



“The Spirit and Salvation”

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We’re talking today about the Holy Spirit and His work in salvation. How does the Spirit of God lead sinners to a saving knowledge of Christ? It IS His role in redemption to reveal and confirm the Christ and His claims unto us, but how does He do that? I want to read the account of Jesus’ teaching to His apostles in the upper room in Jerusalem shortly before His crucifixion.

John 16:7-14 “Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.”

The question is not, *does the Holy Spirit lead someone to salvation?* He DOES. The question is, *how?* It is a very important question. The words spoken in our text passage were spoken in a private meeting between the King of kings, Jesus Christ, and His chosen ambassadors, the apostles. These were the men who were faced with the daunting challenge of overseeing the preaching of the gospel to the entire world upon the return of Jesus Christ to heaven. These men understood very little about Jesus Christ and what His mission truly was at this point. They still had mistaken ideas about Him and His kingdom until after He was crucified and rose again.

Not only that, but how would twelve uneducated, feeble men who had only travelled with Jesus for a few years remember all of the things that Jesus had told them and infallibly preach that message to the world? Furthermore, how would they know all that God wanted made known to the world? How would

they preserve that truth for generations to come? Jesus promises them, in this passage, that they would not face such a task alone; that the Holy Spirit would be their Comforter, Teacher, and Guide when Jesus left them and placed this great responsibility in their hands.

That's the premise of these wonderful words, and any other application is a misuse of the 14th, 15th, and 16th chapters of the book of John. Let's be clear: Jesus is not promising us today the same things that He promised the apostles then, because we do not fill the office that they filled, nor do we occupy the seat of authority that they occupied. We don't have the same work to do under the same circumstances. Now, that doesn't mean that the influence of the Holy Spirit is not involved in our salvation or sanctification as Christians today. Quite the contrary. The Holy Spirit had to directly guide the Christians of the first century since they did not have the completed revelation of the New Testament as we do today. So, they were given supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit to lead them. Their knowledge was *in part*; the revelation of Christ was coming to them revelation by revelation, part by part, bit by bit, you might say. They did not have the full revelation of Christ at that point.

We don't possess those same supernatural gifts, but that doesn't mean that our salvation and sanctification cannot be attributed to the work of the Holy Spirit, for it can be. In fact, any man who is saved is saved because he has been led by the Holy Spirit to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. That is a fact upon which surely all of us can agree. The important thing to understand now, however, is HOW the Holy Spirit accomplishes this wonderful influence within the heart and life of the seeking sinner and the baptized believer.

Let's review a principle that we've talked about several times in our studies together, *the seed principle*. This principle says, among other things, that *all living things are reproduced according to their kind*. That is to say, every living thing possesses a seed which produces the exact same type of organism: humans beget humans, dogs beget dogs, corn seed grows into corn, tomato seeds grow into tomato vines and thus, tomatoes, and so forth. That is an immutable law of nature. But did you know that the kingdom of God operates on the very same principle? That in the natural world typifies that in the spiritual world. Christians are produced by the seed of the kingdom. Jesus said that that *seed* is nothing less than *the word of God, the gospel*, according to the parable of the sower (**Luke 8**). That means that when a person hears the word of God, and only the word of God, if it is mingled with obedient faith, he/she will become only what that seed produces—that is, a Christian, just like you read about in the New Testament. Nothing more and nothing less. That is a simple principle, but it is also a profound and wonderful principle that we all need to understand.

Let's think about how that came to be. How did all living things begin? If we take the word of God for what it says—which I do, by the way—every living thing was originally created by *miracle*. In other words, living things were not spontaneously generated in the form of some cell and through some natural process of evolution became the species they are today. Rather, God miraculously spoke all things into existence in the beginning (**Genesis 1-2**). It was by divine fiat that God spoke, and out of nothing, something came. God's creation miraculously came to be.

We sometimes ask, *which came first: the chicken or the egg?* Actually, the Bible answers that question for us in Genesis. God miraculously created all living things. He created them in a mature state, placing within each species the seed of reproduction.

Genesis 1:24-25 “And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so. And God made

the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good.”

God supernaturally created all that originally came to be. Since then, the natural laws of reproduction have been responsible for reproducing creatures of each species over and over again. It's not a miracle when a baby is born today; it was a miracle when man was first created. It is through the law of reproduction, which God set into motion in the beginning of time that that child now enters into the world. You could say that the existence of man is a miracle, but it's not an actual miracle that takes place each time a child is born. We're ALL the result of a miracle in the beginning of creation, but each generation comes about by the seed that was miraculously produced or begun.

The kingdom of God came about and is sustained in the same way: it was created by miracle and is reproduced by the seed placed within it. The church established on the Day of Pentecost was not produced by the New Testament scriptures because there wasn't a completed New Testament. Today, you can take the New Testament into any community and preach the gospel and by so doing, win men to Jesus and convert them to Jesus. When they are saved, the Lord adds them to the church, and you can take the Bible pattern and establish a New Testament church made up of New Testament Christians in that community. That simple principle takes place by the power and the efficacy of the word that was preached by the apostles.

It wasn't exactly that way and under those circumstances in the first century. The church was begun by the word of God, but that word had to be revealed, confirmed, and recorded. When the Holy Spirit came down from heaven, He filled the twelve apostles and inspired them with the message of God, showing them to be the appointed ambassadors of the Lord Jesus Christ, the apostle Paul coming along later. Those men were vested with all of the authority that that office entails. By supernatural inspiration, the message that the Holy Spirit was revealing through the apostles became published throughout the world, eventually being written down in the form of the New Testament.

The living and powerful word of God has since had the power to create Christians exactly like those who lived in the beginning of the church age. When men today hear, believe, and obey this word, they become the same thing that the people then were. Consequently, if they become something *besides* what you read about back in the first century, then something *besides* the word of God has been preached to them or planted in their hearts. The creeds, ideas, doctrines, and dogmas of men today produce all manner of things that all claim to be Christians, but they're NOT Christians after the New Testament order. New Testament Christians are produced by the New Testament—nothing more and nothing less.

So, the church was created by miracle, and it is sustained down through the ages and reproduced from one generation to the next, from one heart to the next, by means of the *seed of the kingdom—the word of God*. You see, what the Holy Spirit did directly and miraculously then in the infancy of the church He now accomplishes through the gospel message that He inspired the apostles to preach and write down. The kingdom of God is not reproduced today by miracle; it does not take some miraculous or direct operation of the Holy Spirit to make a person a Christian, or to instruct or lead a person living the Christian life. The Holy Spirit produced the seed that creates New Testament Christians today.

Did you know that everything that the Bible attributes to the work of the Holy Spirit when it comes to His work as revealer, teacher, and guide can also be said of the gospel, the word of God? Now, the Calvinist says that no man can come to God except the Holy Spirit performs some direct operation on

the mind or heart of that sinner; that the Holy Spirit will irresistibly draw that man to Jesus Christ through some type of direct, abstract operation upon the heart. And that one cannot believe without such an operation on the heart. But, you see, the word of God is the Holy Spirit's instrument to change and transform the heart.

In every case in which a person came to a saving faith in Jesus Christ, it was because of the fact that he/she heard someone preach the gospel. There are NO EXCEPTIONS to that. Read through the book of **Acts**. Every single time a person was saved, it was upon hearing the word of God. In **Acts 2**, three thousand people were saved because they heard, believed, and obeyed what Peter preached about Jesus Christ.

Acts 2:37-38 "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

Three thousand of those people there that day did that and were saved.

In **Acts 8**, the evangelist Philip preached to the people of Samaria about the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ—that's the word, the gospel. The Bible says of Philip that he went *preaching the gospel of the kingdom (Acts 8:12)*. They believed him, were baptized, and were saved.

In **Acts 9**, Saul of Tarsus had to wait for Ananias to come and tell him what to do before he could have his sins washed away. He didn't sit around and wait for some direct operation of the Holy Spirit on his heart. Rather, after he had met Jesus on the Damascus road he was eager, willing, and ready to follow Christ after meeting Him. He was sent into the city where Ananias would come to him and tell him what to do to be saved.

In **Acts 10**, Cornelius the Gentile called for Peter to come and preach and tell him what to do to be saved. Words had to be spoken, and Dr. Luke tells us that by those words he and his house would learn what to do to be saved.

In **Acts 16**, when Lydia heard Paul speak about Christ, she responded in faith and was baptized. And on and on we could go. That is the process every time. A sinner MUST hear the word of God and he MUST believe and obey what he hears in order to be saved. The difference between all those people back then and people who are saved today is NOT what must be preached; the gospel is the same. It's NOT what must be heard; we have to hear the same thing today that they heard back then. The difference is NOT what must be believed; we have to believe the same thing they believed back then. That hasn't changed. And the difference is NOT what we must obey; we must obey the same gospel plan that they obeyed. The difference is how they heard it. How they got it in the first place.

You see, the gospel had to be preached by the miraculous aid of the Holy Spirit until it was revealed, until the full revelation of Christ was made known. That revelation was written down and confirmed by the apostles of Jesus Christ. What all that means is that we have, in this blessed book--the Bible, what the Holy Spirit inspired them to write in the form of the New Testament. He not only inspired them to write it, but He also confirmed it within them by miracles as they wrote it and as they preached it.

Romans 10:17 "**So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.**"

That is the bottom line. Faith does not come by direct operation of the Holy Spirit. Faith comes by hearing what the Holy Spirit brought to us, and that is the word. They had to hear the word back then,

just like we have to hear it today in order to have faith in it and be saved. But back then, they could only hear it because the Holy Spirit inspired some man to preach it. Today, we can pick up the word of God and read it, or we can hear it preached and it accomplishes the exact same thing within us that the preaching that was inspired directly in the apostles did to the hearts of the people back then.

So, that's what we mean when we say that the church came about by miracle. The infant stage of the church was represented by a supernatural outpouring and work of the Holy Spirit among the church. But the church is reproduced in later generations and sustained throughout the ages by the seed that was created by the miraculous events of the first century. Created by miracle, sustained by the law of reproduction, you might say.

I Peter 1:10-12 "Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven..."

The Holy Spirit came down, and BY the Holy Spirit, the apostles preached the gospel that was revealed to and through them to the people of that day. The gospel is preached to sinners so that they can be saved. Where did the apostles get it? from *the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven*. That happened in **Acts 2**. The question is: where do we get it TODAY? We get it from the testimony that the Holy Spirit inspired those men to write down two thousand years ago.

The gospel is the same. But today, it is in the book; back then, it was in the man.

James 1:21-22 "Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves."

By hearing and obeying the word, the Holy Spirit's work is accomplished within the sinner. It is not a special, miraculous, leading of the Spirit. The Spirit doesn't lead anybody in that way today. The Spirit leads men through the word that He brought to earth through the apostles of Jesus Christ.

I Peter 1:22-23 "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."

THEY were *born of the word of God*, just as WE today are *born of the word of God*. What's the difference? Back then, the word was in the men upon whom the Holy Spirit was poured out. Today, we have what they wrote and confirmed by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and the gospel is here in the Bible. We're born of the same seed. That seed is found within the word of truth, and it is now written down. Peter says we are *purified* when we obey that truth—that truth that was preached and IS preached because of the work of the Holy Spirit. Where do we find the truth? Does the Holy Spirit have to bring it to earth each time a sinner is to hear it? No, He brought it to earth by what He placed in the minds of the apostles and what they in turn wrote down by His inspiration and authority.

Thus, when a man hears the word of God and obeys it, the Holy Spirit accomplishes His great work in the heart and the life of that sinner. He does it through the medium or instrumentality of the word of God. If you look carefully at **John 16**, what does Jesus say the Holy Spirit would DO through those men when He came? He lists several things:

John 16:8 “And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:”

Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would convict sinners of their sins, and of righteousness, and of judgment. Does that sound familiar? Remember what the apostle Paul preached before Felix the governor?

Acts 24:24-25 “And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.”

How does the Holy Spirit convict the world of sin and righteousness and judgment? Through the preaching of the gospel. Not by some direct, miraculous, better-felt-than-told operation on the heart of the sinner. It is through and ONLY through the hearing of the word of God. That is how the sinner is led to faith in Christ. That is how the sinner is led by the Holy Spirit to be saved. It is through the hearing of the word of God, which, when accepted in obedient faith, yields the intended results. But it is up to the sinner to choose to accept what he hears and benefit from it and be saved, or reject it and be lost. Remember, the word of God is called *the sword of the Spirit* by the apostle Paul (**Ephesians 6:17**). This isn't the Holy Spirit, but it is the sword of the Holy Spirit. It is the agency, the instrumentality of the Holy Spirit.

Hebrews 4:12 “**For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword...**”

God's word is *quick* or *alive*. It's not a dead letter. It is alive, and it is powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword. It is able to do what it is intended to do, by the work of the Holy Spirit.

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