

How The Spirit Works In A Christian's Life

Indeed the Holy Spirit works in a Christian's behalf. Much of what He does has already been completed, as studied in previous articles. Already He has given the spiritual blessings which come through Christ (Acts 2:38). Already He has revealed God's word which is recorded in the Bible, through which one is saved, and through which Christians are instructed by God (Ephesians 3:3-5).

The Holy Spirit also seals (marks or identifies) the Christian (Ephesians 1:13; Romans 8:16), and the Holy Spirit makes intercession for the Christian (Romans 8:26-27).

We cannot estimate the amount of continuing work which the Holy Spirit does. We assume, like the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit *"is working until now"* (John 5:17, NASB). Christians must have faith in what the Holy Spirit, along with the Father and Son, is doing for each Christian's life and salvation.

In this article we will identify the work of the Holy Spirit in a Christian's life which is identified in the Bible, and study how Christians should allow this work to benefit us.

Christians Are To Be Led By The Holy Spirit

Romans 8:1-17 helps Christians determine where they stand with God. Those who are led by the Spirit of God have certain characteristics. They are not condemned by the flesh, but rather they are free from the law of sin and death. They mind the things of the Spirit rather than the things of the flesh, thus being spiritually minded rather than being carnally minded. They are spiritually alive unto God through Christ, and they are dead to the deeds of the flesh. Those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. Those who say they are led by the Spirit should have the characteristics listed in Romans 8:1-17. If they do not, then they are not being led by the Spirit, but rather they are being led by the flesh.

How is one led by the Holy Spirit? One is led by the Spirit by following the words through which the Holy Spirit guides. These words are not given by a "voice within us," or through direct revelation to us from the Holy Spirit. These words are given through the Bible. Jesus promised His apostles that the Holy Spirit would guide them into all truth. Jesus said, *"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of*

mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you" (John 16:13-15). This passage tells us how the Holy Spirit guides. He would reveal Christ's words unto the apostles who, along with other prophets in the first century A.D., would preach and record these words. These words are the gospel of Christ (Ephesians 3:4-6). If anyone follows these words, then they are *"led by the Spirit."*

Will we "feel" the Holy Spirit, and therefore be led by the way we "feel"? Most have heard expressions such as "I feel like this is what the Spirit is leading me to do," or "I'm waiting for the Spirit to lead me in this matter." These expressions leave the impression that some people have a direct connection with the Holy Spirit. Somehow the proper decision will instantly dawn on them as it is given directly by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit does not lead in this way. The Holy Spirit does not give us supernatural feelings or instincts. But He does give us knowledge through the Bible. If we gain this knowledge given in the Bible by the Holy Spirit, then we are led by what we know, and not by how we feel (Proverbs 14:12). If we are led by this knowledge of the Bible, we are led by the Holy Spirit, and we can make wise decisions in all areas of life (Ephesians 1:8; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:3).

Will we be led by the Holy Spirit in a physical sense? Will we have some inexplicable urge to change our course — to turn left instead of turning right, or to take the elevator down instead of up? There may seem to be a divine undercurrent when certain circumstances occur. Is miraculous divine intervention the cause of these things? How about when a sinner has a chance meeting with a gospel teacher? Is this chance meeting Spirit led? It is certainly God's will that Christians teach sinners the gospel, and Christians should seize every opportunity to teach others. But does the Holy Spirit override a Christian's voluntary decisions, and corral his direction? The Holy Spirit has never operated on "gut feelings" or "navigational overrides." In the Bible certain ones who had gifts of the Holy Spirit were verbally told by the Holy Spirit where to go (Acts 10:19-20; 13:1-4). But today, in the absence of these gifts of the Holy Spirit, this does not occur. We are not physically corralled by the Holy Spirit. When we make wrong turns which prove to be good turns, and when by chance we meet a sinner who wants to hear the gospel, we should not conclude it is miraculous navigation employed by the Holy Spirit. If that is the case, then we are not responsible for where we may end up! How many have said job decisions, financial decisions, and even marriage decisions were directed by the Holy Spirit? When those decisions result in disaster, whose fault is it? It is not the Holy Spirit's fault, because every individual makes decisions and introduces himself to others based on

what he knows and on what he desires. This is called free will. We must understand opportunities may await us even when we make the "wrong turn." Christians are among a world of sinners so we can let our lights shine (Matthew 5:16). We will have opportunities to teach others. No matter what our circumstances may be, whether or not we "make the right turn," we must have faith and be thankful that "*all things work together for good to them that love God*" (Romans 8:28). We are not led by the Holy Spirit in a physical sense.

Christians Are To "Be Filled With The Spirit"

Being filled with the Spirit can have two applications in the New Testament. The first and basic application is for every Christian to have the influence of the Holy Spirit as their guide in life. This is where one is having God rule them as the word of Christ dwells in them richly. Compare Ephesians 5:18-20 and Colossians 3:15-17 to see how the parallel passages relate these three expressions: (1) "*be filled with the Spirit;*" (2) "*let the peace of God rule in your hearts;*" and, (3) "*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.*" The basic application of "*being filled with the Spirit*" means that Christians are seeking to have more of the righteousness of God (the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit) rule them. Christians may learn God's righteousness through the Bible.

"*Being filled with the Spirit*" is related to being led by the Spirit. One cannot be filled with the Spirit if he or she is not led by the Spirit. If one is led by the Spirit it means they faithfully employ what they have learned from God's word in the Bible. This makes a Christian godly, Christ-like, and filled with the Spirit. Every Christian should seek this more each day.

Being "*filled with the Spirit*" equips Christians to conquer sin. It is contrasted in the Bible with being "*drunk with wine, wherein is excess*" (Ephesians 5:18). Otherwise put, being "*filled with the Spirit*" is in contrast to those who would resort to worldliness for their pleasure and comfort. The surrounding verses teach that following the Spirit's word keeps a Christian from sin (Ephesians 5:1-20). Vss. 8-9 say, "*For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth).*" God does not want Christians to sin. In order to conquer sin God tells Christians to be "*filled with the Spirit.*"

According to Ephesians 5:1-20, we are filled with the Spirit as we "*understand,*" "*speak,*" "*sing,*" and "*walk*" according to the will of the Lord.

The second application in the New Testament of being "*filled with the Spirit*" has to do with the imparting of the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. It is used this way in Acts 2:4; where the apostles "*were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.*" These gifts have been studied before in this bulletin. These gifts were only given to the apostles, who could then only give them to others by the laying on of hands. They were given to confirm God's word and edify Christians before God's revelation was fully finished. When it was finished, miraculous gifts ceased (1 Corinthians 13:8-13).

Christians Are To Bear The "Fruit Of The Spirit"

Christians who subscribe to being "*led by the Spirit*" will bear the Holy Spirit's fruit (Galatians 5:13-26). Paul wrote, "*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law*" (vss. 22-24). It is important to define every one of these fruits, because they are descriptive of the Holy Spirit, of God the Father, and of Jesus Christ the Son. These fruits set one apart from the world.

The "*fruit of the Spirit*" needs definition so we can bear it. Here are some definitions along with scriptures to help show their application.

- Love is defined by God's action in giving His own Son as the sinner's sacrifice (John 3:16; 1 Corinthians 13:4-7).
- Joy is eternal joy or delight found through Christ (Hebrews 12:2).
- Peace relates harmony within a person (Philippians 4:7), between peoples (Ephesians 2:15), but especially between people and God (Romans 5:1).
- Longsuffering is the painstaking effort one would employ in helping another, such as God giving the sinner a chance to be saved, and allowing the sinner time to repent (2 Peter 3:9).
- Gentleness has to do with kindness, such as what God had towards sinners to whom He offered Christ (Ephesians 2:7).
- Goodness is being good in character and in effect, such as God and Christ are in everything (Matthew 19:16-17). That which is morally honorable, pleasing to God, and therefore beneficial (Galatians 6:10).
- Faith is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1; Romans 10:17), and one led by the Spirit will keep increasing in faith in God throughout life.
- Meekness denotes one who is gentle or mild, as Christ displays as our master (Matthew 11:28-30).

- Temperance is strength or self control, as used by Paul in his defense of the gospel, as he spoke before the Roman Governor Felix (Acts 24:24-25).

Every Christian must bear the fruit of the Spirit. It defines the people of God, and molds Christians to be a living sacrifice, conformed not to this world, but to God. Bearing the Spirit's fruit builds character, saves the Christian, shines the light of Christ (Philippians 2:12-15), and produces unity on the basis of God's righteousness (Ephesians 4:2-3).

The Holy Spirit works in the life of a faithful Christian. Each Christian must examine himself or herself, asking, "Am I bearing the fruit of the Spirit?" We can each prove that we are "led by the Spirit" and we are "*filled with the Spirit,*" by believing and obeying what the Spirit has revealed for us in the New Testament.

Adapted From Carl Lungstrum