

## **The Father's Gift**

### **Baptism in and Filling with the Holy Spirit**

#### **General Observations**

Christian life is life in the Spirit. It is impossible to be a Christian let alone grow as a Christian without the Spirit of God. Every Christian believer has an experience of the Holy Spirit from the very first moment of their Christian life. He is the Spirit of life and it is he who imparts life to us. Is it that God makes us his sons and daughters and then gives us his Spirit or that he gives us his 'Spirit of Sonship' which makes us his children? The answer is – both! See *Galatians 4v 6* and *Romans 8v14-16*. Indeed Romans 8 is the key. In Paul's mind to be 'in Christ' and 'in the spirit' are the same thing.

Once the Holy Spirit has come to us and taken up his residence in us, he makes our body his temple, it is here his work of sanctification begins. See *1 Corinthians 3v 16* and *6v 19*. His work is to reveal Christ to us, form Christ in us so that we may grow into his likeness.

The question is – Is this promised 'gift of the Spirit' the same as baptism of the Holy Spirit? Some say yes others say no.

#### **A Distinctive Blessing**

The Holy Spirit was at work in Old Testament times. But in the Day of the Messiah God promised a greater outpouring of his Spirit that would be available for all. See *Isaiah 32v 15*, & *44 v3*, *Ezekiel 39v 28-29* and *Joel 2v 28*.

John the Baptist who is like a bridge between the Old and New Covenant spoke of Jesus as the one who would baptise with the Holy Spirit, *Mark 1v 8*. If you put John's two statements together in *John 1v 29* & *1 v33* they show that the work of Jesus is twofold. He is the one who removes sin and baptises with the Holy Spirit. This ties in with Peter's words on the Day of Pentecost in *Acts 2* – see *Acts 2v 38*.

I believe that Baptism of the Spirit is the same as the gift of the Spirit and is an integral part of the message of salvation through faith in Christ. It is given at the beginning of the Christian life. Could it be argued that part of the problem with much preaching of the gospel is that we have majored on the forgiveness of sins (which is a wonderful thing!) but we have forgotten that we must talk

about the gift of the Holy Spirit? Our presentation of the gospel must have a Trinitarian ring to it see *Titus 3v 4-7*

### **Universal Blessing**

The prophecy of Joel and Peter's interpretation of it in Acts 2 are crucial. It is clear that the Holy Spirit's work would be wider and deeper than in Old Testament days. That Peter understood Joel's prophecy to promise the gift or baptism of the Spirit to all believers seems clear from the conclusion of his sermon in *Acts 2v 38-39*.

### **The Day of Pentecost**

There are two distinct meanings:

This is the last event in the saving career of Jesus, the long-promised outpouring of the Spirit linked to his death resurrection and ascension. It completed the inauguration of the messianic age, the age of the Spirit. In itself it is unrepeatable.

It was a fulfilment not only of the general Old Testament expectation of the Spirit's coming but also of the special promise of Jesus in the upper room which was addressed primarily to the apostles and whose fulfilment was intended to equip them for their particular apostolic work as inspired and authoritative teachers. (*John v13-16*). What then did the Apostles teach about when and how the Holy Spirit is received? For Paul we receive the Spirit not as a result of any good works but by 'hearing the gospel and believing it' see *Galatians 3 v 2 and 3 v 14*.

### **The Samaritan Believers - Acts Chapter 8**

If it is true that all Christians are given the gift of baptised with the Holy Spirit when they believe, what are we to make of the two cases in the Acts which appear to show that there are people who were believers without the Spirit? In the case of the Samaritan believers, it is clear that they were genuine in their faith. Why did the Apostles check them out? (*Acts 8v 14*). Because they were Samaritan. This is certainly the impact of the story in Luke's account. Philip's decision was very bold – could Samaria really receive the gospel? For centuries there had been bitter rivalry. Is it not reasonable to suppose that God withheld the outward evidence of the gift of the Spirit until two leading apostles could confirm the genuineness of the conversion? No other explanation of the

Samaritan story brings it into harmony with the apostles general teaching, from which it deviates and at the same time sets it in its historical context.

### **The Ephesian Disciples- Acts 19:1-7**

The question here is were these men Christians at all? It is true they were called disciples. However, they had not been baptised and had never even heard of the Holy Spirit. They had only received John the Baptist's baptism. What did Paul do? He took them back to the beginning v 4

A key text is *1 Corinthians 12v 13*. This is the only use of the term Baptism of the Holy Spirit outside of the Acts and the Gospels. What is striking about this verse is the emphatic repetition of the word *all* and the word *one*. Paul is underlining our common experience as Christian believers of the Holy Spirit. Baptism of the Spirit is then the same as the gift of the Spirit. It is a distinctive blessing of the new covenant, an initial blessing, and a universal blessing. By uniting us to Christ, baptising us in the Holy Spirit, God has given us everything we need *Ephesians 1v 3, 2 Peter 1v 3*. We must constantly appropriate these blessings as we grow in Christ.

### **The Fullness of the Spirit- Being filled with the Holy Spirit**

If Baptism with the Spirit is a once for all gift, then the fullness of the Spirit acknowledges that this gift needs to be constantly appropriated.

Jesus spoke in very vivid terms about those who believed in him having an experience like streams of life-giving water pouring out of their heart- *John 7v 37-39*. This teaching was tied dramatically with the Jewish feast of Tabernacles, which looked back to the provision the Jewish nation had in the wilderness. The feast also looked forward and symbolised the future outpouring of the Spirit. Jesus interpreted this feast as one about himself. He would provide water to drink and rivers to swim in. The image is one of tired and thirsty travellers and a dry and thirsty land. The living water is seen as the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

The whole thrust of his teaching is that this is something which is experienced. How do we experience this? We come and drink – Not just once but many times.

## **Ephesians 5:18-21 - Marks of Being Filled**

This clearly is a key passage. It becomes clear that for Paul the consequences of being filled with the Spirit are intelligent, controlled healthy relationships with God and each other. This is shown in the following ways:

*Speaking to one another* -Where the Spirit is at work there will be love. We cannot claim the fullness of the Spirit if we are not on speaking terms with one another.

*Heartfelt worship*- A mark of the Spirit's fullness is joy in worship

*Thanksgiving*- Another key mark of a Spirit filled life- no moaning and groaning!

*Submission*-self submission not self-assertion.

Here the two main characteristics of the Spirit filled life are seen in worship and fellowship. If we are being filled with the Spirit, we shall be praising Christ, thanking our Father and speaking and submitting to one another. The Holy Spirit puts us in a right relationship with God and one another. It is these spiritual qualities and activities not supernatural phenomena that we should look for primary evidence of the Holy Spirit's fullness.

## **Understanding Contemporary Experiences**

Very often people are encouraged to prepare for a Baptism in the Holy Spirit. This may well involve confession, repentance, renewed commitment, a heightened faith. If all these things are in play it is almost a guarantee of significant growth in the Christian life. There would almost certainly be a deep sense of fellowship with God. There may well be increased power for ministry, and growth in spiritual gifts. Prayer and Bible study would become more meaningful. Is it right though to put this person in a special category? There may be another Christian in the same church who has never had such a large step of growth but who nevertheless has been making steady progress and growing in Christian experience over 40 years.

**We must beware of the danger of a 2 tier Christianity**- ordinary believers and Spirit baptised believers. We must also note that such a division of Christians into categories is not a unique understanding. Much Pentecostal teaching came out of earlier holiness groups that had taught that Christians could be 'sanctified believers' or 'carnal Christians' and 'spiritual Christians'. Apart from not being New Testament teaching this leads to a 'we' 'they' mentality in church life which is profoundly unhealthy.

## Variety in Experience

To some extent our experience of God the Holy Spirit will vary according to our natural temperament. The Holy Spirit respects us as human beings – he does not obliterate by new creation what we already are by creation. **All** Christians can expect fresh experiences of God. It may be the inward witness of the Spirit that we are his child. *Romans 8v 16*. Our hearts may be flooded with his love-  
*Romans 5v 5*. A great sense of peace and wellbeing – *Philippians 4v 7*. Our hearts burning within us as his word is opened. – *Luke 24v 32*

There may well be more unusual types of experience, often associated with times of revival. These are times when God seem to be at work in a more dramatic and pronounced way, when whole congregations and communities have a heightened awareness of spiritual things. Often these times are accompanied with unusual physical effects which lead to much debate. We can do no better than checking any renewal or revival movement through the ‘grid’ provided by the eighteenth-century pastor and theologian Jonathan Edwards. This ‘grid’ which he believed showed the marks of a true work of God comes from *1 John 4*:

It raises the glory of Jesus (as divine Saviour, v 2-3)

It opposes Satan’s Kingdom (the world, sin and falsehood v 4-5)

It raises the priority of Scripture (as divinely authoritative, v6)

It advances love (to God, Christ, and other people – v 7,11,12,16,19,21)

Christian life begins with a new birth, including the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and this is followed by a continual growth in grace, a filling with the Holy Spirit. Forgiveness and the gift of the Spirit are two sides of the comprehensive salvation which is ours in Christ. Our aim should be to seek more of the Spirit’s fullness in our life so that we can be more effective in our service for Christ.