

The Work of the Holy Spirit in Conversion

General Outline

- A. Introduction
- B. Consideration of the Independent Operation of the Holy Spirit
- C. Examples of Conversion in the Acts of the Apostles
- D. Consider of Occurrences of Spiritual Gifts

1. Introduction

- a. Acts 2:37-41 - [37](#) Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” [38](#) And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. [39](#) For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.” [40](#) And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation.” [41](#) So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.
 - i. Upon hearing the preaching of the apostles, and upon hearing that they had crucified the Messiah, they were “cut to the heart” – convicted.
- b. John 16:7-11 – [7](#) Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. [8](#) And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: [9](#) concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; [10](#) concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; [11](#) concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.
 - i. Jesus’ teaching given to the apostles announced the work of the Holy Spirit in the conversion of sinners – he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.
- c. A question to ask is, did the Holy Spirit convict men independently, or was the Holy Spirit working in conjunction with some other influence?

2. Consideration of the Independent Operation of the Holy Spirit

- a. From a reading of John 16:8, some might conclude that the Holy Spirit convicts of sin independently.
- b. However, to advocate that the Spirit operates independently and directly upon the heart of a sinner results in some serious deductions.
 - i. *The importance of preaching is removed.*
 - 1. Mark 16:15-16 - [15](#) And he said to them, “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. [16](#) Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.
 - a. Jesus’ commission is to proclaim the gospel.
 - 2. John 6:44-46 - [44](#) No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. [45](#) It is

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written in the Prophets, ‘And they will all be taught by God.’

Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me— [46](#) not that anyone has seen the Father except he who is from God; he has seen the Father.

- a. Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me.
3. Rom. 10:14-17 - [14](#) How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? [15](#) And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!” [16](#) But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?” [17](#) So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.
 - a. How are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard?
 - b. It will be noted later that, except for a few special situations, the gift of the Holy Spirit is taught to come after faith, repentance, and baptism.
4. 1 Cor. 1:21 - [21](#) For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.
5. 1 Cor. 9:16 - [16](#) For if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!
6. Titus 1:1-3 - [1](#) Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God’s elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness, [2](#) in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began [3](#) and at the proper time manifested in his word through the preaching with which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Savior;
 - a. Something at the proper time manifested in his word through preaching.

ii. God is made to be partial since all do not receive a direct operation of the Spirit.

1. Acts 10:44-48 - [44](#) While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. [45](#) And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles. [46](#) For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, [47](#) “Can anyone withhold

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water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” [48](#) And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days.

iii. *The operation of the Holy Spirit directly upon the heart of the sinner sets aside the mission of the church.*

1. Rom. 10:17 – So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.
2. 1 Tim. 3:15-16 – [15](#) if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth. [16](#) Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, **proclaimed among the nations**, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.
3. 2 Tim. 2:2 - and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to **teach others also**.
4. 1 Pet. 2:9 - [9](#) But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, **that you may proclaim the excellencies of him** who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

iv. *The direct operation of the Holy Spirit cancels the all-sufficiency of the scriptures.*

1. 2 Tim. 3:16-17 – [16](#) All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for **teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness**, [17](#) that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.
2. 2 Pet. 1:3 - [3](#) His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, **through the knowledge of him who called us** to his own glory and excellence,

v. *The direct operation of the Spirit upon the heart of the sinner contradicts the fact that the gospel is the power of God for salvation.*

1. Acts 11:13-14 – [13](#) And he told us how he had seen the angel stand in his house and say, ‘Send to Joppa and bring Simon who is called Peter; [14](#) he will declare to you **a message by which you will be saved**, you and all your household.’
2. Rom. 1:16-17 - [16](#) For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for **it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes**, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. [17](#) For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”

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3. James 1:21 - [21](#) Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and **receive with meekness the implanted word**, which is able to save your souls.

3. A look at the examples of conversion in the book of Acts

- i. What preceded conversion in every case?

Example	Scripture	Word	Spirit
Pentecost	Acts 2:14-40	Preaching of Peter	Promised with obedience (cut to the heart - conviction of sin)
Samaritans	Acts 8:4-25	Philip proclaimed Christ	when the Apostles came
Ethiopian	Acts 8:26-39	beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus	Not mentioned
Saul (Paul)	Acts 9:1-19 Acts 22:1-21 Acts 26:12-23	rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do	the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.
Cornelius	Acts 10:1-11:14	he will declare to you a message by which you will be saved,	Fell on them prior to baptism, as at Pentecost
Lydia	Acts 16:13-15	The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.	Not mentioned

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Jailer at Philippi	Acts 16:25-34	they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house.	Not mentioned
Thessalonians	Acts 17:1-9	he reasoned with them from the Scriptures	Not mentioned
Crispus, Corinthians	Acts 18:1-11	many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized	Not mentioned
Disciples of John	Acts 19:1-7	On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.	Through the laying on of Paul's hands
Ephesians	Acts 19:8-10	for three months spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God	Not mentioned

- ii. In six of the eleven examples, the Holy Spirit is not mentioned. To say the He is not mentioned is not to deny His role of conviction.
- iii. What can be understood from the five examples in which the Holy Spirit is mentioned?
 1. Acts 2:14-40 – promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit to those who believe, repent, and are baptized.
 - a. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles preceded Peter's sermon, and this outpouring is what was promised to the apostles by Jesus.
 - i. John 14, 15, 16
 - ii. Luke 24:49 - [49](#) And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."
 - iii. Acts 1:8 - [8](#) But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my

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witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

- iv. Acts 1:12-14 - [12](#) Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. [13](#) And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James. [14](#) All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.

2. Acts 8:4-25

- a. Philip proclaimed Christ (4-5)
- b. They paid attention when they saw the signs Philip did (6-8)
- c. They paid attention to Simon for a long time (9-11)
- d. They believed the preaching of Philip (12-13)
- e. The apostles heard that Samaria had received the word of God and sent Peter and John (14)
- f. Peter and John laid hands on them and prayed, and the Samaritans received the Holy Spirit (15-17)
- g. Simon saw and wanted to purchase the power the apostles had (18-19)
- h. Peter replied that it was the gift of God which could not be purchased (20-21)
- i. Simon asked them to pray for him.
- j. Peter and John returned to Jerusalem.
- k. Observations
 - i. The promised gift of the Holy Spirit was due for the Samaritans as it was to obedient believers at Pentecost in Jerusalem, but in neither case were signs a part of the gift.
 - ii. Philip could and did perform signs at Samaria but he could not bestow such a gift.
 - iii. Peter and John came from Jerusalem and used their apostolic power to bestow miraculous working of the Holy Spirit.
- iv. What was the purpose of miracles in the early church?
 - 1. Mark 16:19-20 – [19](#) So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God.

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20 And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and **confirmed the message** by accompanying signs.

2. 1 Cor. 1:4-7 – 4 I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, 5 that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge— 6 even as **the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you**— 7 so that you are not lacking in any gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ,
3. As had already been done by the apostles in Jerusalem, the ability to confirm the message was given in Samaria.
 - a. Two more such examples will be shown.
4. Prior to this, the only recorded miraculous signs of the apostles happened in Jerusalem.
5. Acts 1:8 - 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”
 - v. The Christians at Samaria would have received the promised gift of the Holy Spirit, but it was deemed necessary for them to receive a special gift in order to confirm the message of the Gospel – this it is of divine origin and not an illusion such as Simon had done.
3. Acts 8:26-39
 - a. The Eunuch was reading from Isaiah, but he needed help to understand what he was reading.
 - b. Philip began at that point and told him the good news about Jesus.
 - c. The Eunuch requested to be baptized – the good news about Jesus includes baptism.
 - d. No mention is made of the Holy Spirit with regard to the Eunuch, though he did go on his way rejoicing.
4. Acts 9:1-19; 22:1-21; 26:12-23
 - a. Saul was on his way to Damascus to find any who belonged to the Way, bind them, and take them to Jerusalem.
 - b. Jesus appeared to him, and told him to enter the city and it would be told him what he was to do.

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- c. Ananias protested because of Saul's reputation, but then went to Saul as instructed in the vision from the Lord.
- d. Ananias told Saul the Lord Jesus had sent him so that he (Saul) might regain his sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.
- e. Saul rose and was baptized.
- f. Paul's retelling of this event is found in Acts 22 - [12](#) "And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, well spoken of by all the Jews who lived there, [13](#) came to me, and standing by me said to me, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight.' And at that very hour I received my sight and saw him. [14](#) And he said, 'The God of our fathers appointed you to know his will, to see the Righteous One and to hear a voice from his mouth; [15](#) for you will be a witness for him to everyone of what you have seen and heard. [16](#) And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.'
- g. Observations
 - i. Saul was instructed to enter the city where he would be told what to do – other than that, no divine message was given to Saul on the road.
 - ii. Ananias is the person who told Saul what to do, and Saul rose and was baptized.
 - iii. The point of conversion for Saul was not on the road to Damascus, but upon receiving instructions from Ananias and being baptized.
 - iv. That Paul was filled with the Holy Spirit such as the other apostles had been filled is a matter of record throughout the Acts of the Apostles and in his letters.

5. Acts 10:1-11:14

- a. Cornelius was shown in a vision to send to Joppa for Peter to come. (10:1-8)
- b. Peter was shown a vision which he eventually recognized as God showing him that no person is common or unclean. (10:9-16)
- c. The three sent by Cornelius relayed the message that Cornelius was "directed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house and to hear what you have to say".(10:17-23)
 - i. Peter's report in 11:13-14 gives more information – "Send to Joppa and bring Simon who is called Peter;

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14 he will declare to you a message by which you will be saved, you and all your household.”

- d. Peter’s message was concise, and 44 “While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word.” (10:24-43)
- e. The circumcised believers were amazed because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles (10:45-46)
- f. Cornelius and his house were baptized. (10:47-48)
- g. Peter went to Jerusalem amid criticism to report what had happened. (11:1-17)
- h. And they glorified God, saying, “Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life.” (11:18)
- i. Observation
 - i. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Cornelius and his household was instrumental in convincing the Jewish Christians that if God gave the same gift to them as to the apostles in the beginning (Pentecost), they could not stand in God’s way.
 - ii. Speaking in tongues seems to be common to those who received such a gift from God.

6. Acts 16:13-15

- a. Lydia was with those who went to the place of prayer on the Sabbath.
- b. She was a worshipper of God.
- c. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.
- d. Lydia and her household were baptized.
- e. Paul preached; Lydia paid attention; God opened her heart; the Holy Spirit is not mentioned.

7. Acts 16:25-34

- a. The jailor undoubtedly heard Paul and Silas praying and singing hymns.
- b. Following the earthquake, the jailor (who was responsible for all of the prisoners) asked what he must do to be save.
- c. The short answer was, “Believe in the Lord Jesus ...”
- d. And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house.
- e. The jailor was baptized at once, he and all his family.

8. Acts 17:1-9 –

- a. At Thessalonica, Paul reasoned with them from the scriptures on three Sabbath days.

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- b. "This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ."
- c. And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women.

9. Acts 18:1-11

- a. At Corinth, Paul reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and tried to persuade Jews and Greeks.
- b. Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with his entire household. And many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized.
- c. And he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

10. Acts 18:24-28

- a. Apollos was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures.
- b. He spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John.
- c. Priscilla and Aquila took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.
- d. In Achaia, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed, for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures that the Christ was Jesus.

11. Acts 19:1-7

- a. Paul found some disciples at Ephesus.
- b. "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?"
 - i. If they were true disciples, they would have known of the Holy Spirit.
- c. "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit."
- d. They had been baptized with John's baptism, which included no promise of the Holy Spirit.
- e. Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus."
- f. On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.
- g. When Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying.

12. Acts 19:8-10

- a. At Ephesus, Paul spoke boldly in the synagogue for three months, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God.

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- b. When some spoke evil of the Way, he withdrew from them and took the disciples with him, reasoning daily in the hall of Tyrannus.
 - c. This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.
 - iv. Outside of Jerusalem, spiritual gifts of the Holy Spirit were given in the following order in Acts:
 - 1. Samaria
 - 2. Caesarea (Cornelius and his household)
 - 3. Ephesus (disciples of John)
 - 4. Corinth
 - a. 1 Cor. 1:7 - so that you are not lacking in any gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ,
 - b. 1 Cor. 12:1-ff – Paul wrote about their spiritual gifts.
 - c. 2 Cor. 12:12 - [12](#) The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with utmost patience, with signs and wonders and mighty works.
 - d. Acts 18 does not mention their spiritual gifts, though Paul was there for 18 months.
 - v. Note that Timothy had a spiritual gift or gifts with no written record of their use in the New Testament.
 - 1. 1 Tim. 4:14 – Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you.
 - 2. 2 Tim. 1:6 – For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands,
 - vi. Other
 - 1. Rom. 1:11 – For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you—
 - a. Evidence that no apostle had been to Rome.
 - b. Though the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is much taught in Romans, spiritual gifts are absent.
 - 2. 1 Pet. 4:10 - As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace
 - a. It is not clear the spiritual gifts are what Peter has in mind, even though the Greek word [charisma](#) is used.
 - b. It is clear that every kind of endowment by which we can do good to others is the admonition of Peter.

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4. Consideration of Occurrences of Spiritual Gifts

Consideration of Spiritual Gifts Confirming the Word (Mark 16:19-20; 1 Cor. 1:4-7)

Scripture Reference	Location	Recipient	Background of Recipients	Nature
Acts 2, 3, 5	Jerusalem	Apostles	Jews	Speaking in tongues, healing
Acts 8:4-25	A city of Samaria	Christians	Samaritans (avoided by Jews)	Not specified, but obvious to Simon
Acts 10	Caesarea	Cornelius and his household	Gentiles	Speaking in tongues and extolling God
Acts 18:1-17	Corinth	Christians	Greeks, Pagans, Crispus (Jew)	utterance of wisdom, utterance of knowledge, faith, gifts of healing working of miracles, prophecy, ability to distinguish between spirits, various kinds of tongues, interpretation of tongues.
Acts 19:1-7	Ephesus	Disciples of John	Disciples of John the Baptist	Speaking in tongues and prophesying

From this list we might identify a progression by location as in Acts 1:8 - But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

A different kind of progression may be seen in the background of the recipients.

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