

Baptism Of The Holy Spirit – Part 2

It is truly good for us to be back together after this short absence. And because some measure of time has passed since we first began our study of these precious truths here in Luke chapter 3, I'd like to take the first few moments of our time today to remind us of some of the things we've been learning in this passage.

First, may we take note that these precious words before us today are an ever-present reminder that God is constantly revealing Himself to us through these scriptures. That may sound like an odd thing for me to say, because, after all, this is the Bible, and the Bible is about God.

But folks, I find that too often most of us Christians do not read this Bible to find out about God, who He is and what His plans are. Rather, it seems that most of us instead read this Bible more for how these words might benefit us, comfort us, bless us and instruct us in the ways of daily life.

And this Bible does do that, and that is good. But that is not at all its "first purpose". These words, first and foremost, are intended to reveal our Holy and loving God to us, His Person, His plans, and His purposes. And then secondarily, He reveals to us how we are to respond to Him as our God.

Here, in these first few verses of Luke chapter 3, the Prophet, John the Baptist is revealing one of the very special mysteries of who God is. Here, he is giving us one of our first real glimpses into the blessed Holy Trinity of God. As John had been preaching and teaching, his words had been so strong and so powerful, some of the people mistakenly began to think that John himself might be the coming Messiah. But he quickly responded to them that no, he was not the Messiah, saying in verse 16 of chapter 3,

¹⁶ . . . "I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹⁷His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather the wheat into His barn; but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire." (Luke 3:16-17)

Recall again that God had brought John the Baptist into this world for this one very purpose and ministry. John was the one that Isaiah had spoken about over 700 years earlier saying,

“The voice of one crying in the wilderness:
‘Prepare the way of the Lord;
Make His paths straight.
⁵Every valley shall be filled
And every mountain and hill brought low;
The crooked places shall be made straight
And the rough ways smooth; ⁶And all flesh shall see the salvation of
God.’” (Isaiah 40:4-6)

John the Baptist was this one who was “crying in the wilderness, preparing the way of the Lord”, a messenger, giving the first proclamation that the Kingdom of God had now come to the earth. And as we have said, John was introducing for the first time, the Second Person of the Trinity, the Lord Jesus, by saying these words,

¹⁶ . . . “I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. (Luke 3:16)

And then also, along with his introduction here of the Lord Jesus, John was revealing God in another way, introducing another Person, the Third Person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit. Again, those words!

¹⁶ . . . “I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. (Luke 3:16)

Folks, for you and me who are in this “New Testament age”, such words about the Holy Spirit are common to us. But that was not so with the people of that day. Yes, the Holy Spirit had already been on the earth for all the millennia since creation. And yes, He had been active in many people’s hearts, especially the Prophets.

But these words about the Holy Spirit were strange to the ears of these people of that day. These people knew very little about the Holy Spirit and His role within their daily lives. We know from reading the words of the Old Testament that during those days, there had been very little teaching about the work and the ministry of the Holy Spirit. And up until these moments, His role within the hearts of believers was much unknown.

But now, with the coming of the Lord Jesus, all of that was about to change. The Holy Spirit would now join in with the mission and work of salvation that the Lord Jesus was now bringing to the people. And the Holy Spirit would then carry that salvation on into eternity.

Beginning with the preparatory work of convicting people of “sin and righteousness and judgment”, the Holy Spirit would be the ongoing Agent of God the Father to “draw” unbelieving souls to the Lord Jesus for the blessed salvation Jesus would give to them.

May I say here again that it was never God's plan from the beginning for just one of the members of the Trinity to be involved in the salvation of mankind. It was ever and always going to be the ministry of all three, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

And as we can see in the crowds that would gather to John each day, God's broader plan was clearly already taking place, even on this day that we are reading about here in these words of our scripture text. He was drawing people to the Lord Jesus.

And so, we know then that these people were not there that day, as some have preached, simply as an act of their own “free will”, or even from just “curiosity”. They might have thought that to be the case. But no, they were all mysteriously drawn there, to hear John's message and then to witness Jesus being baptized.

Would they all turn to Jesus and be saved? No, unfortunately not, just as it is with many who come to the churches of today. But those people were still given the message of salvation so that on the day of judgment, they would be without excuse.

And again, as we have studied in earlier messages, we see here how the Holy Spirit has joined with the Lord Jesus to begin to carry forward God's plan of salvation and then on into “sanctification”. Here, God begins to tell us about the sanctifying work that the Holy Spirit will do. Listen carefully,

He, (the Lord Jesus) will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹⁷His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather the wheat into His barn; but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire.” (Luke 3:16-17)

And may I remind us again that God is telling us plainly within these words that our relationship with the Holy Spirit will not always be gentle and euphoric. Yes,

the Holy Spirit is our comforter. And yes, He brings with Him “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control. But the Holy Spirit is also absolutely Holy. And one of His first and most important responsibilities is to bring that holiness and righteousness into each of our sinful souls.

And that is when He will convict us of our sins and of the need for righteousness. And that is when His “unquenchable fire”, spoken about here, will surely do its work in us, and begin to cleanse us of our sins.

And as we have said, that cleansing fire will often be very, very painful, especially for those sins that we want to hold onto. Listen to these words in verse 17.

¹⁷His winnowing fan *is* in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather the wheat into His barn; but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire.” (Luke 3:17)

I love the way God uses this word picture, both as a promise, but also as a stern warning, that He intends to fully cleanse our hearts and minds from all its old sinful habits and inclinations.

His “unquenchable fire” will singe, it will burn, it will scorch every fiber of our being. And it will utterly destroy all the sinful ground that remains within us. And yes, that will often be painful to us.

But with that being said, I want to remind us that as we suffer through His cleansing of our souls, we must keep clear in our minds that God is our dear loving Father. And He is ever faithful to preserve us and to restore us back to a spiritual health that we have never known before, a blessed condition, cleansed from our sins and now filled with His precious presence.

Nowhere in these scriptures is that made more clear than in God's dealings with His old servant Job. Job spent a lot of time and suffering on God's threshing floor. And then Job was restored to a better condition than he had ever known before.

And folks, please know that the cleansing is absolutely essential to all that God wants to begin to do within our souls. It is His way of preparing us to be trustworthy children who are then able to carry forward His plans and His purposes. And that is truly an enormous task.

So then, for those of us who have Christ as our Savior and Lord, according to these scriptures, changes will truly begin to take place within our souls and our hearts, and our personalities will begin to really change, and noticeably so.

But what should, and what will, those changes “feel” like to us, personally. Can we actually “feel” the presence of the Holy Spirit within us as He “fills” us, and as He “baptizes” us, and as His “Holy Fire” begins to burn up that “chaff” within us, those old bad habits and behaviors?

The answer to that question is yes, definitely. But we may not recognize the “feeling” as we usually recognize feelings. With the Holy Spirit, it may be feelings of “guilt” for things we have said or done, guilt and remorse.

Sometimes, it is sorrow and grief because of lost opportunities that we have let slip away from us.

Sometimes, it is sorrow because of things we know we must give up. I can recall in my first days after surrendering my heart to Christ, knowing that I would have to give up the closeness of one of my friendships. He was my drinking buddy, and the one I went fishing with on Sunday mornings.

Sometimes, we will notice that we aren't as angry as we used to be. I personally was often an angry man, easily flaring up in fits of anger.

And there are many, many other ways of “feeling” the work of the Holy Spirit taking place. And again, we may not recognize our feelings as being from Him. But, looking back later, we can then see that it was Him causing those changes to take place.

Another question that often comes to our minds is, as God fills our heart and our soul with His Holy Spirit, is it all of His own doing or do we ourselves have any part within that “filling”. We know that salvation is in every way a “gift” from God, “by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone”. But what about the “filling of the Holy Spirit”? Do we have a part in that?

The answer to that question is yes, we do have a part in our being “filled with the Holy Spirit”, at least to some measure. We are commanded in Ephesians 5 to “be ye filled with the Holy Spirit”. And we know that when God gives a command, we are then expected to do our part in obeying His command.

Now, I confess to you that I don't know much about how I am supposed to do that, but I do know that I must give all that I am in obedience to Christ.

Comments that I have read from some trustworthy bible scholars suggest that to be filled with the Spirit implies giving the Holy Spirit freedom to occupy every part of our lives, intentionally inviting Him to guide and to direct our paths. It is then that His power will be able to be exerted through us so that the things we do will be truly fruitful to God.

And the filling of the Spirit does not apply to only our outward behaviors. It equally applies to the innermost thoughts and motives of our hearts.

And simply praying and asking God to fill us with His Holy Spirit does not seem to fully accomplish His purposes. We must do that, yes. But it seems that "obedience", active and intentional "obedience" is our most important response. It is then that God is best able to accomplish His work in and through us.

And each time that we find ourselves falling back into a sinful behavior, perhaps watching one of those lewd and lascivious programs on TV with all of their vulgar and profane language, or perhaps as we find ourselves caught up in anger, we must in obedience, immediately and intentionally turn away and confess those sins to God, repent of them, and then renew our surrender and our commitment to being Spirit-filled and Spirit-led.

One last Consideration . . . this command tells us to "Be ye filled with the Holy Spirit". As I attempt to apply common logic to those words, the mystery confounds me. Simply put, if the Holy Spirit is already within me, within you, from salvation, how can He "fill" us even more? Preachers have preached many sermons on that one question, but still, for most of us the "mystery" remains.

Perhaps the answer is that in some way, even in many ways, you and I are able to limit and restrain the manifest presence and the power of God and His effectual working within us. But to the degree that we will freely allow Him full access and control to all that we are, to all that we think, to all that we say and do, that is the degree to which His "fullness" is able to be even "more full".

And perhaps it really is as simple as understanding that, "a little commitment accomplishes very little", but a "greater commitment accomplishes greater things".

To be sure, it is dependent to some measure upon us, you and me, and upon our active obedient surrender of ourselves into His hands.

Let me repeat what I have just said so that we know this with a certainty. God commands you and me to “be filled with the Holy Spirit”. And when God gives us a command, it means that you and I have a responsibility for the doing of what He is commanding us to do. And here, it is to be “filled with His Spirit”. These words are clear and plain, you and I must do our part. And with intentional obedience, you and I must join in with God’s Holy Spirit in His filling our spirit with His Spirit.

To say it another way, much of the sanctification that God brings into our soul is a “joint” effort, Him giving us the power and the strength and the will to do it, and then our “working it out” in the practical matters of our day. Listen to these words from Philippians chapter 2!

12 Therefore, my beloved . . . work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; 13 for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. (Philippians 2:12-13)

Take careful note in those words that it is first God’s hand, and then our own hand, that is put to work in our sanctification. These words tell us that God gives us both the “will” and the “ability” to do His Will. But unless and until you and I are willing to “get up and get about the doing of His Will”, we will languish, falling short of His plan for us.

So then, you and I need to begin this very moment diligently seeking how we can fulfill this very brief command . . . “be ye filled with the Holy Spirit”.

One final thought. The Bible Scholar, Martyn Lloyd Jones contends that if we diligently dedicate ourselves to this pursuit of being “filled with the Holy Spirit”, our pursuit will invite an additional special presence of God’s Holy Spirit . . . that the Lord Jesus Himself will often “pour out” His Holy Spirit upon us, giving us a measure of God’s presence such as we have never known before. That in those special moments when no amount of human effort can accomplish a need or a task, Jesus will “pour out” His Holy Spirit upon us, giving us all that we will need to do whatever is needed at that moment.

For some, that might be exceptional thoughts and wording in a conversation that will bring someone to Christ. At other times, it might be exceptional knowledge and abilities for a matter of daily life. For me, I believe that Jesus does that regularly as I prepare these messages and as I give them to you each

Sunday. How do I know that? It's because I know that I am not at all smart enough on my own to think these thoughts and say these words. I know that it is the Holy Spirit. Praise the Lord!

So then, in whatever manner the Holy Spirit decides to do His work in us, through the "Baptism of the Holy Spirit", or through being "filled with the Holy Spirit", or through the Holy Spirit being "poured out upon us", praise be to God for it.

Let's pray!