

Series: The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit **Questions & Responses**

Date: April 29, 2018

Passage: Selected Passages

I. Introduction

A.W. Tozer...

"... the restoration of the Spirit of God to His rightful place in the Church and in the life of the believer *is by all means the most important thing that could possibly take place.*

If you could increase the attendance of your church until there is no more room, if you could provide everything they have in churches that men want and love and value, and yet you didn't have the Holy Spirit, you might as well have nothing at all. For it is "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, [says] the LORD of hosts." (Zechariah 4:6). Not by the eloquence of a man, not by good music, not by good preaching, but it is by the Spirit that God works His mighty works.¹

For the past three weeks, we have been examining what the Scriptures have to say to us about the Person and work of the third person of the Trinity...*the Holy Spirit.*

Today, I am going to attempt to respond to some of the questions that have been raised. Let me say at the outset. I'm not going to get to every question...today. But I will post this message, with additional notes that cover question's I did not get to.

Secondly, I'm not one to over spiritualize, but I have struggled to get this message written. The content is overwhelming, I say "responses" because I know I don't know that "answers." Nonetheless, I'm responsible for what we teach...to you, and to God. Add to that, I have spent hours with a computer consultant trying to get a bug out of my computer. Thought we had it fixed, and Saturday morning I come in to find that all of my work on Friday is lost.

Last night I was working, and just before turning off my computer, I had this thought...I better put this document on my desktop, in case the same problem occurs that I had earlier.

And would you not know it...this message was not in the folder on my computer...because that whole folder is non-existent on my computer. Had I not saved it to my desktop...I would not have this message. Yikes!

This is not an exposition, it is a look at a number of questions that I am going to attempt to respond to.

I say we jump in with both feet...

¹ Tozer, A. W. (1993). [*The Counselor: Straight Talk about the Holy Spirit from a 20th Century Prophet*](#) (pp. 36–37). Camp Hill, PA: WingSpread.

II. Body

1. Why do some believe that Baptism in/by the Holy Spirit is something that happens *after* salvation, and that it is evidenced by speaking in tongues?

Let me start with a reminder of what we believe. We believe that the Baptism of the Spirit is the work of the Holy Spirit whereby He places the person who puts their trust in Christ in union with Christ, and in union with all other believers in the body of Christ.

We base this on Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 12:13...

"For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves of free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit."
(1 Corinthians 12:13)

We base it on Paul's words in Romans 8:9...

"However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him."
(Romans 8:9)

We come to "belong to Christ" the moment we put our faith in Christ. To have the Spirit is to be a Christian. To not have the Spirit is to not be a Christian.

Therefore, the "baptism of/in/by the Holy Spirit" is a work the Spirit does at the moment of salvation.

Now the reason that some believe the "baptism of the Spirit" is something that happens sometime later, is because there are three instances in the book of Acts where the Spirit comes upon people after they believe. What do we make of that?

We apply the accepted principles of biblical interpretation...

a. Acts is a historical narrative piece of literature.

It is describing what happened, but we must be aware that what is described is not necessarily what is prescribed.

The disciple "threw dice" to determine who would replace Judas the betrayer. We don't develop our understanding of "determining God's will from this event."

In Acts 2...the 120 experienced the sound of a mighty wind, there was something like "tongues of fire" spreading around the room, they started speaking in languages they did not know – real languages. It would be like me speaking Russian right now...I don't know one word of Russian.

And yet on this very same day, 3000 people come to faith – they receive the Holy Spirit – and there is no sound of rushing wind, no tongues of fire, and no record that any spoke in a language they did not know.

What is described really happened. But what is described is not “prescribed” in later letters to the church.

Ananias and Sapphira sold a piece of land and gave the proceeds to the church. They lied to Peter about how much they sold it for. As a result, they both dropped dead on the spot.

We don’t develop a biblical doctrine regarding “giving” from this passage.

The point I am trying to make is that building a doctrine of the baptism of the Spirit, speaking in tongues, or any other doctrine of faith upon what happened in Acts is to not handle the Word of God accurately.

b. Acts is transitional in content.

What do I mean transitional? When Paul writes the book of Romans, he is writing a letter to an established church. He is very specific regarding foundational doctrines of the church...Justification by faith alone.

When He writes to the church in Galatia, the church is now old enough that some “false doctrines” are sneaking in...and Paul addresses them point blank. The church is no longer in its infancy...crawling...just learning to walk.

In the book of Acts, the church is birthed – people from every tongue and tribe (not just Jews!) indwelt permanently by God’s Spirit, forming the “body of Christ.” There are growing pains...some Jews Christians want the Gentile Christians to still jump through Jewish hoops to be Christians...the apostle’s meet to debate what to do, they are figuring things out as they go. Paul is even going to meet a group of men in on his third missionary journey who think they are Christians...but when asked about the Holy Spirit...they say, “...we have not even heard there is a Holy Spirit.”

My point in this is not to diminish the value of the book of Acts. It is the inspired word of God. Without it, we would not know how the church began, nor understand some of the foundational doctrines of church life and leadership.

But we must be careful that we remember what kind of book it is, and then interpret and apply it and build doctrines from it accordingly.

Ok, Lloyd, so answer the question. I have. Some believe that the baptism of the Holy Spirit because it happens three times in the book of Acts. And because there are three instances in Acts.

The first instance where there was a delay between saving faith and the baptism of the Spirit is the day of Pentecost in Acts 2:4.

The unique nature of this event is evident in Jesus' words to the disciples in Acts 1:4...He specifically tells them to wait in Jerusalem...until the promise of the coming Spirit (upper room discourse) will be fulfilled.

Why did Jesus have them wait until this specific day? I can tell you what seems reasonable in light of the whole story of redemption.

Three great festivals in Israel's history...Passover, Feast of Weeks (Pentecost) and Feast of Booths.

Passover commemorated Israel's deliverance from bondage in Egypt. Lamb was slain, blood on door posts...death angel passes over. Jesus is slain, hung on a cross during the Passover feast.

Feast of Weeks occurs 7 weeks and one day after Passover (thus is it 50 days after Passover, "Pentecost") Pentecost was a commemoration and celebration of the first grain of the harvest. Now think about this...with the coming of the Spirit God begins the work of "gathering a people from every tongue and tribe and nation as the church goes into the world to proclaim the good news of Jesus' life, death and resurrection."

Do we think it an accident that Jesus had them wait until this "50th" day after Passover – that the "great ingathering, the great harvest" – not of grain, but of souls begins?

So, we cannot take the delayed giving of the Spirit in Acts two as reason to say there is always a delay in the "baptism of the Spirit."

The other occurrence of a delay is when in Acts 8, immediately after Saul begins persecuting the church, Philip goes to Samaria and some Samaritans come to faith in Christ. When the apostles in Jerusalem hear about it, they dispatch Peter and John to confirm what is happening. It is when they arrive, put their hands on the Samaritans that the Spirit baptizes them and they speak in tongues.

Is this to be the normal going forward? Not according to Acts itself where others come to faith and it is assumed in that moment they are baptized and indwelt by the Spirit. And in the NT letters – the writers make clear that it is the Spirit Himself who works to open our eyes to believe, and in believing EVERY Christian is indwelt by the Spirit.

So why the delay for the Samaritans? It seems that God intended the apostles in Jerusalem – who are going to struggle throughout the NT to accept Gentiles – to see first-hand that what God is doing for the Jews, he is doing for Gentiles – even these Gentiles whom the Jews despised for hundreds of years!

We simply do not find the book of Acts teaching that being baptized by the Spirit is normative for the Christian. Did it happen in Acts? Yes, and there are reasons it did. Does it become the doctrine that Paul and the Apostles explain as they write their NT letters? No.

What about "tongues?" Same answer.

When Paul does expound on "tongues" it is to the Church at Corinth...and it was to address "confusion and misunderstanding and misapplication" of tongues. It was corrective. Now, it is beyond a shadow of a doubt that "tongues" in the book of Acts is speaking a foreign language. Now some are wondering..." are the "tongues" Paul speaks of in 1 Corinthians 14, a "foreign language" or an "angelic prayer language?"

I don't believe that what Paul is talking about is any different than the "tongues" spoken in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. I don't know that for sure, but I do think careful study of that passage gives reason to believe it is the same.

What I know for sure is that Paul is correcting the Corinthians, and that he forcefully tells them that "love" trumps everything. And I think that is a helpful and necessary admonition to all of us.

Some of you have spoken in tongues. Some of you have a "prayer language" where you believe the sounds and syllables you make privately enhance your intimacy with God. I love you, I want all that God wants for you. But I do not believe, nor will I teach this church to believe in or seek a private prayer language.

Personally, I have never spoken in tongues, publicly or privately. We – Rob and I as teaching pastors, the elders as those who are charged to "guard the doctrines of the church" – do not believe that speaking in tongues is a sign of greater or deeper maturity in Christ.

They are not a sign of being baptized in the Spirit. They are a known language foreign to the speaker. It absolutely happened in the days of the early church. Is what happens 98.9% of the time when we hear of "tongues" today – the same as what happened at Pentecost? I don't think so.

When we speak of being a Spirit dependent people, and Spirit filled church – we do not believe that leads us toward people speaking in tongues, being "slain in the Spirit." I'm not making fun or disparaging those who do.

There are bright, Godly, biblical scholars and pastors who disagree with what I am saying the bible teaches. I wish it were not so, but I also have room in my heart and my mind to say..."I disagree with your doctrine regarding the Spirit, but I do not doubt your salvation, sincerity, and fruitfulness for the kingdom.

Now, that said, there are many charismatic/Pentecostal teachers and leaders who do actually teach people to speak in tongues in a way that I believe is absolutely

unbiblical and wrong. If you ever find yourself longing for greater intimacy with God, power from God, and fresh experience of God...and you are told speaking in tongues is what you need, and you are encouraged to pray for the gift of tongues, and encouraged to simply start repeating unintelligent syllables...I think you may just experience something...but I don't think what you experience will be the work of the Holy Spirit.

I agree with Lehmann Strauss when he warns... *First*, speaking in tongues can be self-induced. *Second*, speaking in tongues can be group-induced. *Third*, speaking in tongues can be satanically-induced.

If you have never spoken in tongues you are in good company. We have no record of Jesus speaking in tongues. We have no record of the 120 speaking in tongues after that day on Pentecost. When Peter began to preach...just after praising God in a foreign language, he did not preach in a "tongue" – in a known foreign language. He spoke in his native Aramaic.

Well Lloyd, you just took the whole time to answer one question! Actually, I have time to answer a few more. But why so much time on that one? Because that question is so foundational to all the others. Get the meaning of the Baptism of the Spirit wrong, get our understanding of "tongues" wrong... you open yourself up to almost every other misinterpretation, misunderstanding and misapplication of the person and work of the Spirit.

So, very quickly...

2. Is it appropriate to pray to the Holy Spirit?

"Yes, but." Because the Holy Spirit is fully God. Jesus is fully God. The Father is fully God. We are not wrong to pray to the Spirit. Nor to pray to Jesus. Nor, as Jesus instructed us...to pray..." Our Father who art in heaven..."

Which takes me to the "but." The story of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation is the story of God redeeming the planet and humanity through the sending of His one and only begotten Son. Jesus is the hero of the story, Jesus lived, died and rose again to gain our justification before God.

Listen to Paul's words in Galatians 4:4-7...

⁴But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, ⁵so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. ⁶Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" ⁷Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.

Notice Paul refers to the Holy Spirit as "the Spirit of Christ." And whose name is on lips of the Spirit who lives our hearts? "Father." And according to this verse, how is

it that we who were far from God, now are "adopted" sons and daughters, such that God is now our "dad?" The life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

And in this we have what is surely the emphasis and order and model for our prayers...I love what Graham Cole says in this regard...

We see two important truths, then, in prayer to the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit. First, Christian praying is Trinitarian praying. This is deeply important, for much Christian praying in my experience is Unitarian: "Dear God. . . Amen." Unitarian praying makes it hard to see why there's any real difference in praying to the God of the Bible as opposed to praying to the God of, say, the Qur'an. Second, Christian praying exhibits the very structure of the gospel. Jesus stands at the center as the mediator, the Father as the addressee, and the Spirit as the enabler.

It seems then, that while we can pray to the Spirit, and we can certainly pray to Jesus, that the weight of the biblical testimony is that we pray to God the Father, by the power and presence of God the Spirit who lives in us, in the name of God the Son who by His life, death and resurrection makes us once again "son's and daughter" of God.

3. Is the Holy Spirit male or female?

Interestingly, the answer to this question is not as straightforward as one might think. There are two parts to the answer.

First, God is Spirit. Gender is an attribute of the body, but a Spirit does not have a body, thus a Spirit does not have gender. Thus, God in His essence, has no gender.

God does not have head, body, arms, genitals, feet, eyes, and ears. There is no "materialness" to God. Now when God created humanity, remember Genesis 1...

"Then God said, Let Us make man in our image, according to our likeness...God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." (Genesis 1:26-27)

The fullness of the image of God is "male *and* female." In the mystery of God, He transcends male and female, yet He chooses to reveal His image to us in both.

However, why is it that every time I have mentioned God I have referred to him with the masculine pronoun? Because this is the way that God has chosen to reveal Himself, speak of Himself, describe Himself. Now there are almost 20 instances where God describes Himself as a female – He births the nations, He is like a hen who put them under her wing. But the bible never calls God "she."

It is not grammatical accident that in John 16:13-14, where Jesus tells the disciples that the Spirit will come and guide them, that the word Spirit is a neuter noun – yet

John does not match it with a neuter pronoun "it." Instead, he breaks a grammatical rule and uses the demonstrative masculine pronoun "He."

In the same way that God is never referred to as "she," neither is the Holy Spirit ever referred to as "she," never is the Son referred to as "she." So, based on the Scripture, while transcending gender, God has clearly and emphatically chosen to reveal Himself in masculine terms, and He has chosen that for a reason. And I assure you, it in no way diminishes or cast a negative light on femininity. (that's for another time)

4. Are all the gifts of the Spirit operating today?

What are Spiritual gifts? Simply put, *a Spiritual gift is divinely bestowed ability given by God to every Christian that enables them to serve and build up the body of Christ.*

If you are a Christian, you have a Spiritual gift. There are three main passages where the gifts of the Spirit are described: Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4. We find at least 20 distinct gifts in these lists, with some overlap, and scholars are in agreement that even these lists are incomplete. There are probably gifts not listed.

When people ask, "are all the gifts operating today" the question generally is focused on the gifts of "healing and miracles."

There are two camps. Cessationist's and Continuationist's. As the names imply Cessationist's believe certain gifts – healing, miracles – ceased after the apostles died. Continuationist's believe all the gifts continue to be fully active today.

What I don't want to do is improperly represent either view. Understand that Cessationist's do not believe God can no longer do miracles or heal. The issue is whether the "gift" is operative in an individual.

2 points to make.

1. Redemptive History – understand that healing and miracles ebb and flow in the story of the bible. Two obvious times of miraculous in the OT – Moses as he leads Israel out of slavery in Egypt and Elijah and Elisha during the divided kingdom. In the NT, the times of Jesus and the apostles.
2. The intensity of miraculous events seems to congregate around times in redemptive history when God was breaking into time in order to establish the validity of His message and His messengers.

We affirm with deep biblical confidence and conviction God's sovereign power to do miracles, to heal, to break the laws of physics and the physical world. And we affirm asking God to do the miraculous and believe He still does.

We do not have the same biblical confidence and conviction that the gifts of healing and miracles reside in individuals today like they did in the apostles.

5. How do we know when we are being "led by the Spirit?"

This is a great question to end on. How do I know it is the Spirit that is leading me, or is it just my own desire? How do I know if that "voice" I sense that I hear is the Spirit?

Let me say first of all that I do believe God still speaks today. When I say that, please know that I don't mean He has things to say that we need to add into the bible. No, the canon of Scripture is complete.

What I am saying is that we are in a relationship with God, I know of no relationship that survives nor thrives without communication – two-way communication. And I don't believe God's only communication to His children is what He has said in the Bible.

God is intimately acquainted with your ways...He knows more about you, what you need, where you are, what you are going through...than you do.

He gives thoughts to your mind, He plants desires in your heart. The degree to which you are more and more familiar with His voice as revealed in Scripture, the more confident you can be that the voice you hear is His. I can't fully explain this...and I don't think the early disciples could explain it...but God, by the Spirit led them in decisions they made, the Spirit prevented Paul from going to Macedonia. How? I'm not sure.

I do believe there are some guardrails that the Scripture gives us. And if these guardrails are up in your own spiritual journey, my encouragement to you is to live the Christian life like you are on the "autobahn" in Germany (no speed limit) rather than the interstate in the U.S.

1. Is the decision and direction in line with the Scripture?
2. Is the decision and direction affirmed by your community of faith?
3. Does the decision and direction glorify God?
4. Does the decision and direction express the fruit of the Spirit?

Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control

III. Conclusion

Full Circle...

So What?!

No one asked this question, but I've been thinking about it a lot. Rob and I, the elders, we want nothing more for us over these next twenty years than for us be a people – "filled with the Spirit."

And as I've pondered what that would look like, ways that would be expressed in how we live, how we gather to worship, how we go into our community and world...I've tried to get it boiled down to just a few distinguishing marks. I don't know them all, but I am absolutely convinced of one.

If we are indeed a Spirit filled people, what will that look like? We will be a people of prayer. This is the most tangible and concrete expression of being filled with the Spirit. For to be Spirit filled is to be dependent. And to pray is to recognize our dependence, and, our confidence in God's faithfulness.

And that's how we will end our morning. Praying specifically for a very special group of young men and women...

"Come, O Creator Spirit blest,
And in our hearts take up thy rest;
Spirit of grace, with heavenly aid
Come to the souls whom thou hast made.

Thou art the Comforter, we cry,
Sent to the earth from God Most High,
Fountain of life and Fire of love,
And our anointing from above.

Make our dull minds with rapture glow,
Let human hearts with love o'erflow;
And, when our feeble flesh would fail,
May thine immortal strength prevail.

Show us the Father, Holy One,
Help us to know the Eternal Son;
Spirit Divine, for evermore
Thee will we trust and Thee adore."

(Latin hymn of the 10th century)

