

Walking by the Spirit

“If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit” (Galatians 5:25)

“Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path” (Psalm 119:105)

It goes without question that the Bible is to be the standard for the Christian life. If the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever, then the Word of God, which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the *only* rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy Him.¹ Like the early Puritans of America, we are to search the Bible, not only for principles and rules, but for mandates and analogies.² The Scriptures are a light to our feet, guiding us in our personal conduct *and* in the precise organization of civic administrations (II Timothy 3:16-17).

We can look at Old Testament Israel as an example and let their experiences teach us (I Corinthians 10:11). God delivered His people from Egypt, a power state that placed itself as God. He then baptized them in the cloud and in the sea (I Corinthians 10:1-2). The cloud was God's glory cloud; it was God's awe inspiring presence leading them. The sea represented death; a token number of Egyptians did die in the Red Sea. God intended this to be a symbolic message to each Israelite - all that was of his Egyptian experience should die also.

He then led them to Mount Sinai where He gave them His law. God intended that each Israelite meditate on His law (Psalm 1:2; Psalm 119). The first five books of the Bible formed the Pentateuch (five law books). As an Israelite contemplated the law of the Lord he would rebuild his thought structures learning how to think and how to act. This new thinking would deliver them from 400 years of Egyptian thinking. The Law served as a basis for developing a new world view.

The Law spoke to *every* aspect of life. Concerning personal issues, it told you how to meet with God. It told you the proper clothing to wear. It explained the methodology of education. It gave you health, sanitation, and safety standards. It told you how marriage works and how to raise children. It told you how to prosper in life. It told you how to deal with death. It told you how to buy and sell. It told you how to lend money and stay out of long term debt. It told you how to treat slaves, how to treat employees, how to treat your enemies, and how to treat strangers.

Concerning public issues, the law of God obligated civil government to maintain just monetary policies. It established a moral basis for the election of government officials. It forbade abusive taxation of the rich. It called for a justice system based, not upon prisons, but upon restitution. It provided guidelines for fighting wars. It forbade the release, pardoning, or paroling of murderers by demanding their execution. It prohibited industrial pollution that destroyed property value. It established punishment for malicious malpractice suits. It forbade abortion rights.

In the New Testament, God delivers His people in a similar way.

“Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit ... Be saved from this perverse generation!” (Acts 2:38-40).

Walking by the Spirit

To repent means to change your mind about the way you view yourself, the universe, and God. To repent means to forsake your evil thoughts and ways and submit your mind and heart to God's authority. To submit to baptism means to die to your old way of life - the "Egyptian" world view. To receive the gift of the Holy Spirit means that the glorious presence of God will come upon you and empower you to walk in the way of truth. To save yourself from this warped and crooked generation means to restructure your world view and lifestyle; to cast out the lie and put on the truth.

To rebuild your thought structures means you must learn to think God's thoughts after Him. The source of this restructuring is the sixty-six books of the Bible. The Bible is not a source book on calculus or astrophysics or automobile repair. The importance of the Bible is that "without the God of the Bible and the revelation therein given no fact can be truly known, nor can its existence be even posited."³

The Bible tells us that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding" (Proverbs 9:10). To fear God means to hold Him in awe and wonder as the Creator, Sustainer, Revealer, and Redeemer. This verse tells us that the fear of God is the precondition of knowing God and knowing God is the precondition of *true* knowledge about ourselves, about living, about all things. This verse means that *nothing can be understood truly except in relationship to the God of the Bible*. It is only as the light of God's word gives us perspective that we can truly understand life and all of its ramifications (Psalm 36:9). The Bible does not give us all the facts, but it does give us a viewpoint by which we can interpret those facts truly. The viewpoint is that "from Him and through Him and to Him are all things" (Romans 11:36). All facts are from Him, God-created, through Him, God-governed and God-sustained, and to Him, God-serving.

What does it mean to walk by the Spirit of God? First, we must understand the unity of Scripture. The Old Testament foreshadows the New and the New fulfills the Old. We must acknowledge the continuing relevance of Old Testament law, not as a way to salvation, but as a standard of life. Second, we must understand the stage and flow of biblical history. Like the sons of Issachar, we must use this knowledge to help us understand the issues of our time to know what to do (I Chronicles 12:32). Third, we must understand the authority and know the power of the words of the Living God.

The Holy Spirit, given to each believer in the new birth, guides us into understanding the truth (sound doctrine) and empowers us to obey the truth. *We walk in the Spirit by allowing the Word of God to light the path of our feet*. The Holy Spirit and the Word of God complement each other. One cannot be neglected in favor of the other. They are like the two oars of a row boat. You must row with both oars to get to your destination. If you row with only one, either the Spirit or the Word, you will only go in circles and accomplish nothing for the kingdom of God.

It is also paramount that we should not narrowly confine Scripture to be *just* a personal devotional manual or a treasure chest of insights. The Bible reveals God's claim upon our life *and* the nations. We *must* heed the following counsel:

"Too often, the modern theologian and churchman goes to the Bible seeking *insight, not orders*. Indeed, I may go to Calvin, Luther, Augustine, and others, to scholars Christian and non-Christian, for insights, for data, and for learned studies, but when I go to the Bible I must go to hear God's marching orders for my life. I cannot treat the Bible as a devotional manual designed to give me

Walking by the Spirit

peace of mind or a ‘higher plane’ of living; it is a command book which can disturb my peace with its orders, and it tells me that I can only find peace in obeying the Almighty. The Bible is not an inspirational book for my personal edification, nor a book of beautiful thoughts and insights for my pleasure. It is the word of the sovereign and Almighty God: I must hear and obey, I must believe and be faithful, *because God requires it*. I am His property, and His absolute possession. There can be nothing better than that.”⁴

“We today are so used to reading the Bible only for individual inspiration and personal guidance that we overlook the fact that the Bible is also concerned with the development of human history.”⁵

The teaching and learning of biblical faith will be a failure unless its truths are applied to every activity and aspect of life - personal, ecclesiastical, and cultural. Our view of the Bible must be *great* and our application of biblical faith must be *great*. You cannot be a giant of faith unless your view of the faith is great and we will never produce men and women who are giants of faith if we view the Christian faith in a small way. In fact, we as instructors and those we instruct will soon lose interest in biblical faith. In the vacuum created by the loss of sound doctrine, we will lose our ability to discern what is of God and what is not. We will turn to and fall for the latest Christian fads propounded by some gifted or authoritarian leader or group. The name of God and the cause of Christ are blasphemed among unbelievers because of our small faith (Romans 2:24).

Our understanding of God and the Christian faith must be great. His word must carry weight in our thoughts, interpretations, and lives; it must be the final arbitrator. Without this depth of Christian understanding and experience, both we as teachers and the students we teach will drift from biblical Christianity and join ranks with secular humanism.

The way is *not* easy for us. It requires commitment and perseverance. God will bless our faithfulness in time and on earth. “*Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He will do it*” (Psalm 37:5).

Endnotes:

¹The Shorter Catechism, questions 1 and 2.

²Verna M. Hall, *The Christian History of the Constitution of the United States of America: Christian Self-Government* (San Francisco, California: Foundation for American Christian Education, 1983 edition), pp. 48-50.

³Rousas J. Rushdoony, *By What Standard?* (Tyler, Texas: Thoburn Press, 1983), p. 53.

⁴Rousas J. Rushdoony, *Law and Society: Volume II of the Institutes of Biblical Law* (Vallecito, California: Ross House Books, 1982), pp. 691-692.

⁵James Jordan, *Crisis, Opportunity, and the Christian Future* (Niceville, Florida: Transfiguration Press, 1994), p. 4.