

# Fulton County Gospel News

Good News About Christ And His Church For All Of The World

“... Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body.” - Ephesians 5:23

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## DIRECT?

by Lee Moses

Is the direct operation of the Holy Spirit an experience common to all Christians? Certainly the Holy Spirit operates in behalf of Christians; and, through use of means, He influences Christians and potential Christians to do what is right (Nehemiah 9:30; Ephesians 6:17; Revelation 2:29; et al.). However, some aver that the Holy Spirit acts **directly** upon the mind of man; thus forcing, enabling, or otherwise influencing man's obedience to God. But is this true? One can know a doctrine is false when it implies a false doctrine. That is, when accepting one doctrine **demand**s that one accept a second doctrine which is clearly false, the first doctrine is also false. There are only four possible ways known to this writer by which the Holy Spirit could directly influence the mind of man—and each of them demands another doctrine which is clearly false.

The first possibility is that the Holy Spirit **forces** a person to obey God without any willing compliance necessary on the part of that person. This is the Calvinistic doctrine of *irresistible grace* (see “Can Man Resist the Grace of God?” **FCGN**, January 2006). Whether applied to the Christian or non-Christian, such clearly violates the Biblical teaching that **man has free will** (Deuteronomy 30:19-20; Joshua 24:15; Proverbs 1:29). Every man and woman of modest intelligence has the ability to choose whether to do right or wrong, and this is why a just God can justify some and condemn others (Romans 2:2-10; 2 Corinthians 5:10). If the Holy Spirit were to force one to obey God against that person's will, that “obedience” would not be obedience at all.

The second possible way in which the Holy Spirit could directly influence the mind of man is to prod him with **subcon-**

**scious “nudges.”** This position would teach that a person does not know when such nudges occur, and does not know they are from God. This might be done by causing the recipient of such nudges to feel pain at the thought of doing wrong or pleasure at the thought of doing right. Perhaps a woman might be enticing a man to indulge in sexual immorality, but a sudden jolt from the Holy Spirit would incline the man to choose otherwise. This would be akin to what *Star Wars* filmmaker George Lucas called a “Jedi mind trick.” Such would also be a violation of free will, because the choice the person made really would not be that person's choice. Some will attempt to circumvent the obvious implications of this false doctrine by saying, “I don't know what the Holy Spirit's doing, I just know that He's doing something directly to me.” If they **do not know** what the Holy Spirit is allegedly doing to them in a direct manner, it would have to be by subconscious nudges (or by absolute force in a subconscious way). If I were to offer to pay money to someone to be baptized, or were to threaten to inflict pain on a person who initially refused to be baptized, there would be doubt as to whether that person's obedience was saving obedience—but even then, he would have a **choice**. If the Holy Spirit is directly nudging a person's subconscious mind in this way, that person might never be aware he **had** a choice. It might be alleged by some that there is no difference between such direct nudges by the Holy Spirit, and the twinges of a conscience trained by the Scriptures and by faithful brethren. But there is no comparison. The Scriptures provide the Christian with the knowledge that he needs to overcome temptation (Matthew 4:4, 7, 10; 2 Timothy 3:17). Fellow Christians can provide reminders of the

importance of living by the standards of Scripture (Hebrews 3:13; 10:24-25). Yet when temptation arises, the Christian still makes a choice. Hopefully he has armed himself sufficiently with the knowledge of Scripture; perhaps the words of a hymn sung or of a sermon heard in worship will come to mind in the face of temptation. These help the person to consider seriously the gravity of his choice, and to understand which is the better option. In no sense could such helps be said to violate that person's free will, unlike nudges to the subconscious mind that compel a person to make choices he otherwise would not make.

A third possible way in which the Holy Spirit could influence the mind of man is by **direct revelation**. This violates the Biblical teaching that **special revelation from God has been completed**. While the Old Testament was in effect, God had spoken of a pause that would take place in direct revelation from God (Amos 8:11-12). But He also implied that direct revelation would resume again, in order to give and confirm His perfect and final covenant with mankind, the New Testament (Jeremiah 31:31; Isaiah 2:2-3). Christ promised His apostles that they would receive direct revelation from the Holy Spirit that they might carry the Gospel to the world (John 16:13; compare with 1 Corinthians 2:12-13; 2 Corinthians 4:6). Others besides the apostles received direct revelation from the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:28; 14:29-31). But even in this period of incomplete written revelation, direct revelation from the Holy Spirit was not an experience common to all Christians. As Paul asked, “*Are all prophets?*” (12:29). This rhetorical question is phrased in such a way as to demand the answer, “No, of course not.”<sup>1</sup> Direct revelation was given for the benefit of many, not just for the one receiving it (14:3, 30-31; Ephesians 4:11-12). And in God's Divine economy, direct revelation was to end as written revelation was completed:

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*continued from page 1*

*Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge (miraculous knowledge, LM), it shall vanish away. For we know in part (perhaps better translated, “from part” or “out of part,” LM), and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect (literally, “the perfect or complete thing,” contrasted with the previous way of receiving revelation, LM) is come, then that which is in part shall be done away (1 Cor. 13:8-10).*

Thus we are told, “His divine power hath given unto us **all things** that pertain unto life and godliness” (2 Peter 1:3, emphasis LM). Jude speaks of “**the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints**” (verse 3, American Standard Version, emphasis LM). The very means of receiving miraculous abilities, such as direct revelation, ended with the death of the last apostle (Acts 8:17-18). If the Holy Spirit were to speak to anyone today by direct revelation, He would be

speaking either differently from the Bible or the same things as the Bible. Of course, He would not speak differently from the Bible (Numbers 23:19; Romans 1:16-17; 1 Cor. 14:33), and anyone who claims a special revelation from God differing from the Bible must be rejected (Galatians 1:8-9; 1 Thessalonians 5:21-22; 2 John 9-11). If the Holy Spirit spoke the same things as the Bible, He would be redundant and in violation of His means of speaking to mankind today—**through** the Bible (Revelation 2:29).

The only other possible way this writer can conceive of by which the Holy Spirit might directly influence the mind of man is **conscious “nudges.”** That is, the recipient would be fully aware that he was being prodded to do right. Of course, the Scriptures never portray the Holy Spirit working in this fashion. Samson was miraculously endowed (“*And the Spirit of the LORD began to move him,*” Judges 13:25), yet he did not perceive when “*the LORD was departed from him*” (16:20). And the Holy Spirit’s direct endowment of Samson had **nothing** to do with keeping Samson from sin! (compare with 14:1-3, 8-9 [compare with Numbers 6:6], 12-13; 16:1). If the person being consciously nudged were aware to the degree that (1) he knew it was the Holy Spirit nudging him, and (2) he knew what the Spirit was trying to say to him; this would be no different from direct revelation (see above). What that person would have to say about his nudges would carry the same weight as Scripture, since the same Spirit inspired both. However, the Holy Spirit never spoke to anyone by “nudges”—He spoke by **words** (1 Cor. 2:13); He spoke “*expressly*” or “*explicitly*” (1 Timothy 4:1).<sup>2</sup> This makes it even less likely that the Holy Spirit would nudge a person, but only to the degree that (1) the person could **not** be certain that it was the Holy Spirit nudging him, and (2) he could **not** be certain what exactly the Holy Spirit was trying to say to him. This would open the door wide for subjectivism (compare with Judges 17:6); whereas Jesus said, “*Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*” (John 8:32, emphasis LM).

Yes, it is widely alleged that the Holy Spirit operates directly upon the heart/mind of man today. But neither the

popularity of a sentiment nor the credentials of one holding that sentiment makes it true. There is no possible way that the Holy Spirit could operate directly upon the mind of man without contradicting Himself and His teachings in Scripture. Inevitably, if He did, it would follow that there would be either a violation of free will or continuous revelation of some kind, neither of which is taught by Scripture. Do you, dear reader, want to know what the Holy Spirit has to say? Then, please, hear His word!<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “Questions expecting a negative answer are expressed by mee with the indicative.” J. Gresham Machen, *New Testament Greek for Beginners* (Unicoi, TN: The Trinity Foundation, 2000 printing), p. 197.

<sup>2</sup> F. Wilbur Gingrich, *Shorter Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969 printing), p. 192.

<sup>3</sup> For further reading on the means by which the Holy Spirit operates, see “The Holy Spirit and the Word of God: Parts One and Two” by Ted J. Clarke, FCGN, Feb.-March 2004.

## I’ve Got Good News and Bad News

by Chris Perry

Postmodernism. Denominationalism. Murder. Political corruption. Terrorism. Rising gas prices. Unemployment. We have had our fill of bad news, haven’t we? If you are like me, you would rather stare at a blank TV screen than watch what the evening news so often has to offer. If you listen close, you can almost hear an entire generation of people asking, “Where’s the good news?” Well, friend, here it is, and it’s called the Gospel.

The Greek word for *gospel* is *euangelion*, akin to the root word from which we get our English words *evangelize* and *evangelist*. The word is a compound of two other Greek words, and literally means *good message*. In Luke 2:10 and Romans 10:15, the same word is translated “*good tidings*” and “*glad tidings*,” respectively. And what, exactly, is so *good* about the *gospel*? Well, the Gospel

centers around the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Notice I was careful to say it “centers around”—the Gospel is not *only* the death, burial, and resurrection. In 1 Corinthians 15:1-8, Paul explains the basis of what he delivered to the people of Corinth, stating in verses 3 and 4: “*For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.*” However, the events that unfolded at the end of Christ’s time on earth would be of little use to man unless there was some way to apply them to mankind’s situation. Thus, the Gospel is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ *as well as* the means to access the saving power of those events. For instance, notice Philip, an evangelist who went to Samaria during the persecution of Christians in Jerusalem. He “*preached Christ unto them*” (Acts 8:5), and many might see this as *only* preaching the death, burial, and resurrection. But it is of interest what the people learned: “*But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women*” (Acts 8:12). If preaching Christ is *only* preaching the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, how is it that the people believed Philip preaching on the kingdom (or church, Matthew 16:18-19), the name of Jesus (or His authority, Acts 4:7), and the means of salvation (note that they were baptized, something they could only have learned from Philip’s preaching)?

Thus, the *good news* of the Gospel is that there is a Savior who died, was buried, rose again, and ascended to sit on the right hand of the throne of God, and that Savior has clearly set forth what we must do to *be* and *remain* saved. Good news, indeed. Imagine walking in the shoes of someone who did not live under the New Covenant. Job, for example, longed for what only the Gospel provides. He asked on one occasion, “*If a man die, shall he live again?*” (Job 14:14), a question that was answered once and for all when Christ arose as the “firstfruits” (1 Corinthians 15:20-23). He also bemoaned, “*Neither is there any daysman betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon*

*us both*” (Job 9:33), a statement indicating that before Christ there was no go-between to forever close the chasm between God and man. Before Christ, there was no hope (Ephesians 2:12-13) and, ultimately, there was no salvation (Hebrews 10:4, 12). For all mankind, from Adam to Job to you and me, the Gospel is the best news ever heard.

But herein lies the paradox: the *good news* is also the *bad news*. If the Gospel is God’s only means of saving man—and it is (Romans 1:16)—then what about those who do not obey the Gospel? Paul would strongly charge:

*I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so*

*say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed* (Galatians 1:6-9).

There is only one system of *good news*, and any attempt to follow any other system brings only *bad news*. Again, Paul does not hesitate to describe just *how bad* the news will be, for he states that the Final Judgment will find God “*In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (2 Thessalonians 1:8).

For those who accept its precepts, the Gospel is reason to “*rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice*” (Philippians 4:4). Even in hard times, those who are obedient to the Gospel can “*rejoice, and be exceeding glad*” (Matthew 5:12). We have hope, and we should act like it. But the bad news will hang like a thundercloud over those who reject the Gospel, and in judgment there will be no way to change the channel. Tune it now, before it’s too late.

## THREE HOURS AT O’HARE

by Tom Wacaster

My first experience of flying commercially was in 1966. I was sworn into the United States Coast Guard in downtown Dallas, Texas and whisked away to Dallas Love Field for the flight to Oakland, California and nine weeks of boot camp. Four decades ago you could have someone drop you off at the curb, walk to the ticket counter, check in your luggage with no questions asked, and walk straight to your gate. There were no X-ray machines, drug-sniffing dogs, or someone asking you to “remove your shoes,” “hold out your hands,” “empty your pockets,” or “take your laptop out of your briefcase” (of course, there were no laptops back then either). Thirty minutes (or less) from the time you arrived at the airport till you were seated on the plane was the norm.

Since 9/11 passengers are advised to arrive at the airport two hours before departure for domestic flights, and three hours for international flights. The discovery of a plot to blow up American bound planes several weeks ago moti-

vated airport authorities to recommend arrival at the airport three hours in advance of domestic flights, and four hours for international flights. So I followed their advice, and arrived at DFW airport three hours ahead of departure time. With the advent of electronic check-in, I was through the line, past security, and at my gate within 20 minutes after walking through the door of terminal B at DFW. Surely that was a quirk! I must have caught a lull in passenger influx.

Five days later it was time to make my return trip out of Chicago O’Hare. I caught the 6:20 AM bus out of Michigan City that would get me to the airport a full three hours before departure time. Right on schedule, I climbed off the bus at 8:45 AM to fight the crowds at O’Hare for a flight that was not scheduled to leave until 12:30 PM. In less than 20 minutes I had arrived at my gate, along with a small handful of “early bird” passengers who were determined to abide by the FAA’s new three-hour

advance arrival notice.

With three hours to spare I strolled down the corridor to the various shops, and passed a bookstore of considerable size. It was packed with passengers seeking for something that might help them pass the time - and what better way to pass the time than to read! After all, notable men have always recognized the value of reading: "Reading maketh a full man" (Bacon). "If we encountered a man of rare intellect, we should ask him what books he reads" (Emerson). "If time is precious, no book that will not improve me by repeated readings deserves to be read at all" (Thomas Carlyle). Indeed, as one put it, "Reading is to the mind, what exercise is to the body. As by the one, health is preserved, strengthened, and invigorated, by the other, virtue (which is the health of the mind) is kept alive, cherished, and confirmed."

Unfortunately, much of what is read falls into the categories of non-essential and unprofitable reading. If what is sold in airport bookstores is any representation of what modern day travelers are reading, there is much to be desired. Solomon manifested his God-given wisdom when he declared, "Of making many books there is no end" (Ecclesiastes 12:12). And, we might add, many of those books are not fit for human consumption. Some books should carry a warning label: "Reading of the material contained herein is hazardous to your soul." There is a book, however, that stands head and shoulders above ALL books. Its message is heavenly, its contents significant, its Author all knowing and all-powerful, and its benefit for you personally is beyond all description. We are speaking, of course, about the Bible. Here is a book that is inspired, provides nourishment for the soul, a compass for life, and hope for the hereafter. This is why we are instructed to "study" and "read" this Book of books. I don't know how much time you may spend in reading, or what kinds of material you read. But if you are not reading the Bible on a daily basis, then you are either not reading enough, or you are reading the wrong kind of material.

Now, here is the truly disappointing thing about my three hours at O' Hare. I did not see a single Bible on the shelves

of that store, or any other store in that terminal. There were books on the occult, mystic magic, the new age movement, and even the Koran. But not one single copy of a Bible could be found. There were magazines to tempt the sensual pleasures, newspapers that will give you the "truth" on extraterrestrial beings in New Mexico, and "how to" books on desert survival or how to become a contestant on a game show, but no Bible. After less than five minutes perusing the shelves, I decided that my time could be used more profitably by going to my gate and reading from my Bible. For the next two hours I feasted upon the word of God, reminded myself of His great love for me, and read of that heavenly home that awaits the faithful when this life is over. Truly, I can't think of a better way to have spent three hours at O'Hare.

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### GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

1. Hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17; Acts 16:32).
2. Believing what is taught (Mark 16:16; Hebrews 11:6).
3. Repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).
4. Confession (Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37).
5. Baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; I Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3, 4).
6. After the above five steps, faithful Christian Living (I Peter 2:11, 12; Revelation 2:10).

### THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

1. The Bible is its only guide (Romans 1:16; I Thess. 2:13).
2. Wears a Biblical Name (Romans 16:16).
3. Established at the right place (Isaiah 2:2, 3; Acts 2).
4. Established at the right time (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2).
5. Established on the right person (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:36).
6. Saved are in it (Ephesians 5:23; Acts 2:47).
7. Its members are enrolled in heaven (Hebrews 12:23).
8. Membership in it is obtained by obedience to God's commands including baptism (Acts 2:41-47; I Corinthians 12:13).

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