

The Baptism of the Holy Ghost

Why everybody needs the Comforter.

By Ken Raggio

Jesus said, "I will not leave you comfortless. I will come to you." When the Holy Ghost came on the day of Pentecost, the Spirit of Christ had arrived.

Do we need that Spirit? Let's take a practical and Biblical approach in answering that question.

"Everybody needs somebody sometime"

Do you remember the feelings you had as a child when a violent storm raged during the night? Did you ever feel the awful fear, and hiding under the covers, while nature unleashed all her fury outside?

Would the strong winds uproot a tree and crash it through the wall? Would a torrential downpour flood the street and yard sending rushing waters into the house? Would lightning strike the roof and set it on fire?

Every clap of thunder caused you to tremble inside. Every frightening flash tormented you and kept you awake far into the night.

But suddenly a light came on in your bedroom. There in the door stood a mom or a dad who knew all along how scared you were. They came to comfort you with an assuring hug or an caring word: "The storm will soon be over and the winds will die! The sun will be shining again tomorrow."

Mom and Dad's words were peaceful, restful words that soothe and console.

We are NOT truly self-sufficient.

Each of us must look within ourselves from time to time for comfort. It is normal to try to meet our own needs without making demands on others. But sooner or later, we exhaust our inward reserves, and are forced to turn to something in our environment for sustenance.

Child or adult, every one of us eventually "runs out of gas". Where will we go for additional support? Friends? Family? Strangers?

We have watched society's attempts to comfort itself. Self-help programs have advocated "Positive Mental Attitudes", "Self-motivation", "possibility thinking", and a menagerie of other techniques which teach us to offset the negative forces that produce fears, anxieties and worry. Hundreds of books and tapes and seminars on various self-help concepts have proliferated.

This fact illustrates our need to be constantly assured and reassured by outside forces.

Self-help runs down like a battery that cannot recharge itself.

Did God make us to need Him? I believe so. Self-sufficiency proves inadequate over time. It can also be very deceptive and perilous.

No one can deny that there are definite benefits of having a good attitude or of encouraging one's self. But we must be reminded that no man is an island. We are all dependent creatures, ultimately in need of others for our very survival. The self-helper is like a battery trying to recharge itself. He will eventually die unless he draws from other sources.

Even our fellow men are poor comforters

Job, the ancient one whose patience was tested to extremes, met with many calamities. His friends came forward with verbose explanations. After suffering through their incessant

talking, Job concluded, "Miserable comforters are ye all" (Job 16:2). He was not comforted by them.

We often make the same discovery about our own friends. Moses observed that men need more than natural or earthly resources. "Man shall not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord" (Deuteronomy 8:3).

The sooner we acknowledge our need for supernatural help, the better. And of course, the only One who can give us that supernatural help is God.

God made the human being to need Him

As God created the human body needing food and drink, even so the human soul certainly must have its own food and drink in the form of WORDS and SPIRIT.

Not just any words or spirit, but God's Words and God's Spirit. Think about this:

Men who do not pursue God will still attempt to feed the soul, substituting common sense (man's words) and enthusiasm (man's spirit) for God's Words and God's Spirit.

To the ancient Jews, God the Father was the the only true Comforter

Tragically, the soul of man cannot survive on common sense and enthusiasm alone. It just won't work.

There is always going to be some situation in life that men cannot solve. Only God can.

Isaiah zeroed in on where the real help comes from when he proclaimed, "THE LORD hath comforted his people" (49:13).

God the Father declared, "I, even I, am he that comforteth you" (51:12).

Israel's King David spoke often of the comfort he found in the Lord- (Psalms 23:4, 71:21, 86:17, 94:19, 119:50). "In His presence is fulness of joy, and at His right hand there are pleasures for evermore" (Psalm 16:11).

His words comforted the ancient patriarchs.

For every skeptic and atheist there is a multitude who declare their dependency on God.

God's Words comforted the Old Testament believers.

But God determined to do more than speak His word from the heavens. He set out to come down among men and reveal Himself.

God desired to embody His words among men. So He turned the world's attention to Himself by embodying Himself in a MAN.

As a result, "the Word was made flesh" (John 1:14). The Father's comforting Spirit would be upon that man -- Jesus Christ --, and He explained it plainly, "for He hath anointed me to... comfort all that mourn" (Isaiah 61:1,2).

Because of the incarnation of the Father in the body of a human, begotten Son, men could visibly see their Comforter in a human body!

In Jesus dwelled the fulness of the godhead (deity) bodily.

Jesus, The Comforter - God With Us

In Luke 4:18, Jesus read aloud from that same passage: "The Spirit of the Lord" (who was His Father) "is upon me" (the Son of man). "...He hath anointed me", Jesus said.

The eternal comforting Father of the Old Testament was incarnate in a mortal man.

Jesus taught that He was the same Comforter by virtue of the fact that the Spirit of the Lord (Father) was upon Him.

This is a doctrinal revelation that must not be missed.

We have seen that God the Father was the Comforter of the Old Testament. But the Father did not cease to be the Comforter in the New Testament, nor did He pass the role down to someone else.

"My Father worketh", Jesus insisted. "The Son of Man can do nothing of Himself" (John 5: 17,19).

The point is that Jesus was not introducing Himself as a human Comforter. He was emphasizing that the Comforter was the Father who was IN Him, by incarnation.

As such, Jesus was indeed the Comforter - 'God with us'! We saw Him at work as the Comforter. His words were made real in His works.

He said to the diseased woman who pressed through the crowds to touch Him, "Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole" (Matthew 9:22).

He comforted the lame, the blind, the deaf, the demon-possessed; alas, "all that mourn."

This is not a second member of a triune godhead substituting or replacing the first member.

It is the one and only Father come down to us in an earthly tabernacle called the Son.

Jesus Had To Go Away

Jesus' manly role as the Comforter was only for a time, however. God never intended for the ministry of the human Son to continue indefinitely.

Though He had an awesome and miraculous ministry as a man, His wonderful works were generally restricted to the places where He traveled.

Consequently, only a relatively few people benefited from His comfort while He remained in the flesh.

It becomes apparent that the same physical body which had been used to reveal the image of the invisible God had become an encumbrance to the plan of redemption.

The Son of man could not remain on earth indefinitely, He explained that "it is expedient for you that I go away" (John 16:7).

In other words, He informed them that it would be to everyone's advantage for Him to go away. And the reason is evident: more lives would be comforted if He were manifest as a spirit than if He remained a mortal man.

A greater work for both the Kingdom of God and the Church would be accomplished. Hence His statement, "Greater works than these shall ye do, because I go unto my Father" (John 14:12).

"Retiring" His mortal human body, and "redistributing" His ghost, His spirit among His faithful followers would multiply the ministry of Jesus Christ thousands of times over, and would be infinitely more profitable to both God and men.

The Son of Man In Heaven

So where would His body retire to? "I go unto Him that sent me" (John 11:33; 16:5), that is, "I go to my Father" (John 14:12,28; 16:16,17,28).

His body would be exalted in Heaven and placed at the right hand of the throne, where the invisible Father dwells "in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see" (I Timothy 6:16).

Since the Father is invisible, Jesus Christ would become the only person visible on the throne of God.

"For there are three that bear record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one" (I John 5:7).

Revelation 4:2 declares there to be only one throne set in heaven, and only one person sitting on it. Chapter 22, verse 3 calls Him both "God" (our Father) and "the Lamb" (the Son).

Whether the Heavenly hosts desire to see the Father, the Son, or the Holy Ghost, all they will ever see is "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ"(2 Corinthians 4:6)!

As a man highly exalted by God, Jesus would exercise "All power...in Heaven and in earth" (Matthew 28:18). All discretion is His.

"Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you" (John 16:7).

"But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me" (John 15:26).

And logically so! The Holy Ghost proceeds from the omnipresent Father in much the same sense that a glass of water proceeds from the deep blue sea.

It seems that the Holy Ghost is a special allotment of the Spirit of the Father; all of God that will fit into a human body!

Jesus sent a special dispensation of the Father Spirit back to us

Now the Son Of Man had never been to Heaven. Of course the incarnate Spirit of the Father who dwelled in Him had. That Spirit had come down from Heaven.

It is the fact that the Spirit of the Father had come down into the Son that makes Calvary so awesome: "Hereby perceive we the love of God, that he laid down his life for us" (I John 3:16).

Yes, God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself.

But after Calvary, the Father's incarnate Spirit could be released from within the Son of Man, and be reassigned to a new body - the Church!

Like a branch of a tree, Jesus was an extended manifestation of His Father.

He had come with a mission, which was fulfilled at Calvary, where He made intercession for all men for all times.

After Calvary, He was a man with a due reward.

Shortly before His crucifixion, He prayed, "Father, the hour is come; glorify thy son, that thy son may also glorify Thee" (John 17:1).

In only a few days, the Son of Man would ascend to Heaven, to sit on the right hand of the one throne of the invisible God.

(The following scriptures describe the Son of Man either standing or sitting at the right hand of power; the right hand of the Majesty on high; or the right hand of God: Matthew 22:44; 26:64; Mark 14:62; 16:19; Luke 20:42; 22:69; Acts 2:33,34; 7:55,56; Colossians 3:1.)

Jesus was the first immortal fruit from a mortal seed. (I Cor. 15:23). "Wherefore God hath highly exalted him"(Philippians 2:9).

The Comforter with us today

The glorification of the Son of man was the key event for men and women who longed for the life of Jesus Christ to dwell within them.

For the duration of Jesus' ministry on earth, He was obsessed with the desire to fill men with His Spirit.

He carefully instructed Nicodemus that "you must be born again", and to be born "of the Spirit" (John 3:5,7).

He excitedly urged the woman of Samaria to ask of Him "living water". He then explained that His Spirit in her would be like a "well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:10,14).

Then, "In the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, if any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake He of the Spirit which they that believe on Him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given: because that Jesus was not yet glorified)" (John 7:37,38).

Jesus - Baptizer of the Holy Ghost

Jesus was so obsessed with the desire to fill men and women with His Spirit, He preached it long before it was actually given.

In all the above illustrations, Jesus offered His Spirit, but it was still "not yet given". Even in John 20:22, Jesus "breathed on them," (the disciples), "and saith unto them , receive ye the Holy Ghost".

He commanded them to receive it, showing Himself to be the Giver and Source of it. Yet even then, the Holy Ghost was not yet given.

Why wasn't the Spirit yet given? "Because that Jesus was not yet glorified" (John 7:39). In order for the followers of Jesus Christ to receive the fulness of God for themselves, Jesus had to ascend into Heaven.

"And I", (the Son of man), "will pray the Father", (the eternal invisible Spirit), "and He shall give you another Comforter", (another manifestation of Himself, the true Comforter), "that He may abide with you forever" (John 14:16).

Jesus - Intercessor and Mediator

This man actually had to appeal to His Spirit Father to release this intercessory Holy Ghost unto His followers.

He assured His disciples before He went away, "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you" (John 14:18).

He explained exactly who the "other comforter" would be in John 14:17: "Even the Spirit of Truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him, but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."

The "other comforter" already dwelled "with" them, in the body of Jesus Christ. So the same Spirit that would eventually be in them, was already with them, housed in the body of Jesus Christ.

Jesus' own Spirit, or Ghost, would be the Spirit that would come into them later. John the Baptist informed them that "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 3:11). Jesus indicated that once the Holy Ghost was given, "At that day ye shall know that I... (am) in you" (John 14:20).

Furthermore, the Apostle Paul taught that Jesus' indwelling Spirit was ESSENTIAL TO SALVATION: "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (Romans 8:9).

Born Again By The Holy Ghost

Jesus determined that every one of His followers should have the indwelling power of the Holy Ghost. He instructed them to "tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49).

This was a clear command to receive the Holy Ghost Baptism. There was only one way to receive the power. "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you" (Acts 1:8).

The Spirit Birth brings comfort

We mentioned earlier the hunger and thirst of every man's soul for spiritual nourishment. Even as the body needs food and drink, the soul needs God's Word and God's Spirit.

Then consider that our Comforter is the only true source of both Word and Spirit. Imagine the disciples without the Comfort of Jesus' words which they had daily relied upon.

Did Jesus' departure mean there would be no more comforting words? Not at all! The Holy Ghost definitely speaks when He arrives. God said, "I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy" (Joel 2:28).

Stammering lips and other tongues

Isaiah began to itemize; "For with stammering lips and another tongue will He speak to His people" (28:12).

It certainly seems strange that God would choose "stammering lips" to comfort His people. And why wouldn't God speak to them in their own tongue, instead of another tongue?

But Isaiah said, "This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing" (Isaiah 28:11,12).

The fact is that when the Comforter comes, we receive both Words and Spirit.

The heralded event first takes place in Acts 2: "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." (Acts 2:1-4).

The Spirit Speaks Audibly

It is significant to notice that when the Holy Ghost is given, you will hear the sound of its arrival.

Jesus told Nicodemus, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8).

The Spirit comes invisibly, like the wind. But it also comes audibly, like the wind!

How else could the Spirit comfort if it used no words?

Peter considered the sound of speaking in other tongues to be the evidence that members of Cornelius' household had received the Holy Ghost. "For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God" (Acts 10:46). It was just like the experience that had occurred to them in the Upper Room on the day of Pentecost, saying "these...have received the Holy Ghost as well as we" (Acts 10:47), and "the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning" (Acts 11:15).

Again, in the city of Ephesus, Paul preached, and "the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spoke with tongues" (Acts 19:6).

The precedent is set. You will speak with unknown tongues when you receive the Holy Ghost. Jesus Himself ordained it: "They shall speak with new tongues" (Mark 16:17).

Why the Spirit speaks strangely

But the objection arises: "What good are stammering lips, and other tongues?"

Paul answers. "For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful" (I Corinthians 14:14).

We have absolutely no obligation to justify the strangeness of speaking in an unknown tongue. It is not necessary to know or understand what is being said.

It is right and proper for us to assume that as we speak in other tongues, the Holy Ghost is inspiring a very special kind of communication which Paul described as "intercession for the saints according to the will of God" (Romans 8:27b).

It is impossible to appreciate the Baptism of the Holy Ghost until it is a personal experience.

The Baptism of the Holy Ghost is an unknown-tongues-speaking experience designed by God as a facility to intercessory prayer. Speaking in tongues is intended to be a comforting experience.

"He that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men but unto God: for no man understandeth him", (I Corinthians 14:2), "howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries."

"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, for he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God" (Romans 8:26-27).

In addition, "He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself" (I Corinthians 14:4).

Speaking in tongues edifies - 'builds up or establishes' the person who is praying.

Words Spoken By The Spirit

"What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also" (I Corinthians 14:15).

No wonder that Paul boasted, "I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all" (I Corinthians 14:18).

The Holy Ghost does much more than inspire one to speak in other tongues. He comforts through His ministry. "Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied" (Acts 9:31).

You can be comforted.

"Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38).

Nothing can deprive you of it, if you desire it. "For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts 2:39).

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit is not an optional experience for the believer.

One is not born of the Spirit prior to receiving the Baptism of the Holy Ghost.

The Spirit of Christ is the exact same Spirit as the Holy Ghost. Until a person has received the Holy Ghost, he or she has not received the Spirit of Christ; and has not yet been born again.

Receive ye the Holy Ghost.

Now, understand much more about how the Holy Ghost is the Spirit of Christ.
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