

The Volition and the Spirit of Man

After the previous lessons on the counterfeit presence of God and counterfeit leadings by God, we ought to spend some time to develop an understanding of just how God works in man. That understanding will help us to be aware of the false leadings and deceptions of Satan.

Let's begin by reestablishing the fact that God does indeed guide and lead His children. And Satan also attempts to mislead and deceive God's children. The very first thing you MUST understand and accept is that very basic fact. What I want to do now is give you some guidance on how you can tell which is which.

To be led by God the believer must be in cooperation with Him. There is a process for that, which we will develop. God works in the believer and out through the one that is in right relationship with Him. He accomplishes His works in the believer through the indwelling Holy Spirit and the spirit of man. The human spirit is that part of us that has direct communion with God. I have said this before and now is a good time to repeat it: Christianity is not a religion; it is a relationship with God. That may not make a lot of sense if you are not saved and experiencing what I am talking about, but those who have experienced this relationship know exactly what I am speaking about.

That relationship between man and God can be severed by sinfulness, and in that disconnected status Satan and his demons are given opportunity to deceive the believer. Yes, the believer in right relationship with God (remember we call that our "spiritual walk") can also be deceived, but the believer who is already in a broken relationship with God is particularly vulnerable to deception.

Let me make one thing perfectly clear. The broken relationship I am speaking of is when the believer is outside the will of God for his life. He is in a place where he should not be and doing something he should not be doing. Another word for this is "carnality". The believer in this condition has NOT lost his salvation, and we have pretty well established the fact of the permanency of our salvation once we have attained it through faith – NOT works! A very good passage that supports eternal security is John 5:24. "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life."

In interpreting Scripture one of the things is pay attention to is the verb's tense. And this passage has some interesting tenses. The verb translated "has" (eternal life) means it is a present possession with future results. In other words, it is true now and in the future. There is not ever a time in the future when it will not true.

"Does not come into judgment" is a promise of action at a future event. Since it is stated in the negative, there will be no judgment.

“Has passed out of death into life” is in the past tense and is an established fact. The person has passed from spiritual death into eternal life. That is right, the believer is already in possession of eternal life, and the last time I looked “eternal” still meant forever!

Who gets all this? “He who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me.” Does it say “works for me?” Does it say “does lots of good deeds?” Does it say “does not sin?” Does it say “tries not to sin?” Nope! It says “believes.” Salvation is never about what you do. It is always about what Christ did, and you need only believe (trust in) that fact.

The point is this: A broken personal relationship with God as a result of any form of disobedience is not terminal in the context of your salvation. It may indeed be terminal in a temporal sense, IF the disobedience persists to a point of complete moral decay, at which point God may terminate the life of the believer, but he will NOT go to hell. Remember, he is in possession of *eternal* life.

The remedy for this state of disobedience is 1 John 1:9. The offending believer is to confess his sins to God. Some associate repentance with that, and in a sense that is correct, but only in that the believer has a “change of mind” and is in agreement with God. Repent means to have a change of mind or a change in thinking.

I believe there is one more piece of this. I hesitate to call it a step, because that would not be completely accurate. In a way this additional piece, step if you prefer, comes under the concept of repent. The confessing believer is brought back to right relationship with God by his act of confession, but reconnected relationship with God is tenuous at best, if the believer does not bring his own will into voluntary submission to the will of God. Some call that “yielding”. Without that, the believer will likely bounce right back out into carnality.

In his little daily devotional book *My Utmost for His Highest*, Oswald Chambers puts it this way, “Am I willing to let God do in me everything that has been made possible through the atonement of the Cross of Christ?” The key word here is “willing”. That is the *yielding* part I have been talking about. We can repent and confess our sins, but if we or our own free wills do not yield to the will of God, then God can accomplish nothing in us and through us, and we are right back in disobedience and in need of 1 John 1:9 again. It is this detail that many Christians completely miss, thus rendering their spiritual walk non-functional and ineffective for the plan of God. And this is exactly what Satan wants the believer to get trapped in.

In order for man to have a personal relationship with God that is other than one of chastisement, the believer must be in right relationship with Him. That means he must have no unconfessed sin on his soul and be yielding his will freely of his own accord to the will of God. We call that “walking by means of the Spirit” (Gal 5:16) or “abiding” (John 15:1-5). Such a walking believer receives the fruit of the spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). This believer produces “fruit” for God (John 15:1-5).

We should understand by now that God is not in control of a passive believer. The Scriptures do not call for man to relinquish his intellect and free will. The Holy Spirit indwelling the regenerate believer energizes and works through the human spirit to the soul and members of the body only with the active cooperation of the will of the believer. In other words, God does not use a believer apart from the decision of the believer to allow God to use him.

This cooperation with God does not use the believer like a robot set on auto-pilot. Look at Colossians 1:27-29 and we see in verse 29 that Paul says "I labor," implying the full action of Paul's will. In other words, Paul first chose to labor, but the labor is not of our choosing. God makes the decision what He needs and wants us to do. Once we choose to do His will, He enables us to do whatever we are called by Him to do. Now look at Galatians 2:20. Paul says it is "I who live, move and work," and yet "not I but Christ – the Spirit of Christ – in me." There it is! It isn't Paul who "lives, moves, and works," it is the Spirit of Christ in him "living, moving, and working" the things of Christ.

Christ said He came not to do His will but that of the Father. "The Son can do nothing of Himself, My father works and I work." Jesus as the Son of God in hypostatic union (as a man) had a separate will from the Father, but He chose to submit His will to the father. And thus it should be with the believer. It should be his own deliberate choice of harmony with the Holy Spirit to actively use his will in ruling himself in spirit, body, and soul.

To understand how this works we need to understand one basic fact: God created man to have dominion over himself. This dominion was to be exercised by his act of will. Pay attention! We were created to have free will and to exercise self-control. Along comes Satan and the fall of man, and in that fall man yielded his will to the rule of Satan who from that time on, by the agency of his evil spirits, has ruled the world through the enslaved will of fallen man.

Christ, the Second Adam, came, taking the place of man, chose obedience to the will of the Father, and never for one moment diverged from this perfect cooperation with that will. He willed the will of God, becoming obedient even unto death, thus regaining for regenerate man, not only reconciliation with God, but liberty from our enslavement to Satan, and the restoration of man's renewed and sanctified will in its place of free action.

Man was created to have dominion over his world and himself. Through disobedience, he lost it all in the fall and became enslaved to Satan's will. The Second Adam through obedience regained that lost dominion and rulership for the regenerate.

The will of man was united with God before the fall of Adam. As a result of the fall, man's will became united with Satan. As a result of the Cross, regenerate man is positioned to have his will once more united with God.

And through the energizing power of God working with his volition, man is to rule his
★ *Own spirit* –

Prov. 25:28 He that *hath* no rule over his own spirit *is like* a city *that is* broken down, *and* without walls.

★ *Thoughts of the mind*

Col 3:2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth

★ *The Body*

1 Cor 9:27 But I keep under my body, and bring *it* into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

But unregenerate man cannot achieve this stage of renewal and liberation apart from regeneration, because the Holy Spirit is not in fallen man until the moment of the new birth (Eph. 2:12; 16; John 3:5-8).

Even after regeneration the new man does not immediately become a spiritual man, a person wholly dominated by and walking in the Spirit. At first he is only a “babe in Christ” and has lots of growing ahead of him. The unregenerate man is wholly dominated by his body and soul, but the regenerate man has his spirit “quickened” and he is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, yet he may still be governed by his soul and body because his spirit is bound up by the lies of Satan.

The believer, regenerate man, is trichotomous. He is composed of three parts. Those three parts are the body, the soul, and the human spirit. By human reproduction, man is body and soul. That is our bodies and our souls are a product of the human reproduction process. The body and soul therefore have genetic elements from both parents, though we may favor one or the other. Until salvation the person remains dichotomous, body and soul.

The human spirit, as we have seen, is a product of divine generation. It is made by God, and as such it quite literally renders the believer a child of God.

The unregenerate person who is only body and soul is controlled by his soulish nature, which is skillfully manipulated by Satan. On the other hand, the regenerate person, the saved, born again believer has the addition of a human spirit, and it is that human spirit that has communion with God and should be in control of the person, not the soulish nature. The problem is the person has spent a significant portion of his lifetime with his soulish nature in the driver’s seat. He has conditioned himself to be that way, and guess what: You don’t change that overnight!

What may happen is the regenerate believer, who has a human spirit that is supposed to be in the driver’s seat of the person, often continues with his soulish nature in control.

This is why many born again believers look for all the world just like a heathen! It is because the same forces that controlled their lives before are STILL controlling their lives even after salvation. And this is in spite of the fact that as believers they have the power to resist the control of their soulish natures in the indwelling Holy Spirit, a power that the unregenerate does not have. It is not possible to have victory over sin apart from the use of this power asset. Unfortunately, the new believer usually doesn't understand how to use this power, and he will remain controlled by his soulish nature. And the human spirit will be restricted from its rightful position in control of the person. The human spirit will be "bound" by the soulish nature. But there is relief!

There is a passage in Hebrews I never truly understood before I began this study. With the understanding I just presented to you above, that passage now makes sense to me, and I hope to help you come to the same understanding I now have of it.

Heb. 4:12 For the word of God *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 discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Now pay attention to the phrase "sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit". We will come back to the rest later.

Now why would the soul and the spirit need to be "divided asunder"? Because the spirit needs liberating from the control of the soul! This passage is pointing to the solution of how to get the human spirit from under the domination of the soulish nature so it can take its rightful place in the driver's seat of the person. "Divided asunder" the spirit is liberated from the soul.

The "two-edged sword" is the word for the Roman short sword, machaira *makh'-aheer-rah*. The machaira was a marvelous weapon for its time. It was shorter and lighter than other period swords with a double cutting edge that could cut either way and with a stiff, short pointed blade good for piercing armor. It was designed for close work with the Roman shield protecting the soldier from the blows of the enemy's heavier and longer swords. It was very effective! This is a perfect word picture of the power of the Word of God as an effective weapon for cutting the spirit free from domination by the soul.

I had always thought of this in the piercing and convicting context, never as the spirit needing to be liberated from the soul.

It is after this "piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit" that the spirit of regenerate man is able to be brought into harmony with the Spirit of God. And what does Galatians 5:22-23 say? But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, **temperance**: against such there is no law.

"Temperance" is self-control, true dominion over the world of oneself. Then passages like 2 Cor 10:5 are possible, "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to

the obedience of Christ.” And Proverbs 17:27 makes sense, “He that hath knowledge spareth his words: *and* a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit.” The Hebrew word for “sparath” is *chasak khaw-sak'* and carries the idea of restraint or self-control. And “excellent spirit: refers to the human spirit in control and not the soulish nature.

A spiritual person ruled by his spirit exercises self restraint and is “cool under fire” Such a person’s body is an instrument to be handled intelligently as a vehicle for God’s service and not any longer the master of the man or a tool of Satan.

What is the “two-edged sword” that does this piercing and dividing? The Word of God! It is through understanding the mind of God and the provisions He has left for us to use that the spirit can be liberated from control of the soul. We gain that knowledge through study! The problem is that believers are often distracted from the study of God’s Word by the “wiles of the Devil.” Or they are distracted into a system of false doctrines that prevents them from understanding how to exercise the power that has been granted them as believers.

This is expressed in the parable of the sowers in Matthew 13:3-8 and explained in Matthew 13:18-23. Look at verses 4 and 19. The seed of the Word is sown but Satan snatches it away, and they produce no fruit like the believer in verses 8 and 23.

Believers can look like the unsaved, because their human spirit is “bound” by their sin nature and unable to function in its rightful capacity in control of the person and guided and enabled by the Holy Spirit. It takes the Word of God to break that binding. But be careful! Satan will deceive the believer whenever he can. This is the problem with many churches and believers today. Few are actually functioning as God intended their souls to function. I have said this before and will state it here again; the believer can commit any sin an unbeliever can commit, and this is one way it happens. Many people have a difficult time accepting that fact.

As believers we are called to decisive action in cooperation with the Spirit of God using the will. Everywhere in Scripture we are called to declare an attitude of choice with decisive action. We are told to:

- Cast off the works of darkness (Rom 8:12)
- Put on the armor of light (Rom 8:12)
- Put away the old man (Eph 4:22)
- Put on the new man (Eph 4:24)
- Put off the old man and his doings (Col 3:9)
- Put on the new man (Col 3:10)
- Put to death your members (Col 3:5)
- Present your members to God (Rom 6:13)
- Put off the body of flesh (Col 2:11)
- Put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provisions for the flesh (Rom 13:14)

All these passages describe a decisive act of the will not toward exterior things but things which are unseen in the spiritual sphere. They emphasize the effect of decisive

use of the will of man— *When the believer acts in harmony with the liberating power of God.* Christ has done the work on the Cross, but the work is applied in fact through the action of the believer's own will.

That is an incredibly important piece of understanding!

The believer is to act as though he himself has the power to cast off invisible works of darkness, and with his will in harmony with the Spirit of God. Through the co-working of the Spirit of God, this makes the "casting off" effectual. Your spirit acting alone does not have the power, but your spirit in co-operation with the Spirit of God does have the power. But this harmony and oneness of wills is necessary.

Phil 2:12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. **13** For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of *his* good pleasure.

This is a much misinterpreted passage. It does NOT refer to your salvation from the fires of hell. "Salvation" means to have deliverance from *something*, but not always just the fires of hell. It can mean deliverance from earthly issues, and it is often used that way in Scripture. And that is what the context suggests here. It says God is calling the believer to co-action with Himself. The believer is called to exercise this freedom gained through the Cross and through regeneration, and as a result, experience "deliverance from" (salvation) the control of Satan. Look at verse 13. "It is God who works with and in him to *enable him to will and do His will.*"

Through regeneration, God has once more empowered the believer to have control over his own person. By this restoration of a free will to act in choosing for God, **Satan looses his power.** He must rule through the enslavement of man. Once man is free, Satan looses what power he has usurped for himself through the fall. This is why we spent so much time developing the concept of passivity and how Satan uses it against you and against God. He wants you passively in obedience to him, ignorantly thinking you are in obedience to God. And many have fallen for it.

Even if you don't know what the will of God is for you at any given moment or on any given issue simply make the proclamation, "I choose for the will of God and refuse the will of Satan." That declaration will have an affect on the unseen world.

The action of the will is governed by the understanding of the mind. Here is how the process is supposed to work:

- The mind sees what to do.
- The will chooses to do it.
- Through his spirit the believer draws upon the power of the Holy Spirit to carry out the decision.

It is really pretty simple, when faced with an attack by Satan or asked by God to do something for Him we often fail to use the most important asset available to us to accomplish the task, the Holy Spirit. We are led by the Spirit to a need or a task God has for us to do. We may even recognize that God wants us to do this for Him, and we may even decide (use of the will) to do it. Then it unravels! We attempt to accomplish the task or stand against the Devil on the basis of human power and effort. Everything was right up to that point—and then we fail. We fail because we ourselves are not able to accomplish most of what God expects of us. But we are able if we use the enabling power of the Spirit and step out in faith. That may mean recognizing your limitations (humility) and saying in prayer, “God, I can’t do this alone, but since You are asking me to do this, I know with your help I CAN do as You ask.”

Php 4:13 I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me.

The Volition and the Spirit of Man – Review

We have covered a lot of very complicated material, so it may be time to do a little review of all we have learned and make sure we fully grasp the concepts that have been presented.

The relationship between man and God was severed when Adam and the woman sinned, which created a barrier between mankind and God. The purpose of what Christ did on the Cross was first to regain for regenerate man reconciliation with his Creator – break down that barrier. The veil in the Temple symbolized sin as a barrier between mankind and God. The tearing of the veil in the Temple at the death of Christ symbolized the removal of that barrier. The judgment of sin at the Cross broke that barrier down.

This resulted in the potential for liberty from our enslavement to Satan and sin. Unregenerate man is a slave to his sin nature and to Satan whether he understands that or not. He is driven by his own nature, which is skillfully manipulated by Satan. Fallen man is wholly dominated by bodily and soulish needs. Life is all about satisfying those needs, and not just what we would think of as sinful or lustful, but also what we would define as “good”. That is right, even what we would call “good works” prior to regeneration are driven by internal human needs and are of no value to God. They are not motivated by God but rather by our need to feel good about ourselves, to impress others, or to earn points with God. The point is these “good works” are not divinely inspired and enabled, thus they are classified as human good. Isaiah calls them “righteousnesses” and then describes them as “filthy rags”. If it is for the purpose of glorifying man, it is not glorifying to God. Only divinely inspired, motivated and enabled “good works” can be considered as God-glorifying. Fallen and unregenerate man is a slave to Satan. Whose slave are you? Because you are either enslaved to God or Satan.

The Cross and then regeneration result in the full restoration of man's freedom to act. Fallen man was a slave to Satan before regeneration. With the restoration of man's renewed and sanctified will to its rightful and God-given place of free action, man's free will is given liberty to act FOR God's plan. Adam had a free will that was in harmony with God. The moment he sinned that harmony was broken, and his will was in harmony with Satan's will. Prior to the fall, through the free function of his will, man had dominion over his own soul, and body. With the death of his spirit, which we call "spiritually dead," man lost that control. Regeneration creates the potential for restoration of that harmony and control. I said, "potential," because fallen man, with the knowledge of good and evil, now has a choice. Where there was no choice before because of the sin barrier, unregenerate man was a slave to Satan. Now there is a choice. Regenerate man can either choose to allow Satan to manage his life or make a willful decision to put his trust in God.

So, after regeneration we are potentially free to act as free agents again, but the new believer is just a babe in Christ and often remains under the control of his own soulish nature, which of course Satan manipulates. The newly generated human spirit is "bound" by man's sin nature and locked out of control of the person.

How does he get free?

The answer is found in Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God *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 discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

This control by the soul over the human spirit must be severed, and the "sword" to do that with is the Word of God. That word "quick" is *zao dzah'-o* and means it is alive and able to exert power over the soul. The Word does this through knowledge. The believer studies the Word and keeps it close to his heart, and more importantly understands the provisions God has left for him to use to have victory over Satan – and trusts that! Knowledge is power.

Not only does the Word convict, but it imparts power to the spirit by severing the control the soul exerts over the spirit. Only after this severing of the soul's influence over the human spirit, is the spirit of man able to be free of control by the soulish nature and be in harmony with the Spirit of God. From this results TRUE dominion over the soul and the body. Instead of the soul controlling the spirit, the spirit controls the soul. Whereby we might bring into "captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" and have what Proverbs calls an "excellent spirit". That word "excellent" is the Hebrew *qar kar* which means cool or calm, a spirit that is in harmony with God and in control.

Christ has done the work on the Cross, and that work is applied in fact through the action of the believer's own will. He is to act as though he himself has the power to cast off invisible works of darkness. The power is not his own, but that of God, and is available only when his will is in harmony with the Spirit of God, which means being in

right relationship with God – in fellowship, rebounded and yielding your will to His. Through this co-working with the Spirit of God, this makes the “casting off” effectual. The believer’s spirit alone lacks the power, but your spirit acting in cooperation with the Spirit of God does have the power. This oneness and harmony of wills is necessary for effectual action.

The spirit of man is energized by the Holy Spirit. The choice of the will alone is not sufficient for action. More is needed –

Rom 7:18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but *how* to perform that which is good I find not.

I have the will to do it, but not the ability to execute on that decision.

Eph 3:16 That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man

Paul says he wants to act in accordance with the will of God, but is himself helpless to do so. Then Paul says it is His Spirit that strengthens the “inner man” (human spirit). Remember Philippians 2:13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of *his* good pleasure? It is the Spirit of God who energizes the believer to carry out His choice. God gives the power to do His work.

Freed from Satan through regeneration, the believer must use the Word of God and learned and applied doctrine to sever the control the soulish nature of man has over the human spirit. Once freed the human spirit is free to act in harmony with the Spirit of God. And through an act of the will the believer is empowered to have victory over Satan.