

Walk in the Spirit and be led on the Paths of Righteousness (Pt 5 Righteousness)

Today we continue our topical study of righteousness. In our previous study we covered three points; (1) the Holy Spirit reproves the world of righteousness, and (2) the Holy Spirit is life to a believer because of righteousness, and (3) the Holy Spirit bears fruit in righteousness. In this study we will look at two additional points; (1) When we walk in the Spirit we fulfil the law of righteousness, and (2) the Lord leads us in the paths of righteousness.

Let us add a little detail to our points:-

1. When we walk in the Spirit we fulfil the righteousness of the law.

Rom.8:4 *That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

In part one of this study on *righteousness* we asserted that Christ is our righteousness, and in this point when we walk in the Spirit, we fulfil the righteousness of the law. So Christ is the end of the law for righteousness, but we do not attain to that righteousness of the law until we walk in the Spirit. And before we do that, we need to live in the Spirit. Gal.5: 25 says that "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." And we know that the opposite of righteousness is sinfulness, and lusting of the flesh, and therefore it should not surprise us that the remainder of our verse in Rom.8: 4 says "not after the flesh", and in Gal.5: 16 that when we walk in the Spirit we "shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh." Therefore, when we walk in the Spirit of God, two things happen:-

- i) we fulfil the righteousness of the law, and
- ii) we fulfil not the lust of the flesh.

On Friday night on Queen street I was told by a Mormon that for a man to be saved one of the five ingredients was baptism by the Holy Spirit. But is it only those Christians who are baptised by the Holy Spirit of God that can live and walk in the Spirit and therefore fulfil the righteousness of the law?

According to the Bible, from the moment a Christian believes the gospel of Christ crucified God does a work in their heart and following that work His Holy Spirit dwells in them and their body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (see 1Cor.6: 19). Hence in the church age there is no such thing as 'baptism' of the Holy Spirit.

But the two Mormons on Queen street were zealous for their faith, and were convinced that if a person is not baptised with the Holy Spirit they are not saved. For the Mormon salvation is only achieved when a person believes in Christ (and they didn't know what specifically they have to believe), repent of their sin, be water baptised, baptised with the Holy Spirit and endure to the end. What they were saying is that salvation is similar to Saul's time in the Old Testament where Saul disobeyed God so the Lord took away His Holy Spirit. The two Mormon missionaries heard the gospel of Christ crucified, which they had never heard before, and were warned that if anyone preached another gospel than that which the apostle Paul preached, they would be accursed (see Gal.1: 7, 8). Belief in Jesus does not save us, repentance by itself does not save us, baptism is not a prerequisite for salvation, but takes place after conversion as a sign of the inward dying to our self and being raised in newness of life, and the only reference to baptism of the Holy Spirit is Jn.1: 33 where the Lord Jesus Christ went forth and baptised with the Holy Spirit. Therefore, living or walking in the spirit does not necessitate being baptised by the Holy Spirit of God. So let us consider what it *does* mean to live and walk in the Holy Spirit once a person is saved according to the Bible.

Concerning what it means to 'live in the Spirit', there is the use of the phrase in Galatians 5 and also in 1Pet.4: 6 which says "but live according to God in the spirit". Given that those who believe the gospel of Christ crucified, those who are in Christ have all received the Holy Spirit then we must all live in the Spirit.

Concerning what it means to 'walk in the Spirit', Gal.5: 16-25 is a summary of what it means to walk in the Spirit and what happens when we do. In Gal.5: 16 Paul says walk in the Spirit and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. And verse 25 Paul says, "if we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit". Between verses 16 and 25 there is the illustration of the conflict in a man between the spirit and the flesh, including what constitutes the works of the flesh compared to the fruit of the Spirit.

So, walking in the Spirit of God means:-

- i) acknowledging the spiritual battle between our flesh and the Spirit of God that dwells in us (Gal.5: 17), and
- ii) 'feeding' the things of the Spirit of God that resides in us, by reading and obeying the word of God, and prayer, and
- iii) 'feeding' not the things of the flesh, i.e. denying the flesh such that the flesh starves.

Hence, it is important, when we come to a cross roads on our walk (our journey) and we have to choose a particular direction, that we choose not to walk the path of the flesh but of the Spirit. Once we have chosen to walk the path of the Spirit we will know that we have fed the Spirit because the *Spirit of God* will bear fruit of the *Spirit* (Gal.5: 22, 23), and not of the flesh.

Israel attained not to the law of righteousness (see Rom.9: 31).

The Mormon who says they believe Jesus, repents, is water baptised, is baptised by the Holy Spirit (what ever that is), and then endures to the end, does he attain to the law of righteousness?

Any Christian who continually gives into the lusts of the flesh, without dying to those lusts, does not attain to the law of righteousness, and neither does anyone who believes any other gospel than that which the Lord Jesus gave to Paul for the church age.

And given that when a Christian walks in the Spirit they do not fulfil the lusts of the flesh, then if you continually sin in doing that which transgresses the law (for sin is transgression of the law, see 1 Jn.3: 4) and do nothing about it, then you have evidence that you are not walking in the Spirit, because how can we fulfil the righteousness of the law if we continually live in sin without dying to the lusts of the flesh or to our pride?

Is that how you live each day, walking daily in the Spirit, reading the word of God and in prayer and acknowledging the spiritual battle?

Let us pray especially for the young in the faith, those who are weak and vulnerable, that they would wake up each day and live as if they are in a physical battle, and walk each step being led by the Spirit of God. Because when we walk in the Spirit we fulfil the righteousness of the law.

2. The Lord leads us in the paths of righteousness.

Ps.23: 3 He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

See also Prov.8: 20

This point follows on closely from our first point. Our verse from Psalms begins with acknowledging that the Lord restores our soul, and then continues, with the words that make up our point, "He leads us in the paths of righteousness". But the verse does not end there, it concludes with the words, "for his name's sake." So the whole purpose of the Lord restoring us, the whole reason for us becoming a Christian today, so that we follow in the Lord's paths of righteousness, is for His name's sake, to glorify His name.

In Ps.27: 11 David asks the Lord to teach him His way and lead him in a plain path, because of his enemies.

Therefore, in one sense we seek the Lord for help to lead us in His paths of righteousness, His pathway of doing that which is right and just in His eyes, according to the Scriptures, and in another sense we ask Him for guidance to lead us in a plain path because of our enemies. And whereas David was specifically referring to a physical enemy, we can apply this verse to ourselves and ask for a plain path because of our spiritual adversary the devil, who uses devices to destroy our walk on the path of righteousness. Therefore, when you ask the Lord to lead you in the paths of righteousness you can also ask him to keep that path clear of the devil. But remember, God does not always answer our prayers how we would like Him to, but according to His purposes. So, if ask him to lead us in the paths of righteousness and He desires us to be tested, as He allowed David, Job, and other Patriarchs, and as he said in His word that he would prove us, then expect to go through something that will test your faith. Such that when you are tested you will have patience (see Rom.5: 3) and can again ask the Lord for His help to stay on the path of righteousness for His name sake. And if your spirit that battles with the flesh is overcome, then seek the Lord's help to restore your soul through repentance and get back on the path of righteousness. And if after 3 months you are struggling to get back on the path, or after 6 months, or 12 months, or 6 years, then ask someone for help that is older in the faith. Because if you allow yourself to move away from the path of righteousness by more than a hair's breath (that is my figurative expression for "not very far") and you do so for long enough, without getting on your knees and repenting, reading the word and receiving good quality food from the Scriptures, then before long you will be one of the many backslidden Christians who has a blurred line between the path of righteousness and the path of the world.

Before you do utter the prayer, *before* you seek the Lord to help you walk in the paths of righteousness, make sure you have the authoritative words of God. Because if you know people who use one or more corrupt versions of Holy Scripture and they choose which corrupt version to read and learn of what is righteous and what is unrighteousness, then they decide which version to use, depending on what they want to hear. Pastors, ministers, teachers of the word of righteousness who use more than one version of the Holy Scriptures, then ultimately *they* are the final authority on what defines God's righteousness. And that is just another trap, another snare of the devil that confuses believers, it is no different to any other sin, it still traps you into believing a lie. But God has preserved His words, and has only done so in ONE book, the Authorised Bible, and in that book is revealed the righteousness of God, in that book you can learn what it means to walk the paths of righteousness. There is a defined line of righteousness and unrighteousness, and my counsel, is to get 'The Book', read it each day, and come to know what defines God's righteousness, and then ask the Lord for help to walk the paths of righteousness for His name's sake and to His glory!

Let us again pray for the young, pray for those who have not come to the point in their faith of believing all of God's promises, including His preservation and purity of His words. Let us pray for those who struggle to establish God's

righteousness from the rubbish dump, and pray also for our brothers and sisters that know the truth but struggle with keeping on the paths of righteousness, and let us do so with all humility and meekness, lest we too succumb to the devices of the devil and stray from *that* path.

Having said what we have said, let us say it again. In this our fifth study on the topic of righteousness we have covered two points; (1) When we walk in the Spirit we fulfil the law of righteousness, and (2) The Lord leads us in the paths of righteousness.