

The Baptism¹ and Filling of the Holy Spirit



SABBATH—JANUARY 28

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Mark 1:8; Ephesians 5:18; Acts 13:52; Luke 11:8–10; Acts 5:32; Galatians 5:16–26.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come so they can have life. I want them to have it in the fullest possible way’ ” (John 10:10, NIV).

AS CHRISTIANS, we must be filled with the Holy Spirit. Without Him, our witness will be powerless. Without Him, our Christian life will be a burden. For example, suppose we are educated, talented, and speak well but do not have the Spirit. Then we cannot experience life as God meant for us to. And we would not be assured of salvation. We would not know the joy that comes from serving our Lord. We would be Christians in name only. And a Christian in name only is not really a Christian at all.

But Jesus wants us to live life to the fullest. He wants us to live happy and meaningful lives. He wants to give us life as it is meant to be lived. He wants our lives to be rooted in the Source of all life: Jesus Christ. Jesus our Creator is the only way to eternal life. He says, “ ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me’ ” (John 14:6, NKJV). This means that this fullness of life is possible only by being joined to Jesus. And being joined to Jesus happens only through the Holy Spirit's working in our lives.

This week we will study what the Bible says about the baptism of the Spirit. We will learn what it means to be filled with Him. We also will look at some proof that we are, indeed, filled with the Spirit.

DEFINITIONS

1. baptism of the Holy Spirit—the experience by which a person receives both forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. And now he or she belongs to Christ.

THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (Mark 1:8)

Read Mark 1:8. (Compare² this verse with Matthew 3:11; Luke 3:16; and John 1:33.) Also read Acts 1:5 and Acts 11:16. According to these verses, what other important act happens along with the baptism of the Spirit?

In the New Testament, there are only seven verses that speak about being baptized in the Holy Spirit.³ Four of the verses refer to John the Baptist and point to Pentecost.⁴ At Pentecost, Christ gave the Holy Spirit to His followers. The gift marked the beginning of “the last days” of salvation history.

The four Gospels⁵ talk about the baptism of the Holy Spirit. But the Gospel (book) of John does not describe this baptism in the same way that the Gospel books of Matthew, Mark, and Luke do. For example, John does not speak about the baptism of the Spirit as something that happens only in the future. Instead, he makes it clear that the baptism of the Spirit is an ongoing experience. It has continuing power in the life of the believer (read John 1:33).

In the same way, John talks about another important work of Jesus a few verses earlier in John 1:29. This work of Jesus involves taking away our sins and giving us the Holy Spirit. Both of these experiences happen in Acts 2:38. The disciples’ eyes are opened to Christ. Then they receive both forgiveness of sins and the Holy Spirit. Acts 10:43, 44 says that the same experience happens to believers in the house of Cornelius.

In the New Testament, receiving the Holy Spirit goes together with baptism. Both point to our new birth. This is because in baptism we become Christ’s. Why does Jesus give us the Holy Spirit? He wants us to live in His power. And He wants us to share the good news with others. The good news is that He takes away our sins.

All believers, then, are meant to drink of the Spirit. In 1 Corinthians 12:13, Paul says that we all are baptized by the Spirit into one body (church) of believers. He talks about the importance of all believers becoming one in heart and in mind. The word *all* is important. Paul connects the oneness in Christ of all believers with the baptism of the Spirit.

What has been your own experience in being baptized (filled) by the Holy Spirit? What has He meant to your life? What would you be like without Him working in you?



Paul says that we are all baptized by the Spirit into one body (church) of believers.

DEFINITIONS

2. compare—to show how two or more things are the same or different.
3. baptized in the Holy Spirit—to receive forgiveness of sins and the Holy Spirit.
4. Pentecost—the time when the Holy Spirit fell as tongues of fire on Jesus’ followers and filled them after Jesus returned to heaven. Read Acts 2.
5. Gospels—the first four books of the New Testament: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

BEING FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT (Ephesians 5:18)



We need God's Spirit to fill us every day. Why? Each day brings new tests and hardships.

Read Ephesians 5:18; Acts 13:52; and Romans 8:9. What does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit? How does being filled with the Spirit happen in our lives?

First, we are to be baptized and belong to Christ. Then we are to live in the power of the Spirit. To live in the Spirit means to be filled with the Spirit. There are many verses in the New Testament about people who are filled with the Spirit (Luke 1:41, 67; Acts 2:4; Acts 4:8, 31; Acts 9:17; Acts 13:9). The apostle (teacher; leader) Paul uses the word *filling* to describe a person who has completely given his or her life to God. This person is open to being guided by the Holy Spirit. God's own work can now happen in his or her life.

What does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit? It means we yield every part of our lives to His power to change us. Then our walk, talk, and thoughts will show Jesus.

We receive the Spirit by believing what we hear about Him (Galatians 3:2). And we receive the Spirit through faith (Galatians 3:14) at our baptism (Titus 3:5, 6). But we also need to seek (try) to be filled with the Holy Spirit every day. We cannot live off a powerful experience that we had last year or last month or even yesterday. We need God's Spirit to fill us each day. Why? Because each day brings new tests (trials) and hardships.

In Acts 13:52, the Greek word translated as "filled" really means "being [all the time] filled." So, being filled with the Spirit is not a one-time event. It is something that we should seek and receive every day. In other words, this filling has to be repeated. Then every part of our lives will be filled with His presence. And then we will be given the power to live as we should.

Being filled with the Holy Spirit does not mean that we possess (have) more of Him. It means that He possesses (has) more of us. We must give every part of our lives to the Spirit every day. Only then can He use us for God's glory.

"I wish to help you understand that those who have Jesus living in the heart by faith have received the Holy Spirit. Every person who receives Jesus as his or her personal Savior also receives the Holy Spirit. The Spirit will guide each believer. He will make a person holy. And He will witness to him or her about God."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, volume 14, page 71.

REQUIREMENTS: PART 1 (Acts 2:37, 38)

Read Acts 2:37, 38. According to these verses, what is the first requirement for receiving the Holy Spirit?

One requirement for receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit is repentance (turning away from sin). Hearing the Word of God can lead us to understand how sinful and lost we are. True sorrow for sin is more than just feeling sorry for the terrible results of our sins. It is a complete change of heart and mind. It helps us see sin for what it really is: ugly and evil. This is because sin is war against God. The only way that we can experience true repentance is to be touched by the love of God: “Do you disrespect God’s great kindness and favor? Do you disrespect God when He is patient with you? [Do you not] realize that God’s kindness is meant to turn you away from your sins?” (Romans 2:4, NIV).

Read Galatians 3:14 and James 1:6–8. These verses say we must trust in God. We cannot receive the Holy Spirit without faith in His Word. Why?

Jesus has promised to send the Spirit as His representative. In faith, we receive the promised gift. But suppose we doubt God’s promise and do not trust His Word. Then we are like a double-minded person. Such a person cannot expect to receive anything from God.

Read Luke 11:8–10, 13. According to these verses, why does continuous and steady prayer make a difference?

God is not unwilling to give us the Spirit. He wants to. God is good and kind. He is kinder to us than we can be, even to our own children. So continuous and steady prayer does not change His mind. Prayer does not bring God down to us. Prayer changes us. It brings us into God’s presence. It brings us up to Him. Our prayers simply show our firm purpose. They prepare us for the gift of the Spirit.

How can we learn to be more serious, hard working, and unselfish in our prayer lives? Why is it important that we learn these things?



Hearing the Word of God can lead us to understand how sinful and lost we are.

REQUIREMENTS: PART 2 (Acts 5:32)

Read Acts 5:32. Why is obeying God’s Word an important requirement for receiving the Holy Spirit?

Then, as now, the Holy Spirit is given to all who obey God. In the Bible, love and obedience go hand in hand. And true faith is shown in obedience. We must trust God with all our hearts. Then we will obey His commandments. As Jesus says, “ ‘Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching’ ” (John 14:23, NIV).

Obedience is a choice. It leads to a lifestyle that follows God’s will (plan). God’s will is shown in His law. Obeying God helps us to accept Jesus as our Lord (Luke 6:46). In 1 John 2:4, 5, we read, “Suppose someone says, ‘I know him.’ But suppose this person does not do what God commands. Then this person is a liar and is not telling the truth. But if anyone obeys God’s word, then that person truly loves God. Here is how we know we belong to him” (NIV). Those are strong words. From John, we also know that “those who obey his commands remain joined to him. And [God] remains joined to them” (1 John 3:24, NIV).



In the Bible, love and obedience go hand in hand.

Read Jude 18–21. Why do we need to avoid all unclean thoughts and behavior? How will keeping our hearts and minds pure help us to be filled with the Spirit?

The fire of the Holy Spirit cannot keep burning in our lives when we are worldly minded. So, we need to be filled with God’s love. We need to stay connected with God through prayer. If we do, prayer and God’s love will protect us from unclean thoughts and acts. If we do, prayer and God’s love will help us to have a spirit of power, love, and discipline (2 Timothy 1:6, 7). We must fight a fierce battle with self. Only then will we be the kind of people we are meant to be. Of course, we cannot do it ourselves. We need God’s help. We have one of two choices. We can surrender our hearts and minds to the Holy Spirit. Or we can allow our sinful flesh (desires) to rule us. The choice is ours.

“There is no limit to how useful someone can be who puts self aside. This person will make room for the Holy Spirit to work upon his or her heart. He or she will live a life that belongs completely to God.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pages 250, 251. How can you live out these words in your own spiritual life?

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LIVING FOR SELF AND LIVING FOR CHRIST (Galatians 5:16–26)

Read Galatians 5:16–26. Compare these verses with Ephesians 5:1–9, 17–20. List the differences between living for self and living a life that is filled with the Spirit.

A person who does not live in the Spirit lives a very different life from the person who is filled with the Spirit.

Selfish Person	Spirit-Controlled Person
Wants what is sinful and displeasing to God	Wants what is spiritual and pleasing to God
Is controlled by sinful desires	Is controlled by the Spirit
Does not wisely use freedom and is a slave to sin	Is set free from sin and is called to freedom in Christ
Disobeys God’s will (plan)	Is obedient to God’s will
Is selfish	Is unselfish
Displays (shows) the fruit of sin	Displays the fruit of the Spirit
Does not see the need for forgiveness and is boastful	Sees the need for forgiveness and praises Jesus for what He has done

People who are filled with God’s Spirit will love to obey God’s law. They will show a gentle spirit of love for others (read 2 Corinthians 5:14). Our values (things we believe in) will change when we receive new hearts. We no longer want to live our lives in our own strength. Instead, we want to yield to the Holy Spirit’s control (Galatians 3:3).

We cannot change ourselves. This is because we possess no real power to do so. We are too sinful even to try. The power to change must come from God.

This change is the work of a lifetime. It is a work that will have its up and downs. But it is a work that God promises to do in us if we surrender to Him. Philippians 1:6 says, “God began a good work in you. And I am sure that he will carry it on until it is completed. That will be on the day Christ Jesus returns” (NirV).

In what parts of your life do you see selfishness? And in what parts do you see the working of the Holy Spirit in you? What does your answer tell you about yourself and the choices you need to make?

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Choosing to give our hearts to the control of God’s Holy Spirit will bring us God’s peace. We are free to choose to serve God or turn away from Him.

Suppose, for example, we wish to be truly free in Christ. Then we need to turn from our old sinful ways. We must want the power of the Holy Spirit to fill us. To be truly free, we must be surrendered to the control of the Holy Spirit. Our freedom is found in being set free from the power of sin. This is because sin always makes us slaves. It always leads to death. So we must surrender to the Lord. We must allow the Holy Spirit to live within us.

We are no longer under God’s judgment (read Romans 8:1). And we live lives where “our sinful nature no longer controls the way we live. The Holy Spirit now controls the way we live” (Romans 8:4, NIV). Such freedom from sin comes through God’s Spirit. It is the only true freedom that we as sinners can know.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Some people think that freedom means being able to do what you want, when you want, and how you want to do it. What is wrong with that idea from a Christian view of things? What is the Bible’s idea of true freedom? (Read Psalm 119:45; Luke 4:18; John 8:34–36; 2 Corinthians 3:17; and Galatians 5:1.)
- ② It is important to put self aside. It is important to give our lives completely to God. Then the Holy Spirit can work powerfully through us. Imagine what would happen if you put self aside. Imagine what would happen if you fully opened your heart to the work of the Holy Spirit in you. What do you think God could do through you? How would that make you a blessing to others?
- ③ “The Christian’s life is not a small change from the old way of life. Instead, it is a complete change of heart and mind. There is a death to self and sin. Then God gives us a whole new life. This change can be made only by the power of the Holy Spirit.”
—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 172. Discuss in class what these words mean.
- ④ Compare a selfish life with a life that is Spirit filled (see Thursday’s chart). Discuss with your Sabbath School group what the greatest blessing of a Spirit-filled life could be for each of you.