

To Be Continued...

The Holy Spirit & His Gifts

First Corinthians 12:12-14

Ad agencies seem to understand that people like things either one way or the other. Remember the long-running Miller Lite Beer commercials? Celebrities and sports figures would argue as to whether they thought it was good because it was "less filling," or because it "tastes great."

Another way of saying people like things either one way or the other is to say that we are prone to go to extremes. No where is this more prevalent than among Christians, who cannot seem to abide any amount of disagreement even over nonessential points of doctrine.

Issues surrounding the Holy Spirit and His gifts are fraught with either/or arguments. Tonight we're going to see one of those areas where we tend to go to extremes and I'm going to suggest that both extremes are, well, extreme.

The issue I'm talking about is the baptism with the Holy Spirit.

In verse thirteen Paul says, "we were all **baptized** into one body." We'll see what he meant, and at first it will seem contrary to charismatics and to Pentecostal theology; but this one verse is not the whole story.

Let's get into it.

1Co 12:12 For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.

Paul draws upon the human body as an illustration for the church. You have one body, but it is made up of many different "members," or parts, controlled by your head.

When Paul says, "so also is Christ," he means the church of which Christ is the head. The different members of a congregation, with their diversity of gifts, form a united body, the body of Christ.

It's a very simple illustration, is it not? Now think of this illustration with regard to the situation in Corinth. As we've said, and as we will see in chapter fourteen, the Corinthians seemed to believe that every Christian could have the gift of speaking in tongues, and they insisted that everyone speak in tongues simultaneously during their church services.

That would make no sense from the standpoint of a human body. As Paul will say later, our body isn't just one giant member. Isn't there an allergy commercial where the person suffering from hay fever starts off as one giant nose?

If you were going to make a commercial for the church in Corinth, you'd have to depict them as a room full of giant tongues.

This illustration was intended to get them thinking.

1Co 12:13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body - whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free - and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.

Before we tackle the issue of Pentecostal Spirit baptism, let's complete Paul's thoughts about the diversity of the one body of Christ.

The body of Christ - the church - is "one" because we have all received the Holy Spirit. The things that distinguish us in the greater culture - like ethnicity and social status - are eliminated in the church because of our common experience of the Holy Spirit.

It doesn't mean those distinctions don't matter, or cannot be celebrated. It means that they have no significance in the church. We are all one in Christ and on equal, spiritual footing before The Lord.

"All have been made to drink into one Spirit" is emphasizing the Spirit indwelling you as a believer. Just as you ingest water, and it is then inside your body, so you receive the Holy Spirit and He comes to indwell each of us personally, and all of us corporately, as Christ's spiritual body on the earth.

1Co 12:14 For in fact the body is not one member but many.

Again, please note, Paul was stressing the diversity of the "many" members who make up the one body.

A thoughtful person, listening to Paul's letter, would start to conclude on their own that the practice of emphasizing tongues over other gifts was *not* what Jesus had in mind for the many members of His one body.

They ought rather to be encouraging a diversity of gifts in order to minister to one another and glorify The Lord.

In the ongoing debate about the Holy Spirit and His gifts, the phrase in verse thirteen, "for by one Spirit we were all **baptized** into one body," is often one of those extremes of either/or teaching.

It has become a key text, maybe the key text, that cessationists (and other non-Pentecostals) use to try to prove that since you are baptized by the Spirit at your conversion, there is no further experience with Him that could properly and biblically be called "the baptism with the Holy Spirit."

One popular author writes,

It is unfortunate that the term "baptism of the Spirit" has been divorced from its original New Testament meaning. The baptism of the Spirit occurs at conversion when the Spirit enters the believing sinner, gives him new life, and makes his body the temple of God. All believers have experienced this once-for-all baptism. Nowhere does the Scripture command us to seek this baptism, because we have already experienced it and it need not be repeated.

For their part, Pentecostals have long argued that not only **is** there such a further experience of the baptism with the Holy Spirit - sometimes called the second blessing - but that speaking in tongues is, in fact, the evidence that you have received it.

I'm saying that both of those arguments are extreme, either/or arguments.

First, let's deal with what Paul meant in context.

Let me quickly say that none of this has anything to do with water baptism. He says, "you are baptized by the Spirit," and you, "drink into one Spirit." There is nothing here about water baptism, or about receiving the Spirit through, or because of, water baptism.

He **was** most definitely describing the common experience of *every* genuine believer at the moment of conversion. I must honestly admit that Paul was *not* referring to what Pentecostals commonly call the baptism with the Holy Spirit. He was *not* talking about an experience with the Holy Spirit that was separate from conversion.

His whole point in these verses, or we would say in the context, is that the body of Christ is "one" **precisely because every person who gets saved receives the Holy Spirit indwelling them.**

However - and this is a huge "however" - **that does not mean conversion is the final experience a believer can or should have with the Holy Spirit.** That would be saying too much, going beyond what Paul said here, and beyond what he says elsewhere.

In his writings, Paul seems to think of the Christian life as being very dynamic, and by that I mean full of the Holy Spirit's power, from conversion to completion.

For example in Galatians 3:5, Paul told the believers that God had given them the Spirit *and* that He worked miracles among them. It's in a section where he was telling them to continue in the Spirit, rather than try to live the Christian life by self-effort.

We learn from his larger exchange with the Galatians that Paul thought that when you received the Spirit at conversion, you would also receive His empowering, and that it would manifest itself in some dynamic way.

That this was Paul's belief is further proven by his encounter with certain disciples of John in the Book of Acts.

Act 19:1 And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples

Act 19:2 he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" So they said to him, "We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit."

Act 19:3 And he said to them, "Into what then were you baptized?" So they said, "Into John's baptism."

Act 19:4 Then Paul said, "John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus."

Act 19:5 When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Act 19:6 And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied.

Act 19:7 Now the men were about twelve in all.

There's a lot going on with these guys, but the one point I'm making is that Paul recognized they had not received the dynamic power of the Holy Spirit. Either they were not yet saved; or they were saved and needed to understand the dynamic of the Spirit.

Notice, too, Paul certainly thought they were saved when he baptized them in water. We would say that they were baptized in the Spirit, then baptized in water.

But subsequent to both of those baptisms, Paul laid his hands on them and *then* "the Holy Spirit came upon them," and there was a manifestation of dynamic power.

Paul thought there absolutely would be a dynamic power in your life. And he went on to teach that your experience with the Holy Spirit was not a one-time thing, but that since He is necessary for living-out the Christian life, that there would be further, ongoing experiences and appropriations of His empowering.

You might say that Paul's theology of the Holy Spirit was that what happens, or ought to happen, at conversion needs renewing throughout your Christian life. In many places, e.g., Ephesians 5:18, he talked about a present tense, ongoing relationship with the Holy Spirit.

Think about it for a minute. It's the first century. People were getting saved, and there was a manifestation of the dynamic power of the Holy Spirit. So much so that Paul could say to the Galatians matter-of-factly, God gave you His Spirit and did miracles among you.

So much so that he immediately recognized something lacking in the twelve disciples of John the Baptist.

As time transpired, Paul had to warn the Galatians of the danger that having begun in the Spirit, Christians would try to perfect their walk by rules and regulations, by law, by worldly wisdom, instead of being refreshed and renewed in ongoing appropriations of the Spirit.

What if Christians fail to heed Paul's warnings and, in fact, begin to minimize the dynamic of the Holy Spirit in their lives, and in their churches? I think it was Alan Redpath who I first heard say, "If the Holy Spirit were to be removed from most churches, 95% of their activities would continue unhindered."

I want to be fair. The conservatives, the cessationists, **do** talk about the need to go on being filled with the Holy Spirit. But they simultaneously deny certain gifts and almost all supernatural manifestations of the Spirit.

On a practical level, they downplay any show of the Holy Spirit's supernatural power, even at the time of conversion, emphasizing that conversion is mostly intellectual and that you 'get' everything your going to get except the spiritual maturity that comes from the Holy Spirit helping you understand more about the Bible.

It can end up being a great deal like having begun in the Spirit while trying to be perfected in the flesh.

If such a person, a believer, finally comes to see that they are trying to make themselves perfect in the flesh rather than by the Spirit, they often have what could be described as a "second" experience with the Holy Spirit that can be understandably called a "baptism with the Holy Spirit."

Technically, biblically, you are baptized with the Spirit at the moment of your conversion. The experience ought to be dynamic, and it ought to be ongoing and renewable throughout your Christian life.

If it wasn't dynamic at the time of your conversion; if, for example, you're like the disciples of John the Baptist; then you might, in fact, experience something - a second blessing or "baptism" - that **is** dynamic, and then go seeking its renewal.

You could even be like the Galatians who had a dynamic experience, with miracles in their midst, but who were not seeking ongoing renewal but, rather, to be made perfect by their own efforts. Then you, too, would need to again experience the dynamic of the Holy Spirit.

The "Spirit baptism" in this verse is definitely describing the receiving of the Holy Spirit at the moment of conversion. It is the common experience of everyone who gets saved by which they are placed into the body of Christ.

But it ought to be dynamic and powerful and go on being so. If not, then receive by faith a fresh baptism, and then go on living in the Spirit.