

Spirit-filled (5) – What We Desperately Need

In Matthew 3:11 John the Baptist says; **“I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.”** This same statement, **“baptize with the Holy Spirit”**, is recorded in each of the four gospels (Mark 1:8, Luke 3:16 & John 1:33).

Note that Jesus is the one who baptises with the Holy Spirit. Note also the imagery of water, wind & fire... which all help describe the work of the Spirit. The word baptise means to be immersed in water. That’s the analogy John uses to help us understand this aspect of the ministry of Baptism in water means literally to be immersed in, plunged under, and even drenched or soaked with water. John W. Wyckoff notes; *“to be baptised in the Holy Spirit is to be totally enveloped in and saturated with the dynamic Spirit of the living God.”* Now the Bible also uses other terms for this reality of the Holy Spirit including **“being filled with the Holy Spirit”**; **“receiving the Holy Spirit”**; **“the Holy Spirit falling upon”**; **“the Holy Spirit coming on”**; **“clothed with power from on high.”** Each of these phrases help us understand the nature & purpose of Spirit-baptism & we will pick up on these as we explore.

Some Christian’s believe baptism in the Holy Spirit is part of or the same as the new birth experience. Pentecostal’s believe it can happen alongside new birth but also believe it can happen after because we believe it is a distinct

experience with a different purpose. New birth is the work of the Spirit connecting us to life in Christ. Baptism in the Spirit is Jesus immersing us in the power of the Spirit. New birth is the Spirit giving new life in Jesus. Baptism in the Spirit is the Spirit empowering us to live for Jesus. So let me again highlight there are three distinct aspects of the Holy Spirit’s ministry. 1. To bring new life in Christ – New Birth. 2. To empower us to live for Jesus – Baptism with the Spirit. 3. To make us progressively like Jesus – sanctification.

Everything the Holy Spirit does is included in these three aspects of his ministry & we will look at them as we continue to get to know the best Friend the Father has given.

Why Pentecostals believe Baptism in the Spirit is a distinct experience from new birth.

At the end of the Gospel of Luke in 24:49 Jesus says; **“I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”** Then in Acts 1:4-5 while he was eating with his disciples he commanded; **“Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptised with water, but in a few days you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit.”** This is Jesus talking to his disciples remember. Then in verse 8 of the same chapter he says; **“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”**

Then of course Acts 2 happened, the Holy Spirit came in the most dramatic and powerful way. Frightened disciples were transformed into brave witnesses. This baffled the Jewish leaders, how could these unlearned Galileans speak with such authority with the most astounding results?

We have to recognise this was a very unique time in history; this was a turning point... The disciples in the upper room were followers before the cross, resurrection & Pentecost. Salvation had not yet been secured. Resurrection life was not yet available. These disciples lived through all these events and were followers of Jesus as they took place. Pentecost was a unique event in this way. The Spirit came with wind & fire & birthed the church... For this reason the day of Pentecost by its self is not the strongest basis for seeing baptism in the Spirit as a distinct experience from new birth. However the book of Acts provides plenty of examples of how new Christians, saved after the day of Pentecost, experienced the Spirit.

Shortly after the day of Pentecost, Philip, the only named evangelist in the NT, preached the gospel in Samaria. Acts 8:12 says; **“But when they believed Philip as he proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptised, both men and women.”** So they are new believers, they are born again & baptised, but then it says in 8:14-17; **“When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to Samaria. When they arrived, they prayed for the new believers there**

that they might receive the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit had not yet come on any of them, they had simply been baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.”

So these people had believed through the ministry of Philip. Then they receive the Spirit in a significant & noticeable way afterwards through the ministry of Peter and John. This experience of the Spirit was a distinct experience from their coming to faith. Note also how God used Jewish believers to bring the good news & fullness of the Spirit to Samaritan believers ... The Spirit is not hindered by borders or cultural issues.

Next we have Saul who became Paul. Miraculously converted on the road to Damascus! Three days later he is met by Ananias, *an unknown disciple* who laid hands on him so that he might not only regain his sight but also be filled with the Holy Spirit. Paul was **“filled with the Holy Spirit”** three days after his famous conversion. You can read the story in Acts 9:1-19.

Then we go on to chapter 10 when Peter reluctantly goes into a Gentile house – Cornelius’s house. Peter preached the gospel to the household. Verse 44 says; **“While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message.”** The Jewish Christians were amazed at this, hearing them speak in tongues & praising God. This account shows people can come to faith & be baptised in the Spirit at the same time. The most important thing to Pentecostals is not that baptism in the

Spirit is subsequent to new birth, but that it is distinct from. New birth gives life; baptism in the Spirit gives power for Christian living, mission, worship & ministry. It empowers us to be all round witnesses for Jesus.

Here is one more example from Acts 19. Paul meets twelve men who are described as disciples in verse 1. Listen to the story in verses 1-7;

“While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at

Do we receive everything at new birth? Certainly Cornelius’ story shows a person can be saved & filled with the Spirit the same day. But for Paul & those in Samaria & Ephesus things were different. They heard the gospel & believed it, but received the filling of the Spirit later.

Christians disagree about when a person is baptised with the Holy Spirit... Some believe it happens in new birth while Pentecostals view it is a distinct experience empowering believers for ministry. The weakness of the first view is that few can honestly say they knew what it was to be saturated in the presence of the Spirit when they first believed. The weakness of the second view is some Christians are still relying on an experience they had many years ago...

However the most important thing is not how we define the work of the Spirit theologically (although this is not unimportant)... The most important thing is that we experience his ongoing power in our lives in fresh & new ways. That we are immersed, filled, clothed in his presence & power over & over again. Samuel Chadwick wrote; *“Theology without experience is like faith without works: it is dead.”* My question today would simply be: Have you ever experienced what it’s like to be saturated in the Spirit of God,

Ephesus. There he found some disciples and asked them, ‘Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?’ They answered, ‘No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.’ So Paul asked, ‘Then what baptism did you receive?’ ‘John’s baptism,’ they replied. Paul said, ‘John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus.’ On hearing this, they were baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. There were about twelve men in all.”

to feel as though every part of you is filled with the presence of God? If you have: When was the last time the Spirit’s power was genuinely manifested in your life in such a way?

I’m very purposely doing this series in the order of New Birth, then empowerment & then sanctification because we need to understand something very important. The filling of the Spirit is not something we earn but something we desperately need! It is not something we’re given when we reach a certain level of holiness. There is no hint of that in any of the Scriptures looked at or mentioned today. The early church were not filled with the Spirit as a reward for doing great things for God, they were filled with the Spirit to enable them to do great things for God. Without the filling of the Spirit there are no great things done for God – that’s the book of Acts in a nutshell.

Spirit-baptism is a gift we're given to equip us for life, ministry & mission. It gives us freedom, confidence & boldness to do what God has called us to do. So this is really not about levels of Christianity... this is about our desperate need & ongoing reliance on the Spirit of God filling us.

In the book of Acts the filling of the Spirit was not a reward for being holy. It was a gift given to empower weak & ordinary people to live lives they otherwise would not have lived. That's what we're talking about. The gift was given before they done anything! The gift enabled them to do what they did! So this teaching is not about making Christians feel inadequate who haven't had a certain experience because they haven't reached a certain milestone of... Rather it is to help us all see that the Holy Spirit has come to make us adequate for everything God calls us to. There is fresh power from on high for you & you do not have to reach a certain level of anything to qualify for it... Isn't this good news? David Legg says;

*"Being filled with the Spirit is not being holy enough. Some people have taught down through the years that you need to get holy, you need to stop doing this, you need to start doing that; you need to sanctify yourself, almost, and then the Holy Ghost will come upon you. **If you were able to do all those things, you wouldn't need the Holy Spirit!** Eh? I've said to you already, and I will say it many times: the whole Christian operation is a by grace, through faith exercise. God gives it all by gratuitous grace through the merits of the shed blood and the resurrection of His Son, it's all because of Jesus - and the only way we get any blessing or benefits of it is receiving it by faith. Grace is the hand of God that gives it; and faith is our hand that receives it. The fullness of the Spirit, or whatever you want to call it, baptism of the Spirit, is exactly the same."*

Also being filled with the Spirit is not a once off experience. It wasn't in the book of Acts. All of us can ask God for a fresh baptism or filling with the Spirit & we need to. It's not a case of I've been there got the T-shirt. There is more & we need more. There are times in life when energy is running low, when our courage, confidence & vision are almost gone. When fear or discouragement etc threaten to get the better of us! In such times a fresh baptism or filling or whatever you want to call it is the answer needed. The Holy Spirit can energise us again; he can encourage & embolden us again; he can fill us with fresh confidence, vision & power. It's not a case of us pulling ourselves up by the bootstraps; it's a case of us being filled again & again with the Spirit of the living God. The Christian life is impossible, from start to finish, without the Holy Spirit.

"We need more of the presence of the Holy Spirit—more in the pulpit and more in the congregation—more in the pastoral visit, and more in the school. Where He is, there will be life, health, growth, and fruitfulness. Where He is not—all will be dead, tame, formal, sleepy, and cold. Then let everyone who desires to see an increase of pure and undefiled religion, pray daily for more of the presence of the Holy Spirit." – J. C. Ryle

"Christ, the great bearer of the Spirit, is also the great "baptizer" in the Spirit so that others will receive the Spirit & thus bear witness to Christ. It is therefore not surprising that at every turn, the Spirit is the driving force behind the forward movement of the gospel." - Gordon Fee

We are called to be a Spirit-dependant, Spirit-led, Spirit-driven, Spirit-filled people. Without him we have nothing to offer anyone & we do not know

where to go from here... Like the disciples in the
upper room...