

THE HOLY SPIRIT'S ROLE IN CONVERSION

(Acts 2:22-38)

I. The work of the Holy Spirit in conversion.

- a. The primary work of the Holy Spirit in conversion is not to open the heart of the sinner to illuminate the word of God.
 - i. This is Calvinism.
 - ii. Calvinism teaches that since we are so depraved in heart and soul, the Holy Spirit must act directly upon our hearts to allow us to understand the word of God.
 - iii. This is a disgraceful view of the inability of God's word to be understood and taken in, which is completely false.
- b. The primary work of the Holy Spirit in conversion is to convict the hearer of his sinfulness.
 - i. Two examples show this to be the case:
 1. Those on the Day of Pentecost were converted to Christ as the text bears out, calling them saved (vs. 47).
 - a. Before they were saved, they were pricked in their hearts by what Peter and the 11 were preaching (Acts 2:37).
 - b. They were convicted of the fact that they had killed the Son of God and were lost.
 2. The second is the conversion case of Saul of Tarsus.
 - a. There is no doubt that as he sat blind in the house of Judas on Straight Street that he was not convicted of his sin.
 - b. He was repenting of all that he had done against Jesus in his efforts to kill Christians.
 - c. The Holy Spirit does the convicting in the heart of sinners (John 16:7-8).
 - ii. The word "reprove" is the same Greek word that is translated "convinceth" in John 8:46 and "convicted" in John 8:9.
 - iii. Thayer says this word means "to convict, refute, confute, generally with a suggestion of the shame the person convicted of crime, fault or error; or sin".
 - iii. NASB and ESV have the word "convict" instead of "reprove".
- c. The work of the Holy Spirit in the conversion process is to convict the hearer that he or she has sin for which forgiveness is needed.

II. The way the Holy Spirit convicts is through the word of God.

- a.** The Calvinist tells you that the Holy Spirit operates directly on the heart of the sinner.
- b.** In Acts 2, you have the Holy Spirit in both presence and power before a multitude of people who were lost.
 - i.** If there was ever a time where the Bible would teach that the Holy Spirit operates directly on the heart of a sinner this would be it.
 - ii.** There is no doubt that the people present understood something different was happening before them.
- c.** The Calvinist would tell us that the Holy Spirit must open the heart of the sinner in order for there to be understanding of scripture, but in the direct presence of the Holy Spirit there was only confusion on the part of the lost.
 - i.** Notice Acts 2:6-7, 12.
 - ii.** They were confounded and amazed.
 - iii.** Other translations have words like bewildered, amazed, perfectly astounded, perplexed.
 - iv.** Do any of those words sound like enlightened or illuminated?
 - v.** In fact, some of those people present called out and asked, "What shall we do". **vi.** This in no way indicates that the Holy Spirit operated directly on their hearts.
- d.** These people only came to a point where they could be converted when Peter and the 11 preached to them and told them what to do.
 - i.** Notice Acts 2:14, 22, 36.
 - ii.** Peter lifted up his voice and said hear my words.
 - iii.** Peter said for them to know assuredly. **iv.** Notice again Acts 2:37 – "when they heard".
 - v.** Notice Acts 2:40-41 – with many words, they that gladly received his words.
- e.** Here is a group of sinners in the presence of the Holy Spirit who came to understand that they were lost because of the words spoken by Spirit inspired men, not a direct operation of the Holy Spirit on their hearts.
- f.** The conversion of the Ethiopian is another illustration of the way one is saved.
 - i.** Acts 8:26-40.
 - ii.** Philip was told by the Holy Spirit to go to this man. **iii.** Why not just do it Himself?
 - iv.** The answer is, because that is not how the Holy Spirit operates.
- g.** The conversion of Cornelius is another example this.

- i. Acts 10:5 – “he shall tell thee...”
- ii. Acts 10:22 – “to hear words”
- iii. When Peter recounted this conversion he said... (Acts 11:14).
- iv. Notice also that the Holy Spirit was present in this case and even came upon the sinner and his sinful family (Acts 10:44).
- v. These people still needed to be baptized because they were in their sins (Acts 10:47-48).
- vi. Why couldn’t the Holy Spirit cut out all time, travel, and money that it took to get Peter to Cornelius and just do it Himself?
- vii. The answer is, because that is not how the Holy Spirit operates.
- h. The parable of sower has no point if the Holy Spirit operates directly on the heart of a sinner.
- i. How did Apollos mightily convince the Jews?
 - i. Acts 18:28 – convinced is from the root word used in John 16:8.
 - ii. He convicted them of truth by showing them by or through the scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.
 - iii. Why didn’t the Holy Spirit jump on their hearts to show them this fact?
 - iv. The answer is, because that is not how the Holy Spirit operates.
- j. There are numerous verses that teach the fact that the sinner needs to hear God’s word in order to obey God.
 - i. John 15:3. ii. Acts 15:7. iii. Acts 14:1. iv. Acts 16:32-33.
 - v. 1 Thessalonians 2:16 – Jews were guilty of rebellion against God for this.
 - vi. James 1:21.
- k. The New Testament is clear that the Holy Spirit works through the word of God in convicting men of their sins leading to their conversion.

III. Wrong ideas taught by saying Holy Spirit acts directly on the heart.

- a. This doctrine does away with the need for preaching.
 - i. 1 Corinthians 1:21.
 - ii. John 6:44-45.
- b. This doctrine shows God to be partial.
 - i. If all do not receive a direct operation of the Holy Spirit on their hearts, God plays favorites.
 - ii. Acts 10:34-35.
- c. This doctrine does away with the mission of the church.
 - i. Matthew 28:19-20.
 - ii. Mark 16:15.

