



Conducted by
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"Was the Holy Spirit working against Himself when Paul in Acts 20:22 said he was 'going bound in the Spirit' to Jerusalem, and when those Christians in Tyre 'through the Spirit' said he shouldn't go?"

This is not an easy question to answer (they never are) and any answer must have a degree of complexity. However, of one thing we can be sure. The Holy Spirit is a Person of the Godhead, therefore we would expect that there would be no confusion in the Godhead regarding any aspect of the salvation of souls, or in any other matter if it comes to that. The Scriptures assert that the three Persons 'agree in one,' therefore there must be some other explanation, and it is here that the complexity begins.

THE OPERATION OF THE SPIRIT

Let us first consider a person to whom the Gospel is being preached. Such a person is not yet the recipient of the in-dwelling Spirit, i.e., he has not yet repented, confessed Christ, and been immersed in water. The Holy Spirit then operates through the word, and such is the

power of the Gospel message that the hearer's spirit is quickened, and he feels an inner **compulsion** to obey; a dualism of the Holy Spirit and the hearer's spirit, if you will.

This dualism is well attested to in Paul's letter to Rome. Speaking about our adoption into the family of God after we have obeyed the Gospel he says, "**The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.**" 8:16. A point to remember is that we cannot escape the consequences of our responses in our individual spirits.

AUTOMATONS

If a person is defined as an 'automaton' it means that his actions are purely mechanical. If we apply this to our Christian lives, bearing in mind that we have the in-dwelling Spirit, then we might be led to believe that the Spirit would operate through us without any reference to our **individual** spirits. If that were the case, then the doors of Heaven might as well be opened automatically for all of us, and the Judgment Seat of Christ would be a non-event, because we know that the Holy Spirit would always act accordingly to the will of God. Therefore, I must accept that there is an 'essential me,' and that this 'inner me' can and will respond to stimuli to which it is subjected; the responses will be either Spirit-orientated or flesh-orientated. This will be an indicator of my spirituality.

The above reasoning, if true, leads me to a definite conclusion. Across the Christian experience there must be a wide range of spirituality, and consequently we shall find individual Christians at any point within that range. Some will be just embarking on the road to Christian maturity; others will have reached a point where, for one reason or another, they do not proceed from; some, however, will have progressed to full maturity in Christ. When this happens, the actions of the 'inner me' of each individual Christian will be more or less coincidental with the actions as would be produced by the in-dwelling Holy Spirit. I believe realisation of this prompted Paul to say, "**I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I but Christ liveth in me**" Gal. 2:20.

The foregoing means that every Christian's 'essential I' is in control until his 'self' is completely subjugated and Christ is elevated to be the Lord of his life. It is in every Christian's individual power to '**quench the Spirit,**' i.e., put out the fire. This means that the 'inner me' has taken control again, and having quenched the Spirit, has taken his eternal destiny into his own hands. This *can* be done, and we know *is* done, because God has always granted us the free will to choose. Therefore, we see a law. The Spirit can exert such influence in my life as will make my spirit one with His; I shall then have an **inner compulsion** to do God's will at all costs. This would also restrain the 'inner me' from taking over again from the Spirit, Paul, knowing the constant conflict between the Spirit and the flesh, put it like this, "**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 castaway.**" (1 Cor. 9:27). He obviously subjugated his 'inner me' and let the spirit take over.

I am sorry for having had to bring some psychology into the question, but it seemed the best way to explain what I wanted to say.

SO WHAT'S THE ANSWER?

It seems to me that Paul's own spirit was being inwardly compelled to do God's will; his spirit was 'bound' in this determination. He knew what awaited him because he said, "**the Holy Spirit witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me.**" Every city and town that Paul went into were all giving the same warning, i.e., that prison and persecution awaited him if he went up to Jerusalem.

So what were the Christians at Tyre and Caesarea doing? Well, they were doing what all other Christians had been doing, i.e., beseeching Paul not to go. We must realise here that the Holy Spirit is warning of what **will happen**; it is the Christians who are beseeching him not to go. In 21:13 we see again the measure of Paul's determination, "**Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.**" It is here that

we are brought face to face with what love for Christ means. Some have said that to love the brethren is to love Christ; I would put it the other way round, "to love Christ is to love the brethren." Christ must always predominate in all of our lives, but Paul also had great love for his brethren, and there are echoes of his letter to Philippi, **"because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace."** (Phil. 1:7). Paul knew what he was doing when he was determined to ignore the pleas of the brethren and go to Jerusalem. Later on in Phil. 1 he says, **"But I would ye should understand brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places."** The Gospel of Christ was always paramount in his life.

One of the cardinal facts to emerge from this is that the will of the Lord will always be done, even when it is difficult and dangerous. To their great credit the disciples at Caesarea at length realised this, **"And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done."** I wonder if Paul's determination was a striking example to the early Church of what being a child of God really entailed. I am sure that the example was not lost on them, and I pray that it will not be lost on us today.

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