike the Children of Israel, who were not given divine influence, we have that divine influence from God. Israel’s only contact with divine influence was through individual prophets. These few men were invested with the divine influence from God, yet the nation as a whole relied on the spoken and written word only. Think of it. Trying to follow God just by the spoken and written word, and receiving extra guidance only occasionally when a prophet came into the picture. But today, under the covenant of divine influence from God, we have continual influence from him because his Holy Spirit resides in each one of us, not in just a few designated prophets.

And, sad to say, there is a significant portion of the church leadership which would like you to remain subject to them instead of being led of the Holy Spirit. Those leaders which are part of the Pentecostal denominations may not object to you participating in the gifts of the Spirit, but very seldom will encourage you to be led of the Holy Spirit. Generally speaking, there is a great emphasis on following the precepts of leadership rather than following God’s word according to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This is even more pronounced in the non-Pentecostal churches because of the added fears brought about by the many extremes of Pentecostalism.

However, for Christians, it must be kept in mind that God is a Spirit. If God is a Spirit, then how else would God commune with you? Yes, there is the body of Christ on earth as a witness of God, but the body of Christ is not the guiding factor. Those in the church, the living body of Christ, whether leaders or followers, were never meant to be our guide. It is the Holy Spirit which God intends to be our guide. We do have the word of God, but our understanding of that word can only come from God himself.

There are many influences in this world. We receive influence in many different ways from many different sources. We see things that influence us. We hear things that influence us. In fact, we humans have five physical senses, and influence affects us through each of those five avenues in one way or another. But God would have us receive influence from him rather than influence from another god, for if we receive influence and take it for ourselves without it coming from the Spirit of God, then we fall into temptation and deception. We are influenced by many things, but we do have the ability to control that which influences us to some extent. No, we are not able to separate ourselves from the world, but we are able to separate the world from our own environment. Under the new covenant of Grace, we are given the greatest opportunity that ever could be conceived in the minds of men. To communicate directly with God is a most awe-inspiring thing. To receive divine influence from God's own Spirit is more than a human being ever deserves. Yet, so many times Christians are guilty of quenching the Spirit of God, and allowing the spirit of the world to permeate our lives.

It is true that the greatest influence we receive enters us through our eyes and ears. This is for no other reason than that we are flesh and blood humans. Flesh and blood humans are greatly influenced by that which comes into our minds through our eyes and ears. But you and I are not called to remain just flesh and blood humans. We are called to be born again. No, not born again as flesh and blood human beings, but born again, as the Bible says, in spirit. God specifically calls us to be born again in spirit so that we might begin to be influenced by God's Spirit.

2 Corinthians 6:17 tells us to come out from among those who are in disagreement with the word of God. We still must go to work, and we still must shop at the grocery store, and we must still be in public places from time to time, but nowhere in God's word does it suggest that we are obligated to take the influence of wickedness and bring it into our own homes. There is still, at this present time, liberty among Christians to choose whether or not profanity will be spoken in their own homes. There is still, at this present time, liberty among Christians to choose whether or not nakedness is demonstrated publicly in their own homes. No one is forcing you to bring the influence of wickedness into your own house. If you are bringing it into your home, if you are exposing your family to the wicked influence of the world, then it is by your own choice. Do you actually think that God will excuse you for wickedness that you voluntarily bring into your own home?

There is nothing we can do when people in public places use God's name as a swear word. We can't stop Hollywood from graphically displaying flesh, nor cause the various forms of media to cease their marketing of the sumptuous delights of this world. However, we do have the right to separate ourselves from the world's wickedness when we come into our own houses. This is our God given right. However, God leaves the choice to you. You can choose to receive the influence that comes from God's Holy Spirit, and to reject all the influence you can that comes from the world. But, it's not an easy thing. The brainwashing of Satan's world system has advanced so far that Christians are almost past the point of understanding what separation from the world really means.

