

## **Baptism in the Holy Spirit**

*(The following email was prepared for a friend of mine who challenged my stand, and the Pentecostal position, on the baptism in the Holy Spirit. I send the following defence of my position from scripture, and it has become something useful to others who seek to understand the doctrine of the initial evidence of Spirit Baptism being the speaking in other tongues.)*

I'll leave you with two thoughts: there is a difference between receiving the person of the Holy Spirit at salvation, receiving the Baptism of the Holy Spirit as part of our ongoing walk and sanctification, with the accompanying evidence of tongues, and operating in the gift of tongues in a public meeting. Not every one will speak in tongues as a gift to the Body of Christ, but the promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit, that is, his baptism, is for all whom God calls. John 20:22; Acts 2:39; Acts 8:12-17; 10:44-66; Acts 19:5-7; I Corinthians 14:18

People can spend much time defending the doctrine that not all are meant to speak in tongues and possibly close doors to something great God has for them. If speaking in tongues is an act that edifies (builds up the inner man in strength), and God is no respecter of persons, why would I not desire all the help and strength God can give me? I challenge you to keep an open mind. Desire and faith are prerequisites to receiving from God and if you close the door, God will not open it by force.

The short answer to both of your questions is that, no, 'Tongues' is not the only evidence of Baptism in the Holy Spirit. We maintain that it is an initial, physical evidence of Baptism in the Holy Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit, increased strength, boldness to preach the gospel and use of other spiritual gifts, are further evidences. It has nothing to do with your justification or standing of righteousness in Christ. The baptism in the Spirit has nothing to do with our salvation, but rather, the power with which we can serve Christ.

Being baptized in the Holy Spirit is not proof that you have the Holy Spirit living inside of you either – this happens as we commit our lives to Christ. Upon confession of faith in Jesus Christ as your Saviour, you have the Spirit of Christ (Holy Spirit) taking up residence, living within you. The Baptism in the Holy Spirit is an outflow of the Holy Spirit, who already resides within us, because of our salvation.

One who does not speak in tongues, has the same standing in Christ, because of the cross and the blood of Jesus, as one who speaks in tongues. How can one improve upon declared righteousness in Christ? The ability to speak in tongues only enhances our walk, gives us boldness, edifies the inner man and helps our prayer life – it does not make us better in the eyes of God! Speaking in tongues does not make one more spiritual – in fact, the love we show is the only marker for spirituality. I Corinthians 13

I suspect that the journey of laying down your own doctrinal position on these matters will take some time. I am confident you are a student of the Word, as I am, and that as we keep open minds and hearts toward these things, and honestly seek answers under the tutelage of the Holy Spirit, what is in God's heart will be accomplished.

Above all else, I strive for unity in the Spirit, and want you to know that should we ultimately agree to disagree doctrinally on this issue, it will have no bearing on my love for you as a brother. Thank you for being so willing to sharpen my countenance. Brothers who love, challenge each other. What is so encouraging to me is that you are honestly putting I Thessalonians 5:21 into practice. Scripture provides the basis for all of our convictions, and if and until, you see something that makes sense from scripture, you do well to question its validity.

If you would like to discuss this further, at any time, let's set aside a couple of hours and talk – it is much faster and more interactive, especially for poor typists like myself. (I promise you that our conversation will be calm and respectful, without an argumentative spirit, so that in all we honour God.) Maybe we can set something up on Sunday. Until then, God bless you and your family.