

LED BY THE SPIRIT – 1

The question of the will of God is something that comes up again and again in the lives and the minds of Christians. We recognize that God has a will and we often remember to seek that will in our lives. We desire to do that will if only we could discover it. Or at least that is what we claim. If only God would speak to us, we say. One major issue therefore is how to know what the will of God is in our lives.

People are often asked, “did God speak to you about this?” Many don’t know how to answer because they don’t even know what God would sound like if He does speak. I remember the story I related in my book on marriage (*Should I Say Yes?*) in which a brother asked me if God spoke to me about the wife I married. When I answered in the affirmative, he went further to ask how He did. He wanted to know how I heard God. I told him simply, and as a matter of fact, that the officiating minister on that day of the wedding said, “I pronounce you man and wife.” That was the voice of God, I told him. Of course that was not the answer the dear brother expected to hear; after all I was supposed to be a spiritual man. But there was a lot of truth in what I said.

Also I remember a brother who was in financial distress speaking to me a few years ago; someone had advised him on how to use his skill to generate income so as to be able to take care of his family. I listened to the very sound counsel which had been given him, something which I thought was the most reasonable thing in the world to accept, but he ended it with, “God hasn’t spoken to me to do that.” I remember wondering whether God spoke to him to beg me for the money he was asking for, something that I most certainly didn’t ‘hear’ God speak to me to give it to him.

The problem is real. People do not know how to identify the voice of God, and many who claim that God spoke to them often leave discerning people in doubt as to the veracity of their claim. A man approached the dean of a faculty of a university claiming that the Lord spoke to him that he should see him concerning accepting his child into the faculty. The dean said to him that his tenure in the office was about to come to an end, that admissions into the faculty for the next session would commence after his tenure would have ended and therefore would be handled by the person to replace him. He apologized for the fact that he would be unable to help the man. This university officer was wondering how it happened that the Lord was not aware that he was not in a position to solve the situation at hand. Well, after much discussion, the man in question asked what advice the dean may have for him, and to this he replied, “What can I tell you when the Lord is already speaking to you?” What do you think he was thinking? He didn’t believe the Lord said anything to the fellow, and neither do I.

My aim at this time is to help people understand how to walk in the will of God for their lives, being led by His spirit, and to make decisions that are in keeping with that will all the time. It is possible to walk in the will of God all the time and never be out of the will of God. Whether

we are in the will of God or outside of it is determined by the decisions we make when we are faced with choice making. Yes we want to hear God speak to us, and He does, but we must learn how He speaks so we will be closer to recognizing His voice.

He is alive

Let me start by stating clearly that God is alive. He is a living God who has ears and so hears, and who has a mouth and so speaks. According to the Lord Jesus, He is the God of the living and not of the dead (Matt 22:32); this tells me He relates with those who worship Him. This God is mindful of each one of His children and He has a specific will for every detail of their lives. Apart from having a will, He actually seeks to communicate the will to His people every single time. Sometimes He communicates His will through dreams and visions. At some other times He speaks in words that can be literally heard by the person He is speaking to. Sometimes He whispers those words into the heart of the person. Other methods He uses include prophetic utterances through the mouth of a preacher, or even through the mouths of non-preachers (there was a time He used a donkey). There are diversities of ways that He may use, and we cannot restrict Him to any one of them. In the way we use the expression these days, God actually does speak to people through various methods. He chooses the one He uses according to His will at any time. We do not control or determine it.

Another thing to point out is that almost all the methods I mentioned above can be confused easily by and with human thoughts and imaginations (including delusions and hallucinations); they may be faked by evil spirits and even by the hyperactive human spirit of the person who wants to hear God. That is why most of the God-told-me that you hear today are simply unreliable. People have come to realize that God did not tell those people anything at all. Most of the times it is the desires or passion of the people that got 'personified' into the voice of God. The man I spoke of earlier, who came to see the dean, is a clear example. Many times people marry those who they want and then say it was God that told them. The truth again is that there is no fool-proof method of hearing the voice of God when it comes to these supernatural means (no matter how much you have practiced them you can still be deceived).

People often teach that God speaks to us by His spirit inside us, and I agree totally, but the problem still remains, "how do I know the voice of His spirit inside me?" Experience has shown us that the 'still small voice' inside us, which is often called the voice of the spirit of God, can be faked easily by our desires and even by evil spirits, leading people into temptation.

The spirit that came out of God

Now, in trying to walk in the will of God and in making decisions pleasing to Him, we must have a proper understanding of an often quoted verse of the Bible.

For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. Rom 8:14

This verse of scripture is thought by many to mean that the Holy Spirit will speak to us and nudge us to do what is right. Now, please don't get me wrong; indeed the Holy Spirit does such things as part of His activities among believers; for example the Holy Spirit spoke to Philip to join the Ethiopian eunuch's chariot (Acts 8). The self-same Holy Spirit spoke to the prophets and teachers in Acts 13 to separate Paul and Barnabas for the work of the ministry. In modern times there are numerous credible testimonies of the Holy Spirit doing these things daily. Having said this however, we need to understand that *that* is NOT what Paul was calling being led by the spirit of God in this portion of Romans quoted above. These examples I have just referred to are special manifestations of the spiritual.

But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills. 1 Cor 12:11 NASB

To be led by the spirit of God is a daily and continuous *modus operandi* for Christians and is not something that happens 'as the Spirit wills.' It is a part of the fibre of the beings of believers; we are to be led by the spirit of God continually. This is as opposed to those special manifestations such as visions, voices and prophetic utterances, which are all done as the Holy Spirit wills, and there is no way to compel Him do any of them. These special manifestations may not occur regularly and we are not allowed to do anything individually in making them happen. We are to receive them when they do happen and it is good we understand how they work.

Now, what does it mean then to be led by the spirit of God?

This is easy to understand when we understand the use of the word 'spirit' in the Bible.

A careful study of the scriptures shows that this word is generally used for invisible things and persons or attributes of persons which affect what takes place on the earth. The same word is even used to describe the wind; the concept is that you can *hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going* (John 3:8). In the same vein the angels of God are said to be made spirits (Heb 1:7). As a matter of fact the invisible power, drive or attribute within a person which controls what he or she does is also called his or her spirit.

*The spirit of a man can endure his sickness,
But a broken spirit who can bear? Prov 18:14 NASB*

What Solomon explained here is that what is driving a man will overcome his troubles in life. It is that inner force that makes him want to live, want to succeed and which makes him overcome.

Now, please note that there is a spiritually tangible substance which God deposits into the spirit-zone of every one who believes in Christ Jesus; it is the substance that emanated from God Himself, a part of His nature. This is the spiritual identity of every one who is a believer.

However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. Rom 8:9 NASB

That spirit is inside everyone who is a true believer, not just a nominal Christian. They may not have changed outwardly, but this thing is inside them. This is the thing that makes them want to pray, want to hear the word of God and want to keep company with people of like nature. It is the thing that awakens a previously dead conscience, which makes them suddenly begin to desire to do works pleasing to the Father. It is a spiritual DNA. It came out of God into the believer and so is also called the spirit of God. This is as to distinguish it from the spirit of this world. The word 'of' in the NT has many uses; one of them is to describe the origin of a thing (e.g. Jesus of Nazareth). Another use is to describe the character of that thing (e.g. spirit of gentleness 1Cor 4:21; spirit of slavery Rom 8:15). For this latter reason you will see that this spirit is also called the spirit of Christ. It is because it was the same spirit that was inside Christ Jesus; it was the very nature that Jesus had. This spirit inside the believer is the fulfilment of God's promise through the prophets.

"But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the Lord, "I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Jer 31:33-34 NASB

The word 'law' here is beyond a set of codes and commandments; it refers to that force within our system, which inclines us one way or another. Before becoming a believer in Christ, Paul said there was a law in his members that made him to break the law of God (Rom 7:23). The believer now has the law of Christ or the spirit of Christ in him (Rom 8:1-2).

So you see, it is not every time you see 'spirit of God' that it is referring to the Holy Spirit, the Person who Jesus said will be with us and lead us into all truth (Jn 14:26). This was the assumption which made people think that God must always speak to them before they can be said to be led by His spirit. Yes, the Holy Spirit speaks to people when He wills (eg Acts 13:2) but the very nature of God in the believer leads him or her all of the time.

Being led

Also, let me explain the phrase 'to be led.' This is more than the giving of specific directions; it refers to the guidance structure or force in someone's life. Sometimes in life we ask, "what is pushing that fellow?" we ask this when we observe his actions or general drive in life. That 'push' is the same thing as 'lead.' For example, someone who is led by the lust of the flesh and the pride of life (or simply put, the love of money) will always make decisions that would bring in more money. To him or her, 'how much' is all that matters. The ideas of faithfulness, giving, patience, preferring someone in love, etc. are foreign to him. That is what is meant by being led by the spirit of the age, the love of self or the love of money. But the fellow who is led by the spirit of God has a different set of standards and concerns. Like I mentioned earlier, that was the spirit in Jesus, and it showed in how he made his choices. Your spirit manifests in your

values, your convictions, your desires, what you love and such attributes, and then it manifests in your choices and actions.

So we see that the kind of spirit you have is what 'leads' you. The unbeliever is also led by a spirit, even though nobody may be whispering to him, but it is not the spirit of God. The believer on the other hand, is led continually by the spirit of God (AKA spirit of Christ) and is always seeking to do that which is pleasing to God and that which is a blessing to people.

Next we will learn more about this 'Spirit of Christ.'

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