

Why Some Pentecostals Doubt Receiving the Holy Spirit

Is speaking in tongues the end of the journey with Christ, or is it the beginning? Is it the goal in life or the means to the goal? Misconceptions about the hallmark doctrine of the Pentecostal Movement have made well-meaning Pentecostals and charismatics doubt their tongue-speaking experience and give Satan the credit. The irony is that Satan takes the credit, and says, "You're right! I take full credit."

Many Pentecostals and charismatics who assume that receiving the baptism with the Holy Spirit is the end goal of walking in the Spirit, say that they will not face and yield to temptation again, because they have "arrived" and received the power of God now. So when Satan ensnares them after a brief "honeymoon" with the Holy Spirit, and they are devastated for having given into sin and betrayed God, Satan tells them, "See, you have not really received the Holy Spirit." And they believe it.

Almost everyone who ever surrendered to Christ can remember the attempts which Satan made to stop the decision to follow Christ. We don't really feel much opposition from the enemy until we take steps to make a new, deeper commitment to Christ. The same opposition will come when we make a decision to move into the overcoming life of walking with the Holy Spirit. We can choose to live on the borderline of our Christian experience, or we can choose to go on into a Spirit-filled life with Christ. And the same Bible that says, "You must be born again" (John 3:7), also says, "Be filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18), and "Pray in the Spirit" (Eph. 6:18, Jude 20).

Jesus told the disciples, "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you" (Acts 1:8). Since the devil does

not want to see a powerful church or powerful people witnessing for Christ, he constantly attacks the message of the baptism with the Holy Spirit.

God's answer to people's need for power is the baptism with the Holy Spirit. This power is the means to begin overcoming temptation with greater success. The scriptures have many calls to repentance and many places describing the plan of salvation. But the epistles contain an equal proportion of scripture commanding every believer to be filled with the Holy Spirit, to pray in the Spirit and to walk in the Spirit in a life of fruitful service.

After having received the baptism with the Holy Spirit as confirmed by speaking in tongues, people need to know what praying in the Spirit will do for them. Here are some ideas that will result in a more powerful spiritual life.

First, it is important to pray in the Spirit daily. Praying in the Spirit fortifies us mentally, spiritually and emotionally at all times. The Holy Spirit will not leave us nor forsake us. People can pray in the Spirit at any time—silently or aloud. Praying in the Spirit enables us to be led by God in how we pray. We do not know what other's needs always are, but God will show us as we step out in faith and pray for those things as God reveals them. It opens up our hearing to the Holy Spirit so that we can better follow His leading.

Prayer is talking with God and listening to Him. We pray and God answers. If something seems to be lacking when we are praying in the Spirit, it is important to continue. We walk by faith and not by feeling. As we continue praying in the Spirit, a sense of fluency will grow through time. Only as one prays often, does one become fluent in prayer. Praying in the Spirit gives us a deeper hunger for the Word of God. Reading the Bible consistently is a vital key to a vibrant spiritual life. Faith comes by hearing the Word of God. As we obey the Lord in reading His Word, He will grant us the desire to read

more.

Second, doubts may arise about our experience in the baptism with the Holy Spirit, and spiritual conflict may set in. The spiritual conflict we must be prepared for is not simple. There will be spiritual conflict against the world: we are told, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life—is not of the Father, but is of the world. The world and its desires are passing away, but the one who does the will of God lives forever" (1 John 2:15-17).

Then there will also be spiritual conflict against the flesh: we are told "walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit" (Gal. 5:16-17). And there will be spiritual conflict against the wicked devil himself. As Bill Bright says in *The Holy Spirit: the Key to Supernatural Living* (pages, 44-45): we are told "Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith" (I Peter 5:8-9).

However, we also know that the power within us is stronger than the power in the whole world, all the flesh and the devil himself, all combined. Being baptized with the Holy Spirit gives us that power we need to overcome all the evil of the world, the flesh and the devil, and the power we need to follow our Lord.

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