



HOLY SPIRIT - ROMANS 8:14

Part 6

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¹⁴For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

What this verse is identifying is that those who “**are led...are sons**”. Being led by the Holy Spirit is a **confirmation of sonship** and to which family the believer belongs. I.e., being led by the Holy Spirit is one of the ways in which the Holy Spirit actually confirms the believer’s adoption and in so doing confirms their salvation. In fact, the phrase “**these are sons of God**” is emphatic because of the word “**these**”. It literally means “**these and none but these are sons of God**”.

The technical definition of the word “**led**” is the Greek word “*ago*” and means to lead, to guide, and it specifically carries the idea of following someone who is guiding, or being led. I.e., to be led by someone implies to follow them. W.E. Vines says it this way,

“To lead is almost always used in the New Testament of persons, and implies cooperation on their part with the one who is leading....”

So, it is not just the idea of leading, but just as much implies the idea of following. The Greek lexicon defines it as “*to lead by laying hold of, to lead by accompanying, to lead through, to guide, to direct, to exercise an influence on the mind*”. So, once again, the idea of being led means that the individual is submitting themselves to the influence and direction of the one who is leading them.

The word “**led**” is a very personal word. It often means to be led by the hand or to be personally escorted by a tour guide. I assume that every genuine believer can look back on different times in their life and say that “*if it had not been for the Lord and His guidance in a very difficult time, I do not know how I could have made it.*” He was leading and they were following. It is such an incredible privilege and function in the believer’s life, but not just for the benefit of being led. That is a wonderful by-product of the Holy Spirit’s work within them. However, the incredible privilege is that this leading confirms, substantiates, authenticates, and verifies that the believer is one of God’s children, a son, a daughter, and that they have truly been adopted and made a genuine part of God’s family.

The word “**led**” is a present tense verb in the passive voice. What that means is that being “**led**” by the Holy Spirit is a constant, continuous activity that the Holy Spirit is initiating within the believer’s life. I.e., it is not just a hit and miss kind of thing, but rather a continual process in their life. He is **always** leading the believer. It is a constant and effectual influence that He is exerting. The present tense could be translated as “**for as many as are being constantly and continually led by the Holy Spirit, **these are sons of God.**” Because of the passive voice it is something that is being done **to the believer**. Hopefully you remember the simple illustration of the difference between the active voice and the passive voice. “*The boy hit the ball*” is in the active voice. The subject is doing the action. “*The boy was hit by the ball*” is in the passive voice. In the passive voice, the action is being done to the subject. So, this is something that the Holy Spirit is doing to the believer and for the believer – He is leading each believer into the things of God. It is not that He leads them twice a year in some important decision, but that He is constantly, continually, frequently, persistently, and repeatedly leading them into the things of God. It is part and parcel of spiritual life. This is why Christians are**



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growing spiritually, and it is this leading that is one of the strong and validating confirmations of their salvation. It is a defining marker and indicator of genuine salvation. It is very similar to what was previously studied in [Romans 8:13b](#) which says,

but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

I.e., stated another way, if you can see in your life that you are actually putting “**to death the deeds of the body**”, then it is evidence that you are one of God’s children. Why? It is because that is something that is accomplished solely “**by the Spirit**”. As a Christian do you ever have victory over the flesh and over temptations and over trials? Sure you do, and the Holy Spirit is the One doing that in you and for you, and all of that is proof of your sonship, of your adoption, and of your eternal salvation.

In simple terms, what v14 states is that the Holy Spirit is constantly at work in the Christian’s life. It is very intentional on His part. That is why it is in the passive voice - to accentuate and emphasize that it is actually **an intentional work of the Holy Spirit towards the believer.** He is continually and persistently leading them in such a way as to mold them into the very image of Christ. In the context of these verses, it needs to be appreciated that v14 is directly linked to v13.

¹³For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

It is “**by the Spirit**” that you the believer is able to “**put to death the deeds of the body**”, and that is evidence of their being “**led by the Spirit of God**” and evidence that they are one of His children, or “**sons of God**”. In v14, the word “**for**” is a word that gives the basis and explanation for v13. It could actually be translated as “**because**”. So, the reason in v13 that the believer can put to death the deeds of the body is **BECAUSE** they are being led and guided and directed by the Holy Spirit. The reason in v13 that “**you will live**” is simply **BECAUSE** in v14 they are “**sons of God**”. That is the connection between these two verses. I.e., doing something “by the Spirit” means that the believer is being “**led by the Spirit**”. We are an instrument in His hands. We are not leading Him, but He is leading us. We are being moved and led by Him, constrained and encouraged by Him to do what pleases Him.

So, taking these two verses together, they teach that the primary leading of the Holy Spirit is to help believers to kill sin, or as Paul says, to “**put to death the deeds of the body**”. It needs to be appreciated that these two verses are saying much more than just that the Holy Spirit will lead someone to the right church, or that the Holy Spirit will lead someone to the right college, or that the Holy Spirit will lead someone to the right job, or that the Holy Spirit will help someone to make some kind of decision that they need to make. Those things are good and may be true, but they are not the focus of these two verses. The real emphasis here that confirms the believer’s sonship, that confirms their adoption into God’s family, and that confirms that they are truly one of God’s children is the incredible work of the Holy Spirit leading the believer in such a way that they are able to overcome sin in their lives.



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When someone is saved, one of the things that actually happens within them is that they receive a new disposition toward the things of God. They are given new desires and new preferences and new values and new priorities. It is important at this point to clearly emphasize that relative to the believer's assurance that it is not an awareness of some "saving" spiritual event that happened in their life years and years ago that provides them with assurance. It is this very thing that Paul is talking about which is that we know that the Holy Spirit is helping us to overcome sin in our life today, right now, this week, this past month. He is leading us away from sin and into His righteousness.

Another aspect of this leading is found in [Romans 5:5](#) where Paul made this statement,

⁵Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

This verse is one of the reasons why in [Romans 8:15](#) that believers have this compulsion, this yearning, and this supernatural impulse to just cry out "**Abba, Father**". Why? It is because salvation was a real, life-transforming event that took place in their lives. The very love **of** God and a deep love **for** God was poured out in the believer's heart by the Holy Spirit. It refers to an extravagant, overflowing, and lavish outpouring of God's love into the believer's heart. It is the very "**Spirit of adoption**" making the love of God real to the believer's heart which previously had no love for Him whatsoever. The Holy Spirit has created very deep and personal affections for God in the believer's heart.

Every genuine follower of Christ should be thrilled with what Paul is teaching here. Why? It is because they know deep down within their spiritual man that they really do love God. He has become incredible to them, to their life, to their affections. I read these verses and they literally thrill me because I know that this love for God is in my heart. Personally, it was a deep work of the Holy Spirit within me that completely transformed my life. It was more than just a simple change. It was a life altering change and a life transforming change. This is a very deep, personal, and affectionate experience within the Christian's heart. It is not that they just intellectually affirm that God is their Father - not at all. It is that they have this irrepressible and uncontainable cry from deep within their being that cries out with deep, deep emotion - "**Abba, Father**". The Holy Spirit has poured out this deep love of God and for God within their heart, and it provides great assurance of God's salvation.

So, what does this leading entail? Well, obviously in the context it is dealing with mortifying the deeds of the flesh - and it is extremely important not to miss or overlook the contextual correlation and connection. If a verse is taken out of its context, then its meaning is virtually lost. However, we know from the whole counsel of Scripture that the leading of the Holy Spirit includes many other things as well. The following is a very short listing of the kinds of activities in which the Holy Spirit leads the believer. Please recognize that if these kinds of things are apparent within a believer's life, then they are a cause for great rejoicing in their life because they simply confirm their salvation and adoption into God's family.

- It is the Holy Spirit who awakened within us our first longings for God and for His forgiveness.



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- It is the Holy Spirit who convicted us of our sin and led us to the cross where that sin was forgiven.
- It is the Holy Spirit who continually leads us from the sins which often have us in their grip.
- It is the Holy Spirit who leads us to grow in the virtues which are the fruit of the Spirit.
- It is the Holy Spirit who leads us into the assurance that our sins are forgiven and that Jesus Christ is Lord.
- It is the Holy Spirit who leads us into the paths of righteousness.
- It is the Holy Spirit who leads us into an understanding of the Scriptures.
- It is the Holy Spirit who leads us to love and worship God and to honor and magnify Christ.
- It is the Holy Spirit who leads us to fall on our knees and repent of our sins.
- It is the Holy Spirit who leads us to be a part of a God-honoring and Christ exalting church and to not forsake the assembling of ourselves together.
- It is the Holy Spirit who leads us to pray and intercede for other people.
- It is the Holy Spirit who creates in us a hunger and thirst for righteousness.

These are just a sampling of how believers are being led by the Holy Spirit. So, if they have been led by the Holy Spirit in these types of areas of their life, then Scripture declares that they can know that they are one of God's children. All of these are the types of activities that He is constantly developing within every believer, and it should be evident to every believer that these kinds of leadings are consistently taking place in their life. Obviously, there are degrees and levels to which each believer is responding based on their maturity and understanding, but still these are the various Scriptural areas into which the Holy Spirit leads believers.

So, how does all of this leading actually take place? Well, it occurs in two primary ways. First, **the Holy Spirit leads the believer by opening their mind and heart to the truth that He gives them in His Word.** Nothing can be the will of God if it is contrary to the Word of God. God is always correct, always on target, and always right. He is completely sovereign in all things. So, He continually gives understanding, wisdom, and discernment from His Word and relative to His Word. Anyone who is going to be obedient to the will of God must first know what that will actually is, and that is provided in the Word of God. [Ephesians 1:17](#) says,

¹⁷that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him,

A major area in which the Holy Spirit works is in the believer's mind and intellect. [Romans 12:2](#) calls it the "renewing of your mind".

²And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.



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This “**renewing**” primarily happens in one major way – by reading the Scriptures and being taught by the Holy Spirit. Obviously, He may use pastors, teachers, friends, books, etc., but still, the Holy Spirit is the ultimate teacher. The Holy Spirit uses the Scriptures to enlighten, to inform, to encourage, and very often to redirect the Christian’s thinking. So, this particular leading of the Holy Spirit is **an operation of the Holy Spirit and the Bible together**. People who do not spend time in the Scriptures normally display a confused and depleted understanding of God, His will, His ways, and His Word. Unfortunately, normally they choose not to live for Christ. Why? It is because they are simply leaning on their own understanding which is very flawed and defective. Donald Grey Barnhouse in his great commentary on Romans said,

“Ninety percent of knowing the will of God consists in being willing to do the will of God before we know what it is.”

It is the simple idea of just saying “*Yes, Lord*”.

Secondly, **the Holy Spirit leads through sanctification**. Sanctification is that powerful spiritual process in which God allows the believer to practice what He has taught him. Whenever a Christian does what is right, whenever they obey what they know the Scriptures declare to be right, and whenever they put into practice what has been revealed to them in the Word of God, then they are being led by the Spirit. All of that is the Holy Spirit stirring the believer with conviction and tender compulsion. I am personally convinced that the Holy Spirit leads and guides believers in ways that they never know. For instance, [Romans 2:14](#), speaking of God’s work in leading a lost man to repentance, says,

4Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?

The lost man sees God as a threat to their life and an encumbrance and burden on their life. However, God in His goodness leads them to that vital and necessary act of repentance.

What the Holy Spirit does is to enlighten and persuade. He is a very gentle and sensitive Spirit, so He never browbeats anyone. When the Holy Spirit leads, He does not do it in a strong, aggressive, forceful manner – not at all. Believers are being “**led**” and not driven. The impulses that He provides may at times seem very strong, but there is no “driving” and no use of some kind of supernatural force in persuading Christians to do something. We know from our previous studies that we can grieve the Holy Spirit and that we can quench the Holy Spirit – and we all have done that. However, back He comes, and He restores and refines and helps us to see the error of our ways. He is continually teaching and leading and correcting and helping to bend and change our fleshly inclinations. But He is not using a spiritual sledge hammer to do so, but a gentle and gracious compelling within us. And all of that is a part of the leading of the Holy Spirit in our life – and it is a wonderful thing and should provide great assurance to us of our salvation.