Guided by God

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[0:00] Now, I've forgotten my glasses this morning, but my eyes worked just long enough to be able to read the amount of verses that we're going to read, which is just one. Most of these verses you will be very familiar with. We're picking it up in verse 12, focusing on verse 14, but we'll read through to the end of 17. So Romans 8, beginning at verse 12.

So then, brothers, we are debtors not to the flesh to live according to the flesh. For 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. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.
For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. And if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.
So verse 14, for all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. Well, over the last few sermons, we have been looking at our life with the Holy Spirit as a shared life. We share our life with God. We are God's workmanship, but we share our life with God.
And we have seen what it means to be sealed with the Holy Spirit until the day of redemption. We've also understood what it means to not grieve the Holy Spirit because we are in relationship with God. And of course, in any relationship, a party in that relationship can be grieved.
[2:17] And then last time, we saw what it meant to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Now, remembering what it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit is going to be very important this morning for you to understand what it means to be guided or led by God, the Holy Spirit. So remember that to be filled or to be being filled, it is a constant happening, is to be like a glass full of tar underneath a running tap that over a period of time, the glass will eventually run clear. And so as you are being filled with the Holy Spirit in the same way water is running into a glass full of tar, the tar is becoming diluted. And over a period of time, it is diluted to such an extent where there is no tar left but only pure, clean, running water. And that there, if I can put it that way, is an illustration of what your current life is like before you are running clear. Self, sinful self, is the tar and the water is the Holy Spirit.

And the Holy Spirit is the one that dilutes self. So to be being filled is to go through the dilution of self over a period of time. And that means, of course, that the longer you are a Christian, the more of God you have being worked in you, which is exactly what Paul says in the book of Philippians. And that as God works in you, to willing to work according to his good purposes, out of your life comes the very acts of God himself. And so what we're noticing when we recognize that we are being filled with the Holy Spirit is a dilution of self, which is something which we don't necessarily want to let go of. So it can be a slow process, but the point is, is that you are being purified so that one day you will be glorified. In the eyes of God, you cannot be, if you're in Christ, that is, you cannot be any more perfect than what you are right now in the eyes of God. But in your current position within this earth, there's still self that has to be dealt with. And the reason we don't see it is because the other problem with self is ignorance.
Self keeps us in ignorance. So we can't actually see how much of self is left. You know, we always tend to think that we are close to running clear.
You know, and yet Paul said at the end of his life that he was the chief of sinners. Now, you would imagine, based on what I've said, that you would say that at the beginning of your life, and after years and years and years of God working in you, you would then be able to say, well, actually, I'm not as bad as what I was, which may be true. But what Paul understood is that his closer walk in relationship with God over years allowed him to see the greater depths of sin that was currently in his life. I know there's so much purification that needs to happen over such a long period of time

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that you will one day be perfect, but you're not there or even close to being there yet. Now, why does that matter when it comes to being guided by the Holy Spirit? Well, because the sum total of the Christian life, especially when it comes to guidance, is self-denial. To deny yourself. That isn't to deny who you are. That isn't to deny the qualities that God has given you. That isn't to deny the skills that God has given you, but it is to deny self as the ruling power of your life. Self is no longer allowed to rule. And so the foundation of guidance is self-denial. The foundation of being filled, or be being filled with the Holy Spirit is self-denial. There's the dilution of self. And now the foundation of guidance is self-denial. To put it a different way, the scripture says that how can two walk together unless they be agreed? Well, the question is promoting the answer they can't. You cannot walk with another person unless you agree what direction you want to go in. That's just a very basic understanding. And so the way that we agree with the will of God and the guidance of God is through self-denial because self wants to go always in the opposite direction.

So self-denial is the sum total of your Christian life. When you wake up in the morning and go about your business, the one thing that will get in the way, or try to get in the way of God's will, is self. And the one way to deal with self is through denying it, denying that it has any right or rule over your life now that you belong to God. So now that we understand that, we can move on and understand what does it mean to actually be guided by God. In Romans 8, we learn quite strikingly that those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. What Paul is showing us is that the identity of those who are guided by God belong to God. They are sons of God. They are God's children.

[8:06] Those who are guided are children of God. Those who are children of God will be guided by God. Now, this is important because if you understand this correctly, you will not be seeking guidance because it's not possible. It's not possible because you're being guided. So you can't seek something that is already happening to you, and we'll expand on this in a minute. The guidance is to not live no longer according to the flesh, but to be led by the Spirit. There's the conflict.

Which way will you walk? Will you live according to the flesh, or will you live being led by the Spirit? Those who live according to the flesh will die, and those who live according to the Spirit, putting to death the deeds of the body, will live. It's that simple. In John 16, Jesus tells us that the Spirit of God will lead his people into truth. And if we are being led into truth, we have to ask the question, what are we being led out of? In other words, if we're not already in the truth, and we're having to be led to the truth and into the truth, what are we being led out of in order to get there? And we're being led out of ignorance. We're being led out of error. And you can read this in Acts 17, verse 30. That being led by the Spirit of God into truth is to be led out of ignorance, is to be led out of the way of life that wants to live contrary to what God has taught.

And so the person who is being guided by the Holy Spirit, led by the Holy Spirit, is firstly a son of God. They belong to God. They are a child of God. Secondly, since they are being guided by the Holy Spirit, guidance is not something that they have to seek. Direction is not something that they have to seek. It is something that's already happening to them. They are being led.

You are not leading God. You are following God. You're not asking God what direction to go in. God is already leading you. And so you'd be surprised how many Christians fall into the error of trying to seek God's guidance, as though it is something that we are in control of, as if we direct our own life. No. Those who are sons of God are led by the Spirit of God. Those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. In other words, guidance is something that is already happening.

It is not something we have to figure out in order to take the next step. But you'd be surprised how many Christians get themselves into trouble on this area, in thinking that guidance is something that they have to figure out before they can take any step forward. And I've often said to you that the best way to understand God's will, to understand what is actually happening, not in order to figure out what to do next, but to understand how God's will is being revealed in your life, is to look at the trinity of desire, ability, and opportunity. That if you have the desire to do something, and you have the ability to do something, and you have the opportunity to do something, then when God allows those three to be aligned, then that is God showing you the direction that he is taking you in. Not the direction you should take, but the direction that you are being taken in. Remember, we follow God. We don't ask

[12:03] God what direction to go in. We follow him. We are being led by God. These things are simple, but it's amazing how complicated they can become, especially when you have this burning desire to be directing your own life. Now, the trouble with directing your own life is that you can't, especially now that you belong to God, because you are his workmanship, designed for a very

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specific purpose and reason. And because we are God's possession, and because the whole Christian life, as understood and presented by Jesus, is repent and God's possession, and you are going to follow me, guidance becomes something that happens rather than something that we must seek. We are being led into truth, and therefore we are being led out of ignorance. And therefore, to turn back to self is to turn back to ignorance. So here's the first sort of point that I have, or rather application that I have, and that is guidance takes care of decision making. I don't know if you've ever been in the position where you are just too tired to make another decision. You've made decision after decision after your decision, and you're now in the place where you have decision fatigue. You're just too tired to think through the pros, the cons, the ups, the downs to make another decision. Well, guidance properly understood allows us to see that we don't have to enter into decision fatigue. Those things are taken care of us by God. And what do I mean? Well, I mean that we should never believe, ever believe, that we will be helped by God to obtain the things that we desire, contrary to the word of God. So we should never believe that God will help us to obtain the things we desire, contrary to his will. Secondly, neither should we desire or hope or even contemplate any other way of prospering than by the Lord's blessing. I want you to understand that, that you shouldn't even desire, hope or even contemplate. The imaginations of man's mind are endless.

What a man can imagine is almost endless. And people who chase the dream could be chasing nothing more than their own imagination. And we should not be taken away by those things and think that we can prosper in any other way than the Lord's blessing. A person cannot prosper unless the Lord builds the house. Those who build it labor in vain. There is no other way of prospering. We tend to think that we can do things on our own. We tend to think that we can make things happen and then add God's blessing upon. No. And even to get as far as we have, the prospering has come from the Lord in the beginning.
This is important because if you don't understand it, you will set up for yourself goals thinking that you can reach them. And you can't, unless of course it is the Lord's goal for you to reach.
And so being guided by God becomes a difficult task for no other reason than many Christians have forgotten that self-denial is the foundation of it. Being guided becomes a difficult task because self is being promoted above God's will. And you're coming to God based on self-desires.
What you want to happen, what you want to see happen, where you want to go, what you want your future to be. And all of that has self at the very center. And then of course, when that is at the center, you have the terrible feeling years down the road, gut-wrenching feeling of disappointment, discouragement, and wondering why your life has turned out the way that it has. But if you understand that you belong to God and you are no longer your own, but the possession of God, then what God is doing with you is always going to make sense to him, even if it doesn't make sense to you at the time.
[17:08] More importantly, you've got to understand that God's will and being guided by the Holy Spirit are complementary. That God's will and being led by the Spirit go hand in hand, and the denial of self have to be present in both. In other words, look at what Jeremiah has to say when he understands guidance in the context of God's will. He says this, A man's way is not his own, nor is it given to man to direct his own steps.

Now that can either be incredibly encouraging or really frustrating. Let me just read it again so that it settles in, so that you actually understand what God is telling you.
Man's way is not his own, nor is it given to man to direct his own steps. Jeremiah 30 verse 23.
Therefore, to seek God's guidance as if we had some kind of power over the direction our life will go in, it's quite a foolish thing to do.
Solomon put it differently. Solomon rebukes the rashness of men, those men who decide to set up a goal without any reference to God.
[18:41] Tomorrow we will do this, tomorrow we will do that, we'll build bigger barns, we'll go into this city and that city and do business. God willing you will, but it is God willing.

None of those things will happen unless God wills. Have we lost what it means to be guided by God because we so desperately seek to direct our own path because we have not learnt self-denial?
Solomon said this also, that the heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps.
So I decide where I'm going to go, but I end up where God wants me. Okay? I decide where I'm going to go, but I end up where God wants me.

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I mean, how challenging and beautiful is that? That I decide, I'm planning, I'm writing it in my diary, I know what's going to happen because I've written it down, I've booked the tickets, okay, I've bought the shoes, whatever it may be, and who would have ever thought that this would have come next? [20:00] Well, it comes next because guidance and God's will go hand in hand. Well, here's the second thing, and important thing also to remember, that guidance go hand in hand with your calling.

That as a Christian, you must recognize that you are the very workmanship of God, created for good works so that you can do those works for God at this present time.
And therefore, if you look at another Christian and ever wonder, why does God deal with him or her differently than the way God deals with me? Have you ever looked at another Christian wondering why God hasn't given you their type of life and why he's given you the one that he's given to you? No? I think you have. I think we all have. I think we have all looked at life wondering why we couldn't have been somewhere else, someone else, with something else, different money, different house, right?
Because we all tend to think that the grass is greener on the other side. side. And when we get over there, we realize that the person there thinks exactly the same way.
[21:28] The truth is that God does deal with us differently because you are a different purpose, a person with a different purpose, a different design.

And God has assigned for you particular work to do. Ephesians says that you are God's workmanship that to be a new creation is to be the very workmanship of God created for good works which have already been prepared for you that you should walk in them.
Do you know how long it took me to accept that is a young boy? That you're telling me that before God saved me, he had already set out what he was going to do with me after I was saved.
that everything that was going to happen on every day, God had ordered and planned before the foundation of the world. And David White said, yes.
It was actually Andrew Matthews but David White used to say the same thing. Yes. And then you spend years just wrestling with that idea.
[22:41] Now why is that the case? Because you are God's workmanship created for God to do the things that God would have you do. Let me try and illustrate this so that you can perhaps understand this in how it actually happens in a person's life.

The book of Jonah illustrates the truth that God's will doesn't change. And what God's will always does is change the person in light of themself.
Jonah may look as if for a moment in time he was able to do something contrary to the will of God. But by the time you finish the book you realize he hasn't done anything contrary to the will of God. He has done exactly what God wants him to do. what you realize when you read the book of Jonah is that Jonah is not sent to Nineveh to change Nineveh but Jonah is sent to Nineveh for Nineveh to change him.
If you divide the book of Jonah up proportionately where does all the emphasis where is all the emphasis placed? It's not on Nineveh very little is said about Nineveh is actually placed on Jonah and how God has called him to be a prophet and therefore expects him to do what a prophet does.
[24:12] If this is your calling if God's workmanship in Jonah's life is for him to be this then this is what Jonah will fulfill. This is what is assigned for Jonah to do.

And so what Jonah actually comes to understand or rather he should have understood Jonah must have written the book of Jonah which shows us that his heart has changed.
No other person could have written the book of Jonah but Jonah if you think about it. But what you realize as you read the book is that it looks like a man who is running away from God but when you get to the end of the book what you actually find is that God's will is exposing in Jonah what self looks like.
There's a man who could not deny himself and so self was promoted above the will of God only for it in the end to be defeated by the will of God.
Therefore when we understand what it means to be guided by the Holy Spirit to be led by the Holy Spirit we now understand that guidance and the will of God go hand in hand that we follow God we don't ask God what direction to go in.
[25:35] God doesn't follow us as they're helping us to take the next step rather we follow God. We are God's workmanship and God has prepared according to our calling the next step that he

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wants us to take on a daily basis.

Now being led by the Holy Spirit also exposes in us where we are not denying ourself of course but more importantly or as importantly where we are loving the world more than God.
So what the guidance or being led by the Holy Spirit actually exposes in us is how we love the world more than God's word more than God himself.
we are seeking we are trying to seek and yet what God has prepared beforehand is exactly what we will end up doing just like Jonah.
Another example would be that of Esther. Esther is the kind of woman that you do not want your daughters to turn out like. Right?
[26:46] We have no indication whatsoever that she didn't enjoy her time in the high rim and growing up and doing all that she did she seems to present herself to the king quite well even to the point when it actually came where she was caught between a rock and a hard place only then did she do what was right.

When Mordecai came along to her and said for such a time as this how do you know Esther that you are not here for such a time as this and when she realized that she was caught between a rock and a hard place she like Jonah was forced to make the right decision.
Why? Because God's guidance and God's will go hand in hand. If you're God's then you will end up being led by God doing the will of God. But here's the exhortation then as we close.
What we learn here is that there is a relationship between who we are sons of God and guidance.
We also learn that guidance is not something that we have to seek it is rather something which is happening to us on a daily basis.
We are being led by the spirit of God because we are sons of God. And what we learn from Jonah and Esther is how that guidance changes us into the people that God wants us to be.
[28:12] So remember that the sum total of the Christian life is self-denial. Remember that the foundation of guidance is self-denial. Remember that you are God's workmanship created for good works that God has already planned beforehand that you should wake up tomorrow morning and do them just like you are doing them this morning.

Recognizing that you are the very workmanship of God will help you to deny yourself and serve the Lord only. Now if you ignore this in favor for a different understanding well of course you are free to do that.
But to do so is to live according to the flesh and not according to the spirit of God. And those who live according to the flesh die.
and those who live and are led by the spirit of God are sons of God. Guidance is something that we respond to not something that we seek.
Guidance is what's happening all the time. It is not something we need to ask God for. Now having said all of these things there are some things amongst Christians which are identical.
[29:31] That is we are all to grow in the fruit of the spirit. We are all to be godly. We are all to grow in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. All of these things are expected of all of us but then there are differences and those differences is where we see the hand of God at work on us in different ways.

And therefore whatever God has assigned for you for tomorrow God will guide you in. Let me say that again. Whatever God has assigned for you tomorrow next week next month next year God will guide you in because those who are led by the spirit of God are sons of God.
Let me reverse that. Those who are sons of God if you belong to God then you will be led by God because you do not lead him. Amen.
And may you live in the assurance that you will be led by the spirit of God because you are sons of God.
In Jesus name. Amen. God bless you in the

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