

THE PERSON AND WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (continued)

The unity of the Spirit is not automatically self-sustaining. Today we will consider one common misunderstanding that exists between charismatics and non-charismatics. It may well be that the greatest barrier yet to be overcome in the Body of Christ is *wrong attitudes and confused thinking regarding the Baptism in the Holy Spirit*. Sometimes charismatics *deserve* the criticism they receive. Other times misunderstandings can be generated by those who falsely represent what the Scriptures actually teach about the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Perhaps this can be illustrated in the following quote by *John MacArthur*:

"Those holding the charismatic viewpoint are saying in effect that unless you have had 'the experience', which they call the baptism of the Spirit with tongues, you have not reached the place where you can function the way God really wants you to function. You are missing something. You are eight cylinders firing on four, or possible six at the most. You are just not quite there" ("The Charismatics" - page 182).

In fairness, there may be some charismatics who would say a hearty amen to that quote. *I hope not very many, and I hope none at all in this church!* A mature pentecostal response to MacArthur's quote should bring to the foreground several needed truths:

- 1) **THE EXPLANATION OF PETER AFTER PENTECOST - Acts 2:17-21** - "And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; [18] even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy. [19] And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke; [20] the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day. [21] And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

The *manifestations* Peter quotes from Joel are clearly beyond the sweep of the conversion experience received by faith. But in addition to affirming the *ongoing availability* of the outpouring of the Spirit right up to the Second Coming and the end of the age (note the unprecedented signs in 2:19-21), Peter also labors to prove *the baptism in the Spirit is not an earned spiritual benefit* (2:17-18). Hence, it is not reserved for the rich, or the Godly, or the men, or the old, or the leaders. God pours out His Spirit out of His great love and grace, though, as Jesus made clear, this grace does not generally exclude the necessity of *asking and seeking for the promise of the Father* (see Luke 11:9-13). The asking fosters humility. Only the *needy* feel compelled to ask. Jesus called the baptism with the Holy Spirit the *"promise of the Father"* to distinguish it from a *personal accomplishment*. This leaves no room for arrogance or pride.

- 2) **JESUS COMMANDED THE FIRST DISCIPLES TO WAIT FOR THE "PROMISE OF THE FATHER" - THE BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT - Acts 1:4-5** - "And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me; [5] for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

These men had already been with Jesus at length. They had preached. They had performed mighty miracles. They had been fishers of men and recruited followers of Jesus. We may not like the fact that Jesus so clearly said *they needed to be baptized in the Spirit*, but He said it none the less. It is simply a matter of taking Scripture seriously and allowing it to speak for itself. *MacArthur's quote is wrong. Pentecostals* are not the ones saying people need the infilling of the Spirit. *Jesus did*. And none of us, as His followers, has the option of taking His instruction piecemeal.

- 3) **SCRIPTURE NEVER PICTURES SPIRIT BAPTISM AS A POINT OF ARRIVAL, BUT AS A POINT OF EMPTINESS, AWARENESS OF NEED, ENTRY, AND DEPARTURE** - Pentecostals (at least intelligent ones) simply do not believe that they have attained *super spiritual status*. That is why Jesus told them to wait for their baptism *right at the beginning of their ministry after His departure*. The *timing* of their receiving would help underscore they still needed a life time of growth and learning in the maturing process of Christian living.

- 4) **SPIRIT BAPTISM IS NEEDED FOR "BUILDING OURSELVES UP" - Jude 20** - "But you, beloved, build yourselves up in your most holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit...." Those are Paul's unexplained words to Jude. What Paul *means* by *"praying in the Holy Spirit"* is made clear by his words in **1 Corinthians 14:14-15** - "For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful. [15] What am I to do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also; I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing with my mind also." He is talking about praying in tongues. We will look at this subject later. The important point for now is simply this - *people who feel they've arrived don't worry about being built up*. This is the concern of people who know just how terribly weak and dependant they truly are.

- 5) **SCRIPTURE TEACHES THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IS NOT A GUARANTEE TO SPIRITUALITY, NOR A SHORT-CUT TO IT - 1 Corinthians 3:1-2** - "But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. [2] I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready...." Being baptized in the Holy Spirit does not *improve one's status as a Christian*. Pentecostals don't believe that they have been "zapped" or "bumped" into a higher holiness bracket. These stern words of Paul were delivered to *Spirit-filled believers*. Paul still had to tell them to grow up spiritually. There are benefits to being filled with the Spirit. But one should not claim what the Scriptures do not offer. The baptism in the Spirit is never presented as a cure-all to every spiritual problem.

- 6) **THE NEW TESTAMENT DOES NOT FOSTER NOR ENCOURAGE THE COMPARISON OF CHARISMATIC WITH NON-CHARISMATIC CHRISTIANS** - Let's set the record straight in this particular area. It is not the Spirit's infilling that causes disunity in the Body of Christ. Nor is it any form of pentecostal doctrine. Rather, it is those who insist on *comparing* spirit-filled and non spirit-filled Christians. Statements like MacArthur's are terribly damaging to Christ's Church. Instead of a heart that rejoices to constantly say, *"There's always more for me and more for you. Let's humbly desire all that God has promised in His Word,"* some insist on setting up separate camps. Some insist on talking about the Baptism in the Spirit in ways that tear down the unity of Christ's Church - *"You're saying that I lack something, that I'm not whole, that you're better than I am!"*

This is simply not true, of course. It is spiritual insanity to compare charismatic and non-charismatic Christians. The Father loves each and every one. I'm not grading myself against Baptists, Lutherans, or Presbyterians. We should *all* strive to hear *all* that the Bible says and pursue *all* that God promises to *all* believers today. We will be looking at the questions and issues surrounding the Baptism in the Holy Spirit in coming lessons. Today, we want to make certain that, whatever *other* small attitudes there may be circulating regarding this subject, we, at

least, *won't be contributing to the fog and strife.*