

Life in the Spirit

Living a deeper life in God

Rev. Dominic Furness: All Saints' Milford on Sea: 2016

Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them." By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. (Jn.7v37-39)

"I was all the time tugging and carrying water. But now I have a river that carries me." (DL Moody evangelist)

Now the Berean Jews... received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true. (Acts 17v11)



“BE TRANSFORMED!”

We have been thinking together about what it means to be “authentic church”. And we have been thinking about God’s call to be transformed and to be transformed into nothing less than *the likeness of Jesus* –

“And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.” (2 Cor.3v18).

So how does this happen? Well Paul tells us: it “comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.” In other words it is by the grace and power of the Holy Spirit that transformation occurs. Because the only way for us individually to be transformed into Jesus’ likeness and the only way for the Church to be transformed into Jesus’ likeness, is by the Spirit of Jesus releasing the life of Jesus in us and through us. The phrase used to describe this process is “Life in the Spirit”.



FOR REFLECTION

As you read about the New Testament Church and think about its life, about its experience of Jesus and about its impact on its community, how far do you think the Church today and our Church today, reflect those same realities? Do you ever find yourself thinking—“Is this all that there is..?”

“However, as it is written: “What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived” —the things God has prepared for those who love him– these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit...” (1 Cor.2v9-10)

A JOINED UP KINGDOM

One of our problems is that we tend to see things in the Bible in isolation and as basically unconnected events. So we look at Good Friday and we see that Christ died for our sins; then we look at Easter Day and see that Jesus rose to life once again; and then we look at the Ascension and Jesus returning to Heaven; and finally we turn to Pentecost and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

But far from being disconnected, these four events are actually four elements of the same event – the coming of the Kingdom of God on earth as in heaven. So Good Friday is incomplete without Easter Day, and Good Friday and Easter Day are incomplete without the Ascension, and Good Friday, Easter Day and Ascension are incomplete without Pentecost.

In the context of this booklet and of our Sunday morning studies, it means that for us to live in the fullness and the reality of Good Friday, Easter Day and the Ascension, we need to be living in the fullness and reality of Pentecost.



SO WHO IS THE HOLY SPIRIT AND WHAT DOES HE DO?

The Holy Spirit has sometimes been called the “forgotten member of the Trinity”, which is hard, considering that He is there from the very start of creation! In Genesis 1v1-2, we see Him bring light into darkness; order out of chaos; life out of nothingness. And He does the same today, bringing the light of Christ into sin-darkened lives; God’s order into dis-ordered lives; life in all its eternal fullness into people marked for death.

The Holy Spirit is Person and not an “It”. The older translations of the Bible do us a disservice by calling Him the “Holy Ghost”, for He is as much part of the Godhead as the Father and the Son. He is no impersonal force – nor a ghost! He shows all the hallmarks of Personhood: He thinks (Acts 15v28); He communicates (Acts 1v15-16); He leads (Rom.8v14); He can be grieved (Eph.4v30).

He is variously called the “Spirit of Truth, the “Counsellor” or “Comforter” (literally the “One called alongside to help”) and is seen as a Dove and as Fire. He is the Wind of God, the Breath of God, the Spirit of God (Jn.16v13; 16v7; Lk.3v21-22; Acts 2v3-4).

Indeed Paul describes Him as the “Spirit of God” and the “Spirit of Christ” (Rom.8v9), for He is identical to Jesus. When Jesus promised the Holy Spirit to the Church in John 14v16, He described the Spirit as being “*Another* Comforter”. The word that Jesus used for “Another” means another that is *absolutely identical* to the first.



THE HOLY SPIRIT WAS ESSENTIAL TO THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF JESUS

The Holy Spirit literally made Jesus alive, coming upon Mary in His divine conception (Mt.1v18,20; Lk.1v35). He came upon Jesus at His baptism, anointing and empowering Him for service (Mt.3v16; Mk.1v10; Lk.3v22;4v1; Jn.1v32-33). Indeed, Jesus was so filled with the Holy Spirit that His very title of “Messiah”, or “Christ”, means an “Anointed One” i.e. someone called and empowered and filled with the Holy Spirit - “The Spirit-Filled Man”. The Spirit empowered Jesus to proclaim “justice” (Mt.12v18); to cast out demons (Mt.12v28); to speak the very words of Heaven (Jn.6v63); and to be full of joy (Lk.10v21). And He brought Jesus once again to life at His resurrection (Rom.1v3).



FOR REFLECTION

If Jesus needed the Holy Spirit that much and depended upon Him that much, what does that tell us about the importance of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church today and indeed in our own Christian life?

But while we piously repeat the traditional assertion that without the Holy Spirit we can get nowhere in the Christian mission, we seem to press on notwithstanding with our man-made programmes. I have not heard recently of committee business adjourned because those present were still awaiting the arrival of the Spirit of God. I have known projects abandoned for lack of funds, but not for lack of gifts of the Spirit. Provided the human resources are adequate we take the spiritual for granted. In fact we have only the haziest idea of what we mean by resources other than human wealth, human skill and human character.

(John Taylor, former Bishop of Winchester)



THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

We see the Spirit at work and evident in a number of ways. He inspires and empowers craftsmen, leaders and prophets (Ex.31v1-6; Jdg 6v15,34; 1 Sam.16v13); Num.11v25; 2 Chron.15v1; Ezek.11v5). ***But this anointing and empowering was always temporary and given for a specific purpose and at a specific time and only to specific people.***

THE PROMISE OF AN ABIDING, EMPOWERING SPIRIT - FOR ALL.

Gradually over the years, the Lord began to speak through the prophets of a different kind of anointing and empowering. One that would be for all of God's people, and this was something for which Moses had specifically prayed many hundreds of years earlier, sensing as he did that the work of God needed all of the people of God for it to be accomplished.

“The Lord said to Moses: “Bring me 70 of Israel’s elders who are known to you as leaders and officials among the people... I will come down...and I will take some of the power of the Spirit that is on you and put it on them. They will share the burden of the people with you so that you will not have to carry it alone... So Moses ... brought together 70 of their elders and had them stand around the tent. Then the Lord came down in the cloud and spoke with him, and he took some of the power of the Spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders. When the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied—but did not do so again. However, two men, whose names were Eldad and Medad, had remained in the camp. They were listed among the elders, but did not go out to the tent. Yet the Spirit also rested on them, and they prophesied in the camp. A young man ran and told Moses, “Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp.” Joshua son of Nun, who had been Moses’ aide since youth, spoke up and said, “Moses, my lord, stop them!” But Moses replied, “Are you jealous for my sake? *I wish that all the Lord’s people were prophets and that the Lord would put his Spirit on them!*” (Num.11v16-17,24-30) [emphasis added]

First through the lips of Jeremiah and then through Ezekiel and finally through the prophet Joel, a picture began to emerge of what God was going to do.

“The days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them,” declares the Lord. “This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time,” declares the Lord. “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will they teach their neighbour, or say to one another, ‘Know the Lord,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.” (Jer.31v31-34).

How was God going to do this?

“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.” (Ezek.36v26-27).

“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. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days. (Joel 2v28-29).

So God was promising that instead of the anointing and empowering of the Holy Spirit being a temporary gift, given for a specific purpose and at a specific time and only to specific people, He was going to give the Holy Spirit to all of His people as a permanent and abiding gift. And this gift of the Spirit would bring us into relationship with God -“I will be their God, and they will be my people...”; would create a godly people - “And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.”; would include the miraculous - “Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions.”; and would be permanent -“I will put my Spirit in you...”.



THE EMPOWERING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

The Holy Spirit brings us into relationship with Christ (Jn 3v5-8; Rom.8v15-17; Gal.4v6). We become God’s children through faith in Jesus and the Spirit witnesses with our spirit that God is our Father. The Holy Spirit is described as being the “deposit”, guaranteeing what is to come. In modern Greek, the word for “deposit” (NIV) means an engagement ring (2 Cor.1v21-22; 5v5; Eph.1v13-14).

But there is another experience and work of the Holy Spirit. Whereas in salvation, the Holy Spirit brings us into the knowledge and experience of Jesus, so now Jesus wants to bring us into the knowledge and experience of the Holy Spirit. This experience is described as a “Baptism in or with the Spirit” and was exactly what John the Baptist had said Jesus would do, right at the start of Jesus’ ministry.

[John said:] I baptise you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire. (Mt.3v11).

Jesus’ last commandment as recorded in Matthew’s Gospel, was for the Church to go out into all the world and to make disciples (Mt.28v18-20). They were to proclaim the Good News (the Gospel) of forgiveness for all humankind because of what Jesus had accomplished on the Cross. This was the mandate burnt into the very heart and soul of the Church from its very beginning, its whole reason for being - to be witnesses of what God had done in His Son Jesus.

And yet Jesus then expressly stopped the disciples from doing exactly that – “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised...” (Acts 1v4).

In spite of all the teaching and training that they had received over the previous three years; in spite of the miracles they themselves had already performed; in spite of the knowledge that Jesus had been raised from the dead; in spite of their personal and living encounter with the resurrected Jesus, they lacked one crucial element. They lacked the *power* to be effective witnesses - “But you will receive *power* when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1v8).

How were they to receive this power? “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptised with water, but in a few days you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 1v4-5).

The Church needed a Baptism in the Holy Spirit before they could be sent out into the world as effective witnesses to Jesus. And it is the story of this Baptism in the Holy Spirit and the effect that it had on the life, the worship and the witness of the Early Church, which is the story of the Book of Acts.

And it all began on the Day of Pentecost...

“Before Christ sent the church into the world, he sent the Spirit into the church. The same order must be observed today”.

(John Stott – British Theologian)



OUR OWN CHURCH FAMILY

Within this booklet you will find brief accounts from members of our congregations about their own experiences of being Baptised in the Holy Spirit. For this gift of God is not something strange or something that happened long ago, or for people in other churches or in other places. It is for us— today.



FOR REFLECTION

What do we discover from the fact that Jesus told the Church to wait for the event of Pentecost before trying to witness to Him?

Could our own reluctance to witness to Jesus and our apparent ineffectiveness in witnessing to Jesus somehow be linked to an absence of our own “Pentecost”? Is there something that we are lacking?



THE DISCIPLES WERE BELIEVERS IN JESUS BEFORE PENTECOST

These 120 men and women gathered together in the Upper Room were clearly already Christians. They are addressed by Peter as “brothers” (and sisters!); they are described as being “chosen apostles” (v.2); “witnesses of the resurrection” (v.22); believers in Jesus’ resurrection (v.3); and people who call Jesus “Lord” (v.6).

Furthermore:-

- They were already “clean” from their sins (Jn.13v10;15v3).
- They were not of this world but chosen by Jesus out of this world (Jn.15v19; 17v6-8).
- They belonged to the Father and to the Son (Jn.17v9-10).
- Their names were written in Heaven (Lk.10v20).
- They already shared in Christ’s divine life (Jn.15v5).
- Jesus called them His “brothers” (Jn.20v17).
- They had already received the Holy Spirit, without whom no-one can be saved (Jn.20v22; Rom.8v9,15-16; Gal.4v6-7; 1 Cor.12v3).
- They had been taught by Jesus (Acts 1v1,3).
- They had witnessed Jesus’ miracles and performed miracles themselves.
- They were prayerful (Acts 1v14, 24).
- They had personally witnessed Jesus’ resurrection (Acts 1v3, 22).
- They had been commanded by Jesus to go into all the world as His witnesses and to make disciples even as they were disciples of Jesus (Acts 1v8; Mt.28v18-20).
- They were “believers” and apostles (Acts 1v15,25).

But they still needed to be Baptised in the Holy Spirit... A Baptism which was and is connected with the coming of the Kingdom of God (Acts 1v3-8).

This awaited event and experience of the Holy Spirit is variously described as:

- A Gift (Acts 1v4; 2v38; 10v45; 11v17).
- The Promise of the Father (Acts 1v4; 2v33, 39).
- Receiving power (Acts 1v8) - from where we get the English word “*dynamo*”
- Receiving the Spirit (8v15,17; 10v47; 19v2).
- The Holy Spirit coming upon (Acts 1v8; 8v16; 11v15; 19v6).
- Being Baptised in / with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1v5; 11v16).
- The Holy Spirit being poured out (Acts 2v33).
- Being filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2v4; 9v17).

I had given my life to Christ as a child and my faith had been real, sincere and I hope growing, albeit in fits and starts. But then at University I met people whose faith was more vibrant, more real and more immediate than mine. They spoke about having been baptised in the Holy Spirit and what a difference that this had made to them.

I spent quite a time talking with them and looking at what the Bible had to say and then one evening I asked to be filled with God's Spirit. It was a wonderful and most profound experience and there and then I received the gift of speaking in tongues. And from that moment onwards my faith came alive in a way that it had never been before and so it has continued up to this very day.



THE BAPTISM IN THE SPIRIT IN THE BOOK OF ACTS

There are five occasions mentioned in the Book of Acts where believers received this experience of the Holy Spirit. It is useful to have a look at each one in detail to see what common threads emerge.

[i] THE DAY OF PENTECOST Acts 2v1-21

What do we see?

- The 120 were already Christians when they were “all filled with the Spirit” (1v15; 2v4).
- Tongues of fire descended upon them and they spoke in tongues (2v3-4).
- These “tongues” were to God’s praise and glory (2v11) and were real languages (2v6,8). The Greek word used is *dialektos*, from which we get the English word *dialect*.
- It was their hearers who were “utterly amazed” (2v7). If anyone was emotional and ecstatic, it was the crowd, not the believers!
- The gift of tongues was not to preach, for Peter spoke to the crowd probably in Greek, the universal language of that part of the Roman world (2v14f).

[ii] SAMARIA Acts 8v4-25

What do we see?

- The Samaritans had become Christians (v12,14) and had been baptised in water (v12,16).
- They had experienced miracles and were full of joy (v6,8) but something was still missing (v14-16).
- This was another kind of baptism, a Baptism (filling) of the Holy Spirit (v.15-16), which on this occasion was given through the laying on of hands (v.17).
- This was clearly something that came after their conversion (v14-15).
- Simon Magus saw something happening immediately after the apostles laid hands on people, which was different to miracles or to joy and which he had never encountered before (v6-8,13). Was this speaking in tongues? (v17-19).

[iii] PAUL'S CONVERSION Acts 9v1-20

What do we see?

- By the time Ananias had prayed with him, Paul was already a Christian, "a chosen instrument" (v15); "brother Saul" (v17).
- Paul was filled with the Holy Spirit (v17) and either immediately or subsequently spoke in tongues (1 Cor.14v18).
- He received this filling of the Holy Spirit through hands laid on him (v17).
- Subsequently he was baptised in water (v18).

[iv] CORNELIUS Acts 10v1-48; 11v1-18

What do we see?

- Cornelius was not a Christian before Peter's visit (11v13-14).
- He and his household were converted and Baptised in the Holy Spirit at one and the same time (10v44-45; 11v15-17).
- Peter knew that they had been filled with the Holy Spirit because they heard them "speaking in tongues and praising God" (10v46).
- Peter immediately identified what had happened to Cornelius with what had happened to them at Pentecost (10v47; 11v15-16).

[v] THE EPHESIAN DISCIPLES Acts 19v1-7

What do we see?

- These were Christians - "disciples" (v.1), who had "believed" (v.2), but who had been inadequately taught (v.2). This is not surprising given the speed of the growth of the Church. (cf Apollos, as a similar example 18v24-26).
- Paul noticed that something was missing and asked in terms of a "baptism" (v.3) and a baptism connected with the Holy Spirit (v.2).

- The receiving of the Holy Spirit occurred after conversion. “When you believed”, is literally “since you believed”, i.e. *after* their coming to faith in Jesus v.2).
- They were baptised in water – “into the name of the Lord Jesus” (v.5).
- Paul laid hands on them; the Spirit fell; and they spoke in tongues and prophesied (v.6).



FOR REFLECTION

What discoveries do you make and what conclusions do you draw from these five occasions in the Book of Acts?



WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES BEING BAPTISED IN THE HOLY SPIRIT ACTUALLY MAKE?

The first time I experienced people worshipping using gifts of the Holy Spirit I was deeply disturbed – in fact, I wanted to run away not just from them, but from Christianity. It wasn't for me. But before I could escape, a woman I had never met before gave me a word from God, that the Holy Spirit had given her and that she could not possibly have otherwise known. I could no longer deny that there was so much more to being a Christian than I had ever dared to imagine – and I wanted what they had. Did I just have to wait and see if the Holy Spirit would 'zap' me, like a heavenly lottery – “It's YOU!” Years passed. Nothing. Then, I was given a copy of 'Nine O'Clock In The Morning' to read. My whole perspective changed. I searched the Bible with new eyes and I saw the truth: that baptism in the Spirit wasn't for the few but for all God's children and speaking in tongues was not just my longing, but the Spirit's longing for me. A few months after this I received baptism in the Spirit and began talking – and singing – in tongues. It was a profound experience that set my life on a whole new course. I was filled with love for Jesus and my faith sprang into life.

Clearly this gift of the Holy Spirit was considered to be essential both by Jesus and by the Early Church and you can equally see the impact that it has made on members of our own Church family and on their faith.

Looking at the times in the Book of Acts where people were Baptised in the Spirit, we can see that it had a dramatic and visible effect on those first disciples at Pentecost, so much so that they were accused of being drunk (2v13)! We have seen too, that often the Baptism in the Holy Spirit was evidenced by speaking in tongues and prophecy. But maybe the absence of specific and prescribed feelings and effects is the important thing. That each person receives in the way that is right for them.

HOWEVER we know from Scripture that the Holy Spirit does particular things and so it would only to be expected that when someone is filled with the Holy Spirit, and living a life in the Spirit, that these should be evident in their life:-

- The Spirit who lives to bring glory to Jesus and to bear witness to Him, increases our love and commitment to Christ (Jn.15v26; 16v14). It was observed of one person who had recently been Baptised in the Holy Spirit by someone who did not know what had happened, that “they were different “ and that “something had clearly happened...” and that their commitment to Christ had markedly deepened.
- The Spirit who bears witness that we are God’s children, draws us into a deeper relationship with Jesus (Rom.8v14-16).
- The Spirit who brought Jesus to life, makes Him more alive to us (Lk.1v35; Rom.1v4).
- The Spirit who is the Spirit of Truth, creates a deeper hunger for the Bible, and an increased enjoyment and understanding of God’s Word (Jn.15v26; 16v13)
- The Spirit who prays, gives us the desire and an increased ability to pray (Rom.8v26-27).
- The Spirit who gives Gifts of the Spirit, gives them to us (1 Cor.12v1-11; Rom.12v3-8; 1 Ptr.4v10-11).

NB the Baptism in the Spirit is not about gaining extra spiritual “Brownie points” or becoming “super-spiritual” or indeed of becoming more “spiritual” than anyone else. One look at the catastrophic state of the Corinthian Church should disabuse us of any such notion and Paul tells the Corinthian Church that the best way to exercise the Gifts of the Spirit is through love (1 Cor.12v31). But as a Christian who had received this experience of the Spirit said, “...we do not see ourselves better than anyone. But since our receiving the fuller workings of the Holy Spirit – and to His credit – we do testify of ourselves that we are better Christians than we each were before.



WHERE NOW? FIVE QUESTIONS TO ASK OURSELVES

1. Is the Baptism of the Spirit for today? Are there any Scriptures that tell us that it isn’t?
2. Is there any evidence that the Church today doesn’t need this same empowering of the Holy Spirit in its life, worship and witness?
3. Is there any evidence that I personally do not need this gift?
4. Does Jesus want me to be Baptised in the Spirit?
5. Do I want to be Baptised in the Holy Spirit?

“Now the Berean Jews... received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true” (Acts 17v11).

When faced by Paul's preaching and teaching, the Berean Christians responded in the most appropriate way imaginable. They looked at the Bible for themselves to see if what Paul was saying was according to the Word of God. That surely is the best way for us to examine and to explore what we have been discovering.

It would also be helpful to talk to those in our congregation who have received this Baptism in the Spirit and to find out what they experienced and what difference it has made to them.

I gave my life to the Lord when I was around 13 years old, at a Christian Summer Camp when I realised that although I had gone to Sunday School and Church, I needed to respond personally to Jesus dying for me. I was later confirmed and my faith continued to be an important part of my life. At University I heard for the first time about being baptised in the Spirit. I thought at first that this sounded strange and a bit too much, but gradually by listening to Bible teaching and by observing and talking to those who had been baptised in the Spirit – who seemed to have a more real, vibrant faith than I did – I felt that this was something I wanted for myself.

I asked a friend to pray with me, and it seemed that nothing very much had happened. She encouraged me to continue to pray and to ask for the gift of tongues. In a very matter of fact way, I said that I had a few unknown words in my head. When she asked what they were, I just said them out loud and that was the start of my receiving this gift. It has been such a blessing to me, as I can pray without worrying about what to say or how to say it, as I know that the Lord understands.

It might also be helpful to reflect on some common obstacles to believing and to receiving.

Fear

- Of God coming that close.
- Of the supernatural.
- Of things getting “out of control”.
- Of a bad experience that you have had in the past, or that you have been told about by someone else.

Doubt

- Is this gift really for me?
- What if I am prayed for and nothing happens, or have been prayed for on previous occasions and nothing seemed to have happened?
- Will I be making up any speaking in Tongues?

Sin

- Deliberate and tolerated sin will clearly be an obstacle to receiving anything from the Lord. Clearly there is a world of difference between sin of which we repent and are forgiven and sin which we have no intention of yielding to God. The Holy Spirit does not look for perfection before He blesses us but He is the *Holy Spirit!*

Occult

- Present or past involvement with the occult (personal or through the family) will also be a barrier to receiving this gift.



HOW DO I RECEIVE?

- Do you know that you are a child of God? Have you given your life to Christ?
- Is there any unconfessed and unyielded sin in your life of which you need to repent?
- Is there any occult involvement of which you need to repent or to renounce?

THEN ...

You just need to be “Thirsty”.

You just need to “Ask” and if necessary to keep on asking, (which is actually what the Greek of Luke 11v9 means – “Ask and keep on asking, seek and keep on seeking, knock and keep on knocking...”).

SO...

Renounce: Any sin and the occult.

Relax: This is a good gift and nothing to be afraid of. We are safe in Jesus’ presence and can trust His great and precious promises.

Receive: Breathe in the “Breath of God” and then breathe out, giving release to the Holy Spirit who is filling you and being open to and expectant of receiving your very own gift of Tongues. Remember, the Holy Spirit gave the disciples the words to speak but *they needed to do the speaking* (Acts 2v4; Mt.12v34)!

God is faithful to His promises, so don’t be too dependent upon or guided too much by what you may or may not be feeling. The Spirit comes in a rushing wind and in flames of fire, as He did at Pentecost but He also comes in “a gentle whisper”, as when God came to Elijah on Mount Horeb. But whichever way He chooses to come upon you, He will neither impose Himself nor coerce you into doing anything which would not be right for you. He loves you!



FOUR THINGS ABOUT THE BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

1. Far from being an afterthought or some sort of optional extra, the Baptism in the Holy Spirit is an essential part of all that Jesus came to do on earth (Mt.3v11; Mk.1v8; Lk.3v16).
2. It is a definite and unmistakable event (Acts 1v8; 2v1-4). "...this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel" (2v16).
3. It is an initial empowering and commissioning for service and for ministry – a "baptism" is a beginning (Acts 1v5) and is connected with the receiving and exercising of the Gifts of the Spirit (1 Cor.12v1-11).
4. It is the start of a life-time of continually yielding, growing and being filled (Acts 2v4; 4v31). As Paul tells the Church at Ephesus - literally "*Keep on* being filled with the Holy Spirit" (Eph.5v18). But for someone to "keep on being filled" with the Holy Spirit requires there to have been an initial filling of the Holy Spirit in the first place.

JESUS SAID

Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them." By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified. (Jn.7v37-39)

"So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. "Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" (Lk.11v9-13).



AFTERWARDS...

✓ Satan will want to make you think that nothing happened. He did it with Jesus after the Spirit came upon Him at His baptism and he will do it with you ("You are My Son...if you are God's Son..." Lk.3v22; 4v3). Resist him by using the Word of God, speaking out God's precious promises and doing so out loud if necessary, even as Jesus did - "It is written!!" (Lk. 4v1-13). If you are speaking in Tongues then use your new prayer language against his lie that you are making this up.

Listen to the Truth, not to the lie! (Jas.4v7; 1 Ptr.5v8-9).

- ✓ If you are speaking in Tongues, then regularly use this gift, as at the outset it will be new and you won't be used to praying like that. Get in the habit of praying in your new prayer language. It builds you up spiritually (1 Cor.14v14) and enriches your relationship with the Lord (Eph.5v18-20). If you haven't spoken in Tongues as yet, don't despair or give up!
- ✓ Be open to receiving other Gifts of the Holy Spirit and open to how and where God will continue to grow you and to use you (1 Cor.12v7-11; Lk.4v14; Eph.5v18; 1 Cor.12v4-11).

Therefore do not be foolish, but *understand what the Lord's will is*. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. *Instead, be filled with the Spirit*, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Eph.5v18-20).

As a Christian, you and I have the Holy Spirit. Does the Holy Spirit have you?



APPENDIX: WHAT IS SPEAKING IN TONGUES?

When I was confirmed I felt the Holy Spirit come into my life as we sung the hymn "Love Divine" and the words "Enter every trembling heart" were true for me that day and I have frequently recalled them in the years since (now over 50 years ago !). However I had another special experience of the Holy Spirit about three years ago. For many years I had been very sceptical of speaking in tongues. I was, in fact, very judgemental of those who spoke in tongues. I was lent the book "Nine o'clock in the morning" which is written by someone who had had very similar thinking to myself but eventually he, himself, began to speak in tongues. One day I was convicted of my judgemental attitude of those to whom God had given a certain gift. I then repented of my judgemental attitude and found I began to sing in tongues. Since that time I have prayed in tongues during my private prayer times and during these times I have felt very close to God and have wanted to continue in prayer for long periods of time.

This Gift of the Spirit, one of nine spiritual gifts mentioned by Paul in 1 Cor.12v4-11, often seems to cause people unnecessary worry or puzzlement. Tongues are real languages, (although Paul intriguingly also seems to hold out the possibility that some may be angelic languages 1 Cor.13v1). But either way it simply follows the well- established Biblical principle that "...out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks" (Mt.12v34)

The Gift of Tongues is dealt with in this booklet, not because it is the most important gift but because it is often the hardest gift to comprehend, both in the sense of “why?” and in the sense of “how?” And it is also the gift which often accompanies the first experience of being filled or Baptised in the Holy Spirit as we have seen from the Book of Acts. Uniquely among the gifts, it also can be exercised on one’s own to build ourselves up spiritually and to deepen our prayer life.

SOME PRELIMINARY POINTS ABOUT TONGUES

- Tongues are real languages – *glossa* / *language* (Acts 2v4,11); *dialektos*, / *dialect* (Acts 2v6,8), which were understood by the crowd (Acts 2v4,8-11).
- Tongues are a gift from God and thus are holy, whatever one might personally think, feel or fear...
- Tongues were greatly valued by Paul and if he thought that he needed them, might not we? (1 Cor.14v18).
- Tongues are a gift that Paul wanted for every believer (1 Cor.14v5).

WHAT ARE TONGUES (SPIRITUAL LANGUAGES)?

“This is a spontaneous (i.e. not learned beforehand or rehearsed) inspired utterance by the Holy Spirit, where the normal voice organs are used, but the conscious mind plays no part. The languages spoken or sung are entirely unlearned by the speaker. ‘Speaking in tongues’ or ‘praying in the Spirit’ is what happens when a Christian believer allows the indwelling Spirit to guide the form of words he utters. It is not an act of divine ventriloquism, but an act of collaboration...

(‘Come Holy Spirit’ by Bishop David Pytches)

Or to put it another way, it is the Holy Spirit speaking or singing a language of prayer with you and through you.

Why is the Baptism of the Spirit and speaking in Tongues apparently so interconnected?

- The mouth is the gateway, it is the outlet of what is happening within us.
- As we speak in Tongues, so the Holy Spirit flows up from our innermost spirit, through our mind and emotions and out of our mouth, so that all of us is involved; all of us is washed; all of us is sanctified.
- The speech part of the brain is the most dominant part of our brain.

BUT ALWAYS DECENTLY AND IN ORDER

Bearing in mind that a well-kept graveyard is decent and in order (!), nonetheless Paul is concerned that nothing should be done to wound the Body of Christ, the Church, or more positively that everything should be done to edify the Church.

Consequently he urges any who speak aloud in Tongues in a public service, to pray for the gift of interpretation in order that everyone may understand what has been said and be encouraged and built up in their faith (1 Cor.14v6-19; 12v7).

I longed to receive the gift of tongues but hardly dared to hope that it could be 'for me'. I am so ordinary and imperfect. However, I do believe in Jesus and love Him with all of my heart, soul and mind. What a joy to discover that belief is all I needed! With Dominic's encouragement, I prayed that I might be baptised in the Holy Spirit. I have to confess I was a little fearful of the violent wind from heaven and tongues of fire that might ensue! As I tentatively started to let new words and sounds come from my mouth (copying Dominic to begin with), I was acutely aware of the Lord's presence. A deep peace washed over me causing me to let go of my own thoughts. If I had been standing up I would most likely have fallen over. I had anticipated feeling elated, perhaps with tears of joy streaming down my face. But my experience was different; it was so tender and gentle, the tongues came quietly, like my soul was whispering to Jesus, sharing everything with Him in a way that ordinary words would have never given me the capacity to do. It hurt a little, letting some of that emotion out. I understand now why we talk about the gift of tongues. The exact nature of my gift is unique to me – my language, my whispers. I'm still unwrapping it with absolute awe and joy and gratitude. This gift was given tenderly and with such extravagant love at a time that was just right for me. It was given to me by the Person that knows me very best of all, I think in order that I might know Him very best of all.



WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF SPEAKING / PRAYING IN TONGUES?

They bless God

- We speak of Him and to Him in praise, adoration and intercession (Acts 2v11; 10v46; 1 Cor.14v2, 16-17).
- We honour and please Him by receiving and using His gifts (cf Lk.14v15-24).

They bless Us

- Spiritual body-building! (1 Cor.14v4; Jude 20).
- Enabling us to pray according to the will of God (Rom.8v27).
- Resting the mind when we pray in Tongues (1 Cor.14v14; Isa.28v10-12; cf 1 Cor.14v2,28). Paul writes about the mind being “unfruitful” while we pray i.e. allowing it to rest and to lie “fallow” for a while.
- Developing a greater intimacy, sharing “mysteries” with God and learning a new way of prayer (1 Cor. 14v2).
- It is a deep yielding of ourselves to God (Mt.12v34-35).

They bless Others

- They are an aid to Worship, both in Prayer and in Praise (1 Cor.14v2,16,28).
- They enable us to lengthen and to deepen our intercessory prayer time.
- They give us the words when we don't know how to pray for someone or for something and enable us to express what we are feeling and sensing from God, as we pray for or with others (Rom.8v27).
- We are enabled to pray in a very specific and focussed way.
- They are a resource in spiritual warfare, to pray into and about the problem or against the spiritual assault.
- They can give a message to the Church and when interpreted are on a par with Prophecy (1 Cor.14v5-6,13,26-28).

I grew up going to Christian schools and going to church on Sundays. In my early twenties I visited a place called Lee Abbey and had a personal encounter with Jesus. It was there that I gave my Him my life. It was when we moved to Milford and whilst I was praying with someone that I felt the need to repent for some things in my past. I also prayed to be to be filled with the Holy Spirit. I was given the gift of tongues, which I had to practice using. The more I used it the more natural it became. It has made my communication with God go to a much deeper level. When I run out of words my soul takes over and I often pray for people or sing out praises to God. I do ask God daily to refresh me in the Spirit and to fill me with all of His gifts.

They are an aid to Evangelism

- By attracting attention, as at the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2v5-12; 1 Cor.14v22).
- By being recognised, as at the Day of Pentecost.
- By being used to speak of Christ in that language to a non- believer who speaks or who understands that same language.

A classics graduate from Oxford University who was very sceptical of speaking in tongues and of the whole charismatic experience, found himself convinced and compelled when he heard an uneducated farmer giving thanks for the sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross – in fluent Latin!



WHEN MIGHT A PERSON SPEAK IN TONGUES?

There are three distinct uses of Tongues in the New Testament:-

1. When the language is not understood by the speaker but rather by others who recognise their own mother tongue being spoken. And so it gets their attention and they realise that something special is happening (Acts 2v4-8; 1 Cor.14v22).
2. The use of Tongues in public worship. The language used is again unknown to the speaker and is followed by an interpretation in English (in our case) of that message. This interpretation may come from the first speaker or may be given by someone else at the meeting. In essence it is a prophecy (1 Cor.14v4-5,27-30).
3. The use of Tongues in private devotion (1 Cor.14v4a), which because it is in private, needs no interpretation, although such an understanding may be asked for (1 Cor.14v13). Probably the majority who pray in private in Tongues have never used this gift publicly but there is no reason why they shouldn't do so.

SPEAKING AND SINGING IN TONGUES

Depending on one's personality and on the situation, sometimes one may speak in Tongues and at other times sing in Tongues. This is particularly moving and inspiring in corporate worship, where many voices are joined in harmony in a song which no-one has learned or known beforehand (1 Cor.14v15; Eph5v19-20).

○ THE OTHER GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT (1 Cor.12v1-11)

These Spiritual Gifts may at first sight seem unusual or even somewhat strange. In fact it is simply the release of the wisdom, knowledge, understanding and power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus exercised spiritual gifts, so why not the Christian filled with the Spirit of Jesus?

A Word of Wisdom

The Holy Spirit gift of knowing what to do or what to say that goes above and beyond wisdom born of human experience or understanding.

A Word of Knowledge

The revelation of a fact about a person or a situation which the person exercising that gift would not have known and could not have known.

The Gift of Faith

Faith that goes beyond the level of faith in which a believer normally operates and lives. It may be given to the one exercising the gift (e.g. Peter at the Beautiful Gate in Acts 3), or to the person receiving the gift (eg Acts 14v8-10).

The Gift of Healing

A Divine act of grace and power which brings wholeness and healing.

Miracles

Often exercised alongside the gift of Faith.

Prophecy

Not foretelling the future so much as forth-telling: speaking out the mind and the counsel of God to bring strength, encouragement and comfort (1 Cor.14v3). It brings a direct and often very personal word to a particular person and is always in agreement with Scripture.

Discerning of spirits

The revelation of the true “spirit” behind a person’s words or actions, thereby revealing their true motivations and character, whether godly or ungodly. However it also enables the one exercising this gift to ‘see’ angels and demons where that is appropriate.

Speaking in Tongues and the Interpretation of Tongues - see above.

The privilege of being able to pray and communicate with God and be soaked in his presence without the restriction and barrier of language. At times in prayer, words run out. After all, language was created by man and is infantile in scope compared to God’s greatness. You can’t properly express thoughts and feelings. The Spirit takes over and you are free.

I was prayed over to receive the gift of the Baptism in the Spirit but at first nothing happened. I was disappointed because there was no rush of euphoria as the Spirit took over. I figured it was just me... Weeks later I was praying in the car on the way to work and the gift of Tongues just suddenly started. A little at first and I almost sort of dismissed it. I didn't even tell anyone! Over time and with practice the language is growing and it is easier to slip in to. A calming presence falls over me, almost trance like which deepens the longer I stay in the prayer. I feel God’s presence. Close. Warning, can be dangerous when driving!!

How typically human of me that I sometimes forget I have this in my armoury now....

Suggested further reading

‘9 o’clock in the morning’ by Dennis Bennett [available to borrow from the Office]

‘Encounter the Holy Spirit’ by Jeannie Morgan

‘Come Holy Spirit’ by Bishop David Pytches

See also the Holy Trinity Brompton website for downloads and publications

But there are many, many others!

“Get on fire for God and men will come and see you burn.”
(John Wesley)

