

(A Good Foundation) 6. Baptism in the Holy Spirit

by Zac Poonen

The baptism in the Holy Spirit is the experience of being empowered by God to live a life that pleases Him and to serve Him effectively.

Scripture: Matthew 3:11

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Spiritual Empowerment"

Description

Zac Poonen preaches on the two essential needs of every individual: the forgiveness of sins from the past, accomplished through Christ's death, and the empowerment to live a life pleasing to God in the future, provided by the Holy Spirit. Many struggle to realize their need for God's power, either seeking it early on or after years of failed attempts. The baptism in the Holy Spirit is crucial for believers to be empowered to fulfill God's will and be effective witnesses for Christ, as seen in the New Testament promises.

Transcript

There are two needs that we all have. The first relates to the past - the forgiveness of our sins. The second relates to the future - enablement to live a life that pleases God. Our first need is taken care of by the death of Christ. To meet the second, God gives us the power of His Holy Spirit.

Power for Life and for Service

We could never have met that first need by ourselves. God had to meet it. It's likewise with the second. We cannot live a life that pleases God or that fulfills all His will, in our own strength. Some are wise enough to acknowledge this right at the beginning of their Christian life and so they seek for God's power straight-away. Others discover it the hard way - by trying and failing repeatedly for many years and then turning to God for His power.

Unfortunately there are still others who after falling and failing repeatedly, finally resign themselves to a life of defeat, believing that it is impossible to live victoriously in this life.

This also applies to our serving the Lord and being a witness for Him. Most believers realise, immediately after their conversion, that they should be witnesses for the Lord. But they often find themselves tongue-tied and powerless. Some accept this as an unfortunate trait of their personality, and give up all

hope of ever becoming powerful witnesses for Christ.

Others realise that God has promised them the power of the Holy Spirit. And so they seek God for this power and receive it. And they are filled with boldness and endued with supernatural gifts to be fiery, unashamed and effective witnesses for Christ.

It is one thing to be born of the Spirit. That's how we become children of God. But it's quite another thing to be baptized (immersed) in the Holy Spirit. That's how we become empowered to be what God wants us to be and to do what God wants us to do.

Our New-Covenant Birthright

Under the old covenant, the Holy Spirit came only upon certain people, to enable them to fulfil a specific task for God. Under the new covenant, however, the Holy Spirit can be received by all. He has come to show us the glory of Jesus and to transform us into His likeness.

John the Baptist pointed to two ministries that Jesus would fulfil - one was to take away sins and the other was to baptize people in the Holy Spirit (John 1:29, 33). We need to experience both of these.

The first promise in the New Testament is:

He will save His people from their sins (Matthew 1:21).

The second promise in the New Testament is:

He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11).

It's significant that the New Testament opens with these two promises. This was the beginning of a new era in God's dealings with man - the new covenant. This is then our double birthright as children of God - to be saved from our sins and to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. And God certainly wants to give us our full birthright - not just half of it.

The first five books of the New Testament each begin with the promise of the baptism in the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:5). Yet so many Christians have neglected to claim this for themselves.

Rivers of Living Water

The Holy Spirit is pictured in the New Testament as a river flowing from the throne of God and falling to earth (Revelation 22:1; Acts 2:33). To be baptised in the Holy Spirit is to be immersed under this waterfall. Jesus said that all those who thirsted could come to Him and receive the Holy Spirit so that rivers of living water could flow out from their innermost being (John 7:37).

The experience of the average believer, however, is more akin to the hand-pump - a life of struggling and pumping up a few drops of blessing from a dry heart. Yet it need not be like that. If our dryness would only drive us to the Lord, things could be different. To have rivers of blessing flowing out from us to all who come in touch with us is the will of God for our lives.

The first step towards this is to acknowledge our need. Many believers are caught up in foolish arguments about words. But it is power that we need, not correct terminology. What is the use having our terminology

right, if we are as dry as a bone? It's far better to be honest and to come to God, confessing that rivers of blessing are not flowing out through us. Having taken that first step, we can then trust God to grant us what we ask for.

All we need in order to be baptized in the Holy Spirit are thirst (an intense desire, born out of a great longing to glorify God) and faith (the absolute confidence that God will give us what He has promised). Let us ask then, with thirst and with faith, for this power, and God will not deny us our request.

The Enduement of Power

The first apostles had forsaken everything to follow Jesus. But they still had to wait until they were baptized in the Holy Spirit before they could go out and fulfil their God-ordained ministry.

Jesus Himself needed to be anointed with the Holy Spirit and power before He could begin His public ministry (Acts 10:38). If even He needed this anointing, how much more we need it.

Jesus told His apostles to wait in Jerusalem until they were 'clothed with power' (Luke 24:49). And just before He ascended up to heaven, He told them again that when the Holy Spirit came upon them they would 'receive power' (Acts 1:8). On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was poured out on them. And those cowardly men were immediately transformed into bold, fiery witnesses for the Lord (Acts 2:1-4). What they received was exactly what Jesus had told them that they would receive - power.

What we need in order to live the Christian life is not just a doctrine but the power of God in our life. The baptism in the Holy Spirit gives us power for godliness as well as power for service.

The Variety of the Spirit's Working

The Holy Spirit is likened to the wind in the Scriptures; and the wind blows in different ways at different times. "So is everyone who is born of the Spirit", Jesus said (John 3:8). Each believer's experience will therefore be different in the external details of being baptised in the Holy Spirit. The inner enduement with power however, is what really matters.

God gives us 'gifts of power' through the Spirit so that we can serve Him effectively in building up the church as the body of Christ. He is the One however Who determines which gift each of us should have.

Prophecy (the ability to preach powerfully to challenge, encourage and comfort) is the most useful of these gifts (1 Corinthians 14:1-5). There are also gifts of serving, teaching, healing, exhorting, giving money, leadership, etc., (Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:8-10). The ability to speak in unknown languages ('the gift of tongues') is another gift that God gives, to enable us to pray and praise Him, without the limitations of our mind and our mother-tongue.

If you have not been baptised in the Spirit, seek God and claim your birthright. Ask Him also to give you an assurance of this. "If you being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him....You do not have because you do not ask" (Luke 11:13; James 4:2).

Let us then cry out to God with all our hearts, and say like Jacob said to God at Peniel, "I will not let You go until You bless Me" (Genesis 32:26).

There is no partiality with God. What He has done for others He will do for you. Even today, He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6). He is more than eager to give the Holy Spirit in His fullness to all who desire to glorify Him.

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