

The Benefits of the Baptism Of The Holy Spirit

What happens when God fills someone with the Holy Spirit? What difference does it make whether or not you have been filled with the Spirit with the initial physical evidence of speaking in other tongues? Good questions deserve good answers. Look at what the Bible says.

- 1) Witnessing. Jesus himself said it just before He was taken up to heaven after His resurrection: "After that the Holy Ghost is come upon you . . . ye shall be witnesses unto me" (Acts 1:8). The Spirit gives us power to share with others what Jesus means to us and what He can do for them.

I remember as a teenager being filled with the Spirit at the Michigan District camp meeting. What a difference that experience made in my witnessing. Before I had been afraid. But when Jesus filled me with His Spirit, I wanted everyone to know Him.

- 2) Praying. The apostle Paul experienced firsthand what the Spirit can accomplish. In Romans he said this about praying: "*We know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit . . . maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered*" (8:26). The next verse says that such intercession is lined up with the will of God. Being filled with the Spirit gives us access to what God wants to do and makes us partners with Him. It gives us power—through tongues and His other gifts and in prayer.

The baptism in the Holy Spirit is our guarantee that Jesus lives

- 3) Guaranteeing. The apostle Peter, speaking of Jesus, said on the Day of Pentecost, "Having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear" (Acts 2:33). The Baptism is our guarantee that Jesus lives. We don't have to take some secondhand stories about our Master. One way we know He lives is because every time we see someone baptized in the Spirit, we know Jesus is giving us evidence that He is alive. He had said that if He didn't go away, the Comforter could not come. (See John 16:7.) Doubts are gone; Jesus lives and sends His Comforter to help us.
- 4) Living. An often overlooked benefit of being filled with the Spirit is that He gives us power to live and to please the Father. Jesus said we would receive power when the Spirit came. Some of that power is for witnessing. But witnessing is more than talking—it is living. People will look at the life. If they see too much difference between what is claimed and what is evidenced, they will be turned off. People are looking for spiritual reality. That's why a person needs to be filled with the Spirit. He empowers us.

Being filled with the Spirit goes far beyond a one-time experience. We need the power of the Spirit in our lives every moment of every day

Empowered!

By THOMAS E. TRASK

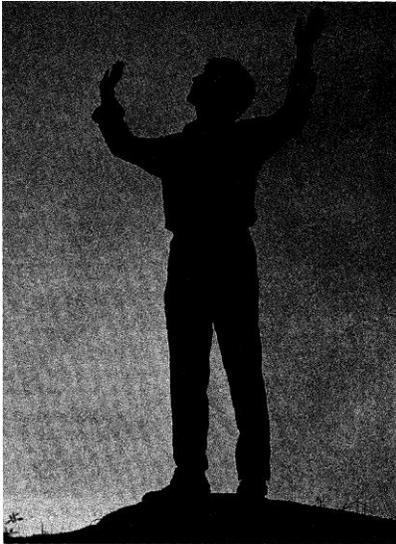
Jesus instructed believers to tarry in Jerusalem until they were endued ("clothed," NIV) with power from on high. (See Luke 24:49.) They obeyed and He sent the promise of the Father, the Holy Spirit, upon the Early Church.

The Holy Spirit's empowerment is still available to help men and women accomplish the task of worldwide evangelism. What would have been impossible to do alone is possible with the Holy Spirit's empowerment in His time frame. This empowerment grants supernatural insight into what methods to use to accomplish the task.

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God equipped His church with the power of Pentecost to finish
the work He gave us to do.*

The church must remain committed to and dependent upon the power of the Holy Spirit. The church's work is a divine ministry that needs divine equipment. The enduement of power spans cultures, distances, and governments. This enduement is given moment by moment.

The Holy Spirit was not given to please us, but to make us witnesses. (See Acts 1:8.) We enjoy the fullness of the Spirit only as we use it for His work. Only in evangelizing can the church of Jesus Christ realize the meaning of Pentecost.



The Holy Spirit also gives power to receive the life of Christ—power to be, rather than to say or do. Our works and words must come from our inmost being or they will have little power. We must walk the walk before we talk the talk.

One characteristic of the Spirit-filled Early Church was its willingness to sacrifice. From early days (when the Assemblies of God possessed less than we have now) men and women made sacrifices. The Holy Spirit placed this in their hearts, minds, and spirits.

The Assemblies of God has been raised up for this moment in history. God equipped His church with the power of Pentecost to finish the work He gave us to do. Let us not assume like Samson that we have the Holy Spirit indwelling us. But let us wait before Him until we have been freshly endued. Then may we believe for the miraculous and God will confirm His Word with signs following. Jesus will be glorified and His church built.

Each generation and each individual must have its own renewal of Pentecost.

Fresh Fire

By RONALD A. SNIDER

Pentecost and *renewal* are powerful words. The first looks back; the second looks ahead. We need to do both.

The rearview mirror of history shows us the magnificent release of power on the Day of Pentecost. Stirring figures: the sound of rushing mighty wind, the sight of tongues like fire, the miracle of speaking languages unlearned, and then the reality of the Spirit's fullness.

The call and challenge to be Spirit-filled is ever the call for a renewal of Pentecostal experience. The wind can still blow, the fire can still fall, and the tongue can be filled with new language. Renewal is possible.

My father, a Methodist preacher, rode the circuit by horseback for six churches in Canada. The year was 1902. He attended a camp meeting where God was moving in power. The evangelist called for people who wanted the Holy Spirit to fill them as on Pentecost to raise their hands and receive. Dad did, and on the sawdust floor he spoke in a new language. But each generation and each individual must have its own renewal of Pentecost.

Mine came at a camp meeting in Iowa when I was a teenager. I recall the glory of His presence and the awe of hearing myself speak and sing in a language I'd never learned. The Word came alive, worship became a joy, and Jesus became more real to me. The initial filling was not the end, but a beginning of a Spirit-filled life with many refillings following.

The Assemblies of God has come a long way since those early days. Thank the Lord for lovely buildings, magnificent music, dynamic small group ministries, and new programs and methods. But let us not leave our roots of spiritual empowering. Modern methods and marketing are no substitutes for the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives and churches.

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Empowered To Live

By GEORGE O. WOOD

Scottish playwright James Barrie dolefully commented on the difference between our expectations for life and the realities we actually experience: "The life of every man is a diary in which he means to write one story, but instead writes another. And his saddest hour is when he compares the volume as it is with what he vowed to make it."

Such a statement reflects an attitude of disillusionment far from the promise of Jesus: "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10, NIV).

How can we be sure the end result of our living parallels the statement of Jesus rather than that of James Barrie? The Bible has clear answers.

The purpose of the baptism in the Holy Spirit is to so overwhelm you with the presence of God that you will no longer dwell on your own weaknesses and inadequacies, but instead be filled with assurance and boldness.

Most of the time our concern for life has to do with living better here and now. But God has a more expansive view. He seeks to empower us to live eternally.

No matter how much money, power, health, or success you have, it will not exempt you from dying. Only Jesus can give you resurrection-order life—whether you are wealthy or on welfare; whether you have great influence or none—regardless of age, gender, or ethnicity. Life is not available outside of Jesus Christ.

So begin with Him. Confess your sin and need to Him. (See 1 John 1:9.) Ask Him to enter your life. (See Revelation 3:20.) Believe on Him with your heart and confess Him as Lord with your mouth. (See Romans 10:8,9.) Follow Him by being baptized in water and learning His way of life and thinking. (See Matthew 28:19.) Commit yourself to be part of His church. (See Acts 2:42.)

The Lord has a wonderful gift for you along with salvation: the baptism in the Holy Spirit. (See Acts 1:8; 2:4,38,39.) You cannot live the Christian life under your own power, nor can you effectively witness to others about your newfound faith unless the Spirit of God enables you. The purpose of the baptism in the Holy Spirit is to so overwhelm you with the presence of God that you will no longer dwell on your own weaknesses and inadequacies, but instead be filled with assurance and boldness.

Have you noticed how two persons accomplish the same job? Look at the difference between the 15th and 16th presidents of the United States. Immediately we recognize the 16th president as Abraham Lincoln, but are hard pressed to recall the name of the 15th. Why? Both held the same office and faced the crisis of a nation divided over the issue of slavery. What

made the difference? One, Lincoln, had a personal enablement—the other didn't. It wasn't their constitutional powers which made the difference. Both exercised identical legal authority as president. It was a personal empowerment in Lincoln not possessed by the 15th president.

It is equally possible for us to live our Christian life as that unremembered 15th president. We have the office of being a Christian, but are devoid of the power. That is why we need the baptism in the Spirit and the ongoing filling of the Spirit to bring a song to our hearts, thanksgiving to our lips, and proper relationships with others. (See Ephesians 5:18-21.)

Have you given your life to the Lord? Have you received the baptism in the Holy Spirit?

Are you continually full of the Spirit's presence? If the answer to any of these questions is no, then ask the Lord to meet you at the level of the need you have right now. Seek a pastor or mature Christian to pray and counsel with you.

What comes after conversion, water baptism, the baptism in the Spirit, linkage and identification with the local church? How do we live empowered each day with strength to overcome the sadness and hurt of life and invigoration to challenge the monotony and humdrum of daily existence?

Here's a checklist for daily use:

1. Have I opened the Bible today and let it speak to me? Failing to take God's Word into your life is like neglecting to eat. You become weak when you do not receive nourishment.

2. Have I prayed meaningfully today? I use my hand as a prayer guide: the thumb represents persons who are nearest my heart; the index finger for those who are an example and point the way; the middle finger for those who are in places of temporal and spiritual authority; the next finger, my weakest, for those in great need and vulnerability; and the little finger for me—the smallest and least.

3. Is there sin, bitterness, or unforgiveness in my life? I need to practice daily spiritual cleansing and not let impurity build up and become caked into my life. Each night as I go to sleep I must seek to do so with a clear conscience. (See Ephesians 4:26.)

4. Am I sensitive to how God may want to guide or use me today?

Peter the apostle prayed during the noon hour, and the Lord changed the destiny of Cornelius and family because Peter opened himself to being guided of the Lord. (See Acts 10:9.) I must not live so structured that I block out what God may want me to do. And when I know what He wants, I must obey.

5. Have I sought to help/encourage someone today whose need is greater than my own?

The Lord commended to us the example of the Good Samaritan. (See Luke 10:30-37.) When I am emotionally expended or dealing with personal hurt and sorrow, I find it important that I rise above my own concerns to enter in to the greater concerns of another. The Lord himself left us an example. On His cross He focused on the needs of others for forgiveness, pardon, and support.

6. Do I live, as Jesus taught, one day at a time? (See Matthew 6:11,25- 34.) I cannot be empowered to live the future unless I am empowered to live today. I must not daydream about how different today would be if I could order it so. God has given me today and seeks for me to glorify Him in it. If I am faithful in small responsibilities now, He will decide what my lot will be tomorrow.

7. Have I relinquished myself to His full control this day? Sometimes hurtful things hit us and we feel diminished rather than empowered. How can we live to the full, when we have taken a hard blow to the midsection and the air has been knocked out of us? We must change our focus, even if it takes time, from asking why to asking what now. In Romans 8 Paul did not concentrate on the why, but the what; in so doing he reminded us that the future glory will be greater than any present suffering. The Holy Spirit is interceding for us even when we don't have words because the pain is too great; God is always working for the good; and nothing can separate us from the Lord. In such times I am empowered as I realize how much God loves me, guards me, and cares for me. He has a stronger grip on me than I have on Him, and He will never betray nor abandon me.

Out of this daily relationship with the Lord flows the quality of life in which we are empowered to be persons of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. (See Galatians 5:22,23.)

The other day I flew in a private plane. I took the copilot's seat even though I don't know how to fly a plane. I noticed that each time the pilot pulled on the stick, the identical stick for the copilot's seat mimically moved in the same direction. The needles on my duplicate side of the instrument panel registered the same as those on his side.

Empowerment to live as a Christian is like flying in that copilot's seat. As long as I don't take the stick or the throttle, but let Him do the piloting, it's a good and safe trip. It would be absurd for me to attempt to take controls from Him when He is on the plane. I must let Him move the controls and monitor the gauges. When the day comes that I know enough about flying, then He can monitor my progress; and if I fly the plane like He would, He will let me continue. But no matter how experienced I may become I must always yield control to Him.

If I want to live empowered, then each day I will sit in my copilot's seat, go through the checklist He asks of me, but make sure that I never attempt to fly the plane by myself or without His direction and approval. My empowerment comes from Him. So must yours.

By the way . . . in case you wondered . . . the name of our 15th president was James Buchanan.



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Empowered To Serve

By T. RAY RACHELS

The most famous address for modernday Pentecostals is Azusa Street in Los Angeles. There in 1906 God sent the Holy Spirit to awaken the church with a revival that lasted 3 years.

City officials took down the street sign several years ago because it's only an alleyway, a half-block long, adjacent to the Japanese Cultural Center. They assumed it didn't merit identification.

A few concerned Pentecostal citizens appealed to Mayor Tom Bradley to restore the sign. "It's a historic site," they said. "Something significant happened there, and it must not be forgotten."

*A believer who does not bear the mark of humble
Servanthood does not reflect the glory of God.*

The sign is up again. Azusa Street has its name back. Just a little street. Why notice?

From Azusa Street and the revival of 1906, according to Cecil M. Robeck, professor at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California, some 400 million people today are Pentecostal Christians. All trace their roots to what happened at that place—the baptism in the Holy Spirit with the initial physical evidence of speaking in other tongues. The result was spiritual backbone, fearless witness, willingness to suffer, an overwhelming love, joy, and enthusiasm, and a missionary spirit.

The resources from God's hand were so unexpected that they caught everyone off guard. The church suddenly was empowered in ways she had long forgotten.

The task for us is to properly interpret the Spirit of Pentecost for today. What does the Spirit say to you and me? Surely His coming was to point us to God and His glory.

God's glory is revealed to people who will follow Jesus.

Mother Teresa was interviewed by Edward Desmond of Time. When he asked if she felt she had any special qualities, she responded, "I don't think so. I don't claim anything of the work. It is His work. I am like a little pencil in His hand. That is all. He does the thinking. He does the writing. The pencil has nothing to do with it. The pencil has only to be allowed to be used. In human terms, the success of our work should not have happened, no?"

This challenge was once posed to evangelist Dwight L. Moody: "The world has yet to see what God will do with a man fully consecrated to Him." Moody determined to be that man.

The great need of the church is for people of the Spirit who are totally committed to Christ.

Without the Spirit no amount of intellectual power, administrative ability, or even the capacity to work without fatigue will bring us through. It is "by my Spirit, saith the Lord" (Zechariah 4:6).

People who follow Jesus are called to serve as He served.

Jesus revealed a revolutionary idea of greatness at the Last Supper. "He rose from supper, laid aside His garments, and girded himself with a towel . . . and began to wash the disciples' feet." (See John 13:4,5.)

Greatness in the kingdom of God is measured in terms of service.

Michael Green in his book, *Called To Serve*, said that Peter learned his lesson well, because in his epistle he used the word "submit" again and again. It is applied to husbands and wives, young and old, slaves, and leaders.

Peter also said, "Clothe yourselves, all of you with humility." (See 1 Peter 5:5.) The likely meaning intended, according to Green, is that we are to do our service for God in a way similar to that of Jesus when He took a towel and girded himself. It's Peter's way of saying that believers are to have this characteristic of Jesus. A believer who does not bear the mark of humble servanthood does not reflect the glory of God.

Paul wrote, "You are not your own; you were bought at a price" (1 Corinthians 6:19,20, NIV). His reference was to the Roman slave and his master. The slave had no rights. His money, time, future, and marriage were at the disposal of his master.

New Testament writers delighted to call themselves slaves of Christ. It was their description of a Christian. Status had an unholy ring to it, for they had all things in common.

"Paul, a slave (Bondservant) of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle and set apart for the work of the gospel of God." (Romans 1:1 NIV)

"But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves (bondservants) to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life" (Romans 6:22 NIV; see also Philippians 1:1; Titus 1:1; James 1:1; 2 Peter 1:1; and Jude 1, NIV.)

"When we reflect on the history of the church," wrote Green, "are we not bound to confess that she has failed to follow the example of her Founder? All too often she has worn the robes of the ruler, not the apron of the servant." His reference was to the Roman slave and his master.

People who serve as Christ served will be empowered by the Spirit who comes to reveal New Testament writers delighted to call the glory of God.

To whom can we look today for renewal The Holy Spirit offers Himself.

In Greek mythology one labor of Hercules was to clean the stables of Augeas. In them Augeas had stabled 3,000 head of oxen for 30 years without ever once cleaning them It was

Hercules' task to clear away this accumulation of filth. He did not even attempt to do it himself. He decided the course of two rivers so they flowed through the stables, and cleansing tide did what no human effort could have done.

The Holy Spirit links a man with a power far greater than his own, said William Barclay, and that flood tide of cleansing and renewing does for him what he himself could never do.

A man named Bezaleel was picked out for mention in Exodus 31. God said, "I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship" (Exodus 31:35).

This moves theology into the workplace. The Spirit of God stands squarely in the center of daily routine, in the mechanic's shop, on the carpenter's table, on the assembly line, at the secretary's desk, and on the salesman's route. God intends to be in the middle of your life's work, and His Spirit is promised to you for help.

Whatever gift a man has – of mind, heart, brain, eye, or hand—that gift is the gift of the Spirit. It is not only the preacher in his study or pulpit who is working in the power of the Spirit; the man or woman whose work is dedicated to God and His glory, however lofty or humble, is also working in the power of the Spirit.

I saw this gift eloquently demonstrated in a large church gathering. The Word of God had been delivered. People were praying. God was moving in rich power.

Then the pianist played—softly at first, holding her music underneath the 2,000 praying people. Then she began playing boldly, beautifully, majestically, with authority, singing the songs as she played.

Electricity was there. Her music and presence grew into a dominant theme. No person interrupted. The gift of God was at work. You could feel it.

The attention of my spirit, and others as well, riveted on such joyous abandonment. Eyes closed, lost in wonder, there was divine transport in her contribution to the Holy Spirit's movement of grace. God's glory was upon her and upon us as well. She had taken what she had, lifted it to God, and God had distributed it among the people.

Regardless of how great or small our abilities are, with the empowering of the Holy Spirit, they are enough to accomplish His purposes.



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Empowered To Worship

By HARRIS L. JANSEN

Holy Spirit, Thou art welcome in this place," is a frequent choral invocation in Pentecostal worship. It is a beautiful chorus. The musical style inspires response. The theme resonates well with Pentecostals.

Try to imagine what the 10 days tarrying before Pentecost were like. What did the 120 do? Did they sing? They were accustomed to singing in the synagogues. What was their song? Similar to our song? What was the content of their prayers? Perhaps it was a blend of synagogue blessings, praising God, and trying to pray in the new ways Jesus taught. They surely reasoned much of the time. Recall the 11 apostles (and Matthias) were there. "Tell us how it was to be with the Lord those more than 3 years," the rest must have asked.

We read the account: "When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place" (Acts 2:1*). "All together." Unity. A clue to what happened there. The Spirit comes when we are united in purpose.

"In one place." The strong possibility is that this place was within the temple precincts. Herod's temple had many rooms, perhaps permitting people to live there. Luke wrote that following Jesus' ascension the apostles stayed continually at the temple. (See Luke 24:53.) The Spirit came while the 120 were in a worship setting.

Actually, some of the most beautiful New Testament accounts of worship occurred before Pentecost. One is Mary's visit to Elizabeth. (See Luke 1:41.) Recall that Elizabeth, herself pregnant by divine miracle, understood that Mary was bearing the Messiah and broke out in spontaneous song. Mary too at the Spirit's inspiration sang the beautiful Magnificat. (See Luke 1:46-55.)

Zechariah received the announcement of the miraculous birth of John as he led worship in the temple. The first words uttered by Zechariah following his dumbness were praise to God. (See Luke 1:20,64.) Luke explained that Zechariah's prophecy that followed was by the operation of the Holy Spirit (v.67).

At the baptism of Jesus by John, Luke tells us that it was while Jesus prayed—a time of worship—that the Holy Spirit came upon Him. (See Luke 3:21,22.) During this time of worship the Holy Spirit identified Jesus' baptism as a messianic anointing.

Read further in Acts 2: "All of them [the 120] were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them" (v.4). Unheard of. Unique up to that time. Saved, regenerated people spoke in the languages of "God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven . . . declaring the wonders of God" (vv.5,11). A new paradigm of the Spirit's working in believers began. The initial physical evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit would be speaking in languages not otherwise learned.

As it was for the 120 in Jerusalem, this Baptism evidenced initially by speaking in tongues would be for Cornelius and family. (See Acts 10:44,46.) Also for the Ephesian believers. (See Acts 19:6.) Further, it was strongly inferred as the experience for Stephen (Acts 8:18,19) and for Paul (Acts 9:17). Today it is the experience of millions and a benchmark doctrine for Pentecostals.

"Holy Spirit, Thou art welcome in this place." The Holy Spirit actualizes the presence of God among us. He is God imminent and intimate with us. He is God at His most experiential. We cannot worship without Him.

The New Testament church knew that. Paul underscored it: "We who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:3). Whenever the early believers gathered, they expected the Holy Spirit to lead in prayer (Romans 8:26,27); their access to God (Ephesians 2:18); their praise in both song and tongue (1 Corinthians 14:15, Ephesians 5:19, Colossians 3:16); the prophetic word (1 Corinthians 14:3); in their discernment (1 Corinthians 14:29); their obedience (Romans 12:1). This should be our expectancy also.

"Holy Spirit, Thou art welcome." We can welcome Him because we too are spirit. We have the nature of God. We can talk with God, and He can talk with us. That was Jesus' point in His conversation with the woman at the well. (See John 4:24.) We worship in the sphere of our human spirits and in the energy (power) of the Holy Spirit. Again bear in mind that we welcome the Holy Spirit so Jesus may be present. The focus of our worship is always the majestic and redeeming Christ. Further, the setting of our worship is in community.

In the Jerusalem church and the awful account of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 4:32 to 5:11), Luke, by his opening paragraph, stressed the character of those first believers: "..the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had" (4:32). Each member felt responsible for the good of the others.

Contrast the congregation of Jerusalem with the congregation of First Church of Corinth: "When you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, for as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else. One remains hungry, another gets drunk" (1 Corinthians 11:20,21). Before Corinth could deal with their abuses in worship, Paul made them deal with their selfishness and division. Then he could say to them, "Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good" (1 Corinthians 12:7).

Empowered to worship, yes. We are helped by the Spirit in our prayer and praise. We are enabled to exercise spiritual gifts. Doing so, we exalt Jesus and edify one another.

Holy Spirit, come



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