

## Led by the Spirit of God

Romans 8:14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.  
Sunday, March 29, 2020 at The First Congregational Church of Marshalltown, Iowa

Introduction: I can imagine that, centuries ago, a parent who was part of the fledgling nation of Israel, en route to the Promised Land, could show the family the pillar of cloud by night and the pillar of fire by day. It would be so easy to believe that God was leading them, because they could "see" Him. Now it is not so easy. There is no pillar of either cloud or fire before us, but we cherish the notion that God leads us. Proverbs tells us that He shall direct our paths. (3:5-6). So how does He do that?

The Holy Spirit can lead several ways. There are intuition and dreams, but we can be easily confused. There is the wisdom of Scripture, and the counsel of the Spirit will never violate the authority of Scripture. There is the counsel of wise friends, for the Spirit can speak through people. Today I want to look at a couple of thoughts connected with this verse about people being led by the Spirit of God are children of God. I believe it involves a sense of debt and a rejection of fear. This is what I mean.

The Holy Spirit chooses to lead us.

The word translated "to lead" could also mean to bring, to drive or to carry. More importantly, it is in the passive voice. We don't beg, force or coerce the Holy Spirit to lead us. We can choose to co-operate, but the Holy Spirit has already chosen to lead us. The passage here gives us a couple of hints as to how that feels.

the sense of debt

The first hint is a sense of debt that we owe to do what is right. Now, I know that many people are overburdened with an unwarranted sense of guilt, and the Scriptures tell us "that there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1), we find in the text that we are debtors against living for the flesh—that is, we should have a sense of obligation toward righteousness. The word for "debtor" is also in Luke's gospel (13:4), where Jesus is asked about the people who died when a tower fell. His response; "do you think that they were *worse sinners* than all the other men who dwelt in Jerusalem?" The phrase "worse sinner" is the same word translated "debtors" in Romans. It means "one who owes a moral obligation, an offender, a delinquent." There should be an urgency about doing what is right in the heart of someone being led by the Holy Spirit.

The Book of Philippians puts it this way (2:12-13): "Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence,

work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure." The Holy Spirit's leading involves us learning what is God's will and desiring to do it. This involves an urgency, a sense of indebtedness, to do what is right.

the rejection of fear

Now a sense of debt to righteousness may have a certain negative feel to it, but the text just after our key verse gives us another hint of the Holy Spirit's leadership in our lives: it is the rejection of fear. The next three verses of our text in Romans (8:15-17) reads: "For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father.' The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs-heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. Fear is a natural part of life, but the Holy Spirit's leading will not lead us to walk in fear, but in a confidence in a holy and just God (so we need to fear sin) but a God who is our Father and who accepts us as part of His people because of Christ. In general, fear-based decisions are questionable when it come to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Application: Decision making should involve two questions; do I do this out of a sense of debt to what is right, or do I do this out of a sense of fear? The first is a good motivation, the second is not so good. These questions, based on the passage we've considered, can give you hints of the Holy Spirit's leading in your life. The fact that a follower of Christ has an interest in being led by the Holy Spirit can be a hint that he/she is being led by the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion

The Holy Spirit does lead the follower of Christ, often without the follower being fully aware of it. Hints of the leading can include an sense of debt to righteousness and a rejection of fear-based decision making. The Holy Spirit leads in many ways, and these are just a few thoughts about those many ways.