

Be Prepared to Be Foolish



How to Be Led by the Holy Spirit (Part 7)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again sharing with you precious insights out of Scripture that have made the difference between success and failure in my life and can do the same in yours.

This week I'm continuing with the theme which I commenced last week, "How to be Led by the Holy Spirit." Understanding and applying the truths it contains is essential for your success in the life of faith.

In my talk yesterday I shared that the Holy Spirit is the only source of effective guidance and power in our prayer life. I mentioned four different kinds of prayer that can be given by the Holy Spirit:

1. Prayer that is directly based on God's Word, like the prayer of the Virgin Mary when she said, "Be it unto me according to thy word."

2. There's prayer that is directly inspired. God says, "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it." We don't know what we're going to say. We open our mouth, the Holy Spirit gives us the prayer that God wants prayed.

3. Then there's supernatural prayer, prayer in an unknown tongue, given by the Holy Spirit.

4. Finally, I mentioned travailing prayer—prayer that is so deep, so intense, that it's not even expressed in words, it's expressed in a kind of groaning like travail.

There are, of course, many other kinds of prayer. Those are just four examples that I gave you.

Today I'm going to focus on one specific, important fact—the way the Holy Spirit directs us is often totally contrary to natural reason or wisdom. Paul states this paradox very clearly in 1 Corinthians 2:12B14:

> "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God..."

Now notice there are two sources of spirits: one from God, one from this present world order. The one that comes from this world order is not the Spirit of God, it's another kind of spirit. Paul goes on:

> "...which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words."

So, the wisdom that comes by the Holy Spirit is not couched in the language of human wisdom. I have to confess I sometimes get nervous when I hear a preacher extensively quoting and using the language of such disciplines as psychiatry or psychology. They are all right in their place but they are not the words that God uses to release divine wisdom. Paul goes on to say:

> "But a natural man [a man who's limited to his own natural understanding without the Holy Spirit] does not accept the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised." (NAS)

So while we are merely in our own natural reasoning and understanding, no matter how highly educated or sophisticated or cultivated we may be, we cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God. In fact, they are foolishness to us. That doesn't mean they are foolish but it means that may seem foolish to you. You see, God is not impressed by the wisdom of this world. Listen to what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1:18B20:

> "For the word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."

You see, the message doesn't change. It's our response. If we receive it in the natural it's foolishness. If we let the Holy Spirit interpret it to us, it becomes the power of God. Paul goes on:

> "For it is written: [He's quoting from the Old Testament] I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the cleverness of the clever I will set aside. [That's God speaking. Then Paul asks:] Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?" (NAS)

That's a very solemn thought today because so much of the church is bowing before the altar of wisdom of this world but God has made that foolish.

Paul goes on again, in the same theme in 1 Corinthians 3:18B20:

> "Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become foolish that he may become wise."

Now perhaps I can interject a word of personal testimony. I had the privilege of very elaborate advanced education in Britain and my special field of study was what Paul calls "the wisdom of this world," which was philosophy—and primarily Greek philosophy, the very thing Paul had in mind when he wrote this epistle. And I have to say that when I came to God and knew Him, I had to become a fool first before I could begin to enter into the wisdom of God. So, if any man seems to be wise in this world, Paul says, the first thing he has to do is to become a fool in his own eyes and in the eyes of others that he may become truly wise. Paul goes on again:

> "For the wisdom of this world is foolishness before God. For it is written, He [God] is the one who catches the wise in their craftiness: and again, The LORD knows the reasonings of the wise that they are useless." (NAS)

And then Paul kind of sums all this up with one hammer blow in 1 Corinthians 8:2 where he says:

> "If anyone supposes that he knows anything, he has not yet known as he ought to know."

Paul says the kind of natural knowledge you have does not fit in with God's revelation. The first thing you have to do is come to the end of all that natural reasoning and reliance on your own intellect and your education, humble and abase your mind before God and acknowledge that what you have is not divine wisdom. And then the Holy Spirit will begin to impart to you divine wisdom. But there is this process of self humbling that has to take place first. And I think the people who find it hardest in this world to humble themselves before God are intellectuals. I think the cultivation of the intellect strengthens pride in man perhaps more than any other. Wealth tends to make people proud, political power tends to make people proud—there are various things. Personal beauty tends to make people proud. But I think the strongest fortress of pride in natural man is that which comes through the cultivation of his own intellect. You see, it isn't that God doesn't have any wisdom, God indeed is the source of all true

wisdom and He makes this available to His people. But God has another kind of wisdom. The key to God's wisdom is the cross. You see, he cross, to natural thinking, is the sum total of God's foolishness. He sent His Son into the world to save the world and He allowed His Son to be seized by sinners, given a false trial, condemned to death and die in agony and shame. What could be more foolish than that if you are seeking to release your power to save mankind? But Paul says, in actual fact, the cross, what happened on that, is the key to all wisdom and all power that comes from God.

This is what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2:4B8. You'll notice nearly all my quotations are from 1 Corinthians because it's in that particular epistle that Paul nails down the wisdom of this world and shows what it really is. Paul says:

> "And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit [the Holy Spirit] and of power, that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God."

That's so important. Now, a generation ago I studied contemporary philosophy—what was contemporary in those days. The real exciting thing in those days was what they call linguistic philosophy. And I sat at the feet of the best known of all the professors, Ludwig ?Witkenschtein?. I was his pupil for two years. But I have to tell you today all that's out of date. It's completely changed. So if I had based my faith on that kind of wisdom, today I'd have no basis for it. You see? So, it's not a safe basis for your faith. Your faith has got to be based on the power of God, not on human wisdom because the power of God doesn't change. Then Paul goes on to say:

> "Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature: a wisdom, however, not of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away: but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery..."

Oh, I love that! "God's wisdom in a mystery." God has wisdom, secret, hidden wisdom of God. You see, as a philosopher that's what I was really looking for. I was looking for wisdom. The word "philosophy" means "the love of wisdom." And I was searching and searching for it but I was frustrated. I couldn't find it. But then one day, by God's grace and mercy, I came to the place where the door opens to God's secret, hidden wisdom. This is what Paul says about it. I can never read these words without getting excited.

> "...we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom, which God predestined before the ages to our glory..."

That's an exciting statement! You have to admit that God has a wisdom that He ordained before creation and the purpose of His wisdom—listen to this—the purpose of His wisdom is to being us to His glory. That's an astonishing statement! No human mind could ever have worked out a system like that. It has to be from God. And then Paul goes on about this wisdom:

> "...the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood: for if they had understood it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory..." (NAS)

You see? The door to this secret, hidden wisdom is the cross. To the natural man, Paul says, the word of the cross is foolishness. Oh, I can remember how foolish it seemed to me when I first heard it! Everything in me revolted against it. What a horrible picture. A naked man dying in agony on a cross. How could God be behind such a scene as that? What does that have to offer to us? But then the Holy Spirit opened my understanding. I had a personal encounter with the man who hung on the cross and I found that the cross is the doorway and the only doorway to the secret, hidden wisdom of God. But to come to that doorway before you become wise in that wisdom you have to become foolish in the natural wisdom. Paul says, "IF any man seems to be wise, let him become a fool that he may become wise." I know very, very well from personal experience how true that is. I know what that's like because I had cultivated my intellect intensively and I had to lay all of that down to find the wisdom that comes through the cross.

Well, our time is up for today but I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this same time. Tomorrow's talk has another unexpected title, "Be Prepared to be Weak." Be sure to tune in again.

My special offer this week is my book, Purposes of Pentecost. This book explains why God has given us the Holy Spirit, all the many ways in which the Spirit is ready to help us and to do for us the "exceeding abundantly above" anything that we ourselves would ask or think. Also, my complete series of talks this week on "How to be Led by the Holy Spirit, Part 2" is available in a single, carefully edited cassette. Stay tuned for details.



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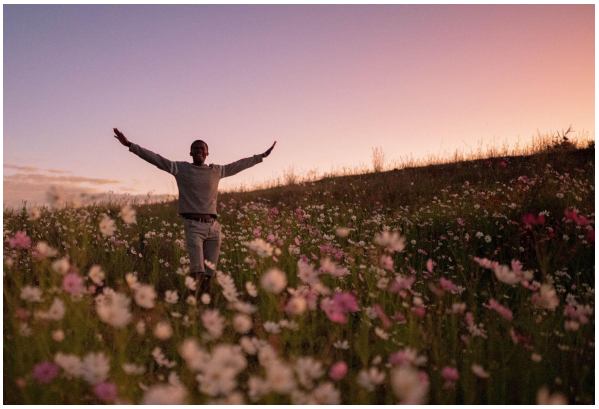

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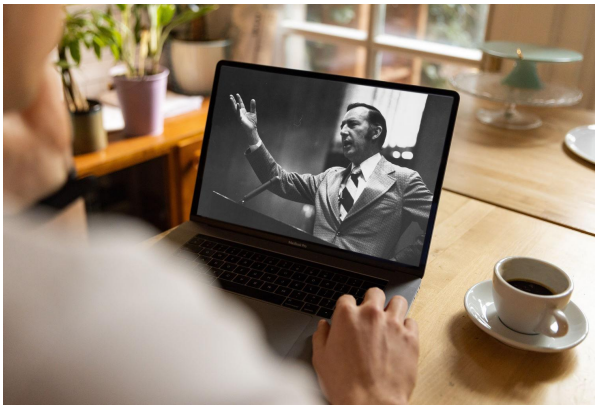

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