

ONLY THE HOLY SPIRIT



Jim Cymbala May 14, 2016

Let's remember how one becomes a Christian. Before a person can feel the need for Jesus Christ as a savior, that person must first be convicted of sin. "When [the Spirit] comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment" (John 16:8, NIV). The Holy Spirit shows us our sin and our need for a savior. That is what every believer experiences in conversion to Christ.

Jesus also taught that entrance into the kingdom of God (being "born again") can happen only by the Holy Spirit's work: Jesus told Nicodemus, "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit" (John 3:5).

It is the Holy Spirit working inside of us that causes us to turn from our sin and fix our eyes on Jesus. While we may be tempted to think that we can create emotional environments for this to happen, the truth is that this kind of rebirth or transformation can happen only through the work of the Holy Spirit.

The apostle Paul taught that believers are "temples of the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 6:19), and because the Spirit lives inside of us, that make us different from the rest of the world. If the Holy Spirit doesn't live inside a person, no church membership or even a sincere effort to live a good life can make that person a Christian. Only true faith in Jesus Christ as Savior, confirmed by the Holy Spirit, makes us a new creation. The Spirit inhabiting every believer is just another way of saying, "Christ in us," for the Holy Spirit's presence represents Jesus.

When God looks down on earth, He doesn't focus on ethnicity, and He never acknowledges religious denominations. He just sees two kinds of people: His children who have the Spirit living inside of them and unbelievers who don't have the Spirit living inside of them. It's as simple as that. Today we split hairs about doctrinal positions to validate our faith, but to the early church the definition was simpler. Either we are temples or we are not temples. "If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ" (Romans 8:9). It would have been impossible for the apostles to consider someone a true believer in Jesus without the accompanying witness and work of the Spirit. The Spirit of God was the bottom line.

Jim Cymbala began the Brooklyn Tabernacle with less than twenty members in a small, rundown building in a difficult part of the city. A native of Brooklyn, he is a longtime friend of both David and Gary Wilkerson.

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