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Bridgeway Church / Foundations
The Holy Spirit (2)

The Holy Spirit: Who is He and How do I Experience Him?
Part Two

Baptism in the Holy Spirit

Paula was raised in a Christian home where church attendance was commonplace. But it wasn't until she was eleven years old that she began to take a serious interest in who Jesus is. That summer she attended a church camp and for the very first time consciously repented of her sins and put her faith in the atoning death of Jesus as her only hope for eternal life. It was a wonderful experience that brought both joy and a sense of relief. She never doubted from that moment on that she was a child of God.

The next few years proved difficult for Paula. She was not especially attractive and boys never seemed to pay her much attention. Her grades were average, at best, and she had few friends. When she turned sixteen Paula was invited to an overnight party where she took her first drink of beer. She won instant acceptance with a small group of classmates who before would hardly give her the time of day. She soon discovered that as long as she joined in on whatever they were doing, they included and affirmed her. Her heart was often troubled as she recognized how her behavior was contrary to what she had been taught in Sunday school, but the fear of rejection was too powerful to overcome.

It wasn't until Paula was in her second year of college that things began to change. She accepted the invitation of a sorority sister to attend a Bible-study that met each Wednesday night. It was here that she began to awaken to how far she had wandered from the Lord. She was brokenhearted and grieved that she had lived in such indifference to the Lord's faithful appeal that she return to her first love. One Wednesday night she asked that some of the girls in her Bible study group pray for her. Paula knew that they believed in spiritual gifts, but the church she grew up in had always warned against such things. As they laid hands on her, Paula cried out to Jesus to forgive her for those many years of spiritual apathy. One of the girls praying for Paula then said, "Oh, Lord Jesus, we ask that you would pour out your Spirit on Paula and empower her to live and witness for you as she never has before."

Suddenly Paula felt a strange warmth envelop her like a blanket. She sensed what she later described as a geyser erupting from deep within her soul. Not really knowing what was happening, she then began to cry out to Jesus her praise and gratitude, but in words she had never before spoken. The unfamiliarity of her experience was exceeded only by the joy and peace that it brought. From that day to the present, Paula has sought by God's grace to live passionately for the Son of God. From that day to the present, she has also prayed in this strange language that her friends told her is the gift of speaking in tongues.

What happened to Paula? If she were to ask you to open the Bible and explain her experience, what texts would you use? What would you call it? Was she *baptized in the Holy Spirit*? Was she *filled with the Holy Spirit*? Was she *anointed with the Holy Spirit*? Or did she simply experience a renewal of faith and the profound assurance of salvation that the apostle Paul had in mind in Romans 8:16 when he spoke of the Spirit bearing witness with our spirit "that we are children of God"? Or was her experience nothing more than the emotional fruit of manipulation by her friends who wanted to win her over to their strange brand of Christianity?

What's at Stake?

The debate over Spirit-baptism may be summarized by answering this question: "Is the Christian's reception of the Spirit characterized by one or two stages?" Or again, "Is Spirit-baptism an *initiator* experience for *all* Christians or a *second-stage* experience that only *some* receive?" Are all Christians automatically baptized in the Spirit at the moment they first trust in Christ for salvation? Or are some, if not most, baptized in the Spirit at some point in life subsequent to their initial conversion? Was Paula baptized in the Spirit at the age of eleven when she trust Jesus at church camp, or did it happen nine years later during that mid-week Bible study?

A. One-stage views

According to interpretations in this category, *spirit-baptism is simultaneous with and essentially the same as regeneration and conversion*. There is little variation among those who espouse this view. Spirit-baptism is understood as a phenomenon that comes to all Christians at the moment of the new birth. The only significant division among the proponents of this view concerns whether or not spirit-baptism is “experiential”.

Some, such as British scholar and pastor John Stott (and American scholar Richard Gaffin), contend that spirit-baptism is *non-experiential* and occurs below the level of human consciousness. In other words, it really happens to you, but you can't feel it or hear it or see it. Others, such as James D. G. Dunn, argue that spirit-baptism is a *felt* and often dramatic *experience*.

B. Two-stage views

According to interpretations in this category, spirit-baptism is *subsequent* to and *distinct* from regeneration and conversion. Generally speaking, history reveals no fewer than six groups that advocate some variation of the two-stage approach to the Christian's reception and experience of the Holy Spirit. The most exhaustive treatment of these issues is found in H. I. Lederle's book, *Treasures Old and New: Interpretations of "Spirit-Baptism" in the Charismatic Renewal Movement* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1988).]

1. *The Reformed Sealers* (e.g., Richard Sibbes, Thomas Goodwin, John Owen, Martyn Lloyd-Jones). These men generally identify spirit-baptism with the “sealing” of the Holy Spirit described in Eph. 1:13.

“In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory” (Eph. 1:13-14).

2. *The Wesleyans*, i.e., advocates of the doctrine of entire sanctification (e.g., John Wesley, John Fletcher, William Booth, Oswald Chambers, the Church of the Nazarene)

Wesley taught a second transforming work of grace, distinct from and subsequent to the new birth, in which the Spirit roots out of the Christian's heart all sinful motivation. The result is that “the whole of his [the Christian's] mental and emotional energy is henceforth channeled into love for God and others: love that is Christlike and supernatural, strong and steady, purposeful and passionate, and free from any contrary or competing affection whatsoever” (J. I. Packer, *Keep in Step with the Spirit*, 132).

This state of “perfection”, according to Wesley, occurs instantaneously through the same insistent, expectant, empty-handed faith through which we received the grace of justification. One may still lack knowledge and act foolishly. But such “mistakes” are not to be regarded as “moral transgressions”. Perfection, then, is primarily a matter of love for God and men being the constant driving force in one's life. On occasion, both Wesley and his followers would refer to this experience as the “baptism in the Holy Spirit”.

3. *The Keswick Movement* (e.g., Hannah Whitall Smith, F. B. Meyer, Andrew Murray, R. A. Torrey, A. J. Gordon, A. B. Simpson)

According to Lederle, the Keswick view “preserves the Wesleyan two-stage grid, but it rejects the view that believers' hearts may become perfect in love. The second work of grace was not an eradicating of inbred sin but rather living a life of victory in which a perfection of deeds is achieved” (11). ***This second work of grace was seen as an endowment with power rather than a purification from sin.***

The key to Keswick theology is a *passive* view of faith in which one confesses one's inability, reckons oneself dead to sin (much emphasis is placed on Romans 6:1-14), and “rests” in Jesus. This occurs as a crisis event and issues in the “higher life” wherein the believer experiences victory over all known sin. The emphasis is not on eradication of sin from the heart but on an endowment of power for obedience and ministry.

4. *Pentecostalism* (e.g., the Assemblies of God). The classical Pentecostal view is clearly articulated in points 7. and 8. of the “Statement of Fundamental Truths” of the Assemblies of God:

“7. The Promise of the Father. All believers are entitled to, and should ardently expect and earnestly seek, the promise of the Father, the Baptism in the Holy Ghost and fire, according to the command of our Lord Jesus Christ. This was the normal experience of all the early Christian Church. With it comes the enduement of power for life and service, the bestowment of the gifts and their uses in the work of the ministry (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4,8; 1 Cor. 12:1-31). This wonderful experience is *distinct from and subsequent to* the experience of the new birth (Acts 10:44-46; 11:14-16; 15:7-9) [emphasis mine].

8. The Evidence of the Baptism in the Holy Ghost. The Baptism of believers in the Holy Ghost is witnessed by the initial physical sign of speaking with other tongues as the Spirit of God gives them utterance (Acts 2:4). The speaking in tongues in this instance is the same in essence as the gift of tongues (1 Cor. 12:4-10,28) but different in purpose and use.”

There are three fundamental elements in the classical view:

First, there is the doctrine of **subsequence**. Spirit-baptism is always subsequent to and therefore distinct from conversion. The time intervening between the two events may be momentary or conceivably years (nine years, for example, in the case of Paula).

Second, there is an emphasis on **conditions**. Depending on whom you read the conditions on which spirit-baptism is suspended may include repentance, confession, faith, prayers, waiting (“tarrying”), seeking, yielding, etc. The obvious danger here is in dividing the Christian life in such a way that *salvation* becomes a *gift* to the *sinner* whereas the *fullness of the Spirit* becomes a *reward* to the *saint*. But all is of grace. All comes with Christ.

Third, they emphasize the doctrine of **initial evidence**. The initial and physical evidence of having been baptized in the Spirit is speaking in tongues. If one has not spoken in tongues, one has not been baptized in the Spirit. According to this view, Paula was certainly saved when she accepted Christ at church camp. But she wasn't baptized in the Spirit until college, the proof of which is her experience of speaking in tongues for the first time when her friends prayed for her. A distinction is often made between tongues as a “sign” (which all Spirit-baptized believers experience, but may subsequently lose) and tongues as a “gift” (a permanent charism bestowed on only some).

5. *The Sacramental View* (Roman Catholicism). Although this interpretation is found predominantly among Roman Catholics, occasionally one finds a representative of the sacramental view in certain Protestant groups, primarily Lutherans and Presbyterians (largely because of their belief in infant baptism).

The original RC view of Spirit-baptism is that it is “a ‘release’ of the Spirit – a revitalization or flowering of the sacramental grace received in Christian initiation, breaking through into the personal conscious experience of the believer” (Lederle, pp. 105-06). Catholic theologian Kilian McDonnell argues that every member of the church who received the sacrament of water baptism was baptized in the Spirit at that same time. This “grace” has, as it were, “lain dormant, and at a particular moment in time or over a longer period it breaks through into the awareness of the individual. It is this conscious experience which is generally called ‘the baptism in the Holy Spirit’ in charismatic circles” (Lederle, p. 108). Cardinal Leon J. Suenens writes:

“The ‘newness’ then is of a particular quantity: we are concerned here with a new coming of the Spirit already present, of an ‘outpouring’ which does not come from outside, but springs up from within” (*A New Pentecost?* [Glasgow: Collins, 1977], p. 80).

Lederle challenges calling such an experience “new” in any sense of the term:

“The major disadvantage of this interpretation is that the renewal experience cannot be seen as something new or something that God is doing in people’s lives at the time at which they experience it. As a ‘release of the Spirit’ it is not a coming or a receiving of the Spirit but simply the activation of what has been received at a previous sacramental rite. The change that takes place in a Christian’s

life is not interpreted as the result of any new or direct action of God. It is merely a change in the believer's subjective awareness" (109).

In light of this emphasis on the "release" or "flowering" or "emergence" of something always hitherto present, it may be questioned whether the sacramental view of Spirit-baptism should even be regarded as a "two-stage" approach. Indeed, the Catholic emphasis is on the initial deposit of the "grace" of the Holy Spirit at baptism, with a subsequent subjective apprehension or experience of the Spirit's presence.

6. *The Contemporary Charismatic View*

Generally speaking, most charismatics endorse the two-stage doctrine of subsequence. Many, however, reject any conditions on which Spirit-baptism is suspended and do not believe all Spirit-baptized Christians necessarily speak in tongues. A growing number of charismatics are beginning to question the doctrine of subsequence (e.g., Thomas Smail and the late David Watson).

C. *An Integrative Approach: The Theology of the Third Wave*

The *Third Wave* is a term used to identify evangelicals who not only believe in but consistently practice and minister in the full range of the Spirit's gifts. According to this view, Spirit-baptism describes what happens when one becomes a Christian. Therefore, all Christians, by definition, have been baptized in the Holy Spirit. However, there are also multiple, *subsequent* experiences of the Spirit's activity. After conversion the Spirit may yet "come" with varying degrees of intensity, wherein the Christian is "overwhelmed", "empowered", "anointed", or in some sense "endued". This "release" of new power, this "manifestation" of the Spirit's intimate presence, is most likely to be identified with what the NT calls the "filling" of the Spirit. John Wimber is an articulate advocate of this view:

"How do we experience Spirit baptism? It comes at conversion. . . . Conversion and Holy Spirit baptism are simultaneous experiences. The born-again experience is the consummate charismatic experience" (*Power Points*, 136).

Paul's statement in *1 Corinthians 12:12-13* (especially v. 13) is the principal text for this topic.

"For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and all were made to drink of one Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:12-13).

1. Some insist Paul is describing a *second blessing* that all the Corinthian believers had experienced. Not all Christians, however, were recipients of this grace (though it was available to them). There are several problems with this view:

- a. If this is what Paul meant, why didn't he say "you all" instead of "we all"?
- b. 1 Corinthians 3:1-3 appears inconsistent with the idea that all the Corinthians had entered into a higher, more spiritual phase of the Christian life.
- c. If this view is correct, those who lack this second blessing do not belong to the body of Christ.
- d. The context of 1 Corinthians 12 militates against this view. The point of the apostle is that all, regardless of their gift, belong to the body as co-equal and interdependent members. The idea of a Spirit-baptized elite would play directly into the hands of those who were the source of division in Corinth. Again, Paul's emphasis in 1 Cor. 12 is their *common* experience of the Holy Spirit, not what one group has that another does not. Gordon Fee observes that "Paul's present concern is not to delineate how an individual becomes a believer, but to explain how the many of them, diverse as they are, are in fact one body. The answer: The Spirit, whom all alike have received" (*God's Empowering Presence*, 178).

[Note: if this view is correct, those who espouse it (classical Pentecostals) must abandon their doctrine of "initial evidence". In other words, if *all* the Corinthians had received this second blessing then they *all* should

have spoken in tongues (as “initial evidence” of their Spirit-baptism). But clearly not all believers in Corinth spoke in tongues (see 1 Cor. 14:5).]

2. Others argue that the preposition *eis* does not mean that Spirit-baptism incorporates one *into* the body of Christ. Rather, *eis* means something along the lines of “with a view to benefiting” or “for the sake of,” the idea being that Spirit-baptism prepares them for service/ministry to the body in which they had *previously* been placed by faith in Christ. Grammatically speaking, had this been Paul's intent, he would have used another preposition that more clearly expresses the idea (e.g., *heneka*, “for the same of,” or *huper* plus the genitive, “in behalf of, for the sake of”).

It should be noted that the preposition *eis* has two fundamental meanings: 1) a *local* sense, indicating that into which all were baptized, or 2) a reference to the *goal* of the action, indicating the purpose or aim of the baptizing action, i.e., “*so as to become* one body.”

3. Another view is that Paul is describing a baptism *BY* the Holy Spirit into Christ for salvation (which all Christians experience at conversion) whereas elsewhere in the NT it is Jesus who baptizes *IN* the Holy Spirit for power (which only some Christians receive, though it is available to all). Hence:

At conversion → HS → baptizes ALL → “into” JC → salvation
After conversion → JC → baptizes SOME → “in” HS → power

a. Part of the motivation for this view is the seemingly awkward phrase, “*in* one Spirit *into* one body.” Hence, the rendering, “*by* one Spirit *into* one body.” But what sounds harsh in English is not at all so in Greek! Indeed, as D. A. Carson points out, “the combination of Greek phrases nicely stresses exactly the point that Paul is trying to make: *all* Christians have been baptized *in* one Spirit; *all* Christians have been baptized *into* one body” (*Showing the Spirit*, p. 47).

b. Wayne Grudem also points to the same terminology in 1 Cor. 10:2 - “all were baptized *into* Moses *in* the cloud and *in* the sea.” Here the *cloud* and the *sea* are the “elements” that surrounded or overwhelmed the people and *Moses* points to the new life of participation in the Mosaic Covenant and the fellowship of God's people of which he was the leader. Grudem explains:

“It is not that there were two locations for the same baptism, but one was the element in which they were baptized and the other was the location in which they found themselves after the baptism. This is very similar to 1 Corinthians 12:13 - the Holy Spirit was the *element* in which they were baptized, and the body of Christ, the church, was the *location* in which they found themselves after that baptism” (768).

c. In all of the other texts referring to Spirit-baptism the preposition *en* means “in”, describing the element in which one is, as it were, immersed. In no text is the Holy Spirit ever said to be the agent by which one is baptized. Jesus is the baptizer. The Spirit is he in whom we are engulfed or the “element” with which we are saturated.

It should be noted that in the NT to be baptized “by” someone is always expressed by the preposition *hupo* followed by a genitive noun. People were baptized “by” John the Baptist in the Jordan river (Mt. 3:6; Mark 1:5; Lk. 3:7). Jesus was baptized “by” John (Mt. 3:13; Mark 1:9). The Pharisees had not been baptized “by” John (Lk. 7:30), etc. Most likely, then, if Paul had wanted to say that the Corinthians had all been baptized “by” the Holy Spirit he would have used *hupo* with the genitive, not *en* with the dative.

4. Another variation is to argue that whereas v. 13a refers to conversion, v. 13b describes a second, post-conversion work of the Holy Spirit. But:

a. Parallelism is a common literary device employed by the biblical authors. Here Paul employs two different metaphors that describe the same reality.

b. Whatever occurs to those in v. 13a occurs to those in v. 13b. The same “we all” who were baptized in one Spirit into one body were also made to drink of the same Spirit. The activity in the two phrases is co-extensive.

5. Some insist that v. 13 says nothing at all about baptism in the Spirit. Rather, the verse is describing the ordinances/sacraments of the church: water baptism in v. 13a and the Lord's Supper in v. 13b.

a. This view is dependent on the unbiblical theory that the Spirit is received at the time of water baptism.

b. There is no hint anywhere in the NT that drinking the cup of communion is an "imbibing/drinking of the Holy Spirit."

6. The most likely interpretation, in my opinion, is that Paul is using two vivid metaphors to describe our experience of the Holy Spirit at the time of conversion, at the time when we became members of the body of Christ, the Church:

Baptism, or immersion in the Holy Spirit, and
Drinking to the fill of the Holy Spirit . . .

the purpose or goal of which is to unite us all in one body.

Thus, our "saturation" with the Spirit, our experience of being "engulfed" in and "deluged" and "inundated" by the Holy Spirit results in our participation in the spiritual organism of the body of Christ, the Church. Some suggest that in v. 13b Paul may be alluding to the OT imagery of the golden age to come in which the land and its people have the Spirit poured out on them:

"Until the Spirit is poured out upon us from on high, and the wilderness becomes a fertile field, and the fertile field is considered as a forest, then justice will dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness will abide in the fertile field" (Isa. 32:15).

"For I will pour out water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out My Spirit on your offspring, and My blessing on your descendants" (Isa. 44:3).

"And I will not hide My face from them any longer, for I shall have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel, declares the Lord" (Ezek. 39:29).

Thus, conversion is an experience of the Holy Spirit analogous to the outpouring of a sudden flood or rainstorm on parched ground, transforming dry and barren earth into a well-watered garden (cf. Jer. 31:12). Fee points out that "such expressive metaphors (immersion in the Spirit and drinking to the fill of the Spirit) . . . imply a much greater experiential and visibly manifest reception of the Spirit than many have tended to experience in subsequent church history. Paul may appeal to their common experience of Spirit as the presupposition for the unity of the body precisely because, as in Gal. 3:2-5, the Spirit was a dynamically experienced reality, which had happened to all" (181).

Conclusion

1. Baptism in the Spirit is a metaphor that describes our experience of the Spirit at *conversion*: we are immersed and submerged in Him and forever enjoy His presence and power.

2. *All* Christians are baptized in the Spirit at the moment of the new birth, not subsequent to it.

3. Biblical usage demands that we apply the terminology of "Spirit-baptism" to the conversion experience of all believers. However, this *in no way restricts* the activity of the Spirit to conversion! The NT endorses and encourages multiple, subsequent experiences of the Spirit's power and presence.

4. Evangelicals are *right* in affirming that all Christians have experienced Spirit-baptism at conversion. They are *wrong* in minimizing (sometimes even denying) the reality of subsequent, additional experiences of the Spirit in the course of the Christian life.

5. Charismatics are *right* in affirming the reality and importance of post-conversion encounters with the Spirit that empower, enlighten, and transform. They are *wrong* in calling this experience "Spirit-baptism".

Discussion Questions

- (1) Discuss among yourselves the experience of “Paula.” Have any of you had a similar experience?
- (2) What are the primary differences between those who hold to a “one-stage” view of Christian experience and those who hold to a “two-stage” view? Which one do you believe? Give your reasons.
- (3) Is there a biblical basis for believing what the Assemblies of God and other classical Pentecostal denominations (and many charismatic Christians) say about the timing of Spirit baptism? In other words, what are the good arguments for the doctrine of subsequence? What are the arguments against it?
- (4) Read over again the five conclusions at the end of the lesson above. Discuss each one. Do you agree with all of them? If not, why not?