

GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT #2: THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Paula was raised in a Christian home where church attendance was commonplace. But it wasn’t until she was eleven years old that she began to take a serious interest in who Jesus is. That summer she attended a church camp and for the very first time she consciously repented her sins and put her faith in Jesus as her only hope for eternal life. It was a wonderful experience that brought both joy and a sense of relief. She never doubted from that moment on that she was a child of God.

The next few years proved difficult for Paula. School was hard work. Her grades were average at best, and she had few friends. When she turned sixteen Paula was invited to an overnight party where she took her first drink of beer. She won instant acceptance with a small group of classmates who before would hardly give her the time of day. She soon discovered that if she joined in on whatever they were doing, they included and affirmed her. Her heart was often troubled as she recognised how her behaviour was contrary to what she had been taught in church, but the fear of rejection was too powerful to overcome.

It wasn’t until Paula was in her second year of college that things began to change. She accepted the invitation of a friend to attend a Bible-study that met each Wednesday night. It was here that she began to awaken to how far she had wandered from the Lord. She was broken-hearted and grieved that she had lived in such indifference to the Lord’s faithful appeal that she returns to her first love.

One Wednesday night she asked that some of the girls in her Bible study group would pray for her. Paula knew that they believed in spiritual gifts, but the church she grew up in had always warned against such things. As they laid hands on her, Paula cried out to Jesus to forgive her for those many years of spiritual apathy. One of the girls praying for Paula then said, “Oh, Lord Jesus, we ask that you pour out your Spirit on Paula and empower her to live and witness for you as she never has before.”

Suddenly Paula felt a strange warmth envelop her like a blanket. She sensed what she later described as a geyser erupting from deep within her soul. Not really knowing what was happening, she then began to cry out to Jesus her praise and gratitude. The unfamiliarity of her experience was exceeded only by the joy and peace that it brought. From that day to the present, Paula has sought by God’s grace to live passionately for the Son of God.

What happened to Paula? Was she baptized in the Holy Spirit? Was she filled with the Holy Spirit? Was she anointed with the Holy Spirit? At the end of the day Paula is just happy it happened!

The Apostle Paul statement in 1 Corinthians 12:13 is the principal text for this topic. ¹² **Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts forms one body, so it is with Christ.** ¹³ **For we were all baptised by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. 1 Corinthians 12: 12-13.** So, the spirit enters your life at conversion. We receive one baptism that unites us all.

Firstly, Paul longed to Experience the Holy Spirit. This is most definitely an experience we should all long for. It is possible to believe in Jesus Christ and believe the right things and

behave in a manner that glorifies God and yet fail to experience anything. Sometimes this experience is nice and neat and tidy and sometimes it isn’t.

Secondly, we receive the Holy Spirit at Conversion. Theologians get a little tongue tied over the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. When we confess our sins and ask Jesus into our lives the Holy Spirit takes up residence. To be a Christian is to have the Holy Spirit in your life. It’s often the work of the Spirit that leads someone to Christ with some help from a believer. He prompts us and guides us in our new life. Helps us read and understand the Bible, encourages us to pray, leads us as we join with other Christians in the church and much, much more.

Also, we are empowered by the Holy Spirit. Let’s look at Luke quoting Jesus. ⁴ **On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. ⁵ For John baptised with water, but in a few days, you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” Acts 1: 4-5.**

Luke is quoting John the Baptist. ¹⁶ **John answered them all, “I baptise you with water. But one who is more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire. Luke 3:16.**

Now I don’t think that Jesus meant his disciples will be converted from unbelief to belief in this baptism. I think that Luke sees the Apostles as genuine born-again believers before this promised baptism happened to them. In fact, Luke ends his Gospel with a description of the Apostles before the experience that they are supposed to wait for the Baptism of the Spirit. ⁵² **Then they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. ⁵³ And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God. Luke 24: 52-53.**

Here, the Apostles are worshipping Jesus. They have great joy. They are blessing God through Jesus in the Temple. These are not unbelievers waiting to be born again by the arrival of the Holy Spirit. So, what does Jesus mean in Acts 1:5 and Luke 3? I think that when he says you will be baptised in the Holy Spirit, it means you will receive extraordinary and supernatural power for ministry in the name of Jesus Christ. It is also a doorway to the discovering the gifts of The Holy Spirit and what gifts he might give you.

Now, that experience may come in an unusual, decisive experience after conversion. It might be a day, a week, a year or a minute after you are born again. It may even come at the very moment of your conversion or during your water baptism.

However, there are also multiple, subsequent experiences of the Spirit’s activity. After conversion the Spirit may yet “come” with varying degrees of intensity, wherein the Christian is “overwhelmed”, “empowered”, “anointed”, or in some sense “gifted”. This “release” of new power, this “manifestation” of the Spirit’s intimate presence, is most likely to be identified with what the New Testament calls the “filling” of the Spirit. These blessings come throughout our lifetime.

I think it would be a mistake to limit baptism in, by, or with the Holy Spirit to a single second event after conversion. Even though you might experience one, that doesn’t mean it’s the normative way that this baptism is to be understood. I think the kind of filling and empowering

that we receive in such experiences are needed again and again and again in our Christian lives. They are not the same in every season of Christian life. I say all the time, “Oh, Holy Spirit fill me afresh. I need a fresh anointing. I need a fresh filling. I need a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit”.

When it comes to the Holy Spirit - there is always more to come! The New Testament endorses and encourages multiple, subsequent experiences of the Spirit’s power and presence. Among the texts that should encourage us to expect post-conversion encounters with and experiences of the Holy Spirit are; ⁵ **And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us. Rom. 5:5.** ¹⁸ **Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit,** ¹⁹ **speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, Ephesians 5:18-19.**

Many passages in Acts that speak of believers being “filled” with the Spirit for ministry and life. The Spirit who was once given and now indwells each believer is continually “given” to enhance and intensify our relationship with Christ and to empower our efforts in ministry. It is of course the fulfilment of the promise in the book of Joel, ²⁸ **“And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions.** ²⁹ **Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days. Joel 2: 28-29.**

Now, there are biblical texts which describe people as being “full of the Holy Spirit” as if it were a condition or consistent quality of Christian character; a moral disposition; possessing and reflecting a maturity in Christ; ⁵ **This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. Acts 6: 3-5;** ²⁴ **He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord. Acts 11: 24.**

This is the ideal condition of every Christian. It emphasizes the abiding state of being filled. Second, there are also texts which describe people as being “filled with the Holy Spirit” to enable them to fulfil or perform a special task or to equip them for service or life-long ministry.

¹⁷ **Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” Acts 9:17.**

On certain occasions, perhaps a spiritual emergency of sorts, a person may be “filled” with an immediate and special endowment of power for an especially important and urgent task. Thus, someone who is already filled with the Holy Spirit may experience an additional filling. Of course, no matter how much of the Holy Spirit one may have, there’s always room for more!

⁸ **Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: “Rulers and elders of the people! Acts 4:8.**

³¹ **After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly. Acts 4:31**

⁸ But Elymas the sorcerer (for that is what his name means) opposed them and tried to turn the proconsul from the faith. ⁹ Then Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked straight at Elymas and said, ¹⁰ “You are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right! You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. Will you never stop perverting the right ways of the Lord? ¹¹ Now the hand of the Lord is against you. You are going to be blind for a time, not even able to see the light of the sun.” Immediately mist and darkness came over him, and he groped about, seeking someone to lead him by the hand. ¹² When the proconsul saw what had happened, he believed, for he was amazed at the teaching about the Lord. Acts 13: 8-12.

If the goal is to be continually filled with the Holy Spirit, is it possible to be empty? No, the spirit is always with us, but it is possible to have a diminished experience of the spirit in your life. We are constantly in a spiritual battle. A battle for our very spiritual lives. We face opposition from three main areas, the world, the flesh and specific satanic spiritual attack.

The flesh: **¹⁶ So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. Galatians 5: 16-17**

The world: **¹⁸ “If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. John 15:18.**

²⁶ What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? Matthew 16:26.

Satanic Influence: **¹⁵ My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. John 17: 15. ¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life and have it to the full. John 10:10.**

There is much, more that the spirit wants to do in your life. Firstly, you must allow the spirit to have more control, more say in your life. The Apostle Paul said this, **Follow the way of love and eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit, especially prophecy. 1 Corinthians 14:1.**

Maybe you feel like Paul this morning. You know and love Jesus but there is a sense that something is holding you back, missing in your Christian life. You need to be baptised or filled with the spirit. As the worship team comes, please make your way to the front and we can pray for this love of the Holy Spirit to be released in your life.

Many here have received the filling or Baptism of the Holy Spirit. I have some questions for you. What gifts has God given you? How are you using them? Will you allow God to stretch you in new ways, new acts of service or give you new courage to share your faith. Maybe the activity of the Holy Spirit has become a little diminished in your life. It doesn’t have to be that way. Come Holy Spirit. Amen.