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WRONG BELIEF ABOUT THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Dear Friends,

All Christians have different religious backgrounds and testimonies of their salvation. Some were raised in churches that preach salvation through Jesus alone; others grew up in churches that were little more than fraternal organizations with a religious theme. Then there are Christians who had no church exposure whatsoever or were associated with churches that deny Jesus as the only hope for salvation. But regardless of a person's background, the fact that he or she finally came to accept Jesus as personal Lord and Savior is cause for great rejoicing.

I was one of those raised in a church that preached Jesus as Savior, leaving no doubt about the fact that if you are not born again you will never go to Heaven. That church was part of the Southern Baptist denomination and there was no question about whether or not we loved Jesus. We were involved in missions programs, community outreach, and evangelism projects. We had services on Sunday mornings and evenings. Before those services we had Sunday School on Sunday morning and Training Union (a variation of Sunday School) on Sunday nights. There was also Wednesday night service and Thursday night home visitations.

We had a tremendous zeal for the Lord and truly wanted to serve Him. What we did not do was believe in or teach the Baptism of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues. Our belief was that speaking in tongues and the other Gifts of the Spirit identified in First Corinthians chapter twelve were no longer available for Christians today. We had what we felt was strong, scriptural support for these beliefs.

I also remember some in our church speaking of Pentecostals and Charismatics as though they were beneath us, uneducated about scripture and not very spiritually advanced. At times, some of our members spoke about them in tones that seemed filled with pity and sorrow for their "misguided and confused ways." Sometimes, our attitude came across as a little arrogant.

Well, to make a long story short, I ended up attending a Charismatic church and witnessed things I had been told could no longer happen, such as healings, miracles and tongues and interpretation. I even experienced what many refer to as "the Baptism of the Holy Spirit" and received the gift of tongues. During those years in that church I found it quite interesting to hear the comments made about Pentecostals and Baptists and similar evangelical denominations. Much of what was said was very similar to what I had heard in the Baptist church, only from a Charismatic perspective, and at times, equally tinged with a bit of arrogance.

To make another long story short, after several years in that Charismatic church, my wife Kathy and I began attending a church that was part of the Church of God (Cleveland,

Tennessee headquarters), which is a traditional, Pentecostal denomination. Once again I was intrigued to hear the comments and opinions, only this time spoken about the Baptists and Charismatics. Once more, what was said sometimes carried with it an air of elitism.

Granted, not all the members of such churches and denominations have the same thoughts and feelings about the other groups. But one thing I did notice about Pentecostals and Charismatics is that their feelings of superiority centered on one thing: they believed in the Baptism of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues.

I have spent time in each of the three "camps" I have mentioned: Evangelical, Pentecostal and Charismatic. In this letter I am going to identify some wrong beliefs about the Baptism of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues. These wrong beliefs are not those I have heard voiced by Evangelicals, but are beliefs expressed by those in Pentecostal and Charismatic churches (albeit, expressed in a somewhat indirect but unmistakable fashion).

Speaking of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues and those who have experienced such an event...

- It does not make a person more saved. Born again is born again; there are not degrees of salvation. In John 3:3, Jesus said, "...Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." He did not say, "Except a man be baptized in the Holy Spirit and speak in tongues, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." When we stand before God on the day of our final judgment, He will look to see if our names are written in the Book of Life, not the "Book of Tongues."
- It does not mean you love God more than "non-Spirit filled" Christians love Him. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit does not make a Christian love God more. A Christian will love God more as he develops his relationship with God.
- The Baptism of the Holy Spirit is **NOT** a lifestyle, it is an event. What you do with the results of that event can impact your lifestyle, but the event itself is not how you live.
- It does not mean you are maturing spiritually. What you **CAN** do and what you **DO** are two separate things. Yes, there are tremendous benefits that come from praying in tongues; but those benefits will **NEVER** be realized unless you make such prayer a part of your lifestyle. I have been praying in tongues for a long, long time and I can tell you for a fact: People who commit to praying in tongues on a regular basis will always begin to bear the fruit of such prayer. In Matthew 12:33 and Luke 6:44, Jesus said you will know a tree by its fruit. Trust me, it doesn't matter what people say, if they are praying in tongues the results will bear out their claim. Just because you **CAN** pray in tongues does not mean you are more spiritually mature than Christians who have not experienced the Baptism of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues.
- It does not mean you are more holy. Holiness is a spiritual condition that comes automatically with being born again. This is confirmed in Ephesians 4:24. Both

Spirit-filled and non-Spirit filled Christians can live a holy life if they yield to the nature of their born again spirit. Some Spirit-filled Christians almost seem to think that if they sin, it is not that bad because they have been "filled with the Holy Spirit." Sin is sin and God does not overlook it in the life of any Christian. The Apostle Paul reveals in 2 Corinthians 5:10, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." The standard for this judgment - God's word (John 12:48) - will be the same for all Christians, whether or not they speak in tongues.

- It does not mean you have a closer relationship with God. Every person who is born again is God's child, birthed of His spiritual life. Likewise, it does not mean you have deeper fellowship with God. In the strictest of terms, relationship with God comes from being born again; fellowship with God is what we do after we are born again. He has invited **ALL** Christians to come boldly before His throne of grace (Hebrews 4:16), not just those who can pray in tongues. Based on my observations of the lives of Christians, I am absolutely convinced that there are non-Spirit filled Christians who have greater fellowship with God than some Spirit-filled Christians.
- It does not mean God pays more attention to your prayers. Yes, I know that there is a distinct difference between praying in the spirit and praying with the understanding. But some Spirit-filled Christians almost seem to think that when they pray (with the understanding) they are "getting through to God" more effectively than non-Spirit filled Christians. This is simply not true and there is nothing in scripture to support such a belief. God will listen to the prayers of His children...**ALL** His children.
- It does not mean you understand scripture more clearly. Quite frankly, some of the weirdest, wackiest and imbalanced doctrine I have ever heard is taught by Spirit-filled preachers. But because these preachers can speak in tongues, they and their followers appear to think that is the confirmation that what is being taught is absolute truth. Yes, it is true that the Holy spirit will teach us all things (John 14:26) and guide us into all truth (John 16:13). But that doesn't just happen automatically. If you don't spend time in fellowship with the Holy Spirit there isn't much He can teach you.
- It doesn't mean you are a better person. I sure hope no one gets offended at this, but some of the most unforgiving and meanest Christians I have ever met pride themselves on being Baptized in the Holy Spirit. Romans 5:5 declares that the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. But again, if a person is not spending time with God for the purpose of change, God's love will not be developed in the character of that individual.
- It doesn't mean you are automatically qualified to operate in a ministry calling. What it means is that you have had a supernatural experience with the Holy Spirit and He is willing to help you mature into the operation of your ministry calling. In First Timothy chapter three, the Apostle Paul told Timothy that a novice should not be promoted into a place of leadership. A Christian who has had the

experience of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit is still a novice until he or she matures spiritually and is qualified for promotion by God into ministry.

God has revealed in Romans 8:26 that the Holy Spirit has been sent to help us in the area of our infirmities. Infirmities would be anything in our lives - such as sin, bad habits, wrong belief, etc - that hinders our progress in God. Sometimes, those infirmities turn out to be things we didn't realize existed or didn't think were much of a problem. Praying in the Spirit enables the Holy Spirit to help us overcome those infirmities. He will not force change upon us, but He will help us as we strive to make necessary changes.

Since experiencing the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and spending many hours praying in tongues, I can tell you my life has been energized in serving God. This is part of what Jesus meant in Acts 1:8 when He said, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you..." This power is not just for signs, wonders, healings and miracles; it is for every area of living and service unto God.

I still remember the church service during which I was filled with the Holy Spirit. I *knew* I had been touched by God's divine power, but the results of what that encounter could produce did not begin to manifest until after I began regularly praying in tongues. It was then that I began to see God's power touch people when I prayed for them. Testimonies have been shared by people having been healed of various afflictions, a few of which are: cancerous and non-cancerous lumps, meningitis, arterial blockage, cancer, migraine headaches, eye and vision problems and muscular and joint pain.

But none of these things make me any better or more highly esteemed in God's eyes than any other Christian. To my brothers and sisters in Christ who have been made to feel as though you are less of a Christian because you have never experienced the Baptism of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues, I want you to know you are just as important and loved by God as every other Christian. God will use you as much as He possibly can to accomplish His Kingdom purpose on Earth.

To my brothers and sisters in Christ who have experienced the Baptism of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues, let us never forget that every, single person on this planet who has accepted Jesus Christ as Savior holds a place of equal value in the eyes of our Father in Heaven. I will close with the words of the Apostle Paul,

***There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.
(Galatians 3:28-29)***

In His Grace,

Jim

In this letter I focused a lot on the Holy Spirit. One of the things I have heard debated over the years is this: What is blasphemy of the Holy Spirit? Not long ago I preached a sermon which deals with that very subject. If you would like to have a CD of the sermon,

"Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit," please check the box below and mail the order form to our ministry address.



By the time some of you read this letter, Kathy and I, along with Pastor Bronc and Candy Flint, will be on our way to Migori, Kenya to minister in a Prayer and Power Conference. The conference will be held Sunday, August 10 through Sunday, August 17 at the Kakrao Mixed Secondary School. The service times will be:

- Sunday, August 10 at 10:30 AM and 7:00 PM
- Monday, August 11 through Saturday, August 16 at 10:00 AM, 2:00 PM, 7:00 PM
- Sunday, August 17 at 10:30 AM

Please pray for the conference, for us and for all who attend that their hearts and minds will be open to receive all that God has planned for the services. Also, continue believing with us for all the necessary finances to come in.

SPECIAL NOTE TO PASTORS IN KENYA: Last year I was approached by several pastors who asked me to extend my trip so I could minister in their churches in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. I was unable to extend my trip last year and will be unable to extend it this year. I realize this may prove to be disappointing to some; but as a pastor, it is very difficult for me to be gone for extended periods. This is why I encourage you to not only attend this year's conference, but to bring the members of your churches. For more information about the Migori Prayer and Power Conference please contact Pastor Kennedy Oluoch at childrenshope2007@yahoo.com.



WATCHING THE VIDEO OF OUR SERVICES - APPLE AND ANDROID DEVICES People with Apple or Android devices have had difficulty watching the streaming videos of our services. The company that manages our streaming informed me that if you will download the Puffin Browser App the videos will play with no problem. I downloaded the free version of Puffin and it works perfectly (there is also a version that blocks popup ads; it costs only \$3.99).

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