

Born Again & The Baptism of the Holy Spirit

Born Again—the Indwelling of the Holy Spirit

Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again (Jn 3:5-7).

And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost (Jn 20:22).

What does it mean to be born-again? The expression “born-again” comes directly out of John 3, where we discover the story of Jesus and Nicodemus, a prominent Pharisee and member of the Sanhedrin (the ruling body of the Jews). Nicodemus asked the same question of Jesus and was told that unless he was born-again he could not enter the kingdom of God. Now what Jesus meant was pretty simple. At the time of conversion we undergo a complete change of heart when receiving God’s Spirit into our lives. That is how we become born-again. We experience a **spiritual regeneration** and become **spiritually alive**. In other words, we are no longer steeped in our old lifestyle and habits since we are now in tune with the things that pertain to God and His Word (the Bible).

Because being born-again means that we become God’s children it is also the strongest indication that we are saved. That is why Jesus made it clear that unless we are born-again—regenerated from our old way of life—we cannot enter into the kingdom of God (Jn 3:5). Similarly, He used the phrase “born of water” to point to the practice of water baptism which symbolizes the inward change that conversion produces. However, the ritualistic cleansing of baptism is futile unless combined with the work of the Spirit. Through God’s Spirit we are able to shed our "old body of sin" and become transformed into new people (2 Cor 5:17). This **transformation** then is due exclusively to the **indwelling** power of the Spirit and is one and the same as being born-again.

To fulfill the born-again requirement of John 3:5, Jesus imparted the Spirit to His disciples when He blew on them in John 20:22. I believe this marked the exact point in time when Christ's disciples were indwelt by the Holy Spirit and entered into the born-again experience.

Without being born-again, we cannot become children of God or possess any lasting spiritual drive and inclination toward Him. Indeed, one cannot even enter into a relationship with God, be cleansed from sin, or find repentance apart from this fundamental groundwork.

The Baptism in the Holy Spirit—the Infilling

Known also as the infilling or "second blessing", the baptism in the Holy Spirit is a subsequent event that typically (not always) occurs after one has been born-again. Essentially, just as the indwelling of the Spirit relates to being born-again, the infilling corresponds to the baptism in the Spirit and is far more profound. Notice the following scriptures:

*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** (Mat 3:11).*

*And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with **power from on high** (Luk 24:49).*

*And, being assembled together with them, 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 (Act 1: 4-5).*

*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** (Act 2:1-4).*

Several things stand out in the above passages. Apparently, there is repeated mention of **fire**, **wind**, and **power**. These three elements are key to our study. **Fire represents power** and has always symbolized the presence of God. The earliest examples are when God spoke from the burning bush (Exodus 3:1-3) and lead the children of Israel with a pillar of fire by night (Exodus 13:21). I believe the fire spoken of in Matthew 3:11 corresponds to the power in Luke 24:49. In order to fulfill the promise in Luke 24 and Acts 1:4, God gave a visible sign in Acts 2 when the Church was gathered together in the upper room. Having been baptized in the Holy Spirit, tongues of fire appeared upon their heads.

Furthermore, the Spirit is compared to a wind that "blows wherever it wills" (John 3:8). **It is highly remarkable that Jesus blew on His disciples the first time around, but came upon them the second time in Acts 2 like a "a rushing mighty wind". What a perfect picture of contrast! Being born-again symbolizes the Spirit's preliminary work while being baptized in the Spirit symbolizes its secondary or ultimate work. Clearly, the latter is much more powerful.**

So now we can see how the presence of God, represented by fire, is ignited into flame when the Holy Spirit blows upon us. This is how God turns a small fire into a mighty one, performing a work of great revival. Without the fire of God accompanied by the blowing of the Spirit there will never be any significant revival. Fire + wind = power. No power, no revival!

The Indwelling Vs Infilling

To further contrast the differences between the preliminary and secondary work of the Spirit, allow me to illustrate it thus. If we drank water from a glass, then the water would be inside us. However, if we went to the beach and stepped into the ocean, the water would completely saturate us. We receive, as it were, a drink of the Holy Spirit when we are saved, but when we are Spirit baptized, it's as though that initial drink becomes an ocean that completely engulfs us.

When reading the account in John 7 of the woman at the well, we find a similar depiction. Notice:

*He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, **out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.** (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.) –John 7:38-40.*

The preceding account clearly denotes the power of spiritual immersion. Hence it is described as an overwhelming life source, "out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water". So it is imperative that we do not confuse spiritual immersion with the act of being born-again for the following reason. Christ promised that the Holy Spirit would not be given until after His glorification (John 7:38-40; 16:7). So when was Christ glorified? The New Testament tells us that it would have happened after his ascension, not before (John 20:17). So then it follows that the example in John 20:22, where Jesus imparts the Spirit by blowing on His disciples, is unrelated to the promise in Luke 24:49. Therefore if we accept the account in John 20:22 as being different than the actual baptism in the Holy Spirit located in Acts 2, we do not fall out of line with the teaching found in either John 7:38-40 or chapter 16:7 of the same book. This point is vital to our study. Yet most Christians easily overlook it or claim that it is all the same thing. As a result, they cheat themselves out of the completed work of the Spirit which God wishes to bestow upon every Believer.

Supernatural Evidence for the Infilling

The Scriptures yield abundant evidence suggesting that an individual must first exhibit at least one or more of the supernatural gifts (1 Cor 12) before claiming to be Spirit baptized. However, it must also be noted that the gifts can be easily counterfeited and are never "tamper proof" evidence for or against a genuine Brother or Sister in Christ. For this reason, we are called to "test all things" (1 Thes 5:21). That being said, let's examine several passages where supernatural manifestations clearly accompanied the infilling of the Spirit.

5 Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. 6 And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. 7 For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. 8 And there was great joy in that city. 12 But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. 13 Then Simon himself

believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done. 14 Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: 15 Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: 16 (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) 17 Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost. 18 And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money (Acts 8:5-18).

In Acts 8, we find the following points to be true: 1. Philip preaches in Samaria while performing miracles. 2. Those who saw the miracles and heard the message believed and repented. 3. There came to be great joy in the city and many were water baptized to confirm their new found faith. 4. The Church in Jerusalem having learned of this sends Peter and John into Samaria to finish Philip's work. 5. Peter and John prayed for the new converts and those for whom they prayed received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. 6. Simon the sorcerer saw a **visible counterpart** to this experience. 7. It was so amazing that he offered money in order to obtain similar power.

Special note: When the Samaritans received the gospel with joy, repented from sin, and were lead into water baptism, they were essentially born-again. Many would claim that this was enough to complete their Christian experience and that nothing further was necessary. But if this is true then why were Peter and John sent to Samaria to add to Phillip's already impressive work? Why did the Samaritans have need of the Spirit's baptism as witnessed later? This wouldn't make sense unless we are willing to recognize the distinctions between the Spirit's preliminary and secondary work and how they impact the Believer differently.

Moving on, we want to demonstrate that the infilling of the Spirit is a visible and powerful event, not a mute one. But to strengthen this argument, we must establish further patterns of proof. In Acts 10, we find such a pattern:

44 While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. 45 And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy

Ghost. 46 For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, 47 Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?

Clearly, after Peter's preaching these new converts were baptized in the Spirit with **accompanying signage**. So then there is no mistaking the visible effects of this experience.

But yet another such example is found in Acts 19:

1 And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, 2 He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. 3 And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. 4 Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. 5 When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 6 And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spoke with tongues, and prophesied.

Apparently, it was Paul's custom to locate new converts and inquire as to whether or not they had received the baptism in the Holy Spirit since their conversion. Why we no longer practice this custom is an unresolved mystery.....However, after learning that their knowledge of the Spirit was deficient and they were ill informed concerning baptism in Christ's name, Paul re-baptized them in the correct name and laid hands on them so they would receive the infilling of the Spirit. Immediately after, they **spoke in tongues and prophesied**. Here again is proof that **the immersion of the Spirit is not without a visible counterpart**.

Now to further demonstrate the powerful impact of Spirit's baptism, notice the following summary of chronological events:

- **In Matthew 3:16 & Luke 3:22**, Jesus is 30 years of age when the dove descended upon Him, which is a picture of the Holy Spirit. His ministry officially begins accompanied by healings and other supernatural phenomena.

- In **Acts 2:14**, the disciples are baptized with the Holy Spirit for the first time. Peter preaches with great power and boldness. Thousands are saved.
- In **Acts 4:8**, Peter is again filled with the Holy Spirit and speaks with such power that the Jewish leaders were amazed in spite of his being relatively uneducated (4:13).
- In **Acts 4:31**, other disciples were praying and the place where they were was shaken and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. The effect of their infilling was that they spoke the Word of God with extraordinary boldness and Christ-exalting power.
- In **Acts 6**, we meet Stephen, one of the seven chosen deacons, who was full of faith and the Holy Spirit (v. 5). In verse 8 it says he was therefore full of power **and did wonders and signs among the people**. In verse 10, the leaders could not resist the wisdom and Spirit with which he spoke. His infilling gave him an extraordinary power for Christ-exalting ministry.
- In **Acts 9:17**, Paul is filled with the Holy Spirit at his conversion and the result was that he spoke with such extraordinary power that the Jews of Damascus were confounded (9:22).
- In **Acts 11:24**, Barnabas was full of the Holy Spirit and faith and the effect was that “a large company was added to the Lord” (as at Pentecost).
- In **Acts 13:9**, Paul was filled with the Holy Spirit as he spoke to Elymas the magician and God gave him the extraordinary power to pronounce Elymas blind for a season (13:11).

The Case Against Cessationism

Many Christians readily acknowledge the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. They do not argue that the infilling was always accompanied with the gifts or manifestations and was a historic reality. However, they claim this experience along with miracles and hearing God's voice was phased out during the first century and after the completion of the New Testament canon. This belief is known as the doctrine of cessation. The following is a concise rebuttal to the main arguments for cessationism written by Doug Bannister, author of the book, "Word & Power Church".

Foreword:

Let it be known that I am not a cessationist: I believe that God still speaks to people today outside of the Bible (though always consistent with it, and submitted to its authority); I believe that God still does miracles today; I believe that all the gifts of the

Holy Spirit are still in operation today (ie. tongues, prophecy, etc.); and I believe that all of the offices of the 5-fold ministry, as spelled out in Ephesians 4:11-12, are still functioning today and necessary for the Church to be effective (including the offices of apostle and prophet)."

Cessation argument #1: 1 Corinthians 13:8-13 teaches that the miraculous gifts passed away with the completion of the New Testament.

Response: Paul wrote 1 Corinthians 12-14 to answer questions the Corinthians were having about the use and abuse of spiritual gifts in their fellowship. His primary goal was to encourage the Corinthians to love one another. Chapter 13:8-13 is to show that love is greater than any gift: Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. When I was a child I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned as a child. When I became a man I put childish ways behind me. Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. And now these three main: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

The miraculous gifts such as tongues and prophecy will cease. But when? "When perfection comes." When perfection comes, these imperfect gifts will pass away. To what is Paul referring when he looks to the coming of "perfection"? There are basically two ways scholars have interpreted this passage. 1) Cessationists argue that "perfection" refers to the completed canon of Scripture. They hold that the first century church needed these miraculous revelatory gifts because the Bible was not yet complete, and when God completed the scriptural canon, these gifts were no longer needed and passed away. 2) Noncessationists believe that "perfection" refers to the second coming of Christ. They hold that these gifts are intended for the present church age but will no longer be needed when Jesus Christ returns. The majority of biblical interpreters have concluded that "perfection" refers to the second coming of Christ and not the completion of the canon.

How have they reached this conclusion? Which is right? Paul says that when the perfect comes, we will see God "face to face." The phrase "face to face" is used in the Old Testament to mean seeing God personally. Revelation 22:4 says that in heaven, "They

will see his face." The Scriptures reveal much about God, but they do not allow for a face-to-face meeting with him. This will come when Christ returns. Paul says that, for us, when perfection comes, "I shall know fully, even as I am fully known." The Scriptures help us know many things, but it could not be said that we know God fully because of them. God will be known fully to his people when his Son returns. Lloyd-Jones rejects the view that the word, "perfect", refers to the closed canon: [Do] you see what that involves? It means that you and I who have the Scriptures open before us, know much more than the apostle Paul of God's truth...if that argument is correct. It means that we are altogether superior to the early church and even to the apostles themselves, including the apostle Paul!...The "then" is the glory everlasting. It is only then that I shall know, even as also I am known; for then I shall see Him as He is. It is doubtful that when the Corinthians read this letter, the concept of a closed canon would have occurred to them. A far more common theme in Scripture is the return of Christ. When Paul pointed his Corinthian readers to a future day when they would see Christ face to face, they are far more likely to have thought of Christ's return. . For these reasons, and many others treated in the scholarly literature, the most reasonable interpretation of 1 Corinthians 13:8-12 says that Paul is teaching that the gifts will cease when Jesus Christ returns. Lloyd-Jones concludes his summary of the cessation arguments with typical bluntness: Let me begin to answer by giving you just one thought...The Scriptures never anywhere say that these things were only temporary – never! There is no such statement anywhere...So you see the difficulties men land themselves in when they dislike something and cannot fully understand it and try to explain it away. All things must be judged in the light of Scriptures, and we must not twist them to suit our theory or argument.

Cessation argument #2: The miraculous gifts ceased with the death of the last apostle. B.B. Warfield, a professor at Princeton Seminary, wrote a book in 1918 called Counterfeit Miracles, which is still the classic statement of the position that the miraculous spiritual gifts were given only to the apostles and Stephen and Philip. Warfield taught that the purpose of these gifts was to authenticate the apostles as trustworthy bearers of doctrine; when they died, this authenticating power died with them. Most of the contemporary works written from the cessationist camp are, in effect, a footnote to Warfield's work. Warfield wrote: It is very clear from the record of the New Testament that the extraordinary charismata were not (after the very first days of the church) the possession of all Christians, but supernatural gifts to the few. These gifts were not the possession of the primitive Christian as such: nor for that matter of the

Apostolic Church, or the Apostolic age for themselves; they were distinctly for the authentication of the Apostles. They were part of the credentials of the Apostles as the authoritative agents of God in founding the Church. Their function thus confined them to distinctively the Apostolic Church, and they necessarily passed away with it. The primary texts used by cessationists to support the claim that miraculous gifts were the sole property of the apostles include these: The apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders among the people. – Acts 5:12 (NIV) The things that mark an apostle--signs, wonders and miracles--were done among you with great perseverance. – 2 Cor 12:12 (NIV) This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will. – Heb 2:3-4 (NIV)

Response: Warfield is correct in affirming the uniqueness of the apostolic office. The twelve apostles certainly enjoyed a unique wonder-working power. The major problem with Warfield's argument, however, is that its conclusion does not follow from its premises. The argument can be broken down into a syllogism. 1) Major premise: The apostles, as the foundation of the church, experienced unique wonder-working powers to authenticate their ministry. 2) Minor premise: The apostles are dead. 3) Conclusion: No one experiences wonder-working power in ministry today. The conclusion does not follow from the minor premise. While it is true that the apostles had unique miraculous powers and it is true that they are dead, it does not logically follow that no other Christians can experience the miraculous gifts. Jack Deere points out how flawed this reasoning is when he applies it to church planting. We could say: 1) Major premise: Only the apostles planted churches in Acts. 2) Minor premise: The apostles are dead. 3) Conclusion: No one should plant churches today. All that is needed to refute this view from a scriptural standpoint is to find any examples of nonapostolic Christians using the miraculous gifts in the New Testament. Consider these: 1) Mark 9:38-39: An unknown man casts out demons in Jesus' name. 2) Luke 10:9: Jesus commissions seventy-two disciples to preach and to heal. 3) Acts 9:17-18: Ananias heals Paul. 4) Romans 12:6: Paul refers to the gift of prophecy in Rome, a church not yet visited by an apostle. 5) 1 Corinthians 12:8-10: Gifts of healing and miracles are experienced in the Corinthian church without an apostle present. 6) Galatians 3:5: Paul refers to the Holy Spirit who "works miracles among you." The "you" is plural and must refer to the entire congregation, which was not led by an apostle. 7) 1 Thessalonians 5:20: Paul demands that the Thessalonians not hinder the prophetic gift. 8) The list of miraculous gifts experienced by nonapostles in the New Testament grows much longer when we include

tongues. Even a progressive dispensationalist like Dr. Robert Saucy of Talbot School of Theology, who stresses in his writings the uniqueness of the apostolic era, challenges cessationist logic at this point: "While agreeing with many of the emphases in the cessationist position, some of the conclusions that demand the complete cessation of miraculous gifts in my opinion go beyond the express teaching of Scripture or necessary deductions from theological principles of Scripture." Conclusion: While the unique ministry of the apostles is honored and revered, it cannot be inferred from that ministry that the miraculous gifts were limited to and died with them.

Cessation argument #3: Church history proves that all evidence of the miraculous gifts passed away after the first century. This argument filled the bulk of Warfield's pages and has been popular in cessationist writing ever since.

Response: Two responses are in order. First, even if it could be proved that the gifts passed away in the history of the church, this does not prove that God will not grant them again. Second, history does not prove that the miraculous gifts passed away, as we will see below. 1) Stanley Burgess has produced a three-volume study on the history of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. He writes, "Before John Chrysostom (A.D. 347-407) in the East and Augustine of Hippo (A.D. 354-430) in the west, no church father suggested that any or all of the charismata were intended only for the first-century Church. 2) The Patristic Era (A.D. 100-600).

An early second-century document, The Didache, was written to ministers. It exhorted the church to "permit the prophets to give thanks as much as they desire" and then proceeded to give instruction on how prophetic utterances were to be tested. Justin Martyr (ca. A.D. 100-165) reminds fellow Christians in a letter that "many of our Christian men...have healed and do heal, rendering helpless and driving the possessing devils out. c) Irenaeus (ca. A.D. 130-202) writes, We do also hear many brethren in the Church who possess prophetic gifts, and who through the Spirit speak all kinds of languages, and bring to light for the general benefit the hidden things of men...those who are in truth His disciples...do certainly and truly drive out devils, so that those who have thus been cleansed from evil spirits frequently both believe and join themselves to the Church. Others have foreknowledge of things to come; they see visions...others still heal the sick by laying their hands upon them, and they are made whole. Yea, moreover, as I have said, the dead even have been raised up and remained among us for many years. Origen, writing in the third century, reported that signs and wonders validated

the proclamation of the gospel: The Gospel has a demonstration of its own...this...method is called by the apostle the “manifestation of the Spirit and of power:” of “the Spirit” on account of the prophecies, which are sufficient to produce faith in anyone who reads them...and of “power”, because of the signs and wonders. The Latin theologian Hilary of Poitiers, writing in the fourth century, affirmed that the miraculous gifts were operating in his day: The gift of the Spirit is manifest...where there is...the gift of healings, that by the cure of the disease we should bear witness to His grace...or by the working of miracles...or by prophecy...or by discerning of spirits...or by kinds of tongues, that the speaking in tongues may be bestowed as a sign of the gift of the Holy Spirit; or by the interpretation of tongues. Finally, Augustine, who wrote in the late fourth and early fifth century, believed that the gift of tongues was not given to the church in his day, but that the gift of miracles was.

The Medieval Era (600-1500). a) Colette of Corbi (d.1447) founded a convent and earned a reputation as one through whom God worked in miraculous ways. The Reformation and the Modern Era (1500 to present). It is widely reported that the Reformers did not believe in the miraculous gifts. Therefore it is somewhat surprising to find Martin Luther writing the following advice to a pastor who sought his counsel in ministering to a sick man: I know of no worldly advice to give. If the physicians are at a loss to find a remedy, you may be sure that it is not a case of ordinary melancholy. It must, rather, be an affliction that comes from the devil and must be counteracted by the power of Christ and the prayer of faith. Accordingly you should proceed as follows...Graciously deign to free this man from all evil, and bring to naught the work that Satan has done in him...Then, when you depart, lay your hands on the man again and say, “These signs shall follow them that believe; they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover.

In this century, D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones helped to foster a renewed interest in Reformation theology in general and the Puritan way of thought in particular. He writes: There is evidence from many of those Protestant Reformers and Fathers, that some of them had a genuine, true gift of prophecy...read these books...you will find this gift of prophecy...[and] the occasional miracle. Anyone who is prepared to say that all this ended with the apostolic age, and that there has never been a miracle since the apostles...gives the lie...*and] is to quench the Holy Spirit. Conclusion: It is probably fair to say that the charismatic church has seen too much of the miraculous in the history of the church, and evangelical church has seen too little (There is no entry under “miracle”

in the subject index of Philip Schaff's History of the Christian Church). As is so often the case, the truth appears to be somewhere in the middle. God has continued to give the miraculous gifts throughout the history of the church, although in varying degrees.

Cessation Argument #4: Jesus says, "A wicked and adulterous generation looks for a miraculous sign" (Matt. 16:4). This means that we should not pray for the miraculous in our ministries today.

Response: The problem with this objection is that it fails to consider who Jesus' audience was. Matthew 16 shows us that the "wicked and adulterous generation" referred to were the Scribes and the Pharisees who came to test Jesus by asking for a sign. Jesus was rebuking hard-hearted unbelievers who mocked him with this request. Notice the greater frequency with which Jesus compassionately responded to a request for a miracle. Significantly, Acts 4:30 relates that the apostles and the early disciples prayed for signs and wonders to follow their preaching ministry. Paul, rather than discouraging his readers from seeking the miraculous gifts, told them do desire them eagerly (1 Cor. 14:1). John writes that "many people saw the miraculous signs he was doing and believed in his name" (John 2:23). Then he reinforces the positive role of signs in proclaiming the gospel: "Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (20:30-31).

Why Do We Need the Spirit's Infilling?

So far we've demonstrated that the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is different than the infilling. We've also demonstrated that the latter is more profound and powerful and that it changes the Believer's ability to minister, evangelize, and maintain a bold testimony in the face of persecution or spiritual opposition. Furthermore, we've shown that the infilling of God's Spirit is always accompanied by a visible counterpart so that there remains no doubt one has been baptized in the Spirit. Finally, we've proven that it is not obsolete in the current dispensation and has not passed away with the completion of the New Testament canon of Scripture.

If indeed all the preceding is true then there should be no reason why we wouldn't desire to partake in this important spiritual immersion and be filled to overflowing with God's Spirit. For we need a power beyond ourselves for service and ministry in Christ's

Kingdom or even to maintain our daily struggle against sin and the wickedness of the flesh. I believe being full of God's Spirit will sharpen and hone our spiritual senses more profoundly than what we have ever experienced!

How to be filled with the Holy Spirit?

The all important question we must now settle is how to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Seeing we are born-again, God would like to take us on to experience the immersion or infilling. But there are certain stipulations that must be understood in relation to this free gift. For even a free gift requires an extended hand. So what does it take to be full of the Holy Spirit?

(a) The Right Heart Posture

You see, God has determined that only **one type of heart posture** would provoke Him to fill and overflow a man with His Spirit. So what is it? It's actually a combination of three biblical attitudes that typify the heart condition God requires. Allow me to prove this in Scripture:

1. *If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him? (Luke 11:11-15)*
2. *...There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth? (Luke 18:1-8).*
3. *And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself,*

God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted (Luke 18:9-14).

The three examples above involve a child, importunate widow, and a publican sinner. All three represent the attitude God is looking for in prayer. This indicates that if we beseech God for the infilling of the Spirit, which power we now realize is vitally important, we must pray in the same manner as they. We must pray with the attitude of a child in need of bread (Luk 11:11-15). Or like the importunate widow begging persistently for justice (Luk 18:1-8). And we must also pray like the sinner with complete humility and brokenness (Luk 18:9-14). God promises that if we approach Him in this manner He will surely take notice: ...**but to this man will I look**, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word (Isaiah 66:2).

Lastly, just like the publican sinner came before God broken and repentant over his sin, we must do the same in respect to our own sin so that God can show us mercy: *He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy* (Prov 28:13).

(b) Faith

Now beyond maintaining the correct heart posture, God also requires faith. So we must exercise faith if we hope to receive the infilling of the Spirit or anything else for that matter. Let's look at some passages:

But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him (Hebrews 11:6).

But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed (Jas 1:6).

Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.....According to your faith be it unto you. (Mar 9:23-24; Mat 9:29).

(c) Earnest Desire

To speak from personal experience, I've found that God will never give anything to those who don't truly appreciate the value of it—be it the indwelling or the infilling. If you don't really see the infilling as the very essence of what you need for your spiritual and eternal success. If your heart doesn't anguish continually with longing for something more, like a deeper revelation of God in your life. And if your appetite is still not stimulated, you will not fool God. Don't bother asking Him to fill you. He simply will not. Brethren, God's greatest jewels might be free, but they are not cheap. They are given selectively to those who will hold them with honor and respect and appraise them as priceless. For this reason, we don't see many truly Spirit filled men and women in our generation. We see plenty of cheap counterfeits, but none that are operating in Holy Ghost power. I remember a time shortly after conversion and being made aware of my need for the infilling, when I would plead with God in agony and weeping, begging Him to baptize me with the Holy Spirit. I even spent time fasting over this matter. This went on for months before I received the infilling of the Spirit. I will never regret meaning business with God as it dramatically changed my life.

However, I might be accused of making this way too hard and I don't blame you for thinking so, as this is how we are taught by most modern preachers. But today's gospel is wrapped up in one phrase, "easy believism". This cancer has thoroughly destroyed the integrity of the Christian testimony throughout the world. So please allow me to point your attention to our chief example, Jesus Christ, and show you how He prayed: *Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared* (Hebrews 5:7).

Christ's physical well being was constantly threatened, so too was His spiritual success. And since He knew this, how exactly do you think He ensured His daily safety and success? Good question. According to the Gospel account, He spent many seasons in prayer alone with God, sometimes early in the morning and sometimes throughout the night (Mat 14:23, Mar 1:35, Luk 6:12), but He never neglected this all important practice. If we dare neglect prayer, we cannot hope to see any semblance of success in our spiritual life. But let us not only merely pray. Let us pray with fervency, earnestly, and with passion, just like Christ our example.

It is no secret that athletes who train for great success will often sacrifice sleep, nourishment, and comfort in order to obtain the gold medal. This is because they are willing to do whatever it takes to come out as winners. But why is it that Christians so cheapen the meaning of faith that they offer God second best and feel as though He is constrained to reward them for their half hearted efforts? Why is it we maintain a passive and complacent lifestyle and keep God on the side in case we need Him and then wonder why our life is such a failure and no one seems to notice whether we are Christian or not? What's wrong with this picture? Are any of us concerned? I know that those who are, will be willing to offer God anything in exchange for His very best.

How to Maintain the Infilling of the Spirit

Many make the cardinal error of assuming that just because they received an experience years ago they are secure in what they possess today. Not so Christian. I advise you to read about the journey of Israel in the wilderness. They were instructed to collect manna daily and not accumulate it for the next day (Exodus 16). But also Jesus, in teaching His disciples how to pray instructed them to ask for their bread on a daily basis. Albeit a physical bread, it is a type of the spiritual also. God wants us to come before Him daily in search of a fresh Spiritual outpouring. Anything less will not work. For we need His power anew every day.

Now just like a physical fire needs fuel to keep burning, the spiritual one needs some of the following also, prayer, fasting, meditation, worship, and regular fellowship with the Saints in order to burn strong. If we neglect any of these, we will surely lose our fire and the passion for Christ will disappear.

Closing

In closing, I want to encourage us to pursue God until the fire of the Holy Spirit is poured out upon us. It is my prayer that we might receive the Spirit's anointing and by it be permanently changed in our way of life and ministry.

Love in Jesus,
John A.