

On Thursday I was sitting in a classroom and watch an interaction with one of our more troubled students at the school. He was sitting there, computer off, doing nothing, and talking to people around him. The teacher asked him to quiet down and get back to work. He said, "I was working, but I had a question and no one would help me!"

"I didn't see you raise your hand," she said. "If you raise your hand I will come and help."

He responded by saying, "I am not a child. I'm not going to raise my hand."

Everyone of us has questions, and the only way to find the answer to them is to ask. It is our most basic urge. As soon as a child learns to speak...they start asking questions because they are curious and they don't know stuff, and they want to know stuff, and the only way they have to learn it is to ask.

But I think the saddest part of growing up is that our culture in many ways pressures the curiosity out of us...or at least pressures us to stop asking questions...

We feel bad, upset, embarrassed when we don't know something. One of the hardest stigmas to overcome as an adult and a leader is the Know-it-all Expectation. We expect our leaders to know everything and be everything. We say we don't, but when they let us down in one area, we get upset.

But if you and I are going to keep growing and learning and expanding our borders as human beings...we have to keep asking questions. We have to keep exploring. We have to be open about the fact that we don't know everything, but we are certainly open to learning and growing.

That is why we are doing this message series. You have questions. I have questions. Sometimes we can find an answer, but sometimes we only find a path to follow. A direction to head...

Today we are going to look at What is Baptism with the Holy Spirit? t

This can be a tricky and sometimes confusing theological idea depending on what your church background is...

If you come from a Wesleyan or Holiness background...you have a certain set of views on what it means to be baptized with the Holy Spirit.

If you come from a pentecostal or charismatic background...you have a set of views on what it means.

If you come from a Lutheran, Episcopal, Catholic, Presbyterian background...you have a set of views...

All of us come to this question with both positive and negative baggage about what it means to be baptized in the Holy Spirit, but every major section of the Church has some reflection on this Doctrine of the Church with many being far more accepting of its reality in their early days than they are today.

So we are going to work our way through this by looking at a few passages of Scripture and reading a few testimonies about the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers throughout history. There is far too much information to give in a single message without going on far too long and getting technical in a way that would bog us down.

In Acts 1: 6-7, Jesus is getting ready to return to the heavenly realm. They know he is getting ready to leave...

Then they gathered around him and asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"

He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Here is Jesus, as we talked about last week, not really answering the question being asked. They want to know, when do we get to be part of the heavenly Kingdom. When are you going to return to set things right.

Jesus' response is important because He doesn't say, "Your thoughts about the end are unimportant." Thinking about the end is important, but they are not the sum total of all they need to be thinking about...

He does two very important things:

First, he tells them that they will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on them...

Second, this power will enable them to be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

If ever there is a time when we need the power of the Holy Spirit it is now. As a young church, we need the power of the Holy Spirit to lead us, guide us, and empower us to be witnesses in our community.

Everywhere we look in our neighborhoods and towns; crime, dysfunction, poverty, addiction...are rampant. And because many of us feel powerless to really do anything we look on and complain or wall ourselves off from the turmoil or any number of things.

But as Christians, we are called to take the light of Jesus Christ into the dark places in our world...and we are able to do this only because we are given the power of the Holy Spirit.

At the heart of the problems in our world is a disconnection from the power of God. Throughout history, every major transformation of society has come, not from a better social program, though those have been part of it. They have not come because people were better educate, though education was part of it. Every major social move forward came when Christians, filled with the Holy Spirit, went out into their world and started schools, hospitals, welfare programs, shelters, libraries, art museums, love people unconditionally, and witnessed to the power of Jesus at work in their lives.

So Biblically what did this look like?

Acts 2:1-21 says,

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. 2 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

5 Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. 6 When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. 7 Utterly amazed, they asked: "Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? 9 Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome 11 (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" 12 Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?"

13 Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine."

14 Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. 15 These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! 16 No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

"In the last days, God says,

I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,
your young men will see visions,
your old men will dream dreams.
Even on my servants, both men and women,

I will pour out my Spirit in those days,
and they will prophesy.
I will show wonders in the heavens above
and signs on the earth below,
blood and fire and billows of smoke.
The sun will be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood
before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.
And everyone who calls
on the name of the Lord will be saved.'

Peter connects this powerful movement with the words of Joel, where he talks about the eschatological, that is the big word for God ultimate goal for our world. Usually people reduce to just end times stuff, but it is far more than just end times stuff. It is the word used to describe the study of What is God's ultimate goal for our world?

Joel says that God will pour out His spirit and people will prophesy, see visions, dream dreams, there will be wonders and signs...

For the disciples, when the Holy Spirit comes our passage says,

"Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them."

This very symbolic passage gives us a two important symbols and one problem.

First the symbols.

The sound of wind and the presence of fire.

These are two very important symbols throughout Scripture, and they represent two very important things that happen in our lives when we experience the Baptism with the Holy Spirit.

Your Baptism with the Holy Spirit Empowers You

Throughout Scripture wind symbolizes power and movement. And when you are baptized with the Holy Spirit, you are empowered to the work of God in the world around you. There reason so many of us fail to make a Kingdom difference in our world is because we fail to allow the work of the Holy Spirit to fully empower us to do what He has called us to do.

We look to our own strength. We see all our failures. We see how screwed up we are. And think...I could never do that! Jesus took a group of 12 VERY dysfunctional people and changed the world because they were filled with the Holy Spirit.

Throughout church history, this power has been seen through the giving of the Spiritual Gifts of 1 Corinthians 12, and in what we in the Vineyard call Signs and Wonders. This is the belief that God can heal people who are sick. He can perform miracles. And, in some cases, we see physical things happens to people.

I will talk about this more in a minute.

The second symbol

Your Baptism with the Holy Spirit Cleanses You.

Fire always represents purity and the purifying process, and when you are baptized with the Holy Spirit, not only are you empowered to do the work of ministry in your world, but you are also empowered to life a more Christlike life.

In my church background it is this aspect which was emphasized as Sanctification. God wants to sanctify you from your sin, give you more power to resist temptation, and develop the character of Christ in your life.

In Galatians, Paul refers to this work as the Fruit of the Spirit. As the Holy Spirit works in your life, you should be producing the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

But in the midst of this passage, a problem has developed.

The Problem of Manifestations

In Acts 2, when the Disciples are baptized with the Holy Spirit, there is a physical sign that takes place, speaking in tongues, that has caused some trouble for the church through the years.

For some, this was a one time miraculous thing, and was needed because there were so many people from different area who spoke different languages and needed to hear the Gospel in their own language.

For others, this was a result of people who spoke different language already being filled with the Holy Spirit and resorting to their native language out of joy and excitement at the work of God in their lives.

For others, this has become the standard expression and sign of what it means to be baptized with the Holy Spirit. It also doesn't mean a known language. For some, they believe in a prayer language where they pray in an unknown language.

In a room like this there are people who come from all different backgrounds and experiences. So let me tell you where I come from and part of the reason why I became part of the Vineyard.

I cannot deny that the Holy Spirit is working and active in our world. I have seen some things happen that can only be described as the miraculous work of God's Holy Spirit in our world. I also come from a background where speaking in tongues was just weird. And growing up I saw far too many people fake it or become spiritual experience junkies in search of the experience but never having a transformation of life. They wanted the wind, but not the fire.

Along the way I have run into two very important groups of people. One group of people testify to the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives, but have never spoken in tongues. So I came to belief by studying Scripture, church history, and seeing it at work in their lives that the Holy Spirit's presence doesn't demand that people speak in tongues as sign they are filled with the Holy Spirit.

Another group of people were those who spoke in tongues and demonstrated the work of God's purifying presence. They weren't spiritual junkies. They weren't trying to prove anything or fake anything. They were genuine and real and experiencing some things that I cannot, still, fully explain. So, in the same way, I came to realize that just because I can't explain and maybe haven't experience something myself it doesn't mean it isn't real.

In the Vineyard I found a place where they try to walk this fine line of balance between both worlds. People who seek after the empowering AND the purifying. A place where they seek to allow the Holy Spirit to work in whatever way He wants to work. Some will speak in tongues. Others will not, but all will be empowered to do the work of ministry and to live Christlike lives.

In spite of this biblical evidence, some of come from backgrounds where Baptism with he Holy Spirit is either seen as a small part of the Christian life or seen only as something that happened for the disciples. So another important part of this process for us is to look at the

Testimonies of past generations

So I just want to read a few testimonies from people from different backgrounds.

John Welsey at Aldersgate

In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.

After my return home, I was much buffeted with temptations, but I cried out, and they fled away. They returned again and again. I as often lifted up my eyes, and He "sent me help from his holy place." And herein I found the difference between this and my former state chiefly consisted. I was striving,

yea, fighting with all my might under the law, as well as under grace. But then I was sometimes, if not often, conquered; now, I was always conqueror.

Charles Finney

As I turned and was about to take a seat by the fire, I received a mighty baptism of the Holy Ghost. Without any expectation of it, without ever having the thought in my mind that there was any such thing for me, without any recollection that I had ever heard the thing mentioned by any person in the world, the Holy Spirit descended upon me in a manner that seemed to go through me, body and soul. I could feel the impression, like a wave of electricity, going through and through me. Indeed it seemed to come in waves and waves of liquid love for I could not express it in any other way. It seemed like the very breath of God. I can recollect distinctly that it seemed to fan me, like immense wings.

No words can express the wonderful love that was shed abroad in my heart. I wept aloud with joy and love; and I do not know but I should say, I literally bellowed out the unutterable gushings of my heart. These waves came over me, and over me, and over me, one after the other, until I recollect I cried out, "I shall die if these waves continue to pass over me. I said, "Lord, I cannot bear any more; yet I had no fear of death.

Author R.A. Torrey tells of D.L. Moody's Baptism:

"The power of God fell upon him as he walked up the street and he had to hurry off to the house of a friend and ask that he might have a room by himself, and in that room he stayed alone for hours; and the Holy Ghost came upon him, filling his soul with such joy that at last he had to ask God to withhold His hand, lest he die on the spot from very joy."

Embarking on an evangelistic tour of England, Moody now found that "the power of God wrought through him mightily in North London, and hundreds were added to the churches."

Phineas Bresee, founder of the Church of the Nazarene,

"I sat alone in the parsonage, in the cool of evening, in the front parlor near the door. The door being opened, I looked up into the azure in earnest prayer, while the shades of evening gathered about. As I waited and waited, and continued in prayer, looking up, it seemed to me as if from the azure there came a meteor, an indescribable ball of condensed light, descending rapidly toward me. As I gazed upon it, it was soon within a few score feet, when I seemed distinctly to hear a voice saying, as my face was upturned towards it: "Swallow it; swallow it," and in an instant it fell upon my lips and face. I attempted to obey the injunction. It seemed to me, however, that I swallowed only a little of it, although it felt like fire on my lips, and the burning sensation did not leave them for several days. While all of this of itself would be nothing, there came with it into my heart and being, a transformed

condition of life and blessing and unction and glory, which I had never known before.

I chose these people because they represent members of churches that have nothing to do with the standard pentecostal, Azusa Street Story, and yet experienced a baptism with the Holy Spirit.

You might also want to read the story of the Azusa Street Revival.

Video of John Wimber...

Conclusion

Often we argue about when it takes place and forget that it needs to take place in order for us to do what God has called us to do.

Are you plugged in to the Holy Spirit's work in your life and living out of the power of the Holy Spirit to do your part for the Kingdom of God?

Are seeking to have all that Spirit has for you?

1 Corinthians 14:1-5, "...earnestly desire the gifts of the Spirit..."

This was empowerment to push the Kingdom forward and to live the way of Jesus in our world.

Craig Keener...People not using lights, washing machines, etc because they haven't been told to plug the thing into the wall.

Often we are just like that...we attempt to do the work of God without the power of God.