

Baptism of the Holy Spirit

December 1992

Doctrinal Conviction of Pastor-Teacher Paul B. Phair and Elder Team Policy

Some Christians use the phrase, *baptism of the Holy Spirit* to refer to a "second blessing," an infilling of the Holy Spirit subsequent to, and quite distinct from conversion. They sometimes regard it as a significantly deeper spiritual experience that is accompanied and evidenced by the speaking of tongues. This view sometimes divides Christians into two levels of spirituality; those without this second experience may be viewed as not having the same capacity for intimacy with God, transformation of character, and power in ministry, as those who have had this experience. Division within the church can therefore be the result of this view.

Rather than being an issue of division, the apostle Paul teaches quite clearly in 1 Corinthians 12:13 that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is the universal spiritual experience of all true Christians and is therefore the basis for Christian unity. The Christians at Corinth had allowed their desire for various spiritual gifts such as tongues to divide them, but Paul writes that they are actually one. His key argument is that they have all been baptized (initiated and placed) into the one body of Christ (the universal church). The baptism of the Holy Spirit is the initial experience of every Christian that occurs immediately upon his/her belief in Christ (Rm. 8:9). There is not a single instance in the New Testament in which any believer is

commanded or urged to be baptized with the Holy Spirit, for the simple reason that he/she cannot be urged to seek something that has already taken place in his/her life.

While every true believer has been baptized by the Holy Spirit, not every believer is always filled by Him. To be filled means to be under His control and empowerment. In Ephesians 5:18, the apostle Paul urges all believers to be continually under the Spirit's control by means of yielded obedience. When a Christian is filled with the Holy Spirit he/she increasingly evidences the *fruit of the Spirit* (Galatians 5:22-23).

(For a fuller presentation of the doctrine of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, consult *Baptism & Fullness* by John R. W. Stott, IVP)

Elder Team Policy

We do not require that everyone in our church fellowship agree with the above doctrinal conviction. We welcome the fellowship and membership of those who may believe that they have experienced a second post-conversion work of the Spirit. However, for the sake of unity, we do require that such individuals not seek to persuade others in our church family to have a similar experience. If a brother or sister cannot comply with this request, in order to

maintain peace, the elders will admonish him/her in love to ally himself/herself with a church that does stress the doctrine of the post-conversion "baptism of the Holy Spirit". We desire to work and pray without ceasing to "*maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*" (Eph. 4:3).

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