

You will have Power

Understanding Baptism in the Holy Spirit

Tony Gray

Salt and Light Ministries

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Foreword

“What is hidden in the roots will be revealed in the shoots.”

This has been one of the lifelong principles by which I have sought to live and build. Experience tells us that what the roots of the plant are like, and what they feed on, determines what sort of fruit grows; where the foundations of a building are shaky, time and disaster will reveal it; where the most simple flaws are not spotted, dreadful disasters can follow – as when a basic defect in the fuel system of the Challenger space craft cost the lives of seven brave astronauts.

So it is with people. What we believe in our hearts will eventually determine how we live, how we build and what we end up with.

This “Roots and Shoots” series is not so much an attempt to define the distinctives of our family of churches, but rather to ensure that all our beliefs and practices are firmly rooted in the Scriptures.

Many people have asked us over the years: “Who are you and what do you believe?” While our structure may appear to be somewhat nebulous, nevertheless the understanding of our common beliefs needs to be clear and unambiguous.

We are a family of churches that believe we are to be “sons of the kingdom” sown into God’s earth. The key that transforms “the word of the kingdom” into “sons of the kingdom” is *understanding* (Matthew 13:23). In the Lord’s first parable of the kingdom (the Sower), the ‘word’ of the kingdom – the seed – when properly received and understood produces fruit. In the second parable of the kingdom (the Weeds), we discover that the fruit has become the seed, and that the seed is “the sons of the kingdom”. The word, bearing fruit, producing seed as sons of the kingdom, planted in the world! That is our prayer for this series of books.

Barney Coombs

Introduction

I first wrote this little book in 1978 to help people understand the baptism in the Holy Spirit, which was a major issue for debate in those days. In the intervening twenty years teaching on this important topic has become less central, but the issue of the empowerment of believers to live holy lives in a dark world is no less crucial and relevant today.

We live in a world of ferment and revolution, where old values are continually being challenged and the traditions and customs of centuries have been cast aside. Some want to throw the Christian faith on the scrap heap too. The old 'wineskin' of institutional Christianity is viewed increasingly by the great majority of people as irrelevant and decaying. Even many of the New Churches, born in the sixties and seventies, have lost much of their momentum and freshness. Hopes of revival come and go.

But there is a fresh current flowing. This is especially evident in those churches of both evangelical and charismatic persuasion, where commitment to the Bible as the Word of God and experience of the Spirit as the Power of God, are beginning to fuse together in a new way. Charismatic believers are holding the Word in higher esteem, while evangelicals are becoming more open to the Spirit. This is creating a new and exciting atmosphere of spiritual depth and Biblical reflection.

In the current 'postmodern' climate, where all experience and truth are relative to the individual, it is very important that we root our spiritual experience in the objective truth and testimony of the Bible. Central to charismatic experience is the baptism in the Holy Spirit. That is why I believe it is timely to make available a new edition of 'You Will Have Power', in which I have attempted, simply but carefully, to show the Scriptural basis and purpose of the experience.

It has been gratifying over the years to hear of those for whom the original book was helpful. It is my hope and prayer that this new edition will

help and encourage a new generation to understand the importance and dynamic of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, in order to be better equipped and empowered in their service of the King.

Tony Gray

Chapter 1

Airborne!

I had never flown in an aeroplane before. My mouth was dry and my stomach felt strange as we sat in the aircraft waiting for take-off. Suddenly the huge engines roared into life and we moved onto the runway, the aircraft poised like a missile in a catapult. Released, it shot forward, faster and faster, down the runway. Abruptly the nose went up at a surprisingly sharp angle and the ground, framed in the window at my elbow, began to fall away.

Heart beating with excitement, ears popping from the pressure, mind racing with new thoughts – I was airborne! For the first time in my life I was flying! Over lands and seas which till then had only been names in books; over Europe, over the Mediterranean, over the Middle East, and finally over the dry brown plains of northern India to Delhi, and then on to Kathmandu in Nepal.

Over most of Europe and the Mediterranean there was a huge cloudbank. I had been quite used, of course, to seeing clouds – from underneath. But this was something new, to see the top side of the clouds! Mile upon mile of rolling, shining whiteness reflecting the rays of the sun through the clear air thirty thousand feet above the earth. A tumbling land of mountains, valleys, forests, deserts and plains unfolded before my eyes. It almost looked as if I could get out and walk there! I had never imagined such a world; and yet there I was in the country of the clouds.

Somewhere to the north-west of India I watched the sun rise and felt a sense of awe and wonder at the beauty of this unexpected world. That was in 1974, a long time ago now, and I have flown many times since then, over

African deserts and jungle and the majestic Rocky Mountains of North America. But I have never ceased to marvel at seeing the setting sun colour the whole land of cloud with pink and yellow and gold; or blinking at the brightness as the plane bursts through the swirling mists, leaving the murky world below.

Exploring a New World

This sense of excitement, of the discovery and exploration of a new world, had already come into my life in another way. After ten years as a believer in Jesus Christ I had felt a lack of real satisfaction and reality in my spiritual life. Then I had heard about, and finally experienced, baptism in the Holy Spirit. For my life as a Christian, the result was as real and significant as that first flight. Like the country of the clouds, life in the power of the Holy Spirit had always been there, but not truly experienced. Indeed the Holy Spirit had seemed more like a threatening storm cloud, reminding me of what I ought to be, or ought to do, rather than a friend and adviser supplying me with personal power, joy and goodness!

Twenty years on from those early days of what we now know as ‘the Charismatic Movement’, the Holy Spirit is again at work in new and fresh ways, and many of God’s people are bursting through ‘from underneath’ into an ‘on top’ experience of the Holy Spirit. For so long the stranger in our knowledge of God, the Holy Spirit, is becoming the familiar source of moral strength and personal assurance to Christians all over the world.

To Experience *and* Understand

Since those early days, there have been many ups and downs in our journey of understanding the ways of the Spirit. Today the hope of revival is stirring the hearts of believers the world over and we have seen some models of what revival might mean, in the events associated with Toronto and Pensacola for example, and in the remarkable life of some South American churches.

But to respond properly to the work of the Holy Spirit today, and to build on these models, it is important to seek to *understand* the ways of the Spirit, not simply to *experience* them. It is particularly important that we try

to understand the way the Bible defines the work of the Spirit, especially baptism in the Spirit. We may want to stretch our wings like eagles and take flight; but in our eagerness to fly we don't want to come crashing back to land!

In the following chapters we will take a look at the way the Bible talks about our interaction with the wonderful third Person of the Trinity. Because the Holy Spirit is a 'he' not an 'it', a Person not a Force, we need to appreciate that God wants us to develop a relationship with him, not simply 'tap in' to a power source for the occasional 'shock treatment'!

Chapter 2

Waters to swim in

“Whoever believes in me ... streams of living water will flow from within him.” (John 7:38)

In the Bible, the image of water is often used to describe the Holy Spirit and his work. The prophet Ezekiel, in one of his visions (chapter 47), sees water flowing from beneath the future temple. Beginning as a trickle, ankle-deep, the water becomes a stream, knee-deep, then waist-deep, and finally a river “deep enough to swim in”. As he ponders on this, his angel guide asks him, “Son of man, do you see this?”

The question is a good one! For many years of my Christian experience I only ‘saw’ – that is to say experienced – the Holy Spirit in a small way, as a trickle, as a small brook, but not as the river seen by Ezekiel, or as the streams spoken of by Jesus (John 7:38). I only began to understand what Jesus was talking about when I was baptised (we could say submerged or even drowned!) in the Holy Spirit.

John the Dipper

This experience of being baptised in the Holy Spirit was introduced by John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus. John’s task was to prepare the way for the coming of the Christ and to proclaim a message of repentance. When people responded to his message and wanted to get right with God, they confessed their sin, repented and were publicly submerged in the river Jordan by John as a sign of their new start. In announcing the arrival of Jesus and

acknowledging him as the Christ, John declared, “I baptise you with [or, ‘in’] water for repentance. But after me will come one who ... will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and with fire” (Matthew 3:11).

The English word ‘baptise’ is borrowed directly from the Greek of the New Testament and means ‘to dip, sink in, immerse or totally submerge’. In everyday Greek at the time, it was used of ships sinking and of cloth being immersed in dye. In the New Testament its most familiar use is when it describes the immersion of people in water as a mark of commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord, and identification with the covenant-community of the church. John was so committed to this practice that it had led to his being given the nickname, ‘John the Dipper’!

This baptism signified the ‘death’ of the believer to his old life, the ‘burial’ of past ways, and the ‘rising up’ to a new life (see Romans 6:3-5). Jesus commanded his disciples to do this when they went out to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19), and this was the regular practice of the Church in its early history (e.g. Acts 2:38-41).

Jesus the Baptiser

But John was saying something more: he declared that just as he immersed repentant people completely in the water, so Jesus would immerse his followers completely in the Holy Spirit. Later, when Jesus was about to leave the earth and ascend to the Father, he took up John’s words in his reminder to the disciples: “ ... wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptised with [in] water, but in a few days you will be baptised with [in] the Holy Spirit” (Acts 1:4-5).

It might be helpful here to note that the term ‘baptism in the Holy Spirit’ is not a technical or theological phrase – in fact it is only used once more, in 1Corinthians 12:13; but it is one way of describing the believer’s personal encounter with the Holy Spirit. In other places we read of people who were “filled with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:4), or of the Spirit as the one who is “poured out” (Acts 2:33) or who wants to “come upon” people (Acts 8:16; 10:44). In yet other references people “received the Holy Spirit” (Acts 8:17) or were “sealed” with the Spirit (Ephesians 1:13).

Two Baptisms

It is important to notice that, whatever the words used, the people concerned had already believed, and in most cases had given evidence and testimony of their belief in Jesus and their commitment to him as Lord through baptism in water. In the two cases where this was not so (Saul in Acts 9:17-18, and Cornelius and his friends in Acts 10:44-48), water baptism followed immediately. The two baptisms are closely related; in the one, water baptism, the believer commits himself to God; in the other, Spirit baptism, God commits himself to the believer. The two baptisms are like two signatures on an agreement. They are covenant marks. We will return to this later on.

The two baptisms are alike too, not only in their purpose, but also in what happens. Just as the baptised person is swamped or ‘drowned’ in the water, so God’s intention is for us to be swamped or drowned in the Holy Spirit. In fact, the Bible even uses drunkenness as an illustration. “These men are not drunk, as you suppose,” said Peter to the crowds on the Day of Pentecost when the disciples spilled out of the upper room on to the streets of Jerusalem shouting in unfamiliar languages and praising God. “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’ ” (Acts 2:15-17). And Paul urged the Ephesian believers not to get drunk with wine but to “be filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18).

Overwhelmed!

In the first edition of this book in 1978 I told the story of how some friends, after speaking about the Holy Spirit in a meeting in Orissa, India, a young man asked to be prayed for. The only available place being the back of a Land Rover, one of the team prayed for him there and the Spirit came upon him in such a powerful way that he almost fell off the seat and had to be held upright as he praised God in an unknown language. He was later seen lurching down the road rather like a drunken man but clearly singing God’s praises!

But such stories have now become commonplace among us! Many of us have seen many similar things, where the power of the Holy Spirit coming upon people has literally rendered them incapable of standing. On one occasion when I was lecturing on the Prophets, a question about the coming of the

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Lord led us to pray, and as I did so, in front of the class, the Spirit came on me and I collapsed in a heap on the floor! That lecture ended in chaos as the Holy Spirit took over and dealt deeply with some students, having incapacitated the lecturer – and we hadn't even invited him in!

Drowned or drunk, immersed or inebriated, take your choice of words; but however we try to describe it, the Spirit comes as an evidence of the overflowing generosity of our loving God!

Chapter 3

A Little Greek Word

“I baptise you with [in] water for [into] repentance.” (Matthew 3:11)

John the Baptist was not the kind of person to change his words to suit his hearers. He preached a simple but demanding message: “Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is near” (Matthew 3:1-2). Many of the ordinary people who had come to hear John recognised the voice of a prophet and responded and “confessing their sins, they were baptised by him in the Jordan River” (Matthew 3:6).

However, when the religious and political leaders came looking for him, John had a very clear word for them: “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance” (Matthew 3:7-8). John wanted to see the fruit of repentance, the evidence of a changed mind, before he would baptise. “I baptise you ... *into* repentance” is the literal translation of his words. When translated literally like that, it produces an awkward English expression; but there is an important principle here.

The point is that John only baptised those who were *already clearly repentant*. Their baptism in water was what set the seal upon their repentance. In a similar way the disciples, after Pentecost, baptised those who believed. “Those who accepted his message were baptised” (Acts 2:41). They were baptised into their repentance and belief in the Lord Jesus. Their baptism in water set the seal upon their commitment.

In another context, when Jesus gave his disciples the great commission, he instructed them to “go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them ‘into’ (the same little word that John used) the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19). As they became disciples, they were baptised into identification with their Lord.

The Seal on the Transaction

Essentially, then, that little word ‘into’ (in Greek, ‘eis’) tells us that water baptism sealed into place a transaction already agreed. When the very special lady who is now my wife agreed to marry me there was never any doubt about the reality of that commitment but it was – a very long! – two and a half years before she sealed that agreement by marrying ‘into’ the Gray family, ‘into’ my name.

As water baptism sets our seal upon our relationship with Jesus, so Spirit baptism sets God’s seal upon the transaction. It seals us into the Body of Christ, into living relationship with our Head. Paul, writing to the Corinthians, reminds them: “For we were all baptised in (a clearer translation than the NIV’s ‘by’) one Spirit into one body” (1 Corinthians 12:13). In other words it is by means of baptism in the Holy Spirit that individual believers are fused into Christ’s Body on earth. Just as a believer offers evidence of repentance and faith in water baptism as the seal of their commitment, so God gives evidence of his acceptance of the believer in the coming of the Spirit.

So Jesus himself very clearly promises a deep personal experience of the Holy Spirit to those already believing in him: “Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him” (John 7:38). John goes on to tell us “By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive” (verse 39).

The apostle Paul in writing to the Ephesians also states clearly the order in which things happen: “And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit” (Ephesians 1:13).

An Important Principle

If we see this principle clearly it will help us to avoid any confusion between baptism in the Holy Spirit and new birth or regeneration. It becomes clear that baptism of both kinds follows the initial faith encounter that brings new birth. The fact that a person does not have a definable experience of baptism in the Holy Spirit does not mean that they are not born again. In fact, due to ignorance, fear, lack of teaching or even wrong teaching, many sincere born-again Christians are robbed of this vitally necessary and exciting encounter with the third Person of the Trinity. Rebirth and Spirit baptism are two distinct divine operations, the one carried out by the Holy Spirit (new birth is part of his work), the other carried out by Jesus on the Father's behalf: "He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 3:11).

It is clear from Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus in John 3:3-8, that new birth is the work of the Holy Spirit and that the new life has Spirituality. "The Spirit gives birth to spirit", Jesus tells him (verse 6). In another conversation, this time with a Samaritan woman, Jesus put it this way: "... the water I give ... will become ... a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (John 4:14). That is to say, the life that Jesus gives has the quality of God's own life, life given by the Spirit of life. Without such life no person can be a Christian at all.

However, once that life is there through repentance and faith, then it is the purpose of the Lord Jesus Christ to baptise the believer into the fullness of his life, by immersing the believer in the Holy Spirit. In teaching his disciples about the Holy Spirit, Jesus put it like this: "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home [living place] with him" (John 14:23). A person's heart becomes God's living room not just by the *work* of the Spirit, but by the *presence* of the Spirit.

When 'With' Becomes 'In'

In John 14:17, Jesus speaks to his disciples about the Spirit of truth and says, "You know him, for he lives with you and will be in you." This last point is very important. For too many believers '*with* you' has never become '*in* you'. Many Christians live with an experience of the Holy Spirit like that

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of the disciples before Pentecost. They know his work and activity outside of themselves, but they do not yet know him as a personal friend, advisor and helper inside their lives.

Alive, but not baptised into life, stuck in a kind of perpetual spiritual infancy, they are like the dry fields in drought, thirsty for the rivers of living water. The transaction is made, but has yet to be sealed in the two baptisms, into discipleship, and into Christ's Body.

Chapter 4

Birth and Growth

“...that we may present every man mature in Christ.”
(Colossians 1:28, RSV)

My wife, Doreen, and I have four children and currently four grandchildren. The memory of the birth of each one of them, of both generations, is precious and important. Yet, in a way, more important is the fact that our children have grown up into adults, three of them now with their own children. The life in them at birth has brought growth to their bodies and minds so that they have become mature adults.

Everyone is sad at the sight of a person who has not grown properly in body or mind. We recognise that it is not how things should be, and do everything we can to help such people to develop to the fullest capacity possible for them. Yet sadly, the Church is full of believers who have not grown up in Christ and are only living at a comparatively unfulfilled level of their potential life in the Spirit.

For such Christians, the life in them through the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit has not grown to its potential. They have been born, and no more has happened. They have never found the rich, full, satisfying and exciting life of one who is filled with the Spirit of God.

In physical life we expect a newly born baby to grow into a child and the child to grow into an adult. Doreen and I follow eagerly the development of our grandchildren, anticipating the next stage of growth reported by phone or e-mail, and waiting for our next chance to visit. The first smile, the first

word, the first stumbling step, are all so important. Do we look as eagerly, I wonder, for growth in the children of God?

We look especially, albeit with some trepidation, for that time when a child, coming out of the crisis of puberty, flowers into the first evidences of adulthood. For with adulthood comes the ability to create new life, to beget and to bear children of their own. So it is with spiritual life. The believer needs to grow from the time of conversion into spiritual childhood and on to maturity. In baptism in the Holy Spirit the growth hormone of spiritual life kicks in and the process toward maturity begins.

Pattern of Growth

In the pages of the New Testament we can see evidences of this pattern. We see spiritual birth, which is the receiving of life. We see too the point at which the new life overflows and begins to express itself in growth and expression. Let's look first at the example of Jesus himself.

Jesus was born into his human life by the agency of the Holy Spirit: "Before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 1:18). In this way the Eternal Word, the Christ, the Son of God, became a man in the wonderful event we call the Incarnation. The Holy Spirit brings to birth the first of many brothers and sisters of a new order, for "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation" (2 Corinthians 5:17). Jesus, in his physical birth, is the pattern for all who enter the Kingdom of God. For "no-one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit" (John 3:5).

However, in the course of time, Jesus was also filled with the Holy Spirit in a special encounter at the time of his baptism in water by John in the River Jordan. Luke records the occasion: "When all the people were being baptised, Jesus was baptised too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove ... Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert" (Luke 3:21-22; Luke 4:1).

It was from this time that Jesus began to share the life of God that was in him. It was from this point on that he healed the sick, made the lame walk, the deaf hear, the blind see. It was in the power of the Spirit that he released

the demon-possessed and taught with authority. It was after this, by his own testimony that he was able to say: “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour” (Luke 4:18-19). So now, thirty years after he was born by the work of the Spirit, Jesus begins actively to demonstrate his mission and ministry.

No Single Blueprint

Just in case we are tempted at this point to tie the Spirit down to a single ‘blueprint’, we should note that John the Baptist was also born by the work of the Spirit – in enabling Elizabeth to bear a child. But he was “filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth” (Luke 1:15). For some, like Cornelius and his family in Acts 10, the moment of birth and the moment of overflow, of active encounter with the Spirit’s power, were almost in the same moment. In fact, it seems that this was the expected pattern in the early church. Luke records carefully the times when the Spirit did not come immediately and the reasons why.

In the case of the Samaritan believers (Acts 8) who had responded to the preaching of Philip, they had “simply [or, only] been baptised [in water] into the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 8:16); they had not yet received the Holy Spirit. Here it was very important for the apostles to be present because these were the first non-Jewish believers. Peter and John quickly saw to it that the gap in their understanding and experience was filled. They “placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit” (verse 17).

In Acts 19, the apostle Paul meets a group of disciples in Ephesus. He discovers that they had not even heard of the Holy Spirit! Again he quickly makes their understanding and experience complete (verse 6). If baptism in the Holy Spirit is not preached as part of the proclamation of the gospel, then we should not be too surprised at converts who do not show the total evidences of a spiritual life like that of the first Christians.

The First Disciples

Let's take a look at the experience of Jesus' first disciples. In John 20:19-23, we read how Jesus met his disciples after the resurrection. As they rejoiced at seeing him, he spoke to them: "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you. And with that he breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit' " (v21-22). This act of breathing on them takes us back to Genesis and the creation of man in God's image: "The LORD God ... breathed into the man's nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being" (Genesis 2:7).

Just as the breath (the same word means 'breath' and 'spirit') of God brought to birth the first order of Man, so now the breath of Jesus brings to birth the first members of the new order, the generation of the Second Adam, the New Man, the Body of Christ. This, to me, is the moment of the disciples' rebirth, the placing of God's life in them.

But then, in Acts 2:1-4, the long-awaited promise of the Father was kept and "all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them" (verse 4). Immediately they began actively to demonstrate the Spirit's power. Now they began, not just to believe and obey, but to express a new life quality, with the remarkable results recorded for us by Luke in the Acts of the Apostles.

The First Generation

Now we can look at the examples of other early believers: in Acts 10:44-48, we read how Cornelius and his household and friends were still listening to Peter's explanation of the good news of Jesus, when the Spirit fell upon them. Here, as we have already noted, Spirit baptism came almost in the same moment as new birth, as the listeners received Peter's words with faith. Water baptism followed quickly to seal the transaction from both sides!

For the Samaritan believers in chapter 8, there was a delay between their first responding to the gospel and receiving the Spirit. But the essential steps are clear: they "believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ" (verse 12). As a result they were baptised in water; but it was not until the apostles Peter and John went to pray with them that as "Peter and John placed their hands on them ... they

received the Holy Spirit” (verse 17). The evidence could be seen and heard as on other occasions in Acts.

Part of a Whole

The New Testament letters look upon baptism in the Holy Spirit as part of the total experience of salvation. A clear reference comes in Ephesians 1:13: “And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit.” Fixing the seal, which is a mark of identity (the equivalent today probably being our signature) is the final part of a covenant, contract or agreement.

When I bought my house, having agreed to the terms, I put my signature to the deed and it was then sealed, showing a change of ownership and a completed transaction. Faith is in some ways like an agreement or contract between God and myself (the Bible’s word for this is a *covenant*). My baptism in water is my signature and baptism in the Holy Spirit is God’s signature or seal on the contract. There has been a change of ownership; my life now belongs to Jesus and the transaction is complete and everlasting. God seals those with whom he has already entered into agreement, those already his children by faith. The seal is not itself the contract, but it is the guarantee of the contract being carried out.

When Jesus fills a person with the Holy Spirit, it is not to *make* him or her a Christian. It is because he or she has *already become* a Christian by faith and the new birth. There are many who, having heard with intent to obey, have believed, and so have been brought to new birth by the operation of the Holy Spirit; but they have never been sealed by an active experience of the Holy Spirit, which gives them the vital assurance (guarantee) in their relationship with God, and sets them on the path to maturity.

Chapter 5

A personal encounter

Jesus said to her, 'Mary' (John 20:16)

I became a Christian when I was fourteen years old. I shall always remain grateful for the love and faith of my Bible Class Leader who led me to Jesus. At the time I understood my relationship with God the Father. I realised my need to confess my sin, repent and receive God's forgiveness. I understood too that Jesus the Son was my saviour and that I needed to receive him into my life. Over the years that followed I gradually came to understand more of the claims of Jesus to be Lord of my life.

With all this, however, from the start I had little or no knowledge of the Holy Spirit. I knew that I should believe that he was a Person and that he is our Comforter, but I could not say that I had a personal *relationship* with him in the way I had with the Father and the Son. In the churches I attended there was little teaching about life in the power of the Spirit. There was, however a lot of teaching about the effort needed for 'going on with God'.

Lack of Real Power

When I was a student, along with other Christian friends, I often felt that my life was not making any impression on others. We frequently talked about the lack of real power in our lives. We wanted to witness, but could not. We wanted to conquer temptation, but failed. We wanted to see others come to Jesus, but nothing happened. I don't think we were too unusual in those days!

After leaving University I went to the town of Basingstoke in southern England to take up my first teaching post. It was here for the first time that I heard about baptism in the Holy Spirit. I fought against it. “It’s all a matter of emotion,” I said. “We get it all at conversion.” I tried to explain away the Bible references shown to me; I argued; but in my heart of hearts I knew an increasing sense of spiritual emptiness that nothing seemed to fill, that refused to be explained away!

Finally I admitted to myself that I needed a person to person encounter with the Holy Spirit. After many occasions when we prayed but nothing happened, I began to listen seriously to God. He had told me quite clearly that I was to ask our pastor to lay hands on my wife and myself. I had not been willing to do that. I didn’t want my pride hurt. Why couldn’t it be a private matter between God and us? I failed to notice that it was rarely that way for believers in the New Testament!

At last I gave in. We asked our pastor to come and pray with us. He came and quietly laid hands on us and prayed. In a moment, something happened. I was overwhelmed with a sense of deep joy. Doreen had a deep feeling of peace. We both knew a deep assurance of God’s love and of his power coming into our lives. We were baptised with the Holy Spirit.

New Confidence

At the time I spoke a few words in a language unknown to me, but my mind was unwilling to trust my tongue and I stopped it. It was six months before my proud mind gave way and I spoke in tongues freely; but that was my fault, not the Holy Spirit’s!

A new confidence came into my service for the Lord Jesus and at last I had some personal knowledge and awareness of the Holy Spirit as a real Person, teaching and leading me. There began a journey in learning to walk in the Spirit and use his gifts, a journey which continues to this day. That initial encounter established a lifelong friendship with the third Person of the Trinity; but it takes time to really know and understand him and his ways, vital as they are to my relationship with Father and Son.

We read in the New Testament of those who were “full of the Holy Spirit” (Luke 4:1; Acts 6:3; 7:55; 11:24). To be filled is exciting! But to stay

full is the real challenge. The Spirit is never far away now; but he is the *Holy Spirit*; and to walk in tune with his sensitive heart is not something that fits easily with our natural inclinations to walk in our own (unholy!) ways. But he is remarkably patient! He alone fully understands the heart of the Father and the mind of the Son and his guidance and counsel, when listened to, save a great deal of the pain and confusion we so often bring upon ourselves.

I have grown to deeply appreciate the Holy Spirit since that first encounter. His patient wisdom and help have drawn me back time and again to the heart of Jesus and to the Father's throne.

A Man Called Simeon

Tucked away in the narrative of the birth of Jesus and the events surrounding it, is Luke's insightful account of a man called Simeon. We read of this man that "the Holy Spirit was upon him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ. Moved by the Spirit, he went into the Temple courts" (Luke 2:25-27). There he met Mary and Joseph and prophesied over their baby. Here was a man who was full of the Spirit; he was taught by the Spirit; he was led by the Spirit. The result of this was that he was the right man, in the right place, at the right time, with the right word!

To be the right person, in the right place at the right time with the right word to speak; that's how I want to be; that's what it means to be 'full of the Spirit'.

Chapter 6

Fire!

“They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them.” (Acts 2:3)

Doreen and I both love that part of southern England called the New Forest (‘New’, that is, when it was planted by William the Conqueror a millennium ago!). We spent our childhood near the Forest and today enjoy walking there and appreciating the beauty of the woodland and heath in the varying seasons. Sometimes, as we have driven or walked across the heath, we have seen the black scars of fire-scorched earth. Some fires are caused by careless visitors leaving behind broken glass or smouldering cigarette-ends which set the heather and gorse ablaze. At other times the blackened areas show where the Forestry Commission has been at work. The foresters deliberately set the gorse alight in order to clear areas for new growth and to maintain grazing for the ponies and deer. This controlled burning is necessary and important.

Fire, destructive and powerful as it is, is still very important to our lives. Fire in furnaces to smelt iron-ore for steel; fire to make steam in order to generate electricity; fire to warm our bodies and cook our food; fire to burn our rubbish.

We have already seen how the Bible uses water and breath/wind as pictures of the Holy Spirit. But fire is another way of describing the Spirit and his work. We have thought about being immersed in the Spirit and being

inebriated with the Spirit, but now we need to think about being incinerated by the Spirit!

Burning up the Rubbish

This is healthy, because it will help us with our motives for wanting baptism in the Spirit and wanting to be full of the Spirit. The exciting evidences of unlearned languages, prophecy, and exuberant praise, as well as the wonderful gifts of the Spirit, are attractive. However, the Holy Spirit's task goes deeper than any of these. His foremost task is to produce holiness in our lives. He is the *Holy* Spirit, the Spirit of truth, the Spirit of holiness. One major result of our lives being filled with him must, therefore, be the reproduction in us of his character, which is the character of Jesus himself.

John the Baptist, in speaking about Jesus, said, "He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and with fire" (Matthew 3:11). In an Old Testament reference which may have been in John's mind, the prophet Isaiah writes of a day when the Lord will "wash away the filth of the women of Zion; he will cleanse the bloodstains from Jerusalem by a spirit [or, by the Spirit] of judgement and a spirit [or, by the Spirit] of fire" (Isaiah 4:4). The Spirit's fire, as it comes upon our lives, will burn up all the rubbish.

Personal Holiness

There is little point in seeking baptism in the Holy Spirit unless we are ready to face up to the need for repentance. The power and the praise will mean very little apart from the purity, which the Holy Spirit wants to bring about in our lives. John the Baptist went on to say that Jesus would "clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire" (Matthew 3:12). I remember seeing threshing floors in Indian villages, circles of hard-trodden earth where the grain and the chaff (the inedible husks) are separated by being beaten with flails or ground under a sledge pulled by oxen. Modern western farming doesn't provide us with quite such a clear picture (stubble burning is not quite the same!); but perhaps an equivalent picture for the West is the kind of furnace that consumes our rubbish these days.

The point of John's picture is that one of the purposes of baptism in the Spirit is to lay our lives on God's threshing floor to 'get the chaff out for burning'. On the Day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit fell upon the disciples, "they saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them" (Acts 2:3). The appearance of fire has often been present with the coming of revival and the outpouring of the Spirit. Mel Tari, in his book 'Like a Mighty Wind' about the revival in Indonesia in the middle of the twentieth century, describes how villagers saw flames coming from a church building, but the place was not burned up. Inside people heard the sound of a rushing wind as they prayed – an experience shared more recently by Inuit believers in the Hudson Bay area of Canada.

The result of these events was that many people received Jesus and were filled with the Holy Spirit. In the revival in England two hundred years ago the Wesley brothers spoke and wrote in their hymns constantly of the fire of the Spirit. The deeply-felt 'warming of the heart' which they talked about described their experience of Spirit baptism. For them the primary purpose was to bring about personal holiness, and we cannot escape our need for that in the churches today.

The Spirit's Fruit

For the apostle Paul it was as important for the believers in his care to produce the *fruit* of the Spirit's character in their lives as it was to exercise and demonstrate the *gifts*, which are expressions of his activity. So at the end of 1 Corinthians 12, and his instructions about spiritual gifts, Paul writes: "And now I will show you the most excellent way. If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing" (1 Corinthians 13:1-2). Love has the quality of eternity, while all the gifts will pass away.

In a similar way Paul encourages the Galatian Christians, in enjoying to the full the freedom which is theirs in Jesus, to "live by the Spirit" (5:16), and reminds them that "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" (5:23).

Peter also reminds us of the importance of holiness: “But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do” (1 Peter 1:15). Without the full resources of the *Holy* Spirit, it is going to be a real struggle to obey such a command. Flooded with the Spirit, however, we naturally express his character more easily. The desire for personal holiness must be a major motive for wanting to be filled with, and stay full of, the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 7

Caution – Dynamite!

“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you.”(Acts 1:8)

One thing that many Christians find difficult is witnessing to others about their faith in Jesus. For some of us, this comes out of the way we were taught when we first became Christians. All too often what happens is that we are immediately given four things to do: pray, read the Bible, go to church, and witness to others. Without a real, personal encounter with the Holy Spirit who breathes life into all these things, they soon become a pressure to maintain, or lapse into a dull routine. Add to these the list of things to remember that Christians don't do, and the joy of our finding the Lord Jesus is soon tempered with bouts of 'ought-itis'!

This tendency to lapse into routine and the constant struggle with an uneasy conscience is no new thing. The apostle Paul himself knew something of the problem, as he shared with the believers in Rome: “I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do ... I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do – this I keep on doing” (Romans 7:15-19). It is somehow comforting to know that the great apostle struggled as we sometimes do!

The War Inside

For Paul, this was like a war going on inside him: “What a wretched man I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” he asked (verse

24). But he found the answer, which he goes on to explain in the next chapter of the letter: “through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free ...” (8:2). This eighth chapter of Romans has been called Paul’s Pentecost. In it he describes in his own way what the Holy Spirit means to him. The great change the Holy Spirit brought to Paul was as great as the change brought about in the disciples on the Day of Pentecost. The heart of the change is *power*:

- *Power to change confusion into peace*: “To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace” (Romans 8:6, RSV).
- *Power to change weakness into strength*: “And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you” (Romans 8:11).
- *Power to live as sons of God*: “Those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship” (Romans 8:14-15).
- *Power in prayer*: “In the same way, the Spirit helps in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express” (Romans 8:26).
- *Power to conquer temptation*: “No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us” (Romans 8:37).

The Spirit at Work

The power, which Paul discovered in yielding his life to the total control of the Holy Spirit, is the same power which throbs through the pages of the Acts of the Apostles. The Book of Acts is a record of the remarkable achievements of men and women filled with the Holy Spirit. It is the story of a group of 120 people who launched a new message of salvation and carried it, within thirty years, to the heart of the Roman Empire and to its boundaries.

There are some fifty references to the Holy Spirit in the Book of Acts, for he was, and is, the Power behind the Message. The Book might justly be

renamed the Acts of the Holy Spirit. Right at the beginning Jesus makes a promise to his disciples: “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you” (Acts 1:8). The Greek word which is translated ‘power’ [dynamis] gives us our English words dynamite, dynamo, dynamic. The explosive power of dynamite, the steady generation of power from a dynamo, the inner strength of character which provides a moral dynamic, all these come from the Holy Spirit.

In addition to his work of producing holiness, the Holy Spirit releases power into the life of the believer. Jesus went on to state the purpose of this power: “and you will be my witnesses ...” (Acts 1:8). The events of the Day of Pentecost would show what Jesus meant. In the power of the Holy Spirit, the followers of Jesus preached to the crowds in Jerusalem, gathered from all the known world for the great festival. Three thousand people responded to the gospel that day and were baptised (Acts 2:41). And that was just the beginning! The explosive events in Jerusalem that day led to a steady output of power which carried the gospel throughout the known world in a generation. This was a power which enabled people not only to speak the new message but also to live the new life.

Not Just a Bang and a Shower of Sparks!

Baptism in the Holy Spirit is not, as some think and others fear, designed to produce a fireworks display in a believer’s life. People who go off with a bang and a shower of sparks every now and then don’t achieve very much in the long run. The steady output of a life producing Christ-like grace and love, understanding and goodness, purity and courtesy, will win people for Christ. I know of one young woman who received Jesus because she had seen a serenity in her neighbour’s life, which was in such contrast to her own insecurity that she went to find out how she could experience it for herself.

Witnessing is speaking clearly and confidently about Jesus. It is not necessarily accosting everyone we meet with ‘the gospel’. It is sharing thoughtfully with those whom the Holy Spirit directs us. Sometimes this will be ‘out of the blue’ – on a plane, in a queue and elsewhere. But more often than not, it will be with neighbours, friends and workmates who have watched our lives so that there is weight to our words when the time comes.

The Holy Spirit is the source of moral power, as well as the one who will give added authority to our words. Baptism in the Spirit releases the power of the Spirit into our lives, and the authority of the Spirit into our words. He enables us to speak without fear or shame about Jesus and to live the lives which give evidence of the truth of what we say.

It was “in the power of the Spirit” (Luke 4:14) that Jesus returned from the wilderness and began to minister in Galilee. It was as the Spirit came upon them that the first disciples in Jerusalem “spoke the word of God boldly” (Acts 4:31). It was as Paul went to Corinth “not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power” (1 Corinthians 2:4) that the church was established there.

Healed of ‘Ought-itis’!

After I was baptised in the Holy Spirit, I was healed of ‘ought-itis’. As I learned to listen to the Spirit more, and to pay less attention to the niggling feeling that I ought to speak to this person or that, I found that I could speak with confidence and conviction when the Spirit directed – including some fascinating encounters in airport lounges! But I don’t feel guilty if I go through a day or a week without speaking to anyone in ‘witness’. What I do pray is that my life is a constant testimony that will bear fruit. Doreen and I had the very special privilege, a few years ago, of leading our next door neighbours to meet Jesus – essentially out of who we were and how we lived, as observed over the garden fence!

There’s a time and a place for the ‘dynamite’ experience, the initial blast of the breath of God to get us going after birth. Then there is the necessity of our learning to “walk by the Spirit” as Paul puts it (Galatians 5:16, RSV). The steady output of the power of the Spirit enables us to speak with authority and discernment at his command. But, in order to evidence the reality of our witness, there is the daily need of the Spirit’s moral dynamic at work in our lives. The power resource is not in our own energy or desires; it is only in the Holy Spirit that we will have power.

Chapter 8

Equipped for War

“Our struggle is not against flesh and blood.”(Ephesians 6:12)

In sharing with people about their experience of being baptised in the Holy Spirit, I have frequently found that a time of quite severe temptation often follows it. This usually begins with an attempt by Satan, our enemy, to cause confusion by suggesting that our speaking in an unknown language is not from God, but is made up in our own mind, or even put there by the Devil himself!

If this first wave is defeated, then often there follow other confusing thoughts doubting God’s love, questioning salvation, and suggesting that the whole thing was simply an emotional outburst. I know about all these from personal experience, and they can be very upsetting, especially to a new believer!

Satan, you see, will never allow any work of God, or any word of God in our lives, to go unchallenged. He will always try hard to stop the full effectiveness of baptism in the Holy Spirit by his lies. We need not fear those lies. Jesus taught us that the Devil is a liar by nature (John 8:44); but his lies themselves cannot harm us so long as we learn to recognise them and resist them.

On the Front Line

Baptism in the Holy Spirit puts a believer into the front line of the battle. Sometimes the battle is hard and Satan's arrows are sharp; but the victory is ours if we stand firm! We are, after all, only following in the steps of the Lord Jesus himself. Straight after his own two-fold baptism, in water and in the Spirit, we read that "Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit ... was led by the Spirit in the desert, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil." (Luke 4:1-2). Six weeks of continuous hassle from the Enemy!

Take note that Jesus was led there by the Spirit. Jesus faced and resisted the doubts, the selfish ambitions, and the rebellion that Satan suggested to him, and returned from it all "in the power of the Spirit" (Luke 4:14). It is a fact that baptism in the Spirit may lead us to face strong testing; but equally it will equip us the better to deal with the Enemy. The apostle Peter, in his first letter, warns his readers, "Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings" (1 Peter 5:8-9). Remember that you are never alone in your fight; we are all involved in this war together. "Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you," James wrote (James 4:7). But if you don't resist in the power of the Spirit and the name of Jesus, he won't flee.

Inner Strength

In his book 'The Jesus Generation', Billy Graham writes: "The world is seething with demonic energy. Only supreme inner strength can resist its ceaseless hassling." Such inner strength is provided only by the Holy Spirit. In the world today Satan is hard at work doing what Jesus warned us he would do – stealing, killing and destroying (John 10:10), with the aid of what the apostle Paul calls "the Devil's schemes" (Eph 6:11).

When I was born, in 1940, I was born into a nation at war. I didn't have a choice, and I don't remember too much about it (apart from having beans on toast in our indoor steel shelter during what must have been one of the last air raids!); but it was reality. Likewise, each of us, when we are born again,

is born into ‘a people at war’. So it’s best to get used to the idea and learn how to fight!

Without the full resources of the Holy Spirit we will suffer many defeats. But in the power of the Spirit we will see Satan thrown back. Our battle is not against people (although it feels that way sometimes!), but it is against “the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Ephesians 6:12). We will never succeed in fighting against such enemies with the resources of our own wills, wits, minds and hearts, however sincere we are. No worldly weapon, no flesh and blood resources, will match the strength of the spiritual hosts. Only the mighty power of the Holy Spirit of God can withstand and defeat them in the name of Christ. And that power is made available to us in the fullness of the Spirit.

Weapons of War

We must learn to say with the apostle Paul, “The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:4-5).

Among these weapons are “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Ephesians 6:17), and prayer “in the Spirit” (Ephesians 6:18). It is not just the word and prayer, but the Spirit at work in the word, and the Spirit at work in the prayer, that makes them effective.

One final point here. I have personally found that the ability to speak in tongues is a fine weapon against temptation. In those personal battles against lust, anger, impatience and pride, as well as in times of tiredness, and tension, this direct link with the throne of heaven brings strength and relief. It is the prayer of our own spirit, in the Holy Spirit, bypassing the mind and its thoughts (1 Corinthians 14:14). It is a great help and a mighty weapon to be used in all situations in our daily lives, which is where, after all, the enemy usually sets out to get us – not in the Fellowship meeting on Sunday! For too many this wonderful gift is a rusty sword! We need to get it out and use it!

Discipleship

The gift of tongues, and the other gifts of the Spirit released to us in Spirit baptism, equip us to be strong soldiers in the army of God.

Chapter 9

Useful Members

“Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.” (1 Corinthians 12:7)

In the last three chapters we have briefly discussed three purposes of baptism in the Holy Spirit:

1. To produce personal holiness
2. To give power for witness to the world
3. To equip for spiritual warfare

In this chapter we look at a fourth and final purpose; that is, to make us useful members of the Body of Christ. To many Christians the church is simply a religious institution, a group to which someone belongs according to the tradition that suits them best. In the New Testament, however, the church is a living unit of all believers in any one place. It is the task of the Holy Spirit to take all the different people who belong to Jesus in any one place and join them together in unity of heart, mind and purpose.

Now, we cannot simply turn history on its head and amalgamate all the different expressions of church that there are today in any one place. But we can work towards that particular church family to which we belong becoming at least something like those early communities of believers, joined together by relationship rather than by organisation.

The Breath in the Body

It may sound impossible to produce the kind of unity of heart, mind and purpose for which Paul and the other New Testament writers appeal. And indeed, it is impossible – unless all those believers in any one community or fellowship are submerged in the one Spirit, soaking up the life and character of Christ in him. It is not an organisational unity that Paul urges the Ephesian believers to maintain, but rather “the unity of the Spirit” (Ephesians 4:3).

The Spirit is the breath in the Body of Christ, the Church of which Jesus is the Head. As each member of the Body receives life from the Spirit, so the Body grows. For “the body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptised by [or, better, ‘in’] one Spirit into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free – and we were all given the one Spirit to drink” (1 Corinthians 12:12-13).

What happens when a believer is baptised in the Holy Spirit is that he really becomes a part of his fellow Christians. As one body, then, every group of Christians is equipped with various abilities in order to build up the Church and establish God’s Kingdom. These various abilities are released to us through baptism in the Holy Spirit. We will not discuss the various abilities here but there is a good survey of them in the Roots and Shoots book ‘Spiritual Gifts’ by John Micklefield and David Perry.

Different Abilities

What we will do here is take a brief look at the words Paul uses to describe these different abilities which have been given to the Body of Christ by the Holy Spirit to serve the Head, Jesus. In 1 Corinthians 12:4-6 Paul uses four different words to define what he calls, translating his words literally, “the spirituals” (verse 1):

- “*Gifts*” (verse 4). In other words, these are not something possessed naturally, but are given spiritually. I believe that the gifts to any one person will suitably match that person’s natural character and temperament; but they are all the Spirit’s sovereign choice. “All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines” (verse 11).

- “*Different kinds of service*” (verse 5). This brings home that the gifts of the Spirit are given for the purpose of serving others, not primarily for personal use (except for the ability to speak in tongues, which is given for personal strengthening).
- “*Different kinds of working*” (verse 6). These gifts are expressions of divine energy, not human ability.
- “*The manifestation of the Spirit*” (verse 7). This word means ‘revealing’, ‘expression’ or ‘demonstration’. They reveal the work of the Spirit carrying out the plans of the Lord Jesus in the lives of believers and in the world.

These spiritual gifts make the Spirit available to the Church in ways that can be seen and heard. They are given “for the common good” (verse 7). Baptism in the Holy Spirit opens the individual believer to receiving these gifts in order to become a useful member of the Body of Christ.

Chapter 10

The Evidence

“They heard them speaking in tongues and praising God.” (Acts 10:46)

Now that we have discussed the nature of baptism in the Spirit and its long-term purposes, the time has come to look at the immediate evidences. Reading through Acts, it becomes clear that receiving the Holy Spirit produced immediate effects, which were seen and heard. Let’s take a brief look at the main occurrences.

The Disciples: Acts 2:1-16

On this first definitive occasion there were some particularly significant signs: the sound of a strong wind and the appearance of tongues of flame above the heads of those present (Acts 2:2). While such demonstrations of the Spirit’s presence are not unknown in later Christian history, they do not seem to have been consistently repeated. The word for ‘wind’ and ‘spirit’ is the same in Greek (just as it is in Hebrew). The symbols of wind and fire carry echoes of Old Testament events – not least when God came down on Mount Sinai to inaugurate the nationhood of Israel (see Exodus 19). So the wind and fire in Acts 2 mark the inauguration of the church, the Body of Christ, the redeemed community.

In addition there is also a reflection of John the Baptist’s prophecy: “He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit (*wind*, breath of God) and with *fire*” (Luke 3:16). With the winnowing fork (verse 17) the thresher turned over the separated grain and husks so that the chaff was blown aside to be burned up.

So the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost begins the process of setting apart a holy people for God, the church, and bringing judgement upon the wicked.

But beyond these special aspects, there were effects which were consistently repeated in later situations.

The effects of the Spirit's coming are two-fold: speaking in tongues (languages unknown to the speakers; though on this occasion many of the hearers recognised their own languages and dialects, much to their surprise!), and prophetic proclamation (see verses 4 and 14-18). The content of the speaking in tongues was praise to God (see verse 11), as recognised by those listening who came from many different parts of the Roman Empire, and who spoke an array of languages way beyond the ability of the Galilean followers of Jesus to know.

A further effect was that the disciples appeared to be drunk (verse 13). The emotional release which often accompanies baptism in the Holy Spirit sometimes produces an effect akin to the loss of bodily control associated with being drunk. This has been recently a common experience in the context of what is often called 'the Toronto Blessing', and is not something to be feared. It is one way in which the Holy Spirit demonstrates that he is in control! The shaking and falling that we have come to associate in the recent past with the working of the Holy Spirit is simply a way of loosening people's grip on their own lives. It is a reminder to them that they have given up control of their own lives to the Lord Jesus by means of the Spirit. There is no doubt that many of us needed that shake-up! But, just as with our initial baptism in the Spirit, it is important to follow the Spirit on from there.

Over the years, I have seen people cry, with tears streaming down their faces; I have seen people sobbing, but with eyes shining and hands lifted up in praise; I have seen in some an immense release of joy, often with uncontrollable laughter; in others, a deep peace. The Holy Spirit cleanses and rules our emotions, and stakes his claim to total control by affecting us physically.

Speaking in tongues as the Spirit gives ability; proclaiming God's praise in an uninhibited way; giving expression to deep emotional release with physical effects – all these evidences are present in this definitive account of that first coming of the Spirit upon the followers of Jesus. And they were transformed! From a frightened group hiding away in the upper room,

confused and uncertain, they became fearless proclaimers of the good news of Jesus, right there on the streets of Jerusalem.

The Samaritan believers: Acts 8:14-18

Luke does not give us much detail in this incident. Peter and John lay hands on the believers and we are told that “they received the Holy Spirit” (verse 17). The outward effects are not specified on this occasion; but whatever they were, it is clear that they could be seen, and probably heard. This is evident from the response of the magician Simon in verse 18 where we read : “When Simon *saw* that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles’ hands ... ”. We don’t know what it was that he saw; but it’s clear that he saw something!

Saul of Tarsus: Acts 9:17-20

The remarkable conversion of Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus was sealed through the ministry of Ananias. This faithful disciple came at the command of the Lord Jesus to lay hands on the arch-enemy of the church so that he could be healed of his blindness and “be filled with the Holy Spirit” (verse 17). The effect on Saul was his immediate healing (verse 18) and bold proclamation about who Jesus really was (verse 20). Whether Paul spoke in tongues at this point is not recorded; but that he had the ability to do so is evident from his testimony to the Corinthians: “I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you” (1 Corinthians 14:18).

Cornelius and his family: Acts 10:44-48

The ‘Gentile Pentecost’, as this incident has been called, produced the immediate evidence familiar to Peter and his companions of speaking in tongues and praise to God. Indeed, it was these external evidences that convinced Peter and his group that these Gentiles must have received the Spirit. “While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. *For* [our emphasis] they heard them speaking in tongues

and praising God” (v45-46). The evidence was clear to Peter: “They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have” (verse 47). And so he commanded them to be baptised in water to complete the transaction.

The disciples at Ephesus: Acts 19:1-7

Once he had made good the gap in their teaching – up to this point they hadn’t even heard of the Holy Spirit! – Paul laid hands on this group of twelve who had somehow heard the teaching of John the Baptist but no more, and the Spirit came upon them. As an immediate result they “spoke in tongues and prophesied” (verse 6). Here prophecy probably has the wider sense of proclaiming God’s greatness and glory.

Some conclusions

So, it is clear from this brief survey that the two main evidences which repeatedly show up in these incidents are speaking in tongues and proclamation. The proclamation is mainly in terms of praise, but can also be prophetic expression or speaking out the good news of salvation. It seems fair to assume that, especially in a period when the Holy Spirit is restoring much of the radical experience of the early Church, we should expect these same evidences today. So we would expect to see and hear these evidences in people being filled with the Spirit today. The fact that not all do evidence these signs should not affect our expectation, but reminds us that it is the Spirit’s decision as to what happens in each individual case!

Emotional release involving laughter, tears and, sometimes, temporary lack of physical control, may also result. We have no need to fear any of these. They simply remind us who is really in control. After all we claim that we are the People of the Spirit! The total surrender of our tongues and bodies is, after all, only the outward expression of the surrender of our hearts and minds to the Lord Jesus anyway. When we surrender our lives to him, he sends the Holy Spirit to occupy the new territory he has conquered. If he is our King, then it is as well we learn how to work with his representative.

All this may conflict with our pride and respectability. Pride or power? Respectability or reality? It is we who must make the choice.

Chapter 11

Sons and Heirs

“So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.” (Galatians 4:7)

What right have I to expect to be filled with the Holy Spirit? If I have come to Christ in repentance and faith, and committed myself to Jesus as Lord in water baptism, then I have the right of a son of God to the Father’s blessing! Paul explains this to the Galatians: “Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out ‘Abba, Father’ ” (4:6).

Of all the millions of children in the world there are only four who have the right to call me ‘Dad’. There are nephews and nieces to whom I am ‘Uncle’, and there are hundreds of children to whom I was ‘Sir!’ in my school teaching days. But to only four am I ‘Dad’.

There is perhaps nothing that gives greater pleasure than the love of those four children. Nowadays, for my wife and me, some of this is made of memories, since the children are now all adults; and though I am still ‘Dad’ and I still appreciate their love, there is a different quality to our relationship. But the memories are fresh! Coming home from school tense and tired after a difficult day, to have one of the children throw himself at me, hug me and shout “Daddy!” revived my spirits straightaway! On one occasion when I arrived home after five and a half weeks away in Nepal and India, I was uproariously met by the children, who were literally rolling round the floor with joy. What it is to be a father! Of course, there are times too of

disciplining naughtiness and I could tell stories about that! But I'll save my family further embarrassment. But it's the moments of love that forge the bond between father and child.

God our Father

To so many Christians God is not like a loving father. He seems to be more the distant uncle or even a strict schoolteacher! But God has chosen, out of the whole range of human relationships, to describe his relationship with us as Father and sons and daughters (both genders with completely equal status in his eyes, incidentally; see Galatians 3:28). In the New Testament God is called 'Abba' (Mark 14:36; Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6), an Aramaic word equivalent to 'Dad'. Jesus used it to talk to his Father, introducing a closeness to God that the Jews had never known. While the idea of God as Father is not completely absent from the Old Testament, no one had ever called him 'Dad' before.

But, remarkably, Jesus didn't simply call God 'Dad'; he passed on this privilege to his followers. "Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12). And because we are sons God sends the Spirit of his Son into our hearts crying 'Abba', Father (Galatians 4:6). In his letter to the Romans Paul refers to "the Spirit of sonship" (Romans 8:15) who witnesses with our own spirits that we are children of God when we call upon him as Father.

Birthright

The Holy Spirit, then, is the birthright of the children of God, the blessing of the Father. Jesus speaks of him as "the promise of the Father" which he had told them about (Acts 1:4, RSV). One occasion when he told them about the Holy Spirit is recorded in Luke 11:5-11. Remarking on the fact that even a human father, limited by sin, knows how to give good gifts to his children, Jesus continued: "... how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" (verse 13). The Holy Spirit is the gift of a loving Father to his children, who have only to receive it joyfully.

Royal Gift

Not only is the gift of the Holy Spirit a fatherly gift, but it is also a royal gift! When, on the Day of Pentecost, Peter was explaining to the crowds in Jerusalem what had happened to the disciples of Jesus, he reminded them of the crucifixion and then proclaimed: “God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear” (Acts 2:32-33). Jesus’ ascension into heaven led to his being crowned as King of Glory and enthroned Lord of all the earth. At his coronation he was anointed with the “oil of joy” (Psalm 45:7), and the oil flowed down from the Head to the Body. The oil of the Spirit overflows from the throne to cover all his members.

He “gave gifts to men”, says Paul of the ascended Christ (Ephesians 4:8), gifts of Holy Spirit power and grace to build up the Body of Christ (v11-13). Royal gifts, from the King to his servants. The promise of the Father, the coronation oil, the King’s gift, the seal of sonship – this is the Holy Spirit.

Of course, there is a great deal more to say about the nature, the person, and the work of the Holy Spirit than we have space to discuss in this book. He is our Teacher, Guide, and Adviser, as well as our Empowerer; he is the one who brings us to new birth; he is the one who works patiently on our becoming holy and Christ-like; he will ultimately transform our lowly bodies to be like the glorified body of Jesus. And this just touches the surface of the work of the wonderful third person of the Trinity! It is so good to know him. And that ‘knowing’ begins with being immersed in him, with being baptised in the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 12

Ask – Seek – Knock

“Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?”(Acts 19:2)

Paul’s question to the disciples at Ephesus is one that may be relevant to many of us. We have seen that in the New Testament receiving the Spirit was a very positive experience. It was also a very important one. The lack of such an experience throughout much of the Church today (including the Charismatic churches!), or the inadequate understanding of its purpose even where it is experienced, needs to be faced honestly.

In the vivid words used by Jesus, the salt has lost its taste and is being trampled underfoot by men. Even the Charismatic Movement and many of the New Churches have lost their momentum, and there is a very real danger of looking to methods to recover it, rather than looking to the Holy Spirit. Many within our own churches are in danger of being content with being ‘charismatic’ rather than clearly being baptised in the Holy Spirit. In many other churches the light of truth is often hidden beneath a basket of compromise and powerless institutions and traditions. It is very unlikely that the traditional churches, including the traditional charismatic churches, will have much appeal to the New Age generation of the 21st century.

Freedom!

“Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom”, wrote the apostle Paul (2 Corinthians 3:17). That remains as true for the 21st century too. In a hurting and fragmenting world only the reality and powerful presence of the

Holy Spirit is going to create churches that can effectively engage their culture and actively make a difference. And such churches are made up of individuals who are full of the Holy Spirit. The freedom is there – freedom to rise up as the sons of God. We desperately need the Holy Spirit today, whatever we may think or feel about some of the issues touched on in this little book.

There was a time when I tried to argue my way round baptism in the Holy Spirit. But it was an intellectual exercise that ignored my powerlessness and my hunger to know more of God. There is no alternative to a dynamic and ongoing encounter with the Holy Spirit. Paul urged the Ephesian believers to “be continually filled with the Spirit” (the literal meaning of the Greek in Ephesians 5:18). We need the Spirit to make us holy and to equip us to witness to the world, to serve the Lord Jesus and to do battle with Satan. We need him to awaken in us our calling to become the children of God, a holy nation and a royal priesthood.

So, how do I receive the Spirit? Or perhaps seek a fresh filling of the Spirit?

Repentance

The first step must be a thoroughgoing repentance from any known sin. This is important since so many have entered the kingdom of God with an inadequate understanding of repentance. A complete change of mind and moral purpose is what repentance is about. It involves a determined turning from sin to obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ. In particular renounce any involvement with idol-worship, magic, sorcery, witchcraft, divining, fortune-telling, astrology, horoscopes, tarot cards or contacting spirits through a medium, Ouija board, or any spiritist or spiritualist methods. All these things mean we have looked for the knowledge of our destiny outside of God’s will and revelation, and they have no place in the life of a believer. Renounce clearly any known involvement of your family in these things which are horrible in the eyes of God.

Obedience

Obedience to God is an essential condition for fully experiencing the Holy Spirit. In Acts 5:32 Peter speaks about the Holy Spirit “whom God has

given to those who obey him.” Therefore renounce any immorality or impurity that affects your life, including pornography; confess any hatred, bitterness or jealousy toward others; forgive anyone who has hurt you; obey any instructions the Lord gives you. All such things are impossible for the Spirit of holiness to live with. Paul commands the Ephesians, “Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption” (Ephesians 4:30). This is in the middle of a section of his letter in which he is commanding them to avoid such things as: unwholesome talk, bitterness, rage and anger, sexual immorality, greed, obscenity and foolish talk or coarse joking.

I suspect that we do not often think about the sensitivities of the Holy Spirit when we lightly apologise to the Lord for some of these things when they intrude into our lives. The anguished cry of David, “Do not cast me from your presence, or take your Holy Spirit from me” in Psalm 51:11 is nearer the mark. David was coming to terms with the awfulness of his sin of adultery and the instigating of the murder of one of his loyal commanders. We may not have fallen that far, but it is worth remembering that Jesus warns us that lust is as bad as the act of adultery, and anger is the seed of murder.

Genuine Longing

After repentance and obedience it is crucial that we really do want to be filled with the Spirit. This is not just another ‘kick’ to add to other exciting experiences; this is an encounter with the Holy Spirit of God. We must be thirsty for this. Do you recognise your need to be filled with the Holy Spirit? Are you actually thirsty for a closer and more intimate relationship with your Father God? Do you really want to be holy? Do you want to witness effectively for Jesus, but not be on a constant guilt trip about your failure? Do you want to serve the people of God and destroy Satan’s works? Then Jesus says, “If anyone is thirsty let him come to me and drink” (John 7:37).

Ask and Receive!

Finally we must ask and receive. Jesus once told a story – recorded in Luke 11 – about a man who needed some bread to give a meal to a visiting friend. So he went to another friend and knocked on his door. This man was

in bed and would not get up. But the man kept knocking until at last his friend got up and gave him all the bread he needed, not out of friendship, but because he kept on knocking the door! Jesus was saying that if such a man would respond to his friend's request in such circumstances, how much more will our Father in heaven respond to us when we come to him asking. So he encouraged his disciples: "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you" (Luke 11:9). The form of the Greek words used means something like, 'Be asking – be seeking – be knocking'. In other words, keep asking, seeking, knocking! Nothing may happen immediately, but keep asking, expecting to receive and we have Jesus' promise that "your Father in heaven will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him" (Luke 11:13).

In your asking, listen for God's instructions. He may want something put right; you may not have been baptised in water, and God wants your signature on the contract first; or perhaps his way with you will be by the laying on of hands, as was almost always the case in the Acts of the Apostles. If you have friends who have been baptised in the Holy Spirit, ask them to pray for you with laying on of hands. Expect to receive the blessing through their hands. Receive the Holy Spirit by faith.

Now It's Up to You!

Now is the time to lift your head up, raise your hands, and release your emotions in praise. Allow your throat and tongue to express any sounds that come, or speak out any words that come into your mind, even if they seem strange. I knew a man once who saw, in a vision, a word he did not know written on a wall, but he remained silent because it was a strange word. Thereafter he had a problem as to why he didn't speak in tongues! It doesn't always come that easily. Expect God to give you a new language. It is especially for you; it is to build you up and make you strong and give you a powerful expression for the deep inexpressible desires of your heart in worship and prayer. It is you who have to do the speaking however (it doesn't just tumble uncontrollably out of your mouth!); so speak out in faith.

When I eventually broke through my pride, (with some help from the Holy Spirit bringing me to a low place so that I was desperate), I heard the

Lord command me to sing rather than speak, and I launched out and sang in tongues. Immediately one of the Enemy's servants was on hand to whisper in my ear that I was singing gibberish! However, I recognised that what I was singing had all the form of a language. At that moment I knew why I had done a degree in Latin and Greek! To silence the sly accusations of the Enemy at that time!

As you allow yourself to drown in the Spirit, pray out in your tongue, praise God with all your worth, proclaim his mighty works, worship the King. Be filled with the Holy Spirit. Let your spirit rise on eagle's wings and begin your journey of living and walking in the power and control of the Spirit of the living God.

In Conclusion

In these critical days in which we live only the empowerment of believers by the Holy Spirit will enable the church to effectively engage our culture.

The Holy Spirit is not an 'it', a source of recharging our personal spiritual batteries. The Holy Spirit is a person. He is the mysterious and wonderful Third Person of the Trinity. It is essential that we build a trusting and true relationship with him. He has come to live with us – indeed, within us. He has come to *teach* us what we need to know; to *direct* us where we need to go; to *empower* us for what we need to do.

To many believers the Holy Spirit is a stranger – an occasional visitor. In this book we have talked about the importance of a transforming encounter with him. This encounter should lead to his becoming our lifelong friend and guide, as well as the strategist of the church's mission. But that's another subject!

“May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the *fellowship of the Holy Spirit* be with you all (2 Corinthians 13:14).

A Summary

Here is a summary of the main points and references to the things we have looked at. They will hopefully be helpful to you in your further study of this important topic.

1. The nature of baptism in the Holy Spirit

a) It is a 'baptism'

Like baptism in water, it is an immersion, submersion, swamping, flooding.

Matthew 3:11

Luke 3:15-16

John 1:33

Acts 1:5

1 Corinthians 12:13

b) It is a filling

It is a filling or a drinking in of that which is poured out by God (Acts 2:33; 10:45).

John 7:37-39

Acts 2:4

Acts 4:31

Acts 9:17

1 Corinthians 12:13

Ephesians 5:18

c) It is an anointing

It is an anointing, a 'coming upon', by the Spirit of God

Matthew 3:16

Luke 3:22

Luke 4:18

John 1:33

Acts 1:8

Acts 8:16

Acts 10:44

Acts 19:6

d) It is receiving a gift

John 7:39

Acts 2:38

Acts 8:15,17

Acts 10:47

Acts 19:2

e) It is God's seal on his children

Romans 8:15-16

Galatians 4:6

Ephesians 1:13

f) It is distinct from, and follows upon, new birth

- Jesus - born of the Spirit: Matthew 1:18
- baptised in the Spirit: Luke 3:21-22; 4:1,14
- Disciples - born of the Spirit: John 20:19-23
- baptised in the Spirit: Acts 2:1-4
- Samaritans - believed: Acts 8:12
- baptised in the Spirit: Acts 8:17
- Paul's teaching - heard – believed – sealed: Ephesians 1:13
- Not necessarily a time gap: John the Baptist; Luke 1:15
Cornelius: Acts 10:44

Jesus teaches new birth by the Spirit: John 3:5-6

Jesus teaches filling with the Spirit: John 7:37-39

The Spirit 'with' and the Spirit 'in': John 14:17

2. The purposes of baptism in the Holy Spirit

a) Personal holiness

The Spirit is fire: Isaiah 4:4; Matthew 3:12; Luke 3:16-17; Acts 2:3

The Spirit of holiness: Romans 1:4

The fruit of the Spirit: Galatians 5:22; 1 Corinthians 13

b) Power for witnessing (Acts 1:8)

Jesus ministered by the Spirit: Luke 4:18

Apostles preached in the power of the Spirit: Acts 4:31; 1 Cor 2:4

Paul's Pentecost: Romans 8

c) Equipment for spiritual warfare

Jesus' victory over temptation: Luke 4:1-14

Spiritual war: Ephesians 6:10-20; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5

The sword of the Spirit: Ephesians 6:17

Prayer in the Spirit: Ephesians 6:18; Romans 8:26-27

d) Equipment for service to the Body of Christ

Baptised into one Body: 1 Corinthians 12:12-13

Spiritual gifts: 1 Cor.12:4-11, 27-31; Rom.12:3-8; Eph.4:7-13.

3. The evidences of baptism in the Holy Spirit

a) Speaking tongues

Mark 16:17; Acts 2:4; Acts 10:46; Acts 19:6

b) Proclamation of praise

Acts 2:11; Acts 10:46; Eph.5:18-20

c) Prophecy

Luke 4:18; Acts 2:14; Acts 9:20; Acts 19:6

4. The reasons for seeking baptism in the Holy Spirit

a) The right of the sons of God

Galatians 4:6; Rom.8:15-16

b) The promise of the Father

Acts 1:4; Acts 2:33, 39

c) The gift from God

Acts 2:38; Luke 11:9-13

d) Christ's coronation oil

Acts 2:32-33; Psalm 45:7; Ephesians 4:8

5. How to receive baptism in the Holy Spirit

Repent (Acts 2:38; Acts 5:32)

Renounce evil

Confess sin

Forgive others

Obey Christ

Thirst (John 7:37)

Ask (Luke 11:9-13)

Receive (Acts 2:38)

Laying on of hands (Acts 8:17; Acts 9:17; Acts 19:6)

Some Discussion Questions

The following questions are offered as possible help for cells, home groups or study groups who might want to use this book as a basis for understanding the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Or it might help the individual reader to review what has been discussed here. The numbers relate to the chapters.

1. Think about the implications of the Holy Spirit being a Person, not a Force. How do we treat the Holy Spirit? Are there things that we do, or words that we speak, that show we are drifting into seeing him as an 'it' not a 'he'?
2. Do you think that the images of drowning and being drunk are helpful or not? Why? What other images might we use?
3. Think about the distinction between new birth and baptism in the Spirit. Is the distinction between the work of the Holy Spirit and his presence a fair one? How does it fit with experience?
4. Think about the relationship between water baptism and Spirit baptism, especially as recorded in Acts. How do we see this relationship today, and what conclusions might we draw from the comparison?
5. Think and talk about your own experience of baptism in the Spirit. How do we develop an ongoing relationship with the Third Person of the Trinity?
6. How do we respond to the 'Fire' image? How can we encourage one another in the pursuit of holiness?
7. Think about the words dynamite, dynamo and dynamic. How do they help us understand the work of the Spirit in our lives. How can we develop the same 'mind set' that Paul describes in Romans 8?
8. Share some of your own struggles with doubt and the attacks of the Enemy. How does the Holy Spirit help us and how can we support one another at these times?
9. How do you understand the role of spiritual gifts in your life as a believer? How can they be developed?
10. Why is external evidence of the baptism in the Spirit important? What evidences are most crucial?

Discipleship

11. How can we help people today to love God as Father when for so many the relationship with their own father has been harmful or non-existent? How does the Holy Spirit help?
12. Talk about your own experiences of baptism in the Holy Spirit. What are the common features? What are the significant differences? What can we learn from these?