

This is tape number SHS306. Unless otherwise noted, all biblical references are quoted from King James Version.

I would like to continue tonight in our study on the baptism of the Holy Spirit. First of all, we will look at the promises of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. In Matthew 3:11, John the Baptist said,

I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.

And then Jesus gave the promise of the baptism with the Holy Spirit in Acts 1:4.

Being assembled together with them [the disciples], commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. (Acts 1:4-5)

So that promise of John the Baptist and that promise of Jesus was fulfilled. And in Acts 2:1-4 we read:

And when the Day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

I have no doubt that this experience in Acts chapter 2 is the fulfillment of the promise of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Here it is declared that they were all filled with the Holy Ghost. And the word “filled” with the Holy Ghost seems to be used interchangeably with the term “baptism” of the Holy Ghost.

Now the issue that arises is whether the disciples were converted before the experience in the second chapter of Acts? Were they born again prior to this experience? You see, whether or not the baptism, the gift, or the filling of the Holy Spirit—which are all interchangeable terms—whether or not that is subsequent to and separate from conversion is a matter of debate within the church. And it is my belief that this baptism with the Holy Spirit, this filling of the Holy Spirit, was an experience that was subsequent to conversion.

In John 20:22, when Jesus breathed on His disciples and said to them, “Receive ye the Holy Ghost,” the question arises: did anything happen at that time? Now there are those who say that was only a symbolic action by Jesus. His breathing on them and saying, “Receive the Holy Ghost,” was just a symbolic action and that they did not receive the Holy Spirit at that time. That would be a very hard position to support or to prove with the Scriptures. It must be acknowledged that it is purely suppositional to say that nothing happened when Jesus breathed on them and said, “Receive ye the Holy Ghost.” It is hard for me to think that Jesus could breathe on me and say, “Receive the Holy Ghost,” and nothing would happen.

You see, the promise of the baptism of the Holy Spirit by Jesus came after this event. It would perhaps mean, that when Jesus breathed on them and said, “Receive ye the Holy Ghost,” that at that time they were born again by the Spirit. Jesus had said that we have to be born again. We have to have a spiritual birth. We have had the fleshly birth, but that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. And it could be that at that time when He said, “Receive ye the Holy Spirit,” that that was the time when they were actually born again of the Spirit, or converted.

Earlier Jesus had said to Peter, “When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren”(Luke 22:32). After this event, we find Peter in the position of strengthening the brethren. As we look at the first chapter of the Book of Acts, when Jesus ascended into heaven, Peter began to take a leadership role in the church. Peter began to be more or less the spokesman within the church, strengthening the brethren.

Now according to biblical interpretation—the laws of biblical interpretation—they say that the obvious meaning is usually the correct meaning. And that makes sense to me. I believe that God meant what He said and said what He meant. And thus, as you go through the Scriptures, it is best not to try to read something into the Scriptures or to find some kind of subtle hidden meaning to the Scriptures. But the obvious meaning is usually the correct meaning.

Now if Jesus breathed on them and said, “Receive ye the Holy Spirit,” then the obvious understanding would be that they received the Holy Spirit. That at that point the Holy Spirit began to indwell them. But they were not yet baptized with the Holy Spirit, which was a subsequent experience that took place on the Day of Pentecost. Thus, the baptism with the Holy Spirit was subsequent to conversion and their receiving the Holy Spirit as an indwelling presence and power within their lives.

Now let us take a look at the Book of Acts to see if this interpretation is not born out by the subsequent events of believers and the filling, or the baptism, or the gift of the Holy Spirit. In Acts 2, after Peter had preached to the multitudes, who had gathered because of the supernatural phenomena that took place with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the people were convicted of their sin. And they said, “Men and brethren, what shall we do, seeing we have crucified the Lord of glory?”

And Peter said,

Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For this promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. (Acts 2:38-39)

Thus, the threefold command: repent, be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins, and then the third—“and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” It seems that it would also be an experience that would be subsequent to their repenting and being baptized in the name of Jesus for the remission of their sins. Then you shall receive—subsequent to that, the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Now of course, I admit that it is not an airtight kind of an argument. It is again, just looking at what seems to be obvious. However, as we go on to Acts 8, we find that Philip had gone to Samaria as the result of the persecution. And he was preaching Christ unto them, and many believed the preaching concerning the kingdom of God and they were baptized, both men and women. So, they believed the preaching of the gospel by Philip and they were baptized. But then we read that, when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John, that they might receive the Holy Ghost. “For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 8:16).

So, here they are believing and had been baptized in the name of Jesus, but they had not yet received this gift of the Holy Spirit. So, the church in Jerusalem sent Peter and John that they might receive this subsequent experience of the baptism with the Holy Spirit. In believing and being baptized in the name of Jesus, the Holy Spirit would, of necessity, be residing in them, because no man can call Christ, “Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit.

And yet, there was a relationship with the Holy Spirit. He had not yet come *upon* them. And this is that preposition *epi*. We dealt with *epi* in our last lesson as we looked at the threefold relationship with the Holy Spirit demonstrated by the three Greek prepositions, *para*, *en*, and *epi*. He is *with* you (*para*). He shall be *in* you (*en*). And you will receive power when He comes *upon* you (*epi*). They had not yet had the *epi* experience. They had the *with*—they were convicted. They had the *in*—the Holy Spirit had come within them because they were baptized in the name of Jesus. But they had not yet had the *epi*, the overflowing (or baptism) with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit had not yet fallen upon (*epi*) any of them.

And so we read that Peter and John prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit. “And they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit” (Acts 8:17).

Now there must have been some visible or audible evidence that they had received the Holy Spirit; why else would Simon the sorcerer ask to purchase the power that he saw manifested? Because he wanted to go around and lay hands on people that they might

receive the Holy Spirit also. He desired that power—offered to buy it. There must have been some kind of audible or visible evidence, though it is not recorded, by which they knew that they were receiving a special gift from God. I would assume that it was their speaking in unknown tongues, but that is only an assumption. The Bible does not tell us.

As we look next at Acts 9, we read that Paul, who was then known as Saul of Tarsus, was on his way to Damascus to imprison those who were calling on the name of the Lord. Suddenly, there was a bright light from heaven about noontime, but it was brighter than the noontime sun. And Paul fell on the ground and he heard a voice saying unto him, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?” And he responded, “Who are you, Lord, that I might serve You?” And the answer came, “I am Jesus of Nazareth.” And then he asked, “What would You have me to do, Lord?” (Acts 9:6).

Now, I do not believe that anyone can question that Paul was converted at that moment on the road to Damascus. I believe that when a man submits himself to the lordship of Jesus Christ, that is a definite sign of conversion. It is also a definite sign of the Holy Spirit. No man can call Christ, Lord, except by the Holy Spirit. And here he is saying, “What would You have me to do, Lord?” (Acts 9:6). And so the Lord told him to go into a town and what he was to do would be shown to him. So, Paul came to Damascus blinded as a result of his experience. Being led into Damascus, he was taken to the house of a man whose name was Judas, who lived on the main street in town. It was called Straight street.

Now there was a certain disciple in Damascus whose name was Ananias and he had a vision. The Lord appeared to him in a vision and told him that he was to go to the street called Straight, to inquire at the house of Judas for a certain man, Saul of Tarsus. The Lord said, “Behold he prayeth.” Ananias was hesitant and argued with the Lord. He said, “Lord, I have heard about this fellow, how he has wrecked the church and has even come to Damascus to imprison those who call upon Your name.” But the Lord assured Ananias that He knew what He was doing and commanded him to go and pray for Paul that he might receive his sight and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. And so, Ananias came to Paul and he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus that appeared to you on the way, has sent me to you that you might receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” And here again, Paul’s filling with the Holy Spirit was subsequent to and separate from his conversion on the road to Damascus.

In Acts 10, Peter had been called by the Lord to go to Caesarea, to the house of the Centurion whose name was Cornelius. And as Peter came to the house of Cornelius, Cornelius had assembled a lot of his friends. And Peter began to share with them the truth of Jesus Christ. And as he shared with them the truth of Jesus Christ, we read that the Holy Spirit fell upon (*epi*) all who were hearing the Word. And those who came with Peter were surprised that the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the Gentiles. They realized that the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out upon them because they heard them speaking in tongues and magnifying God.

Now in this instance, the gift of the Holy Spirit was associated with their believing in Jesus Christ and took place before their baptism in water. In fact, it was decided that it was alright now to baptize Gentiles, seeing that God had given them the gift of the Holy Spirit. It would appear in the case of the house of Cornelius, that the filling with the Spirit and their conversion was a simultaneous experience and that, indeed, with their conversion, they were filled with the Spirit.

Now Peter was explaining to the Jews in Jerusalem what had happened when he went to the house of a Gentile, since he was sort of called on the carpet because of this experience. As he was explaining to them what had happened, he was not wanting to accept any responsibility for it. Peter said,

And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell upon them, as on us at the beginning. Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, “John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost.” (Acts 11:15)

So Peter said, “I was just talking to them and while I was talking, the Holy Spirit just fell on them. I did not do anything. I mean, the Holy Spirit just did it. And when it happened, then I remembered the words of Jesus, ‘John indeed baptized you with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit’—I remembered then those words of Jesus.” So what had happened to them was the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Peter relates it to that. It talks about their being filled with the Spirit, and thus again, these terms—gift of the Holy Spirit, baptism of the Holy Spirit, and filled with the Holy Spirit—are all describing the same event and they seem to be used interchangeably.

Now in Acts 19, Paul had come to Ephesus. And just the other day, I visited Ephesus, and it is indeed an extremely remarkable city. The ruins of the city of Ephesus are probably the most extensive ruins of any of the ancient cities of the ancient world. It has awesome marble streets that go for blocks and blocks, many of them. The remains of the temples and the buildings and all are phenomenal. It was the major commercial city of Asia Minor. It was the gateway to Asia. All of the goods coming from Asia to Europe passed through Ephesus and vice versa. It was a bustling city when Paul came to it, but Paul was not the first one to come to Ephesus with the gospel.

When Paul had taken the gospel to Corinth, because he was a tentmaker, he got a job with a couple whose names were Priscilla and Aquilla. And when he left Corinth to go back to Jerusalem, they came with him on his journey as far as Ephesus. They remained in Ephesus, as Paul went back to Jerusalem for the Jewish holiday. While they were there, there was a certain Jew, a brilliant man and an eloquent man, whose name was Apollos. He was a man who was well-versed in the Scriptures and a man who was able to prove by the Scriptures, that Jesus was the Messiah.

And Apollos was preaching to the Jews in Ephesus, showing by the Scriptures—proving by the Scriptures—that Jesus was the Messiah. However, there were certain parts of his theology that were not complete. So, Priscilla and Aquilla upon hearing him, took

Apollos aside and shared with him the truths that they had learned from Paul. As a result, he had an even more complete grasp of the life and the nature of Jesus. Many people believed in Jesus Christ in Ephesus as a result of this ministry by Apollos.

Now, there was something that was lacking. It is possible to meet believers in Jesus Christ, and as you begin to relate to them a bit and are around them a bit, you can discern that there is just something that is lacking in their experience. There is a lack of joy. They say they are Christians, but you would never know it by looking at their faces. They seem to be so sober and almost angry with the world. There is a lack of love. They are cutting and critical. They have a lack of fervency and are neither hot nor cold, but just sort of lukewarm. There is no fervency in their experience.

And so, as Paul met these believers in Ephesus, he noted there was something that was lacking in their experience and relationship with the Lord. And Paul was seeking to get hold of the problem: *What is wrong here?* And so he asked them the question,

Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? (Acts 19:2)

“Have you had this subsequent relationship? You have believed, but did you receive the Holy Spirit?” Now the Greek scholars say that should be translated, “did you receive the Holy Spirit *when* you believed,” rather than “*since* you believed.” It really does not matter how you translate it, if you use the word *since* or *when*, it still has the same implications. And that is, that the receiving of the Holy Spirit, this gift or baptism or filling, is subsequent to believing.

And one can believe without receiving this filling or baptism of the Holy Spirit. If one asks, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit *since* you believed?” of course, the quite obvious implication is that the receiving occurs subsequent to belief. And if one asks, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit *when* you believed?” the question would indicate that you could believe yet not receive. So however it should properly be translated into English, it has the same effect, in that both cases show that this baptism or infilling of the Spirit is subsequent to believing.

Now they responded,

We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy
Ghost. (Acts 19:2)

They were totally ignorant. “Holy Spirit? What is that?” And Paul said, “Well, how were you baptized?” In other words, when Jesus commanded the disciples to go into all the world and to teach all nations, He said, “Baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.” It was there in the baptismal formula. So, Paul’s question was: “You have not heard of the baptism of the Holy Spirit? Well, how were you baptized? Were you not baptized in the baptismal formula that Jesus commanded—in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit?” They answered, “No! We were baptized with John’s baptism.”

Now John's baptism was a baptism of repentance from sin. And so they were then baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. And then we read that when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came "*epi*" upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. So again, it was an experience that was subsequent to their believing and their conversion. Paul laid his hands upon them, and they then received this gift of the Holy Spirit, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.

It is interesting that there is some confusion that has been generated over the baptismal formula. It is true that in the Book of Acts, we do not find any mention of baptizing in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. We do read, however, "And they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 8:16). Yet Paul's question would indicate that it was generally accepted practice to baptize in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Now as we have looked at these cases in the Book of Acts, what we have observed is that there was a variety of experiences, methods, and ways by which the people received the gift of the Holy Spirit, or the filling of the Holy Spirit, or the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

In Acts 2, they were all sitting there, when suddenly there was a noise from heaven that sounded like a mighty rushing wind filling all the house. There were cloven tongues, like as of fire, sitting upon each of them. And they all began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them the ability.

In Acts 8, the gift of the Holy Spirit was imparted by the laying on of hands by Paul and by John. It is interesting that this was not done by Philip, who was an evangelist and used mightily of God in working miracles. But Philip was not used of God in the imparting of the Holy Spirit. And we will talk about that in subsequent lessons.

In Acts 9, the Holy Spirit was imparted to Paul by an average believer. Ananias? Who is he? He was not an apostle. He was just a certain disciple in Damascus, but really not of any spiritual hierarchy. Ananias was just a common believer in Damascus.

Now the Holy Spirit was imparted to those in Samaria when Peter and John laid their hands on them. Yet there is no mention of any supernatural phenomena accompanying their being filled. However as we pointed out, there obviously was something that occurred, though the Scripture does not record it; or else Simon would not have sought that power.

When Paul received the Holy Spirit, there was the healing of the blindness that took place at the same time. But there was no mention of any other supernatural phenomena accompanying his receiving the Holy Spirit. However, it should be mentioned that later when Paul was writing to the Corinthians about the gifts of the Spirit, he declared that he did speak in tongues more than all of them.

In Acts 10, Peter did not get a chance to lay hands on them. While he was speaking, suddenly his message was interrupted by the Holy Spirit, who just fell upon them and they began to speak in tongues. As Peter was speaking to them, there was just that sovereign move of God's Spirit, and this empowering, this filling of the Spirit.

In Acts 19, when Paul was there in Ephesus, again he laid his hands on them and they spoke in tongues, and they prophesied. So that in all of the illustrations that we have of the infilling of the Holy Spirit in the Book of Acts, there are no two identical experiences. There was not a repeated experience recorded. In every scriptural passage that was identified, the closest thing was perhaps the experience of the house of Cornelius with the disciples. But there was no mighty rushing wind and no cloven tongues of fire. They were just speaking in tongues, which says to me, that God is not bound by a particular method or by a particular way.

God can do things as He wants to do them and we are wrong in trying to pattern our experience after somebody else. We are wrong to look for the same kind of an experience that someone else has had. And I think that there is a real danger of this in the church. God deals with us as individuals according to our own nature and according to our own temperaments. You cannot formulize God and say, "Well now, do this and lay your hand there, and touch this spot. I mean, there is no formula. God is sovereign.

There are people who have testified of their experiences and I accept their testimony as legitimate. I am not going to disclaim what they are saying. Finney described these waves of liquid love that just kept flowing over and over him, until he had to shout out to God crying, "God, stop! I cannot take any more." Now that is wonderful, and that is glorious, and that is how Finney experienced the baptism with the Holy Spirit. But it does not mean that is the way you are going to experience it or that I am going to experience it. And you see, the danger is to hear someone else's experience or to read about someone else's experience and think that such an experience is what happens or that is how you are going to feel.

I have heard people talk about how they felt like there was electricity going through their body from the top of their head and out through their toes or something. Well, that is great. I have never experienced that. I was struck by lightning once and I felt like there was electricity going through me, but I would not attribute that to the Holy Spirit. It was a bolt of lightning and I was laid on the ground by it. But their experience is wonderful!

I am not discounting the experience of others, but I am saying that not everybody has that experience and it is wrong to look for a particular experience. Because when you are looking for a particular experience, then the tendency is to put your faith in the experience rather than in the promise of the Word of God. And so often, when you are looking for a particular experience that someone else had—because God does not follow a pattern—it may be that you will not have that kind of an experience. This does not mean that God is not working in your life. It does not mean that you are not filled with the Holy Spirit because you did not have the similar experience that someone else had.

And so God shows us in the Book of Acts that there is a wide variety of ways by which He operates in the lives of individuals. And it does not follow a consistent pattern all the way through; rather there seems to be a total inconsistency of the way God did it all the way through the Bible. Experiencing the gift of the Holy Spirit was never exactly the same; and thus, the testimony of scripture leaves room for you to experience God in your own personal way. God is not bound to a formula.

Thus, my suggestion to you is just to be totally open to whatever and however God wants to work in your life. You should not look for a particular sensation, not look for a particular gift, not look for a particular reaction or a response. But just be open to let God work and to do however He desires through the imparting of this glorious gift upon your life. It may be that it will be through the laying on of hands by someone—one of the pastors, or one of the laymen in the church, as it was with Paul. It may be that no one will lay their hands on you, as was the case in Acts 2, when the believers were just all sitting together—and notice they were sitting. And I have heard of people who were standing, and I have heard of people who were lying on the floor. It does not matter—even lying in bed. God is not bound to one particular way.

And just open your heart. As Peter was preaching in the house of Cornelius, the hearts of the people were opened by the Spirit. The Spirit was bearing witness of the truth to their hearts. And as their hearts were opened by faith, they were receiving the Word of God. And as they were receiving the Word, the Holy Spirit just came upon them and it was beautiful!

So just be open. Do not try to pattern God. Do not look for a particular experience, but just receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Receive that power—that dynamic power in your life to be what God wants you to be. Receive the power to be a true witness for Jesus Christ in this world.

Shall we pray?

Father, we need, we desire, and we long for the power of Your Holy Spirit in our lives. And we thank You that You have promised that if we ask anything according to Your will, then we have received those things that we have asked of You. We know that it is Your will that we be filled with the Spirit, because it is Your command. And thus, Lord, we ask that we might receive. We seek that we might find that power—that dynamic. And as You work Lord, in Your own sovereign, special way, may we be open and may we receive, even in this moment. In Jesus' name. Amen.