

DID THE DIRECT OPERATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN AND ON THE APOSTLES OF CHRIST INHIBIT THEIR FREE-WILL?

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No. Regarding man's salvation, God has never inhibited his (man's) free-will. Moreover, God has never done for man what he (man) could do for himself. Yet, the Holy Spirit directly (without a medium) empowered and worked on the apostles. This immediate direct relationship of the Holy Spirit on the apostles enabled them to do the work that was theirs alone to accomplish. They could not have done their ambassadorial work without such direct supernatural help.

THE DIRECT WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT WITH THE APOSTLES

This direct involvement of the Holy Spirit in the apostles was the "Comforter" or "Paracletos" relationship that Jesus promised only to His apostles in John chapters 14,15,16. I know of no other faithful child of God who teaches otherwise. Because Jesus would return to heaven when He completed the redemptive work that He alone could do, He sought to help settle the troubled hearts of the apostles. He wanted them to know that they would not be left alone. He said to His apostles, **"And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever: ...for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you"** (John 14:16, 17).

It is self-evident that it is impossible to have **"another Comforter"** without at least one other "Comforter" preceding it. The "Comforter" on whom the apostles had depended and who would need to be replaced by **"another Comforter"** was Jesus Himself. The other "Comforter" whom Jesus promised to the apostles would dwell with them and be in them until (**"for ever"**) they finished their apostolic ambassadorial work.

Such involvement of the Holy Spirit with, on, and in the apostles covers far more than the miraculous operation necessary to reveal to them the New Testament, inspire them flawlessly to record it, and confirm it. Z. T. Sweeny in his book, *The Spirit And The Word*, has an excellent discussion of the meaning and significance of *Paracletos*, ("Comforter"). Sweeny uses the transliteration of the Greek word *Paracletos*, *Paraclete*, in his writing on the subject. On pages 68 and 69 he wrote:

This Paraclete is a distinct gift to the twelve, to take the place of the personal presence and guidance of the leader who is preparing to leave them. What is the nature of this promised one? By examining the lexicons, we find that Paraclete is:

1. One called or sent to assist another.
2. One who pleads the cause of another.
3. A monitor.

4. An instructor.
5. A guide.
6. A helper.
7. A supporter.
8. A comforter.

Of this Paraclete Jesus says:

1. Whom the world *cannot receive*.
2. He dwelleth with *you* and shall be in *you*.
3. He shall teach *you* all things.
4. He shall bring all things to *your* remembrance whatsoever I have spoken unto *you*.
5. He shall testify of me.
6. He shall convict the world of sin.
7. He shall convict the world of righteousness.
8. He shall convict the world of judgment.
9. He shall guide *you* into all truth.
10. He shall show *you* things to come.
11. He shall receive of mine and show it *unto you*.

Here we have eleven distinct things that the Paraclete is to do for the apostles.

All these offices of the Paraclete were needed by the apostles in their work of proclaiming Christianity and establishing the church.

Not one of the direct actions of the Holy Spirit on the apostles in any way, form, or fashion inhibited their free-will. Furthermore, such action of the Spirit did not cause the apostles to think that they had any less natural responsibility to comply with all that God obligated them to do in order to receive their salvation. Also, the presence of the miraculous gifts in the infant church did not cause her members to lessen their natural efforts in discharging their salvation obligations to God (1 Cor. 12:7-11; Acts 8:17-18; 19:6; 1 Cor. 15:58; Gal. 5:19-26; Phi. 2:12; Col. 3; 1 Tim. 3:15; 2 Tim. 2:15).

THE DIRECT WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT WITH THE APOSTLES PAUL AND PETER

Being an apostle of Jesus Christ, the apostle Paul possessed the "Paracletos" relationship of the direct operation of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 11:5; 12:12). However, such a direct work of the Holy Spirit did not cause Paul to be any less determined to will himself to submit to Christ in all things (1 Cor. 9:24-27). Furthermore, this direct work of the Spirit did not weaken or hinder Paul's natural sense of obligation or determination to correct sinners (Gal. 2:11). It is obvious that Peter did not think that he could blame the Holy Spirit for his own improper exercise of his free will (Gal. 2:11-14ff). To conclude otherwise is to reveal an abysmal ignorance of the Bible's teaching concerning the work of the Holy Spirit on the apostles.

Every permanent essential obligation of the gospel the first century church had in order to be saved and remain saved, we have today. Not one direct miraculous action of the Holy Spirit on members of the first century church lessened or weakened the responsibility of every member to work very hard to discharge their duty to God in the use of their time, opportunity, and ability (Jam. 2:14). To conclude otherwise is to deny the teaching of the infallible word regarding the direct and immediate work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the apostles and in the lives of those to whom they imparted miraculous gifts. Furthermore, such a false view reflects on the integrity, sacrificial dedication, and godly characters of the saints of old.

THE MIRACULOUS GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT IN THE CHURCH AT CORINTH

It should be remembered that even the miraculous gifts in the church at Corinth did not prohibit their carnal minds from making a big mess out of many matters necessary (obligatory things or matters pertaining to salvation; 1 Cor. 11:20) for living the Christian life. Miraculous gifts may have been used correctly or misused and abused. Such was in the power of those who possessed them (1 Cor. 14:32). Further proof of this point is seen in Paul's admonition to Timothy. Paul told him not to neglect his miraculous gift (1 Tim. 1:6).

FALLACIOUS REASONING

If the Holy Spirit and Paul had reasoned the way some brethren do, he would not have written the Corinthian brethren. Why write a letter to correct those who have miraculous gifts? They already have the gifts to guide them in living the Christian life. Was the presence of the miraculous gifts (supernatural aid) hindering the normal rational natures and free-wills of the Corinthians from doing all they naturally could to discharge their obligations to God? The Holy Spirit and the apostle Paul whom he inspired did not think so.

If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord. ...Let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Cor. 14:37; Also see 4:21; 15:58).

"PROVE ALL THINGS; HOLD FAST THAT WHICH IS GOOD" (2 The. 5:21)

Are we to conclude that the reason for the Corinthian's errors is found in their possession of miraculous gifts? Do we mean to say that the presence of such gifts inhibited their free-wills and weaken their self-determination. There is no evidence to cause us to believe that they thought that the Holy Spirit would do for them what they must do for themselves? If the answer to the previous question is yes, the following syllogism sets out the fallacious reasoning that leads to such an erroneous conclusion.

Major Premise: If one in the first century received a direct operation of the Holy Spirit, then his will is inhibited.

Minor Premise: Paul received a direct operation of the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion: Therefore, Paul's will was inhibited.

The form of the syllogism is valid. However, the major premise is false. Therefore, as has been proven in this article, the argument is not sound. Hence, as my daddy said, "Down comes the whole cob house." (For the information of those less learned in agriculture nomenclature (country talk) or logical parlance, daddy meant a house that country children used to make out of corn cobs. When a cob in the foundation was removed from the house, the whole house fell). The direct operation of the Holy Spirit on the apostles or those to whom they imparted a miraculous gift did not inhibit their natural abilities and free-wills in discharging their salvation obligations to God. To take any other position is to fly into the face of the material in the New Testament that the Holy Spirit Himself has revealed for our instruction on this subject.

WHAT ABOUT TODAY?

As we have studied, the "Paraclete" relationship of the Holy Spirit was by Jesus promised only to His apostles. By that power the apostles had the ability to impart miraculous gifts to the infant first century church through the laying on of their hands (Acts 8:13-19; Why can we not see what Simon saw? Also see Acts 19:6). When all the apostles and those to whom they imparted miraculous gifts died, all such direct work of the Holy Spirit on the saints ceased. Over and over again in the debate with those who claim such powers from the Holy Spirit today we prove their affirmations false.

PROVIDENCE

What about God's providence? Providence simply defined is a careful supply of needed resources. In the case of divine providence on behalf of Christians it is something beneficial for us that God does on our behalf. It in no way hinders one's free-will. Miracles fall under the head of temporary and provisional providence. Since their cessation, God's providential acts may be called general providence and in no way today involves miracles. No one knows what all Deity and all the holy angels are doing on our behalf (for us). That is God's business and not ours (Deu. 29:29). How God works in the kingdoms of men is not revealed to us (Dan. 4:17).

The specific details of how he answers prayer are not revealed to us. However, James wrote:

The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Elias wall a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit (Jam. 5:16-18).

He can and does answer prayer without the use of miracles. Paul said that the Corinthians had been of help to him in their prayers on his behalf (2 Cor. 1:11). Would the help of their particular prayers been available to Paul if they had not prayed? Peter instructed husbands to treat their wives properly lest their prayers be "**hindered**" (1 Pet. 3:7). If they did not treat the wives correctly would their

prayers not be “**hindered**”? Just a few verses later Peter wrote that God’s “**...ears are open unto their prayers:...**” (1 Pet. 3:12). Does God hear us when we pray according to His will? Paul said that, “**...in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God**” (Phi. 4:6; See also Eph. 6:18). If Christians did not make their “requests” known to God, would it make any difference in God’s dealing with them? He also asked the Colossians to pray “**...that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ...**” (4:3). Does this not imply that God hears prayers and answers prayers regarding specific requests of Christians? May we pray such prayers today and expect them to be answered without God working a miracle to do so? The apostle John answered the question when he wrote:

And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him (1 John 5:14, 15).

John says that he hears and answers scriptural prayers. Do you teach what John taught and continues to teach? Indeed, as we live in harmony with His will and ask according to His will He hears and answers our prayers according to His wisdom. We are not told how God answers these prayers but answer them He does. Surely we have not concluded that the only thing we can do is thank God for what He has already done, which action on His part was determined by His attribute of omniscience before the world was?

We waste all manner of time and get into all sorts of hurtful wrangling in an attempt to explain the unrevealed and/or the unexplainable. In the long ago, the final solution to such things was given by the Holy Spirit when He inspired Solomon to write: “**Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man**” (Ecc. 12:13). To emphasize something that has no bearing on one’s learning and discharging of his obligations to God cannot do anything but hurt the cause of Christ as well as those who advocate it. For the sake of the whole blood-bought body of Christ and the cause of our Lord we should concentrate on “**the conclusion of the whole matter**” rather than on something no man can fully understand and/or explain. Why not conclude what the Holy Spirit concluded and place our emphasis thereon?~