



The Promise of the Spirit:
A Reformed View

by Peter Garner

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This electronic edition: 2012

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INTRODUCTION

It has been said that the Charismatic Movement must be reckoned with, and that we “*dare not ignore the modern claims to miracle working*”. Books appear from time to time against “tongue speaking” and aiming to examine and expose the errors of what is termed “Neo-Pentecostalism”.

It is, however, my contention that what is being ignored, and not being reckoned with, is a silent minority of Christians, some of whom hold to the Reformed faith, who do not wish to be called “Neo-Pentecostals” or “Charismatics”, but simply wish to be truly Biblical and Reformed. They believe reformation has not ceased, but is still going on and must go on until the Church conforms in doctrine, practice and experience to that of the New Testament.

They are saddened by the impression given by those who speak against the baptism in the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit, that all who hold to such doctrines are somewhat suspect in their doctrine of the Scripture, and rather gullible in their acceptance of experiences.

I am one of those who delights in the doctrines of grace as understood by our Evangelical forefathers, the Reformers and the Puritans, but who believes that there is a sound Biblical doctrine of the baptism in the Holy Spirit to which some of them bore witness. I also believe that the gifts of the Spirit, far from being the ravings of fanatical experience-seekers, are an integral part of that ministry of mutual edification which lies at the heart of the Apostle Paul’s doctrine of the body of Christ.

I believe that these views must be reckoned with. One reason these views are often ignored is because they have never been set forth except by those who are usually

labeled “Neo-Pentecostals”. Though some of the literature produced by these writers is extremely helpful, one cannot always accept all the conclusions, particularly the over emphasis upon tongues.

Let me hasten to add that the views expressed are my own, though I believe they will find acceptance among a surprising number of believers.

THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF THE BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

Quite recently there has arisen within the major denominations a new interest in the Biblical doctrine of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, and the exercise of spiritual gifts. Is such a doctrine and such an experience taught in the Scriptures? Let us be quite clear on this point: unless this is taught and promised in Scripture we may not accept the doctrine or seek the experience, no matter how wonderful it may appear, no matter what astounding claims may be made. However, we may find ourselves challenged to consider and even accept new truth. It may well be that our old established views on the doctrine and experience of the Holy Spirit will be challenged. Let us not reject out of hand that which claims to have Scriptural authority. Let us bring all our view under the judgment of the Word of truth. I would plead especially with those with strong Reformed Evangelical convictions to remember the words of Robinson the Pilgrim Father,

“I charge you that you follow me no farther than you have seen me follow the Lord Jesus Christ... I am verily persuaded, the Lord has more Truth yet to break forth out of His Holy Word. For my part, I cannot sufficiently bewail the condition of the Reformed Churches, who are come to a period in Religion and will go at present no farther

than the Instrument of their Reformation. The Lutheran can't be drawn to go beyond what Luther saw... and the Calvinists, you see, stick fast where they were left by that great man of God, who yet saw not all things... I beseech you, remember 'tis an Article of your Church Covenant, that you be ready to receive whatever Truth shall be made known to you from the written Word of God... It is not possible the Christian World should come so lately out of such thick Antichristian Darkness, and that perfection of Knowledge should break forth at once."

I am well aware that these words are often quoted by those who have no real sympathy with the Reformed faith, and who seek by these words to leave room for the errors of a Bible-rejecting modernism. Suffice it to say that all such misrepresentation is far from my mind; Robinson's plea was for truth out of God's Word, not apart from God's Word.

No doubt that the majority of Evangelicals will accept his sentiments, but it is all too easy to hold at the same time in the mind, certain reservations which safeguard us from launching out into unknown areas of Biblical truth. Resolve in your mind to accept only that which you see to be taught in the Scriptures and reject only that which you see is contrary to them. Above all let us all exercise charity in regard to matters over which we may differ.

THE FACT OF THE EXPERIENCE

Do the Scriptures teach a definite second experience of the Holy Spirit, distinguishable from the new birth, and promised to all believers without exception? I emphasize the words "definite" and "second" in order to make it clear

that we are not thinking merely of the many and varied experiences which God in His grace grants to His children from time to time. I emphasize the universal offer of this to believers to indicate that this is not something which is confined to “special” men of God – though I do not deny of course that some eminent Men of God have had experiences of God which we may not have had and perhaps may not expect to have.

1. THE OLD TESTAMENT

Most if not all the doctrines of the Bible have their roots in the Old Testament. It is so with this one. Admittedly it is not fully seen, but it is there for all that seek it.

EXODUS

The first reference we have to being “filled” with the Spirit in any sense at all occurs here in this second book of the Bible. In passing, it is interesting and instructive to observe that this book contains the account of God’s great act of redemption, and that this first reference occurs after that great event. As we shall see when we come to the New Testament this is a post-redemption blessing, only made possible in its fullest sense after the redemptive work of Jesus on the Cross was seen to be finished by His ascension to the Father’s right hand. (John 7:39; Acts 2:33).

In Exodus 28:3 we have a reference which is treated by the R.S.V. as being “*endowed with an able mind*”. Since there are verses which are without any doubt or ambiguity we will pass on to them.

Exodus 31:3. Here the reference is clear, *“I have filled him with the Spirit of God”*. The result of this “filling” is seen to be an extraordinary wisdom and understanding for the special task to which God had called him with regard to the construction of the Tabernacle. The interesting thing is, however, that we learn from Exodus 35:21 & 36:1-2 that others helped in the work whose desire and ability for the work are attributed to the Lord whilst not partaking of this special and extraordinary characteristic.

Here then is a clear distinction between two classes of people numbered among the people of God; they have one thing in common; they have a wisdom and a desire within their hearts which is of Divine origin. The difference between them lies in this; two of them have a fullness of Divine wisdom by the direct agency of the Spirit of God and the others have not.

NUMBERS

We now turn to that book of the Bible which deals at length with the wilderness wandering of the children of Israel. There are quite a number of references which could profitably be studied, but we will confine ourselves to those which most clearly reveal the distinction already noticed in Exodus.

Numbers 11. The murmuring of the people causes Moses’ request for assistance (v14). God answers him by causing the Spirit to rest upon the seventy elders (v17, 25). The same pattern thus emerges here but with some interesting and instructive additions. Clearly what happened to the seventy was not the new birth, to use New Testament phraseology, but rather what might be termed an “endowment” or “equipment” for service. It was a case of the Spirit coming upon them even as He came upon the disciples on the Day of Pentecost. (cf. *“rest upon”* v25, and *“come*

upon” Acts 1:8). We notice that the result was that they “*prophesied*” even as they did in Acts 19:6.

We must not miss the implications of v29. Moses’ desire expressed here becomes a definite word of prophecy in the famous passage in Joel 2:28-29. Here is a foreshadowing of the Lords’ great promise for “all” His people, one day to be the privilege of all, though now confined to the few specially chosen ones.

Consider one more reference in Numbers. It is in chapter 27:18. If anything the distinction already noticed becomes clearer than ever. We are told quite plainly that Joshua was a man “*in whom is the Spirit*”. Yet we are told just as plainly that in order to be equipped to take Moses’ place as leader of the people he needed something more. In v23 we are told that Moses laid his hands on him, and in Deuteronomy 34:9 we are told the result, “*Joshua the son of Nun was full of the Spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him...*”

This pattern which we have discovered continues through the rest of the Old Testament. Special chosen men are endued with the Spirit and with power; particularly prophets, priests and kings. What they experience is clearly distinguishable from the saving operations of the Holy Spirit. It is concerned with their service for God, e.g. Judges 6:34, 14:6, 19 etc., 1 Samuel 16:13; Ezekiel 11:5; Micah 3:8.

As we have seen, however, Joel’s prophecy concerning the last days speaks of a change in this pattern. No longer will it be the “special” people who will be endued with power by the Spirit, but ALL God’s people – sons, daughters, manservants, and maidservants.

So now we must turn to these Last Days which were ushered in by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

At this point it is important to underline the significance of what has been said and to point out something which is critical to our understanding of the difference between the experience of the Spirit of God in the Old Testament and the New Testament.

It may not have been made completely plain in what has been said so far, that the Old Testament saints (i.e. those who truly trusted the Lord) were all born-again of the Spirit. For example, those whose hearts were willing to serve the Lord (Exodus 35:21) were surely those in whose hearts the Spirit was working.

Joshua was “*a man in whom is the Spirit*” though later he was filled with the Spirit for leadership (Numbers 27:18-23; Deuteronomy 34:9).

Throughout the Old Testament there is clear evidence of a remnant of people who were truly godly. They loved the Lord and rejoiced in Him. They were “*the righteous*” who were “*glad in the Lord*” and trusted in Him (Psalms 32:10, 11; 31:1; 64:10).

None of this is possible without the regenerating work of the Spirit within. Such trust, hope and love are fruits of the Spirit and are only found in those born of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22).

Many Old Testament saints may not have known clearly the Author of their new life (although Jesus Himself indicated that the new birth was a thing that should have been well known in Israel, to a teacher of the scriptures like Nicodemus, John

3:7-10), the Holy Spirit. But despite this lack of understanding, the Holy Spirit's work was evident in their lives by His fruit.

However, although the Old Testament saints were born of the Spirit, only those chosen of God for special works of service were filled with the spirit. So that most believers know nothing of the Spirit's endowment with power.

2. THE NEW TESTAMENT

THE GOSPELS

(a) For our first reference we turn to Matthew 3:11 and the promise of John, *"He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire"*.

John's words with regard to his own baptism imply that Jesus completed what he had begun. The people were brought to repentance by the working of God's Spirit, and thus were born of the Spirit. Jesus was later to baptize them in the Spirit.

Since we have used the phrase, *"born of the Spirit"*, it might be worthwhile here to note the distinction inherent in the two Scriptural phrases denoted by "of" and "in". To be born of the Spirit is one thing; to be baptized in the spirit is quite another. Moreover we should notice that the new birth is described in terms which mark out the Spirit as the Author leading to Jesus as the object of faith, whereas Spirit-baptism is by Jesus Himself, the Spirit being the One into Whom we are baptized.

(b) John 1:29-33. John clearly stands out here as the Prophet who links the Old and New Testaments. He points to Jesus as fulfilling a dual role in accordance with Old Testament prophecy and promise.

- i. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. The dim foreshadowings of a Saviour from sin in the Old Testament now take on bodily form in the Person of Jesus, and the shadowy pictures of the basis of redemption in the Old Testament Sacrifices now realize fulfillment in the work of Jesus.
- ii. But a second string of prophecies and promises come to realization. The promise of the Spirit's outpouring with its final expression in Joel finds here its Agent. Here is "*The Baptizer in the Holy Spirit*".

Jesus not only takes away sin, He also baptizes in the Holy Spirit! The great promise in Joel 2:28-29 is now held out as imminent to the repentant onlookers. Their experience as yet is incomplete; they have yet to be baptized in the Spirit.

Thus in the Gospels the same pattern emerges as in the Old Testament, except under different circumstances – two distinct experiences, one of new birth and conversion manifested in repentance and forgiveness, and one of Spirit-Baptism now imminent for all believers in Jesus.

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Now we come to the crucial section of God's Word, namely Pentecost itself. Let us take the first two chapters together.

Clearly what John the Baptist spoke about was what happened at Pentecost (Acts 1:5), and what happened at Pentecost was what Joel had prophesied (Acts 2:16-18). That same promise is now on the lips of Jesus (v5 ff) What is he speaking of? It is obviously not the new birth.

- i) The disciples were already born again. They belonged to Christ as branches of the Vine (John 15:1). They believed He was the Son of God and were therefore born of God (1 John 5:1).
- ii) The promised blessing is not spoken of in terms of new life and salvation, but of new power and service (v 7-8). Clearly then it was definitely a second experience for the Apostles. Who can seriously dispute that? So far then the pattern already observed remains the same – two distinct experiences of the Spirit, one for life and salvation, the other for power and service. Only now the moment of fulfillment has arrived when these two distinct experiences are held out to all believers.

The question now before us is, “Does the pattern remain the same?” That is, should believers after Pentecost know two distinct experiences; the one ushering them through repentance and faith into the new life of Christ’s salvation, and the other ushering them into power for Christ’s service?

It would seem that the vast majority of Evangelicals would argue from Acts 2:38 that the gift of the Holy Spirit is automatically given to every believer at conversion as part of his conversion experience and not distinguishable from it. This is the only verse in Acts which appears to teach this, as we shall see. We would make the following comments.

- i) Even in this verse it is clear that two things are promised to believers, “*the remission of sins*” and “*the gift of the Holy Spirit*”. Thus two things were thought of as happening to one who believed: (a) he was forgiven his sin, and (b) he was baptized in the Spirit. Peter obviously means by the second thing that which he and the Apostles and disciples had just experienced: an enduement of power, equipping them to serve God. (cf. v39 “*the promise*” and v33 “*the promise of the Holy Spirit*”, and 1:4)
- ii) This being so we must ask ourselves whether this was true of our experience at conversion, and whether it is true of others professing conversion today? That is, did we know at the time, not only the peace and joy of sins forgiven, but also the power and ability to witness and serve God? We must remember that it will not do to say that we know of many whose conversion was accompanied with this power. Once we are committed to the view of automatic reception of the Spirit at conversion it is all or nothing. Either all believers have known this or else they are not believers! Some perhaps of our brethren and sisters in Christ will have to be rejected as unbelievers because they know of no tremendous experiential enduement with power. (See Walter Chantry, “Signs of an Apostle”, page 63)

Chantry speaks with great confidence of the outpouring of the Spirit and “*the higher plane of spiritual life*” which all believers enjoy (p.63) He suggests that all believers, in virtue of their union with the exalted Christ, actually have “*the Spirit (which flows from men in rivers of abundance)*”(p.62).

Surely the terms used here indicate an experiential acquaintance with God which is actually seriously lacking among many genuine believers today. Do all our converts actually testify to such an experience of “rivers of living water” or must we “interpret” this language to fit in with our theological prejudices?

Some will reply that there are other and more important tests for discovering the genuineness of Christian profession, and we would readily agree. But they will then have to reject the view that the baptism in the Spirit is automatically received by all believers at conversion.

Peter says in verse 39 that the reason why they shall receive the Spirit is because He is promised to all who are effectually called of God. This is the promised privilege of all believers, but is not automatically received, as other Scriptures confirm.

At this point it might be as well if we point out a glaring inconsistency between what is often said on this subject and what is actually preached and practiced.

Many will resort to the previously mentioned argument when challenged concerning the baptism in the Holy Spirit, but in their preaching they do not offer two distinct blessings to believers, not even as automatically received! They do not promise those to whom they preach the Gospel both the forgiveness of sins and the filling of the Holy Spirit. Yet this is obviously what Peter did.

I would like to testify here to the extreme difficulty I experienced as a Calvinist in dealing with this point honestly. Peter clearly offers the people something called “*the gift of the Holy Ghost*” which is given after repentance, faith and baptism. How I grappled with that problem when reading Acts! As a good Calvinist I was committed to the belief, in accordance with Scripture, that the Spirit comes to the believer not after faith but prior to faith and in order to produce faith. Peter’s words appeared to support Arminian teaching. Indeed this is the way many Evangelical Arminian preachers present the matter. You repent and believe and then God will give you His Spirit and you will be born again, etc.” I well remember the joy when realizing the true meaning of the passage which accords perfectly with

Calvinistic theology, when we are willing to admit that there is a receiving of the Holy Spirit which follows faith.

Usually, if at all, they mention the filling of the Holy Spirit as something to do with later maturity and fuller sanctification and in terms of a progressive work of God. One wishes these brethren would preach even an automatic baptism in the Spirit at conversion – perhaps some blessed soul might take them seriously and surprise them! As it so often is, however, in actual practice these brethren speak only of the new birth and really believe that this is identical with Spirit-baptism. How this view can be defended from Scripture is beyond my power to understand.

It is also interesting to note that most Evangelicals make no mention of the baptism in the Spirit except by way of defense of their position against Pentecostals and what they regard as their erroneous view.

In Evangelical literature which presents the gospel one would be hard put to find any significant reference to being baptized in the Spirit at conversion. If they really believe that baptism in the Spirit happens at conversion to every believer without fail, why do they not speak of it, expound it, explain it.

True, they refer to the Spirit indwelling the believer at conversion, but if we look carefully we will see that this is in the context of the saving and sanctifying work of the Spirit. Wonderful as that is, it is not what Peter meant. (Chantry recognizes this quite rightly, “*could only mean the filling of the Spirit in v.4*”, p.61)

Surely the reason for this is the fact that in the case of most Evangelicals their only view of the baptism in the Holy Spirit is a defensive one. They do not preach or expect their converts to be “*filled with the Spirit*” in the Acts 2 sense.

However, let no-one misunderstand my meaning. The new birth is the greatest thing that can ever happen to anyone and is the result of “*the exceeding greatness*” of God’s power (Ephesians 1:19), but the Spirit-baptism is an experience of a different nature for a different purpose. It is not necessary to salvation as the other is, but it is necessary for our full usefulness in the service of God.

To sum up this section we would say that the baptism in the Spirit is promised to all believers at conversion and in the natural conditions of the New Testament church would take place at or immediately after conversion, but as a distinct experience. However, there is clear evidence, as we shall see, that there were times when a considerable length of time elapsed between conversion and Spirit-baptism. To this we must now turn.

In Chapter 8 of the Acts of the Apostles we come to an instance of believers receiving the Holy Spirit after conversion. I realize that this chapter is regarded as controversial, and the Samaritans a special case. We will turn to that point when we have established what actually happened here. Chantry and Skilton (“*Special Gifts for a Special Age*”) maintain that what the Samaritans lacked was the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The Apostles came down to impart these gifts. (It is amazing how most Evangelical writers think they have dealt with the matter by saying this, and thus make the issue appear to be merely a question of gifts.)

What saith the Scripture? The terms used are “*that they might receive the Holy Ghost*”, “*He was fallen upon none of them*”, “*they received the Holy Ghost*”. Simon also refers to what happened as “*receive the Holy Ghost*”. Peter, in verse 20 refers to the blessing as “*the gift of God*”.

These terms may not be made to mean “*the gifts of the Spirit*”, as for instance Chantry (p.34 cf. p.61 already cited), and Professor Skilton argue. We would not

dispute that it is almost certain that gifts of the Spirit of one kind or another were manifested on this occasion, though it is not said so. But this was an effect of something more basic – the fact that they had received the Holy Ghost.

The terms mean here what they meant in Acts 2 as Chantry so definitely pointed out (p.61). This receiving of the Holy Ghost was the same as that of the Apostles on the Day of Pentecost and which Peter promised to all believers (Acts 2:38). Now I suppose no-one will wish to argue that Pentecost was merely a matter of receiving gifts of the Spirit, rather it was receiving the gift of the Spirit, i.e. the Spirit Himself.

This passage actually says that they had not received the Holy Spirit and that after prayer and laying on of hands they did receive the Holy Spirit. What happened to them is what happened to the Christians at Pentecost, and what happened to the Gentiles, Acts 10:44 (cf.8:16) – 47. And as they were filled with the Holy Spirit, or received the Holy Spirit or were baptized in the Holy Spirit (Chantry shows clearly these were the same, p.58-61), they also spoke with tongues or manifested the Spirit's power in some other evident manner.

Let us sum up.

- 1 These people were believers (v12)
- 2 They had not received the Holy Spirit (v15-16)
- 3 Afterwards they did receive the Holy Spirit (v17)

Now we must come to the objection that these Samaritans were a special case. It is argued by some:

- 1) That God withheld the Holy Spirit so that the Apostles could come down and authenticate their conversion. But this puts Apostolic authentication above Holy Spirit authentication! Surely God would have done here what He did with an even greater problem – the Gentiles! With these latter He so manifestly filled them with the Spirit that there is no doubt about their conversion (Acts 11:15-17). The simple answer is that we do not know why they did not receive the Holy Spirit.

- 2) However, since the Holy Spirit was not given, it was probably wise since they were Samaritans to have an Apostle, rather than Philip himself, to lay hands on them. Surely this is the reason rather than Philip was unable or unauthorized to lay hands on people? I do not believe Scripture teaches that the laying on of hands was the sole prerogative of the Apostles.

Following on from this point, we have the above fact confirmed in the experience of Paul when Ananias came and laid hands upon him in order that he (a) might receive his sight and (b) be filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:17). Paul was converted and commissioned (Acts 26:14-18); he now receives his baptism in the Spirit, i.e. he is filled with the Spirit (Acts 2:4). Moreover, the Spirit is imparted to him by the laying on of hands of Ananias “*a certain disciple*”, not an Apostle. No amount of arguing or quoting of texts concerning “*signs of an Apostle*” can remove this text from Scripture.

THE EPISTLES

Before we examine the epistles, it will be as well if we remind ourselves of one or two points:

- a) The Epistles are not the sole source of doctrine, “*All Scripture is profitable for doctrine*” (1 Timothy 3:16), and this doctrine is derived from “All Scripture” – all parts, and all as a whole.
- b) Some things which are already established and expounded elsewhere in Scripture may only be briefly mentioned in the Epistles.
- c) Some Epistles deal in detail with themes which are hardly dealt with at all in others (e.g. Hebrews – the High Priestly ministry of Jesus).
- d) For this reason we need not expect to see in the Epistles a detailed exposition of the baptism in the Holy Spirit – this we have in other Scriptures.
- e) Following on from this we do not find in the Epistles either reasons stated or arguments employed to the effect that the Christians should be baptized in the Spirit. Paul could take it for granted that everyone had been baptized in the Spirit and did not need to urge the matter upon them, in much the same way as he could take it for granted that they had all been baptized in water and did not need to urge that upon them. This was not because he believed that baptism in the Spirit was automatically received at conversion, i.e. in the way in which some present it today, not regarding it a distinct and distinguishable second experience. He knew that all believers had heard a gospel which held out to them not only new life in Christ by birth of the Spirit, but also power to serve Christ by baptism in the Spirit. This he refers to by various names and titles as “*sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise*” (Ephesians 1:13), “*anointed*” (2 Corinthians 1:21), “*received the Spirit*” (Galatians 3:2).

We should bear these things in mind as we study the epistles. We select references from three epistles which best set forth the fact of the experience.

ROMANS

Chapter 5 v 5 - *“And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.*

I would argue that this is a definite reference to the baptism in the Holy Spirit:

- i) Because Paul describes it as a definite experience enjoyed by all the believers to whom he was writing. Some may argue in that case it proves that every believer must have automatically experienced this. Those who argue in this way must be prepared to take their argument to its logical conclusion which is that all those “professing” Christians who cannot say definitely that “the love of God has been poured into their hearts by the Holy Ghost” are not therefore “true” Christians.

There can be no reasonable doubt that the experience of which Paul is speaking is a clear-cut definite thing that a man either has or has not experienced.

Otherwise he could not have referred to it in the manner in which he does. Dr. Lloyd-Jones says this, *“No man has ever had the love of God ‘shed abroad’ in his heart without knowing it; and it always leads to the shout!”* (i.e. hallelujah!)

Romans, Vol.4 *“Assurance”*, p.84.

So we are faced with one of two alternatives: either believers who have not experienced this are not Christians, or there is an experience of the Holy Spirit definite and distinctive which was known to the Apostolic Church but not known to many today.

- ii) Because it is described as an outpouring (Greek: Ekkechutai). The same verb is used as that in Acts 2:17, *“pour out of my Spirit”*; and exactly the same word as

Acts 10:45, *“on the Gentiles also was poured out (Ekkechutai) the gift of the Holy Ghost”*.

Every Christian in the early church had had an “outpouring”. That which had happened to the disciples on the Day of Pentecost was also experienced by all the early Christians. But, thank God, let no believer lacking this blessing feel condemned. As Dr. Lloyd-Jones says, *“You cannot be a Christian without the Holy Spirit, but you can be a Christian without having the love of God shed abroad in your heart”*. (Romans, Vol.4 *“Assurance”*, p.84) And again, *“This it seems to me was given to the first Christians universally to start off Christianity and the Church and to show us what is possible. It happened to the people on the Day of Pentecost, it has happened to countless others throughout the centuries, it has happened to those who have sought it truly. Why should you not know it, so that you may bask in the sunshine of His love...?”*(p.88)

GALATIANS

Chapter 3:2,14; 4:1-6.

Paul reminds the Galatians that they received the Holy Spirit through faith and that that reception of the Spirit became possible through their redemption from the curse of the law by the death of Christ. He also reminds them in chapter 4 that having become sons of God through this redemption, God then did a further thing: He sent forth the Spirit of His Son into their hearts.

As regards the first reference (3:2,14), this cannot be the new birth since we are not born again through faith but rather unto faith. Faith is a fruit or consequence of the new birth by the Spirit as has already been mentioned. John Murray puts this so clearly, *“It should be specially noted that even faith that Jesus is the Christ is the*

effect of regeneration... We are not born again by faith or repentance of conversion; we repent and believe because we have been regenerated.”

(“Redemption Accomplished & Applied”, p.127) (Emphasis mine)

Nor can such a reception by faith be regarded as something which happens to every believer without a definite exercise of faith. Once again it needs to be said that the early Christians were conscious of two distinct things happening to them: (1) a being born again unto faith in Christ by the Spirit; (2) a receiving of the Spirit by faith.

We must also take note of the fact that the phrase “*received the Spirit*” has a definite meaning in Scripture. By means of the grand Reformed principle of “comparing Scripture with Scripture” we discover that the term “*receiving the Spirit*”, etc. has its original explanation in Acts 2:38 where it clearly refers to an outpouring of the Spirit of God akin to that which Peter and the disciples had received. (cf. also 8:15,17; 10:47; 19:2)

Another phrase used here which is reminiscent of Pentecost is “*the promise of the Spirit*”, Galatians 3:4 (cf. Acts 2:33,39; 1:4; Luke 24:49)

The reference in chapter 4 underlines the above with one or two additional thoughts. It is interesting to observe the way Paul places over against each other the terms “*God sent forth His Son*” and “*God sent forth His Spirit*”, the latter clearly referring to the sending forth of the Spirit promised by Jesus at Pentecost by which the church was ushered into the dispensation of the Spirit. And yet, the language is highly personal and refers to an actual experience by the Galatian Christians by which they were NOT made sons, but rather assured of their sonship by the Spirit of adoption (cf. Romans 8:15,16). They had already been made sons on the grounds of their redemption in Christ and through the reception of Christ

by faith (John 1:12). It will perhaps be useful here to quote the experience of Howell Harris. Following his conversion in Talgarth church, after which he went leaping for joy!, his biographer describes how he had *“a feeling of further need in his soul which he could not define”*. Then, one day while at prayer, he experienced what is described in the following language: - *“He was there cleansed from all his idols, and the love of God was shed abroad in his heart. Christ had come in previously, but now He began to sup with Him; now he received the Spirit of adoption, teaching him to cry, Abba Father.”* (See “The Puritans: Their Origins and Successors”, D.M. Lloyd-Jones, p.290) (Emphasis mine)

EPHESIANS

Chapter 1:13 – *“In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise,”*

In his fine commentary on Ephesians, Hodge considers the A.V. correct in rendering the verse, *“after that ye believed”*. And he comments, *“Whatever is meant by sealing, it is something which follows faith”*. This suggests very strongly the description of some further blessing following upon the initial believing in Christ for salvation, a distinct blessing experienced by all the Ephesian Christians.

Thomas Goodwin makes this plea in his exposition,

“My brethren let me vent that notion to you... that the giving of the Holy Ghost as a sealer with joy unspeakable and glorious was reserved to the times after Christ was glorified. Men had the spirit to work faith before, they had faith under the Old Testament; but for the Spirit to come and work joy unspeakable and glorious in ordinary believers

was not till Jesus Christ Himself was glorified... It is called 'Baptism with the Holy Ghost'... There is a promise of the Holy Ghost to come and fill your hearts with joy unspeakable and glorious, to seal you up to the day of redemption. Sue this promise out, wait for it, rest not in believing only, rest not in assurance by graces only; there is a further assurance to be had. It was the last legacy Christ left upon the earth... Therefore sue out the will of Christ, sue out the last legacy of His... My Brethren there is such a work as sealing by the Spirit, if you have faith; there is a Spirit of promise made to believers, which you may receive by faith." (pages 248-9)

Again we notice the use of the term "the Holy Spirit of promise" or "the promised Holy Spirit". This term, as we have already said, expresses the language of the Day of Pentecost, further evidence that this sealing of believers is another way of describing the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF THE EXPERIENCE

Having discovered the fact of the experience in Scripture, we must now turn our attention to the nature and purpose of the experience.

Before we do so it might be as well to remind ourselves how vital it is that we see this to be a Scriptural doctrine. The advice of A.W. Tozer is pertinent here. He recommends that any enquirer concerning the baptism of the Spirit or being filled with the Spirit should be "... *convinced that being filled is a part of the total plan of God in redemption; that it is nothing added or extra, nothing strange or queer, but a proper and spiritual operation of God, based upon and growing out of the work*

of Christ in atonement... Unless he is persuaded from the Scriptures he should not press the matter nor allow himself to fall victim to the emotional manipulators intent upon forcing the issue.” (“Keys to the Deeper Life”, p.27)

These words of Tozer – hardly a Pentecostalist or Neo-Pentecostalist, though most definitely one who advocated a return to true New Testament experience of the Spirit including the baptism in the Spirit and the proper Scriptural use of the gifts of the Spirit – serve as a rebuke to those who seem to assume that anyone who preaches or teaches the baptism in the Spirit sits somewhat loosely to the authority of Scripture or even questions its sufficiency.

1. THE NATURE OF THE EXPERIENCE

What kind of experience is the baptism of the Holy Spirit? We have already seen that it is not regeneration (the new birth). We must also say that it is not sanctification. There are those who present the baptism in the Spirit as a crisis experience of sanctification by which a high or even perfect standard of holiness is acquired immediately. We cannot go into the errors of this view. Suffice it to say that that is not what I regard as the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

a) It is an experience of assurance.

On what grounds do we say this?

i) From the words used to describe it (“Confirm”, “Seal”, “Witness”).

CONFIRM – 1 Corinthians 1:6, *“The testimony of Christ was confirmed in you”*. The same word is translated “stablish” in 2 Cor. 1:21 where it is used in connection

with the word “seal” and “anoint”. The word means to confirm, to establish, to make sure, and surely its use here relates not to conversion as such, but rather to that which confirms and establishes the Christian in his converted state. This would seem to be further borne out by the words which follow: “*so that ye come behind in no gift*”. Also the preceding words relate to the gifts of utterance and knowledge which the Spirit bestows (1 Corinthians 12:8, cf. Acts 2:4).

This is not to say that the confirmation lies in the gifts themselves but rather that as they were confirmed by the Spirit, so there was also a manifestation of the Spirit’s gifts. There is a true Scriptural confirmation! It is the declared intention of God to confirm and establish the Christian. It is the Holy Spirit Himself who comes in confirming power to the believer’s heart. O blessed confirmation, O glorious establishing, O unshakable certainty! The testimony of Christ not only believed by me (2 Thessalonians 1:10) but also confirmed in me by the blessed Holy Spirit!

SEAL – Ephesians 1:13, “*Sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise*”. It is a sealing experience. The Oxford Dictionary describes sealing as “the guarantee of authenticity... to authorize, confirm”. Charles Hodge says, “*A seal is used, (1) to indicate proprietorship (ownership), (2) to authenticate or prove to be genuine, (3) to preserve safe*”. Thomas Goodwin says it means, “*to assure and certify*”.

Thus the baptism in the Spirit is the seal of God upon the believer’s conversion. It is the believer’s certificate, his guarantee of authenticity of his salvation, the mark of his ownership. He was secure before, now he knows his is secure. He belonged to God before on the ground of redemption, now he knows he belongs to God.

And the seal is not just some effect or fruit of the Spirit’s work in him, precious and absolutely vital as that is, and without which he cannot be saved or know himself to be saved; but the seal is the Holy Spirit Himself! Hallelujah!

WITNESS – Romans 8:16, *“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirits”*. A witness gives evidence, he stands up in court and declares what he has seen and heard regarding a matter. The believer may call upon a number of witnesses to speak on his behalf to defend him against the accusations of the world, the flesh and the devil. Scripture is the fundamental witness and the basis of all his confidence; but over and above this and the witness of his own life and the change wrought in him by regeneration, yet not apart from these witnesses, is the final witness who closes the case and sweeps away every accusation and doubt – the Spirit Himself! Howell Harris says, *“Love fell in showers on my soul, so that I could scarcely contain myself. I had no fear or doubt of my salvation.”* (cf. Acts 15:8) Each of these words indicate an experience of assurance.

ii) The teaching concerning it.

This is found particularly in the teaching of Jesus. It is remarkable how little attention is paid to these words as they relate to the baptism in the Spirit. Yet surely from the context and language used it is precisely the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost to which they do relate.

When Jesus spoke of *“the Promise of My Father”... “which you have heard of me”* (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4) which He also describes as baptism in the Spirit (Acts 1:5), He was surely referring to these discourses contained in John chapters 14-16.

John 14:20. After promising that the Father will send the Comforter in His Name, v16, Jesus goes on to say that, *“at that day ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me and I in you.”* This is the kind of assurance the Spirit brings when He comes. Jesus was already in the Father as He spoke to them, by a Divine Eternal union. They were already in Jesus by reason of the Eternal electing purpose of God

and through faith in Him. Jesus was already in them because they were joined to Him and He to them by the new birth of the Spirit.

But, although these things were so, and although they believed these things were so in a hazy kind of way (cf. Phillip's words, v8-10), after Pentecost and the Baptism in the Spirit they KNEW with a glorious Spirit-given assurance! Jesus in the Father! I in Jesus! Jesus in me! O glorious assurance! The word for "know" is a word that speaks not of a mere intellectual or doctrinal knowledge but of a personal experimental acquaintance.

Indeed if we look further at verse 21 and 23, Jesus appears to explain this "knowing" further, and uses the language, *"I will love Him and will manifest Myself to him"*. The Amplified Bible says here, *"I will let Myself be clearly seen by him, and make Myself real to him."* Christ already seen, already real, but after the Spirit's coming in power – clearly seen, made more real!

John 16:23. Following upon the foregoing, Jesus declares that *"in that day"* the disciples will discover a new assurance in prayer. They will learn by the Spirit the power and authority of the Name. They will come boldly to the throne of Grace, asking as they have never asked before in fullness of joy! We would not advocate flippancy and irreverence at the throne of the Most High, but O, how cautious, careful, calculated and totally lacking in believing expectancy is so much of the praying in our Evangelical Churches! From Acts 4:24-30 we gather that the Spirit had taught the disciples to take seriously the words, *"whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it to you"*. Such was the assurance in prayer bestowed by the Spirit of God!

b) It is an experience of enlightenment and enduement

The key word here is “anointing”. This anointing secures both enlightenment and enduement.

What is anointing? Charles Hodge says, *“Kings, Prophets and Priests were anointed when inaugurated in their several offices. To anoint may therefore mean to qualify by divine influence”*.

Joel’s prophecy declares void the ancient distinction between prophets, priests and kings and, along with other Scriptures, indicates that in the new covenant dispensation the status of kings, priests and prophets is shared by all Christians (Acts 2:17, Revelation 1:6).

This anointing is the privilege of all believers, since the ascension of Jesus our Anointed One, our Prophet, Priest and King. 1 John 2:20 declares, *“But ye have an unction from the Holy One and know all things”*, and again in v27, *“But the anointing which ye have received from Him abideth in you... the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth”*.

These words relate to enlightenment concerning the truth and remind us of the words of Jesus in John 16:13, *“Howbeit when He the Spirit of Truth is come, He will guide you into all truth”*.

Spurgeon says concerning this verse, *“Man can guide us to a truth, but it is only the Holy Spirit Who can guide us into a truth.”* And again he says, *“A Christian should do with truth as a snail does with his shell – live inside it, as well as carry it on his back, and bear it perpetually about with him.”* He then quotes Roland Hill to the effect that we should, *“Not only hold the truth, but have the truth hold us”*. (“New Park Street”, Vol.1, *“The Holy Ghost – The Great Teacher”*)

Yet how many believers lack this anointing of the Spirit! We would not deny that every believer must know something of the enlightenment of the Spirit or he could not be a believer. Like Peter on the road to Caesarea Philippi, it has been revealed to him that Jesus is the Son of the Living God; and without the Spirit's enlightenment he would never see his sinful condition nor the saving power of Jesus.

But these things the disciples knew before Pentecost (cf. John 6:69). This further enlightenment, this fullness, this anointing, is something greater and is associated with the coming of the Spirit to the disciples. "*When He is come.*" Many believers carry truth around with them, sometimes almost as a burden, ignorant of the blessedness of being led into the truth, of living in the Truth.

How many know they are justified but do not live in that truth as justified people? How many know from Scripture that "*The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin*", yet sink daily beneath the burden of their sin? I speak not of that proper Scriptural humbling that must attend a believer's sinning, but rather of that unscriptural prolonged carrying of a burden of guilt that would almost deny the efficacy of the precious blood of Jesus.

True, the Spirit does not do this all at once at the initial anointing, but rather the Christian is led into a depth and extent of experimental enlightenment which he has not known before and which will increase as he is thus led by the Spirit.

However, this experience is also an endowment, an equipment, a furnishing of the believer with abilities unknown, or little known before.

Goodwin says, "*It is a new conversion, it will make a man differ from himself in what he was before in that manner almost as conversion doth before he was*

converted. There is a new edition of all a man's graces...” Jesus told the disciples, *“Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high”.*

Thus in the Old Testament when Samuel anointed David as king, *“The Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward”* and endued and furnished him with all that was required to be a King. To be anointed then is to be one who receives the oncomings of the Spirit of the Lord. (1 Samuel 16:13)

In this way, Jesus Himself was anointed. He quotes Isaiah 61:1 when He says, *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me because He has anointed Me...”* (Luke 4:1,14,18). Jesus' experience explains the true nature of anointing. It cannot refer to the regenerating or sanctifying influences of the Spirit for Jesus as perfect Man did not stand in need of those. It must refer to the enlightening and enduing influences of the Spirit, equipping Him for Messianic ministry (cf. Acts 4:27, 10:38).

It is interesting to note that Paul puts all these terms together in 2 Corinthians 1:21, 22. He describes the Corinthian Christian as being “established (confirmed), anointed, sealed”, these being interchangeable terms for the baptism in the Holy Spirit looked at from different points of view.

c) It is an experience of power

It was the Lord Jesus Christ Himself Who described the baptism of the Holy Spirit as a reception of power (Acts 1:8). As we follow His words carefully we will see a clear link with His earlier preaching in John's gospel chapters 14-16. He tells them to wait for the promise of the Father, *“of which... you have heard Me speak”*. This must surely refer to the upper room discourses in John's gospel, which are therefore here clearly seen as referring to the baptism in the Holy Spirit (v4-5).

The ensuing experience of chapter 2 explains the outworking of that power and suggests the kind of power manifested in the believer when he is baptized in the Spirit.

UTTERANCE - WORDS OF POWER

Perhaps surprisingly to us the power they received found expression first of all in speech (Acts 2:4), *“They were all filled with the Holy Ghost and began to speak... as the Spirit gave them utterance”*. It is important to note that although there is no manifestation of tongues before Acts 2, there are one or two examples of the Holy Spirit giving power of utterance when He fills the believer.

Luke 1:41-42, *“Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost and she spake out with a loud voice”*. This was probably true of Mary’s inspired utterance of praise (v46) and is clearly true of Zacharias (v67).

I said it was surprising, perhaps, that the first manifestation of power was in utterance. Yet how sad it is that this should be thought surprising. How desperately is the Church’s need of the baptism in the Spirit written in her lack of praise! It is quite evident that being filled with the Spirit results in a new dimension of praise. As Dr. Lloyd-Jones says, *“It always leads to the shout!”* Torrey describes how just after his baptism in the Spirit, *“I found myself shouting, ‘glory to God, glory to God, glory to God’, and I could not stop...”*

I have said nothing of tongues, and I do not regard speaking in tongues as the “initial evidence” of the baptism in the Spirit. It is noticeable that the Scriptures actually say, *“They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues...”* Speaking with tongues was actually additional to being filled with the Spirit.

However, the keynote of tongues is praise (cf. 10:46). That is surely what is intended by the words, “*We do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God*” (v11). The note of joyous praise resounds and re-echoes through the pages of the Acts of the Apostles, even where tongues are never mentioned. There is no doubt that to be filled with the Holy Spirit involves a new ability to praise God (Acts 2:47; 13:52).

The power bestowed by the Holy Spirit did not only loosen their tongues in utterance towards God in praise but also towards men in proclamation of the word, “*But Peter... lifted up his voice and said to them...*” (Acts 2:14). The Peter who cringed before the maid outside the High Priest’s house, now speaks out boldly in the name of Jesus, and this boldness of speech in preaching is another mark of the Spirit’s power in Acts (4:8, 31; cf. also 1 Thessalonians 1:5-8).

ACTION - DEEDS OF POWER

Luke sums up Jesus’ ministry in the words; “*All that Jesus began to do and teach*” (Acts 1:1). The church of the New Testament was, and the church today is, meant to be a continued manifestation of the words and works of Jesus. He Himself promised that if the hostile world kept His teaching, they would keep His people’s also (John 15:20), while the works that He had done would also be done by them (John 14:12). That such deeds of power can be done today is in my view clearly and evidently taught in Scripture, and is demonstrated particularly in the revival taking place in Indonesia. (see Kurt Koch’s “*Revival in Indonesia*”).

2. THE PURPOSE OF THE EXPERIENCE

In concluding this section, let us note what is the main purpose of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. We must be clear in our minds that its purpose is not to make us great evangelists. Far too much attention has been paid in this connection to the experience of great men and almost exclusively to great preachers. This is understandable, since we do not normally hear of the experience of Christians in general. Moreover, one thanks God for the testimony of these men.

However, it would be wrong to measure our experiences by theirs. We may recognize that we have had the same kind of experience while allowing that there are surely differing degrees. I like the words of Tozer, which surely every believer baptized in the Spirit can echo in his own way, *“My flame may not be large but it is real”*.

Following on from this, it is important to state the plain fact that despite the presence of individuals in the New Testament who stood out above their fellow-believers both in office and achievement, the overall impression is not of great individuals, but rather of the body of Christ through which Jesus manifested His power to the glory of His Name, the transformation of sinners, and the unspeakable joy of believers (Acts 2:42-7; 4:23-35).

Thus the main purpose of the baptism in the Holy Spirit is to enable the Christian to function in the body of Christ in its total ministry of worship and edification (1 Corinthians 14:26), witness and evangelism (1 Thessalonians 1:5-8). When a Christian is baptized in the Spirit it is in order that he may have a direct assurance from the Holy Spirit Himself regarding his salvation, but this is not merely for his own personal satisfaction, but rather that being so gloriously assured, he may boldly share it with others. Again, another aspect of this experience is the anointing by which he is enlightened in the truth and equipped and endued for

service. But this enlightenment and equipment is not for his own comfort alone but rather for the edification of others.

In a word, what we are saying is that all these aspects of the experience culminate in a definite ministry, God given, Spirit given, Spirit inspired, within the fellowship of the Church of the body of Christ, so that the ascended Christ as the Head of the body may from His throne continue the ministry He began on earth through His body, the Church, by His Spirit sent down from heaven (Romans 12:1-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-7; Ephesians 4:7-16).

How much ministry within the Church is simply the ministry of well educated , well meaning, well organized Christians? How often does ministry of the Word owe more to books than to baptism in the Spirit, more to human eloquence than Holy Ghost enduement?

How often is the average Church member so very sadly average! – joyless, fireless and often speechless. We desire no noise for noise's sake, no “strange fire” upon God's altar, no fleshly utterance of exuberant exhibitionists. But if the Old Testament saints could be urged, *“Clap your hands O ye people, shout unto God with a voice of triumph”* (Psalm 41:1), *“Cry out and shout then inhabitants of Zion...”* (Isaiah 12:6), how much more should the congregation of saints today reverberate and re-echo with shouts of holy joy?

How often too the Christian is looked upon merely as one who only receives and rarely ever gives out in edification within the fellowship of the church! What place is there for spontaneous Spirit-led exhortation and mutual encouragement? More often than not, aside from entering college and training for the ministry the only functions the believer appears to have range through Sunday School teaching, giving out hymn books, giving out tracts, or making cups of tea, etc. These

humanly organized functions have taken the place of Spirit-inspired ministry which every believer can know through the Spirit's anointing.

I do not despise these things, nor do I mean to suggest that humble tasks done in the name of the Lord are not pleasing to Him, but the New Testament requires more of the Christian than this. It expects him to have Spirit-given gifts and ministry by which he is able to edify the saints and fulfill, not merely an inferior, less spiritual function in the body, but rather a vital, necessary, edifying, spiritually upbuilding ministry (1 Corinthians 12:7, 18-22).

Again Tozer's words are in place, *"Such words as those in the second chapter of Hebrews stand as a rebuke to the unbelieving Christians of our day: 'God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost according to his own will'. A cold church is forced to 'interpret' such language. She cannot enter into it so she explains it away. Not a little juggling is required and not a few statements for which there is no spiritual authority, but anything will do to save face and justify our half-dead condition. Such defensive exegesis is but a refuge for unbelieving orthodoxy, a hiding place for a Church too weak to stand"* ("Paths to Power", p.14).

RECEIVING THE EXPERIENCE

1. THE FACT OF RECEIVING

It is important to establish the fact from Scripture that the term “*receiving the Holy Spirit*” is a proper scriptural term used to describe what is also termed the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

To talk in this way, moreover, is in no way to deny that every Christian has the Holy Spirit by virtue of his being born again.

As we have already seen this term is synonymous with the term baptism in the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 1:5; 2:38; 8:15; 10:44,45,47; 11:16).

It is perhaps necessary also to say that the expression does not refer to receiving the gifts of the Holy Spirit. This is not to deny that gifts were also received at the same time as manifestations of the Spirit received (1 Corinthians 12:7), though it is important to distinguish between receiving the Spirit Himself which is the baptism and receiving the gifts which may accompany or follow after the baptism.

Again the use of the word “receiving” does not imply an end of “receiving” as though the baptism in the Spirit implies that nothing more was to be received. There must be an initial believing reception of the Holy Spirit, but this is but an introduction into the realm of the Spirit’s dynamic operation in, upon and through the believer (cf. David “*from that day forward*”, 1 Samuel 16:13).

2. THE GROUND OF RECEIVING

On what ground, on what basis do we receive the Holy Spirit? In general upon the ground of the finished work of Christ, in particular on the ground of His ascension to the right hand of power.

In John 7:37-39 we are told of the “*rivers of living water*” which flow out of the believer upon his reception of the Holy Spirit. John explains that this had not yet taken place because “*Jesus was not yet glorified*”.

In John’s gospel the glorification of Christ covers the whole of His redemptive work from the cross of shame to the crown of glory (John 12:23-32; 13:31,32; 17:1-5). This is important for we must not separate His ascension from His death and resurrection. The shedding of His blood in atonement is the foundation of His heavenly ministry as ascended Lord.

Moreover, John repeatedly links the sending of the Spirit as Comforter in pentecostal power with His return to the Father, i.e. His final glorification (John 14:12-16,25,26; 16:7). Thus it is no surprise to find Peter relating the outpoured Spirit to the historical fact of Christ’s ascension (Acts 2:33).

However, the connection is not merely historical but also theological. The ascension is the final proof of Jesus’ finished work (Hebrews 1:3), and the demonstration of His Kingly power and authority over all (Matthew 28:18; Ephesians. 1:21; 1 Peter 3:22). Thus, the baptism in the Spirit, grounded as it is upon Christ’s ascension to Kingly power and authority, brings with it something of the power and authority that Jesus enjoys at the right hand of God. Note the emphasis of Acts 2:33, “*Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted... He hath shed forth this...*” What He had shed forth was a fitting demonstration of His ascended power manifested in the disciples.

This glorious outpouring is beautifully foreshadowed in 2 Chronicles 5. There the Ark of the Covenant, symbolic of Christ our Righteousness and Covenant Saviour is taken into the most Holy place, symbolic of the heavenlies into which Christ ascended (Hebrews 9:24). The temple resounds with the praise of one hundred

and twenty priests (v12-13) (cf. the 120 at Pentecost, Luke 24:53), and the temple is filled with the presence and glory of God.

No doubt this is why the baptism in the Spirit for all believers was withheld until the ascension of Jesus. It pleased the Sovereign God to withhold this blessing in Old Testament times, until the actual work of atonement was not only done but seen to be done by principalities and powers. Thus in Revelation 12 it is after the ascension of Jesus (v5) and His triumph over the usurping prince of this world that the shout rings out, “*Now is come... POWER*”, (v10). Who can fail to shout “Hallelujah!”

3. THE TIME OF RECEIVING

If this blessing was preached and expected, then no doubt it would be received at conversion. After believing, Christians would be “*sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise*” (Ephesians 1:13). However, it is evident that the experience did not always come immediately after conversion. (See previous chapter, cf. Acts 8:14-17; 9:17; 19:1-6). Since this is the case in the New Testament times it is not surprising that it is often years after their conversion that people are baptized in the Spirit today. This may be due to a number of things. In some cases people are ignorant of such a blessing or sometimes fearful because of the warnings of well-meaning Christians. So often people are taught today that they received everything in their conversion. Indeed in many cases, if baptism in the Spirit is mentioned at all, it is made synonymous with conversion itself.

Goodwin himself says, “*Where the defect lies, God knows, but certainly it might be more common if men would sue it out, such a promise there is*”.

How often one meets with Christians with a desire for something further! I do not mean the experience seekers who run from one convention to another to “get blessed”, I am thinking of serious godly souls, oftentimes mature Christians aware of a lack in their lives which is not satisfied by the pat theological answers, nor explained by the understandable and expected lack that will always be felt by those who, with the Psalmist, will be satisfied only when they awake in glory with His perfect likeness (Psalm 17:15).

Like Howell Harris they are aware of “*a feeling of further need...*”, which they cannot define. Like John Howe they feel “*a need of a vital taste and flavor of (the things of the faith) that they may with greater power and efficacy sink into the very depths of the soul, and there, more deeply fixed, more powerfully control the life.*” (see R.F.Morton “Life”, p.185).

Howe’s deep desire was met in a definite way that caused him never to forget the experience.

It is illuminating to notice Howe’s clear statement of the need of such an experience of the Spirit in his works. Having spoken of some Christians who have only that assurance from the Word and “*the testimony of their own spirits*”, he goes on to say, “*It is apparent what is yet wanting... there is such a thing as an effectual, overpowering communication of the Holy Ghost...of great necessity and importance to Christians – that may be had, and ought to be diligently sought after*” (Works, Vol.11 “*Delighting in God*”, p. 94).

4. THE MANNER OF RECEIVING

In the Acts of the Apostles there are five recorded instances of receiving the Spirit or being baptized in the Spirit. Two are direct outpourings (Acts 2:4; 10:44-47),

and three are by means of the laying on of hands (Acts 8:17; 9:17; 19:2). Thus it would follow that the Spirit may be received today in either of these two ways. This does not mean of course that the believer should submit to the laying on of hands from any Tom, Dick or Harry who claims the right to do so. However, the fact that “*a certain disciple named Ananias*” (Acts 9:10,17) laid hands on the Apostle Paul will be sufficient authority for a much broader view of the ministry of laying on of hands than is generally accepted.

However, we notice that in either case, whether directly or through the laying on of hands, Scripture emphasizes the following: -

a) PRAYER

In almost every case prayer plays a prominent part. The disciples before Pentecost (1:14); Saul for the three days before Ananias came (9:9, 11); the Samaritans (8:15). In Luke 11:13 Jesus tells us that God our Father will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him. And, provided our asking is from the right motive and in true faith, “*how much more*” will He give us the Holy Spirit, than a sinful earthly father some good gift!

b) FAITH

Faith is necessary to receive anything from the Lord, and Galatians 3:2,14 reveals quite clearly that we receive the Spirit “*through faith*”.

John Owen writes,

“Our receiving of Him as a Spirit of sanctification is a mere passive reception... but now, as He is the Spirit of consolation it is otherwise... He was in them as a Spirit of quickening and sanctification when promised to them as a Spirit of comfort and consolation to abide with them for that purpose...So that there is an active power to be put forth in his reception for consolation and this is the power of faith. So in Gal 3:2 they received the Spirit by the hearing of faith... It is believers that thus receive the Spirit; and they receive Him by faith... Faith eyes the promise of God and of Jesus Christ, of sending the Spirit for all those ends that He is desired; thus it depends, waits, mixing the promise with itself, until it receive Him.” (Works, Vol. 2, p. 230-231) (Emphases mine)

Naturally we cannot honestly ask God in faith for this blessing if we are living in disobedience in some respect. God may well reveal some sin which needs confessing and forsaking. But having said this, let us remind ourselves that any preparation needed is not in any way meritorious.

The blessing is entitled *“The gift of the Holy Spirit”*, therefore it is quite freely given, and cannot be earned. It is not a reward for service or an attainment for Christian maturity only.

Moreover, again and again the word “promise” is used in connection with this blessing. Jesus used it, *“The promise of your Father”* (Acts 1:4). Peter used it, *“The promise is to you...”* Paul used it, *“The Promise of the Spirit”* (Galatians 3:14), and *“The Holy Spirit of Promise”* (Ephesians 1:13). This blessing really is promised to us by *“God that cannot lie”* (Titus 1:2). God actually wants us to be blessed in this way! How often we should meditate on the *“how much more”* of Luke 11:13! As

Goodwin says, *“sue this promise out, wait for it... sue out the will of Christ, sue out that last legacy of His”*.

All this should encourage us to trust His promises and fix our eyes in faith upon Jesus, “the One Who baptizes in the Holy Spirit” and He will indeed baptize us in the Holy Spirit.

This last point is important. Jesus is the “baptizer in the Spirit” (John 1:33), and just as the believer looks in faith to the Lamb of God for salvation from sin (John 1:29), so too he must look to the ascended Son of God to baptize him in the Spirit.

His baptism in the Spirit on the ground of the finished work of his ascended Saviour is as certain as his forgiveness on the basis of the blood of the Lamb. This is important. It is far too easy for the believer to concentrate on his feelings in this matter, but the fact that this is an experience involving the most blessed and exalted feelings, must not cause him to lose sight of the fact that the experience is based upon the solid, unshakeable, objective fact of the ascension of Christ.

Let the believer fix his eyes upon his ascended Saviour. Let him exercise faith upon this fact. Jesus is glorified; the Holy Spirit can be given! His blood was sufficient for my justification and cleansing from sin, His sitting at God’s right hand is sufficient proof of His triumph to merit for me the power of the Spirit. From Calvary flows the blood that cleanses me! From the midst of the throne of the ascended Lamb flows the river of living water which Jesus promised (Revelation 22:1; John 7:37-39).

Finally, we should praise Him! The Scriptures suggest that praise is an indication of faith (Psalm 106:12). When men believe God’s Word, they praise Him.

We have already referred to 2 Chronicles 5 as illustrating the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost. It is noticeable that on that occasion it was as the priests praised God for His goodness and mercy that the cloud came down and the glory of God filled the temple.

McCheyne has a sermon on this entitled *“Thanksgiving Brings the Spirit”* and this is borne out by the actual events preceding Pentecost. So often the disciples are presented as searching their hearts and pleading with God before the day when they were filled with the Spirit. We would not deny that such exercises of soul have a place in relation to the baptism in the Spirit, but as a matter of Scriptural fact, apart from Acts 1:14 which tells us that they continued in prayer, Luke 24:52-53 tells us that they were also continually praising.

They had no reason to doubt that what Jesus had promised to do He most certainly would do, and the faith they exercised in their ascended Lord was a joyous, praising, expectant faith. As the days passed they praised and blessed God continually. They knew that though the vision tarried they must wait for it, it would surely come! AND IT DID! Like Abraham they gave glory to God and praised Him, believing that what He had promised He would perform.

I am not suggesting that there must be a long period of waiting. There is no reason why the Christian should not be baptized in the Spirit, and know it, at his first approach to God in faith. The Lord is more eager to bless than we are to be blessed! *“Open thy mouth wide”*, says the Lord, *“and I will fill it”*, (Psalm 81:10). However, where delay is encountered the Christian must not give way to despair, but must rather wait with expectant, praising faith, his eyes fixed upon his glorified Lord.

CONCLUSION

It should in fairness be admitted that in this book, authors and writers have been quoted in support of the main argument who would not or do not accept fully my views relating to the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

I have quite frequently quoted from Puritan authors. In some cases, notably Goodwin and Howe, their doctrine of the baptism in the Holy Spirit as a definite, distinctive further experience of the Spirit is eminently clear. However, I believe that other Puritan writers also held a view of the distinctive and definite experience of the Spirit as Comforter akin to though not defined as baptism in the Holy Ghost. (e.g. John Owen).

Here is a quotation from Owens's works:

“Wherefore, the receiving of the Holy Ghost intended in that expression of our Saviour, with respect whereunto, some are able to receive Him, some are not, is not absolute, but with respect unto some certain work and end; and this, as is plain in the context, is the receiving of Him as Comforter and a guide in spiritual truth. Here unto, faith in Christ Jesus which also is an effect and fruit of the same Spirit, is antecedently required. In this sense therefore, believers alone can receive Him, and are enabled so to do by the grace which they have received from Him in their first conversion unto God.” (See Works, vol. 3, p.109) (Emphases mine)

Another quote from Owen reveals his conception of two distinct experiences of the Spirit:

“It appears, from what hath been discoursed, that this is not the first saving work of the Holy Spirit on the souls of men. Regeneration and habitual sanctification do always precede it. He comforteth none but those whom He hath before sanctified”. (See Works, Vol. 4, “The Holy Spirit as Comforter”, p.382.) (Emphasis mine)

Notice too Owen’s words regarding the seal of the Spirit. He rejects many of the views regarding sealing as tending to confuse the issue, complaining that, *“so we shall never come to know what is that one determinate act and privilege that is intended therein”.* (Works, Vol. 4, p.401). Some may argue that Owen is speaking of the general work of the Spirit from day to day in the believer, but notice the last words quoted, *“that one determinate act and privilege”.* Owen clearly conceived of the seal of the Spirit as a definite thing which you knew you either had or had not had!

I have quoted these writers deliberately because I share their love of the doctrines of free sovereign and efficacious grace as revealed in Scripture. Indeed I recognize in their writing an anointing and unction of the Spirit very largely missing in the writings of those who often claim most to represent their views. Moreover, I long to see an appreciation of Spirit baptism and spiritual gifts from those of Reformed thinking. The outbreak of Neo-Pentecostalism cries out, not for denunciation but for the solid doctrinal emphasis of those who love the doctrines of grace.

Of course this can only be countenanced when the doctrine of the baptism of the Holy spirit and the place of the gifts of the Spirit in the Church are seen to be Scriptural. Thus, the appeal of this book is to Scripture. The author echoes the sentiments of other Reformed writers in his insistence on “Sola Scriptura”.

It is his plea and complaint that the subject under discussion has not been given a proper, thorough Scriptural treatment. He hopes that what he has written may fulfill a threefold purpose: (a) To challenge the thinking of reformed Christians to face more seriously and more scripturally the Biblical doctrine of the baptism in the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit; (b) To set forth the Biblical doctrine of the baptism in the Spirit so that Christians may see it to be Scriptural and be encouraged to seek and receive the glorious experience for themselves; (c) To provide a fuller exposition of the meaning and significance of the doctrine, to counteract much that has been written which has tended to be shallow, though well-meaning, and to encourage those who rejoice in the Spirit's baptism to appreciate the fullness of the blessing that is theirs.

In saying all these things, the writer is painfully conscious of being a novice. He has not "*the pen of a ready writer*" and, with Owen, he feels that these things are "*better admired than expressed*". Moreover, he gladly acknowledges the help received from those who have already written on the subject and others whose ministry on these matters has helped so much.

Finally, it is sincerely hoped that what has been written may contribute in some way, however small, to the growing desire for an outpouring of the Spirit of God in revival blessing to the glory of God, the joy of saints, and the salvation of sinners.

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