

Galatians 5: 18 – “Being Led by the Spirit”, Message # 39 in the series – “Christ has Set us Free”, a Bible Study conducted on May 27th, 2015, by Pastor Paul Rendall at his home.

This evening we want to look at the two ideas which are being conveyed to us by the Apostle Paul in verse 18, that of being led by the Spirit, and our not being under the law, as a result of His leading. This subject I trust will bring great comfort and peace to the believer who has a tender conscience, and it will also bring a strengthening to our faith and obedience as we go about to please our Lord in all that we do and say.

1st of all – What does it mean to be led by the Spirit?

To be led by the Spirit in the context of this passage, is to be directed by the Holy Spirit’s powerful and personal working in your heart and mind as a Christian. It is by His working that you will be led into a sincere obedience to the Word of God and the will of God in every particular. This directing and working of the Holy Spirit leads the believer in Christ into the everyday experience of two major activities which they will engage in, if they are wise; putting sin to death, and pursuing righteousness and holiness in accordance with the truth of the Bible. But these activities do not take place to the glory of God and to your making progress in them, without the work of the 3rd Person of the Divine Trinity. It is very important that we understand that all of these activities take place in connection with the fellowship and communion that the believer is having with the Triune God as they go about to do them. There is a beginning in this leading of the Spirit. It begins when you hear the gospel concerning Christ, and then the Holy Spirit creates a thirst in your soul to know Christ and to desire to deal with your sins. Look with me over at John Chapter 7, and verses 37-39. “On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, ‘If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.’ “He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.” “But this He spoke concerning the Spirit whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.”

You can see here that the person who thirsts is the person who has a desire to know the meaning of life. The meaning of life is to know God and His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. A person must come to Jesus and drink in a spiritual sense to have eternal life. This spiritual thirst is created in the heart of person who whether they know it or not, is a sinner by nature and practice. They may have lived their life to themselves up until the point that they come to have this thirst, or they may have been a very moral person who has thought seriously about the needs of other people around them, humanly speaking. But without the Holy Spirit’s working they will not come to have this thirst. With this thirst, having heard the gospel, they will come and receive the gospel and believe in Jesus Christ for their salvation. But we see here from these verses that the Spirit could not be given in the formal sense to build the Church of Jesus Christ until Jesus was glorified; until He finished His work of the redemption of all of God’s elect at the cross. The Spirit was given to individual persons in their being regenerated according to the will of God, in Old Testament times, and that work of regeneration was the same work of the Spirit for believers then as it is now in New Testament times in terms of the circumcision of the heart. But in New Testament times when Christ came, it became the work for which the Holy Spirit was especially sent, to reveal Christ and the blessings of His truth and grace to those who believe.

These are the rivers of living water which Jesus is speaking about. This was the greater work which the Spirit would be given to do after Jesus was glorified. His work of placing men in the spiritual body of Christ, His work of empowering them for service and witness in relation to the building of the Church, His transforming people into the likeness of Christ in their becoming

righteous and holy people; this is all the work of the Spirit in these New Testament times. Look with me over at John Chapter 16, and verses 13-15 – “However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.” “He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.” “All things that the Father has are Mine.” “Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you.” Now although these words have their primary reference in relation to the Apostles and their being given direct revelation from God so that they could write it down and it would become the New Testament Scriptures, we should still understand that this work of guiding a believer into the truth is a work which the Spirit undertakes for every Christian. We are not guided infallibly; that is to say, that we do not always respond in obedience the way that we should, but we are guided. We are led into all of the truth that He would have for us as individual Christians, as we trust in the Lord Jesus, and as we seek to understand.

Let me give you an example of a man who was led by the Spirit to find Christ, and in finding Him he would also find assurance and consolation; the very things that Paul is trying to teach us through this verse. Luke Chapter 2, verses 25-32. “And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him.” “And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ.” “So he came by the Spirit into the temple.” “And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said: “Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word; for my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel.” Now, I hope that you understand that this man Simeon was a man who already knew the Lord before he had this great experience of being able to hold the Christ Child. But I believe that there are spiritual lessons on how the Lord leads a person which we can apply to ourselves. The Holy Spirit can lead us to a certain place, He can lead us in such a way, that we will find what we have long looked for. He did so with Simeon.

The Lord, the Holy Spirit, had already revealed to him that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. He believed what had been revealed to him. Dear believer, if you have understood, that great and precious promises have been given to you, of what God will do for you through Christ the Lord, then will you not believe that in His time that He will answer all of your prayers which are according to His will, and bring to fruition in your experience the great and glorious and good things that He intends to give you? He leads the seeking soul to salvation, and he leads the seeking saint to find everlasting comfort and consolation by the grace of Christ. Simeon was brought (he was led) by the Spirit into the temple at the very time that Jesus' parents were bringing Him there. And Simeon knew that this was the child that he had looked for, for such a long time, the consolation of Israel. It says here that he was looking for the Consolation of Israel; the One who would be God's salvation, which He had prepared before the face of all peoples, a Light of revelation to the Gentiles. He took him in his arms and knew that peace of God which passes all understanding, that God would most definitely and certainly bring salvation to all of His elect people, even sinners who are unworthy of the least of His mercies.

Your finding what you are looking for in all of your life is directly related to how you are led. Are you looking to become a more righteous and holy person, one who knows God and is pleasing to God? Are you praying that His grace would be working in your heart; that His kingdom might advance through your efforts to promote it? Success in these efforts will only come when you begin to pray that the Holy Spirit will lead you into the reality of pursuing and finding the spiritual realities of living a righteous and a holy life; holding sweet communion with your Lord and not grieving the Holy Spirit. The Spirit will be striving with you to lead you to the

place where you will be walking with Christ more closely. If you are praying and seeking to overcome the world and you greatly desire to mortify the fleshly desires which would lead you astray from God, the Holy Spirit will lead you into the reality of spiritual victory in these areas of the meditation of your heart, and the righteousness of your actions in God's sight. Look over at Matthew Chapter 6 and verses 9-13. "In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be our name." "Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." "Give us this day our daily bread." "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." "And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." "For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever." "Amen." You see, being led by the Spirit, you will learn to pray this way – Do not lead me into temptation, but deliver me from the evil, or the evil one.

Why should the Christian pray this way? Because he knows that apart from the Spirit's help and aid, he is very weak and will not be able to stand against the temptations of Satan or the desires of the flesh. But the Christian prays to be delivered from evil. And he knows that he shall be delivered from evil when he is trusting in Christ, because Christ was led by the Spirit and He was strong enough to overcome the evil one. Look over at Matthew 4, verse 1 – "Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil." I will not relate all of this scene of temptation. But I want you to see that Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. Why? So that He would overcome on our behalf. It was His greatest object to overcome where Adam failed, and where you and I fail. If we were to take the time to read this whole passage, we would see that all of the temptations that came to Him were temptations to act independently from the what the Father had said in the Word. Satan says, "Command these stones to become bread." Jesus says, "Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceeds from the mouth of God." Jesus was led into temptation by the Spirit so that we could pray and know the answer to our prayer – Lead me not into temptation but deliver me from evil. To be led by the Spirit in the context of this passage, is to be directed by the Holy Spirit's powerful and personal working in your heart and mind, into a sincere obedience to the Word of God and the will of God in every particular.

Now 2nd – We need to ask the question – What does Paul mean here when he says, "You are not under the law?"

Well, first we need to see that we are not under the law as a covenant of works. Turn with me over to Romans Chapter 3, verse 27 – "Where is boasting then?" "It is excluded." "By what law?" "Of works?" "No, but by the law of faith." "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law." "Or is He the God of the Jews only?" "Is He not also the God of the Gentiles?" "Yes, of the Gentiles also, since there is one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith." "Do we then make void the law through faith?" "Certainly not!" "On the contrary, we establish the law." We see here that we are not under the law as a covenant of works, as though salvation were by the works of the law. We are saved by grace through faith, and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God. But does this mean that we no longer have any responsibility to keep the specific commandments of the 10 commandments? No, Christ in fulfilling the law on our behalf has established it. He, by His perfect obedience to it, has fulfilled it, and given it back to us to keep; not in a rigorous way of the letter of it, but out of love, going about to do and keep it by the grace of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, out of love to God and Christ for giving us so great a salvation.

It is our responsibility to keep the commandments of God, but we are not under the law which would condemn us at many points if we tried to merit salvation with God by undertaking to keep it. Christ died in order to deliver us from the dominion of sin; the ruling reigning power of sin, in this life. And in the next, He will deliver us from the very presence of sin. Knowing that the power of sin is broken and we are set free, we ought not to let sin reign in our mortal bodies. Look over at Romans 6: 11-14. "Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed

to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” “Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts.” “And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.” “For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.” You can see here Paul’s reasoning, can’t you? Our responsibility as Christians is to present the members of our bodies to God as instruments of righteousness. Sin shall not have dominion over us because of what Christ has done in His perfect obedience to the law, which was imputed to us; and His sacrifice of sufferings and death for our many sins. We are now free from the law’s expectations of perfect obedience because Christ has fulfilled the law on our behalf. But certainly we are not free to live as we please. Our freedom is to learn and to do what is pleasing to God. The expectation of the Spirit, who has been given to us, to lead us into the truth and into all righteousness, is that we be led by Him to go about to do and keep God’s commandments out of love to Christ. This is not a legal obedience, but loving obedience to our great God; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Let’s close by reading John 14: 15-18 – “If you love Me, keep My commandments.” “And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.” “I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.” When we believe in Jesus we receive the Spirit, and when we receive the Spirit we are led by the Spirit into all the truth about Christ, and into all the truth of our need of His grace to do what will please our God.