**Lesson 14**

**The Spirit Leading**

***Romans 8:14— For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.***

One of the many roles the Holy Spirit performs is the role of Guide to the children of God. As the prophet Isaiah records in Isaiah 63:11-14 . . .

***Isaiah 63:11-14— 11 Then His people remembered the days of old, of Moses. Where is He who brought them up out of the sea with the shepherds of His flock? Where is He who put His Holy Spirit in the midst of them, 12 who caused His glorious arm to go at the right hand of Moses, who divided the waters before them to make for Himself an everlasting name, 13 who led them through the depths? Like the horse in the wilderness, they did not stumble; 14 as the cattle which go down into the valley, the Spirit of the LORD gave them rest. So You led Your people, to make for Yourself a glorious name.***

“Moses was no more able, by his own power, to induce the Hebrews to pass between the divided waters of the Red Sea and to cross the trackless desert, than by the mere extending of the rod he could divide those waters. Moses was simply the human instrument; the Holy Spirit was the efficient Agent.”

The Holy Spirit leads in two ways: by means of **an inward impulse** as well as **by external directions**. In the example of Israel’s Exodus, cited above, the Spirit’s empowering of Moses to lead them is an example of the Spirit’s external direction.

* Just as a traveler is led in his journey by a guide, or as a soldier is led in battle by his commander, the Israelites were led out of Egypt by the external direction of the Holy Spirit, working through Moses.
* But we know from the testimony of Scripture that a high percentage of those who fled Egypt in the Exodus were not saved and many died in the wilderness. Though they experienced the Holy Spirit’s external direction in their lives, they were not indwelt by the Spirit.

And just as the Holy Spirit moves men by external directions, in the same way, the Holy Spirit causes men to act based upon **an inward impulse** or “prompting” within them.

***Jeremiah 10:23— I know, O LORD, that a man's way is not in himself, nor is it in a man who walks to direct his steps.***

* “By nature, we are not only ignorant of God’s way, but reluctant to walk therein even when it is shown us.”

**Observation:** It is interesting to note that while the Spirit led the Israelites out of Egypt by external directions, He first had to lead Moses to become the leader of the nation by an inward impulse of the Spirit.

**Point:** As we have learned previously, we must remember that just because the Holy Spirit moves in or restrains someone does not mean that that person is saved or indwelt by the Spirit.

**The saving inward impulses of the Spirit**

In our previous examination of the regeneration process we learned that the Spirit draws the elect by power, but not by force. He makes the unwilling heart willing. In the same way, by the inward impulse of the Spirit He draws us to walk according to His path.

* David understood the need for the Holy Spirit’s work in drawing us to His leading, as we read in Psalm 119.

***Psalm 119:33-36—***

***33 Teach me, O LORD, the way of Your statutes,***

***And I shall observe it to the end.***

***34 Give me understanding, that I may observe Your law***

***And keep it with all my heart.***

***35 Make me walk in the path of Your commandments,***

***For I delight in it.***

***36 Incline my heart to Your testimonies***

***And not to dishonest gain.***

* But in reading Psalm 119:35 we see that David also realized that something more than divine illumination was needed by him. Therefore David added in v. 35-36, ***Make me to go in the path of thy commandments...Incline my heart unto thy testimonies***.”
* “By nature our hearts are averse from God and holiness. We can be worldly of ourselves, but we cannot be heavenly of ourselves.”
* “The power of sin lies in the love of it, and it is only as our affections are divinely drawn unto things above that we are delivered from sin’s dominion. Moreover, our wills are perverse, and only as supernatural grace is brought to bear upon them are they “inclined” Godwards.”
* Thus, to be “led by the Spirit of God” is to be governed by Him from within, to be subject to His secret but real impulses or strivings.
* While Flip Wilson’s character, Geraldine, was famous for saying, “the Devil made me do it!”, when it comes to acts of holiness and personal purity, “the Holy Spirit makes you to do it.”

**The problem with having a new nature**

For those who have been regenerated, you recognize the “holy war” that begins to rage within you when the Holy Spirit comes to reside in you. You begin to war against the unholy desires in your flesh, knowing they are in opposition to the things in which the Spirit is leading you.

* “Not only are our hearts inclined by nature to temporal, material, worldly, and evil things, rather than unto eternal, spiritual, heavenly and holy things, but we desire to continue in them by habitual custom too.”
* The more years we have lived before salvation, the more time we have had to be ingrained and governed by sin. And the more sin is ingrained in us, the more difficult it is to subdue.
* “Natural lusts and appetites being born and bred in us from infancy, continue to cry out for indulgence and satisfaction. The will has become bent to a carnal course and the heart craves material pleasures. Hence, when the claims of God are presented to us, when the interests of our souls and the things of eternity are brought before us, when the “beauty of holiness” is presented to our view, they find our wills already biased in the contrary direction.”
* **The power of sin lies in the love of it.**

***Jeremiah 13:23— "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? Then you also can do good who are accustomed to doing evil.”***

* In Jeremiah 13:23, as the Lord is preparing to punish the nation of Judah for her disobedience and idolatry, it is impossible, of ourselves, to change our nature.
* Only the Holy Spirit is able to incline our hearts toward holiness and righteousness.
* “Grace prevails over us when we so love the things of God that the bent of the will and the strength of our affections is carried after them.”
* **In other words**, the power of the Holy Spirit is the only power in the universe that is able to overcome and subdue the power of sin in our flesh.

***Ezekiel 36:27— "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.”***

* “Yet this is not a work that He does in the soul once and for all, but is often renewed and repeated—and that because the “flesh” or sinful nature remains in us, unchanged, even after regeneration. Therefore we need to ask God to continuallyincline our hearts toward Himself.”

Regarding the leading of the Spirit, Pink states that “we are “led by the Spirit” both **actively** and **passively**.

* Actively with respect to His prompting.
* Passively on our part as we submit to those promptings.
* Actively by His pressing upon us the holy requirements of the Scriptures.
* Passively as we yield ourselves unto those requirements.”

Pink goes on to point out that the Holy Spirit’s **restraining**motives move in us to mortify sin while at the same time exercising **inviting**motives that encourage us to holiness.

* “**The Spirit works in the Christian a right disposition of heart** relating to truth and duty.
* **He maintains in the believer a right disposition of mind**, preparing and disposing him to attend unto the revealed will of God.
* He **speaks effectually to the conscience, enlightens the understanding, regulates the desires, and orders the conduct of those who submit** themselves unto His holy suggestions and overtures.
* To be “led by the Spirit of God” is to be under His guidance and government.”

**Discussion Question:** It is greatly helpful to understand these components of the Holy Spirit’s leading in the lives of God’s children. The pressing question then is this, “how do you know if you are being led by the Spirit?” How can you tell if you are endowed with a right disposition of mind and are submitting yourself to His holy suggestions and overtures? How can you know it’s the Spirit’s leading and not your own deceived heart?

**A Caution**

“To be “led by the Spirit of God” does not mean being influenced by unaccountable suggestions and uncontrollable impulses, which result in conduct displeasing to God and are often injurious to ourselves and others. No, indeed; not so does the Spirit of God “lead” anyone.”

**Question:** What do you find to be most important about this caution?

**Reply:** One of the great deceptions regarding the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of men is the belief that we should “let go and let God” . . . that in losing self-control we are giving in to the leading and control of the Holy Spirit. This loss of control is best seen in the “holy rollers” of the Charismatic churches. Those people who race around the church assembly, who have totally lost control and not being led by the Spirit but by demonic forces. **The caution here is that we are always accountable for our actions.** The Holy Spirit will never take control and cause us to do something without our control and consent. So many professing Christians believe that the Spirit can take control and override our will. Not so. The Spirit works through us, but never overrides our control of ourselves. **He influences us, but never controls us.**

**Divine Direction**

The Holy Spirit fulfills His office of Guide by three distinct operations.

* First, He communicates life and grace, a new “nature”
* Second, He stirs that life unto action, and gives “more grace”
* Third, He directs the action into performance of duty. Life, motion, and conduct are inseparable in nature and grace alike.

Regarding the third distinct operation stated above, “Something more than knowledge is needed by us: the Spirit must persuade and incline our hearts, and move our wills. How strong our inclinations to sin are! How easily our fleshly impulses override our better judgment! How weak we are before temptation! We know what we shoulddo, but are so often carried away by corrupt affections to the contrary. It is at thispoint the Holy Spirit governs from within.

* **First**, by His restraining motions, bidding us to avoid and mortify sin.
* **Second**, by His quickening motions, inviting us to the pursuit of holiness. And just so far as we yieldto His “strivings” are we “ledby the Spirit of God.”

“As moral agents we are responsible to co-operate with the Spirit and respond to His gentle sway over us. Alas, we so often fail to do so. But though He allows this up to a certain point—for our humbling—yet by His invincible power He prevents our making shipwreck of the faith, and after many chastenings, conducts us safely to Glory.”

**Knowing we are led by the Spirit**

In general, those who are directed by the divine Guide are moved to examine their hearts and take frequent notice of their ways, to mourn over their carnality and perverseness, to confess their sins, to earnestly seek grace to enable them to be obedient. They are moved to search the Scriptures daily to ascertain the things that God has prohibited and the things that He enjoins. They are moved to an increasing conformity to God’s holy Law, and an increasing enablement to meet its requirements is wrought in them by the Spirit blessing to them the means of grace. But to be more specific.

* **First**, just so far as we are governed by the Spirit of God are we *led [away] from ourselves*: from confidence in our own wisdom, from dependence upon our own strength, and from trust in our own righteousness. We are led from self-aggrandizement, self-will, self-pleasing. The Spirit conducts away from self unto God. Yet let it be pointed out that this weaning us from ourselves is not accomplished in a moment, but is a perpetual and progressive thing. Alas, God has at best but a portion of our affections. It is true there are moments when we sincerely and ardently desire to be fully and unreservedly surrendered to Him, but the ensnaring power of some rival object soon confirms how partial and im- perfect our surrender has been.
* **Second**, just so far as we are governed by the Spirit of God are we *brought to occupation with Christ*. To whom else, in our deep need, can we go? Who so well-suited to our misery and poverty? Having severed us in some degree from ourselves, the Spirit brings us into a closer realization of our union with the Savior. Are we conscious of our filth and guilt?—the Spirit leads us to the blood of Christ. Are we sorely tried and oppressed?—the Spirit leads us to Him Who is able to succour3 the tempted. Are we mourning our emptiness and barrenness?—the Spirit leads us to the One in Whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. It is the special office of the Spirit to take of the things of Christ and show them unto us.
* **Third**, just so far as we are governed by the Spirit of God are we *conducted along the highway of holiness*. The Spirit leads the Christian away from the vanities of the world to the satisfying delight that is to be found in the Lord. He turns us from the husks that the swine feed upon unto spiritual realities (Luke 15:16-17), drawing our affections unto things above. He moves us to seek after more intimate and more constant communion with God, which can only be obtained by separation from that which He abhors. His aim is to conform us more and more to the image of Christ. Finally, He will conduct us to heaven, for of it the Spirit is both the pledge and the earnest.

**Discussion Question:** One of the great difficulties for every Christian is having the assurance that we are truly following the leading of the Holy Spirit or merely giving in to the corrupt or natural inclinations of our fallen nature. “Is this the Spirit leading me or am I just seeking after my own desires?” From what you have learned in this chapter, what is the answer to this plea from our hearts? How can we know if we are following the leading of the Holy Spirit or simply giving in to our own desires?

**Reply:** According to Pink’s criteria, we should ask ourselves . . .

* Am I being “led away from myself” or am I giving in to the desires of the flesh?
* Am I in union with Christ?
* Am I being *conducted along the highway of holiness*?
* Do I daily search and strive to be led by the Scriptures?