

The Baptism *of the* Holy Spirit



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Acts 2:37, 38; 9:5, 6; 1 Cor. 12:1-13; 2 Cor. 7:9-11; Gal. 3:1-11; 5:5, 6.*

Memory Text: “Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit” (*Ephesians 5:18*).

There's been a great deal of speculation and argument in the Christian church over the centuries about what the “baptism of the Holy Spirit” means. It is clear from the few references in Scripture that it deals with the Holy Spirit in the life of a person who has been born again. Without the prompting of the Spirit, no one can experience the new birth; those who have had that experience have been baptized with the Holy Spirit.

In Acts 1:5, Jesus told His followers they would be baptized with the Holy Spirit; the spectacular events of Pentecost ten days later seem the obvious fulfillment of His words (*see Acts 2*), when many people accepted Christ and became born-again followers of the Messiah.

One thing is sure: Anyone who has surrendered in faith and obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ has been baptized in the Holy Spirit. A loving and lovable Christian, giving of himself or herself for others, is the greatest manifestation of that baptism.

This week we'll look at this promise for all who give of themselves to the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, May 6.*

One Spirit, One Body

Read 1 Corinthians 12:1-13. What point is Paul making here, especially in verse 13?

Paul is dealing with a church that was fighting over spiritual gifts. In response, Paul exclaims, “Don’t get divided over this issue.” Or, as he specifically expressed it: “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:13, NASB).

The word translated “by” in the above verse (NASB) may also be translated “in” (as in NEB, etc.). Thus, genuine believers are baptized in one Spirit into the body of Christ (vs. 13), which is the church. Whatever other points Paul wanted to make, one point is clear: All believers share the reality of being baptized by the Spirit, and this makes us part of the body of Christ, the church.

Baptism in the Spirit, or conversion, ideally precedes water baptism. Baptism in water is an outward demonstration of the change that has already taken place in the heart. The true believer is born by the Spirit (John 3:5, 6); the Spirit is the sealing Agent (Eph. 1:13, 14); and the Spirit has been given as an earnest (guarantee) and reminder that one belongs to God (2 Cor. 5:5).

How important is it that the Holy Spirit dwells in us? Rom. 8:9.

In personally accepting Jesus as our Savior, we receive the Spirit as a heavenly endowment, or assurance, of ultimate and complete salvation. His indwelling becomes our guarantee and constant reminder that someday in the future Jesus will not merely dwell within us; we shall dwell with Him and the unfallen angels in a realm where temptation and sin will no longer touch us. In order to remind us constantly of this ultimate deliverance from the realm of sin, He constantly gives us His Spirit.

Every true believer since Pentecost has received the guarantee of the Spirit, which is the same experience as baptism in the Spirit. The important question for us is this: How willing are we to receive the Spirit?

What is your understanding of what it means to be baptized in the Holy Spirit? If someone were to ask, “Have you been baptized in the Holy Spirit?” how would you respond?

Guilt and the Spirit

“Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (*Acts 2:37*).

Look at the action depicted in the above text. If you read the verses preceding it in Acts 2 (*starting in verse 14*), you can see clearly what was going on here. Peter, quoting the Old Testament, preached to them about the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus. He was giving them the plan of salvation.

Notice, too, their immediate response. Was it joy? Gladness? Happiness? On the contrary, they were “pricked in their heart.” The Greek verb means “to pierce,” and the idea given in the text is that they were pained, they suffered, their consciences were troubled. And no wonder, especially when you read verse 36. Of course, in one sense, we are all just as guilty as these men in that it was the sins of all of us that ultimately brought Jesus to the Cross.

Nevertheless, the idea here is clear: It was guilt, it was sorrow, it was pain that helped bring them to where they needed to be.

Read 2 Corinthians 7:9-11. In your own words write what Paul is saying here and how it relates to the experience of the Jews at Pentecost.

In this context, it’s easier to understand Christ’s words, “Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (*Matt. 5:3*). However much the gospel is a message of joy, of peace, and of hope, the process of salvation, of repentance, and of sanctification does involve some suffering on our part (*Acts 14:22*). Indeed, one of the acts of the Holy Spirit is to bring to us conviction of sin (*John 16:8*), and this can happen only to the degree that our hearts can be “pierced” over the reality of just how sinful our lives have been.

How has the Holy Spirit brought conviction to your heart? What kind of feelings did you have? How has the Spirit been able to use this conviction toward your own spiritual growth?

Repentance and the Spirit

“Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38).

Though Peter here promises the gift of the Holy Spirit to those who repent and are baptized, it's only through the working of the Holy Spirit that they could be brought to repentance. Thus, we can see here the reality of the Holy Spirit working in every stage of a person's relationship to his or her Creator. Theologians sometimes refer to this as “common grace.”

Repentance is a change of mind and life. The words for “repentance” in both Hebrew and Greek involve the idea of change, especially a change of mind and direction. It is acknowledgment that one has been wrong, an acknowledgment that leads not only to sorrow but to a change, a turn to the Source of life and moral understanding. Repentance, true repentance (*2 Cor. 7:10*), is powerful evidence that a person has been touched by the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Read Romans 2:4, along with John 15:26 and 16:13, 14. How do these texts help us understand the role of the Holy Spirit in bringing us repentance?

The Holy Spirit is Christ's Representative here on earth. Only through His work of revealing to us the truth about Christ can a person be brought to conviction and, hence, to true repentance. Only through the power of the Spirit can we be moved to make the conscious choice to surrender our sinful ways and live in submission to the Lord. By revealing to us the love of God, the Spirit touches us and gives us the only true motive for wanting to serve God: a grateful heart that loves a God who first loved us (*1 John 4:10*).

True love for God, however, cannot be forced. The Spirit comes and touches us; we have the freedom to surrender to His convictions or to push them away. In the end, the choice is ours, and ours alone.

Write out a paragraph explaining your own experience with repentance. Where were you when you first felt conviction? What was your immediate reaction? How did you finally respond? What changes took place? Be prepared to share your response with the class.

Obedience and the Spirit

Read again Acts 2:37, the reaction of these Jews to Peter's witness. What was their response? Compare this response with Saul's response (*Acts 9:5, 6*). In both cases, what immediate evidence shows that their conversion was genuine?

"We are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him" (*Acts 5:32*). As this text suggests, obedience is one of the prerequisites for receiving the Holy Spirit. However much we are saved by faith, it's only Christ's righteousness credited to us that saves us from the final consequences of sin. We cannot live in disobedience to the Lord. The Spirit was given to bring conviction to us, a conviction that will lead us to obedience. Anything else is a counterfeit.

Look up the following texts. What do they tell us about the role of the Spirit and obedience?

Acts 16:7

Gal. 5:5, 6

Gal. 5:22-26

1 Pet. 1:2

When here, Jesus admonished His followers to obey God, to walk in the commandments, to love and forgive one another as God loves and forgives us. How foolish to believe that the Holy Spirit, which is here in His place, would admonish us in any other way. Those who claim "baptism of the Holy Spirit" and use, for instance, "speaking in tongues" as proof of that baptism yet live in disobedience to God's commandments are fooling themselves. The greatest proof of living by the Spirit is a life lived in faith and obedience to God.

Faith and the Spirit

As we saw yesterday, those who yield to the influence of the Holy Spirit will be brought into what Paul calls “the obedience of faith” (*Rom. 16:26*). However, because those who are saved in Christ obey, and because salvation is inseparable from obedience, people can easily slip into the trap of confusing the results of salvation (obedience) with the means of salvation (faith in Christ). This was a problem with the Galatians.

Read Galatians 3:1-11. What issue is Paul addressing here? What concern does he express for the Galatians? Note particularly the role he gives to the Spirit in these texts.

The Holy Spirit was to lead people into “all truth” (*John 16:13*); the center of “all truth” is, of course, Christ and Him crucified (*1 Cor. 2:2*). The greatest and most important of all truths is that Jesus Christ died for the sins of the world, that at Calvary He paid the penalty for all human sin, and that anyone can, by faith, be forgiven his or her sin and stand perfect before God. Central to this truth is that no works any human can do, even works of the law, can atone for his or her sins and bring forgiveness (*Rom. 3:20, Gal. 2:16*). This forgiveness and atonement come only through the work of Jesus and become effective in the life of those who believe; that is, those who claim it for themselves by faith (*Gal. 3:5, 6*). Thus, the same Holy Spirit who guides us toward obedience is the same one that helps us understand the great truth of salvation by faith alone. It’s obvious the Galatians were somehow losing sight of this great truth.

Notice, too, the crucial role Paul attributes to the Holy Spirit here (*Gal. 3:2-5*) and how Paul so closely links the Holy Spirit coming to the people through their faith, as opposed to their works of the law.

What are some of the subtle traps of legalism we can easily fall into? How can we protect ourselves from these traps?

Further Study: Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 41–46, 50; *Christian Service*, pp. 252–255; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 283–287, 290, 632–634; *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 444; vol. 7, pp. 211, 212; Exodus 14.

“Let Christ work by His Holy Spirit, and awaken you as from the dead, and carry your minds along with His. Let Him employ your faculties. He has created your every capability that you may better honor and glorify His name. Consecrate yourself to Him, and all associated with you will see that your energies are inspired of God, that your noblest powers are called into exercise to do God’s service. The faculties once used to serve self and advance unworthy principles, once serving as members of unrighteous purposes, will be brought into captivity to Jesus Christ and become one with the will of God.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 396.

“We need the baptism of the Holy Spirit.”—Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, p. 66.

Discussion Questions:

- ① Share your answers to Tuesday’s final question with the class. What can you learn from one another’s responses?
- ② As a class, read together Luke 11:11-13. Then talk about what it was like when you gave someone you cared about a gift that you knew they would really like. How did it make you feel? Why were you so eager to give it? What good would it do for the person you gave it to? With those thoughts in mind, what can we learn about the promise of the Holy Spirit offered to us?
- ③ As a class, see whether you can get some time before the lesson study to prepare a small presentation for Sabbath School on what the “baptism of the Holy Spirit” means. Anticipate as much as possible beforehand what questions people in the church might have regarding this topic and be prepared to answer them.

Long Road to Peace

Andrei Skvortsov

Andrei grew up in an atheist home in Russia. While in university he sensed an emptiness in his life and began reading philosophy and history. One book he read contained many quotations from the Bible. *Maybe Christianity holds the answers I am searching for*, he thought. He visited churches and monasteries, but the ceremonies did not lead him to God. He yearned to find someone to answer his questions.

He found a New Testament in a shop and bought it, though it cost him almost a week's wages. He started reading, but Matthew's "begats" puzzled him. If only he knew someone who could explain the Bible to him. But before he found anyone, he was drafted into the army.

He was sent to Siberia, 3,000 miles from home. He felt lonely and out of place. Then he met a Christian soldier who gave Andrei another New Testament. Andrei began reading again, but when he asked his friend questions, the soldier replied, "Just keep reading."

The military was a bitter experience after the fall of Communism. Soldiers were beaten for little or no reason, and many deserted their posts or tried to commit suicide. Andrei's commander learned of his interest in religion and made life as difficult as he could. Often Andrei was beaten for refusing to hurt a fellow soldier or for crimes he did not commit. But Andrei sensed God's presence guiding and saving him.

When his military duty ended, Andrei returned to Moscow. He bought a Bible and spent many nights reading it. His aunt learned of his spiritual interest and invited him to attend evangelistic meetings with her. There he found answers to his deepest questions.

Then he learned his mother had brain cancer, and he hurried to her hospital bed. His father, desperate for help, asked Andrei to find a psychic healer who would cure his mother. Andrei knew this was wrong, so he offered to ask a pastor to pray for her. He brought a pastor from the evangelistic meetings to pray for his mother. The pastor explained the importance of faith in God and God's power to heal. Then he prayed for her.

Andrei's mother underwent surgery and recovered with no permanent side effects. Andrei was convinced that the pastor's prayers of faith had brought about this miracle, and soon he was baptized. He hopes that his parents, who sometimes attend church with him, will surrender their hearts to the Great Physician.

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A CHOICE TO MAKE



Felipe de Sousa Pequeno had a choice to make. Participate with his mother in Candomblé, a traditional religion that involves Christianity and spiritism, or attend Petrópolis Adventist Academy. He chose Petrópolis and Jesus over spiritism. Now he is sharing his faith with his mother and grandmother. The school is growing and needs additional classroom and dormitory space.

Part of the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering this quarter will go to Brazil to help expand Petrópolis and Espírito Santo Adventist Academies, so there is room for others who choose to come.



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