

SHOULD PENTECOSTALS APOLOGIZE

The Holy Spirit

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I felt prompted in my spirit to give some foundational teaching that for some may seem academic at times but it is from the conviction of my heart that there are some within the body that need a sound biblical undergirding for the experience of the baptism in the Spirit and other experiences in the Spirit. Maybe you've heard testimonies and witness experiences but you're grappling right now with the scripture yourself in terms of what it actually teaches. When you can be in a settled place in your heart that "thus says the Lord" then when that rest has been arrived at in you, then you can be open to a deeper and greater experience in the Spirit. That's been my intention.

Since it has been now four Sunday nights since I have been away from this theme let me take five or ten minutes to stir you up by way of remembrance as Paul would say to where we have been.

We looked on the first Sunday night in this series of the person of the Holy Spirit. Very simply we declared that evening that the scriptures teach that the Spirit is a person. He is not an "it". He is not some impersonal object or force that you get hold of. If he is an impersonal force or object then we get a hold of "it" to use "it" as we want. But if the Spirit is a person then he takes us to use us as he wills.

An object or a thing cannot be lied to. I cannot lie to this book. This book could care less whatever I say. It is totally tuned out to me. But the Spirit can be lied to. This book cannot be blasphemed. It could care less what I say. But the Spirit can be blasphemed. This book cannot be grieved. No object, no thing, no impersonal force can be grieved or saddened by an action of mine. My car isn't even grieved by the way I treat it. It has no feelings in the matter. It just suffers without care. The Spirit is a person, though and he is grieved.

The Spirit is personal. He can be grieved, lied to, quenched, blasphemed.

The Spirit as person is divine. He bears the attributes of God. He is eternal. He is without beginning or ending. He is all knowing. Nothing is hid from his presence. He knows not only what is in my heart and the heart of everyone. He knows what is in the mind of God because he represents the mind of God to us. He is all-powerful and he is everywhere present. He does the works of God. He is active in creation. He is active in spiritual regeneration. We're born of the Spirit of God. He does the works of God in terms of bringing about the scriptures. All scripture has been brought into existence by the activity of the inspiration of the Spirit of God.

That first Sunday night we simply put before you the themes the Spirit is personal. So when we pray for the Spirit to work in our lives we're not asking to like get a hold of a bolt of electricity that if we can just grab the bolt we'll be electrified and energized with all sorts of fireworks going off. We're asking for a person to indwell us and fill us.

The second Sunday night I dealt with the theme of the presence of the Spirit that evening I dealt with the presence of the Spirit from two standpoints. The presence of the Spirit in our lives prior to conversion. John 16:8-11 describes the three-fold work of the Spirit in our lives before we ever came to Christ.

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The Spirit gave us an awakened sense of sin. It is he who brought conviction to our heart. How well I remember that in my own experience. It was about the age of ten when I made my commitment to the Lord, the new birth experience. At a later period in my life at 18 or 19 that I really committed. The conviction! What can a 10-year-old kid do that he can be convicted of? Not too many things perhaps. But the Holy Spirit amazingly can convict us of not ever having invited him into our lives. And convict us of the sense that even as a 10-year-old without Christ we're not ready to meet God.

As a 10-year-old I had a dream that the Lord returned and I didn't go up. After struggling all night in the darkness not seeing my parents – it as too dark to see them – I was convicted of the reality of scripture – the Lord was coming again and at that particular moment in my life at 10, I wasn't ready to meet him. That was the work of the Spirit bringing me to an awakened sense of sin.

The Spirit as well brought to me an affirmation of the righteousness of Jesus. Men called him a sinner but Jesus is declared by the Spirit of God to be Messiah, to be Son of God. The Spirit brings to us an awareness of judgment that has already been handed down. That the world is condemned because of Christ's righteousness if they do not receive him, they are condemned already.

Once the Spirit is present before conversion as I open my life to Jesus Christ, then the Spirit becomes active in me in conversion. That was kind of also a theme of that second Sunday evening. I am born of the Spirit of God.

I receive the Spirit in regeneration. John 20. Jesus breathed into his disciples in that evening before his resurrection. And said receive the Spirit. We distinguished that from Acts 2. That's receiving the Spirit in the regenerative sense, which all believers have. The indwelling Spirit of God.

I am indwelt therefore of the Spirit. I make true confession of Jesus by the Spirit and I am baptized by one Spirit into one body, 1 Corinthians 12:13 "By one Spirit are we baptized into one body." Here Paul's not talking about the baptism in the Spirit, Acts 2, but the baptism by the Spirit into the body of Christ. This all we have as brothers and sisters in the Lord whether or not we've received the charismatic or Pentecostal empowerment.

Just a moment of review on that third Sunday evening I spoke on the presence of the Spirit in Pentecostal empowerment. Choosing deliberately to use that term Pentecostal because it's the term in the book of Acts. The word charismatic is a Corinthian term not an Acts term. Therefore I went back on the older word so to speak to describe the Christian experience.

We looked at this in terms of five terms that are synonymous to describe this experience. One is baptism in the Spirit, which surprisingly is only used twice in Acts. Both times the words of Jesus. Once Jesus directly says it himself in Acts 1. And in Acts 11 Peter quotes Jesus as saying it. Perhaps in the early church there may have been some confusion of terms between Paul's terms "baptized by one Spirit into the body" and Jesus' term about being baptized in the Spirit. Therefore this term "baptized in the Spirit" occurs so rarely in Acts. Because it can be amplified and illustrated by other terms like "receiving the promise of the Father" "receiving the gift of the

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Spirit” or even the term “receiving the Spirit” and also “being filled with the Spirit.” I won’t go beyond just listing those terms. If you want more detail you can get the tape from that particular service.

This evening I especially want to continue speaking along the lines of an apologetic, understanding from the scripture of the person of the Spirit in our life and His presence. I want to set a context for just a moment about the importance of apologetics. I’ll define what that word means.

1 Peter 3:15-16 talking about giving a rational defense for what we believe says “But in your heart set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer.” That word is the word *apologia*. It’s a combination of two Greek words – word and a preposition being a pro-word or a foreword. A recorded decent. It springs out of not just the heart, the testimony, it springs out of the head.

To give an apology is not to be red faced saying, “We believe in the Holy Spirit.” As a kid I always knew when I was in a church where the Spirit was really moving, when there was a lot happening in terms of exuberance. One of the things that was a test of truly being in the Spirit was when persons would really begin to be alive in the Spirit and dance in the Spirit. You knew that they were in the Spirit. There would be people packed around the altar. You knew they were in the Spirit if they didn’t step on anyone! Because the Spirit would guide them with their eyes closed. That indeed was the case. The Spirit really did guide people to not step on other people.

Giving an apology in a scriptural sense is not being embarrassed over what has happened. It’s to give a very strong pro word. It’s being for something and having the insight and the depth to be able to logically and consistently and rationally put forth a position that carries weight and brings response.

So Peter says always be prepared to give an apology to everyone who asks you to give a reason for the hope you have. “Do this with gentleness and respect keeping a clear conscious.” That part is the easy part to leave out.

I simply take Peter’s word although I realize they don’t so much relate to the Pentecostal position as they relate to giving a defense of why Christ lives in your heart. But I use that scripture to indicate that from a Pentecostal position it’s important for us from time to time to give an apology or a reason for our faith to others. Why is this important? Four reasons why an apology or a reasoned defense of what we believe is important.

I think first of all to not contend for truth is to surrender truth.

If you don’t fight for something you believe in a spiritual or intellectual sense it will pass out of existence. If it’s like, “Everybody’s view is as good as someone else’s view” after a while all views blend into one view. And no view stands out. If we as Christians were to say, “It really doesn’t matter whether you receive the Lord or not. Just be sincere in whatever you do.” Once you’ve opted out for not defending truth, you’ve so watered down truth you’re not able to find truth. But to contend for truth, sharpens you and hones you and makes you unwilling to surrender truth. It’s when I begin to really examine the scriptural base and support for

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understanding the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our lives that I begin to get quickened and sharpened in my own spirit. By not saying anything about this I may be surrendering the vital truth of the scripture so I must speak to it; it must not be surrendered.

I think a second reason why an apology is important is that to support an experience we are having only through personal testimony is to depart from the scripture. If the only reason why we can support something we are experiencing is because we experienced it, there's some shaky ground in that. The scripture must undergird it.

There was kind of a heyday in the early 50s of what was called in the Pentecostal movement as the Latter Rain movement. The Latter Rain movement claimed to restore the work of the Holy Spirit to the backslidden Pentecostal church. There was some backslidden. But in their restoration of that they went tremendously to the excess and begin putting forth experiences that could not be based on scripture.

For example one of the things they said is there are more gifts for Christians than are in the scripture. The gifts you would be given would be determined by whoever was ministering in the church. This sounds ludicrous but it actually happened. One of these in the Later Rain movement began giving people the "gift" of baking cakes. I suspect they may have already had the talent; it was just sanctified into a gift. One woman was given the gift of knitting so she began bringing her knitting to church.

There was inability to differentiate experience from scripture and gifts from talents. There were a lot more radical things than this that happened. There are people today in the charismatic renewal who claim experiences but those experiences are not necessarily substantiated by scripture. For example, I would say that from the scripture since Jesus has physically ascended to heaven and has said that he would not return again until every eye will see him there are those who come along and claim a personal experience of "Jesus appeared to me." If they mean by that that Jesus appeared in a vision or a spiritual ecstasy of some sort which was inner and psychologically and spiritually renewing then I would buy that. Jesus does make those kind of experiences. But if they mean, "Jesus appeared to me like he did to the disciples and I felt his hands and I touched him and I ate with him," then that cannot be supported by the scripture. I don't know who they met but I have a terrible time with that from the scripture.

We must support our experience by the scripture or otherwise we depart from truth and otherwise just believing wherever our experience leads us. Experience can be dangerous.

A third thing about an apology that is important is the devil wants to cheat us out of spiritual experience by raising disputings in our mind.

This was the case I suppose a lot for me. I had a lot of questions as a young person growing up in the church. On the one hand I was getting education on the secular side but sometimes people on the spiritual side were not addressing questions which I had. It was said to me from time to time Doubting is a sin. So every time I had a doubt or a question it was Don't ask that. Don't tempt the Lord. He's not going to like you if you doubt. So a lot of my questions went unresolved. I got in deep trouble in my spiritual experience as a result of that.

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In regard to the Pentecostal experience there has been such a barrage of propaganda and doctrine brought against those of the Pentecostal and charismatic conviction that you're betraying the scripture, you're not reading it correctly, you're letting your experience be your guide. And you certainly can't have a doctrine like this if you're advanced and enlightened biblically. And this sort of thing. If you're not careful and you don't know the scripture let that kind of thing rob you of the blessing God wants you to have.

The devil after all is always saying, "Hath God really said?"

The fourth reason why an apology is important is we owe it I think to our non-Pentecostal brothers and sisters in Christ to hunger for more of the Spirit but we hold back for fear of falling into heretical or unscriptural experience. I can understand that attitude having gone to a basically non-charismatic seminary. There are many people whose impressions of the people in the Pentecostal or charismatic renewal is that they don't have any scriptures to point their view. They just take a text, isolate it, use it out of context and we can't go with that kind of thing. I think there's a real legitimate need for a Pentecostal apologist in my own life and our lives together.

I have talked about the five terms used to describe the baptism in the Spirit. I want to this Sunday night and next Sunday night speak on the evidence from the book of Acts itself in regard to the evidence for our understanding of baptism in the Spirit.

I want to deal with two basic objections to our teaching of the baptism in the Spirit that are raised by Bible believing Christians but perhaps they have not had an understanding of our position and our persuasion from the scriptures. Basically two questions are thrown at Pentecostal doctrine. I think probably if I could take the two most cardinal opposition viewpoint that I have had to address myself and have heard and read about it would be these two viewpoints.

One is you Pentecostals are in error on building your doctrine of the Holy Spirit from the book of Acts. You cannot do that. You cannot build doctrine from Acts because it is an historically narrative book. It does not contain doctrine. It contains experience. You must build your doctrine from the epistles. There has been that attempt. I'll deal totally with that objection this evening.

The second objection then follows. Even if you could use Acts you can't prove anything from Acts because the text doesn't say what you say it says. You'll basically find this in the Dallas theological seminary and the non-Pentecostal parts of the world.

When we talk about doctrine I want to underline the fact that I am not separating myself from brothers and sisters in Christ. I believe if they can talk about scripture openly without being mad at me, I can talk about scripture openly and not be angry with them. It's with gentleness and conviction that we share these things. I'm not putting anybody down.

The first objection – you cannot build your doctrine from the book of Acts – this is what we do. When we go establish the doctrine of the baptism in the Spirit, we go to Acts 2 and 8 and 10 and 11, Acts 9 and 19. Five instances. We build our case of baptism in the Spirit off these five instances in the book of Acts. Not from Corinthians. When Paul says, "Do all speak in tongues?" In Corinthians we say that doesn't refer to the baptism in the Spirit at all. That refers

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to the operation of the gift of tongues in a public setting. He's not talking about the baptism in the Spirit. He's talking about the gift of speaking in tongues with interpretation. We don't build the doctrine of the baptism of the Spirit from the epistles at all. We build it from Acts.

Why is it that there are those that say we cannot do this? Hermeneutics – interpretation of scripture – has certain ground rules. For example the New Testament interprets the Old Testament. How do we mean that? The Old Testament says “An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth,” that does not justify us as Christians when somebody crosses us of bashing their mouth in. Why? Because the New Testament interprets the Old. Jesus said, “If someone strikes you on the right cheek turn to them the other also.” So the New Testament governs our understanding of the Old Testament. We would say that clear passages interpret obscure passages. We also say that didactic or teaching passages interpret narrative passages. Example: Acts 5, Ananias and Sapphira. Ananias and Sapphira tell a partial truth – a lie for which sentence is passed upon them. The judgment, which is in the future age, is moved into the present and they're carried out of the company of the saints dead.

It would not be a healthy thing for the body of Christ to begin building a doctrine from Acts 5. Wouldn't be a lot of healthy people left. Why? Why don't we build a doctrine from Acts 5 that when you tell a half truth like Ananias and Sapphira, sentence is going to be passed – zap and you're out!

We make a distinction between what can be called unique experiences which are non-repeatable in scripture and normative experiences which are repeatable. For example there is a procedure of church discipline that the Lord lines out in Matthew 18 where if your brother sins [including telling a lie] you go to him personally. If he doesn't repent you take another person with you. If he doesn't repent then, you tell it to the whole church. If he doesn't repent then let him be to you an outcast. That's the normal procedure and that's the procedure that Paul follows in 1 Corinthians 5 when there is a man who is living illicitly with his stepmother. Why doesn't Paul say, Let the power of the Spirit come down and zap him. Because he's governed by normative procedure. Didactic passages interpret narrative or unique passages. Therefore when the non-Pentecostal evangelical Christian says to the Pentecostal, You cannot use Acts because didactic passages interpret narrative passages and you simply cannot therefore do this.

If there was meant to be an experience as vital as the baptism in the Spirit as an experience alongside salvation then surely it would have been dealt with in the epistles. But the fact is it is not dealt with in the epistles. Of course this presents a problem. If the matter is not dealt with in the epistles how can then the epistles interpret the data in Acts. So the non-charismatic builds his doctrine of the baptism of the Spirit on one scripture – 1 Corinthians 12:13. Which he then uses one scripture to interpret all the data in the book of Acts and force all the data of the book of Acts into that one scripture even though that one scripture cannot bear the weight of all that data. 1 Corinthians 12:13 simply says, “By one Spirit you're all baptized into one body.” The baptism is not into the Spirit. It's into the body. It's by the Spirit we're baptized into the body. The Spirit is the baptizer. In Acts 2, Christ is the baptizer. A different agent and a different element into which we are placed.

What are the answers we can give to a person who says you cannot build doctrine from the book of Acts.

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The response I would give is there is no didactic teaching in the epistles setting forth the doctrine of the trinity. And surely you don't not believe in the doctrine of the trinity because there's no didactic passage dealing with it. We build in our understanding of the trinity – most of the scriptures come out of the narrative portions of the book of Acts. Apart from the references there is no didactic teaching of the trinity. The trinity is there but it's not didactically developed.

What do we do when we come to gospel narratives? We see that Jesus' baptism, he was there on earth, the Father's voice spoke from heaven and the Spirit descended. We look at that narrative passage and say, "That teaches the doctrine of the trinity." Here is a narrative giving forth doctrinal truth. It's simply not always the case that important doctrine of scripture is developed sequentially or didactically in an epistle setting.

Another answer that I would give that there is no didactic teaching setting forth the doctrine of the virgin birth. I don't know any evangelical that wants to throw away the doctrine of the virgin birth because it's not taught in the epistles. You'll find not one reference to the virgin birth in the epistles. In fact the only references are in the gospels of Matthew and Luke. You cannot throw out the doctrine of the virgin birth because it's not systematically developed somewhere. It's taught in the narrative section.

There is further no didactic section setting forth the mode of water baptism. Mode means whether you immerse, sprinkle, or pour. You'll find no teaching in the epistles on this. The only evidence you get in terms of mode is in the book of Acts and the gospels, the narrative portion again. You have phrases for example, "Phillip went down into the water with the eunuch," and we get an idea that if you went into the water he must have gone *into the water*. We talk about immersion and that as the meaning of baptism.

Another thing in regard to this is there would be in the scripture no didactic teaching on the Lord's Supper had their not been a problem in the Corinthian church. In the epistles there is no teaching on the Lord's Supper. Yet it is a rite that is celebrated in every Christian communion. Some see it as a sacrament and teach transubstantiation. Some as emblematic. But if it were not for a problem in the Corinthian church the epistles would have never talked about the Lord's Supper. But because there was a problem at Corinth the epistles talk about it. Which leads me as a Pentecostal to conclude that simply because the epistles don't say anything about the baptism in the Spirit, I am free to conclude that there was no problem in regard to the doctrine and therefore it didn't have to be death with. If there had been no problem, the Lord's Supper the whole example of the Lord's Supper would have been simply left developed in the book of Acts and the gospels.

There is no didactic teaching in the New Testament outside of Revelation 20 on the millenium. Yet there are believers who would hang their whole theology on the doctrine of the millenium.

Let me say this, there is clear teaching in the epistles that we maybe taught from Acts. Where do I get that? 2 Timothy 3:16 "All scripture is inspired by God [God breathed] and is profitable for teaching [doctrine]. Rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." Notice Paul does not say, some scripture is good for doctrine. Some scripture is good for exhortation. Some scripture is good for illustration. But all scripture is profitable for doctrine or teaching. I will not allow as a matter of conviction somebody to take a whole book of the scripture and says you cannot develop doctrine

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out of that book. On the other hand I'd be very careful when I read Acts to distinguish the unique from the normative. That is the events that happen only once and are never repeated and the events that happen more than once and appear to be repeatable like Ananias and Sapphira appear to be unique. But there are other things, which we'll look at in our doctrine of the Spirit that are repeatable.

One non-Pentecostal writer said, "Acts is a narrative of the apostles experience. Whereas the epistles contain the apostles teaching. We are not to duplicate the apostles' experience. But we are to obey their teaching." In other words you cannot have what they had. But you must obey what they said.

Evidently no one told Stephen and Phillip that. Stephen didn't say, "Acts of healing is in the sphere of the apostles and we deacons cannot do that." He just went out and great signs came through his ministry. Same with Phillip.

I think in regard to this viewpoint that Acts contains the apostles' experience and the epistles contain the apostles teaching we can't have the experience but we should obey the teaching, we need some demythologization there. Where has this viewpoint been in the twentieth century. How could this viewpoint have not what the Lord has done in this century? There's still some of this viewpoint that actually believe the age of miracles was over in the apostolic age. I do not know how they come at that.

The continual charge against Pentecostals is we base our theology upon our experience. There's nothing wrong with that if you can prove experience from the scripture. I'll show how in Acts Peter has an experience that God declares all things clean. Once he has the experience he begins understand the word that Jesus spoke in Mark 7 whereby he declared all things clean. But it took the experience to make the word come alive. We are continually told you base your theology upon your experience.

By the way this particular charge is not born out by the January 1, 1901 modern outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the Bible school at Topeka, Kansas because they had spent days studying the scripture to discern what the scripture said in regard to the baptism of the Spirit. It wasn't a bunch of people getting together and having an experience. It was a bunch of people gathered together and studying the scripture. Out of their study of the scripture came the experience most people overlook.

I have an objection to this viewpoint. I'm tired of being charged that I base my theology upon experience. I am increasingly beginning to say this: "I do not base my theology upon experience. I base theology upon the word of God. It is you who are basing your theology upon experience. The fact is you haven't had the experience therefore your theology is based upon your lack of the experience. And that is based on experience." I say that kindly, lovingly. But truthfully. I have had enough of that charge.

I think the non-charismatic of our day are the ones whose theology is coming from their experience.

Pearlman published a fascinating little book in 1935 called The Heavenly Gift. I'm going to quote at length from it. The position as Pentecostals is never that we have the Spirit but they

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don't. That's not the question. Every Christian has the Spirit of God. The question is whether or not we have had in addition to the saving work of the Spirit, the sanctifying work of the Spirit, the bringing forth of fruit of the Spirit in our life. We've also had what is called the baptism in the Spirit or the charismatic or Pentecostal empowerment. It's not either/or in regard to the Spirit. It is have you had an experience, which is doctrinally taught in scripture from the book of Acts. Pearlman has this to say about that subject

“There is one Holy Spirit but many operations of that Spirit. Just as there is one electricity but many operations of that electricity. The same electricity propels streetcars, lights our houses, operates refrigerators, performs many other tasks. In like manner the one Spirit regenerates, sanctifies, energizes, illumines and imparts special gifts. The variety of the operation is beautifully set forth in the many symbols employed in the scriptures to picture the work of the Holy Spirit. He is the gentle dove who broods over us. The wind which blows over us in cooling and life giving power, the fire that warms and purifies. The water which quenches spiritual thirst. Cleanses our lives and makes us faithful. The seal that preserves us and assures us of our sonship. The oil which speaks of usefulness, fruitfulness, beauty and perennial life. The Spirit regenerates human nature in the crisis of conversion. Then as the Spirit of holiness within produces the fruit of the Spirit, the distinctive features of Christian character. At times believers make a special consecration and receive that uplift to a higher spiritual plain and consequent accession of joy and peace which has sometimes been labeled sanctification or a second definite work of grace. But in addition [all the pervious are legitimate valid ministries of the Spirit] to these operations of the Holy Spirit there is another. Having for its special purpose the energizing of human nature for special service for God and issuing in an outward expression of supernatural character. In a general way Paul refers to this outward expression as “the manifestation of the Spirit.” 1 Corinthians 12:7. Perhaps in contrast to the quiet and secret operations of the Spirit. In the New Testament this experience is designated by such expressions as falling upon, coming upon, being poured out, being filled with. Which expressions conveyed the thought of suddenness and supernaturalness. All these terms are connected with the experience known as the baptism with the Holy Spirit. The operation of the Spirit described by these terms is so distinct from his quiet and ordinary manifestations that sometimes scholars have coned the word “charismatic” to describe it.”

That was forty-four years ago and probably as penetrating and decisive word as can be said about what we've been sharing.

I'm right in the middle of something but I wanted to set this before you in saying we want to deal honestly and fairly with the criticisms that have been raised against what we have cherished and believed and experienced. We want to continue doing this for a number of Sunday nights.

[end of tape]