

How does the Holy Spirit influence men today?

(by George Battey)

There are only two possible ways the Spirit of God can operate upon a man:

- *Directly*
- *Indirectly*

There is no other option. If the Spirit operates directly upon men, we have a miracle. If instead He operates indirectly there is no miracle at all.

The question we are asking is this: ***Which of these two methods does the Spirit employ to influence men and women today?***

The answer to this depends on whether or not man possesses a “*free will*.”

- If the Spirit influences men ***DIRECTLY***, then men would be powerless to resist and would lose the freedom of choice.
- If the Spirit influences men ***INDIRECTLY***, then men would have the power to resist and would retain freedom of choice.

If God created man with “*freewill*” (the ability to choose right from wrong), then He will likely use a method of influence that leaves this “*freewill*” intact.

The first question before us, then, is: ***Does man have a free will to choose whether to obey, or not?*** And the Bible answers this YES!

Deuteronomy 30:19 (NKJV)

19 I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live;

Here God set two options before the people and He advised them which option was the best one, but He left the choice up to them. He did not coerce, or force anyone to obey.

When the Spirit begins to influence men He uses a method that leaves man's freewill intact.

A DIRECT OPERATION

If the Spirit operated upon a sinner directly and wanted to convert that sinner into a Christian and used His power directly upon the sinner, that sinner would be powerless to resist.

- You would have the almighty Spirit of God
- Verses a weak, mortal man with no power to resist such a mighty force.

Such a direct operation would do several things:

- A direct operation of the Spirit would destroy the freewill of man which God Himself created.
- A direct operation would not change the moral character of any man.
- Instead of making a man a Christian, a direct operation would simply make man a *VICTIM*.
- A direct operation would make God a respecter of persons.

In other words, God is showing favoritism if only a few people get this operation. But the Bible states plainly that God "*shows no partiality*" (Acts 10:34).

So, in summary, the Holy Spirit does not influence men and women by a direct operation.

AN INDIRECT OPERATION

This brings us now to the second method which the Spirit could use: *an indirect operation*. By using an indirect method of influence:

- Men retain freewill, because it would not be the raw power of God vs. the weakness of man.
- God would not be to blame if someone is not converted, because the indirect method *COULD* have converted the sinner, but the sinner himself refused.
- God would not be a respecter of persons, provided He made this indirect method available to everyone.

Q: What kind of “*indirect method*” could the Spirit use to convert men that wanted to be saved and could be resisted by men who did not want to be saved?

Notice:

John 14:26 (NKJV)

26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.

The work of the Spirit indicated here is an indirect method:

- He would bring to the apostles’ remembrance all the *WORDS* Jesus said.
- He would teach them all additional truth which Jesus did not teach them while He was on earth.

The Spirit’s mode of operation is the use of words – by the use of words he would appeal to man’s intellect and so convert anyone who wished to be saved.

APPLICATION

Here are three conclusions:

1) The “Great Commission” becomes understandable.

Mark 16:15 (NKJV)

15 [Jesus] said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.

Every creature must hear the Gospel, because this is how the Spirit operates upon men.

2) It becomes understandable why some people are not saved.

Since the Spirit is not using His direct power, but is using an indirect method, man retains his freewill. Man has a choice of either believing the word and being saved, or disbelieving the word and being lost.

If any man is lost, it is not the Spirit's fault, for He has done His part.

3) It becomes understandable why some people never mature.

Since the Spirit is influencing us only thru His word, it is understandable why some Christians never mature.

Some will always be weak and unreliable because they do not feed continually upon His word. Maturity and stability comes only thru reading and practicing the word of God.

Psalms 1:1-3 (NKJV)

*1 Blessed is the man
Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly,
Nor stands in the path of sinners,
Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;
2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD,
And in His law he meditates day and night.
3 He shall be like a tree
Planted by the rivers of water,
That brings forth its fruit in its season,*

*Whose leaf also shall not wither;
And whatever he does shall prosper.*

Notice, to become mature and stable like a tree planted by water is to meditate upon the word of God. The Holy Spirit authored the written word. It is through the written word and only through the word that He influences men today.

How, then, does the Spirit influence men today? He influences them by means of His written word and His written word alone.

GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

Five steps in God's plan of salvation:

- 1) **Hear** the word of God (Rom 10:17).
- 2) **Believe** Jesus is the Son of God (Mk 16:16).
- 3) **Repent** of sins (change from living a sinful life) (Acts 2:38).
- 4) **Confess** your faith verbally before men (Rom 10:10).
- 5) **Be baptized** (immersed) in water in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Mt 28:19) for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38).

Mark 16:16 (NKJV)

*16 He who **believes** and is **baptized** will be saved; ...*

Acts 2:38 (NKJV)

*38 Then Peter said to them, "**Repent, and** let every one of you **be baptized** in the name of Jesus Christ **for the remission of sins**; ...*

After being baptized, one must continue to be faithful (Acts 2:42; Mt 28:20; Rev 2:10).