

Title: The Baptism of the Spirit

Text: 1 Corinthians 12.12-13

Theme: The benefits of the Spirit

Series: 1 Corinthians #61

Prop Stmt True unity comes from the Spirit who is ours only through Christ.

Read Text:

Kevin and Cameron went into business together. The name of their venture was Extensive Enterprises. A year later these partners went to a State Farm Insurance agent in Farmington, MI and took out a key-man insurance policy on each other in case something happened to the other, the business would be compensated for the loss. This was all part of a plan that Kevin and Cameron had hatched several years ago as they served time together in a Michigan prison. They would start a business, get a policy, then fake the death of the other, get the money, split the windfall and live happily ever after. However, Kevin did more than fake Cameron's death, he carried it out. Cameron's partner, friend, and co-conspirator became his executioner in order to cash in all by himself. In May, Kevin was found guilty of murder.

These partners in crime were not truly partners – were they? You see, true unity has to go deeper than having a common enemy. Threats and danger can bind us together only because at the moment, the threats and dangers are more urgent than the issues that divide us. But once the threats are over and the danger has passed, we are left with the issues that divide.

There are only two ways to experience unity and peace. The first way is for unity and peace to be enforced from the top down. This results in a surface unity and temporary peace. The second way is for unity and peace to come from within. This results in a true unity and a lasting peace because it comes out from a person. But therein lies the problem. In our natural condition we are sinners. We are by nature self-centered, self-worshipping creatures. We are incapable of having true unity because there is no deep unity that comes from within us. We are at war with each other because we are at war with our Creator. When you are at peace with God, then you can learn to be at peace with others. And when you and others are at peace with God, then you can experience genuine unity and peace. In fact, when you and others are truly at peace with God, then it will be seen in your unity and peace with each other.

That is the point of 1 Corinthians. That is huge point of 1 Corinthians 12-14. The gifts of the Spirit were given to each believer to help the believers experience this deep and abiding unity as each person contributed to the health of the body. Instead, the people at the church in Corinth were dividing themselves up into different groups based on who was experiencing which gifts and were there assigning different value to each group which was resulting in hurtful and wicked divisions. The same sort of thinking surfaced regarding the Lord's Table back in chapter 11. Observing the Lord's Supper is supposed to be a sacred expression of unity, but had for them become a terrible time of disunity.

And here with the issue of spiritual gifts we see it again. The very thing that was designed by Christ to be an expression of true unity became the occasion for war within the church. Look at what is going on here in chapter 12. While Paul is listing some of the gifts that were in operation in the church he is hammering the fact that these gifts come from the same Spirit for the same purpose. In fact, before he goes on with dealing with the gifts themselves, he stops and lays out the theology of the Spirit's relationship to the church, and then applies that in a very clear way beginning in v.14, before he goes back to dealing with the gifts at the end of the chapter.

Verse 13 is the 7th and final time in the NT that the baptism of the Spirit is mentioned. The doctrine of the baptism of the Spirit has been the focus of a tremendous amount of confusion and debate. Much of the confusion and wrong teaching regarding this topic is, ironically, an illustration of the very problem that Paul is addressing.

1. **What is Baptism?**

A. **General Sense** – Initiation

We use this word to speak of a person's initial experience. A baptism of fire is an intense introduction into something.

B. **NT Sense** - Ordinance that represents initiation into Christ and His church

NT baptism is water baptism. It is being immersed into water after you have understood, accepted and made a profession of faith alone in Christ alone as the only One who could and did pay the penalty for your sin.

C. **Spirit Baptism?**

Well, the text here in v.13 gives us some clues. This baptism is something that happens to every single believer. It crosses ethnic lines. It crosses national lines. It crosses educational lines. It crosses cultural and social lines. So, whatever it is, it is something that every believer has in common. That is why, the baptism of the Spirit takes place at the moment a person comes to faith in Christ. This brings us to the next question.

2. **What does Spirit baptism do?**

The baptism of the Spirit initiates you into the body of Christ. This happens at the moment you become a follower of Christ. You are placed into the family. You become part of the stuff. If you are a genuine believer, the Spirit has connected you to the family of Christ in a way that you will never get away from it. You are now joined into a spiritual unity with other believers that transcends all other relationships. Your relationship to the church family is more important than all other relationships. This is where people can get a little wiggled out. Wait a minute? Is my relationship to the church more important than my relationship to my family? Think about it, if your family

are believers, then your relationship with the church involves your relationship to your family.

3. **What are the implications of this?**

A. We are in a relationship with Christ and His Church.

This relationship is more important than ethnicity, nationality, education or cultural and social distinctives.

Ravi Zacharias tells the story that during the bitter days of the Cold War when Eastern Europe was closed to missionaries a Christian from the US “happened to be visiting Romania...As he trudged slowly through a rather busy but beleaguered section of town, bundled up against the biting cold, he was aware of the somber, grim faces of the people hurriedly brushing past him. Suddenly, as if in a different world, a man walked by, his ragged, coarse coat wrapped tightly around him, a woolen scarf thrown around his neck, and a warm cap pulled tightly over his scalp, whistling a melody to his heart’s content. The veteran Christian worker was caught completely by surprise, for the melody was that of a grand, but not too common Christian hymn...Shocked to hear it on a busy Romanian street, he picked up his pace to match strides with the cheerful whistler. He was aware that he might be under observation, so, not wanting to put the Romanian at risk, he cautiously walked alongside of him and softly whistled the tune with him.

The Romanian stopped, looked and excitedly spouted forth a barrage of words in his own tongue, his face beaming. Immediately he knew that his words meant nothing to this stranger, separated as they were by the barrier of language. As if by instinct, simultaneously the both pointed to the heavens, laid their hands on their chests, clasped one another in an emotional embrace. Not a word was spoken, but two worlds were joined as they bade each other good-bye and went their separate ways, still whistling the same tune. In one memorable moment, eternity’s resources knit together two [lives] bridging two worlds, because of identical life-transforming experiences”¹ brought about by the one and the same Spirit of God.

B. Christianity must be seen in the church in a relational way. (not a ritual way)

One day a man stopped by the church and wanted to know if I could baptize him after work on Tuesday. I was a little taken back, so I said, “You mean you want to come in here all by yourself and get wet?” That’s what he wanted. If you just want to get wet, just drive to Lake St. Clair, jump in, get out and drive home. But, don’t call it baptism. He had this private view of Christianity, just between him and God. He did not want a church and relationships, he wanted a ritual so he could feel better about himself. His version of Christianity was not Christianity, but mutilation. The reason we don’t do private baptisms is the same reason why we don’t offer drive through communion.

¹ Ravi Zacharias, Deliver Us From Evil, Word Publishing, 1996, p. 103-104.

Think about it. We could make some serious money that way – huh? Too busy for church this week? That’s okay, get drive-thru communion. This week’s special \$4.99 for a cup and wafer and a hymn while you wait. Now, most of you sitting in here this morning would say – that’s crazy! Is it? Is it all that different from the way that some approach church? How long is it? Will it appease my conscience without asking too much from me? Can I get home before the game, or still make it to the cider mill? What is lost on a drive-thru church is relationships. But, if you replace relationships with rituals then you no longer have church.

We turn so many things that were intended to be relational functions into ritualistic duties. The way that some of you think about Christianity is very ritualistic. You think that showing up in church is the whole duty of man. It ain’t the showing up, it is the growing up. Making an appearance in church is not the heart of Christianity. But here is the system that some people live with.

If I am a Christian I will:

- go to church on Sunday morning
- give some money in the offering
- not do really, really bad things through the week

If I am a better Christian I will:

- go to church on Sunday morning
- go to church on Sunday night
- give some money
- and not do really bad things and not do bad things that aren’t quite as bad as the really, really bad things

If I am a really good Christian I will:

- go to church on Sunday morning, Sunday night, Wednesday night
- give more money
- tell someone that I go to church
- and do some good things

My point is, Christianity is so much more than attending more services. Please do not reduce Christianity to clocking in to a church service. You need the corporate gathering of the believers for worship. You need to be with God’s people, but not because you are fulfilling a duty, but because that is when your family is gathering together and you are needed to minister to them and you need them to minister to you. You need other believers for fellowship. You need other believers for encouragement, accountability, instruction and prayer. You need to be part of a body of believers in order to be part of a corporate, public testimony of the gospel. The reason why Paul uses the imagery of a body here in 1 Cor. 12 and in Ephesians 1 is because the body of Christ emphasizes the fact, that the church is ground zero for the activity of Christ right now. When Christ was physically on earth, the action was happening wherever He was, so now, the action is happening in the church, not as a building but as a body. “The image of the body of Christ also speaks of the interconnectedness between all the persons who make up the

church. Christian faith is not to be defined merely in terms of individual relationship to the Lord. There is no such thing as an isolated, solitary Christian life.”²

4. So, what is all the controversy about?

I mentioned that the baptism of the Spirit is mentioned 7x in the NT. Let’s look at them and piece this together.

Matthew 3.11; Mark 1.8; Luke 3.16; John 1.33

All four gospel accounts record the statement by the John the Baptist. There is someone coming who is greater than me. I am baptizing with water, but He is going to baptize with the Holy Spirit.

Acts 1.5 (Jesus is speaking) “For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” What happened? On the day of Pentecost, the Spirit of God came upon these disciples and He did a new thing. He initiated them into the newly formed body of Christ, called the church. The day of Pentecost was the birthday of the church. The sign of this initiation of these disciples into the church was for them the sound of a violent wind that seemed to fill the house in which these believers were sitting. Then little tongues of flame rested on each head and they began to speak in other languages. The sound of the wind was heard by others, who gathered together. When they went outside to speak with the gathering crowd, nothing more is said about the fire, nor the wind, but speaking in other languages continued for at least part of that day. Beyond that, we do not know. But notice this. The disciples who were in the house when the Spirit came upon them, were already believers prior to this event. There was a gap of time between their belief and this baptism of the Spirit. That was Acts 2.

In Acts 8 a similar event takes place. Philip is preaching in Samaria. Some of the people in that city heard the gospel and believed and were baptized in water. Later on, Peter and John came from Jerusalem to Samaria, laid their hands on these new believers and prayed that they might receive the Holy Spirit. When Peter and John did that, these believers received the Holy Spirit. Did they speak in tongues? The text does not say. It simply says that “they received the Holy Spirit.” (v.17) But notice again, there was a gap of time between their belief and the baptism of the Spirit.

In Acts 10 a similar event takes place. Only this time, Peter is preaching to a group of people in a house in the city of Caesarea. While Peter was preaching the gospel, “the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message.” (v.44) The Jewish believers who were with Peter were blown away because these people who were receiving the Holy Spirit were Gentiles. There was no doubt that they had received the Spirit because they were speaking in tongues. In the next chapter, when Peter is retelling this event, he said (v.16) that he “remembered what the Lord had said: ‘John baptized with water, but you will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’” What these Gentile believers experienced was the baptism

² Millard Erickson, Christian Theology, Baker Book House, 1985, p. 1036-1037

of the Spirit. But, in this case, there was no gap of time between their belief and the baptism of the Spirit. It was simultaneous.

In Acts 19 a similar event takes place in Ephesus. There were disciples there, who had been baptized in water with what they called John's baptism. They were believers in the message that John the Baptist was preaching. They were believers in what had been revealed to them, but they were in need of the rest of the story. Paul told them the rest of the story and they believed it and Paul laid his hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit and the evidence of that was seen in the fact that they spoke in tongues and prophesied. So, in a sense there was a gap between faith and baptism, but really, their faith in the full revelation of the gospel and their baptism by the Spirit was also simultaneous.

If you take Acts 2 and Acts 8 as your model for the Christian life, then you have this:

Salvation....pray, pray, desire, desire... BAM! BOTS - Tongues, power, healing, etc.

Now, let me play this out for a minute. D.L. Moody was a preacher of the gospel who after his conversion experience had a spiritual experience after which time, he saw many people come to faith in Christ under his preaching. He and others called it the baptism of the Spirit. What he did was, he simply looked to the Bible for help in identifying what he had experienced. I applaud that. We ought to look to the Scriptures for help and discernment. He saw that after the Spirit came upon Peter, that Peter preached with power and many people were saved. Moody assumed that this had happened to him too.

The next step is to say, that this is something that every preacher and every Christian needs to experience. But, hold the phone! Moody was used greatly by God. But Moody mislabeled his experience. I do not doubt his experience. The Spirit of God used this man in a very profound way. But, this was not the baptism of the Spirit. Here's why.

Jesus told the disciples to wait until they received power, then they were going to be witnesses for Him in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the rest of the world. That is exactly what took place. Acts 2 was the birthday for the church. The Baptism of the Spirit on that day initiated all of the disciples and empowered and equipped them with gifts for ministry – that very day. The gospel went from Jerusalem and Judea into Samaria. That is Acts 8. Only this time, Philip was preaching, not an apostle. And, Philip was preaching to Samaritans. Whoa! When the apostles showed up, it was made very, very obvious that Samaritans were welcome with the Jews in the body of Christ, because Jews did not start the church – God did. Then in Acts 10, Peter was doing the preaching to full blooded Gentiles. In fact Peter was in the house of a Roman centurion. When these people believed they experienced the baptism of the Spirit. The church was starting to spread now to the rest of the world. That is what the rest of the book of Acts is about. In Acts 2 and 8, there was a gap of time between belief and baptism of the Spirit in order for everyone to see that this was of God. There was no denying that the gospel and therefore the church was and is for people of every tribe, language and nation. Once

that was initially made clear there was no longer a gap between belief and the baptism of the Spirit.

But today, some have taught that there is an experience that is available to every believer after the moment of conversion. This second work of grace or this infusion of power, or this baptism of the Spirit is the experience that separates the spiritual ones from the mediocre ones. That is patently false. There was an original reason for the gap between belief and the baptism of the Spirit that no longer exists and by Acts 10 no longer existed. The example of Acts 19 is in reality further evidence of this. That is why in 1 Cor. 12 Paul is arguing against the view of the spiritual elites that they are above and separated from the mediocre believers because they speak in tongues, or they prophesy, or whatever. Paul's argument against this elitist view is made in verse 12-13 by appealing to the Baptism of the Spirit as the event that we ALL share in common. It does not matter what your gift is, any more than it matters what your race is, or what your income level is, or what your educational level is. If you have come to faith in Christ, you were placed into His family of believers called the church. You belong here. You need the church, the church needs you. We all have to live like that – we really do. You see, true unity can only come within, when the Spirit is within. And He is only within, when you come to faith in Christ. Thinking and living out that unity is what the next section is all about.