

The Holy Spirit and Salvation

by Jimmy Stevens

INTRODUCTION: Every conversion to Christ since the Pentecost in Acts 2, to today, was started, carried on, and maintained as a result of the operation of the Holy Spirit on sinners' hearts.

- A. It is almost universally accepted, **BUT** there is controversy on "how" the Holy Spirit operates.
- B. Would God be so vague about this fundamental element of salvation?

I. This study will center around these questions:

- A. In the conviction and conversion of the sinner to Christ, how does the Holy Spirit exercise his influence upon the heart? Directly or indirectly? **Immediately** (without means) or **intermediately** (with or through means)?
- B. Bible teaches the Holy Spirit operates **intermediately**, through means of the inspired Word.

II. Popular concept of salvation.

- A. Many teach a need for a direct operation of the Holy Spirit on sinners to save them.
 - 1. *"We believe the Scriptures teach that man was created in holiness, under the law of his Maker; but by voluntary transgression fell from that holy and happy state; in consequence of which all mankind are now sinners, not by constraint but by choice; being by nature utterly void of that holiness required by the law of God, positively inclined to evil; and therefore under just condemnation to eternal ruin, without defense."*¹
 - 2. If man is by nature a sinner and can do nothing to affect his salvation then only by God's grace can he be lifted from his sinful condition. This is called regeneration. God sends the Holy Spirit to give saving faith to the sinner and applies the blood of Christ for salvation based solely on that faith without any works performed.
 - 3. *"We believe that in order to be saved, sinners must be regenerated, or born again; that regeneration consists in giving a holy disposition to the mind; that it is effected in a manner above our comprehension by the power of the Holy Spirit, in connection with the divine truth, so as to secure our voluntary obedience to the gospel; and that its proper evidence appears in the holy fruits of repentance, and faith, and newness of life."*²
- B. This doctrine assumes "**total hereditary depravity**", a doctrine John Calvin made popular in the 16th century, patterned after the earlier Catholic doctrine of original sin.
 - 1. Catholic: *"Adam's transgression was not confined to himself, but was transmitted, with its long train of direct consequences, to all his posterity. It is called original sin because it is derived from our original progenitor."*
"As an infant one day old cannot commit an actual sin, the stain must come from the original offense of Adam."
*"...we have all inherited the transgression of our first parents, and ...we are born enemies of God."*³
 - 2. John Calvin: *"We thus see that the impurity of parents is transmitted to their children, so that all, without exception, are originally depraved. The commencement of this depravity will not be found until we ascend to the first parent of all as the fountainhead."*⁴
- C. When you hear, "**Let the Holy Spirit open your hearts**" etc., the speaker is implying a special operation of the Holy Spirit apart from the power and influence of God's Word, sometimes called the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

III. The Bible and "original sin"?

- A. Adam's sin only demonstrated humanity's choice to sin. Adam did not pass sin to following generations, nor make it impossible for humanity to do right. Deut 24:16, Ezek 18:20, Matt 18:2-3, John 8:34, 1 Jn 3:4, Jas 4:17
- B. If the Holy Spirit does not operate directly on the sinner's heart, then how does he operate?

IV. How does the Holy Spirit communicate with mankind?

- A. OT: through God's Word. 2 Sam 23:2, Psa 95:7-8 with Heb 3:7-8, 2 Pet 1:21
- B. NT: Holy Spirit saves by God's Word. Eph 3:3-5, 1 Pet 1:12, 22-25, Rom 1:16
- C. The saving power was in the **message, not the process** by which the message was delivered. Phil 1:15-18

V. Some false ideas where the Holy Spirit is in the same context with the Word.

- A. False Ideas
 - 1. The Spirit converts the Word further instructs
 - 2. The Word converts..... the Spirit further instructs
 - 3. The Spirit does what the Word does..... therefore, the Spirit is the Word

¹ Edward T. Hiscox, *The Hiscox Standard Baptist Manual*, © 1965, pgs. 137-138

² J.M. Pendleton, *Baptist Church Manual*, Broadman Press © 1966, pg. 49

³ James Cardinal Gibbons, *The Faith of Our Fathers*, by 87th edition, John Murphy Company Publishers, 1917, pgs 266-267

⁴ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2:1:6, Reprinted 1975 by William B. Eerdmann Publishing Co.

- B. The Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit uses the word as his agent in converting sinners. Illustrations:
1. John chopped down the tree with an ax John chopped down the tree
 2. Mary killed the snake with a hoe..... Mary killed the snake
 3. Holy Spirit converts sinners with the word..... Holy Spirit converts sinners
- C. The Holy Spirit is not the Word but uses the Word to save. 2 Th 2:13-14

SPIRIT →	ACTION	← WORD
John 3:5	Born, begotten	1 Pet 1:23-25, 1 Cor 4:15, Jas 1:18
John 6:63	Gives life	Psa 119:50, 93
Titus 3:5	Saves	Jas 1:21
Rom 15:13	Power of hope	Rom 1:16
1 Cor 6:11	Sanctified	John 17:17
1 Cor 6:11	Washed	Eph 5:26
Eph 5:18-19	Indwelling	Col 3:16

VI. Bible example of the Holy Spirit using his Word to save.

- A. Acts 2 and the 3000 converted. KEY: Hear these “WORDS”. Vs 14, 22, 29
1. John 16:7-8HS to convict the world of sin
 2. John 14:26, 16:13 Guide apostles in all truth
 3. Acts 1:8Apostles to wait for HS and power
 4. Acts 2:1-4, 11HS gave apostles words to speak
 5. Acts 2:5-13Many marveled, some mocked
 6. Acts 2:14-21Peter defended apostles’ actions
 7. Acts 2:22-35First gospel sermon
 8. Acts 2:36.....“*You have crucified*”
- B. Result of hearing the preaching?
1. Acts 2:37 People were convicted of their sin. **HOW?**
 2. Acts 2:37 “*When they heard this*” **HEARD WHAT?**
 3. The gospel of salvation. 1 Cor 15:1-4
- C. The Spirit convicted and converted many who were of the world. Continue Acts 2:38-41, 47

VII. The Direct Operation theory opposes the teachings of the Bible.

- A. Destroys sinners’ spiritual responsibility and accountability. John 12:48, Rom 14:12, 2 Cor 5:10
- B. God is blamed for lost souls.
- C. There is no record in the Bible of sinners being saved apart from the instructions from God’s Word.
- D. It didn’t change one’s character. Pharaoh, Gen 41, Balaam, Num 24:2, 2 Pet 2:15, King Saul, 1 Sam 19:18-24
- E. In the Bible the Direct Operation of the Holy Spirit was irresistible. If they could resist they would be more powerful than God. Therefore, if the Holy Spirit operated directly, every person on whom he operated would be “*born again*”. Since God does not show partiality (Acts 10:34), the Holy Spirit would operate on every sinner because God wants all to repent. (2 Pet 3:9). This is universal salvation, yet Jesus taught otherwise, Matt 25:46
- F. It denies the Bible’s claim that God’s word is sufficient to save.
 1. SAVES: Rom 1:16, 1 Cor 1:18, Jas 1:21
 2. RECONCILES: 2 Cor 5:18-20
 3. GIVES LIFE: John 6:63, Psa 119:50, 93
 4. CONVERTS: Psa 19:7
 5. CLEANSSES: John 15:3, Acts 15:9, Rom 10:17
 6. NEW BIRTH: 1 Pet 1:22-23, 1 Cor 4:15, Jas 1:18
 7. SANCTIFIES: John 17:17
 8. JUDGE IN THE LAST DAY: John 12:48

CONCLUSION: Neither in New Testament days nor today does the Holy Spirit convert one to Christ by directly working on hearts in some mysterious, unknown fashion. Both then and now the Holy Spirit saves souls by words of the gospel preached or written. Even those who were endowed with the ability to speak by inspiration were not saved by that endowment. They had to first be obedient to that which was taught to them, the Word of God.