
THE SPIRIT'S INFLUENCE UPON MEN

QUESTIONS:

- 1) What was the Spirit's part in man's salvation?
- 2) What is the question we should be asking and what is ***not*** the question?
- 3) What man in the Bible was expecting a dazzling miracle and almost turned his back on God's simple plan?
- 4) What are the two possible ways the Spirit can operate upon a man?
- 5) What if a man is "*convinced against his will*"?
- 6) What did men lose when demons possessed them?
- 7) What did Jesus send the Spirit to the apostles for and what does this indicate about His method of operation?
- 8) How did Absalom "*steal the hearts*" of the men of Israel?

INTRODUCTION

The Scriptures teach that each member of the Godhead plays a part in our salvation:

1) The Father devised the plan.

1 Corinthians 2:9

⁹ But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him."

2) The Son activated the plan.

Hebrews 10:7

⁷ Then I said, 'Behold, I have come; In the volume of the book it is written of Me; To do Your will, O God.'

3) The Spirit revealed the plan.

1 Corinthians 2:10

¹⁰ But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.

The work of each member of the Godhead is supremely important. If we dispense with just one person and His work, we would be totally lost.

In this study we wish to examine more fully the work of the Spirit and the part He plays in man's salvation.

WHAT IS THE ISSUE?

The issue before us is **not "if"** the Spirit plays a part in man's salvation. The Bible says that He does and we accept it by faith.

John 3:5

⁵ Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

Titus 3:5

⁵ not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,

So the issue is not "if" the Spirit is operating in the salvation of mankind, but rather we are asking "**How** is the Spirit operating?"

ARGUMENT: *What difference does it make?*

If we misunderstand how the Spirit operates upon us, we could miss out on salvation.

ILL: Remember Naaman (2 Kings 5).

In the same way ...

TWO POSSIBILITIES

Now, there are two possible ways that the Spirit of God can operate upon a man:

- **Directly** (this would be miraculous)
- **Indirectly** (non-miraculous)

Q: Which of these two methods does the Spirit employ in influencing men to get saved?

Oddly enough, the answer to this depends on whether or not man has a "**free will.**"

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

If God created man with "**free will**," He will likely use a method of influence that leaves this "free will" intact.

Q: Does man have a free will to choose whether to obey, or not?

The answer to this is: YES!

Deuteronomy 30:19

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;

Joshua 24:15

¹⁵ "And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, **choose** for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

Revelation 22:17

¹⁷ And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. **Whoever desires**, let him take the water of life freely.

God did not want us to be like pre-programmed **robots**. He does not force us to serve Him.

One man said:

*"A man convinced against his will,
Is of the same opinion still."*

When the Spirit influences men He chooses a method that will leave man's free will intact.

A DIRECT OPERATION?

Let's start with the first method:

A direct operation – would destroy man's free will.

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

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| You would have the Spirit of God with His unadulterated, raw power | Verses a sinful man with no power to resist such a mighty force. |
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DEMON POSSESSION

Let me illustrate what I'm talking about.

Demon possession – demons from hell would come and operate directly upon these people.

When demons operated upon people like this those people would loose control of themselves. They were powerless to resist such force.

Mark 5:2-5

² And when He had come out of the boat, immediately there met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit,

³ who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no one could bind him, not even with chains,

⁴ because he had often been bound with shackles and chains. And the chains had been pulled apart by him, and the shackles broken in pieces; neither could anyone tame him.

⁵ And always, night and day, he was in the mountains and in the tombs, crying out and cutting himself with stones.

Do you see how helpless this man was? According to Luke 8 he was so deranged he ran around naked. He was powerless to resist the direct power of Satan.

Jesus cast the demons out of this man into a herd of swine and they lost control of themselves:

Luke 8:33

³³ Then the demons went out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd ran violently down the steep place into the lake and drowned.

"Deviled Ham" / "Bay of Pigs"?

SUMMARY: When demons operated directly upon men those men lost control of their own will and were forced to do whatever the demons made them do.

Listen carefully: When Jesus cast demons out of people, He never told those people to **repent!** He didn't say He "**forgave**" them.

These people were viewed as victims and they were not responsible for what they did while possessed by demons.

Luke 8

² ... certain women who had been **healed** of evil spirits and infirmities; Mary called Magdalene, out of whom had come seven demons,

³⁶ ... he who had been demon-possessed was **healed**.

APPLICATION

Do you see the point? When demons operated directly upon men:

- Helpless victims.
- Lost control of themselves.
- Demons were solely responsible for behavior of victims.
- When the demons were cast out, the victim returned to his natural state of being.

In other words, his **character** was not changed at all. He had not really been made worse; he had only been victimized!

If a direct operation of demons upon men was overwhelming and made men victims, how much more if the Holy Spirit (a more powerful Being) were to operate directly upon a man?

If the Spirit operated directly upon men and "made" them into Christians:

- **Men would not be Christians – but victims.**
- **Men would lose control of themselves.**
- **The Spirit would be solely responsible for the behavior of these victims.**

No need to say to them, "Well done thou good and faithful servant," ...

- **If the Spirit ever left, the victim would return to his natural state of being.**

In other words, his character would not be changed at all. He had not really been made better at all; he had only been victimized!

BIBLE EXAMPLES OF A DIRECT OPERATION

To show you that I am not exaggerating, let me give you some Bible examples of the Holy Spirit operating directly upon men.

Notice in each example:

- **The man was helpless** to resist.
- **The moral character was not changed** as a result.

Balaam (Num 24)

As he stood on the mountain overlooking Israel, he opened his mouth to curse Israel, but the Spirit came directly upon him and forced him to bless Israel.

Numbers 24:2-3

² ... **the Spirit of God** came upon him.

³ Then he took up his oracle and said ...

This was for Israel's benefit, not Balaam's.

When the Spirit left him he was the same rotten, evil and wicked false prophet he was before. He was not made one ounce better by this direct operation of the Spirit.

King Saul (1 Sam 19)

King Saul was pursuing David – going to kill David because of jealousy.

1 Samuel 19:22-24

²² Then he also went to Ramah, and came to the great well that is at Sechu. So he asked, and said, "Where are Samuel and David?" And someone said, "Indeed they are at Naioth in Ramah."

²³ So he went there to Naioth in Ramah. Then **the Spirit of God was upon him** also, and he went on and prophesied until he came to Naioth in Ramah.

²⁴ And he also stripped off his clothes and prophesied before Samuel in like manner, and lay down naked all that day and all that night. Therefore they say, "Is Saul also among the prophets?"

This was for David's benefit (and ultimately the world's benefit), not Saul's.

While Saul lay naked prophesying that day, David escaped and when Saul recovered he became the same wicked king he was before and began pursuing David again.

1 Sam 6 - the oxen were operated directly upon.

Num 22 - the donkey operated upon.

SUMMARY

In summary:

- **A direct operation of the Spirit would destroy free will.**
- **Would not change the moral character of any man.**
- **Would make man a VICTIM.**
- **Would make God a respecter of persons.**

In other words, if men are saved only by a direct operation of the Spirit, then God is showing favoritism if only a few people get this operation (Acts 10:34).

Therefore: ***We will not be converted by miracle.***

If we misunderstand this we may, like Naaman, ignore God's chosen way and die waiting for an imagined experience which will never come.

AN INDIRECT OPERATION!

This brings us now to the second method which the Spirit could use to influence us: **An indirect operation.**

By using an indirect method of influence:

- Men retain free will.
- 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 that could (a) convert men that wanted to be saved and (b) could be resisted by men who did not want to be saved?

We discover the answer to this question when we look at the reason Jesus sent the Spirit to His disciples:

John 14:26

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.

This passage demonstrates the work of the Spirit and it indicates the indirect method He would use to influence men:

- He would bring to the apostles' remembrance all the words Jesus said.
- Teach them additional truth.

Apparently, then, 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.

John 15:26

²⁶ "But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.

"He will testify of me" – testimony! Words from the Spirit which would appeal to the intellect of man.

John 16:13

¹³ "However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will **guide you** into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.

"He will guide you" – how would the Spirit guide these men? Jesus says here by speaking words.

Since the Spirit's mission revolved entirely around the word of God, any man that would ever be converted will be converted by means of the word and by means of the word ONLY!

IS THE WORD SUFFICIENT?

Q: *Do words alone have enough power to influence men and move them to action?*

Let me show you what words can do:

2 Samuel 15:2-6

² Now Absalom would rise early and stand beside the way to the gate. So it was, whenever anyone who had a lawsuit came to the king for a decision, that Absalom would call to him and say, "What city are you from?" And he would say, "Your servant is from such and such a tribe of Israel."

³ Then Absalom would say to him, "Look, your case is good and right; but there is no deputy of the king to hear you."

⁴ Moreover Absalom would say, "Oh, that I were made judge in the land, and everyone who has any suit or cause would come to me; then I would give him justice."

⁵ And so it was, whenever anyone came near to bow down to him, that he would put out his hand and take him and kiss him.

⁶ In this manner Absalom acted toward all Israel who came to the king for judgment. So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.

"Absalom stole the hearts of the men" – that is, the men of Israel became loyal to him. They came to love him and they loved him so much many of them eventually died for him.

How did Absalom steal the hearts of these men?

- **By the loving way he treated people**
- **By the WORDS he spoke**

In this same way the Spirit "steals" our hearts from the Devil and causes us to be loyal to God.

ARGUMENT: Wait a minute! Now Absalom was doing some kissing! He didn't use just words to capture the hearts of those men! If the Holy Spirit were kissing on men and speaking to men I might could see how he could influence someone!

R: Oh really! Suppose I told you that:

- God gives every man on earth food to eat every day.

- He gives every man clothes to wear.
- He gives every man rain and sunshine.
- Heart beat
- Lungs breath

That would be far better than a kiss wouldn't it? You see:

- **The Father is doing the kissing**
- **The Spirit is doing the talking**

And together they influence men to become Christians.

If the Father kissing us and the Spirit speaking to us is not enough to "*steal our hearts,*" then we're worse off than those men in Israel!

Acts 11:14

¹⁴ [Peter] will tell you words by which you and all your household will be saved.'

Acts 20:32

³² "So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

James 1:21

²¹ ... receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES

Over and over again the Scriptures reveal that the Spirit influences us only thru His word.

ILL: When you hear that Jack killed Jill and then hear that a gun killed Jill, you know that Jack used a gun and killed Jill.

(Now you know what happened to Jack and Jill.)

Likewise, when one passage says the Spirit does something to us, and another passage says the word does the same thing, we must understand it is the Spirit operating upon us by means of His word.

Every influence which the Spirit exerts upon man to mold his character, that same influence is also attributed to the word which the Spirit gave. He is using His word to influence man.

ARGUMENT: Wait a minute! Rom 8:26 says the Spirit *"makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."* Where is that ever said about the WORD of God?

A: (Listen careful) I did not say everything the Spirit does or that God does is only thru His word. We're not talking about:

- Prayer
- Providence
- The work of angels, etc.

What I said was that every influence which the Spirit exerts **upon man's heart to mold his character**, that same influence is said to be accomplished by the WORD of God.

When Rom 8:26 says the Spirit makes intercession for us, we are reading about an influence of the Spirit upon God, not an influence upon man.

So, the proposition stands: Every influence which the Spirit exerts upon man to mold his character, that influence is exerted thru the inspired WORD (whether written, or spoken).

Jn 15:3 -- we are clean thru the word

Jn 17:17 -- we are sanctified thru the word

Acts 20:32 -- we are built up and given an inheritance thru the word

Ja 1:21 -- we are saved by the word

1 Pet 1:22 -- our souls are purified by the word

APPLICATION

Now, since the Spirit is using this indirect method of influencing man, it is easier to understand a few things:

1) We can understand the "Great Commission."

Mark 16:15

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

2) We can understand why some are not saved.

By using an indirect method, man retains his free will. Man has a choice now of either believing the word and being saved, or disbelieving the word and being lost.

3) We can understand why some never mature.

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

Maturity and stability comes only thru reading and practicing the word of God.

John 15:5-7

⁵ "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

⁶ "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.

⁷ "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.

This is the only hope we have of being converted and maturing in Christ.

CONCLUSION

Let us be keenly aware that a miracle will not come over us to convert us, or to strengthen us.

For conversion we must look to His word

For strength we must look to the word

For comfort we must look to the word

For counsel we must look to the word

Everything we need is contained within the inspired word of God.

2 Peter 1:3

³ as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,