

Eternity Daily Bible Study

(A ministry of Eternity Christian Fellowship)

Walking In The Spirit - 32

NOTE: The first 25 studies are now available as a PDF ebook and workbook on our website at www.globalchristians.org/walkspirit/

Topic: Downloads From Heaven Part 2

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What are these downloads from Heaven like - and how can they help you to serve the Lord? How can you get in on the flow of God's personal revelation, direction and power?

Acts 10:19-20 MKJV *And while Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said to him, Behold, three men are looking for you. (20) Therefore arise and go down and go with them without doubting, for I have sent them.*

As Peter was puzzling over his vision on the rooftop (Acts 10) he gets a 'download from Heaven' – the Holy Spirit speaks to Peter in a perfectly understandable sentence full of specific, present-moment instructions that Peter was to obey.

And things can get much more complex than that, especially when visions are involved:

Acts 9:10-16 MKJV *And there was a certain disciple in Damascus named Ananias. And the Lord said to him in a vision, Ananias! And he said, Behold me, Lord. (11) And the Lord said to him, Arise and go into the street which is called Straight and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus. For behold, he is praying, (12) and has seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him so that he might receive his sight. (13) And Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard from many of this man, how many evil things he has done to Your saints at Jerusalem. (14) And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your Name. (15) But the Lord said to him, Go! For this one is a chosen vessel to Me, to bear My name before nations and kings and the sons of Israel. (16) For I will show him what great things he must suffer for My name's sake.*

This brief vision include everything from specific street directions to theology! It even includes a two-way dialogue between Ananias and Jesus. Again it is something Ananias was to do in the present moment in order to advance the Kingdom of God.

Another instance occurred in the church at Antioch:

Acts 13:2-3 MKJV *As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, So, then, separate Barnabas and Saul to Me for the work to which I have called them. (3) Then having fasted and prayed and laid hands on them, they let them go.*

Again the instruction is straightforward and specific, names the people to be set aside for ministry and the church put it into action straight away, releasing Barnabas and Saul after some further prayer and fasting. Implementation was not delayed say three or four years into the future!

Phillip the evangelist gets both an angel and the Holy Spirit involved in his ministry:

Acts 8:26-29 MKJV *And the angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, Arise and go toward the south, on the way that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza, which is a deserted place. (27) And he arose and went. And behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasure and had come to Jerusalem to worship, (28) was returning. And sitting in his chariot he read Isaiah the prophet. (29) Then the Spirit said to Philip, Go near and join yourself to this chariot.*

So we see that the Holy Spirit is continually involved in directing the ministry of those who are fully committed to God. This guidance tends to be clear and specific, is related to a particular situation in ministry, and is generally is to be applied sometime in the fairly immediate future. (Even the prediction of a famine by Agabus was possibly so the church could start making proper preparations).

Such guidance comes to a great variety of people including laymen like Ananias, as well as apostles, prophets and evangelists. In fact downloads from heaven are built in to the New Covenant and flow from the fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel where all kinds of believers of all ages, genders and classes of society would have abundant access to revelation:

Acts 2:16-18 MKJV *But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel: (17) "And it shall be in the last days, says God, I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh. And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. (18) And in those days I will pour out My Spirit upon My slaves and My slave women, and they shall prophesy.*

Missionary biographies are full of testimonies to the fact that when ordinary people commit themselves to the Kingdom of God they will receive direction at every turn. Now does anyone give directions to a lamp-post or to a telephone pole? No – because we know that the telephone pole will always stay just where it is. Some people are so 'fixed' in their ways that God does not often direct them. It has been said that it is much easier to steer a ship that is moving – and so God steers His saints that are already involved in ministry (great or small). We see a good example of this "moving with the movers" in Acts chapter 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.*

Paul's missionary band first tried to enter Asia and God said "No" ; they then tried Bithynia and God closed that door. Finally at Troas they get a vision of the Macedonian call. Paul, Titus and Timothy were already listening to God and were seeking the next place to minister. They were prepared to obey, so they received the heavenly vision.

There is often a sense of stretching, risk, effort or personal cost associated with such instructions. Phillip could have said "Hey I am having a great ministry here in Samaria, do I have to go all that way down to Gaza just to stand in the desert?" Or Peter could have said "Oh no I will really be criticized if I go and speak to those Gentiles!" and of course Ananias had significant reservations about going to pray for Saul the violent persecutor of the early church. But in each of these cases obedience to the Holy Spirit brought a blessing that far outweighed the risk involved.

Indeed some of these situations defied the common sense wisdom of the day and the instructions from God would have seemed 'just plain weird' to those involved. That is certainly how Peter felt after his rooftop vision and how many others have felt as they have obeyed the Lord.

The center of God's will may not be located within our comfort zone!

Yet God's downloads may also be for our comfort and edification, for instance when God spoke to Paul after he was opposed in Corinth:

Acts 18:9-10 MKJV *And the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, Do not be afraid, but speak, and be not silent. (10) For I am with you, and no one shall set on you to hurt you, for I have many people in this city.*

Or God's instructions to Cornelius:

Acts 10:3-6 MKJV *About the ninth hour of the day he saw plainly in a vision an angel of God coming to him and saying to him, Cornelius! (4) And he was gazing at him, and becoming terrified, he said, What is it, lord? And he said to him, Your prayers and your merciful deeds have come up for a memorial before God. (5) And now send men to Joppa and call for Simon, whose last name is Peter. (6) He is staying with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the seaside. He will tell you what you must do.*

Or the deliverance of Peter from jail;

Acts 12:6-9 MKJV *.... And behold! An angel of the Lord stood by, and a light shone in the building. And striking Peter's side, he raised him up, saying, Rise up quickly! And his chains fell off his hands. (8) And the angel said to him, Gird yourself and put on your sandals. And he did so. And he says to him, Throw your robe around you and follow me.*

To summarize:

- a) God the Holy Spirit can give us specific, clear, plain language instructions
- b) These generally are related to ministry situations in the immediate or near future
- c) All Christians are entitled to receive them because of the New Covenant
- d) However those who are already involved and obedient receive them more often
- e) Obeying these instructions results in glory for God
- f) There may be significant risk or discomfort involved in obeying God's instructions
- g) Yet they may also be for our comfort, consolation, deliverance or blessing

Blessings,

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