

Why Every Single Christian Needs the Baptism in the Holy Spirit

Either the extreme activity of the Holy Spirit is critical to every Christian, or it is not.

I've resisted writing this article for a long time, as there doesn't seem to be a way around causing a schism, or at least provoking people to pick a side. Then again, maybe this is just what we need—an honest evaluation of the value and purpose of allowing the Holy Spirit to be fully free in our lives and in our churches.

Is the movement of the Holy Spirit vital to our success as Christians? Or, can we choose to tone down the manifestations due to personal discomfort or outright disagreement over how appropriate it is?

Amazing Cessationists

One of the reasons writing this article is such a struggle is because of how many truly amazing, godly and humble men and women of God there are who don't affirm the gifts of the Spirit. Additionally, there are many others who affirm the gifts and activity of the Holy Spirit, but don't emphasize them or give room for them in the church. In fact there are many "Spirit-filled" churches today that are sadly restrictive of the Holy Spirit. Yet, I've met so many of these pastors and leaders, and they are remarkable people.

I'm continually humbled by people like this who are lovers of God, faithful givers, students of the Word, brilliant leaders in the church and who possess truly tender hearts toward people. You won't find any praying in tongues, deliverance of demons, mention of dreams and visions or supernatural

manifestations in their ministry. However, they are feeding the poor, visiting prisoners, giving to the needy, standing for righteousness, preaching with conviction and loving those God brings across their path.

There are those who would argue that people who discount or minimize the gifts and workings of the Holy Spirit are not saved at all. While I personally feel this is a serious issue, I could never jump to such an extreme conclusion. However ...

Baptism in the Holy Spirit Is Critical for All

I must admit my spirit is grieved terribly when Christians attempt to shut the Holy Spirit and his workings away.

I recently heard someone raise the question as to why the activity of the Holy Spirit is even necessary today. He argued that if we focus on the basics, on salvation and preaching the gospel, that is more than sufficient. He wondered out loud, "Just what else is necessary?"

He felt the outward expressions, the loud groans of intercession, tongues, deliverance of demons and other manifestations were hindrances to the advance of the gospel. I do understand why he has arrived at his position. There are too many people acting out in bizarre, emotional and strangely spiritual manners while excusing it away as the activity of the Holy Spirit. While I fully embrace the truth that it will become supernaturally intense and even quite messy when God invades a people and a church in great power, too often, overly zealous people are getting a little nutty when the power really isn't there. Their passion can get the best of them and, for better or worse, it turns a lot of people away from such theatrics.

With all of this in mind, I must clearly reveal the core of my heart and my position on this matter:

Those who dismiss, reject, minimize or tone down the gifts

and activity of the Holy Spirit due to discomfort or theological position are at great risk of rejecting God himself—and encouraging others to do the same.

Yes, the baptism in the Holy Spirit which results in a remarkable life of power, praying in unknown tongues, experiencing the supernatural realm and living a prophetic life is critical, not simply optional, for all.

Why Is the Holy Spirit So Important?

No, preaching the gospel and winning the lost aren't all we are called to do as Christians. Not even close. However, it's easy to argue that the very act of preaching the Gospel and leading the lost to Jesus can't be done with any real effectiveness, anointing or power without the very direct and active influence of the Holy Spirit.

"They went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia and were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia" (Acts 16:6).

Only the Holy Spirit knows when, where, how and to whom we should be preaching the gospel. Of course, we should default to preaching and ministering everywhere we go—unless the Holy Spirit tells us not to.

If we are not tuned in to the clear and present words of God, we will not be able to discern his will on anything, including our ministry strategy.

Further, we know that praying in tongues edifies us, and the Bible teaches clearly that this gift is available for all. While some of the different gifts of tongues (tongues and interpretation, for example) are reserved for select people, as is true for most spiritual gifts, the prayer language of tongues is a critically important gift for every Christian. We all need the edification that only the Holy Spirit can bring,

and his chosen vehicle for that edification is praying in tongues. There is no substitute. No tongues, no edification. That is a recipe for disaster.

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