

WHAT IN THE WORLD IS GOD DOING

By Graham Truscott

“Behold I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?”
(Isaiah 43:19)

A NEW HUNGER

Today there is a new hunger in the hearts of many sincere believers for a closer walk with the Lord Jesus. New longings for holiness. New demands for power from on high. A new sense of helplessness – and desperate need.

This new yearning is the result of a new awareness of failure. We simply have not had the power to obey the command of our Lord Jesus Christ to “preach the gospel to the whole creation” (Mark 16:15). Because of the weakness of our contact with the Source of all power, we twentieth century Christians have failed to make the impact in our cities and villages that the New Testament Church did in theirs.

But the hunger is yet more than this. Many are tired of substandard Christian living. Our lives do not burn with the purity of the Fire from Heaven that first ignited the New Testament Church. We read in the Bible, “Sin shall have no dominion over you” (Romans 6:14) and it sounds like a dream. We read, “Thanks be to God, Who in Christ always leads us in triumph” (2 Corinthians 2:14), and it reads like a translator’s mistake.

God speaks to our hearts from His Word, “You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you” (Acts 1:8), and for a brief moment our hearts thrill with expectancy. Then our senses remind many of us that we have been taught, “But that is not for today,” or, “You have received everything when you first accepted Christ. You have it all. Only believe.” How we have been robbed of our blessed spiritual inheritance in Christ!

For many years Christians did not object when ministers told them they needed no more than they had. If they were told that the very Resurrection Power that raised the Lord Jesus from the dead was available for them, they

at once suspected a “strange doctrine.” The suggestion of what they were in Christ, and that His power was freely available to them from Jesus, the Great Baptizer with the Holy Spirit and fire (Matthew 3:11), sounded to them like a new philosophy, and error. If someone would preach that Jesus wanted to give His disciples the same burning zeal today He gave the one hundred and twenty disciples on the Day of Pentecost, they would think someone was trying to lead them astray.

They had been taught so long and so persistently about our weaknesses, our lack of ability, and our unworthiness, they hardly dared to say “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Hebrews 13:8). When Christians were faced with the truth many were afraid to believe it because they thought people would misunderstand them, close their doors to them, or think they had become unbalanced. Up to then, few had taken the Bible seriously about the Holy Spirit or acted as though it were true.

In this age of tension and strife, when man has power to push a button and blow himself into eternity, there has never been such a need for the power of the Holy Spirit in the Church. But where is that power?

Why is the Church so powerless today? Why are Christians making so little vital impact and so few advances? Why is there so much defeat, despair, and discouragement among believers? Where are the great miracles, signs and wonders of the Bible? Might we not well ask with Elisha of old, “Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah?” (2 Kings 2:14). Shall we not search our hearts, and confess with Gideon, “If the Lord is with us, why then has all this befallen us? And where are all His wonderful deeds which our fathers recounted to us?” (Judges 6:13)

Where are these anointed, unlearned men, who preach the Gospel of Christ, and turn thousands to the Lord. Where are these firebrands who are turning the world upside down? (Acts 17:6) At the commencement of their Christian lives, the earliest Christians had “laid up for themselves a good foundation for the future” (1 Timothy 6:19). They had built their lives on THE ONLY FOUNDATION.

The third step in God’s plan for THE ONLY FOUNDATION of the true Christian life is “Receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). The New Testament Christians were charged with the dynamic power of God’s Holy Spirit! To meet the need of this hour, we too need a genuine experience of His power working daily in our lives. So many Christians hunger for this power today.

FOR DAILY LIVING

To obey God and “Receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” is not to embrace some emotional fanaticism. To do so is to take a most practical step to become fruitful in daily Christian living and witness. The Bible clearly teaches that God’s command to “be filled with the Spirit,” is for all who name the Name of Christ (Ephesians 5: 18). To live for Him – in the office, in the home, at school, at college, in the church – we must obey this command. Disobedience to this command will mean an incomplete foundation.

It will only result in failure defeat, and tragedy. We do not need the theory, the “take-it-by-faith believe-that-you-have-it-and-do-your-best-experience.” We have tried this substitute for THE ONLY FOUNDATION too long. Nor do we need a wildfire excitement that leads to emotionalism. This will cause the receiver to think more about the manner in which the Holy Spirit comes, than about the real, practical power and soul-winning efficiency which the infilling of the Spirit brings. Neither do we want an experience which causes us to walk around with an “I-am-holier-than-you, for-I-have-had-an-experience which-you-do-not-possess” attitude. God does not want us to experience His Holy Spirit only for its own joys, blessings, signs and evidences, (though, thank God, these will come when we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit). The Bible teaches a sane, practical experience by which the Holy Spirit forms Christ-like character in us, and gives us power to help us present Jesus Christ to a dying world.

A NEW AWAKENING

In every century since the first Day of Pentecost, there have been those who have experienced the Spirit-filled life. But in the early 1900’s, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit assumed worldwide proportions.

This worldwide outpouring of the Spirit ignited a fervent love for Christ, a powerful witness for the Gospel, and unparalleled missionary zeal, but the Church on the whole chose to stick with tradition. So, for about fifty years, any talk of New Testament manifestations of the Holy Spirit was discouraged on the pretext it promoted emotionalism, fanaticism, or heresy. Those who were receiving the Holy Spirit in the New Testament manner were excluded and forced to band themselves together. They soon became known as “Pentecostals.” Criticism, even abuse, was hurled at those who dared believe

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever,” and would fill Christians with the Holy Spirit, just as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles.

Many went to extremes as has happened in every spiritual awakening since the New Testament times. Even the apostle Paul had to write to the churches he had founded to correct various errors. Yet the Pentecostal Movement became (and incidentally, still is) the fastest growing Christian Movement in the world.

But over the past twenty years or so, a NEW THING has been taking place. World renowned preachers and authors, noted for their balanced presentation of the Scriptures are coming to the defense of those they once despised. Not only this. Throughout the world, many in the historic churches are receiving the Holy Spirit, just as the early disciples and members of the Pentecostal Movement have over the last fifty or sixty years!

ON ALL FLESH

“And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even upon the menservants and maidservants in those days, I will pour out My Spirit” (Joel 2:28, 29)

God’s promise concerning the days in which we live is to pour out His Spirit on all flesh. Not just on one church or denomination; or on a select few; not just on preachers and evangelists; not just on one country; but on all flesh. Well has Dr. R.A. Torrey, first principal of the Moody Bible Institute, written:

“The baptism with the Holy Spirit is the birthright of every believer. It was purchased for us by the atoning death of Christ, and when He ascended to the right hand of the Father, He received the promise of the Father and shed Him forth upon the church, and if anyone today has not the baptism with the Holy Spirit as a personal experience, it is because he has not claimed his birthright.”

Evangelist Billy Graham, speaking to a gathering of ministers, said:

“In the main denominations we have looked a bit askance at our brethren from the Pentecostal churches because of their emphasis on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, but I believe the time has come to give the Holy Spirit his rightful place in our churches. We need to learn once again what it means to be baptized with the Holy Spirit.

“I know that we can rationalize and immediately ten thousand theological questions arise and we try to figure it all out, but I want to tell you that we need to accept, we need to get something. Give it any terminology you want, but we do not have the same dynamic and the same power the early Church had. They had the filling of the Holy Spirit.”

“THE PROMISE IS FOR YOU”

Do not be robbed of the blessing of a complete foundation for your Christian life by thinking that God is pouring out His Spirit on just a select few in the full-time ministry. God’s command to “Receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” is part of the normal Christian life for all believers:

“For the promise of the Holy Spirit is to and for you and your children, and to and for all that are far away, even to as many as the Lord our God invites and bids come to Himself” (Acts 2:39 – Amplified Bible).

Yes. God is indeed doing a new thing! Today, as you read these words, God wants to build THE ONLY FOUNDATION in your life. He invites you to Himself, to take the third step, and “Receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” “The promise is for you.” Have you received it?

“WHAT WILL THEY THINK OF ME?”

Is it not more important to consider what God thinks of you? He wants you, His child to be whole- fully equipped to meet the onslaught of the forces of darkness, fully empowered to live a completely victorious and Christ-honoring life. Can we respond to Him in any less than complete obedience and total abandonment to His will?

“WON’T THIS CAUSE DIVISION?”

It shouldn’t. But the possibility cannot be ruled out. In this connection we should remember the words of Jesus, “Think not that have come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace but a sword” (Matthew 10:34).

Someone once remarked, “Do you not think any truth is divisive to those who reject it?” Ponder these words. And remember for many, many Christians the

fullness of the Holy Spirit has led to warm fellowship with other believers in Christ they were never able to experience before.

“WON’T I BECOME OVERBALANCED?”

Many have a false sense of modesty and decorum. We always want to be respectable. In the days of our Lord and the early Church it was not so. Wherever that early band of Spirit-filled, zealous witnesses went there were always riots or revivals! They found themselves beaten, stoned, imprisoned or carried along in the stream of an outpouring of the Holy Spirit in revival blessing.

Mahatma Gandhi, known in India as the “Father of the Nation,” became zealous for a great cause – Indian freedom from British rule. He fasted, suffered, and toiled tirelessly for this. Three times he was imprisoned for long periods. He led delegations, demonstrations, and passive resistance. Come what may, he would not give up. Many of his followers joined him in prison. Finally, independence was granted.

Should we do less for Christ? Is the cause of Christ any less important? Let us examine anew our sense of values. Would to God that we be filled with renewed enthusiasm and zeal for our Lord.

Let us, then, be encouraged. God says, “Behold, I am doing a new thing now.” (Isaiah 43:19). The rivers of salvation are flowing into the dry desert. The waters of His Holy Spirit are being poured out on the wilderness. Allow God to build your life on THE ONLY FOUNDATION, for He wants you “for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit” (Ephesians 2:20).

HOW TO BE A PART OF WHAT GOD IS DOING.

“Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is . . . be filled with the Spirit.” (Ephesians 5:17,18)

“Receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” is not a suggestion to believers in Christ for the deepening of their spiritual lives, nor is it an optional extra. “Receive the Holy Spirit” is God’s command to sinful men and women to lay THE ONLY FOUNDATION at the beginning of their Christian lives! The gift of the Holy Spirit is not an extra experience beyond what is necessary for every Christian. Nor is it an experience received only by a select few after years of godly living

to make them “super-Christians.” It is one of the three normal steps through the door to a full salvation.

Some churches have over-emphasized receiving the Holy Spirit as a second work of God’s grace after receiving Jesus Christ as personal Savior. But many of us do not hear about receiving the Holy Spirit until years after our conversion to Christ. (I heard nothing at all about this experience until nearly five years after I had become a Christian). To repair the damage, we often have to re-read the New Testament. A second work of grace – yes. But never let us lose sight of the fact that in the New Testament, the three steps of THE ONLY FOUNDATION are intended for the beginning of the Christian life.

For example, the Christians at Samaria (Acts chapter 8) had a deficient initial experience. Their foundation was not complete. But the situation was remedied when they received the Holy Spirit as Peter and John laid hands upon them. The tragedy is the exceptional situation at Samaria has become the common one today. The Bible foundation is, “Repent,” “Be baptized,” “Receive the Holy Spirit.”

ALL BELIEVERS HAVE THE HOLY SPIRIT

Receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit is a separate step in THE ONLY FOUNDATION, distinct from receiving Christ as Savior. All believers do not enjoy the fullness of the Holy Spirit. However, all who have repented of their sins, accepted Jesus as Savior, and been born anew, do have a measure of the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit convicts of sin (John 16:8). After repentance, the Holy Spirit performs that miracle of all miracles: the new birth, without which no man shall see the Kingdom of God (John 3:3). And the Bible says in Romans 8:9, “Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Him.” All who have received Christ as their Savior have experienced the first step in THE ONLY FOUNDATION. This is when the Holy Spirit caused them to be born anew and they are indwelt by the Spirit. The Bible says they are “born of the Spirit” (John 3:8). As the Christian grows, obeying the Spirit, and yielding to Him, more of his life will be indwelt by the Spirit. But the indwelling of the Holy Spirit must not be confused with the infilling of the Spirit – that outpouring of the Holy Spirit that God gives for victorious, holy living, and powerful witnessing.

“GIFT,” “BAPTISM,” OR “FULLNESS”?

What are we to make of such terms as “the gift of the Holy Spirit,” “baptism with the Holy Spirit,” or “fullness of the Holy Spirit” used to describe the point at which we receive the Holy Spirit’s power into our lives after we have been born anew? I trust that mere points of terminology will not be allowed to obscure the blessings of the Spirit-filled life God wants each one of us to enjoy. It is not correct terms we need; rather to build our lives on THE ONLY FOUNDATION!

The Bible describes the first step of THE ONLY FOUNDATION (the personal experience of salvation) in different terms. God does this to give a clearer description of this one experience. This first step is called being “born anew” (John 3:3), “born of the Spirit” (John 3:8), “converted” (Matthew 18:3 -KJV), “saved” (John 10:9), “believing” (Mark 16:16), “repent and turn to God” (Acts 26:20), letting Jesus “come in” to our heart (Revelation 3:20), “receiving Christ” (John 13:20). This other step of THE ONLY FOUNDATION (receiving the power of the Holy Spirit) is also described in various terms.

For example:

Being “baptized with the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 3:11; Acts 1:5),
Being “filled with the Spirit” (Acts 2:4; Ephesians 5:18),
Receiving “the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38).
God “giving” the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:32; Acts 8:18),
”Receiving” the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:15, 10:47),
The Holy Spirit “falling” on the believer (Acts 8:16, 10:44, 11:15),
The Holy Spirit “coming” on the believer (Acts 19:6),
The Spirit being “poured” upon the believers (Joel 2:28; Acts 2:17, 18: 10:45),
Being “clothed” with the power of the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49).

Each term has its own significance, and reveals a different aspect of the infilling with power which is the promise of God the Father to all His children. Some say the term “baptism with the Spirit” is sectarian. Definitely not! No one movement or denomination within the Church has a monopoly on the blessing of God. The apostle Peter was not afraid of using this expression when speaking of the supernatural endowment with power from on high. John the Baptist was not ashamed of the term either, nor was our Lord Jesus Christ. Neither should we be!

The Bible teaches that the terms “baptized with the Spirit,” “baptized in the Spirit,” and “filled with the Spirit” may all be used to describe the first infilling

with the Holy Spirit of the believer, who has already trusted in Christ for salvation. The baptism with, or in the Holy Spirit, is the initial infilling. After the baptism with the Spirit, the term “filled with the Spirit” (not “baptized with the Spirit”) is used. For example, the apostle Peter was first filled, or baptized with the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:4). However, Acts 4:8 (“Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit”) describes one of his subsequent fillings.

We may also note from the Bible that “baptism with the Spirit” is used in all four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles to describe receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit. It surely must be of great importance for God to speak to us like this.

DO WE RECEIVE THE BAPTISM, OR FULLNESS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AT CONVERSION?

The Bible answers a definite “NO.” To those who say they received the fullness of the Holy Spirit at conversion, the Bible replies the disciples didn’t, Paul didn’t, the Samaritans didn’t, the Ephesians didn’t. The fact is, nobody in the Bible did.

The first disciples believed on the Risen Lord after His resurrection, but received the baptism in the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. The Christians at Samaria believed in Christ and were baptized as believers, but, until Peter and John came and laid hands on them they had not “received the Holy Spirit, for He had not yet fallen on them” (Acts 8:15,16).

The apostle Paul received Christ as Savior and Lord on the Damascus road, but received the gift of the Holy Spirit three days later. The Ephesian disciples believed in Christ long before the Holy Spirit came on them. In every instance, two different operations of the Spirit took place as God built THE ONLY FOUNDATION in their lives. No wonder Paul could say, “You are God’s building” (1 Corinthians 3:9).

THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

Our blessed Lord Jesus was “born of the Spirit” from His mother’s womb, because He was conceived by the Holy Spirit (Matthew 1:18). He was the perfect, spotless, sinless Son of God. But 30 years later, as He was about to begin His ministry of preaching, teaching, and healing, He was Himself “anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power” (Acts 10:38). John the Baptist

“saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and alighting on Him” (Matthew 3:16). Two separate experiences!

Knowing that God’s sinless Lamb, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, did everything by the power of the anointing of the Spirit He received thirty years after His birth, let us not be deceived into thinking we can live as Christians without a similar anointing with the power of the Holy Spirit!

You have only started!

When you have received the baptism with the Holy Spirit, you do not “have all God has for you.” To be baptized with, or filled with the Spirit is not a “once for all” experience. To be filled with the Spirit is not an experience to be attained. It is a spiritual condition to be maintained. You do not struggle and strive for “your baptism” and step up on to a super-spiritual level when you receive. You have not arrived.

YOU HAVE ONLY JUST STARTED!

To be born anew, or born of the Spirit, opens the door into the Christian life. There is no other way into the kingdom of God. Similarly, the baptism with the Holy Spirit opens the door into the Spirit-filled life. It is a crisis experience, which follows receiving Jesus as Savior... It is a specific act of surrender to the Holy Spirit. No one is ever baptized in water gradually, and no one ever receives the gift of the Holy Spirit gradually. When you receive the gift of the power of the Holy Spirit, you know! In his book, *Keys to the Deeper Life*, Dr. Tozer says:

“Neither in the Old Testament nor in the New, nor in Christian testimony as found in the writings of the saints as far as my knowledge goes, was any believer ever filled with the Holy Spirit who did not know he had been filled. Neither was anyone filled who did not know when he was filled. And no one was ever filled gradually.”

Dear reader, what about your experience? Do you know you have received the gift of the Holy Spirit?

From the teaching of the Bible, there can be no doubt that receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit leads the believer into an altogether new and exciting relationship with God. Christ becomes more real. The Bible becomes so much

easier to understand. There is power and victory that were never thought possible.

Some have said of the Holy Spirit, “One baptism, many fillings.” True. But the Bible says, “One baptism, daily fillings” is the need of each of our lives. Paul said, “Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day” (2 Corinthians 4:16 – King James Version). How is the inward man to be renewed daily? Paul prayed that the Christians might “be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man” (Ephesians 3:16).

Let the believer who receives the gift of the Holy Spirit continue to be filled with the Spirit daily, for only His might and strength enables us to:

WALK IN THE FULLNESS OF THE SPIRIT

God commands us: “Walk and live habitually in the Holy Spirit – responsive to and controlled and guided by the Spirit; then you will certainly not gratify the cravings and desires of the flesh – of human nature without God.

If we live by the Holy Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. If by the Holy Spirit we have our life in God, let us go forward walking in line, our conduct controlled by the Spirit” (Galatians 5:16, 25 – Amplified Bible).

Nothing less than this daily walk in the Holy Spirit will enable us to live a victorious, Spirit-filled life. The Holy Spirit can be grieved (Ephesians 4:30).

The Holy Spirit can be resisted (Acts 7:51). The fire of the Spirit can be quenched (1 Thessalonians 5:19). Bitterness, pride, coldness of heart, and a host of other sins will result. Nothing has been a greater stumbling block to those who would turn to Jesus than to see Christians who, claiming to be baptized with the Holy Spirit, have lost the Spirit’s power and presence in their lives. Lose that fresh flow of the Rivers of Living Water of the Spirit (John 7:38, 39), and there is nothing left of the Spirit filled life. In that case, no amount of words, outward show, or demonstration will ever bring forth good and lasting fruit, or glorify Christ.

HAVE YOU RECEIVED?

“Receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” “Be filled with the Spirit” an essential part of THE ONLY FOUNDATION for your life. Dear friend, while reading these

pages has the Lord revealed to you your need to obey and receive this precious gift? Are you filled with the Holy Spirit and anointed with power? Do you desire to know God's will? Do you want to bring forth fruit? Are you frustrated by defeat?

Are you hungry for God? Be encouraged with His promise: "Blessed are you that hunger now, for you shall be filled" (Luke 6:21).

"And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:4).

God wants you to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. God's fullness is for you.