

#3081 – January 21, 2008 – “Sons of God” – 1

[Easley:] It's not about working harder and being more disciplined, and more this and more that. It is about letting the power of God through His Holy Spirit control you and me to do what we could not normally do.

[Gauger:] Able to do what you could not normally do. Boy, it almost sounds like Superman or Wonder Woman. Maybe a little. But there's a Biblical basis for that statement as you'll find out in the next few minutes. Welcome to a brand new week of *PROCLAIM!* with our Bible Teacher, Michael Easley.

Michael, we're not talking about Superman today, are we?

[Easley:] Well, we're talking about the very Spirit of God. And, I think, Jon, there is a good analogy you've drawn. This is a supernatural accomplishment. Men and women in the flesh will fail continually. But to understand this passage about being led by God's very Spirit and the relationship we have there is a remarkable way to look at the spiritual life and see how do I live this life in the flesh, which is impossible apart from God's Holy Spirit?

[Gauger:] You know, Michael, I'm thinking that as we're talking today among our listeners are people who just stumbled onto *PROCLAIM!* for the very first time, never heard a program before. What's your heart behind this ministry and what do you hope for them?

[Easley:] Well, number one, we're glad you have stumbled across us, however you've accessed us. But our goal at *PROCLAIM!* is that we open the Word of God, that we go through a paragraph of the Bible at a time, we try to be sure everything we talk about and teach on, Jon, comes from the text; so, that if a person hears *PROCLAIM!* and they look at their Bible they say oh, I can see exactly where that's coming from from the Bible. And, I think too often we're hearing less and less about Scripture and our goal, my desire, is that we are always coming back to the text, clearly see what God's Word says for us.

[Gauger:] That text for today is found in Romans, Chapter 8. We're looking at Verses 14-17 in a message first heard at Emmanuel Bible Church. Now, let's join Michael.

[Easley:] We're in the Book of Romans. You might want to take your Bible and turn to Chapter 8. And, to remind you a little bit of our context, in Romans, Chapter 8, we have learned that we are no longer condemned because of what Jesus Christ has done on your behalf and mine there is, therefore, now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Now, the Holy Spirit indwells us. When you trusted Christ, when I trusted Christ, the Holy Spirit became a permanent resident in your life and mine. And now, under obligation, not to the flesh, under obligation not to our sinful life, we are under obligation in a positive sense to live in submission to and cooperation with the Holy Spirit of God.

Perhaps the most complicated part of the Christian life is, how do we live the spiritual life? It is not a set of do's and don'ts. It is a relationship with Him. It is not in order to please Him, it's because what He has done for us. That's sort of been our study and our immediate context into Romans, Chapter 8.

Today we're going to see some new vocabulary. It's very easy to see the transition in Chapter 8 where he starts talking with familial language. We'll see sons, adoption, children, and heirs as the four terms he's going to make the switch, so it's easy for the reader to see oh, he's changed subjects. He's moved from putting to death the deeds of the flesh and now he's talking about this familial relationship where you and I become sons, daughters of God.

Let's read Verse 14 together from the screen. "For all who are being led by the Spirit of God these are the Sons of God." Because, because you have trusted Christ the Holy Spirit indwells you; and, because of that you are being led as His son, as His daughter, as part of God's family. We want to keep our context in mind. In Verse 13 we saw putting to death the deeds of the flesh. We talked at length about what that means to mortify the deeds of the flesh. Our context is you and I have to cooperate with the Spirit of God in order to put those deeds to death. We can't do it in our strength. We can't do it in our own willpower. But there is a responsibility you and I have nonetheless, to be submissive to His leading, controlled by His power, when we face temptations and difficulties in life.

Listen to the way the Anglican Scholar Cranfield puts it. "Putting to death the schemings and enterprises of the sinful flesh by means of the Spirit is a matter of being led, directed, impelled, controlled by the Spirit. Though the active participation of the Christian is indeed involved, it is fundamentally the work of the Spirit." Great sentence, great sentence. We have to cooperate. We have a part. We're involved in this process. But it is God's Spirit who empowers you and me to live the way He wants us to live, not the way we used to live, the way sin controls us.

Now, let's look at this phrase, to be led by the Spirit. Depending on the context, how you were raised, your backgrounds, all sorts of different possibilities. This passage is not talking about decision-making and the Will of God kind of theology. It's not to know -- you know, many of us have friends that say oh, God told me and God led me. Maybe you used that dichotomy of language with ease. That's not what this passage is about. The context is so important when you study the Bible. What is the point of the paragraph, the point of the section of the Bible? And, what Paul is talking about here is the controlling influence of God's Spirit in your life and mine; that we have died to sin, we now live in Him, and His Spirit indwells us so we can live differently.

A passive verb form, I don't like to get too technical with you, but sometimes some of you are way ahead of me in this league. You got no problem. Other sort of, you know, what's he talking about verbs for? I used to do that one time ago and I don't want to do it no more. It's important from time-to-time to look at the language and the passive verbal influence here is we are being led. The Holy Spirit is not "It", it's *Who*, it's a person, He's a person of God. The Holy Spirit is the agent who leads us. When you trusted Him He indwelt you a permanent roommate and now it is His Spirit, God's very Spirit, who is leading you and me. Passive verb form. We are being led by the Spirit of God. Both the language and the subject here of being a son is related to His Spirit. You can't be His son or daughter unless the Spirit indwells you and we are under His control. When we're controlled by His Spirit, when we are being led by His Spirit, when the deeds of the flesh creep in, when the sin that is like tentacles around our heart and mind starts to grab a hold of you and me, we have the very power of God. The very Spirit of God being led by that to cooperate with Him, to submit to Him, and to resist the temptations that once so easily controlled us.

What does it look like to be led, to be empowered by the Spirit of God? Doesn't matter how much power you've got in the flesh, doesn't matter how hard you work at this, it's not about making the flesh better, it's not about working harder and being more disciplined, and more this and more that. It is about letting the power of God through His Holy Spirit control you and me to do what we could not normally do. And, that's what it means to be led by, empowered by the Spirit of God.

Now, the phrase "sons of God" is where Paul moves next and this title is both technical and relational. It's an Old Testament term we don't have time to develop. But a number of times in the Old Testament His people, Israel, when He calls them, are called His sons. The point of Verse 14 is that when you are governed by the Holy Spirit of God you are His son, you are His daughter. It is the Holy Spirit's indwelling that makes you related to Him in that familial way. Only way to be part of the family of God,

to be sons, to be adopted, to be children, to be heirs is a right relationship with Him. The right relationship is the Holy Spirit indwelling you and me.

[Gauger:] With a look at Romans 8, Verses 14-17, that's our Teacher, Michael Easley here on *PROCLAIM!*.

Michael, there is something that I have bumped against throughout my Christian life, and that is this issue of being led by the Spirit. You touched on it earlier. How can we know as we go through life that something really is of the Spirit and it's not merely our good intentions or something that we're projecting?

[Easley:] Jon, that's perhaps the key question in the spiritual life that we don't answer well and I think there's a number of things. First of all, when we trust Christ we are indwelled by the Holy Spirit. So, we need to understand intellectually, theologically, that once you believe in Jesus the person of the Holy Spirit indwells you as a permanent roommate.

Secondly, the only way to be led by Him is to know God's Word through Him. So, if we don't expose ourself to the Scripture on an ongoing basis, we are not feeding our mind, our spiritual life, and then the Holy Spirit takes what we are in-taking and He impresses, He controls, He leads us with the Scripture.

And thirdly, I heard an axiom years ago. "The Holy Spirit is better than a guilty conscious." I think too often we're driven by things of our past, of guilt, of sin, of our childhood, of bad theology. And, to understand I need to submit to the Word of God, I have the very Spirit of God to help control me, and lastly, the people of God; that other like-minded men and women will come alongside and help, and teach, and encourage, and sharpen us as we walk this Christian life.

[Gauger:] Okay. So, am I right or am I wrong to be somewhat leery of a person who constantly says, you know, I felt led of God to do this. The Spirit led me. My natural inclination is to be "hmmmm."

[Easley:] Yeah, yeah, there certainly is a continuum Jon, of Christians who would language like the Lord told me, and God led me, and God spoke to me. And, those of us who are a little more stoic and perhaps considered deistic about our view I want to be very careful whenever I attribute anything to God. And, when a person tells me God told me immediately the hair on the back of my neck stands up --

[Gauger:] Right.

[Easley:] -- not because I'm suspicious or think that person is evil. I want to be very careful if I'm going to speak for God. I know the Word of God has authority. My experiences, my inclinations, my leanings have no authority. So, for me it's more a function of am I going to err on the side of the Bible, the text, the very Word of God that has authority, or am I going to err on my experiences, my feelings, my impressions? I can't rely on my feelings and experiences, Jon. We all can rely on the Scripture.

So, when you and I read a passage and that passage kind of comes alive or gets us in the stomach, or makes us --

[Gauger:] Right, right.

[Easley:] -- or makes us feel guilty, that to me is where the Spirit of God is using His Word to convict, to encourage, to help control us in the spiritual life.

[Gauger:] But, as you've pointed out, there is an objective assessment here and that is the Word of God itself.

[Easley:] Again, if we're going to err, my opinion, let's err on the Scripture, not on my feelings or my experiences. And, you know, how many of us have thought God led me here or told me this, and then it didn't work out?

[Gauger:] Right.

[Easley:] And then, you got to either explain away God --

[Gauger:] That's right.

[Easley:] -- or God changed, or whatever.

[Gauger:] Exactly.

[Easley:] And, it's this -- yeah, is this forever you're changing the dialogue. At the end of the day let's be centered on the Word, let's be unsure about a lot of things. I don't know for sure, I'm not positive, but I know what the Word of God says and I know what Scripture teaches, and I have good Christian counsel; God's Word, God's people, and God's Spirit. Real hard to err if you're walking close with all three of those.

[Gauger:] Boy, it doesn't get much more practical than that, does it? Thanks, Michael.

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