

## HOW DOES GOD'S SPIRIT MOVE US?

It has been said that God works in mysterious ways. We know that He works with us through the power of His spirit. In **Proverbs 21:1** we read a very interesting verse about the power that God has over our minds to move and influence us. If you'd like to turn with me to **Proverbs 21:1** we read the following: "The king's heart *is* in the hand of the Lord, *like* the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes."

What I'd like to do in the sermonette time today is to examine how God can do what is described here in **Proverbs 21:1**. What is the method by which He influences our minds and can move our hearts like this?

In *Mystery of the Ages* Herbert Armstrong wrote the following about the power that Satan has to influence people:

"In **Ephesians 2:2**, Satan is called the prince of the power of the air, working in -- inside the minds of -- people. I could never have understood this until: 1) I had understood how radio and television sounds and pictures are transmitted through the air; and 2) I had learned the truth about the human spirit in the human brain. If your radio is set on the proper radio wavelength, or television set is tuned to the proper channel, the broadcaster's message comes through clearly. Satan as prince of the power of the air broadcasts -- not in words, sounds or pictures, but in attitudes, moods, impulses.

"For example, we read in **Ezra 1:1**, when King Cyrus of Persia issued a proclamation to send a colony of Jews back to Jerusalem to build the second Temple, he was moved to do so because God stirred up his human spirit -- in other words, put the suggestion and impulse in his mind, and the king acted on it. In the same manner Satan moves on the human spirit within people to move them in attitudes of envy, jealousy, resentment, impatience, anger, bitterness and strife. People have no realization of the tremendous power of Satan. The human spirit within each human is automatically tuned to Satan's wavelength. It seems as if Satan has surcharged the air over the entire earth with his attitude of self-centeredness and vanity" (p.119).

Like radio waves are invisibly broadcast, Satan also broadcasts his self-centred impulses and moods all around the earth which are picked up by the spirit in man in each of us. The spirit in man in each of us is automatically tuned into his broadcasts. It's up to us whether we flow along with and act on those impulses or reject those impulses and stick with God's way. In a similar manner God also can broadcast or transmit His impulses to do good.

Radio and television broadcasts are broadcast in every direction which can be picked up and received from almost anywhere with a radio or TV that is properly tuned to the right frequency. Other transmissions, such as telephone calls, are generally directed from one specific point to another specific point along cable lines which transport the signals. God's transmissions to people's minds are sent specifically to a particular person's mind, rather than a general broadcast.

Let's have a closer look at the example that Mr Armstrong quoted in **Ezra 1:1-2** that shows a king's heart that was in the hand of the Lord. We read in those verses: "Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all

his kingdom, and also *put it* in writing, saying, Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the LORD God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which *is* in Judah.”

According to Josephus, the Jewish leaders, knowing the prophecies spoken of by Isaiah 200 years earlier, showed it to Cyrus at a favourable opportunity. Cyrus was very impressed with the uncanny accuracy of the prophecy which spoke of how he would conquer Babylon and he was motivated to fulfill the second part of the prophecy about rebuilding a Temple in Jerusalem. He appeared to be quite open to the suggestion that God placed in his mind. The thought of his rule actually fulfilling divine prophecy would have certainly stroked his ego.

There are, however, a couple of occasions, where the people that God moved were much more reluctant and hostile to begin with. If you'd like to turn with me to **1 Samuel 19, verse 18** we'll read the first story. In **1 Samuel 19:18** we read:

“So David fled and escaped, and went to Samuel at Ramah, and told him all that Saul had done to him. And he and Samuel went and stayed in Naioth. Now it was told Saul, saying, ‘Take note, David *is* at Naioth in Ramah!’ Then Saul sent messengers to take David. And when they saw the group of prophets prophesying, and Samuel standing as leader over them, the Spirit of God came upon the messengers of Saul, and they also prophesied. And when Saul was told, he sent other messengers, and they prophesied likewise. Then Saul sent messengers again the third time, and they prophesied also.

“Then he also went to Ramah, and came to the great well that *is* at Sechu. So he asked, and said, ‘Where *are* Samuel and David?’ And *someone* said, ‘Indeed *they are* at Naioth in Ramah.’ So he went there to Naioth in Ramah. Then the Spirit of God was upon him also, and he went on and prophesied until he came to Naioth in Ramah. And he also stripped off his clothes and prophesied before Samuel in like manner, and lay down naked all that day and all that night. Therefore they say, ‘*Is* Saul also among the prophets?’” (**verses 18-24**).

Now, I'd like to ask you a question. Have you ever had the experience where you were in a good frame of mind and then you felt suddenly overwhelmed by bad impulses and ended up with a really foul attitude? I distinctly remember one time that it happened to me in a very freaky way and I know of others who have experienced something similar on occasion. I wonder if perhaps Satan is allowed to overload our spirit with bad impulses on the odd occasion to remind us just how easily it can happen without God's restraint.

In like manner, God can overload our minds the opposite way if He chooses to. It's rare and only temporary if He does so because that would take away some of our free moral agency. This is what appears to have happened here with Saul and the messengers who went ahead of him on three separate occasions. They were far from thinking God's thoughts yet God moved them to not only stop pursuing David but to actually come back speaking for God.

Another occasion where this sort of thing occurred was with Balaam. Balaam was an unconverted soothsayer denounced in the New Testament by Peter (**2 Peter 2:15**) and Jude (**Jude 11**). It says in **Numbers 24:2** that “the Spirit of God came upon him” and for the rest of that chapter he began to give a series of prophecies inspired by God. It appears that God, through His spirit, overloaded his mind with impulses transmitted to his human spirit to do good and God used him temporarily to do His bidding. Just as Saul went back to his old carnal self after the experience, so too did Balaam.

Usually, through the Holy Spirit, God only leads us through gentle promptings by His spirit on our conscience. This is because to build true character in us the good that we do needs to be by our consent. Sometimes though, for a purpose, God will overwhelm the human spirit of someone with urges to do good over and above what is normal and against what they might do normally.

Now, is this the way that God works with us when we receive His Holy Spirit? Over in **Romans 8:14** we read the answer to that question. In **Romans 8:14** we read: “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.” Normally God’s spirit only leads us. It doesn’t push us. It doesn’t force us. It leads us and then we have the choice to follow that lead or not.

Let’s go to the next book of the Bible and read what Paul writes over in **1 Corinthians 14:32**. He writes in this verse that “the spirit of the prophets are subject to the prophets.” God only leads us and doesn’t force us to do His will. We have to do God’s will because we **want** to not because we **have** to. If we were forced to do God’s will, like what temporarily happened to Saul and Balaam, then we wouldn’t build any real character at all and we would act just like both Saul and Balaam, who went back to their carnal selves after God moved their spirit to do His bidding.

We are led by God’s spirit. God’s spirit doesn’t force us to do anything but it does work with our conscience as that still small “voice” from God that helps motivate us to do the right thing.

There’s a battle that goes on in our minds all the time. That battle is clearly defined by the word “but”. For example, God’s spirit will motivate us to be patient with some guy who’s really giving us a hard time. If we say “I know I should be patient with this guy but...” and then we act on the but we have poured a little bit of water on the Holy Spirit.

The same could happen where we have offended someone who may have also hurt us as well. We might think, “I should apologize to him but he hurt me just as much and he isn’t apologizing.” Do we act on the thought prompted by God’s spirit or do we act on the but and refuse to swallow our pride and make peace with our brother?

Another example is where we might have a thought that we should do some good deed and do something nice for someone and then we think to ourselves but I don’t feel like it or it’s too inconvenient. Do we act on the thought prompted by God through His spirit to do a good deed to someone else or do we act on the but? We are faced with dozens of these big and little tests each and every day.

The more we act on the but the more we quench God’s spirit (**1 Thessalonians 5:19**). All of us who are baptized have this little piece of God inside of our very minds. Paul tells us not to grieve that spirit, that little piece of God in us, by going against His will (**Ephesians 4:30**). We need to do our best to act on the first part that tells us to do the right thing and ignore the but if we are to grow in God’s character and have more of His spirit.

In conclusion, God can turn people’s hearts like moving water by overloading our spirit with urges to do good or do whatever God wants us to do. This is something that He occasionally does for a specific purpose but for most of us He leads us through gentle promptings on our conscience. He leads us and then we have the choice to follow that lead or not. Let’s all be more and more sensitive to and responsive to that lead and follow it as much as we can.