

Some Distinctions to Be Noted

by David Shelby Corlett

David Shelby Corlett explores the distinctions between the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration and baptism, emphasizing the importance of understanding both for a fruitful Christian life.

Scripture: John 3:5, John 15:1, Acts 2:4, Romans 8:9, Romans 8:15, 1 Corinthians 3:1, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 4:6, Galatians 5:17

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Regeneration"

Description

David Shelby Corlett delves into the distinctions between the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration and in His Pentecostal baptism. The Scriptures emphasize being 'born of the Spirit' as the quickening of the spiritual nature, making believers new creatures in Christ Jesus. While 'adoption' signifies the relationship of the 'born again' individual to God and His family, where the Spirit bears witness that they are children of God. Jesus' analogy of the vine and branches highlights the believer's union with Him, drawing life and strength to bear fruit through abiding in Him.

Transcript

In considering this vital subject, it may be profitable to note some distinctions between the work of the Spirit in regeneration and in His Pentecostal baptism.

The work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration is emphasized in the Scriptures in many different terms. "Born of the Spirit" is used to denote the quickening of the spiritual nature when vital spiritual life is imparted to the believing person, and he is then made a new creature in Christ Jesus when "old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17). The term "adoption" is used to designate the relationship of the "born again" individual to God and the family of His children. This newborn Christian is conscious of a positive identification with God and His people through having "received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father"; and in this adoption the Spirit himself also bears witness with his spirit that he is the child of God (Rom. 8:15,16).

This same truth is emphasized by Jesus in the analogy of the vine and the branches; "I am the vine and ye are the branches" (John 15:1-6). It is in the work of regeneration that the believing one is grafted into this true Vine and because of this union as a child of God he draws his life, strength, and sustenance from the Vine, and through abiding in the Vine he is enabled to bear fruit. There has been confusion in the minds of some relative to a statement made by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:13, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body." It has been emphasized that by this statement Paul meant the baptism or fullness

of the Holy Spirit. A careful reading of this chapter will reveal that the writer was emphasizing the union of believers not only with Christ but also with other believers who were all members of the body of Christ, and that in this body harmony and unity should exist. Incidentally, he mentions that it is by the work of the Spirit that believers are made members of this body of Christ and in this instance used the term, "baptized into the body of Christ." But there is no manner of scriptural interpretation which can make this term "baptized into Christ" mean the Pentecostal baptism with the Holy Spirit. It is a term used to designate what we have already emphasized, an incidental mention of the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration by which the believer, the branch, is engrafted into Christ, the Vine. It is well to note that Jesus emphasized that "every branch in me that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." Also that Paul, after mentioning that the Corinthian believers were through the Spirit made members of the body of Christ, emphasized "a more excellent way" -- the way of perfect love. Note too, that according to Peter's testimony the baptism with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost brought this purging to these disciples, the branches of the true Vine, for it was then their hearts were purified by faith.

Therefore, there is a difference between being "born of the Spirit" and being "baptized with the Spirit." Jesus emphasized the necessity of being born of the Spirit in His conversation with Nicodemus. "Except a man be born ... of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God ... that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:5, 6). But it is certain that the experience noted in Acts 2:4, "They were all filled with the Holy Ghost," is something beyond the birth of the Spirit. In the birth of the Spirit the spiritual nature of men is made alive. He becomes a partaker of a new life -- a divine nature or life. By receiving the baptism with the Spirit, the "born again" Christian is filled with the Holy Spirit. We might find an analogy of this in the life of Jesus. He was begotten of the Holy Spirit. His life before His baptism was lived in close relationship with the Spirit; but He was anointed with the Holy Spirit at the time of His baptism with water by John the Baptist, when the Spirit came upon Him in the form of a dove, anointing Him for His public ministry.

There is also a difference between having the Holy Spirit and being baptized with the Spirit. All Christians have the Holy Spirit but not all Christians are baptized with the Spirit. A failure to recognize this brings one into confusion.

It is quite evident from the Scriptures that the regenerated believer has the Holy Spirit dwelling within him. "Regeneration is the lodgment by the Holy Spirit of the new principle of life ... The Spirit in the new birth touches the whole nature, the thoughts, the feelings and the will, so that the man is a new creature.

Strength is supplied to the believer by the inner presence of the Holy Spirit. His indwelling is by faith. If faith declines, the Spirit's sphere in the soul is narrowed. If confidence in God is 'cast away' then the Spirit withdraws, or rather, is excluded by unbelief, and love, the vital spark of the spiritual life, expires. Hence the question whether the Spirit shall be a merely transient impulse toward purity, or a lasting power, depends upon the free will of the regenerate soul" (Steele, Gospel of the Comforter, pages 104,107). "It is one thing to have the Holy Spirit; it is another to have Him completely possessing us. No one can be regenerated without having Him; but there is the other side of it when He fills our entire being and has His way with us" (Kelly, Gospel of Comforter, page 369).

Let us consider some scriptures which emphasize the fact that all Christians have the Holy Spirit. "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Rom. 8:9). Here it is stated that we must have the Holy Spirit to be Christ's in any degree. "Ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Rom. 8:15, 16). "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba.

Father" (Gal. 4:6). Here it is stated that the Holy Spirit has been sent into the hearts of sons of God, those who have been born again, "crying, Abba, Father." In the first epistle to the Corinthian church, chapter three, it states the condition of that church. "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ" (1 Cor. 3:1). But let us read farther down in the same chapter, verse sixteen, where we find: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"

The same truth is emphasized in chapter six, verse nineteen. Here we have distinctly stated that they were "babes in Christ," and as such they were carnal, but yet they had the Spirit of God dwelling in them. It looks very much like the Holy Spirit dwells in carnal Christians. "But could they be unholy, while they were 'temples of the Holy Ghost?' Yes; that they were temples of the Holy Ghost is certain, and it is equally certain, they were, in some degree, carnal, that is unholy." -- John Wesley, "Sin in Believers."

Now in this connection let us note Galatians 5:17, "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." Here we have the exact difficulty stated. They were possessors of the Holy Spirit, but "the flesh" or carnal nature was also resident within them. As a result there was an internal warfare between the old nature and the indwelling Spirit. "The apostle here (Gal. 5:17) directly affirms that the flesh, evil nature, opposes the Spirit, even in believers; that even in the regenerate, there are two principles, 'contrary the one to the other.' ...

A man may have the Spirit of God dwelling in him, and may 'walk after the Spirit,' though he still feels 'the flesh lusting against the Spirit.' " -- John Wesley, "Sin in Believers." Such a warfare kept the Corinthian Christians in a state of perpetual babyhood. And this warfare keeps all Christians from being what they should be, that is, from being what they desire or would like to be as Christians. These scriptures prove that all Christians have the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of life, as the Spirit of adoption certifying to their sonship, and as an indwelling presence warning against the presence of "the flesh" or the carnal nature.

It is this fleshly or carnal condition that keeps them from being filled or baptized with the Holy Spirit. To say that only those who are entirely sanctified have the Holy Spirit dwelling within them causes many honest Christians to question the work of entire sanctification. They are conscious of the presence of the Holy Spirit in their hearts; yet they are likewise conscious of the presence of carnal disposition or inbred sin. The Spirit does not entirely fill them. They are not baptized with the Spirit. Let us quote from other writers:

"In speaking of a 'second change' of 'being saved from all sin and perfected in love,' John Wesley says, 'If they call this receiving the Holy Spirit, they may; only the phrase, in that sense, is not scriptural, and not quite proper; for they all received the Holy Ghost when they were justified. God then sent forth the Spirit of His Son into their hearts, crying, Abba, Father.' " -- Steele, A Defense of Christian Perfection, page 108.

"And as the heart is renewed by the active agency of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit himself dwells within the believer's heart as 'the Spirit of adoption,' or 'Spirit of assurance,' where, by His own presence, He makes the heart to burn with the sense of the divine love, and by His presence alone is the Christian life continued as a reality ... And because the Holy Spirit does come, in regeneration, the inward warfare so well known to the testimony of Christians is the result ... The Holy Spirit, who came in in regeneration, cannot purify and order the heart and life, perhaps not in any particular, just as He would until all is yielded to Him in full consecration and He, through the door of appropriating faith, is permitted to come into every room, from kitchen to parlor and from cellar to garret" (J. B. Chapman, "The Holy Spirit," pages 11, 16).

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