LED BY THE SPIRIT

Josh Hay

Introduction

Many people often confuse the central message of the Scripture. Most non-Christians, and indeed many Christians, believe that the fundamental theme of the Scripture is that Jesus came to save us from our sin.

It is, of course, true that Jesus came to save us from our sin. However, this was never God's primary overarching plan.

God's plan and purpose – called in Scripture, 'the Eternal Covenant'[1] – is that we would become partakers of His life. The apostle Peter calls this life the 'divine nature'.[2]

Of course if we are to become partakers of the divine nature and the dwelling place of God eternally, there is no place for sin. So God's covenant plan also provided for complete redemption from sin.

The divine nature

The apostle Peter tells us, 'His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness. Through these He has given us His very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires'. 2Pt 1:3-4 TNIV.

Simply defined, God's nature – the divine nature – is love. The Bible explains that love is not merely God's activity or action towards us, rather it is *who* He is. God *is* love.[3]

The love of God

Frist John four says, 'We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love and the one who abides in love abides in God and God abides in him'. 1Jn 4:16.

Love is the very nature of God and is ultimately expressed in His desire to share His life with us. We can become God's children, genuinely expressing the very nature and life of God within our own lives and relationships.

The apostle John goes on to say, 'See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!'[4]

The promises of the Bible are sure. If we can understand how to genuinely receive God's love, He will become a Father to us and we will become His authentic sons and daughters.[5]

In the book of Revelation we read, 'He who overcomes will inherit these things and I will be his God and he will be My son'. Rev 21:7.

Misperceptions of God's love

Our tendency is to measure God's love by our own experience of love. We erroneously think that God's love is like ours. We naturally know love as a 'feeling' and think that must be what God's love is like.

This common mistake is reinforced by various evangelical authors who use such terms as 'the romance of falling in love with God', as if Jesus wants to be our boyfriend or some kind of knight in shining armour.

One Internet blogger described it this way: 'In today's gospel, Jesus makes a very simple request: He asks that we fall in love with God the way we fall in love with each other.'

God's true love reached out to us

The truth that the apostle John explains is that we didn't know what true love was until the love of God reached out to us.

In 1 John we read, 'This is how God showed His love among us: He sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins'. 1Jn 4:9-10.

1. Heb 9:15, 13:20
2. 2Pt 1:4
3. 1Jn 4:8-16
4. 1Jn 3:1 TNIV
5. 2Co 6:17-18

And in chapter five John goes on to explain exactly what God's love is.

'By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments and His commandments are not burdensome.' 1Jn 5:2.

God is not interested in long walks on the beach with you. He is interested in you being obedient to His word and being entirely committed to fulfilling the destiny that He prepared in love for you before the foundation of the world.[6]

The work of the Holy Spirit

The apostle Paul explains that the Holy Spirit pours this love – the love of God – into our hearts.[7]

Without the activity of the Holy Spirit we could never know the love of God. This is why Jesus said that it was better for Him to go than to stay.

'But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment'. Jn 16:7-8.

In the gospel of John we read, 'But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you'. Jn 14:26.

And, 'If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. I will ask the Father and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you'. Jn 14:15-17.

Many misunderstand the work of the Holy Spirit

There is much confusion about the work of the Holy Spirit, which has led to some strange and unusual 'manifestations' of the Spirit.

In some Pentecostal churches around the world this has included: barking, howling, roaring, slithering, hissing, shrieking, elongated screams, vibrations, spasmodic jerking, violent shaking, rapid head rotation, unusual laughter, drunkenness, swooning, burning, angelic visitations, spirit travel, visualization.

Clearly, this is not the work of the Holy Spirit according to the Bible.

The activity of the Holy Spirit is to pour God's love into our hearts. The evidence then that we are filled with the Spirit is that we will love like God loves.

'This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down His life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.'
1Jn 3:16.

Led by the Spirit

The real proof that we are being led by the Spirit is that we are no longer living for ourselves.

Paul explains what this will look like. 'But the fruit, [evidence], of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.' Gal 5:22-23.

Being led by the Spirit of God is the evidence that we are His sons and have been born again. Paul writes to the Romans, 'For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God'.
Ro 8:14.

And the apostle John says, 'Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God'. 1Jn 4:7.

Our lives will be completely and miraculously changed when the Holy Spirit pours God's love into our hearts. The apostle Peter describes this process as being born again, which begins as we hear His word.

'For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.' 1Pt 1:23.

Becoming slaves of righteousness

Up until this point, we can only live according to our natural disposition and perspective. We are entirely captive to our own view and perception. This will be fashioned by our background, past experiences, family history etc. It is what the Bible calls 'natural', or our 'flesh'.

6. Eph 1:3-5

7. Ro 5:5

We are slaves to sin, and remember, sin is anything other than God's will for our lives. When the Holy Spirit pours the love of God into our heart, we are able to hear God's voice, and have the capacity to obey *from the heart*.

Instead of being slaves to sin, we become slaves of righteousness. Instead of being a slave to our own way, we become a slave of Jesus Christ. The capacity to live this way comes only from the Holy Spirit.

'For they that are after the flesh mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For the mind of the flesh is death; but the mind of the Spirit is life and peace: because the mind of the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be: and they that are in the flesh cannot please God.' Ro 8:5-8 ASV.

The apostle Paul is clear that simply living according to our own natural view cannot lead us to the eternal life of God. Rather, to live this way *can only* result in death.

'For if you live according to the flesh, you will [must] die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.' Ro 8:13.

Paul is highlighting that the Holy Spirit is the one who enables us to put off the flesh and live as a son of God.

Jesus noted the same thing in the Gospel of John. As disciples we will be enabled to keep the commandments of God through the work of the Holy Spirit who pours God's love into our hearts. Then we will know that we are sons of God abiding in the fellowship of God's love.

Enabled to love and obey

We must overcome the inertia to simply live according to our own natural view and perspective. This is what the Bible calls living 'according to the flesh', the outcome of which can only be death.

We must also resist the temptation to hear God's voice and simply 'try harder' to be obedient to Him and do the things He calls us to do.

To live this way is to live by whatever 'power' is innately within us. The only outcome of this mode is failure. Simply trying to be different doesn't work.

Rather, we should hear the word, receive the conviction of the Holy Spirit and then pray in the Holy Spirit so that we are enabled to receive God's love and obey the message we have heard.

Let me conclude with Paul's encouragement to the Corinthians. 'For to us God revealed them through the Spirit, for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him?

'Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God". 1Co 2:10-12.