

Session 2

January 29, 2023

DOES IT BRING CONVICTION

Acts 2:36-41

Jesus said in John 16:8 that the Holy Spirit would “convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.” But that conviction is based on God’s unchanging truth. And God’s truth is revealed to us through God’s unchanging word. This week’s lesson reminds us what happens when the word of God is proclaimed and the Spirit of God convicts. Three key words outline the text.

Proclamation (vv. 32-36). It seems that many churches today, in an attempt to reach the culture, have done everything they can to obliterate the pure preaching of the gospel. Preaching is seen as old-fashioned, irrelevant, and often even offensive. But proclamation of the gospel (as “foolish” as it seems today) is *exactly the method of salvation* that God prescribed (see 1 Cor. 1:21). The apostle Paul made it startlingly clear in Romans 10:17: “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” In Acts 2, the manifestation of the Spirit at Pentecost and its accompanying miracles, gave the perfect opportunity for Peter to preach the gospel. In his message, Peter explained the miracles as a fulfillment of prophesy (2:14-21); proclaimed Christ as both the Son of God and the divine Savior of man (2:22-24); and magnified Him as the victorious Lord of all (2: 25-36). Notice that before Holy Spirit conviction took place, the facts of the gospel had to be explained. That’s where God’s word comes in. For reflection: *What facts about the gospel do you think need to be known before someone can be legitimately saved? What are the possible consequences of making a “decision for Christ” without that cognitive component?*

Conviction (v. 37). “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Notice the sequence of events in verse 37. Simply put, they *heard* the word of God, were *convicted* by the Spirit of God, and *inquired* of the people of God. Over and over in the book of Acts, this pattern continued. And it’s the same process today! If you know the Lord Jesus in a personal way, it’s because someone shared the gospel with you, the Holy Spirit used the word of God to convict you of your sin, and someone led you to repentance and faith. Again, all three components are necessary...and it all begins with the word of God. For reflection: *Take a moment to reflect on your own spiritual journey. Who was it that shared the gospel with you? How many times did you hear it? How did you feel each time? How did you respond each time?*

Instruction (vv. 38-41). The only thing disappearing from our churches faster than bold preaching (with the possible exception of Sunday night services!) are bold invitations at the end of the service. Appeals for repentance, conversions, rededications, and special prayer are rare in many of our churches and totally absent in others. But these verses give strong support for gospel appeals. The people had questions...and the preacher had the answers! Notice the elements present. There is the exhortation to *repent* (v. 38) and to follow through with *baptism*. Please understand that *baptism isn’t required for forgiveness of sin!* Rather, we are baptized *because* we have been forgiven of sin. In addition, an explanation is given regarding the filling and gifting of the Holy Spirit. But verse 40 is equally significant: “And with many other words he testified and strongly urged them, saying, ‘Be saved from this corrupt generation!’” Notice the urgency of Peter’s message and the strong appeal to accept the gospel message (see verse 41). The results?

Three thousand people *heard* the gospel from the word of God, were *convicted of sin* by the Spirit of God, and were *led to repentance and faith* in Christ by the man of God. For reflection: *What is it about a gospel invitation that makes many so uncomfortable? Is it really too old-fashioned? Does it seem too confrontational? Does it play too much on guilt and emotion? What is the problem here? And how do we fix it?*