

# A Sure Leading

by Doc Greenway

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*Doc Greenway's sermon emphasizes the practical partnership with the Holy Spirit and its role in guiding believers towards a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ.*

**Duration:** 1:14:02

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, Acts 13:2, Acts 15:4, Romans 8:8, Romans 12:1, 2 Corinthians 13:14, 1 Peter 1:12

**Topics:** "Christian Life"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of prayer in helping others understand the preaching of the word of God. The speaker shares that when they tried to explain the word of God, people couldn't fully comprehend it, but when they bombarded them with prayer, something amazing happened. The speaker also discusses the need for partnership with the Holy Spirit and the sense of deliverance and freedom that comes from it. They highlight the importance of obedience to the leading of the Spirit and the responsibility we have in keeping our vows to God.

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## Transcript

Tonight again I want to continue the theme of partnership with the Holy Spirit. The text, as you no doubt know by now, is the last verse of the last chapter of 2 Corinthians. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Amen. Now I have spoken to you on three occasions on this subject. On the first occasion I mentioned that there is a kingdom involved in this partnership.

That until a man is born again of the Spirit of God, he cannot understand or comprehend anything of these mighty movings of God's Spirit. That is the first essential. And then after that we spoke about a real sense of deliverance and freedom that comes through partnership with the Holy Spirit.

On the third occasion we spoke about that sense of thralldom which is involved, because no man is the law unto himself in spiritual life. And as I played back those tapes and listened to what I had to say, I was made quite aware that there were so many things that were left untouched, and that some of the things upon which I had been led to touch and to make reference, they were not dealt with in any full way at all. And it seemed to me that the best thing that I could do tonight was to continue on that theme, and even though I may touch upon some things upon which I have spoken already, I know that you will understand.

It is done with a view to rounding off some of these principles which are involved. Now you may wonder why it is that we continue to speak about the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit. Let me disabuse your mind at once if you have any idea that we do not honor the Lord Jesus Christ.

We certainly do. And we believe that if you make room for the Holy Spirit, He will always make room for the Lord Jesus Christ. But if you do not honor the Holy Spirit, then He does not have the opportunity of glorifying the Lord Jesus in the midst of you.

And so while we speak about this subject, it is not a subject which is an end in itself, but simply a means to an end. The end is the exalting of the Lord Jesus Christ as the living head of His church, and as the personal Savior of men. Indeed, the Holy Spirit has no other function.

His one supreme desire and longing is to exalt and glorify the Lord Jesus. And I am positive that as we keep that ever before our eyes, as the vision glorious, we shall not be led astray into any side path, or be taken up with any side issue. This is a thrilling subject to me.

I have said time and time again that I would rather not speak about the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit, but take up some other subject, because the Word of God is full of such wonderful truths. And indeed we have been trying to do that right here in this church. Those of you who have been attending the services will know that for a long while we spoke from the first epistle of Peter, and the Lord helped us to expound that wonderful letter.

Then we took the twelfth chapter of Romans, before that the eighth chapter of Romans. And I thought, well now this is fine, I'll continue talking about these great chapters of the Bible, and I'm all set to go. And then the Lord said, no I don't want you to do that.

I want you to talk about the things that, well, are necessary for the people at such a time as this. So I found myself being led back again to this great theme. And I can honestly say to you tonight, it has been like a man bringing treasures, new and old, out of the wood.

For I have seen things in my study and research and in my prayer times, as I've considered the Word of God, that I've not seen up to this point. And although I've been a Christian for many years, and I've been baptized with the Holy Spirit for well over 30 years, yet the amazing thing is that when I come again to God's Word, and I come once more to this subject, the truth of God is so Now tonight, I want to say that the partnership that we enjoy with the Holy Spirit, is not so idealistic, that it has no practical application. There are practical elements in this partnership, most practical.

They apply to our everyday life, and to the situations of everyday life, and that in a most definite and positive way. I know it is a profound mystery that He, the Eternal Spirit, should hold fellowship with us. I know that there are things involved there that our minds cannot conceive, nor can we ever hope to analyze all that He wants and longs to do.

But there are certain things that we glean from experience, and which we can discover in the Word of God. There are certain principles of truth, which are borne out in the experience of those whose lives are recorded in this book, and whose ministry is set down here for our edification, that gives us an assurance that we in our day and generation can know God in a real way, in a positive way, in a personal way, in a progressive way, and thank God in a perfect way too, if we are prepared to go on with Him. And that to me is a cause for great rejoicing.

How can we see these things of the Spirit? Well, I think we have to be in the same attitude as was John on the Isle of Patmos. It is when we are in the Spirit that we see the vision of the ascended Christ. It is when we are immersed in the Spirit that the heavens seem to be open to us.

It is then that we see that Christ in the midst of the golden lampstand, lampstands, the Christ who walks and who ministers as the great high priest, the Christ whose eyes are as a flame of fire, whose word is like a sharp sword, the Christ whose feet shine like silver brass, the Christ who is alive, and behold, alive forevermore. But to see Him, we must be in the Spirit. And I think that is one of the great tests of the reality of what God is doing.

I was speaking yesterday to a minister, not a minister in any of the so-called full gospel movements, but quite outside that altogether. And he was telling me how God has recently baptized him with the Holy Ghost and fire, and that he found himself speaking in other tongues and magnifying the Lord. And I said, well, what does the experience mean to you? I shall never forget the smile on his face as he said, The thing that has convinced me it is of God is the fact that suddenly I find that the Lord Jesus Christ, He is so much more wonderful than ever I thought He could be.

And although I've been a Christian all these years, he said, and ministering from God's word, why I've suddenly realized the greatness of my Savior and the glory of the Christ who died for me. I said, oh, that's wonderful. That's more important than speaking with tongues.

That's more valuable than prophecy. That, I think, is far more lasting than any one of the gifts of the Spirit, to have a deep assurance in your heart that as you are led in the Spirit, Christ Jesus the Lord becomes so real to you, far more real than you'd ever realized or understood before. And I'm sure that is the testimony of everyone who knows God in this way.

So the ultimate proof of the validity of any experience that we have is whether or not it leads us to the exalted Christ and gives him his rightful place in our life, that our testimony might bear fruit to his praise and honor and glory. Now, what are some of these practical elements which I am to mention? Well, I've discovered seven at least. Maybe you'd like to make a note of them.

I'll go over them slowly and give you the opportunity. First of all, there is in this fellowship a sure leading by the Spirit. There isn't any doubt about that.

Sure leading. And then secondly, there is a full living in this partnership. Not just an existing, but a full living.

There is a deep loving in this partnership. A love which is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. There is a high longing in this partnership.

A longing which I think is a creation of the Holy Spirit in the hearts and lives of those who know him. There is a quiet listening in this partnership. A listening for the voice that speaks with authority and a listening for that voice in so many situations because he can speak in multifarious ways.

And there is a sweet laboring in this partnership. Where our service for him becomes a delight. Something that is full of joy and gladness.

And no longer do we labor as though the old chariot wheels need a lot of pushing along. But we find ourselves sitting in the chariot and being carried along by the power and by the glory of the Christ who

loves us. And then there's a rich learning in this partnership.

For it seems to me we never come to the end of the lessons that he wants to teach us as we walk in the light of his counsel and try to obey his will. Now I can only speak to you about one of those things tonight. The sure leading which is in this partnership.

So many dear Christian people are concerned to know the leading of the Spirit of God. And unfortunately there are some who through lack of teaching believe that they have the leading of the Spirit but have been led far away from God. I want tonight therefore to utter a word of caution.

But not that we might be so cautious that we become inactive. Caution does not necessarily mean inaction. We want to seek to do the will of God and to obey him as he gives us light and as he gives us the understanding of his word and of his will.

But what is involved then in this leading by the Spirit of God? Well I think you'll agree with me there is divine revelation in it. In the chapter read to us tonight in the portion read in verses 12 and 13 I've got it typed out here to save time in turning to it as I usually do. Here is what Jesus said to his disciples.

I have yet many things to say unto you but he cannot bear them now. 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 show you things to come.

Observe first of all the reference to time here in verse 12. Many things to say unto you but he cannot bear them now at this present moment. There is a time element in the dealings of God.

There has to be a conditioning of the mind to receive the revelation. You can't expect that God is going to give you the full revelation at once. You cannot bear it now he said to them.

You're not in the place to take it, to carry it, to receive it, to undertake, to hold it. You can't do that yet and I'm sure that God has to say that to his people on occasions. Especially those who seem to be in the dark concerning the working of God's Spirit.

Many things he longs to say but the mind has to be conditioned to carry that unfolding, to receive it and then to apply it. It is like the artist who always ushered his visitors into a dark room. Although it was blazing sunlight outside, this room was heavily curtained.

It was full of darkness and gloom and after they had remained there for about 10 minutes or so, then he would take them into his studio and show them his paintings, his works of art. And the reason for that, he wanted to get the glare of the world out of their eyes, that they might see the beauty of what he had produced. And that is how the Spirit of God deals with you and me.

That is how God comes in his moving in our life. He wants to take the glare of other things out of our eyes, out of our gaze, that we might be conditioned to see the purposes of God and comprehend something of the leading of his Spirit. And what a wonderful thing it is when we are able to go through that experience, through that process and find on the other side a new understanding, a new comprehension of the things of God.

God is very patient with us. He's been very patient with me. I must confess that because so many times I've been unable to take in what he wants to show me.

But as I've lingered in his presence and I've been willing to wait before him, the revelation has come, all right. God is always willing to explain himself, but not always in our terms, of course. And then what is the reference to truth here? When he, the Spirit of truth, has come.

Now this word he is emphatic, hekainos, this one and this one alone, distinct from all others. When he, the Spirit of truth, has come, then he will guide you into all truth. It is a distinctive name, isn't it? The Spirit of truth.

Three times it is used in relation to the comforter. First as strengthener in John 14 verses 16 and 17. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you forever, even the Spirit of truth which the world cannot receive.

The comforter is the Spirit of truth. The word comforter is a very unhappy translation. It isn't that he comes to impart solace, although he will do that when we need it.

But the idea behind the word is strengthener, someone who can put iron into your soul. And we do need that occasionally, don't we? I know that when people come to visit me, they are so sorry for themselves on occasions, filled with self-pity, and they wonder how they can face life. And I suppose in the ordinary course of things, what they're looking for is solace and comfort.

Well, they have that too, but I never allow them to leave without giving them a little shot in the arm, you know, and remind them that after all, they are facing the challenge of life, and it is no time to be concerned with themselves, but rather to be occupied with the work of God. We need that too. And often and often the Spirit of God comes to give us that strengthening of faith, and determination, and courage, that we can face the challenge of life, and face the things that militate against us, and go through them in the power which he alone can give.

So that is the first reference then to the distinctive name, the Spirit of truth, connected with the Holy Spirit as comforter or strengthener. The next scripture is John 15 and verse 26. But when the comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me.

Here he is seen then, the Spirit of truth as testifier concerning the Lord Jesus. I think I have explained, and no doubt you know it by now, that the work of the Holy Spirit is not primarily to bless us, or to undertake for us, or to minister to us primarily. The real work of the Spirit is to testify and witness concerning the Lord Jesus Christ.

He is here to advance his claims. He is here to support his word. He is here in this very world which rejected him to show him forth as the glorious one.

That is his work, and he does that as the Spirit of truth. Only one equal with God could ever interpret God, and only one equal with the Lord Jesus Christ could ever testify perfectly concerning him, for he knows all there is to know about him. And what he brings to you and me, therefore, in his revelation of the Christ, he does as the Spirit of truth.

You can have false enthusiasm. I suppose it's possible to have a false love. You can have false ideals, but you can never have false truth.

And as the Spirit of truth, then, he is here to describe, depict, unfold before our wondering gaze all the glories of the Christ, as our earth-born eyes are conditioned to see them. This is his work as the Spirit of truth. And then he is also, as the Spirit of truth, the initiator.

He shall guide you into all truth, initiating the people of God into the truth of God. Not that he will point the way, but he will go before you, for that's the meaning of this word guide. He will go before you, so that you no longer need to be faltering and fumbling and stumbling and wondering whether you're on the right track, for he will always be just a step ahead of you, according to the promise which Jesus gave.

His wisdom is perfect. He knows all things, and therefore he can lead us in the path of God, in the will of God, in absolute truth, and in absolute perfectness. It doesn't mean that he's going to show us everything.

It doesn't mean that we shall understand everything he does, for we walk by faith and not by sight. We must know that. But he will give us enough light to let us know that we are treading the right pathway.

And sufficient light to take us a step at a time. You know in the early days in Wales, before we had electricity, it was quite a common sight to see people, so I'm told, by the older people walking about with lanterns in the dead of night. And there was one little boy, he had to go quite a way to his home, and the gentleman with whom he'd been staying said, well all right son, you can take this lantern.

And he looked at the lantern, and looked at the gentleman, and looked at the dark road ahead of him, and it seemed to be such a little flickering light. And he said to the man, well this isn't very bright is it? No, he said, it isn't. But we'll give you enough light to take one step at a time.

And there's one thing I can promise you, he said, it will light you home. And that was a comfort to him. It's a comfort to me to know that the blessed spirit of God, although he doesn't flood my pathway with light, he gives me enough light for a step at a time, yet I know he'll give me enough light to see me home.

And that is important to you and to me, isn't it? God never intends that we should understand perfectly this side. He never intends we should have a perfect comprehension of all that he does. For we see now through a glass darkly.

We see the reflection in a mirror, and we are puzzled. It is only then that we shall see face to face. But now we can walk in the light of the counsel which he gives us through the moving and working of the Holy Spirit, and enough light is given to enable us to take one step at a time.

And that's a wise procedure. Now notice not only the distinctive name which is given, but the comprehensive area of his working and his moving. Notice, he will guide you into all truth.

Again, not complete understanding of all truth, not that. But the area of truth is vast and comprehensive. You can never get to the end of it, for there's always something new to be shown to you.

It is impossible ever to reach the limit of new discovery where this partnership of the Spirit is concerned. Now, I don't run away and say that I said tonight that you can see new truth. Never.

If it's true, it's not new. If it's new, it's not true. For truth is as old as God, but he does give you glorious new light upon glorious old truth.

And that is a thing that I think is a cause for wonder and amazement. That he can take this book of God, he can take the truth of God, record it here, and yet over and over again, he can show you new aspects,

new angles, until it scintillates and shines and is glorious before your wondering gaze. And your heart is thrilled, at least mine is, often and often, as I see something which I've never seen before in the Word of God.

Now, that is what he is doing, guiding us, leading us into all the truth that we need to know before Jesus comes again. That is very different, of course, from the attitude in which the disciples were found as Jesus talked to them on that day. I have many things to say to you.

You can't bear them. He tried to talk about his cross. They couldn't take it in.

He tried to talk about the glory which should follow, but they thought only in terms of a kingdom in this world. They couldn't take it in. And even at last, when he talked to them about being baptized with the Holy Ghost, they said to him, Lord, well, when are you going to restore the kingdom? And then he had to say to them again that the times and seasons don't worry about those, but you shall be baptized with power after the Holy Ghost has come upon you.

And he tries to initiate them into it. It's so difficult, so hard. I find the same thing myself.

Many a time people have come and said, well, what is it you say about this being baptized with the Holy Ghost? What is it all about? And you begin to explain, you try to make it clear, and all the time you're conscious that they can't take it in, and you don't know what to do about it. Well, the only thing that I've discovered that really works is to forget about trying to explain and begin bombarding them with prayer. And after you've bombarded them for a few weeks, well, then they come again.

And amazingly enough, you find that something has happened in the meantime. God has been teaching them, showing them, and in a wonderful way preparing them, and they can realize something of what you've experienced, and the thing about which the Word of God speaks. Now, I'm sure that this surely is in the purpose of God, and I'm positive that the area of truth into which the Spirit of God wants to lead us can never be exhausted.

There's plenty there for everybody. And as this great territory opens up before us, we are conscious surely there is enough here to keep us going until Jesus comes again. Bless his name.

Now, I want you to notice the trend to which reference is made here. For he shall not speak of himself. That means literally out from himself.

He is not an independent deity who gives independent truth. There's nothing like that about the working of the Holy Spirit. He listens in to what the Father and the Son are saying, and according to the promise of Jesus, what he hears, he will speak.

This to me is an amazing thing about the Spirit of God. When I read the Old Testament, and see the way in which God raised up men, perhaps one man in a generation, sure and there, to become a mouthpiece for himself. One Isaiah, one Daniel, one Ezekiel, and so on.

And yet, here is Pentecost with its diffusion of power. What a glorious opportunity the Spirit of God has for disseminating truth, we would think. Now surely, he will come into his own, and will have an opportunity of telling out those things which he as God knows and possesses.

But you see the way in which he goes about it. Just as Jesus spoke only the things which his Father spoke, so the Spirit of God binds himself in this age, in this tremendous time of grace, to what he hears the Father and the Son speaking, and that only. That is important for us to remember too.

There is still a perfect cooperation with the Father and the Son where he is concerned. And those things that he hears, that shall he speak, said the Lord Jesus. Remember that was the claim of Jesus Christ, wasn't it? In John 8 and 38 he said, I speak that which I have seen with my Father.

John 15 and 15. Henceforth I call you not servants, but friends. For the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth.

But I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you. So he is repeating what he has heard the Father say. This is what he tells his disciples, and this is what the Spirit of God will do.

There's no independent action here, and there ought not to be in any of our attitude either if we claim to be filled with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God speaks what he hears the Father and Son say. For the all things relate to the all things within the economy of redemption.

The things that apply to you and me as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. And he is confining his revelation to those things. And how wise that is.

You know there are certain men who try to go past that, and they want to fix dates and times for the Lord's return for instance. Going right against the teaching of Scripture, and they have a great following in some places. They want to go beyond what the Spirit of God is prepared to say.

But we have to be careful where this is concerned, remembering that there is a plan and a purpose in what the Spirit of God does, even in this time. Now the Holy Spirit has a voice, whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak. It's amazing how many people take half that verse, isn't it? He shall guide you into all truth.

There you are brother, chapter and verse, it's here you know. Here it is. He'll guide you into all truth, this wonderful book of God.

Praise the Lord. But don't put a full stop behind that, just put a comma there, will you? But he goes on to say, and whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak. Now if he speaks, he must have a voice.

And that voice is heard. It's heard in the book of Acts, Acts 13 and verse 2. As they prayed and ministered and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, in such a way that they could hear him say, separate unto me Barnabas and Saul, for the work of the ministry, whereunto I have called them. That was something positive, something definite.

Now there was nothing independent about that even. The Spirit of God called these men apart, the Spirit of God commissioned them, sent them forth, but they didn't go awarding on their own charges. They were still responsible to the church of Antioch, from which place the Holy Spirit had sent them forth.

And when they returned, they were careful to recite the things which had been done. And then they turned their faces toward Jerusalem, and they acknowledged that there too was a place of authority, and were most happy to cooperate with those apostles before them in Christ. That's very different from what we are seeing in the dominion today.

In this so-called freelance traveling ministry, to me it's a monstrosity. I can't find anything in the Word of God that supports the idea that men can go off like that, go off at a tangent, and because they've got some revelation from God, well then they can do what they like, go where they please, and they're responsible to no one. If that is supporting the truth and principle of the body of Christ, then I can't find any foundation for it in the Word of God.

We were talking about this in the Bible training center today, as a matter of fact, and how necessary it is that discipline should be applied in every branch of Christian service and of experience. And sure you find it so beautifully portrayed, though the Holy Ghost said, separate unto me Barnabas and Saul, they were still sent forth by the church at Antioch. And they returned, and they gave their account of what had happened, and they acknowledged leadership in Jerusalem.

They were not working as independents, but they were working as those who are interdependent and members of the same body of Christ. And I'm sure the Spirit of God wants us to see that too in his leading and in his guiding. Now then, there is divine revelation in this leading.

Then there is divine reason in it. You have a reference to that in Acts 10 and verse 19, and again verse 20. While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee.

Arise therefore, and get thee down and go with them, doubting nothing, for I have sent them. I made reference to this some time ago about the sheet let down from heaven and the creatures that Peter saw while he was in this trance or whatever it was, and how he heard a voice saying to him, Peter, arise and kill and eat. He said, Not so, Lord.

You can't say not so and Lord in the same breath. If he is the Lord, it must be so. Arise and kill and eat.

Not so, Lord, he said. I've never touched anything common or unclean. And the Lord said to him, What I've cleansed, don't you call unclean? And while he pondered on this vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee.

Arise therefore, and get thee down and go with them, doubting nothing, for he was still doubting, for I have sent them. When he got there, what did he find? Three Gentiles looking for him, and he was a Jew, and inviting him to come with them to the house of a Gentile. What an amazing thing.

Here you find Cornelius the centurion, a man exercised greatly about the things of God, who had been fasting and praying, and while he was in this attitude, God spoke to him by the Spirit, and told him to send these men to the house of one Simon the Tanner, to ask for Peter. And Peter was to come with them and speak to him concerning the things of God. What a wonderful plan it is, isn't it? The Spirit of God speaking to a man away over there, and another man away over here, and then arranging things so beautifully, that at last they meet up, and they find that God has been leading them all the time.

It is amazing. And God is doing that kind of thing surely. And this is the way in which he does it.

Think of the circumstances of the vision, in which Peter found himself. Think of the challenge in it. Don't you call it common or unclean, the Lord said? Why was God saying that? Because he knew that if he hadn't, Peter would never have gone into the house where the Gentiles lived.

And if he hadn't gone in there, and begun to speak to them, the Spirit of God would not have fallen upon them. How wonderfully intricate is the interweaving of God's purpose, and how wonderfully God by his

Spirit arranges things, that there is no mistake whatever to be made. You know it is contrary to Peter's reasoning as a man, as an orthodox Jew, but there was a divine reason in all this guidance, just the same.

The leading is clear, but the interpretation is ours. We have to interpret the leading which the Spirit of God gives. And just here, the responsibility becomes ours.

And just at this point, very often we fail, and we can and sometimes do make mistakes. The leading is clear. The responsibility is ours to interpret what he has shown us in the Spirit.

And I don't think it is possible that any one of us can ever understand what God wants us to do, unless we are first of all prepared to obey what he shows us. We've got to face it. God's ways are not unreasonable, they are super reasonable, and they are super.

Praise the Lord. God's movements are not according to our way of thinking, but he still moves by and through the Spirit with mathematical precision. But the mathematics are his and not ours.

The leading of the Holy Spirit will never be in conflict with the lessons taught us in this Word of God. Every single principle which is enunciated here will be observed by the Holy Spirit, and that is not guidance which cuts across the plain teaching of God's Word. Now, I knew a man in Australia.

He was a very determined sort of fellow. Most of us called it stubbornness, but he called it strength of character. Well, it all depends, of course, on how you view it.

But he was determined, for instance, that he was going to go against the government. And although they tried to show him from the Word of God that it was contrary to the teachings of God's Word, we were to honor those in authority. He said, well, I'm not going to pay my taxes anyway.

Well, some of the men said to him, you know what will happen if you don't? They'll put you in prison if you don't pay. And he said, that's all right. He said, I'm quite prepared to do that.

He said, I've become a martyr for Christ's sake. That's how he regarded it. Well, he didn't pay his taxes, they put him in prison.

And he thought of himself in that way. A martyr for the cause of Christ. Nonsense.

He was there because of his stubbornness. And God didn't get any glory out of it. Not at all.

Now, when men say that the Spirit of God is leading them to do things like that, I think it's presumption. It isn't faith. For the Spirit of God will never cause anyone to do anything.

It will never bring embarrassment upon his work or upon his church. Surely, that's contrary to the reasoning of God. For he is here to support and to uphold the testimony of his church in this world.

And he'll never allow anything that will cause discord, disharmony, disruption, and thus dishonor the work of God. I'm sure the Spirit of God is not the author or the creator of such a situation. But there it is.

That is how men will reason. And that is how men will proceed. But you must remember that the leading of the Spirit of God will always coincide with the doctrines of the Word of God.

One thing more. Not only is there a divine revelation in this leading, and a divine reason in it, but there is also a divine restraint in it. Acts 16 and verse 6. Now, when they had gone throughout Phrygia and

Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the Word in Asia, after they would come to Mysia, they are saved to go into Bithynia.

But the Spirit suffered them not. There's restraint in this leadership. It's lovely to think tonight that the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and so are the stops.

When he says stop, well, you just have to stop, or else. Now, here's the remarkable thing. They longed to go in and preach in Europe.

They longed to go in and preach in these places untouched by the Gospel. They wanted to go. They are saved to go.

They struggled, and they strove to get there. And the Spirit of God said, no, stop where you are. It must have been very difficult.

Here's a point to observe, surely. The leading of the Spirit in the life of a Christian is a proof that he is a son of God. That's Romans 8 and verse 14.

And the leading of the Holy Spirit in the life of a Christian delivers him from legal reasoning. That's Galatians 5 and 18. If you are led of the Spirit, you're not under the law.

But within this leading, in spite of these things, there is a prerogative which the Holy Spirit exercises when he restrains where you would be going forward in great zeal. And he puts a barrier before you, and you know in your heart it's not to be. And yet deep down within you want it to be.

What a struggle, what a fight goes on until we learn to submit under the mighty hand and dictatorship of the Spirit of God, because he certainly does no best. So you see, within this leading, there is not only power to impel, but there is power to restrain. Suffer them not, forbidden of the Holy Ghost.

They were forbidden to visit Asia. How and by what means? By an audible voice? Well, whatever it was, it was some positive thing. They knew, and knew definitely, that the Spirit of God was preventing them.

And when the Assaid attempted, in spite of all this, they attempted to go into Bithynia at least. Again, they were prevented by the Spirit of God. He suffered them not.

Now here's the point I want you to notice. In this second instance, he suffered them not, the indication of restraint is not nearly so strong as in the first instance, forbidden. First, forbidden, the Spirit of God said, no.

Then time elapsed, again the Assaid went to Bithynia, he suffered them not. There's not the positive no now, but there is still a measure of restraint. Then what happens? The sequel is in Acts 16 and verse 9. And a vision appeared unto Paul in the night.

There stood a man in Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, come over into Macedonia and help us. What is happening here? No, in the first instance, a measure of restraint in the second. Now a vision of the need, and the willingness on the part of the Holy Spirit to let them go.

What has transpired? Has God changed his mind? Not at all. It's simply the leading of the Spirit within the restraining influence of the time element in the will of God, that's all. And so in this leading of the Spirit, there is this time element that we have to perceive.

The first instruction, you must not go. The second instruction, well, I will not permit you to go. And the third instruction, there's a need now which you have to meet, so go.

I wonder if we have seen this. It is puzzling at times when God deals with us. If God says no at one point in the journey, we're inclined to think, oh well, it's no use, he said no, I'm not the end of it.

It isn't the end of it, it's only the beginning. Give God time. He's got a purpose to fulfil.

And as I said a moment ago, God's timing is perfect. When the apostles did go, they found on the riverbank a company of women worshipping the Lord. That was the first beginnings of the church in Europe.

But God, by his Spirit, wouldn't allow them to go until the exact moment had come. There's a time element in the outworking of this. Verse 10 of the same chapter reads, and after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavour to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called for us for to preach the gospel unto them.

Assuredly gathering. What does it mean? Simply putting things together. That was their responsibility.

They had to interpret the mind of the Spirit now, and so seeing the way Mr. Lord had dealt with them by his Spirit, and this final revelation, they put things together and immediately they were on the way. Time element. I remember once we were in Sunderland in the north of England, and there was a word of prophecy that came in an open meeting.

A word of prophecy to this effect. My hand is upon a place in the north, and I will speak to my servants concerning this place. It is the place called Beamish.

I want you to go there and establish a work for me. Well, that was out in the open meeting. All right.

We in the adversary church don't move on a thing like that. We don't say because a prophecy or an instruction comes in an open meeting, that's the end. We must be on our way.

Not at all. It isn't a prophetic church, it's an apostolic church. We took that word, prayed about it.

We were in council, and while we were in council, another word came to us through a prophet, whose ministry had been tested, tried and proved. And now the word said, it is my will that you should go to this place, but not yet. For I am working in that place to prepare the way for you.

But you shall go in three months time from now. And in three months time from then, when I reached that place, not knowing a soul, to my utter amazement, I found a family of apostolic people there, who had moved from a far away, in the intervening time, settled down there, on their home became the nucleus for the meeting. I didn't know why it should be like that, but the Spirit of God knew.

And I shan't forget my experience in that place. I had to preach every night for two weeks. That was my, they were my instructions.

Every night for two weeks. And I landed there, and I had the flu right away. And the flu wouldn't fly.

And oh, I was ill. I had to go to bed after every meeting, and stay there through the night, and most of the day, crawl into the meeting place, and face the people. I didn't know how to do it.

Absolutely done. And as I stood to my feet and began to minister, it all disappeared. It was wonderful.

I enjoyed preaching, I tell you. I enjoyed it so much, it was the only relief I had. And I preached away there like anything.

And at the end, you know, as soon as I finished preaching, he said the final Amen. Oh, the thing came back on me again. And oh, I was very ill.

And I was like that for the whole fortnight. At the end of the campaign, just the fortnight, we established a church in that place, gave the right hand of fellowship to the people who came. And when I left the old country the last time, it was still going strong.

And you know, as soon as the meetings were over, I was perfectly healed. Here's the strange thing. Every night there were people coming out to be prayed for, and to be healed.

I'd lay my hands upon them, pray for them in the name of the Lord, and they were healed like that. And here was I suffering so much. I can't understand it.

But the Lord took lumps of this old flesh of mine, I tell you, and made me so conscious that I was nothing in his sight. Probably that was the lesson I had to learn at that time. But oh, how wonderful it was to see God's timing.

That's the point I'm making. And oh, my dear friends tonight, Christian men and women, if you want to lead a life that is satisfactory and full of the blessing of the Lord, remember that you can't go ahead of God. Give God time.

Follow after him. Go the way in which he is leading. Otherwise you expect if you rush ahead of him that he's going to follow after you.

Well he does, but not in the way that you expect. Oh, that's an element of time in the leading of the Holy Spirit. You know, there's another instance in the book of Acts too, which gives us quite an interesting angle on this.

It begins in Acts 19, goes over to Acts 21. Luke tells us in Acts 19 of Paul's visit to Jerusalem. It begins in Acts 19, 21, by informing us that Paul, purposed in the Spirit, planned it beforehand, in other words, to go to Jerusalem, saying, after I have been there, I must also see Rome.

Now that's what Paul had in mind. In Acts 20 and 22, there's a restatement of Paul's plan. And now, behold, I go bound in the Spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there, save that thou, holy ghost, witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me.

So he is to go as he purposed. He doesn't know what's awaiting him, but the Spirit of God makes it clear in every city that he visits, that when he gets to Jerusalem, he's going to suffer. Bonds and imprisonment await him.

Now that's clear. But in Acts 21 and verse 4 you read, And finding certain disciples, we tarried there, that's a tarrier, seven days, who said to Paul through the Spirit that he should not go up to Jerusalem. Now what has happened? The Spirit purposed in Paul's life that he should go there.

The Spirit witnessed in every city that he would not only go there, but bonds and imprisonments awaited him when he got there. But here are these disciples who sent in the Spirit the purpose and the will of God, but who say to Paul, not you must not go to Jerusalem, not you shall not go, not even you will not go, but rather you shouldn't go. God save us from our friends.

Especially when it comes to doing the will of God. We pray so often to be saved from our enemies, but our friends can hinder it too. Here are these people, they love the Apostle so much, they couldn't bear to think of him going into that terrible position and situation.

And so they come to him and say, oh you shouldn't go, you shouldn't go really. What happens? He resisted the suggestion, and in verse 11 of that same chapter, his allegiance is confirmed here. Agabus the prophet comes, and signifying in the Spirit what will happen, he took Paul's girdle, and I can see him now, his eyes closed, he's in the Spirit.

I've seen this happen many times, you know. Men and women, the Spirit of God comes upon them, they'll rise to their feet, they'll go through certain motions and actions, symbolizing as the Old Testament prophets did, as Agabus did, taking Paul's girdle, binding his hands, and then saying, thus saith the Holy Ghost, for he has a voice, thus saith the Holy Ghost, so shall they in Jerusalem do to the man who owneth this girdle. So he is going all right, definitely and positively.

And again Paul resists the appeal that was still made, not only by disciples this time, but by Luke also. They said, oh Paul, don't go, don't go. And in verse 14 of that chapter, you hear Paul, you hear it recorded, and when he would not be persuaded, we ceased saying, now here's the strange part, the will of the Lord be done.

But they'd been trying to frustrate the will of the Lord all the way through. How ridiculous it seems, doesn't it? They knew all the time it was the will of God for him to go, but because of what awaited him, oh Saul you can't face it, oh you can't go through with it, oh you shouldn't go there. And then when at last he's so determined, he says, I'm going.

Oh well, is it the will of the Lord be done then? To me there's a humorous element in it, and yet it's so human, isn't it? God save us from our friends. In chapter 23 in verse 11, the Lord Jesus Christ confirms to Paul the fact that he was in his will in the first place, when he purposed to go to Jerusalem. For the Lord said, not only will you go there, Saul, but you'll witness for me in Rome too, but I'll stand by you.

And that's far better than having your friends stand by you. So in the leading of the Spirit of God, there's a restraining element, divine revelation that's there, divine reason that is present, but divine restraint too. And when the will of God is revealed to you, be sure that you don't allow anybody or anything to interfere with it, but be sure also it is the will of God.

I know a young woman to whom God spoke personally many years ago now, and showed her she was to go to the mission field. She had a sick mother at home, but there were two other sisters who were quite willing to look after the mother. But oh, she loved her mother so much, and the mother loved her so much, they couldn't part with each other, so she didn't go to the mission field.

That sort of thing is happening all the time. I heard a young girl stand to her feet in one of the Eastern Beach camps when I was ministering there, and she spoke quite deftly. The Lord has shown me today, and said it with tears, that he must have me on the mission field, and I here and now dedicate my life to

him.

I'm ready to go wherever he wants me. Oh, I was deeply moved. Not long after that, she got married, and after she settled down, and lovely family, beautiful home, and all her talk is about, oh isn't it lovely, you know, to have these nice surroundings.

What's become of the revelation? What has become of the great and strong conviction? Varnish like the mist before the morning sun. One has to be careful in these things, for God does hold us responsible for the vows that we make to him, and there is a sure leading of the Spirit in this partnership, which we must accept and act upon it when it comes. And there's a divine requirement in it.

The requirement is that of implicit obedience. I've touched upon this, but I'll repeat it. Implicit obedience.

I'm positive of this, that the guidance of the Spirit never comes except on the path of obedience. Never. Obedience to the inner voice of the Holy Spirit, as he uses a sensitized and enlightened conscience.

You read what is said in Hebrews 3 verses 7 and 8. The Holy Ghost saith, today if he shall hear his voice, harden not your hearts. What a strange scripture that is. Today says the Spirit, oh we apply that to the sinner, it was applied first to the people of God.

Today the Spirit of God can talk to you. Well if he does, don't harden your heart against him. That's the language of the Spirit to you and to me.

Don't harden your heart by the foolishness of doubt, by the emptiness of pride. Don't harden your heart by the waywardness of sin, by the things that come to battle and to fight against those longings and desires which are created by the Holy Spirit. Don't harden your heart by a narrowness of outlook, or by that awful bigotry that comes because of our prejudice, the blindness that results.

Certainly there's a need for caution as I've said, but there's a need to remember that the time comes when it is the Spirit's now. And if you miss it, you've missed it forever. Don't forget that.

When he says now, he means now. And when we obey and launch out in faith upon the Spirit's now, we find it works out. And that the blessing of God is there to endorse and confirm.

But unless we give obedience, the Spirit of God won't lead us and won't guide us. That is important. How does he guide us and lead us? Well, in so many ways, through the written word, through conscience as I've said, through the words of other people, through the spoken ministry in the church, preaching that is.

There are so many ways. But he wants us to give obedience. Otherwise, we're not going to get the blessing that should be ours out of this partnership and out of this communion.

Disobedience of the voice of the Spirit sounds the death knell to spiritual progress. If you have disobeyed the Spirit of God at any point in your experience, my brother, my sister, you've got to go back to that point and confess it. If you don't, you'll go around and round and round and round.

You'll never go forward. And listen, there are hundreds of Christians there tonight in this country. They haven't made an inch of progress in the last 10 or 15 years.

And they know why. And God knows why. Because along the road somewhere, they disobeyed the Spirit of God and they've never confessed it.

And God is waiting for that confession. And when it comes, then he will cleanse away that offense. And then you can go forward walking in the life as he is in the life.

Unconfessed sin in the Christian is unforgiven sin. And I've said this so many times, an unforgiven sin is uncleansed sin. And it's there all the time, eating away like a cancer until you deal with that thing as God intends it should be dealt with.

There are three strong warning words concerning this disobedience in donation to the Spirit. And with this, I must close. The first is, resist not the Spirit.

Acts 7 and 51, all these strong words from the lips of Stephen to the nation of his day. Listen to them. He's stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears.

He do always resist the Holy Ghost. As your fathers did, so do he. Resist fighting back.

We resist the Spirit actively when we take sides with fleshly lusts. Thus Galatians 5 and 16 and 17. We resist the Spirit of God.

We fight back when we take the side of the lusts of our flesh and we war against the Spirit. That's active resistance and active fighting. But remember, we resist the Spirit of God passively when we ignore Him and act independently of Him and go along as though He does not exist.

We turn a deaf ear to His claims, His challenges, His commands, His words to us. That too is resisting the Holy Ghost. In the church of the living Christ, there are only two things to observe.

One is duty, the other is mutiny. And however we may like to think of it, when He says do this and we refuse to do it, whether it's passive or whether it's active, we are resisting Him. We are fighting back.

The second great warning is quench not. That's 1 Thessalonians 5 and 19. Quench not the Spirit.

Disobedience to the revealed will of God always has the tendency to put out the fire in the life of a Christian. No glow of God there. No radiance.

And I'm sure that we can help to put out the fire in the heart of another brother. That's the context here. Despise not prophesies.

Quench not the Spirit. It's in context. And if you despise prophesying, so Paul said to these Thessalonians, you're quenching the Spirit in the life of that man, that woman.

You're acting towards the things of God, can dampen the fires that should be burning in the hearts of other people. Yes, but it's in our own case too. You can help to put out the fire in your own heart.

Fire will never burn in a vacuum. It has to have air. And you can't live without prayer.

I can't anyway. You might be able to exist, but you go panting along. There's no real strength.

There's no real victory. Why? The fires of God can't burn because you are trying to make them burn in a vacuum. But when you saturate your very being with prayer, when you approach God as you should regularly and wait before Him, and your heart goes out to Him in adoration and worship, in praise, in longing, in thanksgiving, in intercession, and your very being is really immersed in God in this attitude of prayer, then the fires have a chance to burn.

While I'm amused, says David, the fires burn. Oh praise God, it's so real, isn't it? It's so real. And fire won't burn without fuel.

If you want the fire of God to burn in your heart, you must feed it with the Word of God and with fellowship. I have no time for these people who say, oh well, I don't need to come to the house of God. I can have wonderful times with the Lord myself, and oh His Word is so wonderful to me.

I don't need to get anywhere near the people of God. I can enjoy God for myself. Don't be so selfish.

Who do you think you are anyway? To think you can live like that and be a Christian? Nonsense. I know there are times when you can't get to God's house. God will become a house to you then, a sanctuary, a little sanctuary where you're concerned.

I know that. But the other thing is altogether wrong. Neglect not the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is.

I knew a man in the old country who thought that, and he ceased coming to the meetings. Oh, he was having wonderful times with the Lord, wonderful times of blessing, and it was so grand, you know, and it went on for some weeks. And then the pastor went to see him, and he said, well Tom, you haven't been along to the services recently.

No, he said, I've been having a wonderful time here at home, he said, and enjoying myself, you know. Have you really, he said. They were sitting at the fire.

Yes, he said, I don't think it's necessary. I can go on all right, he said. I don't need the other saints of God around me.

After all, a man has to serve the Lord for himself. Oh, is that so, he said. So he just reached out for the tongs, and reached into the fire, and pulled out one glowing ember, put it there on the hearth, and put the tongs back, and just sat and said nothing.

And they watched it together, glowing and sparkling there with life and radiance, for a few minutes. And then the fire died out, more and more until it stood there, just a black burned out ember. And Tom looked at his pastor, he said, all right John, he said, I'll be back in the meeting tomorrow morning.

Ah yes, we need the fellowship of God's people. The fire won't burn if you try to live independently. And that, I think, is a lesson that we need to remember.

The house of God is appointed as a place where the fires of God can really burn. Many a Christian tonight has no glow within, because they've neglected these principles. All they have is the burned out cold ashes of an almost forgotten experience, that's all.

And how tragic that is, when the Spirit of God longs to lead them into the blessing and into the victory of a life ablaze with the radiance of God's glory. It's open to each one of us. Quench not the Spirit.

And the final one, grieve not the Spirit of God. That's Ephesians 4 and 30. Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, in whom he was sealed unto the day of redemption.

Grieving the Spirit. You can't grieve an influence. You can only grieve a person.

And you can only grieve a person who is capable of loving. It is only love that can be grieved. Pride can be hurt, but only love can be grieved.

And this grief of the Spirit of God is the exact equivalent of the grief and sorrow which Jesus Christ suffered in Gethsemane. To think that you and I can bring to the heart of the Spirit of God a Gethsemane grief that is in substance, in nature, in character, because of our attitude toward him grieving the Spirit of God. The grief of thwarted purpose, when God intended a high and calling for us, and we are living on God's second best.

How that must grieve the Spirit of God. The grief of offended righteousness, when his standard is so high, and we live on so low a level. How that must grieve the Spirit of God.

And the grief of slighted love, when his outgoings are so tremendous toward us. When his love and compassion, his mercy and his pity, forever caring for us, forever wooing us and loving us with the utmost. And we independent of all those moving to the Spirit.

We isolated and insulated away from it all, how it must grieve the Holy Spirit. These are the warnings which are uttered, and these are the things we have to remember. Let us not grieve him.

What does the Word of God say? He that hath ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith. What is the Spirit saying to you tonight? What is God by his Spirit telling you? Is he reminding you of the unpaid vow? The forgotten promise? That sinful habit which is not yet conquered? That thing in your life that makes you indifferent to his appeal? That stubborn pride which refuses to let you be humbled at the feet of your risen Lord? Are these the things? Away with them tonight. Let us face the challenge of God's Word.

In this partnership with the Holy Spirit, there is a life which can be a Spirit-led life. Into blessing, into victory. But if we allow these things to obtrude and to mar the vision, to interfere, then we shall lose the blessing that God intended.

But oh, tonight he is opening out before us a wonderful vista of possibilities. And what he wants is that obedience on our part, to follow where he leads. God save us then from allowing anything to interfere with what he wants to do in our lives.

It may be tonight that the care that we have is the care concerning what other people will think about us. What will they say about us? How will we face up to the things that we know we shall have to face if we go this way that he wants us to go? Is that your concern? A million years from now you won't be worrying about that. But 10 million years from now we'll be wondering what Jesus thinks about you.

And I can say this tonight, and I say it from the background of experience, that there are many, many Christians in this city of Hamilton who know the truth of God, absolutely know it. And what's more, they've got conviction about it. But they won't budge an inch because they know that if they do, they're going to be involved in something which they can't face.

My brother, my sister, if you are in that position tonight, may God have mercy upon you and open your understanding as never before to the great possibilities that lie in the life in God that far outweigh all the rest of it, all the approbation of men, all the well-done of your friends, and all the battling and striving of the enemy too. May God bless his word.

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