

Following the Promptings of the Holy Spirit

Foundation Scripture: Genesis 17:6, Romans 7:6

We have been examining the series titled 'Beyond the Boundaries of Limitations'. From our foundation scriptures in Genesis 17:6, we reiterated the truth that God has already blessed us, we are fruitful and we have been made kings. We also agreed that, just as Jesus promised, the Holy Spirit is our Comforter, Counsellor, Intercessor, Advocate, Strengthener, and Standby and He will remain with us forever. As Christian, we need the ministry of the Holy Spirit to fulfill the purposes of God for our lives. The Holy Spirit is already with us, but sadly only a few Christians recognize His abiding presence, let alone the role He is meant to play in our lives. Without Him, we stand the danger of struggling through life, which wasn't God's original intention for us. Our relevance and achievements are rooted in the ministry of the Holy Spirit; hence we must pay close attention to His leading and direction. The Spirit is our advantage and He is the secret to our success and the true measure of our success can only be measured by the work of the Holy Spirit and not through our efforts.

Today's message titled 'Following the Promptings of the Holy Spirit' is a sequel to last week's message. God has given us the mandate to excel this year, and the Spirit will also guide, direct and sustain us in fulfilling this mandate. Romans 7:6 put it this way: 'But now we are discharged from the Law and have terminated all intercourse with it, having died to what once restrained and held us captive. So now we serve not under [obedience to] the old code of written regulations, but [under obedience to the promptings] of the Spirit in newness [of life]' (Amplified). In God's kingdom, there are rules and regulations we live by as Christians, similar to the various laws - including 'the Highway Code' that regulate our conduct when driving on the roads in the United Kingdom. The way to excel, following God's rules and regulations in His Kingdom, is by listening and following the promptings of the Holy Spirit. The peril of ignoring the Spirit inevitably leads to frustration and disappointment - an experience that Abraham and Sarah suffered when Ishmael was born.

As Christians, God leads and guides us from 'Egypt' into our 'Promised Land', just like He led the Israelites in the Old Testament - it must be stated that the journey of the Israelites is a foreshadow of our journey in life. And just like the Israelites were led by the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night, the Holy Spirit has been assigned to lead us through life.

Notice that the Israelites did not know the way to the Promised Land, and they had to rely on God to lead them. Similarly, we need the constant guidance of the Holy Spirit to guide us and lead the way to the glorious future that God has prepared for us. The ten spies (and the generation that left the land of Egypt) who ignored God's guidance forfeited their destiny and did not enter the Promised Land; Only Joshua and Caleb, who believed and trusted God survived and entered Canaan.

John 16:13 reads: 'But when He, the Spirit of Truth (the Truth-giving Spirit) comes, He will guide you into all the Truth (the whole, full Truth)' (Amplified). Hence, it is unscriptural for a Christian to leave their destiny and guidance in life into the hands of a 'prophet'. Such a decision is unbiblical and ungrounded in God's word. May the Lord forgive those 'men of God' who have made a mockery of their office, by attracting undue and unnecessary attention to themselves, by offering to 'lead' their congregation towards a destination they are not sure about, and in the process taking the focus of their attendees from the Holy Spirit. We must

remember that whoever replaces God in a life of a believer has inevitably become an idol, and no one deserves that much attention besides the Holy Spirit. God desires to train up mature children, who are led and directed by Him as they spend time in His presence. Isn't it a tragedy that we have so many immature believers in the church today? These immature believers end up being led astray by these erroneous teachers who end up confusing them even more. We must be careful not to believe the lies, but hold on steadfastly to the truth of God's word.

The Holy Spirit dwells within every one of us who has received Jesus as our Lord and Saviour. However, for those who are yet to fully understand how the Spirit leads them, they must develop their interaction with the Spirit to listen to and understand the unique way by which He prompts and guides them.

How can we be led by the Spirit? I Thessalonians 5:23 reveals this to us: 'May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul, and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (NIV). As a Christian, you are a spirit being, who has a soul and lives in a body. Romans 8:16 gives us more insight into this truth further: 'The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children (NIV). The Holy Spirit communicates with our spirit, to guide our decisions in life. The Spirit and our spirit are pure, holy, and blameless before God. The Spirit communicates with our spirit but barely communicates with the soul or the body. Hence, as Christians, we cannot be led by our feelings, sight, sound, and touch. Instead, we must pay due diligence to build up our spirit by listening to and reading God's word and spending time praying. Once our spirit is strong, it becomes easy for our soul and body to obey and be led by our spirit as guided by the Holy Spirit. Proverbs 23:7 says: 'As he thinks in his heart, so is He'. However, if the spirit is not well developed in listening and yielding to the Spirit, the soul dominates, ultimately giving the carnal mind a chance to lead the way - which is evident in the way some Christians live; by what they can touch, feel, see and hear. Intermittently, the soul craves for ungodly habits, to which the body yields easily, once the spirit becomes dormant. Besides this, the soul is the center of all emotional intelligence - which can be affected by the happenings around us - the hustling and bustling, so much so that the soul becomes crowded and overwhelmed by the obvious problems of life. It is imperative, therefore, to find time regularly to quiet the noise and allow the Spirit of God to direct and reassure you of the way forward. In making critical decisions, you must be careful not to do so out of your emotional reactions - when angry, too excited, depressed, or as a result of the high praises from admirers. Hence your quiet time must be a quiet time. Jacob had such a moment of encounter within Genesis 32:22-32, leading to the change of his name to Israel. Once your spirit is strong, it can influence the soul and body to obey God and follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. Romans 12:2 put it aptly: 'Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will (NIV). As the Spirit knows the future, we must listen and allow Him to guide and direct us every step of the way.

1 Corinthians 2:12 reads; 'Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God'. To be led by the Spirit, there are two ways I would like to share with you:

(a) The Inward Witness of the Spirit: Whenever you want to embark on an

event or activity, and you feel uncomfortable about it, you must pay attention to this. This may be a check or a caution in the Spirit. Always follow the promptings of the Spirit, not the feelings of the natural mind.

(b) The Inward Voice of the Spirit: As Christians, we all can hear the inward voice of the spirit, but sadly many of us tend to ignore this voice. Every sermon that I share with you weekly has been inevitably given to me by God. You must also live your life, by listening to God and obeying His voice. Some destinies are inextricably intertwined with your destiny, and as such, you cannot afford not to be successful in life. You must also realize that you can't live by trial and error - you must get it right always. Your conscience, regenerated by the Spirit guides and leads you to step by step, as you spend time with Him. 1 Corinthians 2:9 puts it this way: 'But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him."'

Now here are guidelines to distinguish and confirm the voice of the Spirit namely; Does it require faith? Whatever God calls you to do you will need His grace to do it. Whatever is not of faith is sin (Romans 14:23). Does it line up with the word of God? Can this prompting of the Spirit be traced back to God's word? Do you have peace ruling in your heart as an umpire? With every promise of God is His peace, despite the huge responsibility that goes with such an assignment. Hence, don't go ahead with any decision that you do not have peace about, and lastly, Does it require courage?