

IF THE HOLY SPIRIT OPERATED DIRECTLY ON MANKIND

by Douglas Hoff, via "Seek The Old Path"

Many people's concept of Christianity includes some mysterious work of the Holy Spirit to change one's life. The Bible teaches the Spirit operates upon man to create faith, convict of sin and convert the soul. But the question is, does the Holy Spirit operate *directly* on man or does He work through the word of God?

The Bible states that the "sword of the Spirit" is the word of God (Eph. 6:17). This word is "*quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart*" (Hebrews 4:12). These two verses show that the Spirit does not operate directly upon man, but through a means — the agency of the word of God. It is much like a man who went to cut down a tree. Did the man himself cut down the tree or did the saw he used cut down the tree? Obviously, the man did cut down the tree, but he used a tool to do so, a saw.

Suppose the Holy Spirit did operate directly upon mankind apart from the word of God. What would be the results? God does not want anyone to be lost (2 Peter 3:9). He is also no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34). Therefore, the Spirit would act uniformly on everyone. Since the Holy Spirit is part of the Godhead, He is all powerful. So it should be the case that everyone would be saved. There can be no other outcome when an irresistible force operates directly upon a very moveable object such as man! But Jesus said, "*Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven*" (Matthew 7:21). This accounts for the fact that not everyone will be saved though God is no respecter of persons. Not everyone chooses to do the will of God.

If the Spirit operated directly on mankind apart from the word of God, the New Testament would not be needed to convert people from their sinful lives. Conversion would depend entirely on the work of the Holy Spirit. If someone was not converted, the blame would lie at the feet of God. Who would dare charge God with a failure to accomplish His will? The truth was stated long ago: "*So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it*" (Isaiah 55:11). Preaching God's word will harden some and soften others. The sun will melt wax but harden clay. Different effects are the result of the differing natures of the materials. So it is with mankind. Some will choose to believe and obey while others choose not to believe and thus disobey leading to their damnation.

If the Spirit operated directly, why even bother preaching? Here is a curious thing. Those who advocate a direct operation of the Holy Spirit preach it! Shouldn't the Spirit have revealed his message directly to each person? Jesus told his apostles, "*ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth*" (Acts 1:8). Without knowledge of God's word, one cannot have faith in Jesus Christ since faith comes by hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:17). The Bible nowhere states that faith comes by some mysterious operation of the Holy Spirit.