

6. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit

Biblical material: Acts 2:37, 38; 9:5, 6; 1 Cor.12:1-13; 2 Cor.7:9-11; Gal. 3:1-11; 5:5, 6.

Quotes:

- No one may ask a believer whether he has been baptized with the Spirit. The very fact that a man is in the body of Christ demonstrates that he has been baptized with the Spirit; for there is no other way of entering the body. *Donald Grey Barnhouse*
- The Christian's birthright is the power of the Holy Ghost. *Lionel Fletcher*

Questions

How would you explain the baptism of the Spirit? What are the evidences of such a baptism? Why were the disciples accused of being drunk at Pentecost? Why is the Holy Spirit linked by some with a denial of thought and reason? How can some use supposed Spirit evidence to claim superiority? What kind of obedience does God want?

Discussion/ Comment

This lesson's memory verse (Eph. 5:18) contrasts being drunk as opposed to being filled with the Spirit. Interestingly, the alcohol connection is also found in the events of Pentecost, in which the scoffers derided the evidence of the Spirit in the apostles as their being drunk.

To pursue this contrasting parallel: it is surely no accident that liquor is also known as spirits. In that sense, alcohol is substitute and spurious spirit, affecting the human body in ways that may have a "spiritual" manifestation but which are entirely opposite to the work of the Spirit. The rhapsodic ecstasy that some feel under the influence of spirits can be contrasted with the true sense of divine bliss experienced under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

So what's the difference? Alcoholic spirits are destructive, damaging body and brain. The use of alcohol leads to impaired judgment, foolish actions, even death. The Holy Spirit's influence is entirely different, leading only to good and beneficial results. Most importantly, the Holy Spirit does not dull the brain and impair reason, but should be recognized as enhancing our mental faculties as he leads us into all truth. Those who just want mindless ecstasy are not following the true Spirit.

1 Cor 12 deals with the way in which we are to respond to the work of the Spirit. It is not to result in division—"I am more Spirit-filled than you." The Spirit is for the common good, not so one Christian can look down on another since he or she does not "speak in tongues" or somesuch. Quite the opposite—the Spirit is for the building up of the one body of which we are equally valuable parts. So to be baptized by the Spirit is not to enter some inner clique of the church, but a recognition of the gifts given to each member by the same Spirit.

Acts 2 shows the work of the Spirit in bringing repentance. The Greek word carries the idea of a change of mind. This is important to note in the context of excessive emotionalism! The Spirit works to convince us of the truth, not to give us some emotional buzz. The sense of joy comes from recognizing and accepting what is true and right, coming back to a loving relationship with our heavenly father. The obedience that is

noted in the lesson (Wed.) is accepting the rightness of God's way, not acceding to the demands of God like some servant. We obey because we identify with truth and right, not because of imposed requirement. The work of the Spirit is to help us understand, through thoughtful investigation of the evidence, why God acts as he does, and to agree with him.

Thursday's lesson deals with Faith and the Spirit, and references Galatians. The comment is made: "The greatest and most important of all truths is that Jesus Christ died for the sins of the world, that at Calvary He paid the penalty for all human sin, and that anyone can, by faith, be forgiven his or her sin and stand perfect before God. Central to this truth is that no works any human can do, even works of the law, can atone for his or her sins and bring forgiveness (*Rom. 3:20, Gal. 2:16*). This forgiveness and atonement come only through the work of Jesus and become effective in the life of those who believe; that is, those who claim it for themselves by faith." How would you explain this to someone who did not understand what it meant? How would you define the terms? How would you help your listener understand that God is not arbitrary, unforgiving, exacting and severe...?

The lesson also speaks of "subtle traps of legalism." Is it also possible to have a law-oriented view of salvation that while not traditionally legalistic, is still operating from the idea of needing to keep the law in order to be saved? In many ways, the stress on the legal need for satisfaction, propitiation, and payment of penalty, can make salvation very legalistic too. It all depends on what you believe is the problem, and how God takes care of that. Here the Spirit can truly lead us into all truth...

Ellen White Comments

Sin perpetuates itself. How cruel then it is for those who claim to have a knowledge of God to show that they are not doers of his word. They indulge in evil thinking, criticizing, and accusing, and in this way they misrepresent Christ's character. They are false witnesses, just as were the Jews. I pray that the vision of the soul may be sanctified, that the sin of accusing and criticizing may be put away, as a sin that crucifies afresh the Son of God, and puts him to an open shame. The Holy Spirit must work in our hearts. Let no false pride, no pharisaism, be cherished. {RH, October 17, 1899 par. 7 }

As surely as the Lord lives and reigns, the words spoken to Nicodemus are spoken to the men who have been handling sacred responsibilities. God says to them, "Ye must be born again." A conversion, represented by a new birth, must take place. Then the men who have worked according to their supposed wisdom, will become as little children, seeking the Lord as did the children of Israel on the day of atonement, confessing their sins, and purifying themselves from every moral defilement. When they come to the Lord with a sense of their own weakness, the Lord will hear them, and will answer, "Here am I." The Holy Spirit will strip them of their self-righteousness, pharisaism, and hardness of heart, and will give them a heart of flesh, made soft and tender by its indwelling presence. Self will die, and the life of Christ will be revealed in their lives. The life they now live, they will live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved them and gave himself for them. {SpTA10 8.1 }

The man who attempts to keep the commandments of God from a sense of obligation merely—because he is required to do so—will never enter into the joy of obedience. He does not obey. {COL 97.3 }

7. The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

Biblical material: Matt. 28:19, 20; Mark 16:15; Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Cor. 12:7-25; Eph. 4:11.

Quotes:

- With a perversity as pathetic as it is impoverishing we have become preoccupied today with the sporadic extraordinary and non-universal ministries of the Spirit to the neglect of... the more general ones. *J. I. Packer*
- Before Pentecost the disciples found it hard to do easy things; after Pentecost they found it easy to do hard things. *A. J. Gordon*
- To be filled with the Spirit is to have the Spirit fulfilling in us all that God intended him to do when he placed him there. *Lewis Sperry Chafer*

Questions

What are the gifts of the Spirit? Should we list them in order of perceived importance? Does our list vary from others? Who defines what is a gift of the Spirit? Are natural skills also spiritual gifts? Can we rely on receiving a gift instead of doing the work? Would truth-filled understanding be seen as a top priority?

Discussion

What are spiritual gifts *for*? In the 80's, I held a number of workshops that were designed to discover your spiritual gifts. The frequent problem we discovered was that many people wanted spiritual gifts for themselves, not for building up the body of Christ. But Scripture is very clear that the gifts of the Spirit are not for our own self-edification, but for the wider community. That is why some presumed manifestations (like speaking in tongues) can be problematic, since all too often they are used as a "badge of honor." Which is why Paul would rather speak five words with understanding than ten thousand in an unknown tongue. The stress is always on understanding and interpretation, not the miraculous utterance.

This reveals the truth about God who wants things done "decently and in order," and his desire is to build up the community of faith rather than any individual. As we see what the gifts are intended to do, we gain a much clearer picture of God's intent.

1 Cor. 12:8, 9 speak of the spiritual gifts of wisdom and knowledge. Such gifts of the Spirit are not usually the ones most frequently remembered or discussed! Additionally, we tend to think of these as acquired through our own study and experience. Does this mean we should give up reading and studying and just wait for the Spirit to give us these gifts?

Ephesians 4:11 could be interpreted in a sense of predestination. Is it that the Spirit decides who is going to do what? What of God's high regard for our individual freedom?

"God does not use miracles extravagantly or uselessly. 'What human power can do divine power is not summoned to do.' -Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 535." (Tuesday's lesson). What is the implication of this statement? Is it always a question of extravagance? Remember the miracle of turning water into wine—some of the more penurious many argue that this was extravagant—"let them drink water!"

So which spiritual gift do you most desire?

Comment

“How do you know if you’re filled with the right Spirit?”

“Well, the right Spirit is the Spirit of truth. And more than that, when you’re led by the Spirit, there will be the fruits of the Spirit... And the first of the fruits is love. And you know how love behaves. And what’s the last of the fruits of the Spirit? Self-control. And when you go into a service and they claim that people are filled with the Holy Spirit, and there is not evidence of self-control, then it is not the right spirit. If things are not being done “decently and in order”, then it is the wrong spirit. So we do have tests here.

“Paul says, ‘I’d rather speak five words with my intelligence than ten thousands of words in one of these tongues.’ Because these tongues are of no use to anybody. The best I can say is, you’re communicating with God, but if you don’t know what you’re saying yourself, then what’s the use of it? I think, although we need to summarize more carefully, when we get through with this, Paul, without insulting them, because you cannot antagonize and persuade at the same time, without insulting them for what they were doing, was pointing very clearly toward a better way. He wanted them to stop doing what they were doing, without saying, ‘Stop it immediately!’ Because they thought it was the Spirit, sincerely. And they had this experience. You can’t go to someone who’s just had a marvelous, exhilarating experience, and tell him he hasn’t had one! Though he can’t tell you what he’s had. He’ll just say, ‘I believe It was the right Spirit.’ Because if you start asking questions, he’ll say, ‘Don’t ask too many questions. You’ll quench the Spirit.’ I’m quoting now from documents by these folk. That’s why it is so self-supporting. You cannot investigate it, because the very investigation shows lack of faith. See how that thing is reasoning in a circle?”

“In the Bible it says, ‘Test the Spirits,’ doesn’t it? There are many false spirits out there. Test them. And Paul is saying, ‘Test this. Is it the true Spirit, whose fruit is love, and peace, and order, and self-control? Does it make sense? Does it speak in harmony with Scripture? If not, away with it!’ And yet, he was so careful. These were babes in the truth, who thought they’d caught the Spirit. And they were speaking in tongues. He didn’t condemn what they were doing...”

“But you know, if we don’t make sense, if it’s not done in order, are we really building up, or are we just having a private experience between us and the Lord? If so, why not just stay home and have it there? He’s saying. Don’t come to church and disrupt the meeting. What do you think of his persuasiveness here? He’s living up to ‘love is never rude.’ He was not rude to the pentecostals in his audience there. He was very polite and gracious.” *A. Graham Maxwell, The Picture of God in All 66, 1 & 2 Cor.*

Ellen White Comments

We are not to encourage a spirit of enthusiasm that brings zeal for a while but soon fades away, leaving discouragement and depression. We need the Bread of life that comes down from heaven to give life to the soul. Study the Word of God. Do not be controlled by feeling. All who labor in the vineyard of the Lord must learn that feeling is not faith. To be always in a state of elevation is not required. But it is required that we have firm faith in the Word of God as the flesh and blood of Christ. {1MCP 49.1}

Those who are worked by the Holy Spirit are not led by a feeling of enthusiasm, which soon goes out in darkness. The spell of Christ’s influence is abiding. “Be still and know that I am God.” This is a solemn abiding quietude in God. {5MR 235.2}

8. The Fruit of the Spirit

Biblical material: Isa. 53:3, John 3:16, 15:13, Rom. 5:5, 1 Corinthians 13, Eph. 2:8, Phil. 4:11-13, 1 John 3:16, 4:8.

Quotes:

- The fruit of the Spirit is not excitement or orthodoxy: it is character. *G. B. Duncan*
- Holy Spirit, descend plentifully into my heart. Enlighten the dark corners of this neglected dwelling and scatter there Thy cheerful beams. *Augustine*
- It is not fitting, when one is in God's service, to have a gloomy face or a chilling look. *St. Francis of Assisi*

Questions

Why are love, joy, and peace listed before some of the more “spectacular” gifts of the Spirit? How are such gifts revealed in our lives? How do we determine what are the fruits? Is it up to us to identify the fruits of the spirit—or the lack of them—in someone else's life? What should we seek? How do we understand the basis of salvation?

Discussion

Some very familiar verses are listed as the basis for this week's lesson. What do they have to do with the fruit of the Spirit? Is it because we believe the essential aspect of the Spirit's work is identical to that we also ascribe to the Father and the Son—our salvation? So we need to ask once again—what is the most important aspect of the great controversy—is it our salvation, or the vindication of God?

The first three texts refer to the suffering and death of Jesus, his laying down his life for his friends. But as has been pointed out, while it is truly a noble act to die for someone else, it does not “save” them. What is it in the death of Jesus that brings salvation—what do we see and understand? What does the Spirit do to help us see the truth in the life, death, and resurrection of our loving Lord?

As the lesson points out, belief and faith are not quite the same things. You may believe, but that is not the same as putting belief into practice and actually trusting, in other words, having faith. How does the Spirit help us to “have faith”? Is it not by helping us to understand, to see meaning and purpose, and to identify with the truth that God reveals by all his words and actions? Only then can we truly be confident that we are following a trustworthy God who not only exhibits might and power but who demonstrates that he always acts in accordance with the truth.

“We must remember, too, that as fruit of the spirit, joy and peace aren't the same as always feeling happy; instead, joy and peace are what comes from knowing—even though we aren't feeling happy or if circumstances aren't good—that God is close and promises to get us through whatever happens.” (Monday's lesson). How would you explain this to someone who is suffering without sounding like one of Job's comforters? How does the Holy Spirit pour out his love into our hearts” (Rom. 5:5)? In what way can speaking of these matters appear to others to be “pretentiously pious”? Finally, how do we relate to the fruits of the Spirit? Do we seek them because we want to possess such fruits in our lives, or because we value such ideals—or is it more that they are the natural fruits of knowing God as he truly is and putting his principles into practice in our lives?

Comment

The primary fruit of the Spirit is truth. The Spirit leads us into all truth, said Jesus. He is the one who witnesses to the truth. He is the inspiration of the truth as revealed in Scripture. Why this truth-focus?

Because without it we continue to operate according to flawed premises and mistaken assumptions. We do not face reality, we create our own version of it. The fruit of the Spirit is a love for truth, whatever the painful cost at times. Jesus died because he was faithful to the truth, not willing to accept the lies of the devil and the easy way of re-creating truth in the way you would prefer it to be. God values truth so much that he was willing to die rather than compromise.

So when it comes to the Holy Spirit, he will always affirm what is true, whatever the situation. God is always gracious, to be sure, but he cannot accept any manipulation of the truth, because that leads to distorted lives.

God seeks true believers, not the miracle-awed, the glory-bedazzled, or the forcefully-persuaded. The reason for faith is vitally important. Is it because of the supernatural manifestations, or the compelling personal presence, or the inspiring oratory?

Or is faith true because it is true of itself, even without the very presence of God himself who chooses to remain hidden as he walks beside us on the way?

“What is truth? Truth is something so noble that if God should turn aside from it, I could keep to the truth and let God go.” *Meister Eckhart*.

Ellen White Comments

The fruit of the Spirit—what is it? Gloom and sadness, and mourning, and tears? No, no; the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. These graces will be seen in every stone that helps to compose the temple of God. All the stones are not of the same dimension or shape, but every stone has its place in the temple { 1888 901 }

The Lord will enrich the minds of those who are searching for the hidden treasures of truth. What promise did our Lord Jesus Christ make to his disciples to furnish them with consolation in view of his departure from them? It was the promise of the Holy Spirit of God. The divine influence of the Holy Spirit was to co-operate with the human mind and bring to their remembrance whatsoever Christ had spoken unto them. The great need of this time of peril is the Holy Spirit; for it will bring to the receiver all other blessings in its train. The truth believed will transform the character. { 1888 1249-50 }

But the Holy Spirit will, from time to time, reveal the truth through its own chosen agencies; and no man, not even a priest or ruler, has a right to say, You shall not give publicity to your opinions, because I do not believe them. That wonderful "I" may attempt to put down the Holy Spirit's teaching. Men may for a time attempt to smother it and kill it; but that will not make error truth, or truth error. The inventive minds of men have advanced speculative opinions in various lines, and when the Holy Spirit lets light shine into human minds, it does not respect every point of man's application of the word. God impressed his servants to speak the truth, irrespective of what men had taken for granted as truth. {PH154 11.1 }

9. The Christian's Guide

Biblical material: *Luke 2:25-30, John 14:26, John 15:26, 16:12-14, Rom. 8:4, 1 Cor. 12:10.*

Quotes:

- The Holy Spirit loves so to arrange men's circumstances that they are brought within the sphere of God's influence. *Maurice A. P. Wood*
- The starting-point in the way of Christianity has proved to be the weal or woe point to thousands of immortal souls. Therefore, the greatest care is to be taken here. The one thing that should concern every person at this point more than anything else in the world is that he obtain a clear, definite witness from God that his many sins are all forgiven and under the blood. *John Hames*

Questions

In what way was it better for Jesus to go away? Why was the Holy Spirit not more visible before? What is the direction of the Spirit's guiding? If we come to the Spirit to learn, what questions should we be asking? In thinking of the new life in the Spirit, what should we most desire? How do our actions either help or hinder God's case?

Discussion

In this lesson the Spirit is revealed as Comforter and Teacher. To the disciples on the eve of their Saviour's departure, what they needed to hear more than anything else were words of hope. They were reassured by Jesus that they would be with him one day, that he would return, and most significantly, that they would not be left alone. Through the work of the Holy Spirit God himself is present in a way that Jesus in his physical body could not be present.

While both the Old and the New Testament show the Holy Spirit already present in the world, his role is much extended and developed after the Ascension of Jesus. It's as if he is now recognized and seen, and so is able to be more effective in the lives of those who search for God. Developing truth means that there is greater understanding, and God is able to work more through those who better relate and understand.

The Holy Spirit will lead us into *all* truth (John 16:13), he will also teach you *all* things and remind you of *everything* (John 14:26). It's interesting to note such inclusiveness that is promised. The Spirit is our guide who does not lead us into some truth, but *all of it!* What does this mean to us—how can we know all truth?!

Some make much of the importance of the not-guilty verdict from God—as for example the above quote from John Hames. But is this the most important aspect for us? Is not the relationship with God that leads to healing and renewal more important than some kind of decree that we have been forgiven? It all depends on what you see the problem as—a legal barrier that needs to be overcome so God can forgive, or the separation caused by our sinful choices. Is it that God needs to pay and be paid a penalty, or that he wants to win us back to trust and acceptance?

As the Holy Spirit guides us, we begin to see that the problem is never with God, but always with us. We are the ones who chose to go our own way, we were the ones to choose the selfishness of sin. God has always been willing to forgive, heal, and restore—

and he needs no machinations in order to achieve this. On the cross we see his outstretched arms willing us back to him, not some kind of “payback” that then enables him to forgive our indebtedness.

So that we may grow in grace, experience the healing we so badly need, and gain the understanding that brings us into loving agreement and harmony (the atonement), the Holy Spirit is our ever-present Friend and Guide.

Comment

Why are there so few miracles in the church today? Why so few dramatic evidences (as some would say) of the work of the Holy Spirit? Why?

Because God wants us to believe for truth's sake—not because of spectacular signs or wonders. In fact, the presence of this kind of miracle-working, the flamboyant, showy marvels, prove the wrong kind of attitude to faith, which should be true trust in the Lord. Miracles can get in the way and confuse people. Jesus never performed miracles for their own sake, but always for a very real reason. And he never performed a miracle to vindicate himself.

In fact, Jesus gives a strong warning against false christs who will be working great signs and wonders. Why? Because that's the way people think, and can be convinced. Fooling people by appealing to their desire for the extraordinary.

“Let none cherish the idea that special providences or miraculous manifestations are to be the proof of the genuineness of their work or of the ideas they advocate. If we keep these things before the people, they will produce an evil effect, an unhealthy emotion... the Bible will never be superseded by miraculous manifestations... The wonderful, marvellous, will be represented and presented. Through satanic delusions, wonderful miracles, the claims of human agents will be urged. Beware of all this... We must not trust the claims of men... The man who makes the working of miracles the test of his faith will find that Satan can, through a species of deceptions, perform wonders that will appear to be genuine miracles.... If we accept not the truth in the love of it, we may be among the number who will see miracles wrought by Satan in these last days, and believe them.” 2SM 48-53.

So don't make miracles the test of your faith. The real test is: Is it true? Is it in harmony with God's word? Even the working of the Holy Spirit must be tested:

“My dear friends, do not believe all who claim to have the Spirit, but test them to find out if the spirit they have comes from God. For many false prophets have gone out everywhere.” 1 John 4:1,2 TEV. “Even the work of the Holy Spirit upon the heart is to be tested by the Word of God.” GC Daily Bulletin, April 13, 1891.

How does God act? Like Jesus on road to Emmaus: not by authority, or by amazing signs, but by appealing to the truth of Scripture. Only when they had believed the truth because it was so obviously the truth, a truth based on reason, did Jesus reveal who he was. That's a big lesson for us today.

Ellen White Comment

The Holy Spirit will not compel men to take a certain course of action. We are free moral agents; and when sufficient evidence has been given us as to our duty it is left with us to decide our course. {RH, July 17, 1888 par. 4}

