

# “THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

## “How Does The Holy Spirit Lead And Influence Christians?”

By Chuck Northrop

To the Christians at Rome, Paul wrote, **“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God”** (Rom. 8:14). Thus, clearly Paul affirmed Christians are led by the Holy Spirit. However, the question arises, “How does the Holy Spirit lead and influence Christians?” Does this mean the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, leads directly by visions or dreams, by revelation, or by influencing thought? Or does this mean the Holy Spirit leads us indirectly by the Word which He revealed to holy men of God? These are the only two possibilities. Either the Spirit leads directly or indirectly. If directly, then there is no need for the written revealed will of God, but if He leads indirectly through the Word of God, then there is no need for direct revelation since the Word of God claims to be all sufficient. To answer these questions, consider the context from which the statement was given.

In Romans 8:1 Paul declared, **“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”** There are a great number of blessings for those who are **“in Christ Jesus.”** In fact, they have **“all spiritual blessings”** (Eph. 1:3). There are no spiritual blessings found outside of Christ. Such spiritual blessings include redemption (Rom. 3:24), forgiveness (Eph. 1:7), reconciliation (Eph. 2:13-16), salvation (2 Tim. 2:10), and as found Romans 8 **“no condemnation”** (no spiritual sentence of death) are **“in Christ.”** Because of so many rich blessings, those who are in Christ **“walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”** To **“walk after the Spirit”** is the same as being **“led by the Spirit,”** and these are the opposite of walking **“after the flesh.”**

Question: How, then, do Christians walk after the Spirit? The answer is found in the verses following. Paul continued, **“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh”** (Rom. 8:2-3). There are three laws found in these verses. The first of these laws is **“the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.”** This law is the gospel, the truth, the New Testament, or the law of Christ. It begins with Matthew’s account of the gospel and ends with the book of Revelation. The second law is **“the law of sin and death.”** This law is the general principle: if you sin, you die (see also Rom. 6:23 and Ezek. 18:20). Finally, the third law (verse 3) is the Mosaic law. This is the law that was given to Moses on Mount Sinai and proclaimed to Israel while wandering in the wilderness. To answer the question, Christians walk after the Spirit by walking according to **“the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus”** (verse 2).

Here is Paul’s point: The Mosaic law was impotent in freeing man from **“the law of sin and death,”** but **“the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus”** could (and for Christians did) free people from **“the law of sin and death.”** Therefore, there is no sentence of death, **“no condemnation,”** to those who are **“in Christ Jesus.”**

Further in this context, Paul contrasted walking after the flesh with walking after the Spirit. To walk after the Spirit is to mind the things of the Spirit – spiritual living (verse 6). To walk after the flesh is to mind the things of the flesh or, in other words, to be carnally minded – carnal living, worldliness, sensual lifestyle (verse 6). Notice in verse 7, Paul wrote that **“the carnal mind” “is not subject to the law of God.”** Remember and keep in mind, the carnal mind is opposite the spiritual mind. Since, the carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, the spiritual mind is subject to the law of God. Thus, to walk after the Spirit (that is, to be spiritually minded or to be led by the Spirit) is to be subject to the law of God. Verses 8-9 concern the person who refuses to follow the Spirit of God. In other words, he or she refuses to follow or subject himself or herself to the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.

Paul's conclusion is found in verses 12-14. He wrote, ***“Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.”*** To keep this in context, to live after the flesh is to die spiritually – ***“the law of sin and death,”*** but to be led by the Spirit of God – ***“the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus”*** – is to be the sons of God and to live.

This conclusion also fits the general context of the book of Romans. Throughout this epistle, Paul developed his stated theme: ***“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith”*** (Rom. 1:16-17). Notice the provisions the gospel provides. First, it is ***“the power of God unto salvation.”*** The gospel contains all the provisions needed to obtain salvation. No other provision is needed including the Spirit working independently from the gospel. Second, the gospel reveals the righteousness of God. This is not speaking of God's character of righteousness but of the gospel which reveals righteousness or justification through faith which is from God. Again, no other means is needed to understand the righteousness which God imputes upon the faithful servant of Christ. Finally in these key verses of Romans, Paul declared that from the gospel the righteousness which emanates from God is ***“revealed from faith to faith.”*** Literally this phrase can be translated ***“out of faith into faith.”*** From the system of faith (the word of God), Christians grow in faith (Rom. 10:17). Paul developed this theme throughout the book of Romans. The gospel is all sufficient, and as such, there is no need for direct revelation.

This conclusion is further developed in the context of the New Testament. Peter declared the all-sufficient nature of the scriptures in 2 Peter 1:3. God has ***“given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness.”*** Nothing else is needed. When the ***“sword of the Spirit”*** is wielded, the Holy Spirit wields His mighty power by and through the word of God which He inspired (Eph. 6:17; Heb. 4:12; 2 Pet. 1:20-21). Also consider the parallel verses of Ephesians 5:18-19 and Colossians 3:16. A casual comparison of these verses reveals ***being “filled with the Spirit”*** is to ***“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom.”***

Finally, if the Holy Spirit directly leads us in our understanding of the Word, then there could be no misunderstanding because the Spirit makes no mistakes. Since there are misunderstandings among Christians, then we must conclude the Holy Spirit did not directly lead us in our understanding. Further, if the Holy Spirit leads us directly in our understanding of the Scriptures, then He keeps us and guards us from apostasy. In fact, since the Holy Spirit is perfect, it would be impossible for a Christian to fall away. However, the Bible teaches Christians can and do fall away (Gal. 5:4; 6:1; Heb. 6:4; Acts 8:13, 20). Therefore, the conclusion is necessary – the Holy Spirit does not lead us directly.

The Holy Spirit is pleading with you to be led by Him! No, He is not leading nor influencing you in a direct or miraculous way. He is pleading with you by or through the Spirit-inspired word. Listen to the Spirit's pleading. It is not a voice in your mind or a vision in a dream. It is the word of God – the word given to us through holy men of God by the Holy Spirit. ■

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## Pointed Perceptions

By Perry Hurst

The Psalmist said, ***“This is the day which the Lord has made, Let us rejoice and be glad in it”*** (Ps. 118:24). This passage causes us to reflect upon an attitude that we ought to have each day of our lives! But how can that be? How can we have such a positive feeling of joy each day? We have trials, sorrows, temptations, heartaches, pains, disappointments, needs, etc. Joy in the midst of all these struggles? Some may think it to be impossible, yet we find the key to such a positive outlook in 2 Corinthians 4:17-18, ***“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.”*** ■

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Tommy Glendol McClure, Editor and Evangelist - 925-759-4357

Web Site: [www.lodicachurchofchrist.com](http://www.lodicachurchofchrist.com) - Email: [lodicachurchofchrist@gmail.com](mailto:lodicachurchofchrist@gmail.com) - Phone: 209-365-9250