

## **The Baptism of the Holy Spirit** (and His on-going ministry in the believer)

This morning as we celebrate our first Sunday back after a very long hiatus, I'm beginning what I'm calling a **“Welcome back series on the Holy Spirit.”** My focus will be the “baptism of the Holy Spirit,” or “the baptism in the Holy Spirit,” or “the baptism with the Holy Spirit,” or, finally, “the baptism by the Holy Spirit,” none of which occur in the Bible. Did you know that? We all use the phrases quite loosely and that's ok, but those phrases are not in the Bible. What matters is that the truth of the baptism is indeed taught in the word of God.

And should anyone here this morning or watching this over one of media wonder why, here's why. <sup>9</sup> *However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.*

<sup>10</sup> *If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness.*

<sup>11</sup> *But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. (Rom. 8:9-11 NAU)*

One can be a “good church member” yet not belong to Him.

Take your Bible and turn to where the promise of the baptism is first found in the New Testament, and this is John the Baptizer speaking, *Mt. 3:11, <sup>11</sup> “As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. (Matt. 3:11 NAU)* You will find the same announcement by John the one who baptized in Mk. 1:8, Luke, 3:16, and in John 1: 32 and 33.

So, four different Spirit-filled men recorded the same exact announcement made to the same bunch of obstinate, stiff-necked, brood of vipers Jewish rulers as both a witness against them and a call for repentance by them. They would have to hear the gospel preached on the Day of Pentecost 50 days after Christ ascended into heaven before they

could believe and as we know, thousands did just that. And thousands more after that day.

**Don't miss the promised grace of God implied in John's announcement, beloved, John was telling these rebellious and dead in their trespasses and sins Jewish heretics, enemies of the Lord Jesus, that Jesus, their Messiah, was going to baptize them, (many of them anyway), with the Holy Spirit and with fire in spite of themselves in order to cleanse them and give them life and that more abundantly, meaning, eternal life with all its benefits. John was announcing ahead of time that they were going to be baptized by the Spirit and with fire. That is a foreshadowing of the gospel of grace. If God would save these people as evil as they were, if Jesus would baptize and save those murderous Jews, what does that say about people we know personally who seem to be enemies of the cross and enemies of the church and enemies of Jesus?**

**And the salvation of those Jews serves as an illustration of how God can save anyone.**

**Your salvation is a living illustration of the grace of God. I am living proof that God desires to save everyone, no matter where they may be at this very moment.**

Remember Saul? Saul was Paul before Paul was Paul. This is what he wrote years after changing his name to Paul, <sup>12</sup> *I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service,*

<sup>13</sup> *even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief;*

<sup>14</sup> *and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus.*

<sup>15</sup> *It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all.*

<sup>16</sup> *Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life. (1 Tim. 1:12-17 NAU)*

**That example was the changed life of the Christ-hating, Christian hating, Christian murdering Saul the Pharisee.** His example said to everyone, “If God can save Saul, He can save anybody.”

I don't know when the Christians at CPCC said this about me, but they did say it, “that guy will never get saved.” They were judging me by my appearance, but God was looking at my heart, as evil and depraved as I was, and He set in motion the events of the day He saved me. After that, I was stopped a couple of times on campus by people I had known before being saved who wanted to know about Jesus.

Now turn to **Acts 2:37**, Acts chapter 2 and v.37, <sup>37</sup> *Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?"*

<sup>38</sup> *Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ because your sins are forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

<sup>39</sup> *"For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself." (Acts 2:37-39)*

Now, Let me ask you a question, “was the gift of the Spirit only for the times of the apostles?” No, it certainly was not. <sup>39</sup> *"For the promise is for you,\* the thousands of Jews standing before Peter and John on the Day of Pentecost, and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself."*

The promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit is timeless and universal, that's what the words of Acts 2:39 make abundantly clear.

But I see a very serious problem in the visible church, and it is the problem Paul found with 12 disciples of John the Baptist he came across in Ephesus.

Turn to Acts chapter 19 and v.1, Acts 19:1 and we're going to see how Paul remedied the problem. **Acts 19:1** *It happened that while*

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*Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus, and found some disciples.*

*<sup>2</sup> He said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they said to him, "No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit."*

*<sup>3</sup> And he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" And they said, "Into John's baptism."*

*<sup>4</sup> Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus."*

*<sup>5</sup> When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.*

*<sup>6</sup> And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking with tongues and prophesying.*

*<sup>7</sup> There were in all about twelve men. (Acts 19:1-7 NAU)*

I'm going to set this remedy in the form of two diagnostic questions.

I would guess that everyone here or watching this at home has been diagnosed by your family physician or a specialist with some ailment that needs to be treated either by surgery or medication. You may have manifested symptoms that troubled you and so you went to your doctor to find out what's going on inside your body. You've had a pain in the lower left side of you back or in your groin or you're running a fever and your coughing, you suspect that you might have COVID19 and it turns out you do. You're having pain in your chest and an arm and you have a pretty good idea what it is before you go to see the doctor. And he confirmed what you suspected. He asked you "where does it hurt" and you said, "all over more than anywhere else." Then he gave you his diagnosis and prescribed a course of action. Spiritually speaking, that's the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of those whom God has called and is drawing to faith in Jesus. The Spirit diagnosis all

as sinners in need of the Great Physician but He first gets our attention to let us know just how totally sick we are.

### **The first diagnostic question at Ephesus**

*1 It happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus, and found some disciples.*

*2 He said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?"*

After meeting these disciples and having a conversation with them, Paul discerned that something was missing so he asked the first diagnostic question, and I find really interesting that Paul's questions center on baptism.

And his suspicion was confirmed. *And they said to him, "No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit." (Acts 19:1-2 NAU)*

It is one of the most important questions in all of the word of God, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" The apostle Paul had reason to doubt that the disciples from Ephesus had, so he very frankly asked them. Can you see the providence of God in the timing of Paul's meeting these 12 disciples at the exact moment he did? It was their blessed day. "Never say, Brother, this is your lucky day."

So then he asked them another diagnostic question,

### **The second diagnostic question at Ephesus**

*"Into what then were you baptized?"* The second question was as important as the first. And you can't help but see that Paul knew it centered around baptism. Go figure. We Southern Baptist certainly believe in baptism but sometimes some preachers call for people to be baptized for the wrong reason. It's the spiritual equivalent of the baptism the disciples in Ephesus had experienced, they were baptized to become disciples of John the Baptist, many in the Baptist church were baptized in order to join a local church, and that my friends, is no baptism at all.

People who have just gotten saved by the grace of God are to be baptized in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, in the name of Jesus, because their sins have been forgiven, not to get their names added to the church roll. The moment the ungodly are saved, they

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are baptized by the Spirit into the body of Christ. And that's how one joins the church. <sup>13</sup> *For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. (1 Cor. 12:13 NAU)*

The get-your-name-on-the-church-roll baptism is a waste of water and as I said, is no baptism at all. That is a pretty serious error that must be corrected. Let me read Acts 2:38 and 39 once more and pay close attention to the wording in those two verses, <sup>38</sup> *Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ because your sins have been forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

<sup>39</sup> *"For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself."*

(Acts 2:38-39 NAU) The wording of v.38 should read the way I just read it to you. Why? Well, the Greek word translated "for" can be and should be translated "because" and not for. And, we are not baptized for salvation but because we are saved. And that is precisely why Paul knew there was a problem with baptism when he talked with the Ephesian disciples. **Biblical baptism seals the deal after one is saved.**

**Being baptized "into John's baptism" is the equivalent of being baptized in order to join a local church. The promise of the gift of the Spirit is fulfilled only for those who have been saved by grace and are being baptized in obedience to the commandment of the Lord Jesus in Mt. 28 and in compliance with Acts 2:38.**

There is no strict order in how this is done. Sometimes unbelievers are baptized by the Spirit before they get baptized in water. Sometimes they get water baptized and then receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

I close with these two diagnostic questions, "did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And second, "Into what then were you baptized?"

**Closing prayer:**

Lord Jesus, I pray that you will, by the ministry of the Spirit, open the minds and the hearts of your people who are gathered here this day so that they might examine themselves and that they might rise above human fear and pride and sincerely search their own hearts as they meditate on these essential matters. In Jesus name. Amen.