

Thus far in our series of sermons on the Person and work of the Spirit we've considered His work in conversion, indwelling, and filling, this brings us this week to the Spirit's Work in leading.

I fear fewer aspects of the Spirit's work is more misunderstood than the leading of the Holy Spirit. What does it mean to be Spirit-led? Are all Christians Spirit-led? What is our responsibility in being Spirit-led? How does a person know whether or not they are led by the Spirit?

Thus, it's to questions like this we now turn, as we consider our theme—The Leading of the Holy Spirit—and we shall consider our topic under two broad questions: How does the Spirit lead us, and, Why does the Spirit lead us?

I. How Does the Spirit Lead us?

II. Why Does the Spirit Lead us?

I. How Does the Spirit Lead us?

1. V18—"But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law"—before I go any further, let me say a few words about the phrase "you are not under the law."
2. Notice there are only two types of people—there are those who are led by the Spirit and those under the law.
3. It's impossible to be both—we are all by nature under the law, and by God's grace, we are led by the Holy Spirit.
4. Thus, the question becomes, What does it mean to be "under the law?" Well, it simply means, you are under the law as a broken covenant of works.
5. You are still in Adam and condemned by the law. There are in fact only two types of people—those in Adam and those in Christ.
6. Those in Adam are under the law, and those in Christ are members of the NC—and every NC member has the Spirit.
7. Perhaps I can put it this way—every NC member, or every Christian without exception, has the Spirit and is led by the Spirit.
8. This was typified in the OC, as the Spirit is described as leading OC Israel (as a whole) through the wilderness.
9. Isa.63:11-14—"Where is He who brought them up out of the sea? Where is He who put His Holy Spirit within them, who led them by the right hand of Moses? Who led them through the deep. As a beast goes down into the valley, and the Spirit of the LORD causes him to rest, so You lead Your people, to make Yourself a glorious name."
10. Just as God led the nation of Israel by a pillar of cloud and fire, so He leads every NC member by His Spirit.
11. Thus, the question becomes, How does the Holy Spirit lead every NC member through the wilderness of this world.
12. (1) He leads us mediately—by this I mean, the Holy Spirit leads us by and through the mediation of the word.
13. The Holy Spirit always and only leads God's people with the word—He causes us to understand and follow the word.
14. Ps.43:3—"Oh, send out Your light and Your truth! Let them lead me"—by light is meant the illuminating work of the Spirit and by truth is meant Scripture.
15. David knew He needed both—He needed the truth but He also needed light—or He needed the Spirit to lead Him by the truth.
16. Jn.16:13—"However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth"—the truth of Scripture.
17. Now, it's true this promise has a particular application for the apostles, but it also has a wider application for all Christians.

18. The Holy Spirit guides or leads us into all truth—He enables us to understand, believe, cherish, and obey the word.
19. This is important because, oftentimes you hear Christians saying, the Spirit is leading them to act contrary to Scripture.
20. For example, a lady might say—"I believe the Spirit is leading me to become a pastor" even though Scripture forbids it.
21. Or else, someone says—"The Spirit is leading me to leave my wife and marry another because I'm not happy."
22. Well obviously, brethren, regardless of what these people felt in their hearts, it was not the leading of the Spirit.
23. The Spirit leads or guides us into all truth—He always leads us into the path of the righteous commands of God.
24. Now, this doesn't mean the Spirit only leads us when we are reading, memorizing, meditating, or hearing the Scriptures.
25. But it does mean, the Holy Spirit always and only leads us in harmony to or conjunction with the Holy Scriptures (He leads us in, with, by, and through the word).
26. (2) He leads us rationally—by this I mean, the Spirit works upon us as rational creatures and not stones or rocks.
27. George Smeaton—"The Spirit which is in Christ without measure, is in them by measure as a Spirit of life; not moving the mind as a stone, or as a wheel, by mere power, but according to the new nature which has been created and formed in it."
28. Thus, we mustn't confuse the Spirit's leading with dragging, as if we were only a tree that's dragged from the forest.
29. But instead, the Spirit works upon the soul, with the word, causing the soul to comply with His gracious leading.
30. Thus, while the Spirit leads us, we are far from passive in the process—the Spirit moves us to follow the word.
31. Perhaps another way of saying this would be—while the Spirit leads us we are responsible to be led by the Spirit.
32. Gal.5:16—"Walk by the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh...But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law."
33. In other words, walking by the Spirit and being led by the Spirit are not two entirely different ideas or concepts.
34. They describe the same thing from two different perspectives—one from the divine side the other from the human.
35. Phil.2:12-13—"Work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure."
36. The Holy Spirit works in us, not only causing us to will but also to do for His good pleasure—He works in, we work out.
37. Thus, the leading of the Holy Spirit is more than mere impressions—it's not merely feeling the Spirit's leading.
38. But the Spirit teaches our minds, warms our hearts, and effectually enables us to walk in a way pleasing to God.
39. Ps.32:8-9—"I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye upon you."
40. This is how the Holy Spirit leads us—He teaches us the Word of God and enables us to walk within that way.
41. By the way, notice WHY God leads us—"I will guide you with My eye upon you"—that is, because I love you!
42. He never takes His eyes off us! He watches us every day and night! His leading is an expression of His loving!
43. (3) He leads us continually—by this I mean, the Holy Spirit leads us from conversion to the very shore of heaven.

44. He doesn't begin to lead us only to leave us, but every person He indwells, He continues to lead to the very end.
45. I fear many Christians are confused on this point—they think the Spirit leads them only in making major decisions.
46. Let's say you're trying to determine what school to attend, what job to apply for, or what lady to pursue in marriage.
47. Surely, we need the Holy Spirit's leading in these decisions, and it's true brethren, the Spirit helps us in these decisions.
48. But the leading that Paul describes in our text, is a leading that takes place all the time—the Spirit is always leading us.
49. Gal.5:18 (literally)—"But if you are being led by the Spirit"—it's a continual leading that happens all day long.
50. Thus, the Holy Spirit leads us through this world, filled with dangers and difficulties, bringing us to our eternal rest.
51. No person indwelt by the Spirit and thus led by the Spirit, will die in this wilderness and miss the Promise Land.
52. Though the Holy Spirit can be grieved or quenched, He will never ultimately leave us to ourselves to find our way home.
53. George Smeaton—"The grand security for the final perseverance of the saints is the leading of the Spirit. The Spirit ever leads and never departs from the soul that He has once occupied."

II. Why Does the Spirit Lead us?

1. Here I want to answer the question—What does the Holy Spirit lead us to do—or, Why does the Spirit lead us?
2. (1) The Spirit leads us to mortify the deeds of the body, Rom.8:13-14—"If you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God."
3. Notice, putting to death the deeds of the body and being led by the Spirit are the same things—in other words, the Spirit leads us to mortify the deeds of the body.
4. Thus, the question becomes—What does it mean to put to death the deeds of the body? Well, let me suggest we largely find the answer in Galatians 5:17.
5. Gal.5:17—"For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish."
6. By "Spirit" is meant the Holy Spirit and "flesh" is meant our remaining corruption—these are in opposition to each other.
7. They "lust" against each other—by "lust" is meant "desire"—the desires of the Spirit and our flesh are in opposition.
8. But why does the Spirit oppose the lust or desires of the flesh—"so that you do not do the things that you wish (desire)."
9. This phrase has been understood differently by good men—I suggest Paul basically means—the Spirit keeps us from obeying the desire of our flesh.
10. Gal.5:16—"I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust (desire) of the flesh"—the Spirit keeps us from doing what the flesh desires.
11. Brethren, there is not a single person present who fully understands the potential evil of our remaining corruption.
12. Left to ourselves our flesh would dominate us and bring us back into captivity—it's the Spirit who ensures this will never happen.
13. The Spirit enables us to hate our remaining corruption, to fight against it, to resist it, to starve it, and not satisfy it.
14. Thus, the Spirit strives against our flesh, by empowering and enabling our spirit, to mortify the deeds of the flesh.

15. This is what being Spirit-led entails! To have the Holy Spirit within us, waging war against our remaining corruption.
16. Oh brethren, I know you are aware of this warfare within—the Holy Spirit causing you to hate and mourn your sin.
17. The Holy Spirit enabling you to put to death the deeds of the body, largely keeping your flesh from scandalous sin.
18. (2) The Spirit leads us to obey or fulfill the law of God, Rom.8:4—"that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."
19. There are two ways "the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us"—the first is in our justification, in which Christ's perfect righteousness is imputed to our account.
20. But there is a second way, and it's likely the primary meaning of Rom.8:4—the Holy Spirit writes the righteous law across our hearts and enables us to walk in agreement to that law.
21. It's for this reason Paul adds—"who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit"—that is, we fulfill the righteousness of the law, from the heart, as we are led by the Spirit.
22. In other words, those who walk after the Spirit (who walk by the Spirit or who are led by the Spirit) fulfill the righteousness of the law.
23. This is another way of saying—the Holy Spirit leads us to obey the law, from the heart, fulfilling its righteous requirement.
24. Ezek.36:26-27—"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them."
25. The Spirit works upon and within our spirit to cause or enable us to walk in harmony to God's righteous commands.
26. Now, don't forget what we've learned—the Spirit doesn't cause us to walk in His commands against our will (desire).
27. But He illuminates our spiritual eyes to see the beauty and benefit of obedience to God and to His righteous law.
28. The Holy Spirit enables us to see the beauty of true holiness, and He enables us to delight in that law from the heart.
29. Furthermore, He enables us to walk in agreement to God's law—He leads us in the path of holy and righteous living.
30. Thus, we learn, one way we can know whether or not we are Spirit-led—Are we obeying the law from the heart?
31. There have been many well-meaning Christians who have terribly misunderstood Gal.5:18—"If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law."
32. There are some who suggest, because Christians are now Spirit-led, they have no relation to God's law at all.
33. Obeying the law was something for OT people—they had to obey the law—but NT Christians are Spirit-led.
34. But my friends, when Paul says we are not under the law, as I've already said, means we are not condemned by the law.
35. The law says nothing to me as a broken covenant—it no longer condemns me—it no longer commands me outside of Christ.
36. But this doesn't mean I don't have anything to do with the law—but that my relationship to the law has changed.
37. The law has been written in my heart, and I now love the law, desire to obey it, and have power to walk in it.
38. Why is that? Why do I now love the law, desire to obey it, and have power to comply with in, from the heart?
39. It's because the Spirit now lives within my heart! And He leads me to fulfill the righteous requirements of that law!
40. This is WHY the Holy Spirit leads us—He causes us to love God's law and gives us power to walk in that law.

41. (3) The Spirit leads us to believe and cherish the gospel, Jn.16:13—"When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth...He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you."
42. That is, the Holy Spirit would reveal to them the truth about Christ—He makes known His person and His work.
43. Ps.23:2—"He leads me beside the still waters"—that is, Christ as the Good Shepherd, by His Spirit, leads His sheep.
44. And He leads them beside the "still waters"—that is, He leads them to drink from the waters of gospel grace and peace.
45. The Spirit leads us again and again to the cross, where we receive fresh assurance, cleansing, and encouragement.
46. The Spirit leads us, through the Scripture, to behold the beauty and glory of Christ, and His perfect atoning work.
47. This is ultimately WHY we fight against the flesh, and this is WHY we obey the law of God—because of Christ!
48. A.W. Pink—"Are we conscious of our filth and guilt? The Spirit leads us to the blood of Christ. Are we deeply tried and oppressed? The Spirit leads unto Him who is able to support the tempted. Are we mourning our emptiness and barrenness? The Spirit leads to the One in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. It is the special office of the Spirit to take of the things of Christ and show them to us."
49. Exhortation 1—Let us pray for the Spirit's leading, Ps.25:4-5—"Show me Your ways, O LORD; teach me Your paths. Lead me in Your truth and teach me" Ps.143:10—"Teach me to do Your will, for You are my God; let Your good Spirit lead me on level ground." Matt.6:13—"And do not lead us into temptation but deliver us from the evil one."
50. Oh brethren, what a glorious privilege we have—to ask God to lead us in His truth and be delivered from evil.
51. Remember, this is a benefit or privilege for every child of God, thus let us ask our Heavenly Father for the Spirit.
52. Exhortation 2—Let us submit to the Spirit's leading—or else, in the words of Gal.5:16—"Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh."
53. What does it mean to "walk in (by) the Spirit," but to walk conscious of our need for the Holy Spirit's leading!
54. To "walk by the Holy Spirit" entails living every day, moment by moment, dependent upon the Spirit's leading!
55. It entails submission to the Spirit's teaching and prompting, as He shows us the truth of Christ and His commands.
56. Exhortation 3—Let us thank God for the Spirit's leading—being Spirit-led is a universal blessing of the NC.
57. As I've already said, every Christian has the Spirit and is led by the Spirit—this is a family reality or a family blessing.
58. Thus, it's not prideful to describe yourself as Spirit-led—in fact, it's actually an open confession of your weakness.
59. I need to be Spirit-led, for left to myself I will never make it through the wilderness of this world into the Promise Land.
60. O I pray, that God would encourage us with the great truth—"as many as are led by the Spirit, these are the sons of God!"
61. That our loving Father and gracious Savior, has given to us the Holy Spirit to lead His people all the way to heaven!
62. Hymn—"All the way my Savior leads me – O the fullness of His love! Perfect rest to me is promised, in my Father's house above: when my spirit, clothed immortal, wings its flight to realms of day, this my song through endless ages: Jesus led me all the way."