

decades, you will not find that they want to change places with us in the West and acquire our material benefits. They have been refined by their hardships to a quality of spirituality of which we know little, but which must bring them close to the suffering Saviour's heart.

These three results often come in the wake of opposition. There is good reason, then, to 'Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything' (James 1:2),

We are called to be disciples. And for us, as for our Master, it will mean a mixture of joy and pain, endurance and delight. It cannot possibly be easy. Jesus is looking for disciples who can face and overcome hard times from whatever source they come. There is a famous saying of Jim Elliott who was martyred as a missionary to the Auca Indians in 1956. He said, as he reflected on the cost as well as on the glory of the Christian life, 'He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.'

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What of the Holy Spirit?

The significance of the Holy Spirit

Let us begin at the beginning. And in the very beginning, the Spirit of God brooded over the face of the emerging cosmos (Genesis 1:2). That same Spirit progressively began to make himself known to man. The Hebrews had a perfectly good word for the human spirit, *nephesh*, but they did not use that word for God's Holy Spirit. Instead they used a very strong word, *ruach*. It denotes the breath, the wind, the Spirit of God.

Centuries before Christ, God began to reveal himself by his Spirit to the prophets. There is a strong link in the Old Testament between the word of the Lord and the Spirit of the Lord (e.g. 2 Samuel 23:2). The Spirit is not only God's creative power, but his self-disclosing word, which breaks in on particular people in Old Testament times, particularly on prophets, on kings, and on special men anointed for a particular mission. Think of the Spirit of the Lord coming upon Samson, for example, and making him unbelievably strong; or on Bezaleel, and making him a marvellous craftsman; or on a king like Saul; or a prophet like Samuel.

But if you look carefully at the Old Testament teaching on the Spirit you will find three characteristics. The first is that the Spirit of

the Lord was limited to certain people. The king might have the Spirit, but his maidservant would not. The great prophet might have the Spirit, but not an ordinary person like you and me.

The second is that in Old Testament days the Spirit of the Lord was fitful in his manifestation. He could be withdrawn. He *was* withdrawn from Samson and from Saul, when they gave themselves over to disobedience.

The third is that in the Old Testament the Holy Spirit was disclosed as sub-personal power. There was little to suggest that this power was personal.

Those were three disadvantages to the Spirit in the Old Testament: he was restricted to special people, he was fitful, and he was perceived as sub-personal. And by the end of the Old Testament period there was an even greater disadvantage. He was seen as past history. After the last of the prophets, the Holy Spirit was not in evidence in Israel. The Temple had been rebuilt, but there was no *shekinah* glory residing in it, as there had been in the first Temple of Solomon. Similarly, the Spirit of God appeared to have retired from human affairs, and you had to make do with the *bath qol*, the 'daughter of the voice', a second-hand substitute for the Spirit of God.

However, the prophets, notably Joel, Ezekiel and Jeremiah, were clear that in the end-time the Spirit of the Lord would come again, and would be widely disseminated. In Jesus Christ it happened. And Luke is at pains to bring this out. He does so in various ways, particularly by mentioning the Holy Spirit a great deal. It is very noticeable in the beginning of his Gospel: the Spirit in Simeon, in Anna, in Mary and Elizabeth, surrounds the coming of Jesus, because Jesus is the man 'full of the Spirit' (Luke 4:1). That Spirit who surrounded his birth and early days was concentrated upon him at his baptism. John picks up the image from Isaiah 11:2 about the Spirit resting on the Servant, and makes it plain that this took place precisely at the baptism of Jesus (1:32). There is nothing fitful here: the Spirit made his home in the incarnate Christ. And instead of the second Temple where there was no *shekinah* glory, John maintains that Jesus 'templed' among us, and in him we beheld God's glory (John 1:14). There is an important link between these three concepts: the new temple consisting of Jesus' body, the Spirit of the Lord, and God's glory.]

Thus the Spirit, widely diffused in the Old Testament, was concentrated in the person of Jesus while he was on earth. He was the man full of the Spirit. He was the ultimate king, the ultimate prophet, the ultimate servant of Yahweh – all three roles that had been marked by the Spirit in the Old Covenant. All were concentrated in Jesus – that is why we hear so little of the Spirit while Jesus was on earth.

What, then, happened at Pentecost? Simply this. The three restrictions of Old Testament days were wonderfully removed. The Spirit became available to one and all. He was now recognized as personal; he was not naked power, but marked with the lineaments of Jesus of Nazareth (Acts 16:7). And he would never be withdrawn: he would remain with God's people both individually and corporately until the end of the age (15:8).

That is not only a wonderful fulfilment of Old Testament indications. It is also an important corrective to some current misconceptions about the Spirit. For it reminds us that the Spirit is always the Spirit of Jesus. He is the touchstone of what can properly be understood of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus is the touchstone of the Spirit in *religion*. The task of the Spirit is to bear witness to Jesus. We should not regard anything as the teaching of the Spirit if it does not relate credibly to the life and teaching of Jesus, the man full of the Spirit.

Jesus is the touchstone of the Spirit in *doctrine*. You will often find doctrines ascribed to the Spirit that by no stretch of the imagination could hold good of Jesus. The Mormons are a case in point. They go with quite a lot of Christian teaching, though Jesus sometimes gets short shrift; but they claim that a further revelation by the Spirit was made on gold tablets to Joseph Smith many centuries later. That cannot match up with the touchstone of Jesus. It is important, not least in these days when interest in the Spirit is high, never to believe anything that is claimed for the Spirit that cannot equally be claimed for Jesus. The Holy Spirit does not 'speak on his own', Jesus said. He glorifies Jesus (John 15:26; 16:13f).

Furthermore, Jesus must be the touchstone of the Spirit in *behaviour*. We are prohibited, as Christians, from regarding any form of behaviour as normative that cannot be demonstrated as part of the lifestyle of Jesus.

We could take all this much further. I have tried to do so in my book *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*. The Spirit assured Jesus of his Sonship, commissioned him for servanthood, and equipped him for witness. All those strands are evident in his baptism as recorded both in Matthew and Luke. And when you have made due allowance for the fact that we are not Christ, those same three roles await the Christians. The Spirit assures us of sonship: he enables us to cry 'Abba, Father' (Galatians 4:6). The Spirit commissions us for costly servanthood. The Spirit gives us power for witness, just as he did to Jesus. All this began with Jesus, and spread to his followers. And Luke picks that up. [Acts 4:14 stresses that the ministry of Jesus was exercised in the power of the Spirit, while Acts 1:2,5,8] indicate that this is precisely the calling of the church. The Gospel of Luke shows what God began to do through his servant and anointed witness, Jesus, equipped with the power of the Holy Spirit. The Acts shows what God continued to do through his servants, his anointed witnesses equipped with the power of that same Spirit. Such is the major significance of God's Holy Spirit.

The birthday of the church

Why Pentecost?

At one level the church began with Abraham. He was the father of the faithful. At another, it began with Jesus, who called the first disciples to come, follow him. But it is no less true to see the birthday of the church as the day of Pentecost, when God's Spirit fell on the disciples to equip them for their world mission.

But why should the Spirit have fallen on that particular day? Here are five possible reasons.

First, Pentecost was the first great feast of the Jews after Passover. Jesus had died at Passover time. More than a million Jews would converge on Jerusalem for the great feasts. If, in the strategy of God, a new thing needed to be, the feasts were the time to do it. Leviticus 13:15 tells us that Pentecost is fifty days after Passover. It was one of the two Jewish harvest festivals a year. Therefore it was a highly appropriate day to mark the first 'harvest' of people into the kingdom

of God. Perhaps this is part of what Jesus had in mind when, in John 4:35, after bringing the Samaritan woman to faith, Jesus speaks of the harvest waiting for reaping. And now, through his spirit, Jesus brings 3000 people on one day into the family of God. Pentecost is the beginning, the first fruits, of the harvest.

Second, at Pentecost the Jews celebrated the giving of the Law to Moses by God on Mount Sinai. They deduced this from Exodus 19:1. One of the rabbis put it like this: 'The feast of weeks (i.e. Pentecost) is when the Torah was given.' That is very significant. The trouble about the Law is that it was external to us. But Jeremiah had looked forward to the day when it would be interiorized. God would put his law within their hearts (Jeremiah 31:33). How appropriate, then, that the coming of the Spirit should fall on the day when they celebrated the coming of the Torah! Here is no external Law given by Moses, but an internal power and motivation given by God within the heart of the believer. That is something Paul revels in in 2 Corinthians 3:3f.

Third, the giving of the Spirit at Pentecost may have been particularly appropriate because of the ascension theme. Moses had ascended Mount Sinai in order to receive the Torah. Jesus had ascended on high in order to receive and distribute to longing hearts the gift of the Spirit (2:33, cf. Ephesians 4:7f). The ascended Christ had poured out what the participants on the day of Pentecost could see and hear.

There is a fourth reason. The rabbis had an illuminating myth that Moses proclaimed the Torah in the seventy languages that were believed to belong to the entire world, as if to say 'This is God's universal will for mankind.' How fitting, therefore, that on the day when the Spirit is given you find representatives gathered together from all over the known world amongst whom the Jews were dispersed. It is as if God is saying, 'Here is something for everybody.'

Finally, only Jews received the Torah. But the Spirit is for all, as Joel had foretold (see Acts 2:17). What better day, then, for God to send his Spirit than the day when the Jews celebrated the gift of the Torah? This fits in precisely with the missionary purpose of Acts.

There are no certain ways of discerning why God sent his Spirit at Pentecost: it lay within his own purpose and discretion. But these are five reasons why Pentecost might have commended itself as the most appropriate time.

Tongues at Pentecost?

The traditional understanding of the tongues given to the disciples at Pentecost is that they were miraculously enabled to speak in many different languages that they had never learnt. If this is so, and it may be, the gift could mark the first stage in the progressive launching of the new movement. For there are three, possibly four, places in Acts where tongues are mentioned in outreach situations. The first is in Jerusalem. The second is in Caesarea with Cornelius (10:46f). The third is in Ephesus, the centre of Greek culture (19:1ff). The same may well have happened in Samaria: this is hinted but not stated (8:16f). Jews, Samaritans, Godfearers, Greeks: a possible progression. If so, we have a very interesting thing. Tongues are mentioned (or implied) at four critical places, and four only, in the unfolding story of the Acts: when Christianity was launched among the Jews, then in Samaria, then among the adherents on the edge of the synagogue, then among those living in the heart of Greek culture. It would be possible to argue, if you believe that these 'tongues' are human languages, that God equipped the early Christians at those four points with a signal mark of his blessing and his presence. It could be seen as the curse of Babel lifted once and for all. Mankind had tried to reach up to God by building a great *ziggurat* or tower in early Old Testament days. God demolished this instrument of human arrogance, and a babel of voices ensued. The peoples of the earth were unable to cooperate because of the discrete languages of the world; but with the coming of the Spirit in tongues at Pentecost, Babel is reversed. Instead of man trying to reach up to God, God's Spirit comes down to man.

However, there is no hint of tongues being a human language in the incidents involving Cornelius, the Samaritans or the folk at Ephesus. A foreign language was not even necessary: all of them could speak Greek. When Peter 'stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd' at Pentecost (2:14ff) he set out to explain the apparently drunken-sounding utterance of his companions. He would have had no difficulty in making himself understood if he used Greek or Aramaic: they would all have been able to speak Greek, the common language of antiquity, and most of them, being Jews, could speak Aramaic.

It seems to me most probable therefore, that Peter gave his sermon in Greek, and that the tongues-speaking was *glossalalia*: the praising of God

in a language given by the Spirit but not normally understood by the person speaking, unless God adds a further gift, that of interpretation. If so, it is not surprising that people thought them drunk. I recall the first time I heard people praising God in tongues; I felt it was very weird! And if it was indeed *glossalalia* into which the Twelve were plunged on the day of Pentecost, it would not be intended for communicating with the crowd (which Peter would do in Greek) but for expressing a love and gratitude to God beyond the level that ordinary language could carry. There was nothing unique to the early church about this outpouring of *glossalalia*: it happens widely throughout the world church today.

What, then, was the miracle at Pentecost, apart from the wonderful outpouring itself? In all probability it was the gift of interpretation that God gave to the crowd. 'How is it that each of us hears them in his own native tongue? . . . we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!' (2:8,11). It seems to have been a miracle of *hearing*, of interpretation. The Apostles celebrated (in vocabulary they could not understand but which was inspired by the Spirit) the mighty works of God, supremely no doubt the coming, the death and the resurrection of Jesus, along with the glorious power of the Spirit that was being shed upon them, and the crowd were enabled to understand.

The rabbis used to say of the original gift of the Law on Sinai, 'The law was given with a single sound, yet all received it in their own languages' (*Tanchuma* 26c). That is just what, I believe, was happening at Pentecost. The Twelve praised God in tongues, and the multitude understood, each in his own language, what this signified. They knew these strange people were praising God for his mighty works. The giving of the Spirit came to these first Christians as the Law came to Moses; and it has universal significance in the new covenant just as the Law did in the old. The gift of tongues at Pentecost is a mark of the universality of the gospel.

The Spirit: God's strategy

In his lifetime, Jesus had foreseen three things that would happen before the end of the age (Mark 13:9-13). First, he predicts tough times: there will be trials, betrayals and ecological devastation. Second, it will be the time for mission: the gospel will be preached to

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all the nations. And third, it will be the time of the Spirit: he will inspire and carry home the witness given by the Christians. These three strands are interwoven.

In John 15:26-16:2 something very similar emerges. The Spirit will come and bear witness. The disciples too will bear witness: such is the call of the church. And there will be tough days ahead: believers will get thrown out of the synagogue, and even martyred. Hardship, witness, the Spirit—the same three strands are interwoven.

We find the same in Acts 1:6-9: witness-bearing as the primary task of the church, the Spirit as the enabling gift, and (as the story unfolds in the rest of the Acts), constant hard times.

So the time between Jesus' first coming and his return is not empty. It is full of the Holy Spirit and mission. They belong together. And the context in which they happen is one of opposition and hardship. Through the Spirit and mission the kingdom is demonstrated to the world before the return of the King. The Spirit and the church belong together, but it is noteworthy in Acts that the Spirit always takes the lead. The church can only live by evangelizing, and by following the paths that the Spirit indicates. It was not the church leaders who decided on an evangelistic campaign. It was an ex-Pharisee, converted through opposing them, who was the main agent in that outreach under the prompting and the power of the sovereign Spirit of God. Hardship was inevitable; the Acts and Paul's own letters give us a glimpse of the tremendous cost.

Such is the divine strategy. And as we look at the ineffectiveness of many churches today, I wonder if we have not reneged on each of those intertwined strands. We do not expect leading from the Spirit and do not trust it when it happens. We are very reluctant to bear any sort of witness to Jesus. And we are most unwilling to bear any kind of obloquy and hardship, criticism and abuse for the name of Jesus. If we implicitly deny the three power lines God has intertwined, can we be surprised when little progress is made?

Baptism in the Holy Spirit

In chapter 10 we looked in detail at the whole area of Christian initiation, and how the Holy Spirit plays a part in it. We saw that there are

three elements to Christian initiation: baptism, repentance and faith, and the giving of the Spirit. Different Christian traditions have tried to separate out or over-emphasize what Luke insists is a threefold rope that binds us to Christ. But here I want to tackle another controversial subject that has been much to the fore in recent years, the baptism 'in' or 'with' the Holy Spirit. What does it mean? Is it always accompanied by tongues? Is it a second experience after baptism in water?

There are seven New Testament references, and seven only, to baptism in the Holy Spirit. Four of them are the Gospel accounts of the prediction of John the Baptist, that whereas he baptized in water, the coming one would baptize in the Holy Spirit (Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; Matthew 3:11; John 1:33). The preposition uniformly used is *en*, a little word that can mean 'in', 'with', or 'by' in Hellenistic Greek. Those therefore who affect to discover some difference between being baptized in the Holy Spirit and being baptized by him simply display their ignorance of Greek usage!

In addition to these four references to the forthcoming baptism in the Spirit at the hands of Jesus, there are three more. One of them comes in Acts 1:5 where Jesus quotes the Baptist's prophecy, and applies it unambiguously to Pentecost. The disciples will soon discover what it means to be baptized with the Spirit, 'in a few days'. The sixth instance comes in Acts 11:16. Once again the very same prediction is to the fore: 'John baptized with water but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' Peter is speaking, and explaining his astonishing time with Cornelius, 'As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning' (v. 15). The sixth reference is also, therefore, related to an initiatory experience. Cornelius and his household entered the realm of the Spirit just as the disciples had done at Pentecost, and precisely as John had predicted.

The last reference is in 1 Corinthians 12:13. 'We were all baptized by one Spirit into one body' writes the Apostle; Jews or Greeks, slave or free, it made no difference. This was the indispensable beginning of Christianity for one and all. Does this seventh reference teach something different from the combined testimony of the other six? The answer must be that it does not. There is no suggestion here that this was a second, high-octane experience into which some Corinthians had entered and others had not. Quite the reverse. The Corinthians had written to Paul about spiritual gifts (12:1). The

The reference to Pentecost in Acts 1:5 is a unique event.

'charismatics' among them were only too keen that Paul should accede to their own high view of themselves and their spiritual giftedness, and their superiority to the ordinary Christians at Corinth. But Paul does nothing of the kind. Instead, he maintains fiercely that *all* the Corinthians had been baptized by the Spirit into the one body of Christ. Not several communities: one body. Not several levels: one baptism. It must have been hard for the 'gifted' Corinthians to accept that they were on precisely the same level as everyone else. It must have been very encouraging to those who had felt put down. After all, the ground is level at Calvary; none of us has anything to boast about. We are accepted into the family – or baptized into the body – simply and solely because of what Jesus Christ has done for us.

There is therefore no possible justification, among those who take the New Testament as their guide, in claiming biblical support for a doctrine of 'second blessing', a mandatory further experience after conversion called the baptism in the Holy Spirit. In each of the seven references, the phrase 'baptism with the Spirit' is unambiguously used of an initial plunging into Christ. It is not talking of the higher reaches of Christian experience, but about the basics of being a Christian. It is not always that we can be so sure about a controversial issue: but in this case the language used of baptism with the Spirit admits of no other conclusion.

But having established that according to the New Testament it is incorrect to speak of any second Christian experience as 'baptism in the Holy Spirit', we still have not settled the matter. For the Pentecostals and their charismatic cousins (among whom I would humbly count myself) may be wrong in their nomenclature, but right in what they are expecting to see in Christian experience. A great many Christians *do* have a notable second milestone in their lives, when they experience the reality of Jesus, the power and love of his Spirit, and receive one or more spiritual gifts in an entirely new way.

It is often so real and so exuberant that it makes any previous Christian experience seem grey or positively unreal. It is this sudden turning on of the lights in a twilight room that has encouraged some to regard 'baptism in the Spirit' as a second stage of Christian initiation. And that is very understandable. It does not help in the least if those who have no such passion for Christ seek to pour cold water on

the Pentecostals' biblical exegesis; we need to hear the Pentecostals when they expect to see radical change in Christian lives, passionate courage in spreading the word, burning love and self sacrifice, and faith that God will act naturally and supernaturally as his people venture out in evangelism, deliverance ministry and healing.

Normal Christian birth does embrace the baptism in water, the repentance and faith, and the powerful and discernible presence of the gift of the Spirit. But it is true, is it not, that our faith is often so dim, our expectancy so low, our ignorance about the Spirit so great, our fear of committing ourselves to anything challenging so strong, that many of us have had a *sub-normal* Christian birth, and an anaemic Christian experience? And it may be that what we need is a major injection of the Holy Spirit into those bloodless lives of ours. I believe that with all my heart. This breaking out of the Spirit in our life, this irrigation of our dry desert with his water is a paramount necessity in many parts of the church. But let us not make the mistake of allowing the change from sub-normal to normal Christian living to create a necessary doctrine of initiation in two stages. Sometimes it comes in two stages. But such need not be the case. When I lead someone to Christ these days I lay my hands on his or her head and pray that the Spirit of God will deeply and fully baptize the new believer into Christ. We need Christians like that today; full-blooded Christians, not ecclesiastical ghosts. Baptism in the Spirit is the common lot of all Christians. Nowhere in the New Testament are Christians told to wait for it, or to seek it, or to receive it. In his booklet *The Baptism and Fullness of the Holy Spirit* John Stott expressed it judiciously: 'The gift of baptism of the Holy Spirit, one of the distinctive blessings of the new covenant, is a universal blessing for members of the covenant, because it is an initial blessing. . . Further, baptism in water is the sign and seal of baptism in the Spirit, as much as it is of the forgiveness of sins.'

The fullness of the Holy Spirit

If baptism is the initial experience, fullness should be the continual state of Christians, though all too often it is not. Those who are real Christians are never told to be baptized in the Spirit. That has already

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happened. But they are told to be filled with the Spirit. On the day of Pentecost the disciples were both baptized and filled with the Spirit. The baptism was complete, unrepeatable and inalienable. But the filling could be both lost and regained. That distinction is very important. You and I can resist the Spirit of God (Acts 7:51). We can grieve the Spirit (Ephesians 4:30). But when we return, in repentance, trust and obedience, we can be filled afresh with the Holy Spirit. I have been filled hundreds of times, and hundreds of times I have run dry. This is not a once-and-for-all experience, but a constant offer from a generous, renewing God. It is very like the two sacraments Christ left us. Baptism is unrepeatable and marks the once-and-for-all aspect of our salvation: Communion is to be constantly repeated and marks the ongoing side of the Christian life. We need not only the once-and-for-all baptism with the Spirit, but the continuous being filled with him.

Thus it is made very clear in the Acts that Christians should be filled with the Spirit, as Jesus was (Luke 4:1). The disciples were all filled at Pentecost (2:1ff). Subsequently Peter was filled afresh with the Spirit (4:8) although he had recently been filled with that self-same Spirit on the day of Pentecost. He needed another filling for taking on the Sanhedrin – so would you! Stephen, equally (6:5), was a man who is described as full of the Spirit, and he needed to be, in view of what he was going to have to face. Saul of Tarsus (9:17) was filled with the Spirit for the ministry that God called him to. The Seven, often known as deacons, were chosen because they were men full of the Spirit (6:3). On occasion we are told that the whole church was filled with the Spirit (13:52).

But what are the characteristics of those who are filled with the Spirit? When Peter needs divine courage to go and speak before the Sanhedrin he is said to be filled with the Spirit (4:8). When Christians are engaged in really united prayer (4:31) they are said to be filled with the Spirit. Administrators in humble social work can be filled with the Spirit (6:3). When Christians are encouraged and built up to lead a holy life, they, too, are said to be filled with the Holy Spirit (9:31). When a good man rejoices with single-hearted delight to see God at work in others, as Barnabas did (11:24), that is a sign that he is full of the Spirit of God. And when disciples under difficult social conditions are filled with exultation, then that too is an expres-

sion of being filled with the Spirit (13:52). But equally, when you are calling God to act in judgment against an evil man like Elymas you need to be filled with the Spirit or else the whole thing could grievously backfire (13:9).

Being filled with the Spirit, then, is neither the monopoly of the 'charismatics' nor the 'non-charismatics'. Nobody has a monopoly in this area. Luke, with his glorious balance, will give joy under persecution as a mark of being filled with the Spirit: equally the supernatural judgment wrought on Elymas through Paul was a mark of being filled with the Spirit. One was 'charismatic', the other not. We are limbs on one body, and we need each other.

So we should beware of dividing Christians into the ordinary run-of-the-mill sort, and those who are 'Spirit-filled'. That is not New Testament language, nor is it real. However often we may be filled, we soon need filling again. We evaporate. We leak. We need refilling. And what is more, we Christians are often filled with spirits and attitudes which are very far from the Spirit of God, however greatly we may have been used beforehand. Being filled with the Spirit is not a state we can claim as a permanent possession: it is a standing call to us to come again and again to the Source and be filled afresh.

The Holy Spirit and tongues

Should all Christians speak in tongues? The answer of the Acts is, I am convinced, an unambiguous 'No'. The suggestion that we should is based on three verses alone: 2:4 when the first Christians did speak in tongues on the day of Pentecost; 10:46 when Cornelius and his friends did; and 19:6 when the 'Ephesian dozen' did.

Tongues is a gift from the good Lord to some people. He has given it to me, and I am grateful for it. But as we have seen there is no suggestion in any of the initiation teaching of the New Testament that it is the invariable mark of the presence of the Spirit. *Glossalalia* accompanied the preaching of salvation in those three instances, and perhaps others, including in Samaria. We have no way of knowing how widespread it was. Indeed you could argue if you were so disposed, that all three of those references have little to say to our condition. Acts 2:4 is not relevant, because we have not journeyed with the

Examples

of re-filling

when does it happen

motivation for awareness of the Spirit

Jesus of history and had to await the coming of the Spirit. Also, 10:46 is not apt for our situation because here the point is that the Spirit was given to Gentiles as well as to Jews, and the need for that lesson is past. And 19:6 does not speak to us because these were Jews who believed under the old dispensation and were now receiving the benefits of the new age. That is an unrepeatable situation. So from Acts one certainly cannot demonstrate that all should speak in tongues.

But equally from Acts one can say that this is a real gift of the Holy Spirit, which he pours out on some of the Christian family just as he lavishes other gifts on different members. [It is valuable for starting us in prayer when we feel little appetite for it. It is valuable for lifting our hearts in praise and adoration. It is very helpful in spiritual warfare, especially when we are in the presence of dark spirits brought in by the occult.] But let us not unchurch those who are given other gifts by the same Spirit. As 1 Corinthians 12:11 puts it, 'he gives them to each one, just as he determines.' Paul asks, 'Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues?' (1 Corinthians 12:29). The answer to these rhetorical questions is in each case a resounding 'No!'

The Holy Spirit in the church

There is a striking contrast between the Acts of the Apostles and the writings of Paul. In Paul the emphasis about the Spirit is more interior: it is for building up the believer in holiness and Christ-likeness. We are changed by the Spirit from one degree of glory (or Christ-reflectingness) to another (2 Corinthians 3:18). In the Acts the Spirit is more concerned with the corporate life of the church. It is more external in its impact. It is more gift-centred. It is more concerned with the growth and expansion of the church than with the holiness of individuals within the church.

There was a great missionary to China many years ago, Hudson Taylor. His biography is in two volumes, *The Growth of a Soul* and *The Growth of a Work for God*. One could almost say that Paul's understanding of the Spirit is 'The Growth of a Soul', while Luke's is 'The Growth of a Work for God'. Neither is exclusive, but such are the major emphases in Paul and Luke.

When we look at how the Spirit operates in the Acts, it is exciting to see the effect upon believers.

First, it is obvious that they were *thrilled to belong* (2:15-16). They were confident and joyful in this new experience of God that had opened up to them.

Then they were *keen to pray* (2:42; cf. 4:31). Disciples and new converts alike were *anxious to pray*, once they experienced the coming of the Spirit. He is the great enabler of prayer when our own enthusiasm is low. He is, after all, given to us in order to enable us to pray (Romans 8:26).

They were *bold to speak*. They had been the very reverse, but not when the Spirit came upon them. Now they were bold to preach in the streets (2:14), to preach to a beggar (3:1f), and to preach before the town council (4:8ff). I wonder when one of us last spoke in such situations! They were bold to speak in homes and synagogues, as the Acts goes on to record, and the mixture of conviction, boldness and love had powerful effects and drew many to Christ.

Fourth, they were *hungry to learn* (2:42). The converts devoted themselves to the Apostles' teaching. That always happens when the Holy Spirit grips someone. People get hungry to dig deeper into the scriptures the Apostles have left us.

They were *willing to give* (2:45). They even started capital tithing. They found their purses opening up as wide as their hearts. This was the work of the generous, free Spirit of God who had come upon them and thawed their selfish instincts. As a result, they had few financial problems, for these were shouldered by the whole community, not just by a small generous minority in the church. Some churches may need to learn that, despite appearances, they do not have financial problems, only spiritual ones!

They were also *longing to share* their hospitality (v. 46). This loving to be together, this open hospitality is a tremendously attractive mark of the Spirit's presence. I was speaking once in Canada about the needs of international work carried on by the church I then served. One of the people present, although she had no funds that she could give, was so moved by this that she went out and bought a salmon, cut it up small and barbecued it for a delightful, relaxed supper party, made a profit on it, and then came along happily the next morning with thirty dollars! That seems to me very much the spirit of the early

Six marks of the Spirit - 1. Acts - a way of praying the word of the Spirit - activity in church

The idea of tongues } there is no universal gift

2. emphasis on the Spirit in the individual (Paul's letters) and in the church (Acts + the epistles). Add also outwards (Acts)

church, and it is something very beautiful for God. It is a mark of the Spirit flooding a life.

Those are some of the qualities we find early in Acts when the Spirit comes. There were tongues and healing and deliverance too, but I have not mentioned them yet, for they are gifts of the Spirit that may or may not be entrusted to us. But these qualities of joy, boldness, prayer, generosity and a hunger to learn are universal indicators of the presence of the Lord the Spirit. They are indispensable in any church that seeks to grow.

Spiritual gifts

Whether you look at the Jewish mission led by Peter, the Hellenist mission led by Stephen, or the Gentile mission led by Paul, the Spirit is active throughout the Acts, shedding his spiritual gifts widely among the workers. It is instructive to examine the extent, purpose and conditions of these spiritual gifts.

The range of spiritual gifts

It is important not to construe the range of spiritual gifts too narrowly. Often one hears that there are nine gifts of the Spirit, no more and no less, and that they are all to be found in 1 Corinthians 12:7–11. The implication, further, is that unless you have one of these gifts you are an impoverished Christian. That is not the teaching of the New Testament. At Pentecost, as we see, there were tongues, boldness, prophetic insight – particularly insight into the meaning of the Scriptures (2:16ff) – praise, prayer, fruit in conversions, unity, love, generosity, hunger for teaching and more. There is no distinction made between gifts of the Spirit that would today be termed ‘charismatic’, such as tongues and prophecy, and the others. All came from the same Spirit. This distinction between ‘charismatic’ and ‘non-charismatic’ gifts (with the accolade going to the former) is quite unbiblical, and very damaging. Indeed, the word ‘charismatic’ is a misnomer, if applied to only some Christians. You cannot be a Christian at all without entering into God’s *charisma*, which means

his gracious gift. And nowhere is that more clearly stressed than in the famous verse, Romans 6:23, where we are told that the wages of sin is death, but that the *charisma*, the gracious gift of God, is eternal life. That is the heritage of every child of God. We need to be careful about misusing great biblical words like ‘charismatic’. If we shrink them, we are guilty of excluding those whom God has included.

The purpose of spiritual gifts

The Acts gives us at least five explanations of why God lavishes spiritual gifts upon his children. I am sure that these five are not exhaustive, but they are certainly illuminating.

1. One reason for these gifts is to confirm: they are given to underline the spoken proclamation of Christians. In Iconium, Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there, speaking boldly for the Lord, who confirmed the message of his grace by enabling them to do miraculous signs and wonders (14:3). The Elymas incident is another such occasion where a manifest miracle, given by God, confirmed the stand the Apostles were taking (13:10–15). We read that ‘when the proconsul saw what had happened, he believed, for he was amazed at the teaching about the Lord’. He was not converted by the *miracle* of Elymas’ blindness, but by the *teaching* of the Lord backed up by God’s power at work. The miracle confirmed its message. These spiritual gifts in confirmation of the word could either be in judgment, as it was on Elymas, or in healing, as it was with the cripple of Lystra (14:8).

2. Spiritual gifts may be given to evangelize, and classically you see that in the case of Saul of Tarsus. First comes the direct divine intervention, as the Jesus he has been struggling so hard to avoid catches up with him and brings him to his knees on the Damascus Road. Second, there was Saul’s blindness; when he got up, he could not see. Third came the dream, which drew a very reluctant Ananias to visit this erstwhile scourge of the church. Fourth was the restoration of Saul’s vision. And fifth was the new birth and filling with the Holy Spirit (9:1–19). This last supreme gift of the Spirit transformed his whole life in the most graphic way. But these are five different spiritual gifts that were used in a very important evangelistic situation.

And I have to say that I have seen more spiritual gifts in operation when I have been on missions and outreach campaigns than at any time in the normal run of the church's life. God seems particularly to send them when his followers seek to fulfil the Great Commission.

3. Sometimes these gifts are given *to demonstrate God's compassion*. That, I take it, explains the occasion when Paul was able to raise up from death through a terrible fall a young man called Eutychus who had fallen asleep during the Apostle's lengthy sermon (20:9–11)! There is no suggestion that any deep theological reason lay behind that resuscitation: it was simply a lovely humanitarian act which prevented a pall of gloom and mourning ruining Paul's last night with his friends at Troas. Or think of Publius, healed through Paul's agency of mercy and care (28:8–9). It was a spiritual gift exercised for a humanitarian cause.

4. Another purpose for these gifts was *to declare*. As in the Gospels, sometimes these miracles took place in order to demonstrate Jesus' Lordship over the power of the devil. We see this in a number of instances. Why is so much space given to the account of Saul's shipwreck (27:27f)? Surely because Luke wants us to know that all the forces of chaos (and the Hebrews certainly saw the sea in that light) cannot prevent God's purpose of bringing his foremost representative to the heart of the Roman Empire, there to stand trial and bear witness before Nero. The Devil himself cannot prevent the God-given shift of the Christian mission from the back streets of Jerusalem to the heart of the known world.

It is much the same with the liberation of demonized people (e.g. 16:18, 19:13–20). They are set free by the gift of the Spirit, and this is not only for their own benefit, though it includes that: it is to demonstrate the Lordship of Jesus over Satan.

I mentioned in a previous chapter the current movement from Hinduism to Christ in Fiji; it is being induced largely through the ministry of deliverance and healing, which declare the Lordship of Jesus.

5. A further purpose of these spiritual gifts was *to direct*. We have noticed how, in chapter 10, God made use of a double vision to lead the church in a new direction, towards the Gentile mission. The Lord also guided the community quite clearly by means of dreams. Paul is frustrated in various attempts to preach the gospel in areas where, for

some undisclosed reason, opportunities did not open up (16:6–10). He and his friends were 'kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia.' And then, one night, God guided Paul and his colleagues into a vital new direction through the dream of the man of Macedonia, calling for help. The entire European orientation of the gospel sprang from that incident, and it was launched by the spiritual gift of a vision in the night, directing the course of events. Again, in chapter 8, we find Philip is directed by a gift of knowledge or discernment (8:29). The Spirit nudges him to draw alongside this strange man, who stands reading the Scriptures in his chariot as it moved along the desert road. Highly improbable, but it was the right thing to do and it led to the founding of a church in Ethiopia. It only happened because Philip was obedient to the prompting, the inner whisper of the Spirit, which he could so easily have set aside as a meaningless hunch.

The Spirit uses promptings like this to lead us in a direction we might not otherwise travel. We need to learn to listen for those whispers. God wants to guide us through them.

These are five purposes for which God gives us spiritual gifts. Happy the church that is open to receiving and profiting by them.

The conditions for spiritual gifts

Three things need to be said on the conditions for receiving these gifts. First, there is no suggestion in the Acts that they were restricted to the Apostles or to a privileged minority of Christians. On the contrary, these gifts broke out from the day of Pentecost among the converts as much as among the Eleven. They were widely disseminated among Stephen, Agabus, the Hellenists, Paul, Ananias, Philip, Silas and Barnabas. But you did not need to be a famous Christian to have spiritual gifts: you might be one of the prophesying daughters of Philip, or one of the people converted from the streets in Corinth.

Second, it is important to remember that the distribution of spiritual gifts was not manipulated by man, but was in God's hands alone. He was the supreme arbiter of where and when particular gifts should be disseminated. People were not always delivered from prison. Some were. Some people were delivered from diseases of long standing, like

the cripples of Jerusalem in chapter 3 and of Lystra in chapter 14, but Trophimus was left at Miletus sick, although Paul, if anyone, had gifts of healing. Some Christians had remarkable deliverances from death in the Acts but Stephen, James and many others were martyred. Humbling and perplexing though it is for rationalist human beings, we do not know the mind of God, nor are we clear why one is spared for a few further years of life and usefulness and another is not. We do, however, need to remember that Jesus is Lord; and if so, we must trust him through thick and thin, whether we can understand him or not. He may decide to give one of the spiritual gifts that will bring release in a particular situation; or he may, in his infinite wisdom, know that the gift is better withheld. He is the Lord of the gifts. We cannot and must not question his wisdom, but rather pray, trust and co-operate with whatever he does.

But, thirdly, there is something we can do to dig the ground for spiritual gifts to grow. The whole climate in the Acts was facilitated by prayer (4:30ff), awe (5:11–12), courageous outreach (8:6), hardship (think of the imprisonments, the stonings, the absence of medication) and expectant faith (3:1ff). When these things were present in men and women full of the Spirit, spiritual gifts were no exception: they were part of the normal run of Christian life. There are parts of the world where those conditions are fulfilled, and the same results are to be seen today. Why should it not happen with us?

Spiritual maturity

Acts makes it very plain that the mature Christian does not concentrate on gifts, but on the Giver. Transformation into the likeness of Jesus is God's supreme goal for us. To be full of the Spirit is to be Christlike. Love, generosity, courage, humility, joy, unity, radiance – these are the qualities that Luke highlights. And nowhere is this more clearly portrayed than in the death of Stephen who radiates these qualities as he dies, because he is full of the Holy Spirit (6:15ff): 'His face was like the face of an angel.'

We are bidden, therefore, not to develop a mindset of the Christian press button, designed to acquire gifts; but of the Christian walk, which is designed to produce holiness. That is the supreme aim

of the coming of the Holy Spirit. The way of the church, the way of the Spirit, the way of evangelism, involves the costly following of a crucified Saviour.

This means that, like Jesus, we must learn obedience through suffering (Hebrews 5:8). There will be an element of trial and error in all this, as is manifest from Acts 16:6ff. Our faculties, as Hebrews 5:14 reminds us, must be trained by *experience* to distinguish good from evil, genuine from bogus. The purpose of the Spirit's coming to the people of Jesus is not primarily to give gifts, though he does that, but to produce in us Christlikeness of character, a people like their Lord. He wants to make us mature in our Christian discipleship. By his presence, his power and his gifts, he offers us the resources for that supreme vocation for Christian disciples this side of heaven.

