

Led by an INWARD WITNESS

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Romans 8:14, 16, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God... The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."

In 1959, the Lord Jesus appeared to me in a vision. At that time He talked to me quite awhile about the ministry of the prophet. In the course of this event, He said, "I want you to go teach my people how to be led by my Spirit." Then He quoted these two scriptures to me: "The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." And, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

Then He said some things to me that are very important and we need to know. If we aren't careful, we want God to do things our way instead of going along with the Lord and letting Him do things His way.

He said, "I do not lead the people of God through the ministry of the prophet, and they are not to seek guidance through the ministry of the prophet, though sometimes through that ministry I do confirm some things."

"And then, my people under the new covenant are not to seek guidance by 'fleeces.' The New Testament does not say, 'For as many as are led by fleeces, they are the children of God.'"

(If you wanted to know where I got that statement which I say so often, I got it from the Lord. I had never heard anyone say it until He did.)

He went on, "But it does say that as many as are led by the Spirit, they are the sons of God. I lead my children primarily by the inward witness. If you will learn to follow the inward witness, I'll guide you in all the affairs of life."

Then He said something that has proved to be a real blessing to me. It surely came at an opportune time. He said, "If you will learn to follow my Spirit, I will make you rich. I'm not opposed to my children being rich, I'm opposed to their being covetous."

I listened to what He said that day, and the greatest thing that ever happened to me from a material or financial standpoint took place when I followed that inward witness. A certain thing came along and something like a buzzer set off on the inside of me. I almost missed it but I remembered what the Lord said and went ahead with it. It certainly pays rich dividends.

What is meant by the 'inward witness'? Most of us know in a sense, yet spiritual things are often indistinct to us because we're taken up with the external and the physical.

For instance, I was preaching in Texas at the time of this vision. A man from another part of the country had previously contacted me about preaching a revival meeting in his church--one of the largest Full Gospel churches in that state. He had talked to me personally, called me, and then written me. And I had tentatively agreed to come to his church for the simple reason I was going to be in his area and would have a little free time. At that time I was traveling with a travel trailer, and I tried to stay in one area a little longer instead of jumping from here to there.

I thought to myself, "Well, I'll be in that area and that would be the logical thing, so I'll just accept his invitation." (You can reason things out in your mind and miss it a lot of times.) I didn't particularly have any leading about it when I talked to him.

His letter to me requested confirmation of the date we had set up tentatively. I'd had his letter several days, and for three days I'd started to sit down and write him, but there was always a sort of 'check' in my spirit. So I thought, "Well, I'll just wait." The very night the Lord appeared to me in this vision it was my intention to write the next day and accept the man's invitation.

So the Lord said to me, "That check you sense in your spirit is the witness of the Spirit not to go, because it is not my plan."

(Paul mentions how he and his company were going into Asia Minor to minister and, "The Spirit forbade us." I don't know how He dealt with them, but it is my opinion the Spirit simply checked them. So they didn't go that direction, but went another direction.)

The Lord said to me, "I'm not going to direct you about what churches to go to, or what places to hold revivals through visions or the ministry of the prophet. Even though you do see me now..." (and I did see Him in this vision and hear Him speaking, just as real as any man I ever saw in my life) "...and I'm telling you not to go. But I'm instructing you to learn to follow the witness of the Spirit."

I never have had the Lord at any other time tell me not to go somewhere for a meeting in a vision. All He was doing then was simply con-

firming what I already had.

He went on to say, "There is a point I want you to get here. The ministry of the prophet is not to direct people, or guide people's lives; but it will do exactly what I just did for you. It will confirm what they already have. You already had the witness in your heart not to go there. All I did was simply to confirm it."

Because they don't know any better, and because people get carried away sometimes, some endeavor to guide people's lives through spiritual gifts and prophecy. Then others who claim to be prophets or claim to minister along this particular line lead people astray.

It is interesting to note that in Acts 21, Luke said, "And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judea a certain prophet, named Agabus. And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles."

Did you notice that Agabus did not give Paul any guidance? He didn't tell Paul to go or not to go, he simply told him what the Holy Ghost said was going to come to pass. There was no guidance there.

Sometimes there is just a shade of difference between the real and the false, a fine line between that which is helpful and good, and that which is a hindrance and hurtful, between that which is a blessing and that which is an abuse and a misuse. I've seen what has happened to those who have listened to what someone else said by a "so-called" ministry or a prophecy.

Some have entered into marriage because of a 'prophecy' and their lives have been wrecked and ruined. Ministers have changed churches and entered into other ministries because of "so-called" prophecies and never were able to regain and recover their loss. Businessmen have been terribly hurt. Listening to someone who claimed to have a revelation from God, they invested their money and went bankrupt.

I can't find any place in the New Testament that through a prophet's ministry anybody was told how to invest their money. You understand of course, there could be an exception occasionally to all rules but when people make a 'habit' of things and develop some kind of a 'system' in some of these areas, I'm scared of it.

Jesus told me, and the Bible agrees with it, that He leads, number one, by and inward witness.

There is a helpful little statement in Acts 13, a clue that would help us in receiving guidance from God, or hearing the voice of the Lord.

"Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teaches; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said...."

I think we need to have some services where we don't minister to the people, but where we minister to the Lord. I'm very busy with calls and invitations and so on, but I take time to get alone with the Lord and minister to Him, to wait on Him. In those times I receive enough guidance sometimes to last a year or more.

That's a whole lot better than going along not knowing where you are going and just praying, kicking, clawing, sputtering and trying to get help. Sometimes you have to keep going and you don't have time. It is sort of like getting on the freeway--you had better know where you are going before you get on it.

Prior to this vision as I had been waiting on the Lord, and ministering to Him, it came to me about a certain man. I passed it away at first, and thought perhaps the thought of it had come to my mind. But as I continued to wait on God it kept coming to me. Then at different times, over a period of days, it kept coming to me. After several days, I finally said to the Lord, "Now Lord, do you want me to go there to hold a meeting?" The more I thought about it on the inside of me, the better I felt about it. I didn't have any check at all, I seemed to have a green light.

So when the Lord appeared to me in this vision, He reminded me of that. He said, "That green light, so to speak, which you had in your spirit was the witness of the Spirit to go there. Now you see me and hear my voice as I speak to you. I'm telling you I want you to go there because there are a number of professional people in his congregation. Scarcely any of them have the baptism of the Holy Spirit."

(When I went, they all received that week. And though it was a small church, which only took one offering a week for me, I received larger offerings than what I'd been averaging in churches much larger. God takes care of all of us when we obey Him.)

Jesus said to me, "In one case every time you thought about it, that 'check' in your spirit was the witness of the Spirit for you not to go there. On this other occasion, that green light in your spirit is the witness of the Spirit for you to go there."

The number one way the children of God are led is by an inward witness.