

THE ONLY FOUNDATION

THE FIRM FOUNDATION

“God’s firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: `The Lord knows those who are his” (2Tim 2:19).

Every person who builds a house knows the importance of the foundation. When building, the foundation is built first. Without a proper foundation, the building will surely fall.

Today we are living in times of great uncertainty. In all history there have never been so many wars, famines, earthquakes, strikes, riots, doubts and fears, as there are today. People everywhere are wondering, “What is going to happen next?” In the midst of all this tension, many are asking, “Is there a firm foundation upon which I can build my life?”

My friend, I’m so happy today to be able to tell you there is! Right now, as you read these words, God’s great heart of love reaches out to you. He has a firm foundation for you to build your life upon. Your doubts, fears and uncertainties will leave you, as you build your life on THE ONLY FOUNDATION.

The Bible, which is the Word of God, tells us about this firm foundation. This is God talking to you and me. Speaking to those who have already built their lives on this firm foundation, God says:

“So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the chief cornerstone, in Whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in Whom you also are built into it for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit” (Eph 2:19-22).

What a beautiful picture God gives us here! He loves us so much He wants us to be members of His family. He tells us the only way we can be members of His family is to be built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. The chief cornerstone of that foundation must be God’s only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shed His own blood on the cross, and rose again from the dead, to give us this firm foundation for our lives. And these very lives of

ours God wants to be a beautiful dwelling place for His Spirit. What love! What blessing! What encouragement!

But what is this “apostles’ foundation”? To answer this question, we must turn back to that day when Jesus Christ first poured out the power of His Spirit upon His followers. This was called the Day of Pentecost because of the Jewish feast which was observed on that day. We read about it in The Acts of the Apostles, chapter 2.

WHAT SHALL WE DO?

On the Day of Pentecost, the risen Christ, Who had left earth and returned to God the Father in Heaven, filled His waiting disciples with the power of His Holy Spirit. As a sign of having received the Holy Spirit, the 120 disciples began to speak in languages given by the Spirit Himself. The Jews who had gathered together in Jerusalem to keep the Feast wondered what was happening. Some mocked. Others asked, “*What does this mean?*” (Acts 2:12).

Then Peter gave a powerful address. He told the large crowd which had gathered that God was pouring out His Spirit. He boldly proclaimed to them the Good News of Christ, telling of His death, rising again, and ascending to Heaven. He testified that despite the fact that Jesus was now in Heaven, His disciples were continuing to enjoy His blessing and presence in their lives, by the power of His Holy Spirit. He finished his message with these words:

“Therefore know assuredly that God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus Whom you crucified” (Acts 2:36).

While Peter was saying these things, the Holy Spirit, Who convicts people of their sin, was working in the hearts of the listening crowd. The Spirit’s conviction cut deep, and they began to ask this all-important question: “*What shall we do?*”

“What shall we do?” Remember, people with no firm foundation to their lives are asking this. People who, despite the fact that they are deeply religious, and observe all the ceremonies and rituals of their religion, have no peace in their hearts. They have no assurance that their sins are forgiven. No knowledge of eternal life. They are outside the Kingdom of God.

But they see their need of the Saviour, Jesus Christ. They now realize that it was to shed His blood for the forgiveness of their sins that He died on the cross. They are convinced He is now risen from the grave. They want the salvation which He offers. They want His power in their lives. They want to become followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. To **commence** their Christian life, here is what they are commanded to do:

*“And Peter said to them, ‘**Repent, and be baptized** every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall **receive the gift of the Holy Spirit**’” (Acts 2:38).*

What shall we do?

- (1) **“Repent”**
- (2) **“Be baptized”**
- (3) **“Receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”**

Here the Bible clearly teaches the way the Christian life begins. Here we are taught about THE ONLY FOUNDATION on which we may build our Christian lives. This foundation has three parts of experiences.

Some see in Acts 2:38 two commands to be obeyed – *“Repent,” “Be baptized”* – with the receiving of the Holy Spirit as an automatic result. But in the New Testament nobody ever received the gift, or fullness, of the Holy Spirit, as an automatic result of experiencing the first and second parts of the foundation. Really we see not only two commands to be obeyed, but also a promise **to be received**. For the Bible teaches that the gift or fullness of the Holy Spirit is received as a definite experience, as distinct from obeying these first two commands. There are **three** fundamental, foundation steps, each forming part of the **whole beginning** of the Christian life.

Others accept there are three parts, but teach that our Christian experience is completed by them. However, the Bible teaches that our Christian life is only really **beginning** with them! It is very clear that the apostle Peter, speaking with God’s authority, gave these three directions as a command to those about to start on the Christian way.

As then, so now. On hearing this for the first time, some are filled with questions and doubts. Some mock. Some get angry. Others say “It’s not for today.” But say what we will, we cannot change God’s Word. Rather, we may have to change our thinking.

Friend, I pray that you today will be like those on that day when this message was first proclaimed, who believed the Word of God and obeyed it. For the Bible says as Peter *“exhorted them, saying, ‘Save yourselves from this crooked generation’,”* that *“those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls”* (Acts 2:40,41). And we know that the blessings promised to those who will obey the command are definitely for today when we read the following:

“And Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

“For the promise is to you and to your children and to all that are far off, every one whom the Lord our God calls to Him” (Acts 2:38,39).

What encouraging words! “The promise is to you.” “Everyone whom the Lord our God calls to Him.” Yes, today the Lord Jesus is calling you to Himself. Will you obey His command?

“Repent.” “Be baptized.” “Receive the Holy Spirit.” This, then, is the way to commence a Christian life, according to the Bible. This is the only way. This is THE ONLY FOUNDATION. This is the “apostles’ foundation.”

A little further on, in Acts 2:42, we read that those who took these three steps *“devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching.”* But if the proper foundation had not been laid, there would have been nothing upon which to build the teaching. First comes the “apostles’ foundation,” then the “apostles’ teaching.” Only upon this firm foundation can a building be raised which shall be filled with the presence and beauty of God.

THE FOUNDATION DESTROYED

One of the great heroes of the Bible, King David, cried with concern and alarm: *“If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?”* (Ps 11:3).

It is a great tragedy that in so many branches of the Church of Jesus Christ, one, two, or even all of these foundational experiences have been destroyed. The churches who have left these experiences out of their foundation may look all right at first glance.

But there is a deep hunger in the hearts of many today for the reality of the firm foundation spoken of in the Bible. Worship may be performed as a habit, but the heart will not thrill to the power and presence of Christ, which is made real by the Holy Spirit.

If the foundation be destroyed, the whole house will fall down! At the very least it can never *“grow into a holy temple in the Lord”* (Eph 2:21).

THE CHIEF CORNERSTONE

“Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the chief cornerstone” (Eph 2:20).

How is this? Well, He is the Central Person in the three foundational experiences. Firstly, to come to God we repent of our sins, turning from them to Jesus Christ. He alone can cleanse us from sin by the power of His blood. Then, as we shall soon see, the Lord Jesus is the Central One in water baptism too, for we are to be *“baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ”* (Acts 2:38), being *“buried therefore with Him by baptism”* (Rom 6:3). And thirdly, Christ Jesus Himself gives us the gift of the Holy Spirit, for it is written *“He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit”* (Matt 3:11).

Christ Jesus is the Chief Cornerstone of the foundation – the Rock upon which every wise man will build the house of his life. Jesus said:

“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house upon the rock; and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock” (Matt 7:24,25).

“Founded on the rock.” Which rock? Jesus Christ; for *“He only is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be greatly moved”* (Ps 62:2).

We all want to make wise decisions. Some of us may not have a brilliant education, nor be very wise in the knowledge of this world. But we all desire to be spiritually wise. And the spiritual decision we make now will affect our eternal destiny. Jesus said that the person who makes the wise decision is the one who hears His words, **and does them**. So then, if the Spirit of Jesus commands us through Peter to build a right foundation in our lives, then to act upon these words is the wisest decision we will ever make.

THE FOUNDATION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

“Laying up for themselves a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life which is life indeed” (1Tim 6:19).

God has laid down a pattern for the commencement of the Christian life. It is THE ONLY FOUNDATION upon which a life of faith in Christ must be built.

On the Day of Pentecost, the multitude listening to Peter’s message were convicted of their need, and cried, “What shall we do?” Peter gave these, who had never known Jesus as their Saviour, this pattern, this foundation, for the commencement of Christian life:

*“**Repent, and be baptized** every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall **receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.** For the promise is to you and to your children and to all that are far off, every one whom the Lord our God calls to Him” (Acts 2:38,39).*

“What shall we do?”

- (1) **“Repent”** –
- (2) **“Be baptized”** –
- (3) **“Receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”**

God’s plan. Heaven’s pattern. THE ONLY FOUNDATION. And if the Bible teaches that these three experiences are commanded as THE ONLY FOUNDATION upon which we should start to build our Christian life, then we may expect to find this same foundation right through the New Testament. This is exactly what we do find.

Some teach that if one experiences the first two steps of the foundation, repentance and water baptism, one will automatically have the third, the gift of the Holy Spirit. The only problem with this theory is that we don’t find it in the Bible. Also, vital Christian experience points the other way!

Let us look at THE ONLY FOUNDATION as it is evidenced in the Lord Jesus and His followers in New Testament times.

(1) THE LORD JESUS CHRIST:

(1) “**Repent**” – When sinful man repents of his sins, and puts his trust in the power of the blood of Jesus to wash the stain of sin away, the Holy Spirit does a miracle in his heart, and he is born into the family of God. This is called being “born again,” “born from above,” and “born of the Spirit.”

Jesus Christ the Son of God never needed to repent. He was sinless. He was born of the Spirit from His mother’s womb, for He was conceived by the Holy Spirit (Matt 1:18).

(2) “**Be baptized**” – Then, before starting His active work, He took the next step in laying **THE ONLY FOUNDATION**. He was baptized in water. The Bible record reads:

“Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan [River] to be baptized by him [John]. John would have prevented him, saying, ‘I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?’ But Jesus answered him, ‘Let it be so now; for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.’ Then he consented. And... Jesus was baptized” (Matt 3:13-16).

May all who trust Jesus today see their need to fulfill all righteousness, and follow their Lord through the waters of baptism.

(3) “**Receive the Holy Spirit**” – After baptizing Him in water, John saw the Lord Jesus Christ receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is written:

“And when Jesus was baptized, He went up immediately from the water and behold, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and alighting on Him” (Matt 3:16).

In that river “*God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with Power*” (Acts 10:38), so that He might demonstrate to the world the love and power of God.

(2) THE TWELVE DISCIPLES:

(1) “**Repent**” – The twelve disciples of Jesus lived in a unique age. While they still lived in the Old Testament age, He Who was about to shed His blood of the New Testament, the Lord Jesus, had called them to Himself.

Nevertheless, from the beginning these twelve men were confronted with the call to repentance. John the Baptist's first recorded word is "Repent" (Matt 3:2). The first sermons of the Lord Jesus began with "Repent" (Matt 4:17). So they could never have followed their Master without facing up to the command to repent.

(2) "**Be baptized**" – The twelve disciples of Jesus were from the beginning baptizing in water those who became His followers (John 4:1,2), and at least Andrew and Peter among the twelve had been disciples of John the Baptist (John 1:35). We can be well assured that these first messengers of Christ were themselves obedient to His command to be baptized.

(3) "**Receive the Holy Spirit**" – On the Day of Pentecost – the birthday of the Christian Church – the waiting disciples received the gift of the Holy Spirit: *"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).

Those who were to teach others THE ONLY FOUNDATION experienced it, even as their Lord had done. So must all who would be His disciples today.

How, then, did the disciples do miracles and cast out devils **before** they received the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost? Jesus gives the answer in John 14:17:

*"The Spirit... dwelleth **with** you, and shall be **in you**."*

As the Spirit of the Lord "came upon" the mighty men and women in the Old Testament days, so He was with the disciples before the Day of Pentecost. It may be pointed out here, the early disciples had more **before** the Day of Pentecost, than most have today **after** the Day of Pentecost! Yet they were instructed **not** to commence proclaiming the Gospel "**until** you are clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). Only after they received the gift of the Holy Spirit did they take the message of salvation through Christ to a lost and dying world.

(3) THE BELIEVERS AT SAMARIA:

(1) "**Repent**" – In Acts 8:5-25 we see God's perfect pattern fulfilled again, as THE ONLY FOUNDATION is built in the lives of the new Christians at Samaria. As Philip preached Christ in all His saving and healing power in that

city, the people “gave heed” to the Word of God, *“when they heard him, and saw the signs which he did.”* The Bible says that “much joy” was in the city. The people repented of their sins, and “believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ.”

(2) **“Be baptized”** – Showing simple obedience to the command of the Lord to “be baptized,” the new believers “were baptized, both men and women” (verse 12).

(3) **“Receive the Holy Spirit”** – It comes as a shock. It challenges our experience. It upsets our doctrine. The disturbing fact is this: the believers at Samaria had placed their faith in Christ, they had been baptized in water, and the joy of salvation filled their whole city – but **“as yet He [the Holy Spirit] was fallen upon NONE of them”** (Acts 8:16 kjv).

In other words, the foundation of the Samaritan believers’ experience was not complete. And this greatly concerned the apostles at Jerusalem. So, despite danger to their lives in traveling from Jerusalem to Samaria, *“they sent to them Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit.... Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit”* (Acts 8:14,15,17).

Again we see THE ONLY FOUNDATION properly laid in the lives of new believers, to enable them to become holy temples of God, filled with His spirit.

(4) THE APOSTLE PAUL:

(1) **“Repent”** – Saul of Tarsus, later known as the apostle Paul, repented from sin and was converted to Christ while traveling to Damascus to imprison and persecute the Christians there. On the way he saw a blinding light, brighter than the midday sun. He fell to the ground. He heard the voice of the Lord Jesus. And he who had been filled with murderous hate against Christians called Jesus “Lord.” He had surely repented, the Spirit of God changing his heart, for he later wrote, *“No one can say Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit”* (1Cor 12:3). The account of Paul’s Damascus Road experience is found in Acts 9.

(2) **“Be baptized”** – On a later occasion, while telling how he first met Christ, Paul was careful to mention that the Lord, through Ananias, the very first Christian he met after he repented, exhorted him:

“And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name” (Acts 22:16).

“Then he arose and was baptized” (Acts 9:18).

(3) **“Receive the Holy Spirit”** – Three days **after** his Damascus Road experience, Paul also received the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Lord had instructed Ananias, in a vision, to go to him. Accordingly: *“Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him (Paul), he said, `Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came, has sent me that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit”* (Acts 9:17).

Yet again, THE ONLY FOUNDATION.

(5) CORNELIUS AND HIS COMPANY:

(1) **“Repent”** – Cornelius, a God-fearing soldier, was directed by a vision to call the Apostle Peter to his home to preach the Word of God. The story of how he and his household received three definite experiences to commence their Christian lives is told in Acts 10.

A devout and sincere man, Cornelius worshipped and prayed continually to God. Yet, just like so many devout and sincere people today, he was not saved (see Acts 11:14). Only when Cornelius and his company heard the Apostle Peter teaching the Gospel did they repent of their sins, and trust the Lord Jesus Christ to save them. Then the Lord “cleansed their hearts by faith” (Acts 15:7-9).

(2) **“Be baptized”** – These people repented of their sins, and while Peter was still preaching, they received the gift of the Holy Spirit, even before they were baptized in water. However, Peter immediately *“commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ”* (Acts 10:48). On this occasion, the three experiences of THE ONLY FOUNDATION did not change – only the order in which they were received.

It is possible to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit before you follow the Lord through the waters of baptism. Indeed, it is possible to repent from sin and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit almost simultaneously. However, note carefully that the Bible teaches repentance from sin together with the miracle

of being born into the family of God (called being “born of the Spirit” or “born again”) and receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit (called “the baptism in the Holy Spirit” as distinct from water baptism), are **two** separate operations of the Spirit of God. While it is possible to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit before water baptism, the Bible clearly teaches it is **not** possible to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit **before** you have repented.

(3) “**Receive the Holy Spirit**” – The Bible says that while Peter was still preaching:

“The Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. And the believers from among the circumcised who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God” (Acts 10:44-46).

When Peter told the Jewish Christians at Jerusalem about the outpouring of the Spirit in the house of Cornelius, he gave this testimony:

“As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them just as on us at the beginning. And I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, ‘John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit’” (Acts 11:15,16).

THE ONLY FOUNDATION does not change. *“The firm foundation laid by God stands, sure and unshaken”* (2Tim 2:19 – Amplified Bible).

(6) THE DISCIPLES AT EPHESUS:

(1) “**Repent**” – In Acts 19:1 we read that the Apostle Paul “found some disciples.” In the New Testament, when the word “disciple” is used for any except those who are true followers of Jesus Christ, it is specifically stated (for example, the disciples of John). It is safe to conclude, then, that these disciples at Ephesus were followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, and as such had repented of their sins, and been cleansed by the power of His blood.

Further proof of this is found in Acts 18:24-28. Here we read of Apollos, who went to Ephesus. The Bible says Apollos *“had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John”* (verse 25).

Apollos instructed them about Jesus, and Paul took them on to the second and third steps in THE ONLY FOUNDATION.

(2) “**Be baptized**” – Taking the second step, “*they were baptized in the Name of the Lord Jesus*” (Acts 19:5).

(3) “**Receive the Holy Spirit**” – At the same time, Paul challenged these disciples with the very question that pricks many of our hearts today: “*Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?*” (verse 2)

If all Christians automatically receive the gift of the Holy Spirit when they believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, then why should the apostle Paul have asked believers this question? We clearly see from this that one may be a disciple of Jesus without having entered into possession of the Holy Spirit as God’s gift to believers. Now see how Paul led the Ephesian believers to take the essential third step:

“And when Paul had laid hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them; and they spoke with tongues and prophesied” (Acts 19:6).

When later writing to these Christians at Ephesus, Paul again pointed out the distinction between their repentance and believing in Christ as their Saviour, and their receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit:

*“Christ, in Whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation: in Whom also **after** that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise”* (Eph 1:13 kjv).

Other examples could be given, but the above six prove conclusively God’s plan for THE ONLY FOUNDATION. Jews, Samaritans, Romans and Greeks had their lives built on this foundation. Insofar as He was permitted by His sinlessness, so did the Lord Jesus Christ. The first and only foundation upon which a complete Christian life can be built stands sure.

HAS THE ONLY FOUNDATION CHANGED?

“**Repent**”; “**Be baptized**”; “**Receive the Holy Spirit.**” We have seen that in the Bible God’s plan for THE ONLY FOUNDATION for a Christian life never changes. Then **when has it ever changed?**

Neither has God Himself changed. He says, *“I the Lord do not change”* (Mal 3:6). He Who commanded all men everywhere to “Repent,” “Be baptized,” and “Receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” in Bible days has never altered His pattern, and He still commands all men everywhere to build their lives on this same firm foundation. The three experiences of THE ONLY FOUNDATION are definitely for all of us today, no matter who we are. For the very next verse after the commandment to “Repent,” “Be baptized,” and “Receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” says:

“The promise is to you and to your children and to all that are far off, every one whom the Lord our God calls to Him” (Acts 2:39).

Though far off in time from the day the command and the promise were given, if you are called to God at all, you are also called to build your life on THE ONLY FOUNDATION.

TRADITION OR THE ONLY FOUNDATION

Friends, we have to admit that tragedy has overtaken certain sections of the Church. Some of the foundation has been removed! In some places, all of the foundation has been destroyed! For THE ONLY FOUNDATION, which God has commanded, the traditions of men have been substituted.

The religious leaders of Jesus’ time had also substituted the traditions of men for the commandments of God. Jesus asked them this pointed question:

“Why do you transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?” (Matt 15:3).

Please note that Jesus clearly stated it to be transgression – **sin** – to follow the traditions of men instead of obeying the commandment of God. Jesus went on to warn us:

“So for the sake of your tradition (the rules handed down by your forefathers), you have set aside the Word of God – depriving it of force and authority and making it of no effect. You pretenders – hypocrites! Admirably and truly did Isaiah prophesy of you when he said: This people draw near Me with their mouth and honor Me with their lips, but their heart holds off and is far away from Me; Uselessly do they worship Me, for they teach as doctrines the commands of men” (Matt 15:6-9 – Amplified Bible).

Could anything be clearer? If any man – be he bishop, priest, or pastor – teaches the traditions of men instead of the commandments of God, he must be putting the Word of God to one side. Historically the results of doing this have been serious indeed! Countless numbers of sincere people have been deceived, and robbed of precious blessings purchased for them by Jesus Christ on the cross.

Again the Lord Jesus said to the religious people of His day: *“You leave the commandment of God, and hold fast the tradition of men”* (Mark 7:8).

Many are doing the same today. Dear friend, what about you? What will you do? Leave the commandment of God, and hold fast the tradition of men? Or will you leave the tradition of men, and hold fast the commandment of God? Today you must make your choice.

“Repent,” “Be baptized,” “Receive the Holy Spirit.” This is the commandment of God. This is God’s plan for THE ONLY FOUNDATION upon which a proper Christian life can be built.

These are the three building blocks of THE ONLY FOUNDATION. All three are needed; **therefore, it is essential that you thoroughly understand each one of them.**

WATER BAPTISM – WHO?

“He who believes and is baptized will be saved” (Mark 16:16).

We should note carefully that water baptism is God’s command – **“Be baptized”** (Acts 2:38). Water baptism is not something about which we can please ourselves. It is essential for **every** believer in Christ to obey this command in the Word of God. And it is also essential to obey it **in the Biblical way**. Jesus said: *“He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me”* (John 14:21).

The Bible tells us in the book of First Samuel that King Saul wanted to please God with his animal sacrifices, but he had already disobeyed the command of God. The Lord spoke to him through His servant Samuel: *“And Samuel said, ‘Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying*

the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams” (1Sam 15:22).

These words come as a warning to us today. You may be willing to do much service for the Lord. You may be ready to do many other good works. You may be trying to serve God in so many ways, like Saul. But if you are not ready to obey God’s command to “Be baptized” in the Bible way, then the Lord will not accept your services and sacrifices. We see the absolute necessity to obey the Lord’s command to “*Be baptized*” in the Biblical way when we see that Jesus “*became the source of eternal salvation to **all who obey Him***” (Heb 5:9). In the light of this solemn warning, let us examine God’s Word, and see what **He** has to say about water baptism.

There are five questions usually asked about water baptism:

- (1) **WHO** should be baptized?
- (2) **HOW** should we be baptized?
- (3) **WHERE** should we be baptized?
- (4) **WHY** should we be baptized?
- (5) **WHEN** should we be baptized?

The commands of God about water baptism are very different from the traditions of men. So we must bear in mind the stern warning of the Lord Jesus against those who “*for the sake of your tradition (the rules handed down by your forefathers)... have set aside the Word of God*” (Matt 15:6 – Amplified Bible).

WHO SHOULD BE WATER BAPTIZED?

Before He ascended to Heaven, the Lord Jesus Christ commanded His disciples: “*Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned*” (Mark 16:15,16).

Here we see that the command of the Lord Jesus is very simple and clear. Only those who have become genuine believers by putting their faith in the Gospel of Christ should be baptized. Obviously, then, those being baptized must be old enough to make their own personal decision for Christ.

Again, in Matthew 28:19, 20, Jesus commissioned His disciples: *“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.”*

Here also the wording is clear. Only those who have become disciples by choosing to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, and His teachings, are to be baptized. Now Jesus said the conditions for becoming a disciple are as follows: *“If any one comes to Me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters (that is, in comparison with their love for Me), yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after Me, cannot be My disciple”* (Luke 14:26,27 – Amplified Bible).

Thus we see that one who is to be baptized is to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, one who has chosen to make Christ the supreme love of his life. Anyone who has not done this “cannot be My disciple,” Jesus said. And if they cannot be His disciple, they cannot be baptized. It is as simple as that.

“Be baptized.” Who? Those who have placed their personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Those who have made their own choice to be His disciples and follow Him. There is no authority in the Bible to baptize anyone except those who have repented from their sins, and made their personal decision to accept Christ as their Lord and Saviour and follow Him. We cannot experience the second part of THE ONLY FOUNDATION – water baptism – until we have experienced the first. We cannot obey the second commandment of THE ONLY FOUNDATION – *“Be baptized”* – until we have obeyed the first commandment – *“Repent.”*

Even those born in any kind of Christian home must truly repent, and hold their own living faith in Christ.

BIBLICAL EXAMPLES

During the ministry of Christ’s followers, only those who truly repented and believed and accepted Christ in their hearts, were baptized.

(1) The Day of Pentecost:

“Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Brethren, what shall we do?’ And Peter said to them,

‘Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sin...’

“So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:37,38,41).

Notice those who received the word and obeyed the command to repent were baptized.

(2) The New Christians at Samaria:

“When they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women” (Acts 8:12).

When Philip preached Christ in Samaria, and demonstrated the miraculous power of God by healing signs and wonders, there was a multitude of men and women present. We read *“when they believed... they were baptized, both men and women.”*

(3) The Ethiopian Eunuch:

“Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this scripture (Isa 53:7,8), He told him the good news of Jesus. And as they went along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, ‘See here is water! What is to prevent my being baptized?’ And Philip said, ‘If you believe with all your heart, you may.’ And he replied, ‘I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.’ And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him” (Acts 8:35-38).

Water baptism for believers is an essential part of the “good news of Jesus,” for the eunuch asked for baptism. Here it is so very clear – “If you believe with all your heart, you may” be baptized. This condition has never changed.

(4) Saul of Tarsus (the Apostle Paul):

“So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, ‘Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus Who appeared to you on the road by which you came, has sent me that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.’ And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized” (Acts 9:17,18).

We have already noticed how on the Damascus Road Saul repented of his sins, and called Jesus “Lord.” Ananias, called “a disciple” (Acts 9:10), addressed Saul as “Brother Saul,” because through personal faith in Christ, Saul had become his brother in the Lord. So the one who was to become the great apostle Paul, was baptized in water as a believer.

(5) Cornelius and his Company:

“Can anyone forbid water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 10:47,48).

Cornelius and his company first believed and repented (Acts 11:17,18). Then they received the gift of the Holy Spirit. Notice, those who received the Holy Spirit, just as the 120 disciples had in Acts 2, were baptized in water.

(6) The Corinthians:

“Many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized” (Acts 18:8).

There is no room for debate – first they believed, then they were baptized.

(7) The Disciples at Ephesus:

“Paul passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples...they were baptized in the Name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 19:1,5).

We saw that these disciples at Ephesus were true followers of the Lord Jesus. And their example, like all the others, shows that Biblical baptism in water in relation to the Gospel of Christ comes **after** repentance and personal faith in Christ have been experienced. There is no authority in the Bible for baptism of adults who have neither repented of their sins nor received Jesus Christ into their lives.

“Scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:35). In all of the above instances of water baptism, those being baptized first repented of sin and believed in Jesus Christ.

There are four more examples of water baptism in the Bible. We shall now show how these also teach that the Lord's command to "Be baptized" is to be obeyed by those who first repent and believe in Him.

HOUSEHOLD BAPTISMS

There are four references in the Bible to household baptisms. We now deal with the subject of household baptism in the light of what the Bible says:

(8) The Baptism of the Household of Stephanas:

"I did baptize the household of Stephanas" (1Cor 1:16).

"Now, brethren, you know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints" (1Cor 16:15).

Reading these two verses together, we get the whole picture of the baptism of the household of Stephanas. The first reference tells us only that Stephanas and his household were baptized by the apostle Paul. But from the second verse we learn that all in the household were "converts" – they had repented of their sins and turned to Christ. The words "they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints" reveal very plainly that Stephenas and his household members were not only those who had experienced personal salvation through believing in Christ. They had also dedicated their lives to the service of God's people. Because they had **all** become devoted believers in Christ, Paul baptized them in water.

Scholars agree that the word "household" in the New Testament would in Bible days mean dependents and servants. Indeed, every discussion and example of each step of THE ONLY FOUNDATION – "Repent," "Be baptized," "Receive the Holy Spirit" – reveals all three of these experiences are for persons who receive instruction, understand the Gospel, repent, and have faith.

(9) The Baptism of the Jailer and his Household:

"And they said, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.' And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their wounds, and he was baptized at once, with all his family. Then he

brought them up into his house, and set food before them; and he rejoiced with all his household that he had believed in God” (Acts 16:31-34).

It is very clear that the whole family of the jailer rushed to the prison cell when they felt the earthquake which had set the prisoners free. Paul and his companion, Silas, preached the Gospel to them all right there in the prison cell. They all heard the Word of the Lord. And because they all believed, they were all baptized. So all the members of the jailer’s household heard and believed the Word of God. Therefore, they were all baptized as believers, and all rejoiced in the joy of their new-found salvation.

Once again, then, we see it was baptism for believers.

(10) The Baptism of the Household of Crispus:

“Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with all his household; and many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized” (Acts 18:8).

This prominent man believed on the Lord together with all his family members. Therefore, all of them were entitled to experience believer’s baptism. The other Corinthians who believed were similarly baptized in water.

(11) The Baptism of the Household of Lydia:

“One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshipper of God. The Lord opened her heart to give heed to what was said by Paul. And when she was baptized, with her household, she besought us, saying, ‘If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.’ And she prevailed upon us” (Acts 16:14,15).

Lydia’s heart was opened to the Gospel, and to the Lord Jesus. She became a faithful believer and was baptized. On the strength and authority of the ten previous examples, plus Lydia herself, we can say definitely that, whether it is the household of Lydia or any other household, **every** member of the household must truly repent from sin, believe and receive the Lord Jesus Christ and His Gospel as a personal experience, before **all** the members of the household can be baptized.

We have now considered every instance of water baptism in the New Testament. The truth stands out from all eleven examples. The command to “Be baptized” is for those who have personal, living faith in the Good News of salvation through Christ, and have received Him as their Lord and Savior.

WATER BAPTISM – HOW?

WATER BAPTISM – HOW?

“Buried with Him in Baptism” (Col 2:12).

We have now established from the Bible the answer to the question “WHO should be baptized?” We have seen God answers us loud and clear from His Word. The candidate for water baptism must have repented from his sins, and have experienced personal salvation through Christ.

The next question is “HOW should we be baptized?” If we sincerely desire to build a good, firm foundation for our Christian lives, it is essential we find the correct answer.

THE ORIGINAL LANGUAGE

In the Greek language in which the New Testament was written, the word for baptism is “baptizo,” which comes from “bapto,” meaning “to dip,” “to plunge under,” “to immerse.” The word “bapto” was used among the Greeks to signify, for example, the dyeing of a garment.

When a piece of cloth was to be dyed, it was plunged under the colored liquid until changed into the color of the dye. Another example of the use of this word was the drawing of water by dipping one vessel into another. The vessel being used to draw water was immersed beneath the water in the larger vessel.

It is of great significance that the Greek Orthodox Church has retained the word “Baptizo” in its liturgical language from the beginning, and has always understood it to mean nothing else but immersion in the water. To this day, the Greek Church baptizes in water by immersion. We may be sure that the Greeks understand the meaning of their own language!

THE BIBLICAL METHOD OF BAPTISM

Because the Bible word means “to dip,” “to plunge under,” “to immerse,” we should expect to find this to be the baptism practiced in the Bible. This is exactly what we do find.

(1) John the Baptist:

*“Then went out to him (John the Baptist) Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan, and they were baptized by him **in the river Jordan**, confessing their sins” (Matt 3:5,6).*

The Bible could not make it any clearer. They were baptized – in the waters of the river Jordan.

Indeed, the Bible teaches that both John the Baptist **and** our Lord Jesus Himself chose a place where there was much water, to do their baptizing: *“After this, Jesus and His disciples went into the land of Judea; there He remained with them and baptized. John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, **because there was much water there**; and people came and were baptized” (John 3:22,23).*

Aenon means “fountains” or “springs.” You can go there today and still see the abundant springs of water. Another rendering of John 3:23 is “because there were many pools and streams there” (Weymouth’s version). “Much water” was essential, because they were baptizing by immersion of the candidate in the water.

(2) The Example of Christ’s Baptism:

*“In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John **in the Jordan**. And when **He came up out of the water**, immediately he saw the heavens opened and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, `Thou art My beloved Son; with Thee I am well pleased” (Mark 1:9-11).*

Our Lord Jesus was baptized in the water, and came up out of the water. He came *“leaving you an example, that you should follow in His steps” (1Pet 2:21)*. Have you followed His example? Have you been baptized **in** the water, and come **up out of the water**?

(3) The Example of the Baptism of the Ethiopian Eunuch:

*“And he commanded the chariot to stop, and **they both went down into the water**, Philip and the eunuch, **and he baptized him**. And when **they came up out of the water**, the Spirit of the Lord caught up Philip; and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing” (Acts 8:38,39).*

Why does the Bible say “they came up out of the water”? Because the very word “baptize” means to dip under, and the New Testament speaks of no other way of baptism.

BAPTISM A BURIAL

The Bible teaches that baptism is a burial. The candidate is completely buried in the water:

“Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death” (Rom 6:3,4).

“You were buried with Him in baptism” (Col 2:12).

We shall discuss the spiritual significance of this soon. Here we note that all who have been baptized were buried in the water, just as Christ was buried in the earth.

BAPTISM A RESURRECTION

The Bible also teaches that baptism is a resurrection to a new life:

“We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life” (Rom 6:4).

“...baptism, in which you were also raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead” (Col 2:12).

“You have been raised with Christ” (Col 3:1).

In water baptism, after the candidate is buried, he is raised up from under the water. Water baptism is a burial and a resurrection.

“HOW should we be baptized?” There is only one way: in water. The Bible teaches us no other way.

WHERE SHOULD WE BE BAPTIZED?

From our study of “HOW should we be baptized?” the answer to our third question is obvious.

“WHERE should we be baptized?” The Bible says we must be baptized **in** the water where there is **much water**. In the sea, in rivers, in streams, pools, fountains, and tanks. Preferably outdoors as in the Bible, as a public testimony. However, some churches have a deep tank, or “baptistry,” inside the building. The main essential is that it must be a place where you can be buried and raised up – a place where there is much water.

WATER BAPTISM – WHY?

“It is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness” (Matt 3:15).

WHY should we be baptized? Because the Lord Jesus commanded it. Because it is the second experience of THE ONLY FOUNDATION the Bible gives upon which we are to build our lives.

Furthermore, there is a deep spiritual meaning in water baptism. Whole books could be written about the spiritual meaning of baptism. We have space only to briefly consider the most important aspects.

(1) Baptism and a clear conscience:

“God’s patience waited in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water. Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal (answer) to God for a clear conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1Pet 3:20,21).

It is an historical and Biblical fact that because of the sinfulness of mankind, God covered the whole earth with a flood of water, saving only Noah and his

family in the ark. The earth was completely covered with water. Here the Bible says baptism “corresponds to this.”

How does baptism in water “answer to God for a clear conscience”? It means, in effect, that God is asking us if our conscience is clear. The Bible says, *“How much more shall the blood of Christ... purify your conscience”* (Heb 9:14). If your sinful conscience has been washed in the blood of Christ and purified, you no longer feel guilty and ashamed to come into the presence of God. Your conscience is clear. Therefore, in baptism you are answering God that your conscience has been purified by the blood of Christ and is now clear. Praise the Lord!

(2) Baptism is a Testimony to the world of the Burial and Resurrection of Jesus Christ:

“Baptized into His death” (Rom 6:3).

Each time someone is baptized in the Biblical way, they are testifying to the world that God’s Son, Jesus Christ, was crucified on the cross, and shed His blood and died for their sins. His dead body was placed in the grave. But He did not stay there. After three days He rose from the tomb, victorious over sin and death. Each time a believer is baptized, confessing faith in Him, public testimony is given to this glorious fact:

“We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life” (Rom 6:4).

(3) Baptism is an Experience of burying the “old, sinful man”:

It has often been said that “Baptism is an outward testimony of an inward experience.” It is. But it is much more than this! Baptism is an experience too! From a study of Romans 6 and Colossians 2, we see that there is a deep and precious identification of the believer with the Lord Jesus in His death, burial, and resurrection, when water baptism takes place:

“We know that our old self was crucified with Him so that the sinful body might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For he who has died is freed from sin. For sin shall have no dominion over you” (Rom 6:6,7,14).

“Buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised with Him through faith in the working of God, Who raised Him from the dead” (Col 2:12).

What tongue can tell the blessed deliverance we have in the Cross of Christ! Freed from struggling! Freed from sin! Freed from condemnation, guilt and fear. Sin nailed to the Cross. Old man buried. We ourselves risen in newness of life. This is the inward experience of those who follow their Lord through the waters of baptism.

(4) Baptism and Satan’s Defeat:

“Buried with Him in baptism...

“He disarmed the principalities and powers and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in it [the Cross]” (Col 2:12,15).

In Biblical water baptism, the believer is certainly laying a good and firm foundation! He testifies before Satan, the enemy of God and man, together with all his devils, that the Lord Jesus has triumphed over them all in His Cross, and has delivered the believer from their kingdom and powers. Hallelujah!

(5) Baptism is a Public Acknowledgement of Repentance and Faith in Christ:

“Everyone who acknowledges Me before men, I also will acknowledge before My Father Who is in Heaven; but whoever denies Me before men, I also will deny before My Father Who is in Heaven” (Matt 10:32,33).

The New Testament teaches that the first way a new believer is to acknowledge his new-found faith in Christ is by being publicly baptized in water. We have already seen, in the New Testament, examples that baptism was no secret thing, but an open, bold testimony before others. And how this public acknowledgement and testimony strengthens our faith and determination to follow Christ! The Lord does not want secret, weak, fearful disciples, and this is one reason why He has commanded believers to “Be baptized” – to acknowledge Him before men.

(6) Baptism is a Testimony to the Oneness of True Believers in Christ:

“For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:27,28).

The believer being baptized testifies that he or she is equal and one with all other believers in Christ. By the shedding of His blood on the Cross, the Lord Jesus has made all believers in Him *“one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us”* (Eph 2:14 kjv).

So the believer by being baptized is acknowledging this equality and oneness in Christ with all other Christians in the world who have trusted in Christ and been baptized in the Bible way. Any baptized believer still holding in his or her mind any kind of class consciousness, racial prejudice, denominational feeling, or attitude of superiority over other Christians, is living contrary to the truth and testimony of baptism, and needs to repent and be cleansed afresh in the blood of Christ.

(7) Baptism and the Purpose of God:

“But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected the purpose of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him” (Luke 7:30).

Although this verse is speaking of baptism by John the Baptist, the spiritual lesson here and in believer's baptism in the Name of Jesus Christ are the same. We acknowledge in water baptism our willingness to accept God's purpose for our lives. God has a purpose – a plan – for each one of us. But if we will not obey His command to “Be baptized,” we reject His purpose for us. I am sure that God's purposes are best, aren't you?

(8) Baptism and Separation from the Old Life:

“I want you to know, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea” (1Cor 10:1,2).

The only other Old Testament incident given to us as a picture of water baptism is the baptism of the Israelites in the Red Sea. Actually, while the level of the water was well above their heads, and the water was *“a wall to*

them on their right hand and on their left,” “the people of Israel walked on dry ground through the sea” (Ex 14:29).

They had been saved from the judgment of God through the blood of the lamb on their doors. They were set free from bondage and slavery to the Egyptians. But their “baptism into Moses” meant full and final separation from Egypt, Pharaoh King of Egypt, and the Egyptians. Pharaoh and the Egyptian chariots and horsemen were thrown into the sea, and destroyed under the waters which God brought upon them (Ex 15:19,21).

In the same way, believers who have followed their Lord through the waters of baptism, and even those intending to be baptized, should live lives of complete separation from bad habits and the vain ways of the world.

(9) Baptism fulfills all Righteousness:

“Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John to be baptized by him. John would have prevented Him, saying, ‘I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?’ But Jesus answered him, ‘Let it be so now; for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.’ Then he consented. And... Jesus was baptized” (Matt 3:13-16).

If the sinless, spotless Son of God, the Lord Jesus, had to be baptized to fulfill all righteousness, then who are we to say we do not need to be baptized in water as He was? Believers, in their baptism, show that like their Lord, they are willing to fulfill all righteousness.

(10) Baptism and rejoicing:

*“And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught up Philip; and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way **rejoicing**” (Acts 8:38,39).*

*“He was baptized at once, with all his family... and he **rejoiced** with all his household that he had believed in God” (Acts 16:33, 34).*

The eunuch returned to Ethiopia rejoicing, and planted the seeds of the Church of Jesus Christ there, the results of which are still evident today, nearly 2,000 years later. The jailer, naturally speaking, had nothing to be

happy about. His prisoners were free. The prison was damaged. But the joy of salvation and baptism so filled his heart, he rejoiced with all his household.

Today many seek for joy in ways that are not pleasing to God. There is no lasting joy apart from God. *“Thou dost show me the path of life; in Thy presence there is fullness of joy”* (Ps 16:11). As you follow His path, which leads to baptism, you too will be rejoicing. For there is a direct connection in the Bible between water baptism and joy. A deep, spiritual, lasting joy as a result of obeying God.

Many more reasons why we should be baptized could be listed. But these show the emphasis God has placed on baptism. Notice again that all the experiences of water baptism are for those who accept and experience for themselves the grace and blessing of God.

CIRCUMCISION OF HEART

“Nor is true circumcision something external and physical... real circumcision is a matter of the heart, spiritual and not literal” (Rom 2:28,29). Paul teaches that those *“are the true circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God, and glory in Christ Jesus, and put no confidence in the flesh”* (Phil 3:3). The outward rite of circumcision has been replaced by the inward experience of the cutting off of the power of sin and fleshly desires, by the burying and raising again of true believers in baptism:

“You have come to fullness of life in Him (Christ), Who is the Head of all rule and authority. In Him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of flesh in the circumcision of Christ: And you were buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised with Him through faith in the working of God, Who raised Him from the dead” (Col 2:10-13).

The matter is settled. Baptism is for those who have accepted Christ, and the fullness of His life, who put off the body of fleshly sins and desires, by their spiritual experience of being buried with Him in water baptism.

According to the Bible, baptism is for those who have repented, and have personal saving faith in Jesus Christ. If you have not been baptized since you repented from your sins and accepted Christ as your Savior, then your next step should be to obey God’s command to fulfill all righteousness by receiving water baptism.

BAPTISM – GOD’S COMMAND

“WHY should we be baptized?” Because of the glorious testimony and blessed experience of water baptism. Because it is an essential step in God’s plan for THE ONLY FOUNDATION for our lives. **Above all, God has commanded us to be baptized.** Even if we do not understand all the reasons and spiritual meanings of water baptism, this one fact should compel us to obey the Lord: it is His command. He said:

*“He who has My commandments and **keeps** them, he it is who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him”* (John 14:21).

The real proof of our love for Christ is not our words, not all the many things we do for Him, not our prayers, not our Bible reading, not our going to church, although all these things have their place. The real proof is this – do we **keep** His commandments? *“I hasten and do not delay to keep Thy commandments”* (Ps 119:60). Are you hastening to keep his commandment to “Be baptized every one of you”? God’s Word says:

“He commanded them to be baptized in the Name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 10:48).

WATER BAPTISM – WHEN?

“And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized” (Acts 22:16).

From the answers found in the Bible to our previous questions, the answer to our last question is obvious. “WHEN should we be water baptized?” Just as soon as we repent from our sins, and believe the Gospel, receiving the Lord Jesus Christ into our hearts.

The word to act on in repentance and salvation is “now.” *“God... now commands all men everywhere to repent”* (Acts 17:30). *“Behold, **now** is the acceptable time; behold **now** is the day of salvation”* (2Cor 6:2).

In exactly the same way, the word to act on in water baptism is “now.” *“And **now** why do you wait? Rise and be baptized”* (Acts 22:16). The Bible knows nothing of “instruction classes,” “three-month trial periods,”

“seeing if it will last,” “getting ready,” “waiting for the next baptismal service,” or any other such waiting or delay. God’s command is “now.”

On the Day of Pentecost, the three thousand who repented from their sins “*were baptized... that day*” (Acts 2:41). There was no delay. The Samaritans were baptized in water “*when they believed*” (Acts 8:12). The Ethiopian eunuch was baptized immediately after he believed in Christ, even though this was the very first Gospel sermon he had ever heard (Acts 8:35-38). The Apostle Paul was immediately baptized by the first Christian disciple who came to him (Acts 9:17,18). Cornelius and his company were baptized immediately after they believed (Acts 10:48). The jailer and his household were baptized the same night they believed in Christ (Acts 16:30-34). As soon as they heard of the baptism of Jesus, the Ephesian believers were baptized by Paul (Acts 19:4,5). We find no delay in any example given in the Bible.

How many are being robbed of the great blessings of baptism by saying, “I’m preparing my heart. As soon as I am ready I will obey the command to be water baptized.” The only conditions laid down in the Bible for water baptism are repentance from sin, personal faith in Jesus Christ, and total commitment to be His disciple.

Right now, the Lord is speaking to your heart from His Own Word about baptism. You feel you should follow your Lord’s command to “Be baptized.” Act at once! Arise. Go to a church, a pastor, or a disciple who is living according to the Bible. If you do not know of one, or cannot find one in the area where you live, write to one of the addresses given in this magazine. We may be able to put you in contact with Christians. Do not delay. For God commands you:

“And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His Name” (Acts 22:16).

If you have repented, and believed on the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour, and know in your heart you are His child, then obey the commandment of God. Act upon His Word. *“Rise and be baptized,”* right now!

And right now, let us turn to the final step in THE ONLY FOUNDATION.

RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT

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

Again, let it be emphasized. **God’s command** to “**Receive** the gift of the Holy Spirit” **is not a suggestion** to believers in Christ for the deepening of their spiritual lives. **God’s order** to “be filled with the Spirit” **is not an optional extra**. We cannot please ourselves. “Receive the Holy Spirit” is God’s **command** to sinful men and women for the laying of THE ONLY FOUNDATION at the **beginning** of their Christian lives!

The gift of the Holy Spirit is not just an added experience, beyond what is expected of every Christian. Nor is it an experience received 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 into full salvation.

True, 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 it is also tragically true that many of us today 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 became a Christian!) To repair the damage, we often have to re-read the New Testament.

In the New Testament, the three steps of THE ONLY FOUNDATION are meant for the Christian **at the beginning** of his Christian life.

For example, the Christians at Samaria (Acts 8) had a **deficient initial experience**. Their foundation was not complete. But the situation was soon remedied when they received the Holy Spirit as Peter and John laid hands upon them. The tragedy is this: the exceptional situation at Samaria has become the common one today, and urgently needs to be remedied. 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, quite distinct from conversion to Christ or receiving Christ as Savior. All believers do not enjoy the **fullness** of the Holy Spirit.

However, **all** who have repented of their sins and 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 deliberately received Christ as their Savior and have experienced the first step in THE ONLY FOUNDATION when the Holy Spirit caused them to be born anew, 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.

Let us be very clear in our minds on this fundamental and vital Bible truth. At the **first step** in THE ONLY FOUNDATION, we come to Christ for salvation. We repent, believe in the cleansing blood of Christ to wash our sins away, and the Holy Spirit performs a miracle in our spirit. We are *“born of the Spirit”*

“You He made alive, when you were dead through the trespasses and sins in which you once walked” (Eph 2:1,2). When we experience salvation through Christ, we are born spiritually. We become children of God. We are now members of His family. Each year, all celebrate the anniversary of their physical birth — their birthday. But on the day we are born of the Spirit, we are *“born anew”* (John 3:3).

However, when the Bible speaks of receiving *“the gift of the Holy Spirit”* or being *“filled with the Spirit,”* it means coming to Christ for **power**. It is the **second** or **third step** in the same, THE ONLY FOUNDATION, depending on whether the believer has time to be baptized in water or not between being *“born of the Spirit”* and being *“filled with the Spirit.”*

“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”* in describing the receiving of the Holy Spirit’s power into our lives after we have been born anew?

We should not let mere points of terminology hide the blessings of the Spirit-filled life God wants each of us to enjoy. Nor should we think that using the correct terms will give us a perfect doctrine or a complete experience.

Let us bear this foremost in our minds: it is not correct terms we need; rather it is essential that we build our lives on THE ONLY FOUNDATION.

In the Bible, the personal experience of salvation (the first step of THE ONLY FOUNDATION) is described in different terms. God uses these different terms to give us a clearer description of this one experience. This first step is called:

1. Being “born anew” (John 3:3)
2. Being “born of the Spirit” (John 3:8)
3. Being “converted” (Matt 18:3 kjv)
4. Being “saved” (John 10:9)
5. “Believing” (Mark 16:16)
6. “Repenting and turning to God” (Acts 26:20)
7. Letting Jesus “come in” to our heart (Rev 3:20)
8. “Receiving Christ” (John 13:20).

This other step of THE ONLY FOUNDATION, the receiving of the power of the Holy Spirit, is also described in various terms. For example:

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

9. 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 one experience; that infilling with power which is the promise of God the Father to all His children.

Some say the term “baptism in the Spirit” is sectarian. Definitely not! No one movement or denomination within the Church has any monopoly on the blessing of God.

The apostle Peter (through whom the Lord gave us THE ONLY FOUNDATION) 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. Neither was our Lord Jesus Christ. Neither should we!

The Bible teaches that both terms “baptized in the Spirit” and “filled with the Spirit” may be used to describe the **first infilling** with the Holy Spirit. The baptism in the Holy Spirit is the **initial infilling** of the believer, who has already trusted in Christ for salvation.

When someone in the New Testament was baptized in the Holy Spirit, he was later described as “filled with the Spirit” (not “baptized in the Spirit” again). For example, the apostle Peter was first filled, or baptized in the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:4). However, Acts 4:8 describes one of his subsequent fillings in these words: “Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit.”

We may also note from the Bible that “baptism in 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.**” The disciples did not receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit at conversion. Neither did Paul. The Samaritans didn’t. The Ephesians didn’t. The fact is, **nobody did.**

We have already seen in our study of THE ONLY FOUNDATION in the New Testament that in each example given us in the Bible, the “gift” of or “baptism”

in the Holy Spirit was **always** received as a subsequent work of God's Spirit, different from initial faith in Christ for salvation.

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 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 any of 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.

Cornelius and his company first repented from sin and believed in Christ, their hearts being *"cleansed by faith"* (Acts 15:9), after which they were baptized in the Holy Spirit (see Acts 10:44-48).

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 one, THE ONLY FOUNDATION, in their lives. No wonder Paul could say, *"You are God's building"* (1Cor 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 (Matt 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"* (Matt 3:16). Two separate experiences!

We know that God's sinless Lamb, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, did everything by the power of the anointing of the Spirit that 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!

Thus we see that God's command for us to "Receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" is part of THE ONLY FOUNDATION.

But remember — when you have received the baptism in the Holy Spirit, you do not "have all God has for you." To be baptized in, or filled with, the Spirit is **not** a "once for all" experience. I cannot emphasize this too strongly. 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 to a super-spiritual level when you receive it. 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 in the Holy Spirit opens the door into the Spirit-filled life.

It is a definite **crisis** experience, subsequent to receiving Jesus as Savior. It is a specific act of **surrender** to the Holy Spirit. It is a definite act of **receiving** 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 whether 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.

But remember also, God's command for us to "Receive the Holy Spirit" is but a part of THE ONLY FOUNDATION. After the foundation is laid in our lives, God wants to go on and build us into a beautiful, holy temple, worthy of the indwelling Spirit.

Some have said of the Holy Spirit, "One baptism, many fillings." True. But the Bible says, "*One baptism, **daily fillings***" is the need for each of our lives. Paul said, "*Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day*" (2Cor 4:16 kjv). 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***" (Eph 3:16). There is the answer.

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 enable 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" (Gal 5:16,25 — Amplified Bible).*

Nothing less than this **daily walk** in the Holy Spirit will enable the believer to live this pure, victorious, Spirit-filled life.

The Holy Spirit can be grieved (Eph 4:30). The Holy Spirit can be resisted (Acts 7:51). The fire of the Spirit can be quenched (1Thess 5:19). The results are bitterness, pride, coldness of heart, and a host of other sins.

Nothing has been a greater stumbling block and hindrance to souls who are seeking, 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.

IMPORTANT DEFINITIONS

To “Receive the gift of the Holy Spirit,” or be “baptized in the Holy Spirit,” is the initial in-filling of the believer’s life with the Holy Spirit, after personal salvation has been received.

The “Fullness of the Holy Spirit” is the living of a continuously Spirit-filled life, by being constantly filled with the Holy Spirit, after the initial Baptism in the Holy Spirit has been received.

HAVE YOU RECEIVED?

“Receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” “Be filled with the Spirit.” It is an essential part of THE ONLY FOUNDATION for your life.

Dear friend, while you have been 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? 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).*

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“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!

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THE SIGN

“These signs will accompany those who believe . . . they will speak in new tongues” (Mark 16:17).

The God of the Bible is the God of signs, miracles and wonders. He demonstrated to the world what He is like through His Son, Jesus Christ, Who *“reflects the glory of God, and bears the very stamp of His nature”* (Heb 1:3). The Bible speaks of:

*“Jesus of Nazareth, a Man approved of God among you by **miracles and wonders and signs**, which **God did by Him** in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know”* (Acts 2:22 kjv).

When we read the New Testament, we see the miraculous nature of God revealed in His children:

“God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to His Own will” (Heb 2:4). God does not change. Nor does His Son. Nor do His signs.

THE SIGN IN THE BIBLE

In these days when God is pouring out His Spirit, more people than ever before are wanting to know how they can be sure — how they can have real assurance that they have received the baptism, or fullness of the Holy Spirit.

Some say, “I **hope** I have been filled.”

Others say, “I **think** I have received it.”

But in the Bible days, there was no doubt at all. They **knew** when they were filled with the Spirit — and when others were filled too.

The God Who fills His children with the Holy Spirit is the God of signs.

Throughout the Bible, God confirms His covenants and promises with **signs**. Our Father’s promise to us of the baptism in the Holy Spirit is also accompanied by a sign — the sign of speaking in unknown tongues as the Holy Spirit Himself gives utterance.

Let it be understood right now that speaking in tongues is not **the evidence** of a Spirit-filled life. Neither is speaking in tongues the **only** sign of the baptism in the Holy Spirit and fire. Speaking in tongues is not the sign of a sanctified or spiritual life.

In many circles, speaking in tongues in the believer's life has been magnified out of all proportion to its place, as taught in the Word of God.

Despite all this, whether we like it or not, when believers were filled with the Spirit in Bible Days, the **first** thing that was "seen and heard" at the time of the initial infilling was supernatural utterance in unknown tongues.

Jesus promises:

"These signs will accompany those who believe... they will speak in new tongues" (Mark 16:17).

When believers received the promised gift of the Holy Spirit in Bible days, they spoke with other tongues as the Spirit gave them the words to say. Let us consider the examples given in the New Testament.

(1) **The 120 Disciples:**

The first fulfillment of Jesus giving the promise of the Father is recorded in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. It is true that various miraculous manifestations took place as the Spirit came (and they still happen today). But the sign that caught the attention of the astonished multitude above all others, was that the Spirit-filled disciples "began to **speak in other tongues**, as the Spirit gave them the words to say." (Acts 2:4 — Weymouth)

In his Expository Dictionary of the New Testament Words, W. E. Vine gives an excellent definition of this phenomenon: "The supernatural gift of speaking in another language without its having been learned." The Holy Spirit, coming in to fill their temples, gave the words to say and the disciples spoke.

Some have been under the impression that the disciples spoke in tongues on the Day of Pentecost so that the multitude which came together, confounded by this strange event, could hear the Gospel. But many highly esteemed Bible scholars refute this theory. W. E. Vine comments: "In Acts 2:4-13, the circumstances were recorded from the viewpoint of the hearers. To those in whose language the utterances were made, it appeared as a supernatural phenomenon; to others, the stammering of drunkards. What was uttered was

not primarily to the audience, but consisted in recounting ‘the mighty works of God.’”

Furthermore, in New Testament days, all who lived within touch of civilization spoke two languages — their mother tongue, and Greek. Thus, on the Day of Pentecost, where the Greek or Aramaic language would be sufficient to communicate with the assembled multitude, a miracle whereby the disciples spoke in foreign languages to preach the Gospel to them was totally unnecessary.

Clearly, then, this “speaking in tongues” was not so the astonished Jews from different nations could hear the Gospel. Rather, God gave a miraculous **sign** that He was filling the disciples of Jesus with the Holy Spirit and power. It was left to Peter to preach the Gospel to the multitude in a language they all understood.

(2) **Cornelius and His Company:**

Many were gathered together when the Spirit fell on the household of Cornelius, but only one sign is mentioned. First, it is written: “*While Peter was still saying this, **the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the Word***” (Acts 10:44).

The next verse tells that six Jewish believers who had come with Peter from Joppa “were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles.” But they were fully persuaded that the Gentile **had** received the Holy Spirit. How? “*For they heard them **speaking in tongues and extolling God***” (vs 46).

They did not know that the Gentiles had received the Holy Spirit because they had seen Peter lay hands on them. He had not done this at all. Neither did they know that the Gentiles had received the Holy Spirit because they saw power manifested in the lives or ministries of the Gentile believers. They did not see the gifts of faith, word of wisdom, or any other gift of the Holy Spirit. They did not see great love. They did not see transformed lives. The Gentiles did not suddenly become great preachers.

It is clearly recorded in the infallible, unchangeable Word of God for all to see — the Jews declared they knew the Gentiles received the Holy Spirit “For (because) they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God.”

(3) The Apostle Paul:

In accordance with the scriptural pattern, Paul was converted on the Damascus Road, and three days later was filled with the Spirit as Ananias prayed for him.

Did he speak in tongues? Most certainly. In his great exposition on the use of speaking in tongues in private devotional life and church worship services, he testifies:

*“I thank God that **I speak with tongues** more than you all” (1Cor 14:18).*

(4) The New Christians at Samaria:

Some may say, “The Samaritans didn’t speak with tongues as all the others did.” How do we know they didn’t? Most definitely, the **Bible** does **not** record that they did not speak with tongues as they received the Holy Spirit. There is plenty of evidence to suggest they **did**.

In Acts 8 we read of Simon, a magician with such mighty magical power that he *“amazed the nation of Samaria”* (verse 9). Furthermore, *“They all gave heed to him, from the least to the greatest, saying, ‘This man is that power of God which is called Great’”* (verse 10). What deceptive powers he must have had to command such honor and obedience! And yet it is written, *“When Simon **saw** that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles’ hands, he offered them money, saying, ‘Give me also this power, that any one on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit’”* (Acts 8:18,19).

Simon the magician had seen Philip cast out devils and work amazing miracles of healing. But he never desired to buy that power. However, he was obviously so greatly impressed and amazed at the miraculous sign of receiving the Holy Spirit, he was prepared to pay money to be able to make people respond miraculously to his touch. He **“saw” some outward sign** when Peter and John laid their hands on the believers to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This sign was more impressive to the magician than all his former magic tricks, and greater in his thinking than all the mighty miracles Philip had done before his eyes.

He certainly could not have seen people simply kneeling down as the apostles laid hands on them quietly saying, “Get up now. You have received. Take the baptism with the Holy Spirit by faith.” Of course not! Simon (or anyone else for

that matter) could have easily done that. Simon the magician “saw” something happen that convinced him the believers had received the Holy Spirit. He offered his money for a **distinctly supernatural gift**. If it was not the power to cause people to speak with new tongues he wanted, **what was it?** If the Samaritans did not speak with tongues, **what did they do?**

Most widely accepted Bible commentators agree that the Samaritans spoke with tongues.

From these four instances in the Bible, we see that the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the Jews, Samaritans and Gentiles. The sign was clearly this — they were all heard speaking in tongues as the Holy Spirit gave them utterance. Something was seen and heard!

However, some have distorted the Word of God. They teach that this “speaking in tongues” was an initial sign only, showing both Jews and Gentiles that the Church was born. After that, they say, “speaking in tongues” was no longer needed.

For this supposition to be true, there would be no other occasions of “speaking in tongues” recorded in the Bible. But there are. For example:

(5) **The Ephesian Believers:**

Twenty years or more after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the 120 disciples in Acts 2, Paul laid his hands upon the disciples at Ephesus. They were filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied (Acts 19:6). Note the fact that they spoke with tongues is recorded **first, before** they prophesied. Prophecy is not usually the sign of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. However, believers today can, and some do, prophesy when they receive the Holy Spirit and speak in tongues.

(6) **The Church at Corinth:**

The church at Corinth certainly knew the blessing of the presence of the Holy Spirit. When they first heard the Gospel, Paul’s *“speech and message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and power”* (1Cor 2:4). As a result, their faith did *“not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God”* (verse 5).

We see that the sign of speaking in tongues was in their church. It is true that the apostle Paul gave certain instructions for the regulation and proper operation of speaking in tongues, and we do well to heed these today. But he did not tell them to stop speaking in tongues. On the contrary, he commanded: *“I want you all to speak in tongues...”* (1Cor 14:5). *“Do not forbid speaking in tongues”* (1Cor 14:39).

Can any mere man have the audacity to forbid that which Almighty God commands us **not** to forbid?

Other examples could be quoted from the New Testament. Numerically, speaking in tongues as the sign of obeying God’s commandment to “Receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” is the rule. Speaking in tongues is the sign that this vital step in THE ONLY FOUNDATION has been taken.

THE SIGN TODAY

In Bible days, our unchanging Lord filled His followers with the Holy Spirit, and confirmed He had done so with a sign — they spoke in tongues. All over the world today, Christians are rediscovering the blessing, benefit and assurance this sign of God brings to the Spirit- filled believer.

You too can enjoy God’s fullness. Do not be satisfied with frustration and doubt. Stop admiring the New Testament, and start acting upon it! Receive the testimony of the Bible. Reaffirming the counsel of the word of God, the Lord Jesus said, *“Every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses”* (Matt 18:16). Here we have not two or three, but **six** witnesses from the New Testament (and there are more), all teaching us the same thing about the sign of having received the gift of the Holy Spirit.

He Who confirmed the promise of the Holy Spirit with the sign of speaking in tongues in the New Testament has not changed. There is not one word in the whole Bible to suggest that God has ever changed or done away with this sign.

THE SIGN EXAMINED

“Wherefore, tongues are for a sign...” (1Cor 14:22).

Today, respected members of many historic churches and missions in which the miraculous manifestations of the Holy Spirit have previously been unknown, are speaking in tongues. Many sincere Christians looking on are puzzled. Some, like a portion of the crowd on the Day of Pentecost, mock. Others, despite all the evidence in the Bible to the contrary, emphatically say, "It's not for today." Yet others, having no understanding of what God is doing, issue stern warnings, "Be careful. There's something queer about it."

Because there are so many misunderstandings and false impressions concerning what speaking in tongues is, we will first consider what it is not.

WHAT SPEAKING IN TONGUES IS NOT

(1) Speaking in Tongues is not Linguistic Ability

The Apostle Paul knew various languages through his education. In Acts 21:37 he spoke to the chief captain of the soldiers in the Greek language. Acts 21:40 and 22:2 record that he spoke to the assembled multitude in Hebrew.

Yet, in his teaching on the speaking in tongues by the power of the Holy Spirit, he says: *"For one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God; for no one understands him, but he utters mysteries in the Spirit. For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful"* (1Cor 14:2,14).

Thus we see there is absolutely no connection between a supernatural utterance given by the Holy Spirit and something that is learned through our own efforts. When the believer speaks in tongues, the Holy Spirit bypasses the intellect. Paul clearly makes this distinction in 1 Corinthians 14:15: *"I will pray with my spirit — by the Holy Spirit that is within me; but I will also pray intelligently — with my mind and understanding"* (Amplified bible).

(2) Speaking in Tongues is not a Supernatural Sign or Gift given by the Spirit to the Church in the New Testament and then taken away:

Some have tried to teach that speaking in tongues, prophesying, and other miraculous manifestations of the Holy Spirit were taken away from the Church at the end of the first century, when the Bible was completed. The Bible itself, history, and today's move of the Spirit of God with miraculous manifestations, all refute this theory.

In an endeavor to find proof for the supposition that miracles ceased when the Bible was completed, the words of 1 Corinthians 13:10 are wrenched from their setting: *“But when the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away.”* However, it is clear from the context of this verse that the clause “when the perfect is come” refers not to an incomplete Bible, but to an incomplete Christian, who shall be perfected at the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

(3) Speaking in Tongues is not “Emotionalism”

As we have already seen, when God moves in a person, He touches every part of his being — intellect, emotion and will. Because He is a Person, the Holy Spirit Himself has these three characteristics — intellect, emotion and will.

Often when the emotions of the Holy Spirit touch the emotions of the believer, the result will be outwardly visible. When the cripple was healed by the power of the Spirit flowing through Peter and John, *“leaping up, he stood and walked and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God”* (Acts 3:8). Such leaping would break the traditional religious atmosphere in some of our churches today, and would no doubt be termed “emotionalism.” Even in the Old Testament, people under the influence of the Holy Spirit did things which some would consider rather strange today.

For instance, *“David danced before the Lord with all his might”* (2Sam 6:14). Would David be welcomed in our churches today? Or would we, like David’s wife Michal, despise such unseemly displays, and lose, as she did, the blessing of the Lord in our lives?

(4) Speaking in Tongues is not “Pentecostalism”

“Pentecost” is not a denomination — it is an experience for every born-again child of God.

The Feast of Pentecost was a memorial of God’s visitation to His people. There was shaking and fire. God spoke in a **new** way to His people. This took place 50 days after their deliverance from Egypt by the blood of the Passover Lamb at Mount Sinai.

In the same way, 50 days after the Passover Lamb of the New Covenant, Jesus Christ, was slain, God visited the praying 120 disciples in the upper

room in a **new** way. They were baptized with the Holy Spirit and fire. They spoke in tongues.

(5) **Speaking in Tongues is not “Fanaticism”**

Because of the supernatural nature of speaking in tongues, many do not understand. Sometimes those who speak in tongues and teach about it are called fanatics. Careful now! That means the New Testament Christians were fanatics. Our Lord Jesus would have to be similarly condemned, for He taught about speaking in tongues (Mark 16:17).

The problem is that there is today so little enthusiasm and zeal for the cause of Christ, that if Christians from the New Testament were to walk into our churches, they would appear fanatical in contrast to us. They followed Jesus, of Whom it is written, *“The zeal of Thine house hath eaten me up”* (John 2:17 kjv). The Lord Jesus is God’s pattern to us for **normal** Christian enthusiasm and zeal.

(6) **Speaking in Tongues is not Unimportant**

On the contrary, the Word of God says, *“Now I want you all to speak in tongues”* (1Cor 14:5). If the matter were unimportant, the numerous examples of speaking in tongues would not have been recorded in the Book of Acts, nor would the apostle Paul have devoted such a lot of space to it when writing to the Corinthian Christians.

Having cleared away some questions and doubts, let us see what God says speaking in tongues *is*.

WHAT SPEAKING IN TONGUES IS

(1) **Speaking in tongues is a sign that God is pouring out His Spirit**

On hearing the 120 disciples of Jesus speaking in tongues on the Day of Pentecost, the multitude asked, “What does this mean?” (Acts 2:12).

Peter answered, *“This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: ‘And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out My Spirit’”* (vs.16,17).

(2) **Speaking in Tongues is a Gift from God — a Manifestation of the Holy Spirit**

The Bible teaches that speaking in tongues is a gift of the Holy Spirit, which God has given to the Church (1Cor 12:1,7,10, 28). Let us not question the plan of God. If God has set this gift in the Church, then it must be needed. In fact, we are specifically commanded not to forbid speaking in tongues (1Cor 14:39).

(3) Speaking in Tongues is the initial, seen-and-heard Sign of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit

On each occasion when God baptized His children with the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues is specifically mentioned or strongly implied, as the first sign of what had happened. Nowhere does the Bible give the slightest suggestion God ever intended to change His pattern. A few believers have possibly experienced something of the Spirit's fullness without the sign. But if these believers have really received that foundation experience of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, they necessarily have within them the latent ability to manifest the sign of praise and worship in the Spirit, as He gives them utterance. Why not enjoy the full blessing of receiving the Holy Spirit, fulfilling the pattern of God's Word, as our New Testament brethren did, and as many thousands of Christians are doing today!

(4) Speaking in Tongues is one of God's Appointed Methods by which a Believer can Edify Himself

None will deny that we need to be edified — built up — in our faith. The statement of Scripture is clear: *"He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself"* (1Cor 14:4).

Nine supernatural gifts, or manifestations of the Holy Spirit, are listed in 1 Corinthians 12. This is the only gift of the Spirit of which it is specifically said that its use promotes the spiritual growth of the one who speaks in tongues.

(5) Speaking in Tongues, Together with the Corresponding gift of Interpretation of Tongues, is a Way God has Chosen to Edify His Church

When someone speaks out a distinct, loud utterance in tongues in a church meeting, that which has been spoken in tongues should be interpreted for all to understand. (The only exception to this is when the person speaking in tongues is doing so for the very first time as a result of receiving the baptism in the Holy Spirit.)

God has given some in His church the gift of interpretation of tongues for this purpose (see 1 Corinthians 12:10). The gift of interpretation of tongues is a supernatural showing-forth in a known tongue, by the power of the Holy Spirit, of a miraculous speaking in a tongue unknown to the speaker.

The interpretation is not an operation of the mind of the interpreter, but of the Spirit of God, so that all can understand what was spoken in tongues. The church will be edified — built up and strengthened — by this operation of speaking in tongues and interpretation. (See 1 Corinthians 14:5,12,26.)

The Bible clearly teaches that speaking in tongues is **speaking to God, not to men** (1Cor 14:2,28). The gift of prophecy — a supernatural utterance, inspired by the Holy Spirit, in a known tongue — speaks to men (verse 3). So then, according to the Bible, that which is uttered in tongues will be one or more of the following:

- (1) Glorifying God — *“telling the mighty works of God”* (Acts 2:4-11),
- (2) *“Extolling God”* (Acts 10:46),
- (3) *“He utters secret truths and hidden things (not obvious to the understanding)”* (1Cor 14:2 —Amplified Bible). This is the speaking of “mysteries” (kjv) in the human spirit, motivated by the Holy Spirit. Another rendering is the speaking of “divine secrets.”
- (4) Prayer (1Cor 14:15),
- (5) Blessing — that is, praising — God (verse 16),
- (6) Giving God thanks (verses 16 and 17).

Because the speaking in tongues is to God, it follows that the interpretation into the known language is also to God — prayer, praise, extolling the Lord, telling His mighty works, speaking divine secrets about Him, giving Him thanks. But while the utterance of the interpretation is addressed to God, those listening will be blessed and built up in their faith.

This is a long subject and one that has been very misunderstood. In a future book I will discuss it in more detail. A few further notes about this can be found in the Appendix (at the end of this teaching, in the next issue).

(6) Speaking in Tongues is a Gift God desires for Every Believer

“Now I want you all to speak in tongues...” (1Cor 14:5).

Jesus commanded His disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel, baptizing those who received salvation. Then He promised: *“These signs will accompany those who believe... they will speak in new tongues” (Mark 16:17).*

(7) Speaking in Tongues is given that Believers may Speak Supernaturally to God

Every true believer in Christ feels at times he just cannot express in words the communication of his heart to God. Of speaking in tongues the Bible says: *“For one who speaks in an unknown tongue speaks not to men but to God, for no one understands or catches his meaning, because in the Holy Spirit he utters secret truths and hidden things (not obvious to the understanding)” (1Cor 14:2 — Amplified Bible).*

There is no *“if it be Thy will, Lord,”* about this supernatural way of prayer. The Spirit of God knows the will of God; thus we ask *“according to His will,” “He hears us,”* and *“we know that we have obtained the requests made of Him” (1John 5:14,15).* Praying in tongues opens up an entirely new concept of prayer, intimate communion with the Father, and answered prayer for those who will believe.

(8) Speaking in Tongues is a God-Appointed Way by which Believers may Praise the Lord

On the Day of Pentecost, the 120 disciples praised God in other tongues. They told in *“tongues the mighty works of God” (Acts 2:11).* When the Holy Spirit fell on Cornelius and his company, they were heard *“speaking in tongues and extolling God” (Acts 10:46).*

How often those who love the Lord with all their hearts have been at a loss for words to express their love, praise and adoration to Him. Praise is born in the heart, and expressed with the tongue. In a reference to praising God in unknown tongues, Paul says: *“I will pray with the Spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the Spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding” (1Cor 14:15).*

(9) Speaking in Tongues is given so that our spirits (as distinct from our understanding) may Pray

The Bible makes this clear: *“For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful”* (1Cor 14:14 kjv).

Verse 15 of this same chapter speaks of praying and singing “by the Holy Spirit that is within me,” as distinct from praying and singing “with my mind and understanding.”

From the context of these verses, it is clear that our praying, speaking, and praising God in unknown tongues is more especially for our own private devotions, and communion with the Lord.

“Do All Speak With Tongues?”

Despite all the evidence in the Bible about this sign of God, some still boldly quote 1 Corinthians 12:30, asking “...do all speak with tongues?” and with equal boldness answer the question themselves with a most emphatic “No!”

But wait. As we have already seen, Paul clearly asserts it to be the perfect will of God for all believers to speak with tongues: *“Now I want you all to speak in tongues...”* (1Cor 14:5).

There is no contradiction here. The difficulty lies in failure to recognize the difference between speaking in tongues in private prayer and the **public ministry** of the gift of tongues in the church.

After the believer receives the initial infilling with the Holy Spirit and speaks in other tongues, he can, and should, continue daily to enjoy the blessing of praying and praising God “in the Holy Spirit.” Some may have been filled with the Spirit and, not understanding they are able to speak in tongues by the power of the Spirit within them, have not entered into this daily blessing.

But **all** Spirit-filled Christians may enjoy this God-given way for personal edification — building up — “spiritual progress” — in private prayer (1Cor 14:4a), praise (Acts 10:46b), unto God (1Cor 14:2), and praying and singing with the Spirit (1Cor 14:14,15).

Speaking in tongues is also used in prayer and intercession in the Holy Spirit (Jude verse 20; Rom 8:26,27), and utterance in the Holy Spirit of “*secret*

truths and hidden things not obvious to the understanding” (1Cor 14:2 — Amplified Bible).

The **ministry of the gift of tongues in the church** is given audibly for all to hear, and is always to be interpreted by another believer who has the gift of interpretation of tongues (1Cor 14:27, 28), or interpreted by the same person who spoke in tongues (1Cor 14:13).

When the local assembly is gathered together, these inspired utterances are for the edification of all present.

We must always keep in mind that chapters 11 to 14 of 1 Corinthians are instructions on how **church meetings** should be conducted, especially regarding the communion service, and the operation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Thus it is perfectly clear: it is this **ministry of speaking with tongues in the assembly of believers, the church**, to which Paul is referring in 1 Corinthians 12:30, for it is listed there among the ministries **“in the church.”** The Bible does not say that all believers should not speak with tongues — it says just the opposite. The Bible does say that not everyone in the church has this gift to minister the manifestation of speaking with tongues in the church.

HOW HE COMES

Mainly because of lack of teaching on the subject, the misconceptions concerning speaking with tongues are numerous. Some say that speaking in tongues is just the person speaking: Acts 2:4 explodes this theory with the words “...as the Spirit gave them utterance.” Others have even gone to the most dangerous extreme of attributing to Satan the works of the Holy Spirit!

But leaving aside the ridiculous notion about giving the devil credit for God’s work, some very sincere Christians do have genuine questions. The main one seems to be, “What will happen if I speak in tongues?”

When the Holy Spirit comes into our lives, He is exactly like Jesus. You are not afraid of the Lord Jesus. Do not be afraid of the Holy Spirit. He will not cause you to do anything wrong or unseemly. The reason unseemly things have sometimes happened as people receive the Holy Spirit, is simply because they are **resisting** Him. But the Christian fully yielded to his Lord will know only the gracious moving and true manifestations of the Holy Spirit.

When you speak with tongues, the Holy Spirit will not, as some seem to think, grasp your tongue and move it uncontrollably in your mouth. Neither does the Holy Spirit speak in tongues.

The teaching of the Bible is *“**They** were all filled with the Holy Spirit and (they) began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance”* (Acts 2:4). The disciples did the speaking. **They** spoke — as the Holy Spirit gave them utterance. They could have received the words from the Spirit, and kept quiet. But they didn’t. They spoke.

Some have said, “I will speak in tongues when the Lord wants me to” or “if the Lord wants me to.” From the teaching of the Bible, there can be no doubt about God’s will in the matter. But remember, the Holy Spirit will never force Himself, or His manifestations, on anybody. He seeks those who are yielded completely to Him — believers who will speak as He gives the utterance. A noted doctor has written: “It must be emphasized that the believer’s renunciation of his will (so that the Spirit of God may take over his tongue, his entire vocal apparatus and his subconscious thoughts) necessitates an **act of faith**. This renunciation is made with the firm expectation that he will receive something infinitely better in return, namely God’s will, guidance and energizing strength.”

To those who would still turn away from the Word of God, and resist the Spirit, saying, “I do not believe it is for me today,” we can only reply, “You are correct. It is not for you.” For Jesus clearly said: *“He who **believes** in Me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water.’ Now this He said about the Spirit, which **those who believed** in Him were to receive”* (John 7:38,39). *“These signs will accompany those who **believe... they will speak in new tongues**”* (Mark 16:17).

As in Bible days, so today we *“receive the promise of the Spirit **through faith**”* (Gal 3:14). The promise is definitely not for those who do not believe. The promise is for those who DO believe – for ALL who believe, from the Day of Pentecost until the day the Lord returns.

THE EVIDENCE EXAMINED

“You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses” (Acts 1:8).

“But tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high” (Luke 24:49 kjv).

“Power from on high” is the evidence of a true baptism, and daily fillings, with the Holy Spirit. A life that witnesses of Christ, in all His miraculous power and matchless beauty, is the evidence of a Spirit-filled life. Not only have we limited our own ability in Christ, but we have limited the ability of Almighty God, because we have not received that power of the Spirit which God intends for His Church.

The enemy has almost succeeded in blinding our eyes to the glorious realities of the Spirit-filled life. How can we say, “This experience, these miracles, are not for today,” and with the same mouth try to quote that God “is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think”! “All that we ask or think.”

Our asking and thinking could scarcely be more different from the early Church’s asking or thinking. In the midst of their persecutions, they asked for healing signs, wonders and miracles. They thought in terms of all being filled with the Spirit. The consuming passion of their lives was to obey Christ’s command to preach the Gospel to every creature.

Do you hear such asking today? Does such thinking fill our minds today? Our first-century brethren knew the key to God’s “exceeding abundantly.” Let us also return to quoting the whole verse, remembering that the preceding verse speaks of being “filled with all the fullness of God”:

*“Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, **according to the power that worketh in us**” (Eph 3:19,20 kjv).*

Yes, God’s power will only be manifest in our lives according to the freedom that His Holy Spirit enjoys within us. God willed that Christians of every generation should receive this power and thereby glorify His Son. This is clear from the next verse:

“To Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations...” (Eph 3:21).

The power of the Spirit was certainly not merely for the generation of Christians living in New Testament days. Today God wills that we too receive

the power of the Holy Spirit in the same way, that we may give the same dynamic witness and miraculous testimony to the authority of Christ.

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND FELLOWSHIP

The Bible teaches that receiving the power of the Spirit brings the believer into closer and richer fellowship with God, and with others of “like precious faith.”

The early disciples had experienced fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ. They had lived with Him. They heard His words — they saw His miracles. Indeed, they themselves went forth preaching, casting out devils in His Name. Despite all this, the Lord Jesus promised that new and deeper fellowship would be theirs after they had received the baptism with the Holy Spirit.

While He was with His disciples on earth, their fellowship with Jesus was limited. But when He ascended to the right hand of the Father in Heaven, the exalted Christ poured forth the Spirit upon His disciples, **filling their innermost beings** with His power and presence. He had promised, “*I will come unto you*” (John 14:18). He assured them His presence would not only be with them, but in them. “*I in you*” (John 14:20).

In accordance with His promise, fellowship with their Lord became altogether different — intimate, continuous and powerful — after the disciples received the baptism with the Holy Spirit and fire. That lukewarm love they had for their Master, causing them to forsake Him and flee from Him in His crisis hour, was transformed into burning, white-hot devotion. His words became meaningful and new. Prayer became vital contact with Heaven, and the results miraculous.

Today, God in His love and grace offers all Christians this same intimate, precious, new fellowship with Him by the power of the Holy Spirit.

We do not suggest, no, not for a minute, that those who have not received the fullness of the Spirit God intends for them, have no fellowship with God. All believers who are born of the Spirit may enjoy fellowship with their Heavenly Father. However, God longs for **deeper** fellowship with His children. This is made possible by receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit as He was received in Bible days.

In my ministry, I have been surprised and shocked to find just how many Christians are not enjoying rich, intimate, two-way communication and

fellowship with Christ. This fellowship and communion are possible only through the Holy Spirit. Most of us are able to recite the words of “the Grace,” the blessing found in 2 Corinthians 13:14:

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.”

But have these words become too familiar, so that we have failed to fully understand the significance of them? Do you notice it? — “the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.” Could this be the neglected link between us and the Godhead?

When the heart fully grasps the indispensable ministry of the Spirit in our fellowship with God — His power in making the Lord Jesus real to us — then gladly we will submit to His command to “be filled with the Spirit.” For in the heart of every true believer is this prayer:

*Nearer my God to thee
Nearer to thee;
E'en though it be a cross
That raiseth me,
Still all my song shall be,
Nearer, my God, to thee,
Nearer to Thee.*

How, then, does the Spirit make this intimate fellowship with the Lord possible? By His anointing upon us in **prayer, worship**, and as we meditate in the **Word of God**.

PRAYER

Prayer is much more than reading prayers some other man has written.

Prayer is more than bowing our head before God for five or ten minutes each day and telling Him what we want. Prayer is really enjoying fellowship with our Father.

In what must surely be one of the finest books ever written on prayer, In His Presence, a book that has revolutionized the prayer life of thousands, E. W. Kenyon defines prayer thus:

“The call to prayer is the Father’s invitation to visit with Him. This is more than the consciousness of a great need that often drives us to intercession. It is the call of Love to come and Fellowship. It is really visiting with the Father.

“Few of us have realized the fact that the Father’s heart is hungry for the companionship of His children. His heart hunger is the reason for man, and the reason for redemption. ‘For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.’

“That love impels Him to call us to prayer. That call is the proof of our ability to stand in His presence. It is the proof of His making us righteous enough to stand in His presence without reproof or condemnation.”

When a Christian receives the baptism with the Holy Spirit, the Lord gives him a new way to fellowship with Him in prayer. The Bible calls this “praying in the Spirit.” God wills that we pray in the Spirit, so that our spirits, as distinct from our understanding, may pray. As we have already noted, in the church we should pray in a known language, unless what is said is interpreted “*so that the church may be edified*” (1Cor 14:5).

However, the Bible teaches that Christians should pray not only with their minds and understanding, but also with their **spirits**, by allowing the Holy Spirit to pray through them.

INTERCESSION

The Holy Spirit is “*the Spirit... of supplication (earnest prayer)*” (Zech 12:10). One main reason the Lord commands His children to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit is to teach them to pray. Because in praying in the Spirit, the believer often enters into that all- important ministry of intercession — pleading on behalf of another.

Today the Lord is seeking intercessors — those who will go to their rooms, close the door, and agonize in prayer on behalf of others. But for what should we pray? What is the will of God? Herein lies the ministry of praying in the Spirit:

*“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our weakness: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but **the Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered**”* (Rom 8:26 kjv).

Yet these unutterable groanings have meaning, for there is no “Lord, if it be Thy will” about this intercession. The following verse teaches:

*“And He Who searches the hearts of men knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints **according to the will of** (v.27)*

WORSHIP

We find it hard to describe in words the fellowship and nearness to God experienced when worshipping God “in the Spirit.” Indeed, however reverent much of our worship may sound to the ear, without the Holy Spirit, true worship is just not possible. For as we have seen, only as God’s Holy Spirit moves upon us, do our spirits pray and worship. Jesus said:

“But the hour is coming and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth, for such the Father seeks to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:23,24).

He tells us to bring to Him “*the fruit of our lips.*” Jesus said, “*I am the vine, you are the branches*” (John 15:5). Our words of praise and worship are part of the fruit the branches bring forth. Our Father partakes of the fruit of our lips. Now we love to obey His invitation:

*“By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of **praise** to God **continually**, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His Name” (Heb 13:15).*

It is wonderful to worship God with the words of inspired hymns which express our praise and worship to Him. But let us also remember that the Lord has provided **two** methods by which we may worship Him — with our understanding, and with our spirits.

What tongue can describe, with natural words, that which is altogether supernatural? Here words fail us altogether. Who can ever forget being in a congregation of Spirit-filled sons and daughters of God, and experiencing the singing lifted up by the Holy Spirit, where the words, melodies and harmonies are all given by the Spirit. Most testify that in such times of worship they know the presence of God in a very real and special way.

THE WORD OF GOD

There is no substitute for the Word of God. The **most important way** God speaks to us in our fellowship with Him is through the Bible. The Bible is *“the sword of the Spirit”* (Eph 6:17).

Although it was written by about forty persons over a period of some 1600 years, the Author of the Bible is none other than the Holy Spirit Himself. It is written: *“Men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God”* (2Pet 1:21).

Therefore, the Word of God must be revealed and taught by the Author, the same blessed Holy Spirit. Without being born of the Spirit, no man can have fellowship with God in His Word. And by being filled with the Spirit, the Christian can have yet closer fellowship with the Lord in His Word. For again, it is our relationship to the Author that determines the depth and blessing of our fellowship.

Thousands testify that after they received the gift of the Holy Spirit in the Bible way, portions of the Bible, which they may have read even hundreds of times previously, made an altogether new impact upon them. The Spirit of God makes the promises of the Bible real and personal to the Spirit-filled believer.

No longer are His promises limited to a people who lived many centuries ago — they are ours today. God wants us to **“know** the things that are freely given to us of God.” How? By the Holy Spirit which we have received from God. *“God hath revealed them unto us **by His Spirit.**”* *“The Holy Spirit teacheth”* (1Cor 2:10,12,13 kjv).

No longer are God’s promises merely words in a Sacred Book. His Word is *“written not with ink but **with the Spirit** of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts”* (2Cor 3:3). The Holy Spirit teaches us that, in Christ, we are what God says we are. We can do what God says we can do. It revolutionizes our thinking. It is almost like starting all over again. Before we received the gift of the Holy Spirit, so much of our Bible reading, and our attempts to live by the Bible, was a grim struggle. But now we understand that the Christian walk is *“not of the letter, but **of the Spirit: for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life**”* (2Cor 3:6 kjv).

In these Last Days when God is pouring out His Spirit on all flesh, He calls us to a new realm of fellowship with Himself, and with one another, by the power of the Holy Spirit. This fellowship in the Spirit is one of the evidences of a life that has obeyed God’s command to “Receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Men

and women enjoying this blessing will radiate the beauty and power of Jesus, for they live in the presence of God.

DIRECTIONS FOR SEEKERS

“The Holy Spirit, Whom God has given to those who obey Him” (Acts 5:32).

WHEN CAN I RECEIVE?

“When can I receive the promised gift, or baptism with the Holy Spirit?”

You must take the first step in THE ONLY FOUNDATION — repent from sin and believe in Christ as your Savior. Then, according to the Bible, you can receive this vital part of THE ONLY FOUNDATION for your life while:

(1) **Tarrying — waiting upon the Lord:**

Jesus commanded: *“Behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you; but tarry ye... until ye be endued with power from on high” (Luke 24:49 kjv).*

Some object to “tarrying” for the baptism in the Holy Spirit. But tarrying does not mean waiting around aimlessly for God to fill you with His Spirit. Tarrying is nothing more than waiting on God in prayer.

The great importance of prayer in seeking the baptism with the Holy Spirit must always be kept in mind. Not that God will fill you with the Spirit because of your efforts at prayer. You cannot earn the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Prayer is communion with the Lover of your soul. As you live a prayer-life rich in communion with the Lord, it will become most natural to enter into the fullness of the Spirit.

We can commune with the Lord as we work, walk, sleep — whatever we do. And regardless of where we are or what we happen to be doing, the minute our faith reaches out to receive, we can be baptized with the Holy Spirit.

A Hindu woman, who accepted Christ as Her Savior, was singing one of the new songs she had learned in the meetings as she was working in the cotton mill. As she was working and praising God, she was baptized with the Holy

Spirit and found herself, much to her surprise, praising God in a language she had never learned. God is not bound by circumstances — only by our lack of faith.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the Baptizer with the Holy Spirit (Matt 3:11). Contact Him in prayer. Seek Him, wait upon Him, and He will send the promise of the Father into your life.

(2) You may Receive the Baptism with the Holy Spirit during the Preaching of the Word:

Most of us would be shocked by such an outburst today. But it happened. While Peter was still preaching his sermon to Cornelius and his company, *“the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the Word... for they [Peter, etc.] heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God”* (Acts 10:44-46).

Such occurrences are not so very usual, but the same thing can and does happen today, just as it did in the Scriptures. However, the preaching of the Word of God should **never** be interrupted by speaking in tongues or any other gift of the Spirit unless the Spirit of God sweeps into a meeting, as He did in the house of Cornelius, to **baptize** people with the Holy Spirit.

(3) You can Receive the Baptism with the Holy Spirit during the Laying on of Hands:

Many Christians today — as in Bible days — receive the Holy Spirit during the laying on of hands. In fact, we find this to be the most frequent way of entering into the baptism with the Holy Spirit. The new Christians at Samaria received the baptism with the Holy Spirit as Peter and John laid hands on them (Acts 8:17). The Ephesians received the Holy Spirit as Paul laid hands on them (Acts 19:6). The Apostle Paul himself received the Spirit as Ananias laid hands on him (Acts 9:17). Notice we do not read that Ananias was a great preacher, or an apostle, or an evangelist. The Bible simply describes him as *“a disciple at Damascus”* (Acts 9:10).

Now to answer the question, “How can I receive the gift of the Holy Spirit?”

DIRECTIONS FOR THOSE SEEKING THE BAPTISM WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

(1) Be Cleansed from All Known Sin

The first commandment to those who cried “What shall we do?” on the day of Pentecost, was to repent of their sins. In every Bible example, it is clearly taught that the blessing of the gift of the Spirit is for those who have repented and become the children of God.

You may come to Him now, and be cleansed. The promise is: *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness”* (1John 1:9).

(2) Surrender Yourself Completely and Fully to the Lord

The one hundred and twenty were fully surrendered to God. On the Day of Pentecost, as they waited for their Lord to send the promise of the Father upon them, they were *“all with one accord in one place”* (Acts 2:1). There was no pride or bitterness, no self-seeking in their hearts. They had surrendered to the will of their Lord.

They had tried to follow their Lord without the power of the Spirit, but had failed miserably. In the end, just when He needed them most, they had all forsaken Him and fled. Their experience had proved to them how impossible it was to follow Him and to live for Him without power from on high. Thus they surrendered themselves to Him.

Today we must surrender to the Lord. This further act of consecration and surrender should not be necessary. But because so many conversions are shallow, and others grow so slowly in Christ after conversion, some must make this further act of full surrender.

(3) Obey God in Every Part of our Life

*“And we are witnesses to these things, and so is **the Holy Spirit Whom God has given to those who obey Him**”* (Acts 5:32).

“If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Counsellor, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth” (John 14:15-17).

The language could not be clearer. The Holy Spirit is given to them that obey God. Sometimes it may be hard. But if we are to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, obey we must. Which of his commandments is the Lord calling you to

obey? To be baptized? To tell others about Him? To apologize to someone you find difficult to love? To serve Him? Whatever it is, obey Him. Otherwise, all your service and sacrifice counts for nothing. *“Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice”* (1Sam 15:22).

(4) Ask with Faith to Receive the Baptism in the Holy Spirit

It is clear from the Bible that the gift of the Holy Spirit, like all other gifts from God, is received by faith. The Word of God says that the Holy Spirit is received *“by hearing with faith”* (Gal 3:2). Again it is written: *“We... receive the promise of the Spirit through faith”* (Gal 3:14).

“Is it really necessary to ask?” some say. “If God wants me to receive the Holy Spirit, then He’ll give it to me.” But this is not so. The Lord Jesus said: *“If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?”* (Luke 11:13).

We see from this verse two essentials to receiving the Holy Spirit — you must be a child of God first, and you must ask. Jesus also said, *“Ask, and it will be given you”* (Matt 7:7). Again he said, *“If any one thirst, let him come to Me and drink... this He said about the Spirit, which those who believed in Him were to receive”* (John 7:37,39). Asking in faith, or drinking if you like, there must be; and whether it is slow or quick depends on how thirsty we are.

(5) Begin to Praise God Aloud for Filling You with His Spirit

We cannot fully understand it, but it happens right throughout the Bible. God’s people shouted the victory **before** they saw the battle won.

True faith is a faith that rejoices. This joyous faith in our hearts is manifested as we praise God for fulfilling His promise.

We do not have to persuade the Lord to keep His Word. He is longing to give you the gift of the Holy Spirit, even as you are longing to receive. Thank Him. Praise Him out loud. The Bible commands us:

“May all who seek Thee rejoice and be glad in Thee; may those who love Thy salvation say continually, ‘Great is the Lord!’” (Ps 40:16).

Most seekers after the gift of the Holy Spirit find it a great help to begin to praise God out loud.

Often it is only fear or pride which keeps us so quiet and reserved.

It is interesting to note that in the last chapter of Luke's Gospel, Jesus commanded His disciples to tarry for the Spirit. Luke ends his Gospel with the disciples "continually in the temple, praising and blessing God." Luke then opens his second letter, which we call the Acts of the Apostles, by giving us the account of how the disciples received the promised endowment with power from on high. Again praise, then the blessing. In these days, many Christians have come into great blessing, liberty and release, and even found themselves speaking in tongues for the first time as they became "lost in wonder, love and praise."

(6) Receive the Gift of the Holy Spirit

It seems almost too obvious to mention. But receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit is a definite **act of taking and receiving**. "Did you **receive** the Holy Spirit when you believed?" Paul asked the disciples at Ephesus. Many seem to have forgotten this act of receiving the baptism in the Holy Spirit, and continue to ask, ask, ask, when the Lord wants them to receive. "Ask and it will be given." When you have asked, receive what God is giving.

(7) As you Surrender Your all to the Lord, Begin to Speak, as the Holy Spirit Gives you the Utterance

Let us remember that the Holy Spirit does not speak in tongues, nor does He force anyone to do so. On the Day of Pentecost, "**they**" began to speak as the Spirit gave "**them**" utterance and expression.

"**They**" expressed out loud the word and sentence patterns inspired by, and given to them by, the Holy Spirit.

At the house of Cornelius, Peter and his friends heard "them speaking in tongues." Of the Ephesian believers, it says "they spoke with tongues." Paul testified, "*I thank God that I speak in tongues*" (1Cor 14:18). The Bible says, "*Now I want you all to speak in tongues*" (1Cor 14:5).

Because He is a Person, and because He demands nothing less than full surrender, the Holy Spirit will influence every part of our being — mind, body,

spirit, emotions — our all. But just as different people react differently at conversion, so it is in the baptism with the Holy Spirit. Different people have different emotional and spiritual responses to this experience. Therefore, we should never be surprised to see or experience Biblical manifestations of God's power when He is moving by His Spirit. Some of these manifestations are:

Trembling (Acts 9:6 kjv; Dan 10:11);

Praise which can be heard (Ps 66:8; 98:4; 147:1; Acts 2:4-11; 10:46);

Shouting (Ps 47:1; 35:27);

Clapping and lifting up of hands (Ps 47:1; 63:4; 1Tim 2:8);

All praying or praising together (Acts 4:23, 24; Rom 15:6);

Dancing before the Lord (Ps 150:4, Exo 15:20, 21; 2Sam 6:14; Luke 6:23);

Speaking in tongues, or any other manifestation of the gifts of the Spirit (see 1 Corinthians Chapters 12 to 14; Acts 19:6).

The Biblical instruction is *“All things should be done decently and in order”* (1Cor 14:40). Notice that the first part of the verse does say *“All things should be done.”* Are all things done in your church? Decently and in order too, of course. Some people will have perhaps more manifestations than others. Other believers may have relatively few *“feelings.”*

The main thing is to obey God's command in THE ONLY FOUNDATION to receive the Holy Spirit and His power. But it is not at all strange that He wants complete control over us, including our tongue. The Bible says, *“no human being can tame the tongue”* (Jas 3:8). Thus it is not hard to see that the last member of the body to yield to the control of the Spirit is the tongue. Yet it is obvious that no one can be **fully** yielded to the Spirit, completely submerged, immersed, baptized, controlled, filled with the Spirit, until the tongue is yielded too.

Let us obey God. *“Be filled with the Spirit”* (Eph 5:18). Be submerged, immersed, baptized, filled, controlled by the Holy Spirit — soul, mind, spirit, body, hands, tongue, lips, voice — your **all**.

The Bible records that more than five hundred saw the Lord Jesus after His resurrection (1Cor 15:6). But only one hundred and twenty obeyed His command, and received the promised baptism with the Holy Spirit and power on the Day of Pentecost.

“Repent,” “Be baptized,” “Receive the gift of the holy Spirit.” Will you allow God to complete THE ONLY FOUNDATION in your life today?

For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1Cor 3:11).

“What shall we do?”

- (1) **“Repent”**,
- (2) **“Be baptized every one of you in the Name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.”**
- (3) **“Receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”** (Acts 2:37-38).

This is the apostles’ foundation upon which our lives are to be built into holy temples for God’s Spirit to dwell in. It is THE ONLY FOUNDATION upon which a Christian life can be begun. As we have seen, it was clearly THE ONLY FOUNDATION upon which the New Testament Church was built. It is THE ONLY FOUNDATION for us today.

“The Doctrine Of Baptisms”

The Bible teaches *“the doctrine of baptisms”* (Heb 6:2 kjv) — that is, more than one baptism. Or more correctly, as we see on the chart, the three foundation steps of the “one baptism” spoken of in Ephesians 4:5. Remember, the “doctrine of **baptisms**,” together with the doctrines of “**repentance** from dead works, and of **faith** toward God,” is listed among the first principles of the “word of the beginning of the doctrine of Christ.” Believers are commanded in this same verse to leave these first steps behind and “go on unto perfection.” How many of us have yet to take some of the first steps!

IT IS UP TO YOU

I write with a real sense of urgency and commission when I say that terrible ruin will come to those whose lives are not built upon the threefold experience of THE ONLY FOUNDATION.

To dig deep and build — or not? To do His sayings — or not? To be able to stand unshaken against the floods — or be ruined? To respond to His love for you — or not? To obey the commandment of God and experience His salvation, love and power — or to follow the traditions, ceremonies and rituals

of men, which lead to judgment and death? To build your life on THE ONLY FOUNDATION — or the sinking sand?

“Choose you this day whom you will serve” (Josh 24:15).
God — or man?

The choice is now up to you.

YES, it is up to you now to BUILD on the foundation. The next issue of ACTS will show you how you can build a **life of constant triumph** – by the **power of God**, according to the **Word of God**, and to the **glory of God!**

