The Leading Of The Holy Spirit

Arend Remmers · John 16:13-15 · September 30, 2024



John 16:13–15

> 13 But when *he* is come, the Spirit of truth, he will guide you into all the truth: for he will not speak from himself; but whatever he will hear he will speak; and he will announce to you what is coming. 14 He will glorify me, for he will receive of mine and will announce it to you. 15 All things that the Father has are mine; on account of this I have said that he receives of mine and will announce it to you.

Romans 8:14–16

> 14 for as many as are led by the Spirit of God, *these* are sons of God. 15 For you have not received a spirit of bondage again for fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption, by which we cry, Abba, Father. 16 The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are children of God.

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One of the numerous and wonderful workings and effects of the Holy Spirit is His guidance or leading. It is a subject of which we find very little in Scripture; only four passages in the New Testament mention it.

The first to be considered is in John 16, where the Lord speaks of the Holy Spirit, who had not yet come but Who was to come after the Lord Jesus had been glorified.

- "***But when he is come, the Spirit of truth, he shall guide you into all the truth: for he shall not speak from himself; but whatsoever he shall hear he shall speak; and he will announce to you what is coming. He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine and shall announce it to you. All things that the Father has are mine; on account of this, I have said that he receives of mine and shall announce it to you.***" **(John 16:13-15)**

In John 7, there is a very important passage as to the coming of the Holy Spirit. On the last and great day of the feast of Tabernacles, verse 39 says, "*But this he said concerning the Spirit, which they that believed on him were about to receive; for the Spirit was not yet, because Jesus had not yet been glorified.*" Scripture says that the Holy Spirit could not come down from heaven before the Lord Jesus had accomplished His work on the cross of Calvary and had been glorified in heaven at the right hand of God. During His presence on earth, the Lord Jesus was the Comforter (or 'Advocate') of His disciples; he took care of them.

In Luke 22:35, He asked them, "*When I sent you without purse and scrip and sandals, did ye lack anything? And they said, Nothing.*" The Lord had taken care of them in a wonderful manner, but now they had to experience that He would leave them, which thing they did not believe. They did not enter into the purpose of God; they could not believe that their beloved Master and supposed King would be crucified and go back to heaven. However, the Lord Jesus said it had to be because if He was not crucified

and glorified, He could not send them "*another* Comforter". The Lord Jesus had been their Comforter during His presence on earth, but we now have *two* Comforters. Firstly, we have an Advocate with the Father (it is the same word in 1 John 2 and here in John 7, meaning the One who takes care of us); the Lord Jesus takes care of us with the Father, and if we have gone astray it is He who brings us back. We would never return to God when we go astray if it were not for His care as the Shepherd of His sheep and the Advocate with the Father!

But we have another Comforter who could only come down after the Lord Jesus was glorified. This passage explains why God wants us to be introduced into the things in the glory before we even come there. That is why a divine Person from the glory testifies to us of the things in the glory concerning the Lord Jesus.

The Lord Jesus had witnessed the truth of God when He was on earth. He was the revelation of God in grace and truth. Still, after He had accomplished the work of atonement and salvation and glorification of God, He would send the Holy Spirit (John 15:26). But it is also said that the Father would send Him (John 14:26), and He would even, as it is said here, come of Himself. The whole Trinity was active on our behalf in this matter.

What was the aim? "*He shall guide you into all the truth*." This is the first truth in relation to the coming of the Holy Spirit. **He introduces us to the truth concerning the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, who came down to this earth to dwell in the midst of sinners, to die for them, to be raised and glorified**. After that, the Holy Spirit came down to glorify the Lord Jesus, "f*or he shall not speak from himself; but whatsoever he shall hear he shall speak*," but hear where? In the glory. The Lord Jesus had come to reveal God in grace and truth; the Holy Spirit now came down to reveal the glory of the glorified Man.

This shows our heavenly calling. The Holy Spirit does not, in the first place, reveal things on earth (although He does so by prophecy); rather, He directs our eyes and our hearts toward the glory. What he heard in the bosom of the Father, the things which concern the Son, our beloved Lord, and the Father, He has come down to tell us about. In the epistles of Paul to the Ephesians and the Colossians especially, we are told by the Spirit (because he has inspired all these epistles), "*Things which eye has not seen, and ear not heard, and which have not come into man's heart*" (1 Cor 2:9). The Spirit has revealed them to us, and how important it is to be occupied with these truths which speak of the glory of the Lord and His assembly, which show how we are united in spirit to Him already, He being the Head in heaven.

But then the Lord continues, "*He will announce to you what is coming*." Here we have a revelation. Nobody else reveals the future to us, not our intelligence, not science, not education; the only education we can use is that of the Holy Spirit. How important it is to know this, and how good it is to be guided by the Holy Spirit, Who directs our view towards heaven. **He leads us into all the truth and reveals the things which must shortly come to pass.**

Once, I had a little outing. We went south of Dublin to Powerscourt castle, where we were reminded that one hundred and seventy years ago, a company of young men and women, most of them below the age of thirty, came together to study the word of God. They were all well-educated people, many of them theologians and lawyers, but this was not what brought them together; what brought them together was the Spirit Who occupied them with the word of God. In those days, the truth, which had been buried for centuries, came to light. There were large church organizations in different countries, but the fact that there is one body of Christ consisting only of believers had been buried for hundreds and hundreds of years. But then, this truth was recovered by the church. The presence of the Holy Spirit in and among believers had been known but hardly practically acted upon until then.

The special subject at Powerscourt was the future, and things that had in all the centuries of Christianity been only very vague came to light there. Truth as to the assembly, the body of Christ, being taken up to heaven together with the Old Testament saints, a truth unknown during many centuries, came to light there one hundred and seventy years ago through young students of Scripture who let themselves be led by the Holy Spirit. At the time, the people of Israel played no role whatsoever in the thoughts of the great churches; the church had, in their eyes, taken the place of Israel, but these Christians found in Scripture that Israel will return to their country and God will take up His dealings with that nation once more after the church has been raptured to heaven. By the Spirit alone, and trusting Scripture alone, without any theological paraphernalia, they let themselves be guided, and God brought to light truths which have been precious to many for these one hundred and seventy years. The question is, 'Are they precious to us anymore today?' May the Lord give us the same simplicity of heart as these men and women to be guided by the Spirit alone and to be led through obedience to His precious word to see the same things and enjoy them as the Lord wants us to.

- **"*For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For ye have not received a spirit of bondage again for fear, but ye have received a spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are children of God*." (Rom 8:14-16)**

The second passage does not speak about the practice of our Christian lives but characterizes a principle of Christian standing. It is not, therefore, to be understood that only those who are practically led by the Holy Spirit are really sons of God, but we have to turn the sentence to read, "*Those who are sons of God have the characteristic of being led by the Spirit*." We are sons of Abraham (Gal 3:7) by imitating the faith of Abraham, but being sons of God goes much further. What it means to be a son or daughter of God is explained in 2 Corinthians 6:16-17, "*Wherefore come out from the midst of them, and be separated, saith the Lord, and touch not what is unclean, and I will receive you; and I will be to you for a Father, and*

ye shall be to me for sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." In Ephesians 1:4-6 we read, "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ; according as he has chosen us in him before the world's foundation, that we should be holy and blameless before him in love; having marked us out beforehand for adoption through Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.*" **The word 'adoption' could also be translated as 'sonship,' for it means to be placed in the position of a son.** Once, we were enemies of God, sinners, without God and hope in this world, but by grace, we have been marked out beforehand in Christ to be in the place of sonship, and not for our blessing only, but for the joy and glory of God the Father.

What, then, is the difference between a child of God and a son or daughter of God? - Children of God are those who are born of God (in this connection, 'child' is never used in the singular; it is always in the plural). This is a special part of John's truth. He speaks of the new birth in chapter 3 of his Gospel, he speaks of being born of God in John 1:11-12, and then he says those who are born anew of God are children of God. This means, in John's language, that we are partakers *of the same nature*. It is the closest relationship described in Scripture: God is our Father, and we are His children.

Paul, it is true, also speaks of us as children of God in the following verses, but his special line of truth is our being placed in the 'official position' of sonship or adoption. The Lord Jesus has the pre-eminence before God the Father, according to Whose purpose we have by grace been placed in that position with the Lord Jesus. He is the Firstborn, but we are all in this position of sons for the glory and joy of the Father. There is thus a difference between being children of God and being sons of God, although we are both. These expressions show us the manifold wisdom of God and the wonderful glory He has lavished on us that we are placed in such a relationship and position. Those who are sons of God, who are in this position of adoption, have the privilege of being led, not by law or by their own will, but by the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit also testifies that we are children of God, "*The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are children of God*." So Paul uses both expressions, children of God and sons of God, but his line is more the special position of sons and daughters of God. As such, we have the privilege of being guided by the Holy Spirit in accordance with this wonderful position. Do we not have to confess how little we are in the good of being placed by God before Himself as His sons and daughters? As we walk through this world, are we conscious of the fact that we are sons and daughters of God? What a worthy and glorious position to be in.

"*Our life is hidden with Christ in God*" (Col 3:3). The world does not know us, and nobody can see this life from the outside, but we know we have it. We have a wonderful, precious possession in ourselves to live according to it. God has given us His own Spirit to lead us in accordance with this high and wonderful position He has given to us.

- **"*For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these things are opposed one to the other, that ye should not do those things which ye desire; but if the Spirit leads ye, ye are not under the law*." (Gal 5:17-18)**

The Spirit is in strongest contrast to the law. As Christians, we have the Spirit for our guidance here on earth; Israel was under the law, and the Rabbis found 613 commandments in the Old Testament. The flesh loves to have prescripts to follow. If you know you have to do this or that, you can proudly say, as the man in Matthew 19:20, "*All these have I kept*." It is the tendency of the flesh, even in the Christian. That is why Judaizers found such fertile soil when they reintroduced the law, saying, 'If you keep the law, you are on a higher level than if you only believe the plain gospel of the Saviour.' But Paul says, "If the Spirit leads ye, ye are not under the law." In other words, you need no law because the Spirit is a much better guide. He is the only right guide for those who are born again.

We have in ourselves two different powers, the old nature (the flesh) and the Spirit, and these two are opposed to each other, "*The flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh*." The flesh will *never* like the guidance of the Spirit, a very important thing to realize. For besides new life, we still have the flesh, the old and evil nature (the old man, our standing before conversion, has been taken away, but the sinful flesh remains), the power, and the guidance of the new life being the Holy Spirit. Flesh and Spirit are opposed to each other. Whenever we wish to be guided by the Spirit to fulfill the will of the Lord, there is the flesh that says 'No.' **Whenever we are feeble and tend to follow our flesh, there is the Spirit Who says, "Do not do that. Follow the Lord"**. So whatever we do, whether we are liable to sin or whether we try to live in the new life as guided by the Spirit, there is always a power in us opposite to it; there is always this internal controversy, "*that ye should not do those things which ye desire*."

It is very important to realize we do not have to fight against the flesh in ourselves but only to follow the guidance of the Spirit. Then, we will be on the right path. That is the teaching in this passage. We need no carnal precepts; we do not need the law which was given to Israel on Mount Sinai. What we need is the Spirit and the Word of God to keep us on the right pathway.

It is much easier for the flesh to follow precepts because it can say, "I have fulfilled them all, and therefore I can give myself a pat on the back." Life under the guidance of the Spirit is insupportable for the flesh; it will not accept it. Humanly speaking, it is more complicated and difficult because we always have to ask God, 'What is Your will?" This is the attitude which the Lord desires in us. He wants us to start our day every morning by asking Him, 'Show me Your way.' This will keep us in real dependence on Him. It is what the Lord desires, and it is the desire for a new nature. The new nature does not want to act independently of the Lord; the Holy Spirit in us wants to direct us according to the will of the Lord, and consequently, we need no human precepts, only His perfect divine guidance, which is always in accordance with the word of God. John 16:13-15, Romans 8:14-16 and Galatians 5:17-18 are the three

portions in the New Testament that doctrinally inform us about the guidance of the Holy Spirit. There is a further passage that gives us a practical demonstration in Luke 4.

- **"*But Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, forty days, tempted of the devil*" (Luke 4:1)**

As far as I can see, we have here the only passage in which the verb "to guide" or "to lead" is used practically in relation to the Spirit and a human being. It is very beautiful to see that it is in the Gospel of Luke, where the Lord Jesus is presented to us as the perfect Man. When He began His public ministry, which ended at the cross of Calvary, it is said that not only was He led by the Spirit but that He was full of the Spirit. We have to be encouraged to be filled with the Spirit (Eph 5:18, etc.), but here is One who was *always* full of the Spirit. He knew only one aim, as He said in John 4:34, "*My meat is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work*," of which all His life is the perfect example. In His heart, there were no side thoughts, no self-will, no independence, and no sin, and so He was full of the Holy Spirit. **The Holy Spirit characterized all His thoughts, His feelings, His words, and His works.** He was the only one of whom the Bible says that The Spirit led him, and we see here at the beginning that it was not a very pleasant pathway that He had to follow.

When the Spirit led the Lord Jesus into the desert, He was to be tempted by Satan for forty days. What a wonderful example we have in Him, the perfect Man! If you want to know how a Christian has to walk, study the life of the Lord Jesus in the Gospels and the epistles (for it is mentioned here and there). He is our perfect example, according to which the Spirit wants to guide us. He practically fulfilled what is doctrinally said of us in Galatians 4:6; for He could always say, "*Abba, Father*," and He did so in Mark 14:36. We can now walk in His footsteps as sons, guided by the Spirit, saying, "Abba Father."

Although He fulfilled the law, He was not *guided* by it, for The Spirit guided him. He is our example.

The guidance of the Spirit is only one of many precious results of His coming to dwell in believers. May the Lord help us to be more and more guided by Him and His Spirit alone.

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