

Baptism Of The Holy Spirit

by Colonel Jenny Walker

Salvation is only the beginning of what God has in store for us, writes Colonel Jennifer Walker

A few years ago the holiday show, 'Getaway', advertised a competition offering a very generous prize package that included a four wheel drive car, a flight to a capital city in Australia of the winner's choice, three night's accommodation and \$6,000 to spend on fuel, as well as food and accommodation to tour for seven days in the new car. So, the prize package not only included a car—but everything needed to enjoy it!

When we accept Jesus Christ as our Saviour, His free gift of salvation comes as a package deal. He not only forgives our sins, rescues us from the dominion of satan and gives eternal life, but he gives us the full resources to live a victorious and effective Christian life as God—in the person of the Holy Spirit—comes and takes up residence in our lives.

However the Holy Spirit is a gracious guest and waits to be appropriated into the totality of our lives. At some point in our Christian journey there needs to be a moment when we invite the Holy Spirit to have full control. Commissioner Edward Read states it like this:

'Christians ought to know that they become temples of the Spirit the moment they become Christians...but he who is resident must be invited to become president.'

The Holy Spirit is present, but he waits to be received. As we welcome the Spirit, giving him our full attention, he releases his gifts and supernatural power into our lives, enabling us to live holy and victorious lives and fulfil God's purposes and mission in the world.

The receiving of the gift of the Holy Spirit is commonly called the 'Baptism of the Holy Spirit'. It is a second subsequent work of God (distinct from, and in addition to, receiving the Holy Spirit at the time of conversion)—when we give the Spirit permission to become the president and not the resident (it's also called being filled with the Holy Spirit or the second blessing).

Don Basham explains it like this: *'Conversion is that experience of Jesus Christ by which the non-Christian becomes a Christian, while the baptism in the Holy Spirit is that experience for the Christian to make him a powerful Christian...an empowering experience which introduces the Christian into the supernatural realm of the Christian life.'*

While the experience of the baptism of the Holy Spirit will be unique and different for everyone, for most Christians it is a defining and supernatural moment. God's presence may manifest in a number of different ways, such as;

- When the Spirit comes upon us he comes as the breath or wind of God and so some people will shake uncontrollably or breathe deeply.
- One of the symbols of the Holy Spirit is fire and some Christians testify experiencing physical heat when the Spirit comes upon them—like a burning sensation in their hands or bodies, or like a liquid heat within.
- Others are overwhelmed with an experience of God's love. Romans 5:5 says that, 'The love of God is poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit.'
- In three out of five accounts of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit in Acts, it is accompanied by a phenomenon called 'glossolalia', or speaking in tongues. This is the ability to speak in a language never learned. Speaking in tongues is a gift, not proof of being filled with the Spirit; an indication, not qualification.

One thing is for sure—when you are filled with the Spirit it will be noticeable not only to yourself, but to others around you that something has happened.

Eddie Snipes describes the moment he was baptised in the Holy Spirit, *"It was if the floodgates of heaven opened up and poured through me. The chains that bound my mind fell like shackles and I felt like God filled every part of my mind and soul. It was if Scriptures previously unknown raced through me and I felt as though they were now part of me.....During this encounter with God the entire world disappeared, time stood still and all I could see and experience was the power of God. I walked away a free man. Everything that haunted me now seemed like a trophy of God's grace. After I was baptized with the Holy Spirit my life and ministry was transformed. God opened the door and gave my ministry power....Everything about me changed that day.'*

Receiving the fullness of the Holy Spirit is not an onerous task, but a deliberate and intentional step of faith, whereby we consecrate our lives to God and ask for the gift of His Spirit to be released in full measure. (Luke 11:11–13) Neither is it a once only experience, for we are invited to continuously be filled with the Spirit throughout the course of our Christian journey. (Ephesians 5:18)

In the early days of its inception, The Salvation Army experienced a Holy Spirit revival. Originally William Booth named the Sunday morning meetings, 'Baptism of Fire', because it was the opportunity for the new converts to get sanctified—baptised in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Reports like the following abounded in the *War Cry* of the day:

'After we had a few testimonies the glory came in a marvellous manner. Talk about a baptism of fire like they had at Pentecost, we were all filled and flooded and some overwhelmed with the Divine Presence. And then the Captain and the Lieutenant lay on the floor, both were filled unutterably full of glory and full of God. All of us got such a baptism we had not had for a long time.'

Imagine what our Army would look like today if every soldier was filled and emboldened with the fire of the Holy Spirit? May our prayer continually resonate with the words of our Founder:

'O God of burning, cleansing flame, send the fire!...Give us the promised Holy Ghost, we want another Pentecost, send the fire today!'

Colonel Jennifer Walker
Territorial secretary of women's ministries