

The Spirit's Use of the Law

(Rom 8:15)

- Remember the context is the assurance of justification by faith

- I. “Leading of the Spirit” (1st assurance here)
 - A) Paul has been showing how the leadership of the Holy Spirit is an assurance to the believer
 - 1. This again is not through “feelings” or “spiritual nudging”
 - i. This method would be of no assurance because it is completely subjective
 - ii. Many a heretic has been completely certain he was being led of the Spirit
 - 2. This is not to say the Spirit never works in this way, but this is not in the context of assurance here
 - i. For example:
 - a) Acts 13:1-2, 15:28, 16:6-7
 - b) There are those pressings on the mind at times, as when we have decided to do a thing and then are subject to restraint or pressure against it
 - c) There are also those times when multiple people are put under the same persuasion or compelling
 - 1) But these times will always correspond with scripture and will never contradict biblical doctrine

- II. 2nd Assurance: “Spirit of bondage to fear”
 - A) Our exposition here must be in the context of the overall section
 - 1. Proper exposition of any subsection also is a method of checking our previous exposition (as here we can confirm Rom 7:7-25)
 - B) Terms:
 - 1. **“Spirit”** (used 2 times- correct understanding of these 2 uses is the key to a proper interpretation of this statement)
 - i. Possible interpretations:
 - a) Some say that both these uses are referring to our temperament or our emotional state
 - 1) For instance, scripture speaks of a “spirit of humility” or a “contrary spirit”
 - 2) They say this is a comparison of our pre-converted attitude vs- our converted attitude

- b) Some (like the KJV translators) say the 1st “spirit” refers to our temperament and the 2nd “Spirit” refers to the Holy Spirit
 - 1) For instance, our pre-converted spirit -vs- The indwelling Holy Spirit
- c) Some say that both uses refer to the Holy Spirit
 - 1) I believe this is the correct interpretation because:

ii. Interpretation:

- a) The context of this section from Rom 8:5 onward has been about the work of the Holy Spirit
- b) When Paul refers to our spirit he says so: Rom 8:16
- c) Paul is making a comparison so there must be correspondence
- d) The unconverted do not have a spirit of bondage to fear
 - 1) Psa 36:1/Rom 3:18- The wicked have no fear of God
 - 2) The lost may very well have “fear” of hell or judgment, but they are in no way aware of their bondage to sin
 - (a) They instead have a spirit of security and self-satisfaction
 - (1) Rom 7:9- Paul has just shown this
 - (2) Phil 3:4-9- Paul’s example of himself
- e) Gal 4:1-6- This to me qualifies as a proof text of this interpretation
 - 1) Notice the process is the same both in the case of Israel and in the individual also (microcosm)

2. **“Received again”**

- i. This use 2x’s of “received” makes the corresponding comparison
 - a) Whatever is received the 2nd time matches the way in which the 1st thing was received
 - b) “Received” doesn’t equal “born with” in the comparison
- ii. “Again”- This confirms the 1st reception

C) Context:

- 1. Paul has been detailing the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer
 - i. Practice and application are not the context, neither attitude

D) Doctrine:

- 1. John 16:7-11- It is the Holy Spirit Who is the convicting power
 - i. Paul detailed this in ch 7 and showed that the Holy Spirit uses the law to do this
 - a) Rom 7:7-11- Paul taken from “alive” to “dead under the law”
 - ii. The law itself doesn’t condemn, as Paul showed by being “alive”
 - a) The Jews had the law and were anything but convicted
 - 1) John 8:29-39- “We have never been in bondage...”
 - b) Matt 5:17-27- Christ is using the law to bring conviction of sin
 - c) Rom ch 1-3- Paul convicts of sin before preaching justification

- iii. Examples:
 - a) Acts 2:38- 3000 “pricked in their hearts” (why not everyone?)
 - b) Acts 16:25-30- The Philippian jailer is terrified (why not everyone?)
 - c) Consider every revival in church history:
 - 1) Edwards and “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God”
 - 2) John Bunyan and his “18 months of hell”
 - 3) John Newton and his terror in the storm
- iv. Yet it is not simply fear that does this, for many are made fearful in the scriptures and yet still go to hell
 - a) Such as Herod in Acts 26
 - b) Simon Magus in Acts 8
- 2. The work of the Holy Spirit is yet another thing the “law cannot do”
 - i. Heb 4:2- “Not being mixed with faith...”
 - ii. It is not the law that convicts and brings repentance, it is the Holy Spirit; the law is simply His tool

E) Summary

- 1. Paul is referring to the work of the Holy Spirit in both cases in Rom 8:15
 - i. It is the Holy Spirit that the Father sends through the Son to convict those He has given the Son
 - ii. It is the Holy Spirit that seals the adoption of the Father to the believer
- 2. Thus Paul is giving the believer another source of assurance: the conviction of sin and its bondage
 - i. This is not something new; Puritans such as Preston, Horton, Goodwin taught the same thing.
 - ii. This is the exposition of MLJ, Matthew Henry and others

III. The assurance in this

- A) What are the evidences or fruits of this conviction by the Holy Spirit on a His subject?
- 1. Condemnation of self- Rom 7:7-10- “Dead in sin”
 - i. The believer has been made aware that we are at odds naturally with God and subject to His judgment and penalty
 - 2. Knowledge of inward depravity- Rom 7:14, 17-18, 21, 23
 - i. The believer has been made to see sin not as just what he does, but as the vileness that he is outwardly, but especially inwardly
 - 3. Awareness of the inability to overcome sin- Rom 7:15, 18, 21, 23
 - i. The believer has been made made aware that if even if he overcomes certain sins, his mind is a den of iniquity and lustful desires and guilty of the 1st commandment all the time he breathes
 - 4. Hopelessness- Rom 7:24
 - i. The believer has been made to despair and call out to God

5. Humility- Rom 7:14, 18, 24
 - i. This humility is the most lasting of these fruits
- B) All of these things are another form of assurance unto the believer
 1. The world does not live “under the law” and in bondage, even though that is the truth about them
 2. Col 2:14-16- The world has never issued the “IOU” to God
- C) This exposition is in clear agreement with our exposition of Rom ch 7 and not only confirms the interpretation of 8:15, but proves that of Rom ch 7 (Paul is describing the child of God in his “conception and incubation”)
 1. Paul will now go on to show this same picture with adoption, and the change that takes place from our viewing God as our harsh Judge to that of our loving Father