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**GO THEREFORE!**

Greetings in the great name of our great Savior, Jesus Christ!

God is great and greatly to be praised! His mercies are everlasting and His truth endures forever!

I am so excited about what I feel the Lord has put on my heart to share with you this month… While I had planned to share with you part two of the teaching I began last month entitled “The Breastplate of Righteousness”, I felt impressed to share another message that I believe the Lord has for us in this hour. As the Lord wills, I will revisit the other side of our breastplate of righteousness at a future date, but for now, I feel the Lord has a “now-Word” for us. And while this word is expressed in more of a teaching, I believe it is prophetic in nature because I am impressed that there are many out there who have allowed the enemy to deceive them in this area. So let’s get right into it, shall we?

I have grown up in the circles where the importance of being led by the Holy Spirit and hearing from God has been greatly emphasized. And while certainly being led by the Spirit and doing what God tells us to do are two of the most important things we can learn, there is a tendency that comes from embracing these truths that must be avoided.

You see, oftentimes when someone gets the revelation of the importance of only doing what God leads or tells them to do, there is a fear that creeps in of “missing God.” What I mean is that when they begin to see that God has a perfect will for them and that He wants to lead them along His path for their life, many do not move forward until they know that they have heard from God. Generally, this happens because they fear getting out of His will and doing something that will derail His plan for their life. Therefore, the reason for this is usually not noble, but is motivated by the fear of missing His plan for their lives.

But what we need to understand is that, even if we make a mistake, God is more than able to get us back on the path He has for our lives… A very close friend of ours once had this concern about “missing God.” She had a decision before her and was seeking God for His direction but did not want to do anything that would derail her from His plan and purpose for her life. So as she expressed her concern to Him, He said to her, **“If you miss Me, I know where to find you.”** In other words, the Lord was settling that concern by letting her know that it is not the end of the world if she made the wrong decision because God, who alone is wise, is able to work all things together for our good and turn any mistake into a miracle.

My friends, waiting on God’s direction has never been His plan for His children! While He has always desired to lead us and tell us what to do and where to go, His intention is not for us to sit still- waiting for Him to tell us what, when, where, etc. His intention is for us to act on the direction that He has already revealed to us through His Word. He has already told us to do many things in the Bible, and as we walk in the light of what He has already revealed, He will guide us along the way. As a matter of fact, the word “guide” is a much better description of how God has purposed to lead us.

**GUIDED INTO ALL TRUTH**

One of the benefits of our salvation that makes our New Covenant better than the Old Covenant is the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The fact that God has put His Spirit within us to lead us is an awesome advantage that we have available today. And in John 16:13, Jesus told us that one of the ministry’s of the Holy Spirit is to guide us into all truth.

So what does this mean that He will guide us into all truth? Well, let’s first use the description of the truth being the Word of God (John 17:17) in order to illustrate what it means to be guided… Would it make any sense for me to expect the Holy Spirit to lead me through the truths contained in the Bible if I never occasionally read my Bible? No, if I want to capture a spirit of wisdom and revelation of God through His Word, then I must first seek to grow in knowledge which comes through reading and studying (Ephesians 1:17). While certainly He could reveal the truth to us through some sort of miraculous revelation if we were in a situation where the Word of truth was not readily available to us, this is not the common way He will reveal His Word to us. I would be foolish to expect God to instruct me this way if I have the Word of God sitting on my nightstand collecting dust because I never take the time to read it. No, in order for me to take advantage of this ministry of the Holy Spirit, I must give Him something to work with. I must begin reading, studying, and meditating the Holy Scriptures. Then, and only then, will I be in position for the Holy Spirit to guide me through the Bible’s books, chapters, and verses and into all the truth contained in them.

And the awesome news is, just as the Holy Spirit is commissioned to guide us into all the truths contained in the Word of God, He is also commissioned to guide us in all other areas of our life. The Bible teaches us that the Holy Spirit has been commissioned to lead us in everything from walking free from sin to walking in God’s divine purpose and destiny for our life (Romans chapter 8). But in order to be led by the Holy Spirit in any of these areas, we must first be moving.

You see, Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would “guide” us into all truth, which implies that we must already be moving… Did you know that you cannot guide anything that is not already moving? For example, in order for a rudder to guide a boat, the boat must first be moving. You can turn a rudder as far as it will turn, but if the boat never leaves the dock, it will remain pointed in the same direction. Likewise, God expects us to be moving so that His Holy Spirit can then guide us into all truth.

But this is what we must understand: The Holy Spirit’s job is to guide us, not to drag us. In other words, His ministry is to help us stay on God’s path, not to tell us every little step to take.

You see, there is a reason that God is likened to a shepherd in the Scriptures and not a cowboy. A cowboy drives his cattle. In other words, he makes them do what he desires. A shepherd does not operate like this… A shepherd has a much milder and gentler approach. He leads his sheep and they follow Him, and if they start to veer off the path, He gently guides them back on the path with His rod and staff.

This is a perfect illustration of the ministry of the Holy Spirit! He is a Leader! He is a Guider! But He will not make us do anything. He is a perfect Gentleman, just as is all of the Blessed Trinity. He never wants to usurp our own free will but is ready and willing, when invited, to guide us into His perfect destiny for our lives! Thank you Lord for the Holy Spirit!

**DON’T BE MULISH!**

But even though this is how God has planned to lead us, many believers will still make statements like, “If God wants me to do that, He is going to have to speak to me through a burning bush!” or “God is going to have write in the clouds what He wants me to do.” When Christians have that kind of attitude, they are just being “mulish.”

What do I mean by “mulish?” Well, when you think of a mule, what do you think of? Here is the one word most of you probably thought of- **Stubborn**! A mule oftentimes has to be motivated to move through being yanked around or beaten because of this stubborn nature they are known for. I can assure you, this is *not* how God wants His children to be led.

In Psalm 32:8-9 the Lord says, “I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye. So do not be like the horse or like the mule, which have no understanding, which must be harnessed with bit and bridle, else they would not come near you.”Here God is telling us that He desires to lead us but that we should not be like a horse or a mule that has no understanding of what its master is leading it to do unless it gets its head jerked around with a bit and bridle.

In Psalm 16:7 David says, “I will bless the Lord who has given me counsel; My heart also instructs me in the night seasons.”The King James Version actually translates the word “heart” as “reins” here. This is interesting because it is as if David were saying that he was like a horse and God was steering him through the “reins of his heart.”

This is how God desires us to be: “rein-trained.” He does not want us to require an audible voice or some other spectacular experience before we will do what He is telling us to do. He wants us to be willing to move in the direction that His slightest tug on the reins of our heart will direct us to do. And if that was His perfect will for the Old Testament believer, how much more will it be His will for the New Testament believer!?! We have the “Jockey”(i.e. The Holy Spirit)on the inside of us and He is called to tug on the reins of our heart, leading and guiding us into the direction we should goeHe H! Hallelujah! God wants us to be like the “rein-trained” race horse which does not need to be forced to turn this way and that, but will, with just the slightest nudge of the reins, turn in the direction that its jockey desires.

Our job is to move in the direction of that which seems good to us and be sensitive to the Spirit’s slight and gentle nudges to change courses. But, again, we must be moving! Unlike the mule that will not move until it is made to, we need to follow what seems good to us, trusting that as we are walking in fellowship with the Lord and are doing things that are helpful and beneficial to others, that He is ordering our steps.

Let me give you a great example of this out of Luke’s gospel…

**IT SEEMED GOOD**

In Luke 1:1-4 Luke gives us brief summary of what led him to write his gospel… He said, “Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those ﻿﻿things which ﻿﻿have been fulfilled among us, ﻿just as those who ﻿﻿from the beginning were ﻿﻿eyewitnesses and ministers of the word ﻿﻿delivered them to us, ﻿it seemed good to me also, having ﻿had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, ﻿﻿most excellent Theophilus, ﻿that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed.”

So notice what Luke said here… He said in verses 1&2 that there had been many who had taken it upon themselves to write about the life and ministry of Jesus- some of them being witnesses to the things that Jesus said and did. But in verse 3, Luke says that it in spite of all that had been recorded of the life of Jesus by others, “it seemed good” to him also to write an orderly account because of the perfect understanding of these things from the very beginning of Jesus’ life (we know this to be true because of how Luke’s gospel has more information of the birth of Jesus than the other three gospels). But I want to draw your attention to those three little words he used- “it seemed good”…

Now we know that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God (2 Timothy 3:16) and the writings and prophecies of the Bible were written by men who were “moved” by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21), but how were they “moved” and “inspired”? Were they even conscious of the fact that they were being moved and inspired by God? I believe it is fairly obvious that most (if not all) of them were unaware that what they were writing was going to be considered Holy oly Scripture. I personally would have a hard time believing that they knew that what they were writing was holy because I know that if God told us to write something that was going to be considered Scripture, we would have likely gotten in the way and added things that we thought were best. No, I believe that although some of them maybe knew that they were “inspired”, they did not know just how “inspired” they were.

Take this passage from Luke, for instance… We know, without a shadow of a doubt, that the Gospel of Luke was inspired by God down to the very last jot and tittle because of how it is now considered Scripture. So it would be a gross understatement to say that Luke was “led by the Holy Spirit” to write this book that has impacted the lives of so many for 2,000 plus years. Well, one would think that if Luke were going to be chosen to write one of the four most important books that would ever be recorded, God might have instructed him to do so through some obvious mandate (i.e. a dream, an open vision, an audible voice, or some other spectacular source), right? But he did not! You would have to add to the Bible to say that God led Luke to write this gospel through any of these spectacular means. As is the case with many other authors of the books of the Bible, there is no indication that Luke even knew what he was writing was going to be passed down for 2,000 years and considered part of the Holy Scriptures. In fact, Luke said that he was writing this book because it just seemed like the right thing to do based on the information he had concerning the life of Jesus.

This is pretty amazing to think that God led him to write one of the most important books ever written- one of the four gospels that have been passed down for 2,000 years declaring the truth about Jesus- simply because it “seemed good” to him. You would think that God would have sent an angel saying something like- “Luuuuuke, I am your Father (note the Star Wars quote☺)! Write the things which I will tell you” or “Thus saith the Lord, thou art to writest a Gospel that wilt be canonizeth as Scripture and read by billions of people!”☺ No, God led him to write one of the most important books ever written by just putting in His heart the idea and it seeming like a good thing to do! That is amazing, isn’t it?

Now here is the point we should learn from this: **If God led Luke to write what he did simply by putting on his heart that it was a good idea, how much more will He lead us to do less impactful things by them simply just seeming like a good thing to do?** That, my friends, is a powerful question!

But this where I believe we, who have learned to be led and hear from God, have missed it! While we are sensitive and, in some cases, even fearful of not “missing God”, perhaps we have missed it by waiting for God to give us the green light!

Do you remember the Bible story of the lepers who were dying within the city walls as their enemies had them surrounded? What if those two lepers would have said, “Well, we are going to wait for God to tell us what to do so that we can escape this situation”? You would have to assume based on what ended up happening that they would have starved to death. But, no, they basically said, “Well, we are going to die if we stay here. Let’s go out to our enemies because what are they going to do to us that is not going to happen anyways if we stay in here?” Of course, you know the outcome of how God caused their enemies to hear an enormous army approaching them and they fled, leaving a large banquet and booty behind! Well, these two guys just did what came up in their hearts and minds. They did what “seemed good” to them as well and this too turned out to be inspired by God!

You see, we have many examples in Scripture- both in the Old and New Testament- of God’s people being “inspired” but without their knowledge. In other words, they were being “led” but they did not realize that it was God leading them to do it. Therefore, we need to avoid over-spiritualizing how God is going to lead us to do things. Sometimes the Holy Spirit will lead us to do something and it will come just like an idea that popped into our mind. Sometimes He will guide us to say something, but it manifests just as something that seemed good to say. As we are walking in fellowship with the Lord and our relationship with Him is a priority in our life, more times than not, those ideas and thoughts that we have come up are indeed God-inspired. Therefore, we do not need to be like a mule and have to “hear from God” before we move. We can trust that the Holy Spirit will place God’s desires in our heart as we are delighting ourselves in Him (Psalm 37:4).

**THE ACTS OF THE GREAT COMMISSION**

Somebody might be thinking- “Trey, I am not sure about this. I do not think we should “move” until we hear from God first.” Well, I completely agree! But the truth is that we have *already* heard from God on what I am referring to. How? The Bible is God’s Word to us! So if He has already told us to do it in the Scriptures, then we have already heard from God and do not need to wait on Him to give us further direction.

For example, let’s look over at Mark 16:15… In Jesus’ great commission He told His disciples to “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.” Do you know what this verse should eliminate? It should eliminate the questions: “Lord, should I go to this person?” and “God, do you want me to go there?” Why? Because Jesus did not say, “Go into the parts of the world I tell you to”, nor did He say, “Go preach the gospel to the people I lead you to.” No! He told all of His disciples, for all of time, to go into *all* the world and preach the gospel to *every* creature! Therefore, we already have heard from God!

Now, of course, we individually cannot go everywhere in the world and tell every human being the good news. That is not the point. But what Jesus meant was that we all, collectively, should be fulfilling this great commission by each of us doing our part. This is where we need to be led by the Spirit and where we need to hear from God- not to *whether* we should be a part of this great commission, but to *where* our part is.

And this is my point: If we are sitting on our hands for extended periods of time waiting on God to tell us what to do, we are missing it. We should not be doing nothing and waiting on God to tell us what to do. We should be going out seeking to fulfill this command of Christ, while being sensitive to how the Holy Spirit might be guiding us to do it.

The Book of Acts gives us a great example of this… After Jesus’ disciples got this directive from God, they began moving- preaching everywhere they went and to every person they came in contact with. It was amazing! If you just were to study the maps of where these disciples went, you will find that they just followed the roads they had and stopped in all of the cities along the way. And in one particular passage, we have a great example of really how the Lord has planned to lead and guide us…

In Acts 16:6-10 we are told, “6 Now when they (Paul and Silas) had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. 7 After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them. 8 So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. 9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, ‘Come over to Macedonia and help us. 10 Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them.”

Now I hope that you see the significance of this passage of Scripture… Notice in verse 6 that they “had gone”- meaning they were already moving, but were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. This describes the ministry of the Holy Spirit to guide us. They were sensitive to the Spirit’s direction as they were already acting on the command of Christ. Then what did they do? Did they just sit at the border of Asia and wait for further directions? No! Verse 7 says that when they had come to Mysia, they tried to go to Bithynia, but were again not given permission by the Holy Spirit to go into the area that they intended. So surely they did not try and go anywhere else until they heard from God, right? Wrong! Verse 8 says that they passed Mysia and came down to Troas where the Apostle Paul received the vision of the Macedonian man pleading with them to come to them.

So my point is that the great Apostle Paul who certainly knew about hearing from God and being led by the Holy Spirit was not sitting in his prayer closet waiting for God to tell him where to go preach the gospel. The Lord had already specifically commissioned him to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, so he was just acting on the Word that he had and was going into whatever gentile region that seemed best to him while certainly being sensitive to the “red lights” the Holy Spirit gave him.

But as evidenced, not only in this passage of Scripture but all throughout the rest of the Book of Acts, the Holy Spirit guided them as they went. They had taken the Great Commission of the Lord Jesus seriously and were actively going into all of the world and preaching the gospel to every creature and making disciples. They had this word from God and they ran with it! Of course, there were times when the Holy Spirit had to stop them from going into certain areas and/or redirect them, but this is the pattern which God desires to direct us… He wants us to be acting on what He has already said and what is written in His Word and then He will redirect us as needed.

But as I have already made the point of, the mistake so many people make that is they are waiting for God to tell them what to do and they are doing nothing in the meantime. They believe God is the “God of the Red Light.” What I mean is that they believe that they need to ask the Lord for His direction and then they sit there waiting for the light to turn green before they start moving. Let me assure you, this is not God’s plan for us when it comes to sharing the gospel with others. He wants us to act on the Great Commission and then expect Him to give us more specific direction as we are moving.

As I have said time and time again: **In order to receive God’s specific direction for your life, you first need to follow His general direction for all of our lives.** What I mean by this is that God has already told us to do many things which are contained in His Word. So before we seek more specific direction from God through His Spirit, we need to act on the general will of God found in the Scriptures.

**WHERE DO I START?**

So the question many of us have is “Where do I start?” Let’s look over at Acts 1:8 where Jesus gives us a very practical directive to fulfilling His great commission. In this verse, He said that His disciples would be His witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. I want you to notice that this is progressive… Jerusalem is the city where they were currently at. Judea and Samaria was the region surrounding their city. And to the end of the earth obviously includes everywhere beyond the previous two.

First of all, notice that the first place that Jesus mentioned for His Jewish disciples to begin was the city where they were currently at- Jerusalem… This should be a practical lesson for us that when it comes to fulfilling the great commission we do not need to bogged down by the immensity of the call. As Jesus said, we just need to begin where we are at! We need to find the opportunities contained in our “Jerusalem” (i.e. the area we reside). In other words, we are to find the places and opportunities around us in the city in which we live and take advantage of them. We need to actively be looking for the opportunities contained in our center of influence and seek to impact as many people with the good news as we can! This might be starting a Bible Study, ministering to individuals in a nursing home, or teaching a Sunday school class at our church. It could be as simple as sharing Christ with your neighbors or encouraging someone at your place of employment. The possibilities are limitless. The key is just possessing a sense of urgency and an acute awareness of the opportunities around you every day.

Then notice what Jesus told them next… He told them that they would go into all of Judea and Samaria. As I previously stated, this was the surrounding country and region around the city that they lived. So when we have done what we could do in our “Jerusalem”, we are to move on to “Judea and Samaria” which is symbolic of the places surrounding our circle of influence. This could be an opportunity we see in a neighboring town or it could be something just simply outside of our comfort zone like Samaria was to the Jew. You see, we all want to stay in our “Jerusalem’s” (i.e. the places where we are comfortable and that we are familiar with), but God has a plan for us to eventually move out of our comfort zone and into a ministry that might stretch us. So be aware of those “Samaria’s” God might call you to.

And, last but not least, He included all of the earth so that they were not confused about His intention to preach the gospel to every creature all around the world. So this is a process to expand until we have covered the whole earth! Jesus has plans for His kingdom to spread like leaven until it fills the whole earth and this is only going to occur as you and I first claim our “Jerusalem’s” and then our “Judea’s and Samaria’s.”

But what I believe is the Lord’s main point for us this month is that we are not just to sit on your hands and wait for a green light from Him! He has already given us the green light through the mouth of Jesus! Jesus has already said, “Go therefore!” Go into your Jerusalem! Go into your Judea and Samaria! Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature! Amen!

 Victoriously,