

# THOUGHTS ON THE HOLY SPIRIT

It is obvious to all who have been Christians very long that there is a great deal of division and confusion about various aspects of the relationships between the Holy Spirit and the believer. It is a shame that this is so and even a casual reading of I Corinthians 12 shows that God intended the Holy Spirit to be a unifier, not a divider. Our enemy, however, seeks to twist things around and has, to some degree, succeeded. My goal in this writing is to bring clarity and, hopefully, unity in our understanding of this third person of the trinity. By the way, it should not be surprising that we get confused about the Holy Spirit considering the mess some of us have made in our understanding of the Father and the Son.

I am choosing to not quote much scripture in this paper. My reason for avoiding the many quotes which could be given is that scholars would tear it apart for their own scholarly reasons and the seeker would get lost in the references and counter-references. Instead, I will share what I have learned over the past sixty years of being a pretty conscientious seeker after the truths of God. I assure you that there is a good scriptural basis for my beliefs. You may find errors. I would be surprised if you don't. I hope you will also find truth and some greater understanding. Please be patient with me, I am only trying to help.

I grew up 'fundamentalist' and thank God for it. I was taught that when I received Jesus as my savior I was 'born again'. That is I, by a miracle of God and the work of Jesus Christ, was born into a new and divine race of beings. We are absolutely unique in all of God's creation being born once into the kingdom of man and the second time into the family of God. I was taught, and still firmly

believe, that upon my confession of Jesus as my savior and Lord the Holy Spirit somehow entered my spirit and from that day until this has indwelt me. It is my belief that every child of God, no exceptions, has this indwelling Holy Spirit who will never leave nor forsake him/her. I was born again when very young (nine years old) but there came a time in my life when I failed to see much connection between scripture and the 'Church'. My view was that the 'Church', meaning the organized denominational structures which were all that I knew at that time, had all the power of the Masonic Lodge. I have a lot of respect for the Masons. The Shriners in particular have done many wonderful works. What I meant was that anything that the creativity of man and the resources of man could do – they could do. The Church did a lot of good but I honestly failed to see hardly any 'power'. In scripture I read about power that glorified God and brought people to believe in Him to the point of giving their lives to Him, literally, not figuratively. Yet, during that time of strong disbelief, God never left me. How do I know? I don't! But I have evidence that makes me believe that He never left me. I cried out in prayer for Him, if He was up there and if He cared anything at all about me, to reveal Himself, somehow, anyhow. It took awhile for Him to get through my thick skull – but He did. What change did this make in me? Instantaneously probably not very much but as I grew up I am convinced that This decision to follow Christ caused me to grow in directions for which I will be eternally thankful. I noticed no changes in my emotions immediately and there was no instantaneous change in my mind. There was an enormous change in my Spirit but I was not very much aware of the change.

One day I heard a preacher named Jim Hylton say that if we wanted God's results we had to use God's methods. He went on to preach that God commanded that we reckon ourselves dead to our own kingdoms and alive to His and His alone. He said that when

Christ died, I died and the only reasonable thing for me to do was to believe the truth. I have, in some very real sense, died. And if I have died with Christ I have, in some very real sense, been made alive with Him and in Him. My wife and I heard this, believed this, and laid our lives on this altar, the altar that 'it is no longer I that live but Christ lives in me'. We believed that all things work together for good to them that love God and are called to His purposes. In my opinion we were 'filled' with the Holy Spirit. Scripture indicates that we are to be "continuously be being filled with the Holy Spirit" and we understood that to mean that we were to be continuously be being emptied of self. For thirty eight years we have been living with this understanding and it has served us wonderfully well.

So now I am expressing to you that scripture invites you to two quite separate experiences with the Holy Spirit. One is when He enters you and causes you to be born into the Kingdom of God. The second is when He initially fills you with Himself as you empty yourself to Him. The first is a one time action. The second is an initial filling followed by many times of infilling as we live our lives. The infilling of the Holy Spirit brought to Lavon and I great peace and joy. We had a closeness to the Lord we had not experienced before. The scriptures and other spiritual things I read just flooded me with meaning and truth. It was grand. It still is. What change did this make in me? This is very hard to answer. There was a major change in my 'world view'. I really believed so many scriptures that I had passed over before. The pet phrase between Lavon and I was, "All things work together for good to those who love God". This was said often and in a very positive way. We saw ourselves much differently. This change caused major changes in our minds and it was a time of great joy in our lives. This joy has continued for many years and , for the most part, remains.

Someone may ask, "but did you speak in tongues?" No, I did not. Neither did I experience any other miracles. I asked for them but God was silent. I heard about miracles but none came as a result of my prayers or deeds. I did experience one thing though. I started leading people to believe in Jesus and become His children. I had tried to do that before but was a miserable failure. Something had changed though even now I am not able to fully explain what. (There are many things in my life that I do not understand. I am glad. I would hate to serve a God who was no bigger than my understanding). There came a time when I became, reluctantly, willing to go another step which, for me was, investigating the gifts of the Spirit including this horribly divisive thing called, "tongues". I will not go through the details of this but I was raised that tongues was 'of the devil'. I also had a relative who was a true 'holy roller' but was very unkind to me. I had a very high wall! Yet, there came a time when I allowed someone to pray with me to be 'baptised in the Holy Spirit'. I was told to speak in something other than English. I felt foolish and was not at all sure that God had anything to do with it, but I did. Truly, when I spoke in this gibberish it meant nothing to me and certainly was not 'ecstatic utterance'. There was hardly any emotion at all. Yet, I really wanted to please the Lord and scripture says not to despise the gifts so I would begin by praying, "Lord, if this is not from you please let me know in any way you wish". I did this for about a week but got no rebuke from the Lord. After about a week I began my little formula when I heard a voice inside my head. I thought then it was the Lord. I think now it was the Lord. It said, "Now Dick, don't you think that is about enough". This was a great comfort to me and remains so.

So, did my life change dramatically? Did I suddenly become 'super Christian'? No, I did not. It was a new experience and strangely enough after hearing the Lord I found peace and comfort in praying with a language I myself did not understand. Yet, my

daily struggles with trials and tribulations seemed about the same. There was a change however though it took me quite awhile to really understand what had happened. I began to see miracles. Even more I began seeing miracles in response to my direct supplications to God. I have never been confused about who had the power. God has the power. Yet, now He seemed to work in me and through me in ways He never had before. At first it was physical healing. I quickly confess that I have prayed for a lot of people who did not get better (though, truthfully, I know of no one who got worse). But some did get better. Some got better quite dramatically. I had no desire to pitch a tent and hold meetings. My greatest desire was that I not offend the Holy Spirit because I really liked being involved with these things that were so much bigger than myself.

I am tempted to begin telling stories at this point but will resist that temptation. This is NOT about me. This is about Him, our indwelling, infilling, baptizing Holy Spirit. We are told in Galatians chapter 5 that the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, etc. I believe we would be wise to seek the fruit of the Spirit alongside seeking the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Without a balance terrible things happen. Whole ministries have been destroyed because some have loved the power more than the Spirit. What I am expressing to you is my belief that it is God's purpose for you to let the Holy Spirit come into you causing you to be born again. God's purpose for you is to reckon yourself dead and be filled with the Holy Spirit. It is also God's purpose for you to be baptized in His Holy Spirit. For years I have not had the words to express 'how' to receive the baptism. My wife filled in the gap for me. If you would receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit you must 'jump off the cliff'. You must lose control to Him to such a degree that He can do what He wants and you will follow. Does this mean that you have to speak in tongues? Of course not! Paul is very clear in scripture that, "not all speak in tongues do they?"

But, and this is a very big but, your submission to God should be sufficiently complete that if God wants you to, you will, no matter how much it may embarrass you. Putting 'tongues' aside for the moment, my belief is, and the clear teaching of scripture is, power will enter your life, supernatural power will come but it will seem so natural that it may not seem supernatural. You may have an ability to teach that goes beyond what you had before. I am not referring to natural abilities. You had those before you were saved. I am talking about a long list of things mentioned in I Cor. Romans, and elsewhere. It may be a gift of helps, administration, healings, teaching, etc. Scripture says you should earnestly seek the gifts that the Holy Spirit has selected specifically for you. It is exactly in this passage that the 'Love' chapter is given. We are told that the things we are discussing here will 'pass away' when the perfect has come. I personally am confident that this is referring to the return of Christ. But even when the perfect has come some things will remain. These are faith, hope, and love. And what change did this make in me? Indescribable! During the subsequent years since that time I have been involved in actually helping quite a few people, people I love, by the power of God working through me. Would He have done the same things without me? I surely do not know. I do not even think that is relevant. It was my privilege and my pleasure to be involved. These things really allowed me to love people more and I assure you it has caused me to love God more. It has not produced pride but a true humility.

It has been my hope and intent to bring about greater acceptance of one another as we see the work of the Holy Spirit in EACH of the members of His body. God does not intend that we be divided about the Holy Spirit but that His Spirit will be glue that holds us together.