

Union with Christ



How to Be Led by the Holy Spirit (Part 10)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again as we draw near to the close of another week. Today I'll continue and complete the theme that I've been following for the past two weeks, "How to be Led by the Holy Spirit." I trust you've found it helpful and inspiring.

If so, please let me hear from you! Before I finish this talk we'll be giving you a mailing address to which you may write. It means a great deal to me to hear how this radio ministry of mine has been helping you and blessing you. So please take time to write, even if it's only a brief, personal note. Write today.

Now, back to our theme, "How to be Led by the Holy Spirit." In my talk yesterday I warned you against what I believe to be the commonest hindrance to being led by the Holy Spirit and I called it legalism. I offered two definitions of legalism. The first was seeking to achieve righteousness with God by observing a law or a set of rules. The second was imposing requirements for righteousness which God Himself has not imposed. And I believe, frankly, that is a disease which has affected the vast majority of professing Christian churches today. You see, Jeremiah 17:5 contains a warning that sums it all up in a few words:

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

When we turn back to a system of rules or law to achieve righteousness, we're trusting in man, we're trusting in our own carnal strength and our heart has turned away from the Lord and it brings us under a curse. This is a surprising thought to many Christians. But it's extremely relevant to the situation in the church today. I would have to say that the church has many problems, but the greatest and the commonest is legalism.

Today I want to point you to the positive alternative made possible through the Holy Spirit and this positive alternative to legalism is direct, personal union with Christ. This is a ministry of the Holy Spirit, what I consider to be perhaps His greatest single ministry but one about which very little is said in the contemporary church. In Romans 7:1B6 Paul paints a picture of the alternatives: union with our fleshly nature under

the Law, which brings death; or being delivered from our fleshly nature through the death of Jesus on the cross on our behalf and being united through the Holy Spirit with the resurrected Christ. Those are the two alternatives. The first alternative is legalism, the second is God's purpose for every believer in Christ. It's a personal, spiritual union with the Lord Jesus through the Holy Spirit. Let me read the words of Paul now and then comment on them.

> "Or do you not know, brethren [for I am speaking to those who know the law], that the law has jurisdiction over a person as long as he lives? [Once you're under the law, the only way out from the law is death.] For the married woman is bound by law to her husband while he is living: but if her husband dies, she is released from the law concerning the husband. So then if while her husband is living, she is joined to another man [in marriage], she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband dies, she is free from the law, so that she is not an adulteress, though she is joined to another man. Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, that you might be joined [in a marriage union] to another, to Him who was raised from the dead [that's the Lord Jesus], that we might bear fruit for God. For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death."

It's an amazing statement, isn't it? The sinful passions which were by the Law. How can that be? The answer is that when we rely on our own carnal ability to keep God's law, we are under the power of our carnal nature and our carnal nature is not capable of anything good. Nothing good can come out of our carnal nature. Paul says, "I know that in me [that is, in my flesh] dwells no good thing." The only problem about most of us is not that we're different from Paul but we don't know what Paul knew. Because he knew he couldn't produce anything good out of his fleshly nature. Then Paul concludes this passage in Romans 7 by saying:

> "But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter." (NAS)

You understand the picture which Paul uses, a picture of marriage. Paul says when a woman is married to a man, she has to remain that man's wife as long as he lives. If she departs from that man while he lives she becomes an adulteress. But he says, if the husband dies then she is free to marry another man. She doesn't have the stigma of being an adulteress.

And this is the way Paul explains it. Under the law we were married to our carnal nature, we were compelled to rely on our own natural ability to do what God requires. Now, there was nothing wrong with the Law, but the problem, as Paul points out again and again is in our carnal nature. We can hear the Law, we can give assent to it but we lack the power to carry it out because there's something in each of us, a rebel nature, that is made even more rebellious by the law.

Paul says a little further in Romans 7, "I didn't know covetousness until the Law said, Don't covet, it produced in me all kinds of covetousness." That's the rebellious reaction of our carnal nature. But as long as our carnal nature continues to live we cannot be married to anybody else—we are bound to it as long as it lives.

But the message of the gospel is our carnal nature, our old man, was crucified in Christ on the cross and we are to reckon ourselves to be dead to that carnal nature. We are to reckon that dead. Paul says, "You have become dead to the law." So when we see that our carnal nature was put to death in Jesus on the cross, we are free to enter into a new marriage. If our carnal nature was still alive and we had been married to it, if we turned away from it and sought to marry somebody else, we would have been in the position of the adulteress. But once we grasp the fact that through the death of Jesus on the cross that carnal nature was put to death, then we are no longer bound to it. So we can be married to another.

And once that carnal nature was put to death, we were released from the obligations to the law. Paul says the law has jurisdiction over a man as long as he lives. The last thing the law can do to anybody is put you to death. Once it has put you to death you are not under the law. So through the death of Jesus on our behalf, as our representative, we were put to death and released from the claims of the law. Now we are free to be married to another. To whom? To the one who rose from the dead. How can we be united in our marriage relationship to Him? Not through the law but through the Spirit. I believe personally, this is the greatest single contribution of the Holy Spirit to our spiritual life is to make it possible for us to be united in a kind of marriage union with the resurrected Christ.

According to whom we are married, we will bring forth the fruit of the union. If we are still married to the flesh we will bring forth what Paul calls the "deeds of the flesh." Now Paul

lists these in Galatians 5:19B21:

> "Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envyings, drunkenness, carousings, and things like these..." (NAS)

There's not one good thing on that list. The flesh is corrupt. Whatever it brings forth is corrupt. It is evil, it is unacceptable to God. As long as we are married to the flesh, no matter how hard we try to do good, we'll bring forth the fruit of the union with the flesh. But once we're set free from that union and once we're married to the Lord Jesus through the Holy Spirit, then we'll bring forth the corresponding fruit of that union. And in Galatians 5:22B23 Paul speaks about this kind of fruit:

> "But the fruit of the Spirit [capital s, the Holy Spirit] is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self control: against such things there is no law." (NAS)

When you're bringing forth that kind of fruit out of your union with the resurrected Christ, you don't need to be controlled by a law because there is no law against the fruit of the Spirit.

Let me just give you quickly, in closing, a picture of the kind of union that the New Testament speaks about. In 1 Corinthians 6:16B17 Paul joins together two things that may, at first, seem very surprising. He says:

> "Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a harlot [or a prostitute] is one body with her? For He says, The two will become one flesh. But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him." (NAS)

Now that's a very astonishing parallel that Paul uses, in the flesh and in the spirit. In the flesh he speaks about a man being united by an immoral sexual union with a prostitute. And he says they become one flesh, one body. But in the same context he talks about being united with the Lord Jesus and becoming one spirit. Do you understand? There are two kinds of unions. There's a fleshly union, there's a spiritual union. What the Holy Spirit does is enable us to be united in spirit with the Lord Jesus and once we're united with Him we will naturally, not by a matter of effort, bring forth the fruit of the Spirit. You see, the question is not our effort, the question is whom are we united? Effort won't do it. Union is the only answer. And I believe that this particular union with the Lord is consummated in one way, through worship. God is Spirit and those who worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in truth. I believe the climax of our union with Jesus through the Spirit in this dispensation comes in worship. When we become totally united with the Lord in worship, something happens within us that is going to release all the grace and the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

So bear in mind those two alternatives. United with your flesh through the law or united by the Holy Spirit to the resurrected Christ.

Our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again next week at this same time, Monday through Friday. Next week I'll be sharing with you on another rich and exciting theme from the Word of God.

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 could 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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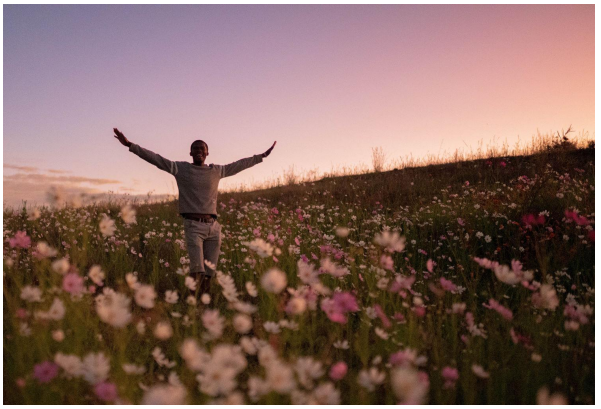

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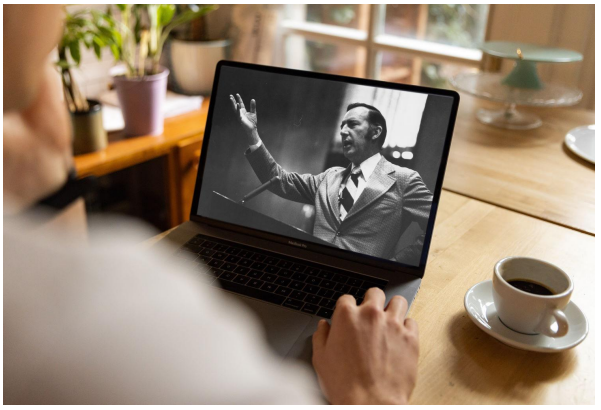

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