

## **The Holy Spirit 2017 Part 7**

We have spent the past few weeks talking about the person and the work of the Holy Spirit. In a couple of the early messages in this series I asked a question similar to this: **Given what we know about the Holy Spirit, are you reluctant to open your life to Him?** I hope, given all we have said about who he is and what he desires to do, that you are more open than ever to allowing the Holy Spirit to work in and produce his fruit in your life.

Today I want to talk about the Holy Spirit's role in igniting spiritual power in the life of the believer. Specifically, we are going to talk about the value of the experience we call the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Let me begin by making a distinction. We are talking about an experience, an event, distinct from our salvation experience. We have made this point numerous times, but when you are born again through faith in the atoning work of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit takes up residence in your life. Every born again believer has the Holy Spirit dwelling in their life. But there is an experience with the Holy Spirit that Jesus spoke of, a baptism in the Holy Spirit that brings about spiritual empowerment and boldness, that is separate and distinct from the Holy Spirit's entrance into your life at salvation. We call this experience the baptism in the Holy Spirit. You may hear us talk about being baptized "with" the Holy Spirit or "in" the Holy Spirit or being "filled with the Spirit" or being "empowered by the Spirit". All these terms speak of the same experience. Let's look a little deeper at the term baptism in the Holy Spirit.

We are all familiar with the term baptism. What happens at a baptism? We immerse someone in water. To experience baptism, there must be someone to administer the baptism, there must be an element into which you are being baptized and there must be the person who is being baptized. The theological terms are the celebrant, the element and the communicant.

**The celebrant is the one administering the baptism.**

**The element is that into which you are baptized.**

**The communicant is the one being baptized.** Finally, there is

**The effect, the result of baptism.**

When we think of baptism, we usually think of water baptism, but the bible speaks of two other baptisms that are important to us. When we are born again, Paul tells us, **"We were all baptized by one Spirit into one body."** 1 Corinthians 12:13. In salvation, using the terms we just mentioned, the celebrant, the one doing the baptizing, is the Holy Spirit. The element into which we are baptized is the Body of Christ. We are made one with Christ in his body, the

church. The communicant is us, the believer. The change, the result of this spiritual baptism: we have life in Christ. We are part of his body. Redemption, spiritual transformation takes place.

That's one baptism, then, as a born again believer, Jesus taught us to submit to water baptism. Symbolically in water baptism we are buried with Christ and we rise from the water to live a new, resurrected life. In water baptism, the celebrant is the pastor. The element is the water and the communicant is the one being immersed in the water. The effect, the result in a physical sense in this baptism, the person is changed from being dry to being wet and we publicly profess our faith and our new life in Christ.

The third baptism in the New Testament is the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Remember John the Baptist said, **“I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I...He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.”** **Matthew 3:11.** In this baptism, Jesus is the celebrant, the one doing the baptizing. The element into which we are being baptized is the Holy Spirit. The communicant is the born again believer. Jesus baptizes us into or with the Holy Spirit.

Jesus said to his disciples just before he ascended into heaven, **“Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with [in] the Holy Spirit.”** **Acts 1:4-5** The disciples had heard him speak about this in Luke 24:49 when he told them “I am going to send you what my Father has promised...stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.” The baptism in the Holy Spirit is the fulfillment of a promise from the Father and from the Son. Why should you want this experience? In part because it's the fulfillment of His promise. It's an experience Jesus wants you to have.

We said the element into which you are baptized effects or results in change. At salvation, as the Spirit baptizes us into the body of Christ, we are changed from spiritual death to life. In water baptism we are changed from dry to wet. What effect does the baptism in the Holy Spirit have on us? What changes can we expect? There are many, but this morning I want to focus on two things we can expect collectively, as the church. The primary effect stated in the Scripture: **The Baptism in the Holy Spirit empowers the church.** Jesus said...

**“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.”** **Acts**

**1:8** Specifically, the baptism in the Holy Spirit gives us power to be His witness. **It's not just power to witness, to tell his story, it's power to BE his witness, to live His story!**

The results of this spiritual power to witness are immediate in the book of Acts. On the Day of Pentecost, this frightened band of disciples move from hiding behind locked doors to standing in the marketplace and boldly, publicly proclaiming the death and resurrection of Jesus, proclaiming Him Messiah and risen Lord! Daily they were in the temple testifying to what Jesus had done and who he was. Threatened, intimidated, beaten, jailed, they only grew bolder by the Holy Spirit's power. In jail they sang and witnessed to the jailers. Signs and wonders followed their ministry as the Holy Spirit empowered them to take this message everywhere. It was boldness and power to be witnesses – with their lives, their words, their choices, their refusal to retaliate when attacked, their willingness to love, to sacrifice, to serve!

We live in a world impressed with power - power to intimidate, to control, to get or take what we want, to enslave. But Jesus wants to empower us to serve, to love, to announce good news. The Holy Spirit's power is power not to enslave but to liberate and set free. His power breaks the shackles and chains of bondage. His power enables us to stand against the gates of hell. His power enables us to choose to do what is right, regardless of the price or the cost. The church needs a fresh baptism of this kind of power because we have some hard and difficult choices ahead. "O God, baptize your church in the Holy Spirit and give us that life changing power to be witnesses of Jesus to our world." The second change the Spirit produces:

**The baptism in the Holy Spirit gives the church a greater vision of our purpose and calling.** Something extraordinary happened after the baptism in the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Jews from everywhere had come to Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost. Acts 2 records Jews and converts to Judaism from 15 nations or regions of the world. The disciples realize the message of Jesus was even for Jews living outside of Israel, living in pagan territories, less devout, even converts. It even went beyond that. In his sermon on the day of Pentecost, Peter quoted from the prophet Joel, explaining that what they were seeing and hearing was a fulfillment of prophecy and that God was pouring his Spirit out on all people, sons and daughters, men and women, old and young! Walls of gender and age were coming down. But that wasn't all. In Acts 8, Philip went to a city in Samaria and preached Christ there. The Samaritans you recall were despised by the Jews. But Jesus said after they were baptized in the Spirit they would be witnesses in Samaria and to the ends of the earth. Maybe they didn't

believe he meant that literally, but the Samaritans received the gospel and **“When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. When they arrived, they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit.”** Acts 8:14-15. Barriers were coming down. The Holy Spirit was expanding and enlarging the vision of the church. No one was beyond the reach of God’s saving grace if the church would be willing to go and share the message. Even despised Samaritans, but that was just the beginning.

In Acts 10, the Lord tells Peter to go to Ceasarea, to the house of a Roman soldier, a Gentile named Cornelius, a God fearing man, hungry to know the truth. Peter came into the home of a Gentile for the first time in his life! The baptism in the Holy Spirit was producing change in Peter, breaking down his prejudice. Peter told Cornelius “everyone who believes in Jesus will receive forgiveness of sins through his name.” Cornelius and his household believed and were saved and while Peter was still preaching, “The Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message...” **The Jewish believers that had come with Peter “were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God.”** Acts 10:45-46. It was this experience, the baptism in the Holy Spirit with the initial physical evidence of speaking in other tongues that convinced Peter that God’s plan and purpose for the church was much greater than he imagined. It was for men and women, young and old, Jews and Samaritans and now even for Gentiles! Pagans like Cornelius.

Peter returned to Jerusalem to explain his actions to the leaders of the church because they heard he had gone into the home of a Gentile. That was a scandal, but Peter explained they had believed in Jesus and upon believing had been baptized in the Holy Spirit. How did he know? Peter said, “God gave them the same gift he gave to us. He baptized them in the Holy Spirit.” He knew because they were speaking in other tongues and praising God. Hearing this the leaders of the church in Jerusalem said, **“So then, God has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life.”** Acts 11:18

The baptism in the Holy Spirit empowers the church to reach beyond itself to touch the whole world, just as Jesus said. The baptism in the Holy Spirit has always empowered the church, motivating and moving believers out of their comfort zone, beyond our private world. Peter protested at first, (I can’t go to the house of a Gentile!) The leaders of the Jerusalem church protested as well but then realized God had granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life. The Holy Spirit took them beyond their prejudice so they could reach men and women,

Jews, Samaritans, Gentiles, people from every race and color and background. The Holy Spirit is still trying to do that – not only to reach others but to unite us as one in the body of Christ!

You may not know, but in some ways we trace the beginning of the modern Pentecostal movement and church to the Azusa Street revival in Los Angeles at the beginning of the last century. The spiritual outpouring that occurred there would eventually lead to the founding of the Assemblies of God and other Pentecostal denominations, worldwide numbering 650 million. You may or may not know that revival was led by Rev. William Seymour, an African-American, the son of freed slaves! Racial lines were ignored as hungry people came to Jesus and were baptized in the Holy Spirit. Gary McGee, a Pentecostal historian wrote, **“The unique interracial and intercultural dynamics at Azusa... accented both holiness of character and power to witness in an unusual demonstration of love and equality in the body of Christ.” ... Gary McGee** The Holy Spirit united people from different races and different denominations and empowered them to take the gospel to the world! To be witnesses. It didn't matter if you were black or white, Asian or Hispanic, rich or poor, male or female, the message was “get full of the Holy Spirit and let's win the world!” That was the power of Pentecost. Sadly, as the Pentecostal message spread across the nation, racism and prejudice in America brought division and hindered what the Holy Spirit was trying to do. Churches divided along racial lines but thank God that is changing. I mentioned already on the day of Pentecost, Peter quoted the prophet Joel, “In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people.” Acts 2:16. You know what all people means in the original language? All people. All races, all colors, all God's children coming together in the power and anointing of the Holy Spirit to get the job done!

We've seen racism brought to the forefront of the news again in our nation. I think the Pentecostal church ought to be leading the way in racial reconciliation because we have been empowered by the Holy Spirit, baptized in the Holy Spirit and granted a new vision of what the church of Jesus Christ is supposed to be and how we are supposed to look and how we are supposed to act. I can't imagine I need to say it, but in case someone needs to hear it, there is no place, NO PLACE, for racial prejudice and bigotry and hatred in the church of Jesus Christ!

The baptism in the Holy Spirit will empower us to be bold in our witness. The baptism will give us a new vision and understanding of our purpose and calling. God is going to need a church, empowered by the Holy Spirit, willing to speak with a clear, prophetic voice to our nation, to our culture, to our leaders. He is going to need a church, empowered by the Holy

Spirit with the courage to speak to power and issue a call for holiness and integrity and repentance. He is going to need a Spirit filled, Spirit empowered church that won't back down from biblical truth.

The New Testament church, empowered by the baptism in the Holy Spirit spoke truth to the world, regardless of the cost and it was said of the believers when they came to Thessalonica, preaching the gospel, **“Those who have turned the world upside down have come here also.”**

**Acts 17:6**

O God, baptize us in the Holy Spirit, empower us and embolden us so we can turn the world upside down, or right side up, for the kingdom and the cause of Christ! Jesus, pour your Spirit upon us so we can boldly tell your story and live your story before the world. Baptize us in the Holy Spirit as a church so we will once again see beyond ourselves and see the needs of a lost and dying world, so all can hear and all can be saved. Fill us with your Spirit so we will go beyond our prejudices, our preferences, our comfort zone in order to reach our world.