

No Neutrality



Foundations (Day 239)
by Derek Prince

In Acts chapters 6 and 7 we read how Stephen was accused of blasphemy and arraigned before the Jewish council in Jerusalem. At the opening of the trial scene Stephen is accused, and the members of the council are the accusers. But before the trial closes these roles have been reversed. As Stephen, under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, expounds to the council the Old Testament Scriptures relating to Israel and the Messiah, it is Stephen who becomes the accuser and the members of the council who are accused.

> "When they heard these things they [the council] were cut to the heart, and they gnashed at him with their teeth." (Acts 7:54)

Notice the same phrase again: "cut to the heart." Once more we see that the sword of God's Word, wielded by the Holy Spirit, reached into the hearts of those unbelievers and wounded them there most deeply. One of the witnesses of Stephen's trial and martyrdom was a young man named Saul of Tarsus. This incident evidently had an effect on Saul, for when Jesus appeared to him later on the Damascus road, He said:

> "It is hard for you to kick against the goads." (Acts 9:5)

What were these goads from which Saul was seeking vainly to escape? They were the sharp goads of God's Word, which had been pressed home to his heart by the Holy Spirit through the lips of Stephen.

Acts 24 describes another trial in which Paul was now the accused, arraigned concerning his faith in Christ, and the Roman governor Felix was the judge. In this trial, once again, the Holy Spirit reversed the roles of accuser and accused, for as Paul "reasoned about righteousness, self- control, and the judgement to come, Felix was afraid" (Acts 24:25). The Holy Spirit, through Paul, pressed home to the heart of Felix these truths of righteousness and judgement. The proud Roman governor, accustomed to having prisoners tremble before him, found himself trembling in the presence of an unseen judge and hastily dismissed the court without any judgement being pronounced.

These examples from the book of Acts illustrate the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit to convict men of sin,

righteousness and judgement. But they also show that conviction is not the same as conversion, nor does it necessarily lead to conversion. There is one thing, however, that the Holy Spirit, by His convicting power, most surely does: He leaves no further room for neutrality. Jesus says:

> "He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad." (Matt. 12:30)

Where the convicting power of the Holy Spirit is manifested, every person who comes under the influence of that power is compelled to take a definite stand – either with Christ or against Him; either gathering or scattering. Compromise or neutrality are no longer possible.

> "Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.'" (Matt. 10:34-35)

The sword of which Jesus here speaks is the sword of God's Word. As this Word is ministered in the power of the Holy Spirit, it is so sharp and so penetrating that it leaves no place anymore for neutrality or compromise. It divides even among members of the same family, compelling each one individually to take a stand, either with Christ or against Him.

We live in a civilisation marked by materialism, indifference, compromise and moral and spiritual decline. Is there anything that can arrest the course of this decline and turn our generation back to God? Yes, there is one thing that can do this, and only one: the power of the Holy Spirit working through the Word of God, convincing the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgement.

Devotional

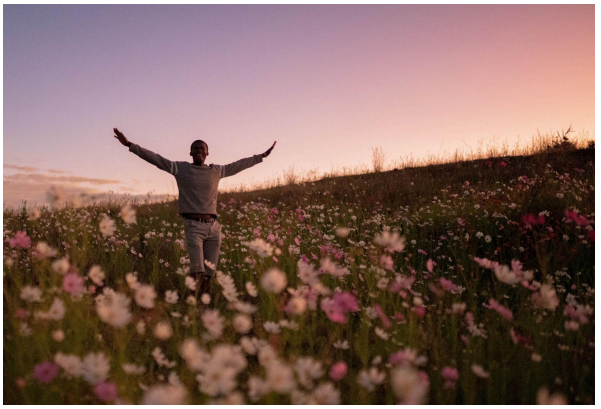
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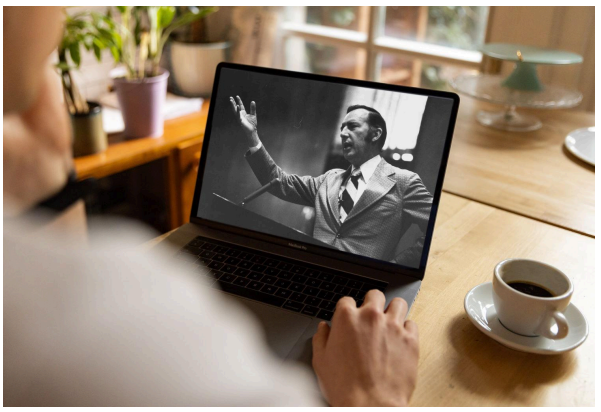
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