

## Supernatural Input

If the supernatural excites you before salvation, you gotta love being a believer! The Christian experience is jammed full with supernatural phenomenon, including things like tongues, healings, miracles, raising the dead, demons, possessions, revelations from God, and a supernaturally enabled lifestyle. If you were drawn to this sort of stuff before, you will continue to be drawn to it after. Even if you weren't attracted to it before, the very nature of a believer's Christian experience demands recognition of certain supernatural phenomenon. There is no avoiding it.

So, we have a bunch of Christians, some really saved, some Christian in name only, but just about all of them are in some measure expecting supernatural things to happen. This openness to the supernatural leaves the believer open to fairly easy deception by Satan. This is especially true of new believers who do not have the spiritual development to discern what is supernatural from God and what is from demons. The point we must always remember is this: If you are looking for the supernatural, it will be delivered, if not by God then certainly by Satan.

If you accept that God can lead a believer, then you must also accept that He communicates His wishes to the believer. God communicates with His children in a supernatural manner. That said, there are communications that are legitimate and those that are not. There are methods of communication that are legitimate and those that are not. The "are nots" are communications from evil spirits designed to deceive the believer into some act of disobedience or into some system that will cause his disobedience. The end result is temporal separation from God, or what we called "outside our Area of Operations" from a previous study. In other words, outside the will of God for our lives. "Out there" we are a casualty in the angelic conflict and no longer a witness for God against Satan.

I believe there are two principle methods of divine leading for the believer. The first is what we call "providential leading." By this God brings people, events, and opportunities into our lives that tend to lead us in the direction He wishes us to go. The decision remains ours to follow God's lead or not.

The second method is through the Holy Spirit in communication with our human spirit. The Holy Spirit suggests directions for us to follow. Some call this "having a burden," as in feeling a pressing need to act in some manner that may be a bit unnatural or even well outside our "comfort zone." I will give two examples.

Twenty-plus years ago several of us decided to start a men's Bible study. It was suggested that I teach it, but I did not feel qualified. The Spirit of God, however, had another opinion and was moving in my heart to encourage me to teach. In spite of this, I attempted to avoid a teaching position by purchasing books for the men's group we were forming to use to work from. Providentially, God prevented us from acquiring the books for six weeks. The source was unavailable, then he didn't return our many calls to

place orders, out of stock, etc. Finally, I was forced to develop my own lesson plan and teach the classes myself. Soon our wives wanted in on the class. I resisted teaching, but God had His way in the end, working both providentially and in my spirit.

Another example: Janis and I hold very conservative views, and we have held these views for years even before we became believers. In some respects our views, especially on crime and criminals, would be considered a bit harsh by others with a more liberal perspective. "Lock them up and throw away the key!" God sought to soften our hearts on this subject (Mat. 25:34-36, 43; Heb. 10:34). He brought a person into our lives (providential leading) who had no one to turn to but God. His family had abandoned him. He was a brand new believer and a three-time loser in the California penal system, serving life under the three-strikes law, and was reaching out for help from other believers through a prison ministry called "Someone Cares." My wife heard the ministry's leader speak on radio one day and wrote in and asked to be matched up with a "pen pal." This was waaaaayyyy outside her comfort zone! But the Spirit of God was moving in her heart and eventually in mine to do this. And Tommy Artist came into our lives to demonstrate to us that Christians need to be compassionate even to those we might be afraid of.

Tommy got my Bible studies by hard copy mailed to him for years. We corresponded with him several times a month and have thus followed his spiritual development from a babe in Christ to a rapidly maturing believer. Tommy's first letters were filled with sadness and desperation. Eventually they were filled with joy in spite of his circumstances. We feel like we have known Tommy all our lives and he was one of the family. Tommy matured and began leading Bible classes in prison, using the notes I sent as his lesson plan. Hardened criminals, Christians, met in the "yard" several times a week. One reads the lesson, and the others looked up each verse to be read and discussed.

I believe God had great plans for Tommy and used us to get him off on the right foot. Tommy felt like he was being led to work with the young first-time prisoners to lead them to Christ before they become hardened by the older prisoners. The best chance of rehabilitation these people have is through a relationship with Christ.

I used the past tense when speaking of Tommy because he passed away some 15 years ago. We became good friends with Tommy and miss him still, but we will be reunited with him in eternity.

God moved providentially and also "burdened" us and lead us to soften our hearts towards people in prison. Oh, we don't believe the cells should be thrown open and all criminals released, but we do believe we should show compassion to those in prison, especially those who are "in Christ." God did this because there are great opportunities for evangelism in prison. Sometimes a person must be completely humbled and brought to the lowest possible point before he sees his problem and seeks God and help. Tommy was such a person and freely admitted it. God humbled our hearts as well. We now write to second prisoner in Angola, the son of a fellow believer. Logan has earned

his degree from the NOLA Baptist seminary and ministers to other prisoners at Angola. Logan is in for life with no hope of parole. That may not be too much longer because he has a form of leukemia. Logan could use your prayers.

The point is this. God has plans for our lives, and He has work for us to do. If so, then He is obliged to reveal those plans to us and lead us where He wants us to go and enable us to do what He wants us to do in His name. When we are doing His work we are witnesses against Satan, and Satan will do all he can to prevent that. It follows then that Satan will attempt to mimic God's leading by deceiving us into doing something other than what God wants. And that, my beloved, is what this study is all about.

## **Supernatural Input, Part 2**

We established that God communicates with mankind through providential leading and the indwelling Holy Spirit. In ages past, God has communicated with man in numerous other ways, including dreams, visions, prophecy, direct revelation, tongues, and burning bushes to name a few.

Now pay attention! Other than providential leading and conviction/illumination by the indwelling Holy Spirit, none of these are valid forms of divine communication today. Why? Because we have the completed canon of Scripture, and God's main method of communication with mankind today is through His written Word.

"Well, what about miracles?" you ask. Yes, God does perform miracles, but he does not do it through the likes of Benny Hin and others of his ilk. When God does perform miracles it does indeed have a message attached to it in the sense that they are designed to get someone, either the person directly affected by the miracle or a witness, to pay attention to God, and what He wants of them. In that context miracles would be considered providential leading.

First Corinthians 12, 13, and 14 deal with spiritual gifts. The subject of tongues is a very controversial one within the Body of Christ. I do not believe tongues are legitimate today.

**1 Cor 13:8** Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. <sup>9</sup> For we know in part and we prophesy in part, <sup>10</sup> but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away.

It was indeed divine communication during the first century. It was a warning to Israel of the pending discipline for their continued apostasy and rejection of Messiah. Tongues ceased prior to the fall of Jerusalem in 70AD.

**1 Cor 14:21** In the Law it is written, "By people of strange tongues and by the lips of foreigners will I speak to this people, and even then they will not listen to me, says the

Lord.”<sup>22</sup> Thus tongues are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers, while prophecy is a sign not for unbelievers but for believers.

The passage quotes Isaiah 28:11-12 which is a warning to Israel of pending disaster. Israel was committing that “unpardonable sin” of rejecting Messiah and faced divine discipline, which would be their destruction as a nation in AD70. The nation was Assyria and they also spoke “strange tongues” (foreign language).

First Corinthians 13:10 says tongues will be removed once the “perfect has come.” Some argue the “perfect” is Christ and the “comes” is His Second Coming. Therefore all these named spiritual gifts would be valid until He comes. There are a few problems with that. First it states elsewhere in Scripture that most of these gifts will be active after He comes. How can they also be done away with when He comes? And secondly, the word “perfect” is in the neuter gender, indicating it is a thing and not a person. The only perfect “thing” is the completed canon of Scripture, and historically that is what happened. Second century church fathers rarely spoke of tongues and some mentioned it had long ceased.

These spiritual gifts served several purposes:

- They were for the purpose of establishing the early Church and the authority of the message being delivered by the apostles.
- They were for the purpose of filling the “void” in Scripture until all of the New Testament had been revealed and recorded, which was about 90-95AD.
- Some of these gifts were a warning to Israel of pending discipline.

Once all this was accomplished and once the entire canon of Scripture had been revealed and recorded there was no more need for these special gifts.

Do not be looking for signs and wonders, Do not be listening for divine revelations. Do not be looking for God to give you a vision. Do not be waiting for God to reveal something to you in a dream. Because if you do, these things will be given to you and they may NOT be from God.

The late J. Vernon McGee told a story once about two students at Moody Bible Institute way back when he was a young man before WWII. It seems one day two young seminarians did not come down for breakfast. Nor did they come down for lunch. And neither did they show up for supper. The dean went to their room to check on them. They were sitting quietly looking out the window and praying. He asked if something was wrong, were they sick? They replied in the negative, that they were fine.

“Well, why did you miss three meals?” He asked. Their reply was that they were waiting for sign from God to go eat.

“Are you hungry?” he asked.

“Well, yes.” They replied.

“Has it occurred to you that might be a sign from God to go eat?”

“No,” they replied. “We will wait for a sign from God before we leave here.”

“You are leaving here all right,” replied the dean, “and I am the one giving the sign. Pack your bags and get out.”

If you are looking for “signs and wonders” then you are just like the two seminarians and just like Israel of the first century, when Jesus said of them, “Unless you see signs and wonders you simply will not believe” (Jo. 4:48). Israel was apostate and was in the process of rejecting the very thing they so longed for, the Kingdom and its King.

The spiritual life of the believer is supernatural, all right. It is divinely inspired. It is divinely led. It is divinely enabled. But all of this is done by providential leading and the indwelling Spirit working in man through his human spirit. A true spiritual life does not happen without the inspiration, leading and enablement of the Spirit of God. There are counterfeits where man is his own inspiration and attempts to do what he considers divine work on human effort. In the counterfeit man is glorified. In the true supernatural spiritual life God is glorified and Satan is condemned.

Satan will do all he can to distract man from God’s work to do his bidding instead, and he will try to make it look like the work of God. And so many Christians fall for it.

## **Review**

Before we launch into the next phase of our study let’s review where we are and where we are going. You should, by now, have an understanding that God does communicate with His children. He does this in a number of ways, including providential leading and communications between the Holy Spirit and your human spirit in the form of conviction or burdens.

You should also understand that Satan can and does mimic this through deception. He deceives the believer into thinking he is being lead by God, when in fact it is Satan doing the leading. And he leads us to do his will and not do God’s will. Satan uses methods to deceive believers that “appear” to be divine in origin such as dreams and visions and tongues. It is easy for believers to be tricked by these deceptions. How do we avoid that?

Understand you can be deceived and beware of any communications or leading you think you have received - TEST IT!

You have three possible reactions to input:

- I assume

- I am not sure
- I am certain

You have three responses to those reactions:

- I assume = NEVER ASSUME!
- I am not sure = Then take a neutral position until you are sure of the source
- I am certain = Then by all means act on it in faith.

You have three tools to use:

- Your free will
- Your brain / intellect
- Scripture

You are called to use your free will. Exercise it and make free will decisions in compliance with God's will for your life. You are NEVER called to a condition of passivity, a condition where the brain God gave you isn't used; use it.

Do not assume! Use your brain and examine these communications or leadings and determine their source and purpose. Are they from God or evil spirits? One good way to tell is what is the fruit? What spiritual production will come of this? That may not always be evident at first, but when it is use it as a measure.

**NOW PAY CLOSE ATTENTION!** If the supernatural leading did not produce God-glorifying fruit, you can be absolutely certain it did not come from God. If so, then, my beloved, that means you have been following an evil spirit.

You are called to use Scripture to test supernatural leadings. Does it line up with the truth? But if you have bought into false doctrines your standard of measure will be flawed. Satan will use this and very often make it look like it does line up with scripture, but the truth is available to shed light on the lie. That is why we have the Bible.

Do you use your free will, intellect, and Scripture to allow your eyes to be opened? It is your obligation to be open to the truth when it is presented to you. God will hold you accountable for this.

One tool to use is prayer. Get on your knees, rebound, and ask God to show you what is the truth in the matter—put some dew on the fleece, so to speak. But then be prepared to act on what He will show you.

## The Non-Functioning Spiritual Life

Ephesians 6:10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. 11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

We have demonstrated how the chief tool of Satan in this war was deception. Both the words “wiles” and “wrestling” in the original language of the above passage support this concept. Many Christians are looking for the overt temptation, while in truth, Satan comes in the back door through deception. With this lesson we will begin to look at deception in action and eventually some ways to defend against the “wiles of the Devil.”

### God has work for you to do.

**Eph. 4:11** And He gave some *as* apostles, and some *as* prophets, and some *as* evangelists, and some *as* pastors and teachers,

12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ. (See also 2 Tim 3:16; 1Co 15:58; Col 1:10)

There are two kinds of “work” or production, and we need to understand the difference. In previous lessons we have defined them as divine good and human good.

- Human good is motivated by human needs for self-gratification and produced in the power of the flesh, and is by definition man glorifying.
- Divine good is divinely inspired (motivated by God’s needs or purpose), is divinely enabled, and therefore God glorifying.

In John 15 we are told we are the branches, and Christ is the vine. The branches are expected to produce fruit, and God the Father, as the husbandman, will prune the branches, so they will produce much fruit. And your fruit will be tested.

In 1 Corinthians 3:11-15 we have a passage where we see the *bema* judgment for Church Age believers that takes place in heaven during the time of the Tribulation on earth. “Gold, silver, and precious stones” are divine good that passes the fire test at the bema judgment, while “wood, hay, and stubble” are human good that gets burned up. “If any man’s work is burned up, he shall suffer loss.” This is loss of rewards, not salvation. “But he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire”

Yes, work is expected of us, and this work does not result in our salvation, it results **from** our salvation and our relationship with the “vine.” And as this passage indicates very clearly, lack of production does not forfeit our salvation. God has a plan and a purpose for your life, work for you to do. If so, then God is obliged to communicate His

wishes to the believer. The chief means during this age is providential leading, the Holy Spirit leading the human spirit through burdens and convictions, and through the study of the Word of God.

Satan can and does mimic the legitimate means of divine communication, and also uses those that are not valid during this dispensation, such as tongues, prophecy, etc. He deceives the believer into thinking he is being lead by God, when in fact, it is Satan doing the leading to do his will. And many in the Church today are deceived and drawn into a state of apostasy. Satan's purpose is to cause the believer to lose sight of God's plan for our lives, God's guidance in our lives, and the work God has for us to do, and deceive us into a condition of non-production. We will call that condition PASSIVITY.

To understand passivity, we first need to understand what it is not. **God requires, for His working, cooperation with His Spirit and the complete use of every faculty of the whole man—body, soul, and spirit.** God's objective is to make the believer a free, intelligent sovereign within his own sphere, a thinking, rational, renewed creation created in His own image.

To accomplish this God gave us five things:

- God gave us a free will—
  - And we are expected to use it.
- God gave us an intellect with the power to reason right from wrong—
  - And we are expected to use it.
- God gave us certain strengths, talents, abilities, physical/financial assets, and spiritual gifts—
  - And we are expected to use them.
- God gave us His inspired Word in the completed canon of Scripture—
  - And we are expected to use the wisdom and knowledge it contains.
- God gave us the indwelling Holy Spirit to lead us and enable us to do His work
  - And we are expected to use those assets.

God does not need nor seek inactivity or passivity on the part of the believer. God expects intelligent action. God expects the believer to use the assets he has been given and produce fruit. By contrast, the powers of darkness would make the believer to be a machine whose brain is in neutral. Satan wants the believer in a non-productive state and distracted from the truth where he will not be a witness against him during the appeal phase of his trial. We will see how he goes about accomplishing this in the lessons that follow.

## **Passivity of the Will**

Think of the will of man as the helm of the ship. Turn the helm and the ship goes in that direction. The will, as the helm, controls the activity of the man for better or for worse.



Passivity of the will is disastrous to spiritual direction. Passivity is thinking that a “surrendered will” to God means no use of the will at all. A person in this state is so attuned to yielding his will to God’s will that he assumes incorrectly that everything in life results from the will of God and his only response is to “go with the flow.”

The underlying idea is that God is making all the decisions for him through His providential actions. God does indeed act providentially in our lives, but this is carrying that concept to the extreme of hyper-Calvinism where man has no free will and everything is preordained of God. True, everything in life is part of the will of God, either His active will or permissive will, but there is a requirement that we respond to that in an intelligent manner, using doctrine to think with, and make a decision. The danger is that we accept everything as coming from God, when in fact much of what comes at us is actually from Satan. We must discern the difference. If your will is passive and accepting of everything, there is no discernment and only deception.

If you are open to and waiting for a sign to act—avoiding making a decision—Satan will deliver and put within your reach many “supernatural” props to lead you where he wants you to go. And that is exactly where many believers are today. They mistakenly believe that they have no choice in the matter and no need of a decision. God will lead, but if you are so focused on signs and wonders, Satan will deliver and make it look like God is doing the leading. This is a common problem in the Pentecostal and charismatic movement today. They have been so focused in signs that they are easily deceived into false doctrines and into a passive state outside the will of God.

God only works through the active volition of a man and not *for* him in matters requiring action. God did not design you to be an automaton or robot. God expects you to make a free will decision to act in accord with His will. “Choose for yourselves this day who you will serve.” (Joshua 24:15)

## **Passivity of the Mind**

The passive believer is one who does not use the assets he has been given by God for their intended purposes and in the process becomes non-productive for God. As believers we are all called to produce. This production, also called “works,” must be divinely inspired, for a divine purpose, and divinely enabled. Such production is “gold, silver, and precious stones” that pass the fire test at the bema judgment for Church Age believers and is God glorifying.

God has a plan for your life and He has work for you to do. Satan will do all he can to prevent that, because a productive Spirit-led believer is a witness against him in his appeal trial. He will attempt to deceive the believer into a passive non-producing state. The first example of this we looked at was called Passivity of the Will, where the will of man is brought to a condition where there is no action and the believer relies on signs and wonders before acting.

Passivity of the Mind can be confused with Passivity of the Will, but the two are very different. It may help to view them as two sides of the same coin. Passivity of the mind relates to the decision making process. That process is analyzing the input and coming to a decision concerning the choices. "I can do this or I can do that. I conclude for various reasons that I should do this." That is simply making a decision based on some rational process that considers the alternatives in light of some set of values or established criteria. Passivity of the mind does not execute this decision process.

By contrast passivity of the will relates to acting on the decision that results from the decision making process. Once you have decided it is correct and proper to do "this" instead or "that," one must actually will to do "this"—or not. No action results from the mental process of deciding what to do until it is determined by act of the will to actually follow through and do it. Passivity of the will is failure to will to act and depending on signs and wonders to guide actions.

In the decision making process the believer is called to use his mind or intellect and reason, examine, and test in order to come to a correct decision. Satan would prefer you put your mind in neutral and examine nothing, test nothing, just accept whatever is thrown at you. We all know people who are trapped in this deception. They are in religions that accept whatever the authority or tradition teaches, and individual believers examine nothing of what is presented to them. The irony is that often they must accept things at face value in the face of staggering, even Scriptural, evidence to the contrary. To question the authority or tradition is to have little faith and is a sin in their minds, so they don't dare question it.

Some believe that complete surrender means the giving up of the use of our brains, but God chose the greatest intellect of his age as His servant, Saul of Tarsus. When God chose a man to lay the foundations of the Church, he chose one with a mind capable of vast intellectual thinking. None of us have minds like Paul, but that doesn't mean that what we have is useless for God. God gave you a mind and expects you to use it. You are called to use your mind to reason, examine and test.

I call people trapped in Passivity of the Mind human theological sponges sucking up garbage. They often get trapped in heresies because they fail to examine doctrinal teaching for accuracy and correctness. In this condition they are in a state of perpetual disobedience because they are involved in activities that are either forbidden by Scripture or at the very least they are distracted away from the plan of God for their lives. In this condition they are non-productive, exactly where Satan wants them.

The believer is never called to blindly accept everything that comes at him. Scripture calls for exactly the opposite attitude.

**2 Co 13:5** Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?

**1 Th 5:21** Prove all things; hold fast that which is good

**Ro 12:2** And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

The word translated “prove” in these passages is dokimazo *dok-im-ad'-zo*, which means to examine or to have discernment.

The non-use of the brain hinders spiritual growth and activity, just as the evil working of the brain hinders. But the normal and pure working of the brain is **essential** for cooperation with God. For His purposes God requires the normal use of the brain.

## **Passivity of Judgment or Reason**

Very closely associated with passivity of the mind is passivity of the judgment or reason. We said a person with a passive mind is a human theological sponge sucking up garbage. That garbage is of course the lies of Satan in the form of theological heresy. If you have not figured it out yet, this is why we have so many denominations. It should be obvious that they all cannot be right, and it isn't a case of “whatever it means to you is right.” That is itself a lie. God is not the author of confusion, but Satan is. God teaches that there are indeed absolute truths that are valid no matter what time in history we are in. Moral values are not moving targets that change with the culture. Satan would very much like for you to believe they are.

Passivity of judgment or reason is a condition that often follows passivity of the mind. Once the sponge is *full* of garbage these people go into what I call “theological lock-down.” In this condition the person closes his mind to all arguments and statements that are contrary to anything he has already come to a conclusion about. Efforts to give him the truth are regarded as interference, and the person attempting to enlighten them is ignorant and intrusive. Some call this simply being stubborn, but what I am talking about here is more complicated and a whole lot more evil. The person is not merely stubborn, but he is in such a severe state of deception that he is resistant to the truth when presented to him.

If you think about this one for a moment, you will realize you have experienced people bound by this. This is the classic case of Satan feeding false doctrines and deceiving the person into believing them to be true. Let me give an example of this in action.

I once taught a thorough series on the false doctrine of tongues and the other temporary spiritual gifts. The material was presented from Scripture, which should always be the basis of any doctrine, and was supported with both historical evidence and scientific evidence refuting tongues and the other temporary spiritual gifts that were active during the early apostolic period but are not active today. One of my students had a friend who

was involved in the tongues movement, and this young man attempted to present the scriptural evidence against this heresy to his friend. Before he could even begin, his friend stopped him with this, “Whoa, there is NOTHING you can tell me that will convince me tongues is wrong!”

*Not even from the Word of God?*

This is passivity of judgment or reason in full bloom!

It has been my experience that those involved in the Pentecostal and charismatic movements and the ultra-legalists and ultra-religious are particularly difficult to reach with the truth. There is a very good reason why this is true, and we will see that in later lessons in this series. It comes down to the fact that they have turned inward and are looking to the emotional experience as proof of their spiritual lives.

**1 Tim 4:1** Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;  
**2** Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron

The Scriptures speak of just these kinds of deception and describes the condition that results as “having their conscience seared with a hot iron.” The Greek here is *kauteriazō* *kow-tay-ree-ad'-zo* and is the origin of our modern English word cauterize. It means to render insensitive. The idea is that scar tissue is built up, and that scar tissue is hard and without feeling, insensitive to pain. A person with this build-up of scar tissue becomes insensitive to the truth and even resists it. The longer this condition exists the worse it becomes, and the harder it is to “rescue” the one deceived.

Ephesians 4:17-19 speaks of this same condition where we see a warning to believers not to act as an unbeliever with their understanding darkened. And look at verse 18 where we have the reason for this darkened understanding, “because of the blindness of their heart.” The word for “blindness” comes from the root word *poroo* *po-ro'-o* which means to be blind or callous or hardened—as in scar tissue or calluses on the soul that are resistant to the truth.

Refusal to correct error despite efforts by the Holy Spirit through God’s people will result in hardness of the heart. The longer this lasts the more difficult it is to break through to them. In fact it is so difficult to break through they often have to be shocked by some major crisis in their lives to get them to begin to question these false teachings. This is God chastising them to get their attention and bring them to a condition of humility where they become teachable again. That process can be exceedingly painful.

Even if you do break through, it usually means the complete relaying of the foundation of their spiritual lives. They have to start over from day one because they are incapable of sorting out all the lies of Satan they have accepted as truth from Biblical truths. Furthermore Satan will not let them go easily and will fight every step of the way until the last visage of the lie is removed.