

## SOTERIOLOGY (109)

### 1. The need of the Spirit's work.

Dr. Walvoord's comments are very precise and accurate on this point: "In order for an unsaved man to come to faith in Christ, it is necessary that he be the object of the...work of the Holy Spirit. Man in his natural mind cannot comprehend the mystery of the death of Christ for the sins of the whole world and how this truth applies to him personally" (Vol. 2, p. 124).

There are many passages of Scripture that clearly demonstrate the need of the Spirit's work in bringing a person to salvation:

1) Romans 3:10-18 – This passage is clear that an unregenerate person, left to himself, will not choose God. This N.T. concept was also evidenced in the O.T. – Psalm 14:1-3. No man, in and of himself, was good or righteous. Clearly this information establishes the need of the Spirit's work in salvation.

2) I Cor. 2:14 – An unsaved person has no capacity for the things of God. Now of course the logical question that comes from this truth is "How do people who have no capacity for the things of God ever become saved?" The answer is that the Spirit of God must work and bring them to salvation.

3) Romans 8:7-9 – A lost person's mind is in hostile war against God. Again, how does a mind against God change into becoming a mind submissive and obedient to God? The answer of course is the Holy Spirit of God.

4) II Cor. 4:3-4 – It is clear from this text that the mind of an unsaved person is "blinded by Satan" to the extent that the Gospel is not able to reach them. An unsaved person is impressed with various issues of morality, education or philosophy, but he is not impressed with the Gospel message. As Dr. Chafer says, "...as all experienced soul-winners must recognize, the unsaved remain unimpressed with the way of salvation until they are awakened by the Spirit, and when awakened, their response and enthusiasm is a marvel to behold" (Vol. 3, p. 214).

Obviously this concept demonstrates a great need for the ministry of the Spirit of God, for without it, sinful men have minds that have been satanically blinded.

5) Eph. 2:1-3 – This passage is clear that all believers were once spiritually dead. Now the ability to give life to one dead is a special prerogative of God. Only God has the power to create life.

The obvious question is if the entire world is dead spiritually, what is needed to make a person alive spiritually? The answer of course is the Spirit of God!

6) John 3:3 – Implied in the context of this verse is the inability of a very religious and faithful man to do anything capable of meriting the Kingdom of God.

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Again, the words of Dr. Chafer on this verse are significant: “There is special force in this unqualified assertion by Christ in view of the fact that it was addressed to one of the most faithful and religious men of his day. The truth that the most conscientious of Judaism needed a new birth, which evidently he little understood, should not be overlooked. No discredit is implied respecting the great factors and blessings which Judaism secured, but it is clearly demonstrated here, as everywhere that this truth appears, that a new and marvelous reality is introduced by the death and resurrection of Christ and by the advent of the Holy Spirit” (*Ibid.*, p. 215).

The words “born again” are words that literally mean a new birth from above . One must ask how is it possible for such a spiritual birth to take place. The answer is by the Spirit of God (John 3:5, 6, 8). It is the Spirit of God that produces a new birth from above.

Clearly these passages establish the need of the Spirit’s work in salvation. No Christian worker will ever deliver an unsaved person from the power of Satan by his argumentation or persuasive power. An unsaved person can only be delivered by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer writes: “Though much Scripture of an indirect nature might be cited, enough has been presented to establish the doctrine of man’s natural inability to exercise saving faith. Were men able to move themselves toward God, there would be no provision from God for this need. The fact that such enablement is proved argues in favor of man’s inability. It is too often supposed that the only restraint upon unregenerate persons in the sphere of their ability to turn to God, is their natural disinclination or prejudice. The Armenian error regarding a universal grace is largely responsible for such suppositions” (*Ibid.*, p. 217).

The Bible is very clear—“No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him...” (John 6:44). This biblical fact clearly demonstrates a need of the Spirit’s drawing work when it comes to saving a lost soul.

### 2. The fact of the Spirit’s work.

One critical passage that clearly establishes the fact that the Holy Spirit must undertake a convicting work in the heart of the unregenerate man is John 16:7-11.

The work “convict” (16:8) is a Greek word that means to reprove and rebuke to the point of conviction (G. Abbott-Smith, p. 144).

The point Christ is making is when the Spirit of God has come and is involved in convicting an individual, there will be three special areas in which a lost person will be convicted: 1) Sin, 2) Righteousness and 3) Judgment .

It becomes the responsibility of the Bible student to carefully understand these three areas of conviction:

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### 1) Conviction “of sin.”

When the Spirit of God is doing His convicting work, there will be a supernatural awareness that one is a sinner and that he/she needs to believe on Jesus Christ. This convicting work does not recall all the sins an individual has committed, but it, as Dr. Walvoord says, “...illuminates a person about the necessity of trusting Christ in view of the sins he has committed” (*Edited Theology*, Vol. 2, p. 127).

When this phase of the Spirit’s convicting work is in progress, the lost person will realize that he is sinful and guilty before God and he needs to believe on Christ for salvation. No preacher can ever make a lost person realize this point; it, as Dr. Chafer says, “...must be accomplished by the Holy Spirit” (Vol. 3, p. 218).

### 2) Conviction “of righteousness.”

The “righteousness of God” can only be found by faith in Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:22). One may ask how does anyone realize that he needs a righteousness that is found only in Jesus Christ, when Jesus Christ is no longer here on earth but is in heaven with His Father? How can one expect to come to the realization that it is not his works that saves or his religion, but the righteousness of Jesus Christ that is imputed to the one who believes (Rom. 4:5)? The answer to this important question is through the convicting work of the Holy Spirit.

This recognition that no works save, but only faith in Jesus Christ saves is clearly a convicting work of the Spirit of God. Whenever someone believes that his own works or his own religion determines his righteous stand with God, that one is not being moved upon by the Spirit of God.

The Spirit of God will always convict a person that his own works cannot ever make him right with God and that it is only the imputed righteousness of God that can give everlasting life. Dr. Chafer says, “It is...of the greatest importance...that the one who would be saved shall come to know that he is not entering into a merit arrangement, which would demand of him that he produce his own righteousness as a basis of acceptance before God” (*Ibid.*, p. 219).

It is legitimate to question the salvation of one who claims his own works make him righteous before God, for the Spirit of God, when He is involved in saving a soul, convicts the world of just the opposite.

### 3) Conviction of “judgment.”

The Spirit of God, when convicting a soul of its need for salvation, convicts a person of judgment. The Holy Spirit will convict a person that unless he believes on Christ, he will be damned in the lake of fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels (Matt. 25:41). Hell is a very real moment-by-moment threat for one without Christ. But hell only becomes a personal threat when the Spirit of God convicts one of his own pending judgment.

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Satan suffered a severe judgment at Calvary; he lost his foothold over the world (John 12:31-32; Col. 1:13-14). It is the Spirit of God who is able to convict one of the need to be right with God and remove the blinders that have been given by Satan.

Dr. Chafer's closing comments on this passage are a fitting conclusion:

“Thus it may be deduced that John 16:7-11 presents a truth of measureless import—a threefold work of the Spirit in behalf of the unsaved which is not to be confused with His larger ministries when, as a part of the salvation of me, He regenerates, indwells, baptizes and seals. Nor is this specific ministry of the Spirit in enlightening the unsaved to be confused with His service to those who are saved when He bears fruit in them, exercises gifts, teaches the Word of God, and intercedes in them. When the Spirit enlightens the Satan-blinded mind regarding sin, righteousness and judgment, that otherwise blinded mind is at once more than normally enabled to understand the three great foundational truths that sin has been judged, righteousness is available in and through Christ, and the condemning sin is failure to believe that which God now offers the sinner, namely, a perfect salvation in and through Christ the Savior. No soul can be saved apart from this enlightenment, for no other power is sufficient to break the blindness which Satan has imposed on the minds of those who are lost. It, therefore, follows that evangelism which is adjusted to God's Word will make a large place for this preliminary work of the Spirit and recognize that in answer to prayer alone that souls of lost men may be moved to believe on Christ” (Vol. 3, p. 222).

### 3. The results of the Spirit's work.

The result of the convicting work of the Spirit of God is that a lost person, who has a mind blinded by Satan, now has a mind capable of understanding the Gospel of God.

The complete process of bringing a person to salvation is, in its totality, a gift of God (Eph. 2:8).

Dr. Walvoord says, “As far as man's experience in salvation is concerned, when he places his faith in Christ he is conscious of making a human choice even though he may or may not be conscious at the same moment of the Spirit of God working” (*Edited Theology*, Vol. 2, p. 129).

Even though man is responsible for his choice of rejection, it is the Holy Spirit who is responsible for his choice of salvation (John 6:29-40, 44-45).

According to Romans 10:17, when the Word of God is proclaimed God will move through the power of His Spirit to convict and save people. It is not the communicator of the Word who saved anyone, for those who communicate the Word are those who plant and water. But it is God who saves through His Word. Notice too, from this verse that during the presentation of the Word of God souls may be saved, not necessarily after the message is over. God saves people when His Word is preached (I Cor. 1:21).

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No matter how clever, how convincing, how entertaining or how scholarly we may think our presentations are, the truth is none of those things convicts or saves a person. God alone, through the convicting power of the Holy Spirit and through the power that is in His Word, saves lost souls.

Ephesians 2:8-9 is very clear to reveal that the salvation of a soul is by God's grace. There are no human works involved and there is nothing man can do to merit salvation. Salvation is a gracious gift of God.

No human will ever comprehend the full depth of the grace of God involved in saving a sinner. But any true doctrinal study of soteriology will try as best as possible to grasp as much as possible concerning the "Amazing Grace" of God that saved and continues to save sinners.

**QUESTION #42** – What really happened at the moment of salvation?

At the moment of salvation, there are at least 33 divine achievements that are all of God's grace.

All of these achievements have the following in common:

- 1) They are not experienced –although they are very real, no human can boast claim to having experienced them in some emotional or tangible manner. Many are very confused on this point and, as a result, wonder if they are really saved.
- 2) They are not progressive –none of these achievements mature with time or progress as the individual spiritually advances and develops.
- 3) They are not earned –none of these achievements may be earned. They do not rest on the merit of a human being; these rest on the finished work of the Son of God.
- 4) They are eternal –all achievements given to a person at salvation are eternal, not temporal. In fact, the gift is called "eternal life."
- 5) They are revealed –all of these achievements are found in the Word of God. They are not invented by men or the result of human imagination or speculation. These are achievements God has declared and revealed in His Word.
- 6) They are God-wrought –all of these achievements are God's work for man. In fact, no man is capable of doing for man what God does for man at the moment of salvation.
- 7) They are not man-wrought –none of the 33 achievements can be attained by any human. All man can do in regard to these accomplishments is stand in awe of the grace of God.

When considering the above matters, one begins to scratch the surface in understanding that salvation is by grace.