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How You Can Be Led by the

Spirit *of* God



LEGACY EDITION

Expanded With New Material



CHAPTER 16

Tenderhearted

*For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart
and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not,
then have we confidence toward God.*

—1 John 3:20–21

Does the Holy Spirit condemn you if you do wrong as a Christian?

No. It is your spirit that condemns you.

You need to learn that. It's a hard lesson to learn, however, because we have been taught incorrectly.

The Holy Spirit will not condemn you. Why? Because God won't. Study what the Holy Spirit through Paul wrote in the Epistle to the Romans. He asked: Who is it that condemns? Does God condemn? No, it is God that justifies.

Jesus said that the only sin the Holy Spirit will convict the world of is the sin of rejecting Jesus (John 16:7–9).

It is your own conscience—the voice of your own spirit—that knows when you have done wrong.

I have found that even when I do wrong, though my spirit condemns me, the Holy Spirit is there to comfort me, to help me, to show me the way back. You will never read in the Bible where the Holy Spirit is a condemner. Jesus called Him *the Comforter*. The seven-fold meaning of that word from the Greek is brought out in *The Amplified Bible*:

JOHN 14:16 (*Amplified*)

16 And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Comforter (Counselor, Helper, Intercessor, Advocate, Strengtheners and Standby) that He may remain with you forever.

The Holy Spirit is all of those! He will stand by you when no one else will. He will help you. He is a Helper! It is your own spirit that knows the moment you have done wrong. I am glad I learned that early. It has paid off richly for me in life.

I was barely saved and healed and back in high school when the following incident occurred: I really don't know why it slipped out—no one in our family used profanity. But we had a neighbor, bless his heart, who could—as we say in Texas—“cuss up a storm.” You could hear him all over our end of town. I suppose I picked it up from him. Anyway, I simply said to one of the boys, “Hell, no (something or other).”

The minute I said that I knew on the inside it was wrong. What was it that condemned me? the Holy Spirit? No. It was my spirit. My

spirit, this new creature, this new man doesn't talk that way. The Life and Nature of God doesn't talk that way. Now the flesh, the outward man, may want to go on doing some things that he did before, and talking in ways he talked before, but you have to crucify the flesh. A good way to crucify the flesh—the outward man—is to bring your mistakes right out in the open.

I did that right then. I didn't wait until I was moved. In my heart I said, "Dear God, forgive me for saying that." The young man I said it to had walked away. I located him and asked him to forgive me. He hadn't noticed what I'd said; he was used to people talking that way. But I had to get it right.

It was the voice of my spirit. It was my conscience. My conscience was tender, and I didn't want to violate it. *Unless you keep a tender conscience, spiritual things will be indistinct to you.* That's because your conscience is the voice of your spirit and it is your conscience—the voice of your spirit—that will relate to your mind what the Spirit of God is saying to you down in your heart.

The Bible speaks about Christians even having their conscience seared:

1 TIMOTHY 4:2

2 Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron.

The first church I pastored was a community church out in the country. I usually went out Saturday night, spent Saturday and Sunday nights, and came back into town on Monday. I stayed quite often in the home of a dear Methodist man. This fine spiritual man, a great man really, was 89 years old. He and I didn't get up as early as the others did on his farm. They would be out doing chores or be out

working in the field when this older gentleman and I had breakfast together about 8 o'clock.

I didn't drink coffee, but this old gentleman did. Now you could scarcely believe it unless you saw it, but he had one of those old-fashioned coffee pots—this was the mid-30's—sitting on an old-fashioned wood stove with coffee boiling in it. I have seen him take that boiling coffee, pour it into a big thick mug—and when it was still so hot it simmered in that mug—turn it up to his mouth, and drink the whole cup.

The first time I saw him do it, I hollered. I felt like my mouth and throat were burning.

How could he do that? I couldn't. The tissues of my lips, the inside of my mouth, my throat and esophagus are so tender, just one teaspoonful would have burned all the way down. But he drank a whole mug without taking it away from his mouth.

He couldn't do that to begin with though. Through years of drinking coffee that hot, his lips and mouth, and throat and esophagus became seared. Eventually, he could drink it that hot, and it didn't bother him.

Spiritually, the same thing can happen.

Learn to keep a tender conscience. Learn the minute you miss it and your conscience condemns you, to correct it right then. Don't wait until you go to church. Immediately say, "Lord, forgive me. I missed it." If you have to, if someone else saw or heard you, tell that person right away, "I did wrong. Please forgive me. I shouldn't have said that."

You will have to keep your spirit tender if you are going to be led by the Spirit.