



THE FIRE WITHIN

A GUIDE
TO THE
BAPTISM
OF THE
HOLY SPIRIT

ROD PARSLEY

The Fire Within

A Guide to the Baptism of the Holy Spirit

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**The Fire Within:
A Guide to the Baptism of the Holy Spirit**

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Introduction

His appearing should not have been a surprise, since his coming had been announced by the prophet Isaiah hundreds of years before he arrived. Even so, John the Baptist burst into first century Judea and set it abuzz with messianic rumors.

Was this the One who was to come? John squelched that speculation directly. But we see his startling and enigmatic pronouncement in Matthew 3:11:

I indeed baptize you with water to repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

The imagery was obvious since John said this as he was baptizing people on

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the bank of the Jordan River. John's baptism was of water, representing repentance. But he predicted that the next baptism would be a baptism of the Holy Spirit and fire. What would that mean?

Of course, from our perspective on this side of the subsequent events, and with the testimony of the Gospels to inform us, we know that the Greater One John was talking about was none other than Jesus, the Christ.

John said Jesus would also have a baptism in store for His followers—but it would be something different in magnitude from John's baptism. Like John's baptism, it would be an *immersion*, but not an immersion in water. It would be an immersion into the person of the Holy Spirit Himself. Unlike John's baptism, it would also include a

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supernatural *infusion* of power—a power that would burn like a fire within.

During His earthly ministry, Jesus spent most of His time in Galilee, intensively training His disciples for the work they would continue after His departure. He said relatively little about the ministry of the Holy Spirit in that time. After His dramatic death, burial, and resurrection, Jesus said this to His followers just before His ascension:

“And now I will send the Holy Spirit, just as my Father promised. But stay here in the city until the Holy Spirit comes and fills you with power from heaven.” (Luke 24:49 NLT)

Any uncertainty about exactly what He meant was about to be undeniably eliminated just a few days later.

Chapter 1

A Promise Fulfilled

Jesus told them to wait in Jerusalem, so they waited—but they were not idle. They spent their time in fellowship, in fasting, and in prayer. As the day of Pentecost dawned, 120 of them were assembled together in a home in Jerusalem. Suddenly, after ten days of anticipation, something extraordinary happened. Here is the biblical record in Acts 2:1-4 of that event:

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like a mighty rushing wind came from heaven, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.

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There appeared to them tongues as of fire, being distributed and resting on each of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to speak.

The Initial Outpouring of the Spirit

When Jesus came to the earth, it was in a stable, in a small town, in an outlying area. His birth was announced by angels, but the only people who saw Him that night were some local shepherds who were working third shift.

On the other hand, the arrival of the Holy Spirit in His fullness happened in Jerusalem during one of the three feasts of the Lord, which guaranteed a large and international audience. Coupled with the sound of a mighty rushing wind and the sight of flaming tongues of fire, there was bound to be a stir in the city.

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As news of the phenomenon spread, people came from every quarter of the city to try to find out what was happening. Soon a crowd gathered, representing people from nearly every place in the Roman world. As they listened, they heard a group of predominantly unlearned Galileans and Judeans praising God fluently in many of the visitors' languages. The crowd's amazement knew no bounds.

It didn't take long for the mockers and doubters to accuse the disciples of being drunk. This prompted Peter's first post-ascension sermon, recorded in Acts 2.

He was quick to point out that what the surprised crowd was witnessing had been prophesied centuries before by the prophet Joel:

"...‘In the last days it shall be,’ says God, ‘that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall

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prophesy, your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.

Even on My menservants and maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; and they shall prophesy. And I will show wonders in heaven above and signs on the earth below: blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke.

The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and glorious day of the Lord comes. And whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.’ (Acts 2:17-21)

Peter continued his message, and finished with an altar call that resulted in 3,000 being ushered into the kingdom of God. This was the same man who, less than two months before, had denied with an oath that he even knew Jesus. It was a remarkable transformation by any measure.

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In his evangelistic message, Peter included this proclamation regarding the gift of the fullness of the Holy Spirit, in Acts 2:39:

...For the promise is to you, and to your children, and to all who are far away, as many as the Lord our God will call.”

Other Outpourings of the Spirit

Although this is the initial—and most dramatic—incidence of the Holy Spirit falling upon people in the New Testament, it is by no means the only one. An unquenchable fire had been ignited, a movement had begun, and the flames of that fire were spreading rapidly across the land. I want to share with you the other significant occasions recorded in the book of Acts where people received the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

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The first example is in Acts 8, where people in a revival in Samaria were filled with the Holy Spirit. Acts 8:14-17 says:

Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. When they came down, they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, for still He had come on none of them. They were only baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

Another example is found in Acts 9:17. Saul of Tarsus received the baptism of the Holy Spirit as a result of the ministry of a disciple named Ananias:

Then Ananias went his way and entered the house. Putting his hands on him, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the way as you came, has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

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The next example is in Acts 10:44-46, where Cornelius and those of his household received the baptism of the Holy Spirit while Peter was preaching to them:

While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all those who heard the word. All the believers of the circumcision who had come with Peter were astonished because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in other tongues and magnifying God.

The final example is found in Acts 19:1-7, where Paul encounters a group of men in Ephesus and prays for them to receive the baptism of the Holy Ghost:

While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the upper regions and came to Ephesus. He found some disciples and said to them, "Have you received the Holy Spirit since you believed?"

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They said to him, “No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.” He said to them, “Into what then were you baptized?” They said, “Into John’s baptism.”

Paul said, “John indeed baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people that they should believe in the One coming after him, that is, in Christ Jesus.” When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

When Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in other tongues and prophesied. There were about twelve men in all.

Be Filled to Overflowing

These five unique examples clearly show that the baptism of the Holy Spirit was not just a one-time event to prove that the Holy Spirit had been poured out. They show us that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is a separate event—

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subsequent to salvation—that is part of the equipping process God provides for every believer.

Some people object to this, saying that the Holy Spirit comes in all His fullness to abide in a person's heart when they are born again. There is no question that the Holy Spirit, as the third person of the Trinity, dwells in a believer's heart from the moment they receive Jesus as Savior. But there is another level of infilling that is available, and it is clearly identified in the New Testament.

One way to think about this is to picture a glass of water. Water in a glass is commonplace—we encounter it every day. When we fill a glass, we want to be able to carry it without spilling it, so we leave some room near the top. We still say the glass is full.

However, if we continue to fill the glass, it will soon overflow. Everyone can

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tell when the glass is overflowing, because water pours over the rim and onto anything else that is under the glass. That is the difference between being full and being full to overflowing. It is the same water, but in a different measure. The full glass represents being born again, and the overflowing glass represents the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus illustrated the difference. In John 4, He encountered a woman at a well outside the city of Samaria. Here is John 4:13-14:

Jesus said to her: "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water that I shall give him will become in him a well of water springing up into eternal life."

In this instance, Jesus was describing the salvation experience.

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Contrast this with the declaration Jesus made in John 7:37-39:

On the last and greatest day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water."

By this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believe in Him would receive. For the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

In this instance, He was describing the infilling and overflowing of the Holy Spirit.

Make no mistake—water is water wherever it is found. But there is a great degree of difference between a well of water and rivers of living (flowing) water. A well can supply a household, but rivers can supply many more people.

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That applies to the Holy Spirit who comes to indwell an individual heart in the new birth (a well of water) and the overflowing measure of the Holy Spirit who comes in fullness in the baptism of the Holy Spirit (rivers of living water).

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ

Here is another Bible proof that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is subsequent to salvation. In Acts 8, during the revival in Samaria, Peter and John were sent to the city following Philip's evangelism efforts, which had resulted in many salvations.

The Bible says they prayed for the converts to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This did not involve praying for people to be saved, because the people were already saved. Verse 12 tells us this. It says:

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But when they believed Philip preaching about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized.

They believed in Jesus Christ, and they were baptized. This is proof that they were saved—at least, according to Jesus' words in Mark 16:16: *He who believes and is baptized will be saved.*

When Peter and John prayed for the believers in Samaria, it was to receive something additional—the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

The Bible says in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word will be established. Let me give you one more witness of the baptism of the Holy Spirit being subsequent to salvation. It is found in Acts 19, when Paul encounters the believers in Ephesus. In verse 2, Paul

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asks them, *Have you received the Holy Spirit since you believed?*

They had not, so verse 6 says:

When Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in other tongues and prophesied.

In every case, the fullness of the Holy Spirit is a promise fulfilled. But why has He come? What is it that the Spirit of God intends to accomplish as a result of infilling the hearts of men and women in overflowing measure?

Chapter 2

A People Empowered

After the thoroughly remarkable and miraculous events surrounding the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, it seems odd that the disciples would still be uncertain of what He meant in Acts 1:4-5:

Being assembled with them, He commanded them, "Do not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, of which you have heard from Me. For John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

They thought He might mean that Israel would be immediately restored as a natural kingdom. Jesus made certain

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there was no misunderstanding in verses 7-8:

He said to them, "It is not for you to know the times or the dates, which the Father has fixed by His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you shall be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

The Great Commission

What we generally regard as the great commission is found in two passages. The first is in Matthew 28:18-20:

Then Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things I have commanded you."

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And remember, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.

The second is even more specific, and is recorded in Mark 16:15-18:

He said to them, “Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved. But he who does not believe will be condemned. These signs will accompany those who believe:

In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.”

The first question anyone reading these requirements would have is undoubtedly, “How are we going to do all these things?” The answer is simple: “We are going to do them the same way Jesus did them.”

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Anointed with the Spirit and Power

Before you reply that Jesus was God and we are not (which is true, of course), hear the testimony of Acts 10:38:

...how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.

Jesus did the things He did during His earthly ministry because He was anointed with the Holy Spirit and power. The enabling power of the Holy Spirit was necessary for Jesus to do what He did.

How do we think we can do what He did without that same power? That is exactly what the baptism of the Holy Spirit is designed to do—to give us the power to do the works that Jesus commanded us to do. He said as much in

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Acts 1:8. The purpose of the baptism of the Holy Spirit is so that we can receive power to fulfill the great commission.

A Powerless Pentecost

It is no mystery why so much of the church is powerless—they have either actively refused or passively ignored the empowering ministry of the Holy Spirit. Even some churches that claim to be Pentecostal have avoided any reference to the ministry of the Holy Spirit in all of His fullness.

I have said many times that the only way to identify some churches as Pentecostal is by looking at the sign in front of the building—because you won't see any signs once you get inside.

Jesus said in Matthew 5:13:

“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how shall it be made salty? It is from then on good for nothing but

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to be thrown out and to be trampled underfoot by men.”

Perhaps that is the reason so much of the body of Christ has been trampled by the culture—we have lost our distinctiveness. In many cases, the church looks like a cheap imitation of a world that even the heathen recognize is headed in the wrong direction. No wonder they are staying away in droves.

Let me be explicitly clear about what Jesus intends for us to do: preach the gospel to every creature, disciple those who are won to Him, and do signs, wonders, and miracles in His name.

The Measure of Success

The measure of our success is not and has never been how many we have coming to our buildings or to our meetings, or how many names are on our mailing list, or how many social media

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followers we have gained. The yardstick of our effectiveness is whether we are doing the things we have been commanded to do.

Sadly, in many places, we are not. And one of the biggest reasons we are not doing them is that we have forsaken the power that is available from heaven to equip us to do what we are supposed to be doing on earth.

We shout in the flesh, but have no influence in the spirit. We say we are warriors for the cause of Christ, but the battles we fight are against each other. Instead of following those who dare to lead, we criticize them relentlessly and complain about their leadership.

We claim to be in one accord, but we dissent and drop out the first time some trivial point of doctrine arises that does not align with our organizational dogma.

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The demonstrations on our platforms are not of signs and wonders and miracles, with gospel preaching and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Today, all that is being demonstrated in many churches are the latest special effects to support the sound and light shows that pass for praise and worship.

We have traded altars where hearts are changed for stages where minds are dulled. Instead of reproducing sheep, we have become content with entertaining goats. And all the while, the world is going to hell faster than the unlocked wheels of time can carry it.

Of course, there is an answer for all that. But it cannot be found by forging ahead down a path that has already been proven to be a dead end. The answer can only be discovered by going back—back to the beginning.

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The Power of the Holy Spirit

The first century church had none of the modern conveniences that we enjoy, yet they turned their world upside down. Within a few short decades, despite relentless persecution, there were multitudes of genuine Christians in every strata of society in the Roman empire. Local assemblies of believers were changing their communities and their world by the power of the Holy Spirit operating in their lives.

Let me share an example from the New Testament. Acts 9:10-19 says:

A disciple named Ananias was in Damascus. The Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." He said, "Here I am, Lord."

The Lord said to him, "Rise and go to Straight Street, and inquire at Judas' house for someone named Saul of Tarsus, for he is praying, and has seen in a vision a man

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named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him, so that he may see again."

Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how many evil things he has done to Your saints at Jerusalem. And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name."

But the Lord said to him, "Go your way. For this man is a chosen vessel of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and their kings, and before the sons of Israel. For I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake."

Then Ananias went his way and entered the house. Putting his hands on him, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the way as you came, has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

Immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he could see again. And

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he rose up and was baptized. When he had eaten, he was strengthened.

Saul of Tarsus, one of the up-and-coming Pharisees in Jerusalem, was highly motivated to persecute Christians. On his way to the city of Damascus, he was apprehended by the Lord and blinded by the glory of God. He obeyed God's instructions to go to Damascus and await further instructions.

Those instructions came in the form of Ananias, who as far as we know, held no official position in the church, was not a preacher, and was just an "ordinary" Christian. And yet, when he went to Saul with a message from God, the credential-ed Pharisee did not question Ananias' authority, but simply received from him.

Of course, the fact that Saul was blind and had received advance information that Ananias was coming surely helped.

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But the point is that Ananias was not in a position of authority in any way—other than being supernaturally empowered by God to pray for Saul to not only receive his natural sight, but to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

The enabling power of the Holy Spirit was necessary for Ananias to fulfill his ministry to Saul—he could not depend on education, recognition, or ordination. And without the power of the Holy Spirit, Saul, later known as Paul, would never have been able to begin his ministry, much less complete it.

Culture-shaking awakenings have taken place before, and can take place again—and I believe with all my heart they will. But they will not be birthed by Madison Avenue marketing campaigns or the manipulations of men. They will not be produced by pulpiteers who peddle trinkets, gimmicks, and gadgets.

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It will take the power of God, demonstrated in each and every believer through the mighty baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Miracle-Working Power

Let me describe the kind of power that is available to you. The word *power* in Acts 1:8 is a form of the Greek word *dunamis*. It is the same word from which we get the English words *dynamo*, *dynamic*, and *dynamite*. It means miracle-working power.

It is power that is capable of moving great obstacles out of the way. It is power that can reproduce itself, even after it has been expended. It is power that is able to do what would be impossible without it. It is the power that raised the three-day dead body of the Prince of God from the borrowed tomb of Joseph of Arimathea.

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It is also the power that ignites the fire of God within you. This is the power that will be loosed in your life when you receive the mighty baptism of the Holy Spirit. It is available in never-ending supply. And we must all receive it, possess it, and use it to do what Jesus, the head of the church, commanded us to accomplish.

Chapter 3

A Potential Realized

As we have seen, the baptism of the Holy Spirit is something that God desires for every believer to receive after they have been born again. It is part of the ministry of Jesus, the head of the church, to every individual believer. Its purpose is that we might receive miracle-working power to fulfill the great commission.

I want to review Acts 1:8 again, because I need to point out another purpose of this power: the power to be a witness. Jesus said:

“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you shall be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all

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Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

The word *witness* in this verse is a form of the Greek word *martus*. It means a witness, as in a judicial trial. A witness is someone who swears to tell the truth, and who provides testimony of what they have seen and heard.

A witness is not allowed to talk about what someone else has seen or heard—that is called hearsay, and, in most cases, it does not have the necessary credibility to be accepted as evidence. In legal terms, evidence and proof are not the same, but evidence can become proof.

The Three Dimensions of Witnessing

As witnesses of the Lord, we tell people what we have seen and heard about Him. Our witnessing has three dimensions.

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First, we tell people what we believe: Jesus is alive, and He has been raised from the dead and is coming back soon.

Next, we tell people what we have experienced ourselves as a result of knowing Him—that He saved our souls, healed our bodies, brought peace to our minds, and granted us all the other benefits of salvation that we enjoy.

Finally, those who have been filled with the Holy Spirit have been empowered to do what Jesus told us to do—lay hands on the sick, cast out demons, and perform all the works that He did during His earthly ministry.

This is also a part of our witness, or testimony, about Jesus. Jesus is not dead—He is alive. And since He is alive, He will still do the things He has always done. As His representatives and witnesses, we produce evidence of His

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resurrection by doing what He did, just as He commanded us.

Benefits of Being Filled with the Spirit

The purpose of the baptism of the Holy Spirit is to receive power to be a witness of what Jesus has done and continues to do. But there are benefits to being filled with the Holy Spirit in addition to that.

One benefit is that the fullness of the Holy Spirit opens the door to all of the manifestation gifts of the Spirit listed in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10:

To one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another various

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kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues.

A thorough examination of the gifts of the Spirit is beyond the scope of this book, but it is an important subject every believer should study.

Praying in the Spirit

Another benefit of being filled with the Holy Spirit is the ability to speak in tongues. This is sometimes informally referred to as praying in the Spirit, or having a prayer language. It is the initial physical evidence of having received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. It gives a believer several advantages. I want to mention just a few of them. Jude 20 says:

But you, my delightfully loved friends, constantly and progressively build yourselves up on the foundation of your most holy faith by praying every moment in the Spirit. (TPT)

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We can build ourselves up, or fortify our spirits, by praying in the Spirit.

We can also pray according to God's perfect will. Romans 8:26-27 says:

Likewise, the Spirit helps us in our weaknesses, for we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

The Apostle Paul says that another benefit to praying in tongues is that we are enabled to give thanks well, according to 1 Corinthians 14:17.

Sometimes, people object to any discussion about the baptism of the Holy Spirit by saying it is not necessary to receive it in order to go to heaven. That is true—being born again is what is necessary to go to heaven. But why would

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anyone want to go through life without a blessing as beneficial as being filled to overflowing with the Holy Spirit?

Holy Spirit Baptism Is Essential

God did not save us just so we could attend religious services while waiting to make the trip to glory. We have been enlisted in an army of saints who are contending for the faith and taking enemy held territory.

Christianity is not and has never been about us—it is about the multitudes who are still in darkness, and it is up to us to shine the light of truth into their lives. In order to do that effectively, the baptism of the Holy Spirit is not an option, it is a necessity.

Being filled with the Holy Spirit is not as complicated as some have made it seem. I have heard of some groups saying that people have to tarry—or wait—for an

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unspecified amount of time before they can receive. Others say that candidates must achieve certain requirements of spiritual growth or maturity in order to be eligible to receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit. I don't see any of those restrictions in the Bible.

In fact, in the case of Cornelius in Acts 10, the entire group was saved and instantaneously filled with the Holy Spirit in the same event. It was a surprise to Peter and a shock to his Jewish companions. The recipients didn't even ask for it, although no doubt their hearts were prepared to receive whatever God had for them.

The Holy Spirit just came upon them as they heard the word of God being proclaimed, without any formal request or procedure whatsoever. What this says to me is that God wants people to have

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this experience even more than they want to receive it.

Necessary Elements for Baptism

Let me share with you some principles that I have found useful in ministering to people who desire to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Keep in mind that all baptisms, regardless of what kind they are, have three things in common: the candidate, the element, and the baptizer. In the case of water baptism, the candidate is the believer, the element is the water, and the baptizer is the minister or other person who is actually doing the baptizing.

When it comes to the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the candidate is the believer who wants to receive, the element is the Holy Spirit Himself, and the baptizer is the Lord Jesus Christ.

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The only prerequisite for receiving is that a person be born again. If they are not, I lead them in a prayer of salvation. They have just confirmed their eligibility. In fact, you may find, as I have, that new believers are among those who receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit the most readily. Often, they are willing and eager to get all God has for them.

Make sure that those to whom you are ministering actually understand what they are expecting. If you are not sure, ask them to articulate what they want. If they are uncertain, a few words of explanation are in order.

Let me mention this also—children can and do receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit. I won't presume to tell parents when this should happen in their child's life, but one indicator that they are ready to receive is when they begin to ask questions about the Holy Spirit. I have

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seen many children receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit—sometimes an entire group of them at once.

Here is a passage that is helpful to increase people's confidence as they prepare to ask for the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said in Luke 11:9-13:

“And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

“If a son asks for bread from any of you who is a father, will you give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will you give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will you offer him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?”

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Simply Ask

All anyone who is born again needs to do to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit is to ask. God will grant their request. Here is a simple prayer that you can lead people to pray as they receive.

“Heavenly Father, you said that if I would ask, you would give me the baptism of the Holy Spirit. So right now, I ask you to fill me to overflowing with your Spirit. I expect to receive power to be a witness. I expect to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gives me the words to say. I am asking in the name of Jesus. Amen.”

After this prayer is concluded, I find it helpful to begin thanking God aloud, and I encourage them to do the same. Then, at some point soon after this, I recommend that you begin praying in the Spirit, and encourage them to do the

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same. Many times they will begin without hesitation.

If they do not, it is important that you assure them that they have received exactly what they requested, even though they may not have begun speaking in tongues immediately. Remind them of Luke 11:13, where Jesus said their heavenly Father would give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him for it. The proof that they have received is what the Word of God says, not whether they immediately begin speaking in tongues.

Speaking in tongues is a physical, outward demonstration of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, but there may be many reasons why a person is hesitant to begin speaking in tongues right away. I will discuss these reasons next.

Chapter 4

Principles and Practices

One of the biggest hindrances people have to receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit is uncertainty about the subject of speaking in tongues. It is not unusual to encounter people who are reluctant to pray for the baptism of the Holy Spirit at all because of their lack of information about tongues.

Or, after praying to receive, they may not begin speaking in tongues right away because they feel self-conscious or embarrassed. These feelings may be hard to overcome, especially if the person has had little exposure to this experience.

Whatever it is that prevents someone from speaking fully and freely in the

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Spirit, it will require a patient, persistent, and competent advocate to help them move beyond the roadblock. I have included this chapter to give you some principles and practices that will help you assist people who desire to receive.

Breaking the Myths

First, let me deal with several myths that people may have heard about speaking in tongues.

Myth 1: *Speaking in tongues is from the devil, and not from God.*

Some religious organizations are so adamantly opposed to speaking in tongues that they promote falsehoods to keep people from inquiring about it. This is one that is frequently cited.

You are asking God for something that is none of the devil's business. The devil wants no part of it, and cannot interfere with it. While it is true that

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some people under demonic control may exhibit some form of glossolalia, that has nothing to do with a Christian speaking in tongues. The existence of a counterfeit is simply proof that the real thing exists.

Myth 2: *Speaking in tongues means you will be out of control—you may scream, gyrate, act crazy, or roll on the floor.*

There can be no doubt that some people have been so excessively enthusiastic in their worship of God that they have exhibited unusual behavior that has no precedent in the Bible. In certain cases, this behavior has crossed the line of propriety into what might properly be called bizarre. In fact, a pejorative term that was applied to Pentecostals in the past was “holy rollers.”

However, I have never seen or heard of biblically instructed people indulging

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in those kinds of behaviors as a result of receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit. God will never force you to do something you do not want to do, or that would cause you to draw attention to yourself and distract people from receiving from Him.

Myth 3: *The Bible forbids speaking in tongues unless there is an interpreter.*

This statement is true as long as it refers to public utterances, or messages, given in tongues. But when used as a mandate to forbid praying in the Spirit, it becomes a myth that conflates two different manifestations of the Spirit of God: speaking in tongues as a part of your individual prayer life and speaking in tongues as part of a message to the church. Even though the language might be the same in both cases, the purpose is different.

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When you personally pray in the Spirit, or speak in tongues (which are essentially equivalent terms, according to 1 Corinthians 14:13-15), you are speaking to God, not to men. It is not meant to be interpreted for others, any more than any personal prayer in your own language is meant for public edification.

However, a message spoken in tongues in a public assembly must be interpreted in order for others to understand what has been said in tongues, so that they can be edified and blessed.

Myth 4: *When people speak in tongues, they are just making it up, and it's not really coming from the Holy Spirit.*

Speaking in tongues involves speaking a language that is not understood by you, the speaker. It may

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not sound like a language, but there are many languages that sound strange to those unfamiliar with them. Besides, unless you have a special genius for languages, you probably can't make a language up on the spot. What you say in tongues comes from the Holy Spirit, not from your own mind.

Myth 5: *Speaking in tongues means that the Holy Spirit takes over your voice and speaks. Consequently, if you don't say anything, it must mean that it's not God's will for you to speak in tongues.*

This myth results from a misunderstanding of the process of speaking in tongues. Acts 2:4 says:

...and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to speak.

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A careful reading of that verse makes it clear that the Holy Spirit did not do the speaking. The ones who were gathered together in the house in Acts 2 were the ones who began to speak. The Holy Spirit gave them the words to say, but they had to do the speaking.

The Holy Spirit will not move your tongue, depress your diaphragm, or do anything else to make you speak. You have to do that yourself, just as you do when you speak your own language.

Myth 6: *If you don't begin speaking in tongues, it must mean that there is sin in your life, or there is some other reason God didn't answer your prayer.*

Receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit does not depend on your holiness or lack of it. It is a gift, and it is given freely to all believers who ask for it.

Make no mistake—if there is sin in your life, you need to repent, turn away

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from it, and ask God to forgive you. But just because a person doesn't begin speaking in tongues immediately does not mean they don't measure up to God's expectations in some way.

How Will I Know What to Say?

Even if these myths are not issues that prevent someone from speaking in tongues, there is another big question that arises. It is this: "How will I know what to say?"

I have used the following illustration with remarkable success to demonstrate how the Holy Spirit prompts people about what to say.

I will tell those who are having difficulty getting started speaking in tongues to repeat aloud something I am going to say to them. For example, I will instruct them to say, "Hello, Pastor."

They repeat it aloud: "Hello, Pastor."

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Then, I ask them, “How did you know what to say?”

They will invariably respond, “Because you told me what to say!”

Of course, I tell them that is the right answer. Then I explain that in the same way, the Holy Spirit will give them the words to say. He will prompt them in their spirits with sounds and syllables, words, and phrases that He wants them to speak.

All they have to do is use their voice, their tongue, and their lips to form those words and speak them out. Many times, this clears up their difficulty, and they begin speaking in tongues right away.

However, this may lead to another significant obstacle some people have to speaking in tongues, and it is this: when they are about to speak in tongues, their mind raises an objection, such as: “Don’t say that, because I don’t understand it!”

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When we speak in our own language, our minds choose the words we are going to say. However, when we receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit, our minds are not in charge of what we say in tongues. Listen to what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 14:14:

For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful.

He is saying that when you speak in tongues, your spirit is in charge, and your mind is not. That is an extremely hard place for your mind to be because ever since you learned to talk, your mind has chosen every one of your words for you. To be relegated to the sidelines when you pray in tongues is not easy for your mind. It will object and try to keep you from saying anything of which it does not approve or which it does not control.

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Here is a key: when you pray in tongues, you are not talking to yourself; you are talking to God. You don't have to understand it. In fact, part of the very definition of speaking in tongues means you are speaking in a language you don't understand. But God understands it perfectly, and he wants to hear what you have to say.

Common Concerns

Sometimes, people do not begin speaking in tongues fluently right away. They may halt and stutter and stammer, or they may say the same few words or sounds over and over. This may cause them to become self-conscious and stop. They may be accustomed to hearing others praying in tongues very confidently and feel as though they don't measure up. Here is an explanation that will help those in this dilemma.

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When you started talking as a baby, you probably didn't use full sentences. You began by repeating sounds and syllables and phrases, and then built your language skills from that beginning.

It is sometimes the same way with speaking in tongues. You start with sounds and syllables and then proceed to using words and phrases. After that, you become more fluent in your ability to use the new language you have received.

Another objection that people have when starting to speak in tongues is that they think their language doesn't sound as refined and practiced as that of someone who may have been speaking in tongues for many years.

Others will surely remember how odd speaking in tongues sounded to them when they first began. They just needed some time to get used to it. Keep speaking, and it will sound better and

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better to you. Once again, keep in mind that you are not talking to yourself—God loves to hear you speak in tongues.

If there are those who are particularly sensitive about how they sound, suggest that they practice in private until they become more confident.

Three Steps to Your Breakthrough

Finally, there is one other suggestion I can give that will benefit those who have a tough time breaking through to speaking in tongues. It includes three principles that will be particularly helpful.

First, ask them to speak in tongues loudly enough that their own ears can hear what they are saying. This will help assure them that they have actually received.

Second, encourage them to vary the volume and the pitch of their voice, just

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as they would in normal speech. Remind them that when they speak in their own language, they use a lot of variety, and don't speak in a monotone. They can use the same natural variety when they speak in tongues.

Third, advise them to position their bodies effectively. By standing up, lifting their heads, and raising their hands, they open themselves up, both physically and spiritually, to receive.

Once they overcome and move past these obstacles, they will be able to freely enter into and enjoy the experience of being filled to overflowing with the Holy Spirit.

Energized and Empowered

God has promised to give the Holy Spirit to all who ask. He desires to fill us to overflowing with His Spirit. He wants

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to enable us to fulfill our untapped and unrealized potential in Christ.

He wants to anoint us with the same power that anointed Jesus. He wants to infuse each and every one of us with a power that burns like holy fire within us.

There is more of God than we have experienced, and greater victories in store for us than we have dared to imagine. The mighty baptism of the Holy Spirit will energize us and empower us to do exploits under the lofty banner of our King, the Lord Jesus Christ. I will leave you with these final words, first spoken by the apostle Paul in Ephesians 5:18: *...be filled with the Spirit.*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

ROD PARSLEY, BEST-SELLING author of more than 70 books, is the pastor of World Harvest Church. A highly sought-after crusade and conference speaker, he uses his platform to call people to Jesus Christ through the good news of the Gospel.

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Parsley's refreshingly direct style encourages Christians to examine and eradicate sin from their lives. A fearless champion of living God's way, Parsley follows the high standard set by Jesus Christ and encourages his readers to do the same.

He and his wife, Joni, have two young-adult children, Ashton and Austin.

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