

THE HOLY SPIRIT'S WORK IN CONVERSION

TEXT: JOHN 3:1-16

INTRODUCTION:

1. A few months ago, the entire New York City area was devastated by Hurricane Sandy. We did not see the strong 75-mile-an-hour winds, but we saw the results: huge trees were down everywhere -- on top of houses and cars, blocking streets, uprooting cement sidewalks.
2. Our Lord says in John 3:8, "The wind bloweth where it listeth (wishes), and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."
3. We do not see the Holy Spirit but we see His power to transform lives -- drunkards are now sober; immoral men have become clean and virtuous; sinners have repented and are now godly church members.
4. The Bible calls this the new birth. Jesus said, "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again" (John 3:7).
5. There is no other way to be saved. For example, Nicodemus was a very religious man. John 3:1 says he was "a man of the Pharisees," and "a ruler of the Jews."
6. In verse 10, our Lord called him "a master of Israel." But he was lost.
7. There are many religious people that have never been born again. Our Lord said in verse 3, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."
8. This transforming work of the Holy Spirit is incomprehensible in many ways. Psychologists deny it. Scoffers ridicule it. Religious fakers try and imitate it.
9. But the Bible clearly explains it.

I. CONVICTED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

1. The Holy Spirit convicts sinners. Our Lord said in John 16:8, "And when he is come, he will reprove (convict) the world of sin."
2. People respond differently to the convicting power of the Holy Spirit. In Acts 2:37, when the Jews assembled in Jerusalem for the day of Pentecost heard Peter preach the Gospel, the Bible says, "they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?"
3. Peter told 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" (Acts 2:38).

4. And many of them did repent and get baptized, and that same day "there were added unto them about three thousand souls."
5. But not everyone responds the same way to the convicting work of the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 7:54-60).
6. The Holy Spirit comes to convince men of their sin, to make them feel that they are guilty before God.
7. Spurgeon said sinners are "greatly guilty—so guilty that they are lost, ruined and undone! He comes to remind them not only of God's loveliness, but of their own unloveliness — of their own enmity and hatred to this God of Love and, consequently, of their terrible sin in thus ill-using One so infinitely kind. The Holy Spirit does not come to make sinners comfortable in their sins, but to cause them to grieve over their sins! He does not help them to forget their sin, or think little of it, but He comes to convince them of the horrible enormity of their iniquity!..There is a withering work of the Spirit of God which we must experience or we shall never know His quickening and restoring power. This withering is a most necessary experience and, just now, needs much to be insisted on. Today we have so many built up who were never pulled down; so many filled who were never emptied; so many exalted who were never humbled that I, the more earnestly, remind you that the Holy Spirit must convince us of sin or we cannot be saved! This work is most necessary because without it there is no leading men to receive the Gospel of the Grace of God" ("The Holy Spirit's Threefold Conviction of Sin").

II. REGENERATED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

1. The convicting work of the Holy Spirit must precede His work in regeneration. The convicting work of the Holy Spirit is mysterious and difficult to understand, and so is the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit (John 3:1-9).
2. The hymnwriter said:

*I know not how the Spirit moves,
Convincing us of sin,
Revealing Jesus through the Word,
Creating faith in Him.-- Daniel Webster Whittle*
3. Daniel Webster Whittle was a major in the Civil War, and so for the rest of his life was known as "Major" Whittle. During the war, Whittle lost his right arm, and ended up in a prisoner of war camp. Recovering from his wounds in the hospital, he looked for something to read, and found a New Testament. Though its words resonated with him, he was

- still not ready to accept Christ. Shortly after, a hospital orderly woke him and said a dying prisoner wanted someone to pray with him. Whittle objected, but the orderly said, "But I thought you were a Christian; I have seen you reading your Bible."
4. Whittle then agreed to go. Later on he recorded what took place at the dying youth's bed side: "I dropped on my knees and held the boy's hand in mine. In a few broken words I confessed my sins and asked Christ to forgive me. I believed right there that Christ did forgive me. I then prayed earnestly for the boy. He became quiet and pressed my hand as I prayed and pleaded God's promises. When I arose from my knees, he was dead. A look of peace had come over his troubled face, and I cannot but believe that God who used him to bring me to the Savior, used me to lead him to trust Christ's precious blood and find pardon. I hope to meet him in heaven."
 5. Major Whittle's conviction and conversion began when he started reading the Bible. First Peter 1:23 says, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."
 6. Have you been born again?
 7. Since the Holy Spirit uses the Word of God to quicken lost sinners, we must preach the Bible, and use the Bible when we share the Gospel with the unsaved.
 8. I heard about a woman who felt very sick, and so she dragged herself down to see a doctor. She walked into his office and told him she needed some medicine.
 9. He told her, "Read the Bible for one hour every day for one month." At first she was offended at this prescription, but then reconsidered, figuring it was cheap medicine. In fact it was free since she already owned a Bible.
 10. She went home and read the Bible. Thinking her hour was up she got up from the table and was surprised that only ten minutes had passed.
 11. She continued reading for what she considered a very long time, only to discover it had only been twenty minutes.
 12. So she started reading again, and by the time her hour passed, she had developed a taste and an appetite for God's Word.
 13. After a month she walked back to that doctor's office, strong and healthy, happy and well! The doctor said, "I see you have been taking my medicine!"
 14. The Spirit of God uses the Word of God. In fact, Ephesians 6:17 says the sword of the Spirit is the word of God. And it is a sharp sword!

15. Hebrews 4:12 says, "For the word of God is quick (alive), and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword."
16. The new birth is a complete transformation. It is not mere reformation or self-improvement. Many people clean up their life, then they die and go straight to hell.
17. Second Corinthians 5:17 says, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." Have you been born again?
18. This new divine nature provides victory over sin. First John 3:9 says, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him."
19. The "seed" refers to the "divine energy of the Holy Spirit operating within the soul by which we are regenerated" (Greek lexicon).
20. First John 5:18 says, "We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not."
21. First Peter 2:9 says God hath called us "out of darkness into his marvellous light."
22. Colossians 1:13 says God has "hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son."
23. Have you experienced this marvelous transformation?

III. INDWELT BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

1. Referring to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, our Lord said in John 14:17, "He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."
2. In John 14:16, our Lord said that the Holy Spirit's indwelling would be permanent, not intermittent. He would not come and then leave, and then come again and then leave again.
3. Our Lord said to His disciples, "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever."
4. Ephesians 4:30 says, "And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."
5. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit makes it possible for the Christian to be a blessing to others (cf. John 7:37-39). God's desire is that our lives might overflow to others.
6. Out of our innermost being "shall flow rivers of living water" (John 7:38)! The Holy Spirit is in believers to make this possible. We can be a refreshing influence to all who know us, overflowing with His life, and His power.

7. The hymnwriter put it this way:
*Channels only, blessèd Master,
But with all Thy wondrous power
Flowing through us, Thou canst use us
Every day and every hour.* -- Mary E. Maxwell
8. The Bible tells us that every born again child of God is indwelt by the Spirit of God.
9. Galatians 3:2 says we have received the Holy Spirit "by the hearing of faith." We received the Lord Jesus Christ by faith, and we have received the Holy Spirit by faith.
10. The Bible says all believers are indwelt by the Holy Spirit.
11. The Bible says all believers are sealed by the Holy Spirit.
12. But not all believers are filled with the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 5:18 is a command -- "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit."
13. Ask and ye shall receive (Luke 11:13).
14. D.L. Moody asked and he received. One day, while walking down the street right here in New York City, the Holy Spirit came upon Moody with great power. Later on, Moody said this, "Oh, what a day! I cannot describe it, I seldom refer to it; it is almost too sacred an experience to name. Paul had an experience of which he never spoke for fourteen years. I can only say that God revealed Himself to me, and I had such an experience of His love that I had to ask Him to stay His hand."

CONCLUSION:

1. I have spoken on being convicted by the Holy Spirit, regenerated by the Holy Spirit, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, sealed by the Holy Spirit, and filled with the Holy Spirit.
2. What is your need today? Are you saved?
3. Have you been filled?