

Led by the Spirit

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Date: 23 October 2022

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[0 : 00] So just for a few minutes this evening, I want to remind ourselves of who we are as Christians. We're doing this series on walking on the Holy Spirit and we're coming this evening to the theme briefly of being led by the Spirit of God. God. We've seen lots of different aspects of the life or the person of the Spirit. But what we're going to do tonight is think about our being led by the Spirit.

Which is actually very critical because Paul says here in Romans. In verse nine of chapter eight. Where we read. You have are not in the flesh. But in the spirit of indeed.

The Spirit of God dwells on you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. So it's as critical and as crucial as that, that every one of you and me, as we claim to be Christians, are people who walk in the Spirit, who are led by the Spirit of God. And we are going to look at that because that is what's spoken of in these verses that we've been reading this evening. Verse 14, what it says for all who are led by the Spirit, our sons of God.

And so being led by the Spirit is a really important thing for us. It's you're a Christian, it's something, it's your reality and it's mine. That our life's journey from this moment on and from the past and the future is a journey that is led by God's. Spirit, your life and my life. He's got the map.

He knows where he's taking you, how to get there, and he knows that the journey itself matters and that the destination is sure. So all of these things are really important for every single one of us as Christians. Your life is this great identity and this great meaning, because you're being led by the Spirit and God is intimately involved in your life and my life as a Christian. It's a great truth and it's a really significant truth. What does it mean to be led by the Spirit?

[2 : 06] I'm just going to say two things and I'm going to try and see them briefly. The first is that really knowing God is the journey itself. Being led by the Spirit is knowing God. And that is the journey we're on. And we are called as Christians to keep in step with the Spirit on this journey with God.

So when we're told that we're being led by the Spirit and we're walking in the Spirit, it's a reminder to us that we are on a journey. Life is a journey. It starts and it ends. But the whole Bible reminds us that as Christians, to be redeemed and to be rescued is to live with and to live for God. In other words, he is the journey for us.

He is the goal of our existence. He's our motivation. He's a reason for not giving up the Christian life. It's so not just about church. It's so much more.

allencompassing that our lives are our lives are led by the Spirit. He leads us into the company and to the fellowship of God. We've seen that as the core truth of First John that we've been looking at as well in our morning worship, that we are people who are, by the Spirit, led into God's presence on a daily basis. This chapter reminds us that we are adopted into God's family born from above. A really significant and important truth in the Greco Roman world had such significance that a son would be a child would be adopted to perpetuate the family name and to inherit everything that came from the family.

And we are adopted into God's family and we're brought from death to life. We are given divinely gifted rights to live through Jesus Christ. We are people who are forgiven and loved. I just want to stop there for a minute because it's very easy to let that slip off the tongue. Whatever happens tonight in your life and in mine, you're forgiven and you're loved by God.

[4 : 20] That's a great and significant and important truth that if you are to die tonight, you are forgiven and you're loved by the God that you go and meet. And that is a great truth for us. We have this great identity and this great guarantee of sharing in the Trinitarian family life. If you look at the passage we read, if you picked out something, you would find it the Father's mentioned, the Son's mentioned, the Spirits mentioned. It's a great trinitarian smorgasbord of joy that we have in living

this life with Jesus.

We are adopted and we can call God, as we are told in verse 15, the spirit of adoption of sons by whom we cry Abba, Father. So in this journey that we have where we are led by the Spirit, we're led into this place where we call God, abba, Father, we have this special, precious relationship where the separation between ourselves and God is gone and there's closeness and strength and protection. So this word, this calling of God, abba Father, it's a childlike phrase. Now, when I use that, I don't mean it's childish and I don't mean it's babyish. I think there's a lot of misconceptions about the word abba being used here.

It's often sometimes been translated daddy or Papa, but I don't think that's right. Many commentators would think that that is not necessarily the case. But it's a word that denotes closeness and intimacy. It's childlike, but it's one that even a grown up would use of their dad as well. So it's not childish.

Jesus uses it in Mark 14:36 when he's in the garden and he's facing this great cup of wrath and he says, abba, Father, if you can take this cup from me. So there's that great sense of respect, but also familiarity in this phrase.

We're not afraid of him. But with our fears, we go to Him with our fears. It is a significant name. And four times in these short verses versus 14 to 17, the word child is used or son is used. And there's not just that great closeness that being led by the Spirit brings us into this relationship with God as our father, the best relationship that we can imagine in many ways, where there's a strong relationship between the child and parent, we can put and focus that on a relationship with God, even in the absence of that.

[7 : 18] And if you have had a bad relationship with your parents, it's the reality of what you long for. You find in Jesus Christ the shadow of a deeper reality. It's ingrained in our human consciousness, this desire to be in relationship with the Father. And we find, as we do so on this journey, when we're led by the Spirit, we cry out to Him. We cry out to him abba.

Father. We cry out for guidance, for help, for his answers to our needs before Him. And there's a whole so there's a whole recalibration that we go to Him first. We're in this journey with Him and we're being led by the Spirit into his presence. So we make these cries.

And I think that comes out sharpness. As it does in the example of Jesus in many ways. Comes out sharpest in our bad circumstances. When things are difficult. We might question.

We might be scared. But we run to Him. Not from Him. And we're trusting in Him rather than in our circumstances. Even where we are being led.

Where we wouldn't want to go in the hardest of circumstances. But we trust and we believe and we accept who he is. It's the way we are with our parents as children in many ways. I always remember on a Saturday when a dad would take us out in the car around Arthur's seat. It's great for all these days, we'd trip round Arthur seat, no end of expense spared in our family for a good day out.

[8 : 56] And there was the good thing about it was there was a Mr Whippy ice cream van at the top car park and we stopped there and had a Mr Whippy on a Saturday afternoon. But on the way up Arthur Seat and the way round back Arthur Seat, there are two very small doors on into the hillside. I know if you ever noticed them, very small. And my dad every time would say, that's where the little people live. They live under the hill.

And you believed it. You believed it because your dad I always waited to see the little people coming out of these doors and they never did. But, you know, there's a sense of innocent belief in what was being said and, well, that was just a lie with God. It's different, obviously, isn't it? Because he's telling us the truth.

And we believe in him because there's that trust. And we're led by the Spirit into believing and we want him to be with us in difficult times. It's like Joe or my boy Joe would hate to go to the dentist. He wouldn't go to the dentist unless I went not just with him but sat in the dentist room when he was being seen to, which was horrible as a parent and probably not great for him either. But we are guided and led and in this relationship, this intimate yet respectful relationship with her father and we recognize that being led by the Spirit is indeed simply being in the presence of God.

But secondly, and briefly as well, we see that being led in the Spirit means that we have a responsibility to keep in step with the Spirit in our lives. We have to do that. For all we're told in verse 14 who are led by the Spirit, sons are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back in fear but you've received a spirit of adoption. And it's also spoken of in Galatians five.

I'm not going to speak about that because that's the fruit of the Spirit and we're going to look at that next week. But also there's this whole recognition in verse four that we are to be those who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. And so we have this incredible responsibility to know that the Spirit of God helps us to keep in step with Himself. He enlightens us, he leads us, he persuades us, he empowers us. And we're never alone in that walk of faith even in the growing pains of Christianity the tears and the confusion and the discovery and the mistakes and the maturing, he leads us.

[11 : 42] And he leads us into the company of the Father by transforming us into his likeness. So keeping in step with the Spirit has a couple of aspects to it that are important. The first is getting our minds into gear. It's important to get our minds into gear. See verse five of this section.

Those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh. Those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. There's always two ways to go and go the way of the flesh, way of sinful thinking, or we can go the way of the Spirit. And the section is all about this internal, raging battle that we often have between our remaining sinful desires and the walk of the Spirit. The moment you come to faith stirs up a great tension, a wild tension within us because the remaining sinful nature, this body of death, battles against the life of the Spirit of God in us.

And that's a great sign if you struggle with these things. But it's a great sign that God is working in your heart when there's this battle between your own desires and what this journey with God through the Spirit, wants us to follow. And so we're to set what we have, this responsibility to set our minds on what the spirits, what the spirit desires, not what we're tempted to sinfully prefer. And that's a daily task. It will be a daily decision that we make, whether we set our minds and our thinking on what God wants for us or the way we're going to go.

Because sometimes we have this selfprayer that we make, maybe unintentionally and not consciously to myself, hallowed be my name, it's my life, my will be done, my opinion that matters. I'll provide for myself. I'll reject anyone who does me anything wrong. And if temptation tastes good and I can get away with it, bring it on, because it's all about me. Amen.

Now that's extreme. And we might not think that consciously, but that is often the battle that we face in our lives, setting our minds either on what God wants for us on this journey and what the Spirit leads us into, or battling against the Spirit and satisfying our own sinful desires. So we get our minds in gear and then we recognize and know briefly the way itself, the way of company with God. Very quickly, I'm going to say four things, okay? Very quick, I promise.

[14 : 47] The first is it's a straightway. David mentioned this morning about not being a hypocrite, about not being crooked as a Christian. But it's a straight away. It's a way of holiness. It's the Holy Spirit that we have to keep in step with.

Proverbs 36:0s in all your ways, submit to the Lord, he will meet your path straight. And that just means that we're not moving away from closeness to God. We are keeping close to Him. Hebrews 12:13 speaks about making our paths level as we follow Him and serve Him. So we remind ourselves that the Christian walk in fellowship with God's a straight way.

In other words. It's a way of truth, it's a way of purity. And it's not crooked, it's not hypocritical. We're not one thing in public and another thing in private, but we live in this way. Our word is our bond. We are truthful in all that we are. So straight away, this being led by the Spirit, he doesn't lead us a crooked way, he leads us a straight way. But circulates also a walk of death. Not very pleasant. It's a walk of death.

Verse 13 for if you live according to the flesh, you will die. But if you live by the Spirit, you put to death the deeds of the body and you will live. So there's a sense in which on this what we're putting to death, that remaining sinful nature within us because we're not indebted to that life. It's done nothing for us. We owe nothing.

[16 : 35] It's to Christ. We owe everything. It's to Christ that we're indebted. Verse twelve brothers, we are debtors not to the flesh to live according to the flesh, but rather we are indebted to Jesus to follow him. As again, as we were reminded this morning, not out of legalism, not out of duty, but out of great and glorious love.

So we have this duty to put to death the sinful nature within this great old word that we don't use very much mortification.

It's putting to death. It's what we do as Christians, what we should do. It's far too easily ditched, I think, from our experience. There's great words in Colossians as well, where we're reminded of that

same truth. Colossians cleavers.

I put to death therefore, what is earthly in your sexual immorality, the impurity, passion, evil, desire, cottons, which is idolatry on account of all these things. The wrath of God is coming, and these you once walked when you were living in them, but now you must put away your language. Wrath, malice landed up sea talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another. Saying that you put off the old self with its practices.

It's very practical and it's a real mortification. We are putting to death these things by the power of the Spirit in our lives. He gives us that strength. And these things are there in the passage in one John which we looked at last week, spoke about Cain and the way he treated his brother Abel. And the interesting thing God says of Cain, Cain sin was crouching at your door.

[18 : 23] We can't let it crouch at our door. We can't let it just stay there. We need to put it to death because it's a dreadful thing. We need to allow the beauty of his life on this journey as we're led by the Spirit into the darkness of our hearts. It's not about the sinfulness of others, it's about the ugliness of our own self-centeredness and keeping God out of certain areas of our lives.

And maybe, like you, like me, you have to admit that sometimes we don't pray these things out because we don't want them out. And yet this walk of death is being led by the Spirit and relying on the Spirit to give us the strength and the courage to put these things to death. Straight paths. A walk of death. It's obviously it's a walk of life as well.

In verse six it speaks about the mind set on the flesh is death, but to the mind on the Spirit is life and peace, great. We walk with the presence of God, fellowship with God, by the power of the Spirit. It's abundant and satisfying life. We are hearing no condemnation as we were told. That the beginning of that chapter.

True freedom, life, peace and glory walk through Sam 23. Just to think about that as you consider that lovely picture of the life that comes from following and relying on the Spirit, we lack no good thing he restores our soul. We're in paths of righteousness. Even in darkness, we're opposed by enemies. He is with us in love and provision and blessing and goodness and mercy.

We spend much time grumbling. And yet we encourage to remember that we have this recognition and this truth that if we are led by the Spirit, we are walking in life, we are not walking in death. And we're walking a straight away. And the last thing is we're walking together in this. It's not an isolated path we walk.

[20 : 37] We walk this walk together. We walk it with our brothers and sisters from different nations. We walk with our own people here. We work with those in our church plants. We walk with our families and our children.

And Romans 14:13 says don't put a stumbling block in anyone else's way on this walk. And I think that's a great important reality. As we are led by the Spirit, we walk together. We walk in unison because we have one Lord and one God and we have fellowship with one Father. So as we close. I think as we open our eyes more and more to the privilege and to the beauty and to the victory of being led by the Spirit. I don't think there's any telling how much glory God will get in our lives. How powerful the effect of our testimony will be to a watching world because we'll be a group of people walking the opposite way to the world in which we live. That's a very powerful reality. You ever been in a crowd?

It's very hard to walk the other way as an individual. Even if you do as an individual, it's quite a powerful thing. But when there's a group of you walking the opposite way to a crowd that's something that is acknowledged and noticed and seen. And that's how we are to live our lives. To be led by the Spirit.

It will lead us to the lost who need also to know the fellowship with a father so they can cry a FA father. We're not just to be selfish in that, far from it. We're to be openhearted as we long for others to know the Christ that we know and that others will be led by the Spirit in the way that we are being led. And that should be visible our fellowship with God. And we seek forgiveness when we seek to hide that.

[22 : 43] And it's easy for us again, as we were reminded this morning to do so. Let's pray. Father God, we ask and pray that you help us to know what it means to be led by the Spirit. We would look at this past and take longer over it in our own homes just to meditate on its truth, to think through the challenges, the seriousness of what it said, yet the joy of what I said, the amazing gift of salvation that is ours, the gift of the Spirit and this responsibility. We have to cooperate with the Spirit to partner with the Spirit, to recognize the beauty and the privilege of fellowship with the

Father, which is our deepest longing that we are created to enjoy.

And may we do so boldly and courageously. May we mortify our sinful flesh. May we not just take the weekend off and take the night off and feel that we deserve a sinful activity just to keep us going. But we will see it in the cancer as danger, that it is the darkness and the death that it brings, that it doesn't satisfy us, that it doesn't bring us closer to joy and to hope, but it leaves us nasty and empty and bitter and selfish and broken. Lord, keep us close to you.

We pray. Help us to be led by the Spirit and cry Abba Father and cry out for your closeness and your guidance and your help and your fellowship. And know that in our experience and encourage one another in that. We pray. Thank you for what we've heard this evening.

We pray that many people in Winchburgh will cry, abba Father will come to know Jesus. We pray for our brothers and sisters who are in the city, but maybe don't feel part of the Christian community or feel in a different culture and a different way, struggling and battling. Bless them and bless us as we seek to be bound together with them. Help us be open and honest and considerate and remember the great blessing they are here, but also maybe as they return at different times in their lives to their own nations, that they will bring great light and great gospel truth there and maybe no greater fellowship than they've known here. But, Lord, what we know is happening in different parts of the world in terms of blessing, we pray for here, we long for here.

We don't want to make this a Christian Ice age. We don't want to make that presumption. We pray that many people will be saved. Hear our prayers as we cry out to you, and that we would see many people coming to the front of the church here to be baptized for the first time because they have never heard the Gospel and never had the privilege of being brought up in a covenant family or being baptized a child. So, Lord, we long for these things and we pray for them.

[25 : 51] And we ask that we would see them in our lifetime in ways that we'd sustain and encourage and broaden our hope and our focus on you. In Jesus name, amen.