

God's Greatest Gift to the Church

"John answered everyone, "I baptize you with water, but there is one coming Who is greater than I am. I am not good enough to untie his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." Luke 3:16 NCV

Jesus is God's greatest gift to the world. He said "God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten son". After receiving Jesus as God's gift of salvation, there is another gift the Lord has for all who have been saved—the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit has been given to the church to teach, to give direction, to provide power, and bring us into the fullness of everything God has for us to experience as His children.

I have been blessed to lead many believers into this experience we call the baptism in the Holy Spirit; but I have also encountered a lot of people with questions about this wonderful gift from God. Some have been told that when they get saved they automatically have the baptism in the Holy Spirit, but there are plenty of scriptures to tell us otherwise.

The apostle Paul wrote this to the church (people who are already saved). "Don't be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit," Ephesians 5:18 NLT.

Paul compared being filled with the Holy Spirit to being drunk with wine. What happens when a person becomes drunk with wine? The wine controls them; it affects their mood, their attitude toward others, their ability to speak, the way they walk, and it can change or destroy their entire life. But when you receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit, everything about your life will be changed for the better. You will have the power to love those you once struggled to love. You will have joy when everyone around you is depressed. You will have the power of God in your life to help you become everything you are destined to become and to do everything you are destined to do.

It is true that when you got saved the Holy Spirit came to live inside of you. For example, there are plenty of times that my beautiful wife and I will have people come over to our house and although they are "inside" our house, they are not in charge of our house. This is similar to the position that the Holy Spirit takes in you when you are first saved. He is inside of you, but He is inside of you as an honored guest. He is waiting for you to give Him control and He desires to help you overcome old thought patterns; negative emotions; rebellious tendencies; and to help you deal with the issues of life, but He needs your permission to take over before He can operate this way in you.

I came to Jesus at the age of five. The Holy Spirit was living inside me right then, but He wanted to fill me completely. It wasn't until I was at a camp meeting when I invited Jesus to baptize me in the Holy Spirit and it was then I was filled to overflowing and I began to see the results of that encounter. He will do the same for you if you ask.

So how do you know when you have been baptized in the Holy Spirit?

"All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them." Acts 2:4 NIV

Throughout the book of Acts we see that when people were baptized in the Holy Spirit they would speak in other tongues. This is a language you have never spoken before; I will do another teaching on the importance of praying in tongue's at a later time, but for right now, let's point out one thing: God gave them the language, but the Bible says they *spoke*. That means you have to *say* something. The Holy Spirit will not force you to speak in tongues; He will give you the language, but speaking it out is entirely up to you.

That night when I prayed for Jesus to baptize me in the Holy Spirit I begin to hear what sounded like a miniature Jeremy Mays inside me speaking in a language I did not understand. At first I was a little bit nervous, because I wanted to make sure it was God and not just something in my head. Someone leaned over to me and said "Jeremy, the Lord just spoke to me and He said you are hearing your prayer language inside you and you just need to speak it out". So I begin to speak those words I was hearing by faith, and suddenly, it felt like a river broke loose on the inside of me and ever since then, I have been praying in tongues every day of my life.

If you desire the baptism in the Holy Spirit, pray the following prayer; and after you pray it, do not say or think another English word. Just begin to speak any word or sound that comes to you, that isn't your native language.

Say, Lord Jesus Christ, I have received you as my Savior and I receive you now as my baptizer with the Holy Spirit, so baptize me now! I receive your power, and I receive my prayer language. I declare by faith that I am baptized in the Holy Spirit and I have my prayer language, and by faith in Jesus name I will speak in it now! And let the Holy Spirit speak through you.