

The Holy Spirit Told You What?!

False teaching about the work of the Holy Spirit has been around for a long time. In the first century, Christians were arguing over the miraculous gifts given by the Holy Spirit through the laying on of the apostles' hands (I Corinthians 12-14). Several hundred years later, John Calvin would come along with his erroneous "TULIP" doctrine which basically advocates that man is wholly dependent upon Divine intervention for salvation because he is inherently evil and can never do anything good. For this reason, according to Calvin, one needs the Holy Spirit to "illuminate" the written Word of God in order for him to understand it. In the 21st century, not only does Calvin's view remain in vogue, but groups exist that advocate the continual miraculous operation of the Holy Spirit, much in the same manner in which He worked in the first century. It's gone beyond that, however. There are those who claim the Holy Spirit's intervention in the mundane, day-to-day affairs of life. According to some, He has helped them find their car keys and even opened up a parking space at the mall for them. Others aver that He has assisted them in making a choice of a career. (It's been interesting to see these individuals later after they changed careers because they "hated" the one into which the Holy Spirit had supposedly led them.) I remember well the gentleman who came up to me and said, "The Spirit told me to come up to you and ask for a dollar for a hamburger." My reply was, "Well, it wasn't the Holy Spirit because if He had spoken to you He would have told you I wasn't going to give you the money!"

In the minds of some, the role of the Holy Spirit seems to have been turned into little more than that of the genie from the magic lamp. He will do practically anything and everything one's heart desires. There is no task too small. Just rely on the Holy Spirit and He will open eyes and ears and show the way.

The doctrine of the Holy Spirit is worthy of pages and pages of discussion. One brief article could not begin to do justice to the topic. However, sound Biblical exegesis demands that one grasp the first principles of an issue before delving into a more in-depth analysis of it. In this case, the first principle to understand about the Holy Spirit is the Bible-defined scope of His work.

Was it ever the Father's intention to have the Spirit work miraculously until the end of time or was His miraculous work intended for only a designated period with a definite purpose? The latter would seem to be the case as we read God's Word. In the context of a discussion of miracles, Paul wrote, "But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." (I Corinthians 13:10). "That which is perfect" is sometimes erroneously applied to Jesus, but since the term is neuter and not masculine in form, it can't possibly apply to Jesus. Instead, it applies to something that would put an end to the need for the miraculous. Ephesians 4:11-14 refers to miracle-infused offices in the church in the first century which would last "till" a certain point, that point being when all would come into the unity of the faith, the point of maturity and completeness. Resulting from this would be something that would have the capability of producing stability in the faith, something that would keep Christians from being "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine..." (Ephesians 4:14).

What is it that God has given to us that is complete, mature and able to provide stability in the faith? Is it not the written Word of God itself? If you haven't considered this before, please go back and read the verses in I Corinthians 13 and Ephesians 4 and picture the completed written Word of God, the Bible, as that of which the writer is speaking. After you've done that, consider this: Because of the aforementioned false teachings regarding the work of the Holy Spirit, the world that calls itself "Christian" is indeed "tossed to and fro, and carried about by every wind of doctrine." The religious confusion that exists today is the result of a refusal to know and accept God's written Word. People are claiming that the Spirit told them this and the Spirit told them that. An examination of their words in light of the Bible proves their teachings to be contradictory to that which the Spirit inspired and which His inspired writers penned. The Holy Spirit inspired the Bible (I Corinthians 2). What more could He possibly say apart from the written Word than He has already said therein?

The written Word of God that resulted from the Holy Spirit's inspiration is as alive and powerful today as it was when it was first penned (Hebrews 4:12). Why can't we be satisfied with that? Why

must people insist that the Spirit is working separate and apart from that which He wrote centuries ago? Is it a lack of trust in the Bible? Is it too much Calvinism? Whatever it is, the only way to get back to true Bible unity is to return to the words of the Holy Spirit as written in the New Testament and cease these wild imaginings of dreams, visions and direct conversations with the Spirit.

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