

Don't Go Back to Rules!



How to Be Led by the Holy Spirit (Part 9)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again as we continue with our theme for this 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.

Both last week and this my talks have been based on a specific Scripture, Romans 8:14:

> "For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God."

Sons in the sense of mature, grown up sons.

I pointed out that there's only one way to spiritual maturity—you become a child, a little baby in the family of God by being born of the Holy Spirit. But to achieve maturity you have to be led by the Holy Spirit and the tense used is a continuing presence. You have to be continually led by the Holy Spirit. That's the only pathway to maturity.

And I pointed out two important facts about the Holy Spirit. First of all, he's a person. He's not a theological abstraction, He's not a system, He's not a set of rules. He's a person, you have to relate to Him as a person and the key word is sensitivity.

And then I pointed out also that He is not merely a person but He is Lord. He requires total submission. The same submission we give to God the Father and God the Son we must also give to God the Holy Spirit.

In my talk today I want to warn you against what I have come to believe is the commonest hindrance to being led by the Holy Spirit and if I gave you fifty guesses most of you would not guess what I have in mind. So, I'll tell you. The hindrance that I see as the commonest is legalism, religious legalism. I'll give you two possible definitions of legalism so that we have some idea of what I'm talking about. They're related but they're distinct. The first one is seeking to achieve righteousness with God by keeping a set of rules. That's legalism.

I was speaking just recently to a rather large audience somewhere and I made this statement rather casually in my talk: "Christianity is not a set of rules." And I saw the astonishment on the faces of most of those Christians and I realized I'd said something that they'd never considered. But I'll repeat that, Christianity is not a set of rules. Christianity is primarily a relationship with a person. That person is Jesus and the relationship is with another person, the Holy Spirit.

The second possible definition of legalism would be this: imposing requirements for righteousness which God Himself has not imposed. God has laid down in the Bible what He requires to achieve righteousness with him and nobody, no church, no group, no one has any authority to add one requirement to God's requirements. And to add even one requirement is to trespass in the area of legalism. The Holy Spirit is Lord and He will not share His Lordship with a set of rules. I'm going to say that again because most of you have never even considered it. The Holy Spirit is Lord and He will not share His Lordship with a set of rules.

Now, human nature is such through the fall that every one of us would rather rely on ourselves than on the Holy spirit. You see, the essence of the fall and the essence of sin is not primarily the desire to do evil, it's the desire to be independent from God. And so, when we are confronted with the map or the guide we say, "Well, give me the map. I'm clever enough. I can find my way." Now the map is absolutely perfect. The Law, as given by Moses, is a perfect law. If you keep it all you'll make the way but nobody has ever kept it all.

So we set out with the map and we feel so strong and confident and healthy and the sun is shining and we see the road before us. But about 48 hours later something's gone wrong and it's pitch dark and it's raining. And we're on the brink of a precipice and we don't know whether we're facing north, south, east or west. We say, "Help!" And a gentle voice says, "Can I help you?" Do you know who that is? The Holy Spirit.

"Oh, Holy Spirit, I really need you. I'm desperate!"

"Give me your hand and I'll lead you out of this situation." And, sure enough, He does. And then the next day you're walking on the road with the Holy Spirit at your side, the sun is shining, the birds are singing, you can see the highway and you think, "Well, really, I was dumb! I could have made my way out of that mess without all this." And you say to the Holy Spirit, "Listen, I've got a wonderful map here, would you like that?"

And the Holy Spirit says, "Thank you, son, I don't need the map. I know the way. As a matter of fact," He says, "I'm the one who made the map in the first place."

Well, after a little while you think, "I just don't like having this person lead me by the hand all the way. It looks a little demeaning." So you think to yourself, "Well, I could have made it. I could use this map." And while you're thinking that, this guide has disappeared and He's nowhere to be found. So, off you go again with the map and 48 hours later you're in the middle of a bog. And every step you're taking you're sinking deeper and you know that it won't be long before you won't be able to take another step. And you say, "Help!"

And the Holy Spirit says, "Can I help you? Give me your hand, I'll lead you out."

My question is: How long do we have to go on that way? How long do we have to go on spurning the Holy Spirit and going back to the map, which we are not capable of using aright? It's not that there's anything wrong with the map, the problem is with us, not the map. You see, the New Testament continually warns us against seeking to achieve righteousness by keeping law. Romans 3:20:

> "...because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in [God's] sight: for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin."

God says emphatically, no human being will ever achieve righteousness in My sight by struggling to keep the Law. You say, "Why was the Law given?" Well, one main reason was the Law was given not to make us righteous but to show us that we are sinners and we need God's grace and the help of the Holy Spirit.

Then Romans 6:14:

> "For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace."

Notice the implications of that. If you are under Law, sin will have mastery over you. If you want to be free from sin, you cannot be under the law, you have to be under grace and the two are mutually exclusive. You're either under the law of under grace but not under both.

And the in Galatians 5:18 Paul says:

> "If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law."

And remember, being led by the Spirit is the only way to maturity. So, if you want to achieve maturity, you cannot

afford to do it by trying to keep the law.

Now, rules have a place in life. That's very clear. How do we relate to them? Well, I will just offer you this simple thought. If rules are scriptural and if you've been made righteous by faith, that will enable you to keep the rules. But you don not achieve righteousness by doing so. Grace will not mix with law. Paul uses a picture in Galatians. He speaks about the two sons of Abraham: one by a slave woman, Ishmael; one by the free woman, Sarah, whose name was Isaac. And he said when Isaac came Ishmael and his mother, Hagar, had to leave. The message of the Scripture was:

> "Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be an heir with the son of the free woman." (NAS)

So those are the alternatives and you see they're mutually exclusive. If you want Ishmael, the Law, your fleshly ability, there's no room for Isaac and the grace of God. If you want the grace of God, there's no room for the Law as a means of achieving righteousness. You see, this was the error of the Galatians. They'd known Jesus Christ, they'd received the Holy Spirit, they'd experienced miracles but Paul said to them in Galatians 3:1 and following:

> "You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? [Then he says] This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the Law?" (NAS)

I want to tell you, frankly, that I think that's the commonest single problem in the church. People begin by the Spirit. They have a revelation and an experience of the grace and power of God through the Holy Spirit and then they go back to the map. They are not willing to continue relying on the Holy Spirit. Paul points out that going back to the Law brings a curse. He says in Galatians 3:10:

> "For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse..."

I believe many, many Christians, individuals, denominations, churches, are under a curse. They've forfeited the blessings of God because they've dishonored the Holy Spirit and gone back to their own efforts.

Then we return again to the words of Jeremiah, Jeremiah 17:5, for these are the words of the Lord through Jeremiah.

> "Thus says the Lord, Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind and makes flesh his strength, and whose heart turns away from the Lord." (NAS)

You see, there are only two alternatives but they are mutually exclusive. We can try to find out way by the map or we can be led by the guide, the Holy Spirit. But the Holy Spirit, being Lord, being God, is not going to share His Lordship with that map. He is the one who gave the map. He knows the map far, far better than any of us do. He understands all the motivation and the reasoning for the map but if you want to grow to maturity, the only way is to be led by the Holy Spirit.

If you want to be led by the Holy Spirit, you are not under a system of law. You do not achieve it by keeping any set of rules. Lots of Christian churches today say we are not under the Law of Moses but they've made their own set of rules. In fact, almost every denomination has its own little law. I want to tell you, if the law of Moses couldn't do it, which was given by God, no religious denominational law can do it either. There's no hope that way of achieving maturity. You need to repent if you're in that condition and turn back to the Holy Spirit.

Our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this same time. I'll share with you the goal towards which the Holy Spirit directs us.

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 "exceedingly 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.

Radio Program

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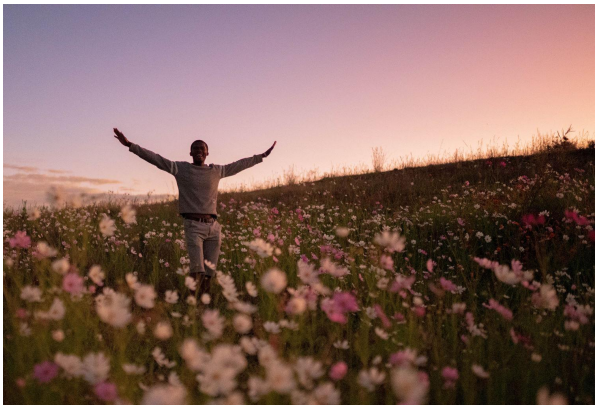

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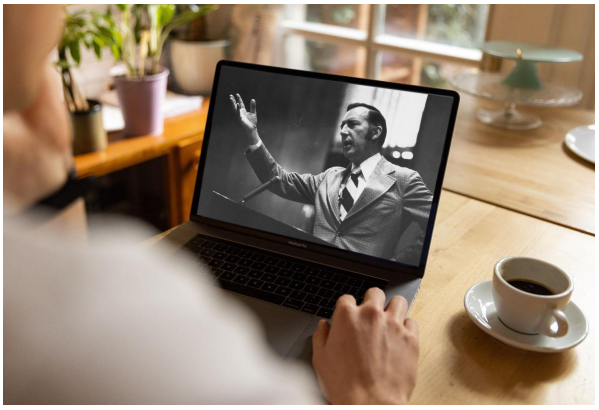

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