

Eternity Daily Bible Study

(A ministry of Eternity Christian Fellowship)

Walking In The Spirit - 55

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Topic: The Initiatives of Heaven - 1

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The phrase 'the initiatives of Heaven' is one I have borrowed from Dennis Walker of Dunamis ARC ministry in Las Vegas Nevada. It is a way of describing the reality that spiritual ministry proceeds from the heavenly realms and is 100% God's initiative not ours. Our task is to cooperate with God in the work of the ministry.

Almost by definition, God takes the initiative in spiritual ministry. The Holy Spirit is in charge before, during, and after the ministry session. It is not up to us to make the plans or to take the initiative. It is up to us to wait on God in prayer to see what He wants us to do – then move forward in obedience to that prompting. We see this principle operating in Paul's ministry in Acts 16:

Acts 16:6-10 MKJV *And coming through the Phrygian and the Galatian region; and by the Holy Spirit being forbidden to speak the Word in Asia; (7) having come to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia. But the Spirit did not allow them. (8) Then passing by Mysia, they came down into Troas. (9) And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A certain man of Macedonia stood, begging him, saying, Come over into Macedonia and help us! (10) And after he saw the vision, we immediately tried to go into Macedonia, gathering that the Lord had called us in order to preach the gospel to them.*

The Holy Spirit stopped them ministering in Asia at that point (they would do so later on) and blocked entry in Bithynia, until at Troas Paul got the night vision about the Macedonian Call. This is an initiative of Heaven – God has made the ministry plan and He calls Paul and Silas in to join in it.

We see similar examples with the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8), Ananias being sent to heal the blind Saul / Paul (Acts 9), Peter going to Cornelius' house (Acts 10), Agabus' warning about the famine and the church response (Acts 11:28ff), and Peter escaping from prison (Acts 12) and so on. In fact the ministries of the apostles and disciples seem to be entirely Spirit-led. They let God do the planning according to His wisdom and then they simply joined in with what God was doing.

They developed their ministry gifts and learned the Scriptures and even has special callings given by God (such as Paul's 'to preach the gospel to the Gentiles'). But they did not snatch up the reins and try to steer their ministries. They became co-participants with God in the ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18-20). Even the most gifted individual should seek the Spirit's direction as to the specifics of implementing God's calling, such as where to preach and when to travel and even what to say to certain individuals.

The initiatives of Heaven may be things that we would never have thought of, and even may be things quite outside our comfort zone such as Jonah being sent to Nineveh or Ananias being sent to pray for Saul. But whatever God's plan is – it is good!

Now the trouble is that we tend to doubt God at the critical moment. When we feel that nudge in our spirit to say something to an important person we are overcome with shyness, or when we feel led to go to a certain city for ministry we think of the cost.

There is a certain boldness that is required if we are to fully cooperate with God. Satan operates via fear so to overcome these spiritual attacks we must be bold.

Satan also operates on us through doubt, skepticism, fear of social disapproval, and poor teaching on the nature of Christian ministry. We must not give in to such things!

Thus following the initiatives of Heaven requires prayerfulness, boldness, zeal and ethical integrity as we minister in the Name of Jesus Christ. We are to be constantly listening to God for the 'next step' and fine-tuning our plans in accordance with His prompting.

Small acts of obedience can have big consequences. Once when I was getting ready for a Christian camp the Holy Spirit said 'pack that black jumper' (a jumper in Australia = a sweater in USA), it was thin, old and ragged and was one I generally only used for fishing. But I put it in my duffel bag and went to camp.

I wore it on the first evening of camp as it was a bit chilly and I found out that black as "in" that year. I was soon adopted as leader by a group of five highly extroverted teenage girls who were not yet believers. They spiked my hair in gel, hung out with me, and got gloriously saved. They all went to Bray Park High so we started a Scripture Union bible club at that school that eventually had 40 members in it.

God's very simple leading led to a whole chain of positive events that resulted in glory being given to God.

Some people deny that such prompting has any place in the Christian life of modern believers. A leading proponent of this is Gary Friesen whose book "Decision-Making In The Will of God" has been a best-seller for many years. Dr. Friesen's book is a reaction against legalism, against the 'dot' theory where people could 'miss God's will for their life' by messing up a small decision. However he has gone overboard and thrown out all spiritual impressions whatsoever and all Holy Spirit guidance along the way. He has 'thrown the baby out with the bathwater'. God does communicate His will to us, personally, and that is a big part of the joy of the Christian life.

However this does raise a question – what do we do when there is no specific guidance?

There is a place for common sense in routine matters. A friend of mine waited four months to get her car fixed because she was praying for a 'sign' as to which mechanic to use. The car was totally wrecked by the time the four months was up.

You don't need Holy Spirit guidance on which shoe to put on first or on whether you should pay the electricity bill. These things are the simple routines of life that God expects us to take care of. God will speak when He wishes to speak about something special.

So we should not deny the value of the leading of the Holy Spirit and retreat to our own wisdom and intelligence, nor should we become passive and dependent and expect Holy Spirit guidance for every tiny detail of our lives.

One way to think of this is to see yourself as a soldier under orders. God is the General, the Master Planner. He decides who goes where and what the overall strategy will be. Sometimes you will get special orders and you should obey them. Other times you will just be at your guard-post doing routine duties faithfully and that is fine as well. If there is action you will respond according to your training first and listen carefully for any special directions on the radio. When orders come we are to be bold and courageous to promptly carry out the will of the Commander.

Now spiritual ministry is a quite different matter from having your car fixed or packing for camp. Spiritual ministry is initiated by God, empowered by God and directed by God. You really CANNOT do effective spiritual ministry unless you are totally surrendered to His guidance. Let's see what Jesus said about His own spiritual ministry:

John 5:19-20 MKJV *Then Jesus answered and said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, The Son can do nothing of Himself but what He sees the Father do. For whatever things He does, these also the Son does likewise. (20) For the Father loves the Son and shows Him all the things that He Himself does.*

John 5:30 MKJV *I can do nothing of My own self. As I hear, I judge, and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of the Father who has sent Me.*

When it came to ministry Jesus did nothing out his own initiative, nothing out of His self, nothing from His own judgment and nothing from His own will. Now Jesus had a perfect judgment and will and His thoughts were pure. If anyone could have done His own ministry planning it should have been the Lord! However Jesus sought the will of the Father. He wanted His ministry direction to come from Heaven above.

If Jesus sought out the initiatives of heaven – how much more should you and I!

Blessings,

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