

Journey to Pentecost ON MISSION

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A friend of mine said in a sermon that if the Holy Spirit suddenly were taken out of this world, 95% of what we are doing in our churches would continue. What do you think about that?

If the Holy Spirit suddenly were taken out of your life, how much of what you do would continue as before?

This month, as we journey toward Pentecost, we are keeping it personal with the Holy Spirit. As we set our aim at knowing the Holy Spirit better, more personally, we began with these words from Jesus:

John 14

¹⁵ "If you love me, obey my commandments. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Advocate, who will never leave you. ¹⁷ He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. The world cannot receive Him, because it isn't looking for Him and doesn't recognize Him. But you know Him, because He lives with you now and later will be in you.

Notice the final words: *"He lives WITH you now and later will be IN you."*

The Holy Spirit lives WITH us all, as our Advocate, who reveals the Father's love for us in so many ways, pointing us toward Christ.

After He was glorified, through His death and resurrection, Jesus sent the Holy Spirit INTO us, as the Life-giver, the Author of a new birth, who reveals God's Son in us.

All of this invites a growing fellowship with the Holy Spirit. This fellowship is the source of day-to-day mercies, protecting interventions, and gracious provision.

Yet, there is a third dimension of fellowship with the Spirit, reserved for those in whom He dwells, which opens amazing doors of opportunity and foreshadows the powers of the life to come. It is signified by the word, UPON.

Upon You

In the Bible, this first appears in the Book of Numbers, chapter 11, when Moses was needing some relief and help for the immense task of leading the Hebrew people. God said, *"I will take some of the Spirit that is upon you, and I will put the Spirit upon them also. They will bear the burden of the people along with you, so you will not have to carry it alone."* (Numbers 11:17)

Clearly, Moses' capacity to lead was based on the Spirit being UPON him. This would become true also for the seventy elders whom he chose to assist him. *"Then he gave the seventy elders the same Spirit that was upon Moses. And when the Spirit rested upon them, they prophesied. But this never happened again."* (Numbers 11:25)

Moses was so impressed by the results that he said, *"I wish that all the Lord's people were prophets and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them all!"* (Numbers 11:29)

This was the pattern of the Old Testament: the Spirit came upon certain individuals to produce certain works; in other words, individually, occasionally, and temporarily. You'll find it in the Book of Judges and the other historical books, and the books of the prophets of Israel.

But, John the Baptizer, the last of the prophets under the First Covenant, testified of a change that was coming when he identified Jesus of Nazareth as the Hebrew Messiah. He said, *"I saw the Holy Spirit descending like a dove from heaven and resting (staying) upon Him. I didn't know He was the one, but when God sent me to baptize with water, He told me, 'The One on whom you see the Spirit descend and rest is the One who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' I saw this happen to Jesus, so I testify that He is the Chosen One of God (Messiah)."* (John 1:32-34)

John revealed a fundamental ministry of Jesus Christ: to baptize with the Holy Spirit. During His life on earth, He empowered His disciples, much like He had the judges and prophets under the Old Testament, but after His resurrection from the dead, there was a shift.

Jesus told His disciples, *"Look, I am sending you what my Father promised. But stay in the city until you have been CLOTHED with power from on high (Luke 24:49). You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes UPON you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."* (Acts 1:8)

And on the Day of Pentecost, Jesus fulfilled His promise: *"ALL of them were filled with the Holy Spirit, and they began to speak in other languages as the Spirit enabled them."* (Acts 2:4)

The shift was that ALL of Jesus' followers were to receive this gift of empowerment, throughout the Age of the Church. As Peter preached later that day, he emphasized the extent of the promise: *"Repent, and each one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and your children, and for all who are far away, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself."* (Acts 2:38-39)

When God chose to extend the reach of the Gospel message to non-Jewish people, He sent Peter to the home of Cornelius, a Roman military leader, who was also a seeker after God. Peter began to testify about Jesus who gave His life for us to take away our sins. While he was speaking to them, *"the Holy Spirit fell UPON all who were listening to the message. The Jewish believers who*

came with Peter were amazed that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles, too. For they heard them speaking in other tongues and praising God.” (Acts 10:44-46)

God confirmed this action through Paul, when he discovered some believers in Ephesus, who were unacquainted with the Person of the Holy Spirit. *“When Paul laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came UPON them, and they spoke in other tongues and prophesied.” (Acts 19:6)*

What Does This Mean?

Baptism with the Holy Spirit is God’s way of clothing His people with supernatural power for life and service—to extend the Church (mission) and to build the Church (spiritual formation). Receiving this baptism is signified by the ability to speak in unknown languages (“other tongues”), when control of the most potent member of the human body (the tongue) has been yielded to God.

“Death and life are in the power of the tongue.” (Proverbs 18:21). Once the Holy Spirit is given control, life becomes the dominant product of our words—through thankfulness, encouragement, and comfort—to the benefit of those who hear.

Other supernatural gifts follow: *“Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.” (1 Corinthians 12:7-11)*

This “endowment of power” is God’s gift to His people. It cannot be earned. No one deserves it. It is a gift.

It’s a Gift

Steve was an earnest follower of Jesus and had asked God to baptize Him with the Holy Spirit several times, but he didn’t really expect anything to happen when he prayed like that, because Steve was a smoker, and in his mind the smoke that filled his temple was unholy, forbidding this gift of the Holy Spirit from being given.

Steve didn’t recognize that the baptism with the Holy Spirit is a gift, long ago promised by God our Heavenly Father. He thought he needed to earn it by cleaning up his life first, and this lingering addiction to nicotine stood in his way.

I counseled him about the nature of the gift, and told him that if he received God’s gift, the Holy Spirit would help him lick the nicotine habit. Steve’s faith arose and he received the baptism of the Spirit, speaking with other tongues. And soon, he was able to quit smoking.

It Must Be Received

Ed was an older man of noble character, who had served as a deacon in the church. He had grown up in a non-Pentecostal church, but began to believe in the present-day power of the Holy Spirit, and moved his membership to an Assembly of God. Still, Ed had not received the baptism with the Holy Spirit, though he had responded to numerous altar calls with that in mind. He would obediently come forward and wait for God to do something to him, but it seemed like He never would.

The Spirit directed me to pray with Ed one night. I asked him what he wanted the Lord to do for him. He said, "I want to be baptized in the Holy Spirit." I inquired further and he told me that he was beginning to think God didn't want him to have the power of the Spirit.

I explained how Jesus had already given us—the whole worldwide Church—the gift of the Spirit, just as He had already provided our salvation, and that the ball was now in our court to take God at His word and receive what He had given. I said, "In your heart, just believe God and receive His gift. Then, as the Spirit prompts you, use your voice to thank and praise Jesus in a brand new language that you've never spoken before."

Ed hadn't realized that the gift had already been given—way back on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2). Peter declared concerning Jesus, "*Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear.*" (Acts 2:33)

Jesus already delivered the gift, pouring out the Spirit on His Church. Now, every believer may receive the gift in faith and be clothed with the power of the Holy Spirit.

The baptism with the Holy Spirit is about giving Jesus greater access to your life through the Holy Spirit. It is personal surrender of control to the One who loved you and gave Himself for you in order to set you free. It is a great big "Yes!" to Christ's leadership.

Will you trust His leadership?

Will you *trust Him* to set you free, and not enslave you or force you to do something you don't want to do?

Will you trust that He will not lead you astray? That He will not abuse or misuse you? That He will not humiliate you? That He will not abandon you?

Will you trust Him to lead you into a supernatural life that is freeing though demanding, that is relaxed though intense, that is deep yet overflowing?

Yield your all to Jesus, and ask Him to baptize you with the Holy Spirit.

Receive this dynamic gift by faith—trusting God’s promise and opening your heart and mind to His activity. You don’t need to pretend, but you do need to participate. This is a cooperative relationship.

Turn your “want to” into “I receive” and then respond from a grateful, worshipful heart. Leave your own words aside for the time being and let the Holy Spirit prompt you with new sounds of worship. Once you hear them in your spirit, express them verbally. As the flow develops, give yourself to it; give it everything you’ve got—speak it out to Jesus.

Why Other Tongues?

The Holy Spirit gives us the ability to communicate with God on HIS level, with words that bear deeper meaning than our own.

Instead of locking up your praise and prayer in the intellectual bottleneck of your mind, where you must think *what* to say, as well as *how* to say it (and often, how to say it *best*), the Holy Spirit enables you to speak to God from your heart, directly, without the need of human interpretation.

As Paul noted, when you speak in tongues, *“you will be talking only to God, since people (including yourself) won’t be able to understand you. You will be speaking by the power of the Spirit, but it will all be mysterious.”* (1 Corinthians 14:2)

Jesus once told His disciples, *“There is so much more I want to tell you, but you can’t bear it now. When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth.”* (John 16:12-13) God communicates on a higher level than humans do. The world of the Spirit is both deeper and broader than we can understand. We need the Spirit to interpret what God has to say to us, and we need the Spirit to help us communicate better with God. This is for our spiritual formation.

To the World

The other purpose for which God has given the baptism with the Holy Spirit is to get the message of His saving love to all the world effectively... *“to the ends of the earth.”*

Consider the impact of the Pentecostal movement in the first 100 years of Church history. Before the end of the first century, the unchurched world reported that *“these people have turned the world upside down”* (Acts 17:6). The Church grew from 120 in an upper room to one million devout worshippers across the inhabited world, in spite of intense, targeted, and deadly persecution, from the highest levels of government and society.

Then, consider the impact of the Pentecostal movement in the last 100 years of Church history. According to the research of the Pew Forum, Christians worldwide have grown in the last 100 years from 600,000 to 2 billion. Of these, more than 500,000 are Pentecostal.

The Assemblies of God alone, which began with 300 participants in 1914, now accounts for 67 million believers... in 100 years! One person is converted to faith in Jesus through the ministries of an AG church every 20 seconds! And a new AG church is planted every 30-40 minutes.

In the time it has taken me to preach this message, another church has been planted and 100 people have been saved!

That is the power of UPON—*“You shall receive power after the Holy Spirit comes upon you.”*

Now, some of the first AG missionaries thought that the ability to speak in tongues precluded their need for language study, so they journeyed to foreign lands expecting to preach in languages they had neither heard nor learned. Astonishingly, a few times they actually did! But mostly not.

The baptism with the Holy Spirit does not take the place of learning, preparation, or thinking. But the Spirit does enhance and amplify all of our learning and efforts.

God has not sent us to argue the Gospel, but to demonstrate the Gospel. This is why we must have the Spirit UPON us. This is why God has provided such a gift for *“as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself”* (Acts 2:39). This is our mission.

Acts 29

Do you need to be filled with the Spirit again? Do you need a refreshing of His touch and of His special language of worship?

Do you need to receive the baptism with the Holy Spirit for the first time? Are you willing to give your all to Jesus and find a new level of communication with God?

Then answer the call, trust the Lord, and receive His gift today. Then, let God prepare you for the mission of your life!