

NBC Devotional
July 14, 2021
“Utterly Changed for Service”

John answered them all, “I baptize you with water. But one who is more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” (Luke 3:16-17, NIV, 1984)

The Lord has given many great and precious promises for all those who follow Him in faith and obedience. The Father’s promise to the believers is the gift of the Holy Spirit, the One who not only brings conviction of sin but also comforts, teaches, guides, purifies, and empowers them for kingdom service. The 120 disciples gathered in the upper room in obedience to Jesus Christ’s command to wait, pray, and expect the fulfillment of the promise from the Father. The promise was that they would receive power from heaven—something so powerful that it would utterly change them on the inside and give effectiveness in reaching the nations with the good news of the gospel. The promise was a person, the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit—the promise that Christ would baptize them with the Holy Spirit and fire from heaven.

On that day, the Holy Spirit descended suddenly in response to their faith in the promise of God. They saw tongues of fire descend on each believer. The Holy Spirit came upon them in power, baptizing the consecrated hearts of believers, burning up the chaff of inbred sin. He not only crucified their sinful human nature with its passions of selfishness, lust, pride, anger, and fear but also burnt up the dross of ingrained sinful desires in the believers, purifying their hearts to be wholly devoted to Christ.

The Holy Spirit entirely sanctified each of them through and through—spirit, soul, and body. He gave the power from heaven and cleansed the inner man. The perfect love of God was poured into their hearts. The apostle Peter later testified that the Holy Spirit came upon both Jewish and Gentile believers in a second work of grace through faith *“making no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith”* (Acts 15:9, NKJV).

After a sinner is saved by grace through faith by repenting of personal sins and has been justified and cleansed (initially sanctified) from acts that lead to death, the Father has promised a baptism with the Holy Spirit and fire, which is the second work of grace. It is an act of God, brought instantaneously on the fully consecrated believer by faith. The state of grace is confirmed with a blessed assurance from the Holy Spirit. The believer’s service for the Kingdom and maturity into Christlikeness come through the enabling power of the Holy Spirit. The entirely sanctified believer is dead to sin and empowered for victorious living with an anointing for service and effectiveness.

The devoted Old Testament men like Noah, Samuel, and Daniel and women like Ruth and Esther were empowered by the Holy Spirit to fulfill their ministry and calling. The early disciples received power from heaven to lead blameless lives here on earth. What the early church experienced, we can still experience today.

In times that are so uncertain and chaotic, now more than ever, you need the ministry and power of the precious Holy Spirit to live for Christ without reproach while serving others. The work of the Holy Spirit changes lives. He changes families, churches, and nations.

He is calling each of us to set aside regular time every day to read the Word of God and to pray. He's calling each of us to be all out for Jesus. The days are evil and the time is short. Sin is running rampant in the culture and even in the visible church in some places. Even so, Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today, and forever. His promises are real. The challenges seem to have never been greater, and we cannot overcome them in our own efforts. He has promised us everything we need for life, godliness, and to reach the nations with the good news of scriptural holiness.

When our families face crises, we turn to the only source of our help. We turn to the Lord, praying and believing the many great and precious promises. We expect the Holy Spirit to act in a way that will bring honor and glory to Jesus Christ. Prayer changes people and situations because God changes them through the work of His Spirit. Those who know Him must rely on His great and precious promises from the Scripture.

Jesus promised His disciples that He would not leave them alone (John 14:16-18). He promised to give them a Helper and Comforter, a Sanctifier and Healer, who is the Advocate. This promise is not just for preachers, evangelists, and teachers. The Holy Spirit has been given without limit to whoever will surrender to Him, cleansing the person from the enslavement of sinful behaviors (initial sanctification) and purifying the heart from inbred sin (entire sanctification). You need the Holy Spirit in full measure. The good news is you can have as much of His Presence and power as you desire. The promise of the Holy Spirit is for those who think they are near and those who think they are too far away:

"The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call." (Acts 2:39)

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