

## The Holy Spirit 2017 Part 8

We spoke last Sunday about the importance and the benefit of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit for the church. This morning I want to talk about the importance and benefit of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit for the individual believer.

Jesus told the disciples to wait in Jerusalem for this experience, that they would receive power through this experience to be his witnesses. We said last week that Jesus spoke of the baptism in the Holy Spirit as a gift from the Father that had been promised to the disciples and to all of us. If he has a gift for us, I want to receive that gift, don't you?

My best recollection is that I was about nine years old when I was baptized in the Holy Spirit. I wanted everything Jesus had for me. At nine I can't say I understood everything about this anymore than I can say I understand it all at 62. What I can say is this experience, the baptism in the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in other tongues has made a huge difference in my spiritual life. I couldn't begin to estimate the significance and importance of this experience in my life.

The gospel writers testified that Jesus would baptize us in the Holy Spirit. Jesus himself promised that to the disciples in Acts 1. Then, on the Day of Pentecost as they were baptized in the Holy Spirit, the bible says, **“They were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.” Acts 2:4** Filled up and baptized in the Holy Spirit. The bible seems to give us a couple of images. Which is it? Baptized or filled with? I don't want us to become pre-occupied with the terminology because I think it is an attempt to give us a sense of a thoroughly overwhelming experience. We are baptized in the Holy Spirit and at the same time we are filled with the Holy Spirit. Think of a pitcher being immersed in water. You could say it was baptized in water but at the same time it is being filled with water. The effect is both inside and outside. There is something happening outwardly and inwardly, physically as we begin to speak in other tongues and spiritually as the Spirit prays through us. “Baptized in the Holy Spirit, baptized with the Holy Spirit, receiving the baptism, filled with the Spirit, receiving the prayer language of the Spirit,” there are a variety of ways to talk about the experience and the immediate physical evidence, but it is all referring to a power encounter with God the Holy Spirit!

I remember it was at the close of a Sunday morning service at First Assembly of God in Muskogee where we attended. I was praying at the altar. Most everyone was gone except for

my parents and a couple of ladies that worked with children in our church. The pastor was there somewhere. The ladies were kneeling and praying with me along with my parents. We used to call this “praying through to the baptism in the Holy Spirit.” On reflection, it might be a pretty accurate term. You pray through the hesitation, the uncertainties of “Is this me or the Holy Spirit? Will Jesus give me this experience? How do I step out in faith and receive this gift the Father promised?” It was well after noon, praying, when I began to speak in other tongues as the Holy Spirit welled up inside of me. There was a joy that accompanied this, a realization of God’s presence in a different way. There was an emotional aspect to all of this as well as God’s Spirit just flooded my life, my being. This Spirit baptism and the accompanying spiritual language, speaking in other tongues, has made a difference in my life. I believe this experience is a doorway to more of what God has for each one of us. Let me share some benefits I believe come from being baptized in the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in other tongues. At least, this has been my experience and I believe the experience of countless others.

**The baptism in the Holy Spirit makes Jesus and His word come alive in your heart.**

The baptism brings what I would call a deeper intimacy with Jesus, a heightened awareness of His presence, a greater awareness of the significance of our relationship. Jesus became more important, more at the center of my life as a result of the baptism in the Holy Spirit! I believe it is one of the things that sets Pentecostals like us apart. The baptism in the Holy Spirit makes Jesus come alive. We aren’t just focused on what Jesus did in the bible. We are focused on what he is still doing by his Spirit! By his Holy Spirit he is still speaking to his church, to his people. He is still at work in our lives in a personal way, a personal dimension. He is still healing and encouraging and delivering. He is still guiding and directing our daily lives, our daily steps.

I can remember walking to my elementary school in Muskogee, praying in the Spirit, speaking in tongues as I walked to school and wondering if that was weird. “Am I the only kid in the world praying in tongues as I walk to school? Is there anything wrong about this?” But what I knew was that Jesus was with me as I walked to school and as I walked in the doors of the school and into my class room. He was with me, guiding me, comforting and encouraging me, each and every day. This was part of that greater intimacy I had with Jesus as a result of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. We sing the hymn that says “And He walks with me and he talks with me and he tells me I am his own.” That was amplified in my life by the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Jesus said, **“But I tell you the truth; It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you...when he, the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you.”** John 16:7, 13.

As a result of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, it was like Jesus became more than the character in the stories I read in the bible, he became the living Lord of my life. I could sense his presence, his involvement in my life in a way and a dimension I hadn't known before. The baptism in the Holy Spirit enhanced every aspect of my relationship with Jesus. He became closer, ever present, the focus of my love, my worship, my attention, my prayer. As Jesus said, the Holy Spirit brought glory to Jesus, revealed Jesus in a greater fashion to me and spoke in my heart the things Jesus wanted me to know, guiding me into the truth of His word and his will.

I said, the baptism in the Holy Spirit not only makes Jesus come alive in your heart, but the experience makes the Word of God come alive. Eugene Petersen's paraphrase of John 16:13, in The Message bible reads, **“He won't draw attention to himself, but will make sense out of what is about to happen and indeed, out of all that I have done and said.”** John 16:13. The Holy Spirit makes sense out of the word of God. He makes God's word come alive and He helps us apply God's word to our hearts, our circumstances, our everyday lives.

It's one thing to read the bible like a piece of literature, it's another to read it with the insight given by the Holy Spirit. The bible becomes a guide for our life as the Holy Spirit gives us understanding. The Apostle Paul wrote, **“In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us.”** 1 Corinthians 2:11-12 The baptism in the Holy Spirit helps us understand all that God has for us and has given us through Jesus Christ. We have the Holy Spirit teaching us, enlightening us. Paul goes on to say **“The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.”** 1 Corinthians 2:14 The baptism in the Holy Spirit opens your mind and spirit to discern the things of God as never before. There is new spiritual understanding that can come as a result of the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Pastor Jack Hayford, in his book *The Beauty of Spiritual Language* writes, “I’ve rarely met a person who entered the realm of exercising spiritual language [his term for speaking in other tongues] but that either or both of these matters are soon brought up, usually in words like these: ‘Since I opened to this dimension of the Holy Spirit’s work in my life, Jesus has become so much more precious to me; worshiping God has become so much more vital.’ Or, ‘I don’t know how to explain it, but since I received my spiritual language, the Bible has opened up with a new clarity and depth to my understanding. I can’t get enough of it – I love the word of God.’ Exactly how speaking with other tongues enhances the matter of understanding the Scriptures or loving Jesus Christ is probably a matter of speculation. But it is clear that both the bible and God’s Son are central to the Holy Spirit’s program. He breathed the Bible into existence and He glorifies Christ at every opportunity. So it’s not surprising that (as a person who speaks in tongues) I am a Bible centered, Christ-centered person.”

The baptism in the Holy Spirit increases our intimacy with Jesus and our understanding of his word. In addition, **The baptism in the Holy Spirit brings benefit to our prayer life.** The baptism in the Holy Spirit will revolutionize your prayer life as you pray in the language of the Spirit as well as praying in English. We refer to speaking in tongues as the initial physical evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. While baptism in the Spirit, being filled with and empowered by the Spirit is the gift the Father promised and Jesus spoke about, I believe speaking in tongues itself is very much a part of that gift. It is not the gift alone, it is evidence of having received the gift but speaking in tongues is itself beneficial to our spiritual life.

We quoted Jack Hayford who refers to speaking in tongues as “spiritual language.” Some refer to it as the prayer language of the Spirit. Why? Because Paul writes, **“For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God. Indeed, no one understands him; he utters mysteries with his spirit.” 1 Corinthians 14:2** If you are speaking in tongues you are speaking to God. That’s what prayer is. Paul writes, **“For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind.” 1 Corinthians 14: 14-15** We pray in tongues, in a spiritual language. But if Paul says my mind is unfruitful, is there benefit? Paul says, **“He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself...” 1 Corinthians 14:4.** Yes it is beneficial to us. Our faith is built up. Intercession is made according to God’s word and God’s will. We are praying in agreement with God’s Holy Spirit. Jude encourages us, **“But you beloved, building yourselves up on your**

**most holy faith; praying in the Holy Spirit.” Jude 20.** There is spiritual benefit to praying in tongues, praying in the Spirit.

I believe praying in tongues provides an entirely new language with which to worship and magnify Jesus. There have been times when I have been lost in worship and so overwhelmed by the presence of the Lord I just haven't had the words to say, to tell the Lord how thankful I am, how much I love him. But then, by the language of the Holy Spirit, it seems my spirit is able to worship and give glory and honor to Jesus in words that I don't know, words I haven't learned but words that must be pleasing to him.

Perhaps you've been in conversation with someone who speaks another language and they've said something to the effect, "There is a beautiful phrase in my language but it doesn't translate into English" or "we have a word for it in my language that expresses this thought so much clearer or richer." I think that must be what happens as we pray in the Spirit. I don't have the word for what I want to tell Jesus, but there is a word in this heavenly language that is most appropriate for such a heavenly truth!

It's not only in times of worship and adoration that the Holy Spirit prays through us, but also in times of intercession. Paul writes, **“In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.” Romans 8:26-27**

There are times we don't know how to pray or what we should be praying for. We aren't certain about the direction or the will of God but the Holy Spirit knows the mind of God. He knows the will of God and he will pray through us. There are other times when the burden is so heavy, when grief or pain is overwhelming, when we are so weak, we can't seem to find the words or even form the words, but the Holy Spirit prays through us. Paul said it is with groans that words cannot express. He is saying that from somewhere deep within us, beyond the place of our own language, comes the spiritual language of the Holy Spirit who intercedes for us and in our behalf. Oral Roberts used to say that speaking in other tongues was our spirit, now touched by the Holy Spirit, bypassing the intellect and speaking directly to God, spirit to Spirit as it were. He knows what to pray when we don't.

I heard a former classmate from Seminary speaking about a position he found himself in. The Lord had opened an opportunity of ministry for him that he had not expected and he said he hadn't really desired it or thought about it. He asked, "Lord, why have you placed me in this position" and he said he felt the Lord tell him, "this is in answer to your prayers." He said I haven't been praying about this and he said the Lord said, "every time you prayed in the Spirit, this is what you were praying about." I had never heard anyone say this, but Paul says we are speaking mysteries in the Spirit. Perhaps we are praying at times for things we haven't seen yet, things we don't even know to pray about, but God knows. The Spirit is making intercession for us according to the will of God for our lives. It is just one more of the benefits that come from the baptism in the Holy Spirit and the prayer language of the Spirit. There is so much more. The baptism in the Holy Spirit opens the door to gifts of the Spirit operating in our life, signs and wonders, manifestations of power like healing and prophetic utterance, words of wisdom and knowledge and discernment. We could go on if we had the time.

Let me emphasize again, the baptism in the Holy Spirit is a promised gift from the Father. Jesus told the disciples this experience was of such importance to them that he didn't want them to leave the city until they had received this gift of spiritual power. If the Father wants us to have this gift, and if this gift produces the benefits we've talked about, then I hope you will want to ask Jesus to baptize you in the Holy Spirit today.

Jesus said he would give the Holy Spirit to those who ask. Let's ask Jesus to baptize us in the Holy Spirit. "I believe this experience is real and is meant for me. I ask you to baptize me in the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in other tongues as your Spirit gives me the words. I open my life to you and to the fullness of your Spirit. In Jesus name."

Begin to thank Him and praise him. Tongues is about praising the Lord and honoring him, so honor the Lord with your praise. But understand you won't be able to speak English and speak in tongues at the same time. You'll eventually have to allow English to give way to the Spirit's language and prayer and worship. You may feel or sense the presence of the Lord. Don't be afraid. You may hear or feel in your mind and spirit a word, a sound, a syllable. Don't be afraid to speak out what the Lord is giving you to speak. Just surrender yourself, including your voice and your language to the Lord and allow him to speak through you. Let's begin to worship the Lord together and ask for the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Ask Him for this spiritual gift.