

Truth Is Power!

Imagine you're on a boat. You're told with confidence, "Call on the captain if you fall overboard, and you'll be saved." So, a big storm comes, you fall overboard, and you call out the captain's name. He then yells out instructions - he tells you exactly what you need to do to be saved from drowning (grab hold of the life ring, put on the life vest, inflate it, etc.). But, you don't listen out for his instructions amid the noise and tumult of the sea. Instead, you decide to stay paddling in the water, thinking and even professing, "but, I believed all I had to do was call on the captain's name and I'd be saved..." Consequently, you end up drowning.

The Bible is jam-packed with exciting things to learn about God, our Creator. But, for many people it can be a daunting task to find the "meat and potatoes" of what they need to do to get right with God, and to decipher what Christianity is all about. The existence of myriad religions and versions of self-called Christian churches exacerbates the problem. It never used to be this way. Back in the days of Jesus and the very early church, there was only one way and it was very simple. It is mankind that has created what we call "churchianity," over the years turning the pursuit of Jesus into a business, social club, and even a rock concert alternative.

But, there is Truth, and there is power in Truth. Man-made theories and philosophies can be incredibly appealing. They're like beautiful ornaments that can change people's lives on the surface, but only God's way will actually get people anywhere. The reality is that we're all involved in a battle of good versus evil, of life versus death, and only Truth can move us forward to victory.

The following is the "meat and potatoes" everyone needs to feed on in order to find truth.

1 Corinthians 2:4-5, "And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."

The Battle

God is a Spirit. He is all-powerful. And, He *IS* love (1 John 4:8) – a kind of love that's so much bigger and deeper than any one of us can fathom. It's not a gushing, all-accepting, unconditional kind of love that some people mistakenly presume, but a love that is good (meaning absolutely perfect – not according to our modern day casual treatment of the word), holy, righteous (blameless), and just. God is pure. God is divine.

With His unlimited power, God created mankind so He could have a type of family with whom to share His love. But, now we're all in a state of separation from God because of the evil that entered mankind thousands of years ago. Because of Satan (God's adversary, a rebellious angel) and his deception, mankind was duped into sinning (doing wrong against God). (If you're not familiar with this, read the beginning of Genesis – the first book of the Bible – and you'll find out all about this tragic event).

You see, when God created mankind, he gave everyone free will to choose to live *wholly* under his care (or not). He didn't want a relationship with robots. He wanted a relationship with a creation that would willingly choose to live with Him in all goodness, following His ways with the wholehearted belief that their Creator knew what was best for them.

The moment mankind chose to step out of the fullness of God's care and act independently, it set in motion a battle. Generation after generation has since struggled with the war of good versus evil, but God Has always given people a way out – a way to victory.

God wants each and every one of us to be saved from this ongoing conflict and to be reunited with Him, so that when we die we can live with Him forever in His amazingly perfect spiritual realm. But, being the perfectly good and just God that He is, He doesn't do it for us. It has to happen through actions that reflect our own free will to want the fullness of God's care – including the fullness of His ways. All sin breaks our relationship with God, and without going through a process of reconciliation with our Creator, our separation from Him will remain and we will continue to suffer the consequences of living independent lives.

So, how can a person be reunited with God?...

Well, for thousands of years, mankind has liked to think he can do things his own way, hence the multitude of different religions and other kinds of spiritual philosophies that exist today, including myriad man-made versions of Christianity!

Yet, God has told us there's only one way for reconciliation to happen...

John 3:5 says, "...Except a man be born of water and *of* the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

Being born of water means being baptized in water (or fully immersed in water according to the Biblical Greek word "baptizo"). Being born of the Spirit equates to being baptized with the Holy Spirit (or being filled with the power of the Holy Spirit).

Baptism in water is a demonstration of our personal repentance (feeling remorse for – and desire to overcome – our fleshly ways). Water baptism buries our old life and washes us clean of our past sins. It's something we consciously and humbly choose to show toward God, so it's *our* part of the reconciliation process.

Baptism with the Holy Spirit is a sign that God has seen our true repentance and it's something God chooses to do for us as we come to Him, asking for it. It's a regeneration that gives us new life, and it's *God's* part of the reconciliation process.

This message is reinforced in Acts 2:38: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." *Note: The terms Holy Spirit and Holy Ghost are synonymous.*

The Focal Point

But wait, in this last scripture, did you notice *THE* critical element – the center of what makes reconciliation possible? Yes, it's Jesus Christ, the Son of God. (If you don't know about Jesus and His teachings on how to live a life that pleases God then you need to read what's called the *gospels* – the Books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John – in the Holy Bible. Step #1 on our Get Empowered page will also help you.)

You see, God's Word tells us that "...without shedding of blood is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22). Even when Jesus was on this earth preaching the coming kingdom of God, He himself prophesied, "...this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."

The Bible also records the words of John the Baptist, "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he" (speaking of Jesus) "that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: **he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost**, and *with* fire:" (Matthew 3:11).

So, when we repent and get water baptized, we do so in the name of Jesus Christ, recognizing His sacrifice on our behalf. We humbly and gratefully recognize that without Jesus' death and the shedding of His blood, we would be unable to be healed of what separates us from our Creator. When we understand our desperate need for Jesus in this way and determine to follow after Him, God the Son (Jesus) then gives us the power of the Holy Spirit – and *this* is what unites us with God the Father.

In John 15:16, Jesus pointed out that "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and **ordained** you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain..." We cannot just choose Jesus and leave it at that. We must seek after Him in repentance, humility, gratitude, and obedience.

This is what Jesus meant when He declared, "...I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). Likewise, it's what Jesus was referring to in John 7:37-39: "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)" The Biblical word for "should" in this scripture is a mixture of "would" and "necessary" i.e. it was *necessary* that they *would* receive the Holy Spirit.

This is also what's meant by the much misinterpreted scripture, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). We discuss misconceptions to do with John 3:16 and similar scriptures in more detail further below, but briefly, the "believing" part here (and in John 7:37-39 quoted above) *doesn't* mean just "acknowledging" Jesus as the Son of God and the Savior of mankind. Rather, the word believe is far more encompassing. It refers to 1) our understanding that only Jesus – through His blood – has the ability to wash us clean and make us presentable to God the Father, and 2) acting on this belief (i.e. acting in faith) by getting water baptized in Jesus' name and seeking for (and receiving) the Holy Spirit.

Jesus' death on the cross made way for Him to baptize us with the Holy Spirit and thereby give us a new relationship with the Father. Jesus explained this to his disciples in John 13:20, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me." If we come to depend on Jesus, we forsake our independent ways, and we can then come into a new, *dependent* relationship with our Creator!

Bursting the Bubble

Has anyone ever told *you* that you just need to give your heart to Jesus, or just say the sinner's prayer and you'll "be saved" (and, thus, have automatic assurance of eternal life)? This is in part

correct, but it is not the fullness of what we need to know if we truly want to be a Christ-follower. God's Word clearly warns us:

Matthew 15: 8-9, "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."

Romans 10:2-3, "...they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."

There are many well meaning, church going, self-professing Christians all over the world. But, did you know that the word Christian comes from the word "Christos" which means anointed one? When a person comes to a knowledge of Jesus Christ (which equates to giving their heart to Jesus, etc.) and starts to draw closer to God and His Word, the Holy Spirit works on the outside of that person's life. But, it is when someone is anointed with (permanently filled with) the Holy Spirit that the fullness of God's promises come to life.

Romans 8:8-9 states, "...they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

People's emotions can easily deceive them into following after something that "feels" like the truth, especially if it's being promoted by others they love or admire. But, don't be fooled into thinking you can't be fooled. Satan is still playing his deadly games, pulling out every trick in his arsenal to sway people away from being fully reconciled with God. And his tricks are, on the surface, very attractive:

2 Corinthians 11:14-15, "...no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works."

There is a reality we must be wary of and contend with: The devil wants (among many other things) to stop people from being filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. Satan – who God describes as a deceiver – uses many subtle ways to trick people into believing that following his messages will bring them great benefit, and he's very successful at it. After all, he first did this with Eve (again, read Genesis if you're not familiar with this part of history) and look at the curse that came upon mankind because of listening to him instead of obeying God. Of course, the adversary does not want people to come to a knowledge of Jesus at all, but if they do, he will still try to mess things up for them.

Two common misconceptions that the devil loves people to embrace concern the words "believe in" and "call upon" that are mentioned in English Biblical translations. For example, scriptures such as John 3:16 (quoted above) are isolated from everything else Jesus ever commanded, with people referencing the phrase "believe in him" as though it means "accept as true." Yet, the Greek word for believe here means to "trust and commit to."

Jesus clearly said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15), and one of his commandments – as we have already highlighted – was "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God... Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be

born again" (John 3:5-7). Therefore, someone who truly believes in Jesus will consider and follow *all* that Jesus instructed - including this critical call to action.

John 3:16 is part of the *very same* conversation between Nicodemus and Jesus in which Jesus mentions the necessity to be born again (just *moments* earlier in verse 5). So, what Jesus is emphasizing in verse 16 is this: **"If you truly believe that I am Christ the Messiah that was prophesied to come, you will regard the instructions I just gave you (and everything else that comes from my mouth), and in doing so, you will have eternal life in the kingdom of God waiting for you."** The emphasis should actually be on the word "him," not on the word "believe." Meaning, if you believe on (and therefore follow after) *Jesus* (and *only* Jesus) all the days of your life, salvation will be yours.

Verses like Romans 10:13 are also commonly focused on as the "be all and end all of salvation." This particular scripture says, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Yet, the phrase "call upon" does not mean to simply cry out to Jesus - as is frequently assumed. Rather, it's referring to those who - by their actions - honor Jesus as Lord of their lives. In any kind of kingdom, it is necessary to obey all that the Lord expects of them.

Let's put it another way: Imagine you're on a boat. You're told with confidence, "Call on the captain if you fall overboard, and you'll be saved." So, a big storm comes (likened to life's struggles), you fall overboard, and you call out the captain's name. He then yells out instructions (likened to all of Jesus' commandments) - he tells you exactly what you need to do to be saved from drowning e.g. grab hold of the life ring, put on the life vest, manually inflate it, etc. In other words, "I will give you something and if you use it, it will save you." But, say you don't listen out for the details of his directions amid the noise and tumult of the sea (likened to the distractions of the world and its myriad religious philosophies). Instead, you decide to stay paddling in the water, thinking and even professing, "but, I believed all I had to do was call on the captain's name and I'd be saved..." Consequently, you end up drowning.

Do you see how a single distortion or incorrect simplification can suddenly corrupt the entire intention of a message? And unfortunately, the sinful heart of mankind is drawn to these kinds of trends because it helps to absolve people of responsibility, accountability, and/or action on their part.

It's very convenient for people to think that all they have to do is accept Jesus as the son of God and then His blood will automatically cover them and all other "believers" around the world. Yet, the Word of God clearly tells us that "...being made perfect, he (Jesus) became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that **obey** him," (Hebrews 5:9).

It's also very convenient for people to think that the New Testament epistles (letters of exhortation - and sometimes chastening - by various disciples of Jesus to their brethren) apply to mankind in general. Yet, the fact is that these letters were written *by born again believers* to other *born again believers*. They were *all* part of the baptized and Spirit-filled body of people that were *already* following the Way of Jesus. For example, when Titus 3:5-6 states, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour," Titus is talking to his brothers and sisters in Christ and not to just anyone reading the Bible with interest.

Adding to this, many scriptures are misconstrued because people don't have an understanding (or

full understanding) of the environment and circumstances that motivated the recording of certain words found in the Bible. For example, people read Romans 10:13 (discussed above) and quickly draw the conclusion that all they have to do is call upon the name of Jesus and they'll have salvation guaranteed. Yet, this verse was written during a period when some Jewish Christians were trying to impose certain aspects of the law of Moses upon the Gentile Christians. Steps #1 to #5 on our Get Empowered page explain things like this in more detail, but basically the scripture is emphasizing that salvation is now *all about Jesus and His Way* – versus the outdated way of the Old Testament law.

Faith Alone - Not!

Hopefully you can see how blanket salvation statements and assumptions are invalid when understood as they were meant to be taken. If not, let's consider another example. The Book of Hebrews is often quoted for "faith" as the way to salvation. Yet, there are two critical things to consider: 1) the Biblical word faith not only means faith "in" but also *faithfulness* "to" (Jesus), and 2) historical records indicate that this epistle was written at a time when born again (Spirit-filled and water baptized) Jews were returning to the synagogues in order to escape persecution from the Romans. (At this stage, the Romans were persecuting the Christians, but not the Jews. Judaism was an "allowed" religion in the Roman Empire, but Christianity was an outlawed, underground religion.)

Now, for Jews to re-enter the synagogues after turning to Christ, they had to deny Jesus as the promised Messiah. However, many weak born again Jews were willing to do this rather than potentially face death for themselves and their families. Romans 10:13 is written as a solemn reminder that *only* those that have the right to carry the name of Jesus upon them can hope in salvation. By returning to the synagogues, people forfeited this right.

We find a similar situation with scriptures such as "by grace ye are saved" (Ephesians 2:5) and "The just shall live by faith" (Galatians 3:11). These words were never intended to be a "one size fits all" promise for whoever chooses to simply have faith that Jesus is their Lord and Savior. Rather, they had a specific purpose. They were written to comfort and admonish those who were hesitant or reluctant to let go of their former traditions, especially to those who were trying to enforce certain elements of the Mosaic law (such as circumcision) upon the born again Gentiles (non-Israelites). Given this, it's important to realize that 1) the "ye" and "just" in these two scriptures is speaking to those who had *already* been born again and were therefore part of the body of people living in Christ (the Body of Christ), and 2) the words purposed to remind such people that it is by the *grace of God* that Jesus Christ died as the final sacrifice for sins, and that *continued faithfulness* to Jesus' teachings (not just possessing faith in Jesus) is the only way into God's Kingdom in this New Covenant (agreement) age – not by following the Mosaic law, or any other path. (Note: Read our other articles on the "Get Empowered" page for more detailed explanation on various topics such as the Old Testament/Covenant versus the New Testament/Covenant.)

Even if all of these facts seem a bit complicated for you to digest right now, at least you can come away with a general yet critical exhortation: don't be tempted (by others, or by your own emotions) to hang your salvation on isolated scriptures that you've perhaps heard repeated over and over. "Believe" and "call on" are only two blanket statements that commonly feature in gospel messages today. There are a multitude of others: confess Jesus, receive Jesus, give your heart to Jesus, accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior, make a decision for Christ, etc.

Take time to read the surrounding words in other verses and chapters and your eyes will begin to open up to Truth. You'll realize that the scriptures throughout the New Testament were meant to *support* what Jesus first laid out in detail – not *replace* everything Jesus said. When Jesus commanded, for example, that you "must be born of water and of the Spirit" then that's exactly what He meant, and those that afterward believed, received, called upon, had faith in, or confessed (or any other similar version) Jesus consciously chose to follow this instruction as the beginning of living in the Way – His Way.

Increasingly, "saved by faith alone/only" is a theme being promulgated by a variety of churches and especially in the social media environment. Yet, this is a blatant twisting of God's Word. The reality is that the term "faith only" is mentioned just once in the Bible, and the context is the *opposite* of what is being progressively preached. James 2:24 says, "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." Furthermore, earlier in the same chapter James states, "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone."

Churches and social media gurus are so quick to tell you that salvation is by faith and faith alone, and listeners are even quicker to embrace this message without any cross examination with the Word of God. Yet Ephesians 5:17 warns, "...be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is." God makes it very clear that proclaiming your faith in Jesus is not enough to get you into the Kingdom. It is your works – how you choose to conduct yourself in this life, disciplining yourself after the Word of God, as a true disciple should – that your faith becomes complete. And, as we have already examined, these works are not manifested as a result of applying the written law. Rather, they are made manifest by willingly walking in the steps of Christ Jesus and aligning yourself with His character and His works i.e. by following His Way. It is the power of the Holy Spirit anointing that fully enables you to do this, once you are born again.

So, once again we emphasize that individual scriptures must be examined in the light of their complete context. Otherwise, if we so called "cherry pick" scriptures and even twist them to our advantage, we will easily be led astray ourselves and likely take others along with us.

Palatable Substitution

The "thief on the cross" is another widely-rehearsed example of people substituting the true meaning of God's words for something more "palatable." Readers take what they see at face value regarding the crucified thief and immediately give credence to every "death bed confession," equating it to salvation. Yet, when Jesus said to the thief in Luke 23:43, "...To day shalt thou be with me in paradise," He simply meant, "all you can expect to happen *this day* is to join me where I am going: to the garden, or to the place of the dead." (Either one – the Bible is not quite clear because the Greek word "paradeisos" can mean different things relating to "garden, park, grove, enclosure, or preserve.")

By the word paradise, Jesus was *not* referring to "eternal life in the kingdom of God" (as many people conveniently assume) seeing that the literal garden grave, or the spiritual grove of the dead, is where Jesus went that same day He talked to the thief, and Jesus was there until He was resurrected (brought back to life) on the third day. It's also obvious that Jesus was not referencing the Kingdom given the many scriptures (such as John 3:13, John 1:18, John 6:46, Acts 2:27, Hebrews 9:27, 1 Corinthians 15, 1 Thessalonians 4, and Revelation 20) that indicate that no-one is yet living forever with the Father except the Son.

Even more significant is the fact that when the thief asked, "Lord, remember me when thou

comest into thy kingdom," Jesus did not say "yes" or "I will" or anything such like. All that Jesus replied is, "thou shalt be with me in paradise." Nowhere else in the entire New Testament does Jesus use the word paradise, and nowhere does He use any other word to reference the Kingdom, the kingdom of God, nor the kingdom of heaven with anything other than the word "kingdom." Over 100 times the Bible records Jesus speaking the word "kingdom" to reference salvation through Him, but never once did he use the word "paradise" to imply this hope.

Jesus didn't even say to the thief "thy sins are forgiven thee" as He had so mercifully proclaimed at different times upon a small number of followers, giving them hope of a favorable post-millennial judgment (should they have died before the New Testament covenant came into effect). After all, the other two gospels clearly record this thief – together with the second crucified thief – reviling Jesus along with many others, including the chief priests. Let's further consider that, most likely, both crucified thieves had already been aware of (and rejected) Jesus' ministry as His fame had indeed spread widely throughout the land!

Having addressed these points, let's return to the word "paradise" or "paradeisos." What was Jesus referring to? There are only two other places in the Bible where paradeisos is used. One is in the second chapter of Revelation where the paradise – *garden* – of God is referenced as featuring the tree of life. The other is in 2 Corinthians chapter 12 where it seems the apostle Paul is writing about once being "caught up" into paradise – perhaps a *garden-like* place of the dead, a kind of waiting room where people go when they die to await judgment, but a place where God somehow still has a glorious presence. After all, the Book of Acts records Paul's body being dragged out of the city after he was stoned to death (seemingly), but afterward rising up alive when the disciples surrounded him (and most likely prayed over him). Many scholars believe this is when Paul had his experience in paradise, which Paul later wrote about in 2 Corinthians. This is interesting given many other contemporary, first-hand accounts of people having clinically died and then been resuscitated, and later giving account of experiencing some kind of heavenly light, glory, and/or inexplicable peace, etc. while being temporarily departed from this world. But we will leave it at that – it's interesting...

The most important thing to remember is that, according to Scripture, there has been absolutely no judgment yet, of the living or the dead. Without getting too detailed here (*see our Get Empowered page for more specific information about life, death, and resurrection from the dead*), the thief died under the Old Testament contract and he will be judged according to his works after the millennium. Even if Jesus (despite the weight of evidence to the contrary) did somehow imply to the thief that he would *one day* get to be with Him following the post-millennial judgment (but it would be incorrect and very dangerous of us to confidently promote this, or even make this final assessment in our own minds – because this will be God's call only, and we must stand solely on what we know for certain), this does not make obsolete Jesus' commandment in John 3:5, "... Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

So, for those who are able and have opportunity at *this* time in *their* lives in this *New Testament age*, both water baptism and Holy Spirit baptism are still necessary fulfillments of a life fully dedicated to Christ. If we are born again of water and the Holy Spirit (and continue to live a Spirit-led life) and then die in body before Jesus returns, we simply wait in the place of the dead until we are raised (resurrected) to join Him in His Kingdom. At this point, this will be our judgment (and it will be a favorable one!):

Revelation 20:5-6, "This is the first resurrection. (The rest of the dead did not come back to life until the thousand years had ended.) Blessed and holy are those who share in the first

resurrection. For them the second death holds no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him a thousand years."

The Big "But..."

"But, I already *feel* saved," you might say. The loving but grave caution here is to beware of your emotions. It's quite easy for someone to convince themselves that they're fully reconciled with God because of His miraculous hand upon their lives, but the person that has begun to open his/her eyes to God must be careful not to confuse *God's hand* with the *fullness of God's expectations*.

Remember the scripture we already visited that highlighted the importance of repentance as the first step toward reconciling with our Creator (Acts 2:38: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.")? Well, repentance always involves a change of heart and mind away from "self" and toward God. Many positive – and even miraculous (healings, answers to prayer, indescribable feelings of joy and comfort and peace, etc.) – changes will absolutely occur in the life of the truly repentant person as the Word of God progressively takes effect. At this point, the person might be tempted to wholeheartedly believe they've done all that Biblical salvation requires. They might be tempted to offer all kinds of "But..." justifications that contradict scripture, citing examples of God's hand as evidence of their right standing with God.

BUT... the truth of God's Word always trumps a person's emotions and personal convictions. Repentance is a wonderful stage in anyone's relationship with God. In fact, it can sometimes be the stage where the most significant impact is seen and felt. However, a person's walk toward God should not stop there. As we've already examined, there are still two more stages of conversion that must be experienced: baptism in water and baptism with the Holy Spirit. Everyone who's at the stage of repentance – no matter how good they feel – should be greatly encouraged to continue moving forward so they don't miss out on being sealed with that which makes eternal life in the kingdom of God possible:

Ephesians 1:13-14 "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, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory."

Romans 8:11, "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies **by his Spirit** that dwelleth in you."

Signs Following

So, how do people know when they've been baptized with the Holy Spirit? God's Word clearly tells us we won't be left wondering. Acts 1:8 states, "...ye shall receive **power**, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me..." Mark 16:17 tells us "...**signs shall follow** them that believe...they shall speak with new tongues..." In Acts 2, the disciples all spoke in tongues the moment the Holy Spirit was first given to believers. And, the Book of Acts records other occurrences of people being filled with the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues as the first manifesting sign of the anointing (e.g. Acts 10 and 19).

Okay, so if that's how you know when you've received the Holy Spirit, what then is "speaking in tongues"? Put simply, the act of speaking in tongues (or speaking with tongues – both the same thing) is a miracle. The Bible explains it's praying in a spiritual language that only God can understand:

1 Corinthians 14:2, "For he that speaketh in an *unknown* tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth *him*; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries.

1 Corinthians 14:14-15, "For if I pray in an *unknown* tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful. What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.

The Word also tells us that an active prayer life is what helps to build our relationship with God. It's like choosing to actually go to the gym and *diligently use* the equipment once you've been given the membership:

Jude 20-21, "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

The Bible has an abundance of wonderful things to say about the Holy Spirit. You can read about all the amazing gifts of the Holy Spirit (meaning "extraordinary powers" or "supernatural abilities" of the Holy Spirit) with which you are empowered, or gain access to, once you're born again: 1) Word of Wisdom, 2) Word of Knowledge, 3) Faith, 4) Gifts of Healing, 5) Working of Miracles, 6) Prophecy, 7) Discerning of Spirits, 8) Diverse (or different) kinds of Tongues, and 9) Interpretation of (different) Tongues.

Speaking in tongues may be the first gift to show forth when you are born again of the Holy Spirit, but as believers grow, the other gifts begin to progressively shine. Yet, of all of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues is the one gift that is for personal edification (strengthening) – which explains why it's the first gift to manifest as soon as someone is filled with the Holy Spirit:

1 Corinthians 14:4, "He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself..."

Like the cry of a newborn baby, the new convert cries out unto the Father upon regeneration by the Holy Spirit: "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father," (Romans 8:15)

Whereas the other gifts of the Spirit serve to help others, speaking in tongues helps the individual (other than being a "sign" of the Holy Spirit anointing as the Bible tells us: 1 Corinthians 14:22, "Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not..."). The Holy Spirit immediately wants to start speaking forth once He fills the seeker, to kick-start a life of empowerment for that person. And, as s/he chooses to exercise the Holy Spirit by praying in tongues daily as much as possible, the empowerment cultivates, enabling the person to increasingly apply Jesus' teachings and thereby "live a Christian life."

In fact, speaking in tongues is such a mighty tool that the adversary does everything within his power to cause people – even entire fellowships – to disregard it. If you were in a war, wouldn't you want to try to convince your opponents to forget about, lose faith in, or question their most

valuable piece of equipment? Well, that's exactly what the devil has done with speaking in tongues with many believers in Jesus – both personally and within their worship groups.

One of the common arguments against speaking in tongues is that it's not mentioned in the Bible every time someone gets filled with the Holy Spirit. There's a simple reason for this: it was a *given* occurrence. Speaking in tongues is mentioned many times (Acts 2, Acts 10, Acts 19), and it's implied in Acts 8 because Simon "saw" that by the laying on of hands the Holy Spirit was given to the people, but just as you don't mention the make and model and color of your car when you tell people you drove somewhere, Jesus didn't say, "You will receive the Holy Spirit... and you will speak in tongues as proof." Scripture doesn't always say, "The people were all filled with the Holy Spirit... and spoke in tongues," just as you would most likely say to someone, "I went to the store" versus "I drove to the store in my red Honda Civic hatchback."

Speaking forth in tongues happened to every one of the 120 disciples when the Holy Spirit was first poured out on the Day of Pentecost, and from that point forward, it was simply known and understood that these new converts of Christ (they were first referred to as "the people of the Way" i.e. the way of Jesus) could speak in new, spiritual languages. Jesus simply told His disciples that *power* would come upon them once they received the Holy Spirit. This was enough as "power" encompassed everything with which the disciples would be equipped. (The Holy Spirit is all about empowering people to live like Christ.) Jesus didn't need to explain exactly what would happen – He knew they would just *know* once it occurred.

Don't Make it Complicated

Now, some degree of confusion has been created amongst churchgoers regarding the various types of "tongues" (the "diverse kinds of tongues" mentioned in the above section) in the New Testament, particularly in Acts 2, 1 Corinthians 14:2, and 1 Corinthians 14:27. However, it need not be complicated. The simple and scripturally sound explanation is that it's all still speaking in languages *unknown to the believer*, and the tongues are all still manifested *by the same Holy Spirit*.

The difference is the *purpose*, and the Bible indicates three of these. It's the Holy Spirit that decides the tongue according to the purpose; we are just the vessels who open our mouths, choosing to act in faith at the time. In other words, for whatever purpose speaking in tongues is operated, it's still the *same process* of opening our mouths in faith and *letting the Holy Spirit speak through us*.

If you'd like to learn more about this, keep reading this section. Otherwise, if you're content with this simple understanding for now and would like to get to the rest of the key points, skip ahead to "All or Nothing."

Let's look at the three different purposes:

The Day of Pentecost: Tongues of men, for proof

The Bible mentions "tongues of men and of angels" (1 Corinthians 13:1), and the languages manifested by the 120 disciples in the upper room as they were filled with the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost (the first day that mankind came to receive the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit) were clearly tongues of men, but were foreign to the speaker. The disciples themselves had no idea what they were saying (as they opened their mouths to praise God and found themselves talking mysterious yet glorious words by the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit), but the various

foreigners from other regions that were gathered in Jerusalem for Passover did understand them. (Well, not *everyone* understood *all* of the disciples – rather, each foreigner understood his own native language that was being uttered by one or more disciples.)

God purposed it this way so that the people hearing from the outside of the upper room building (structures weren't sound proofed like they are today!) could know that the miraculous experience was truly of God, for they heard the disciples speak "the wonderful works of God" (Acts 2:11). This is the only time this kind of "tongues of men, for proof" is recorded in Scripture. It was critical that the first outpouring of the Holy Spirit was attributed to the one and only true God. However, certain other historical records and personal testimonies since then have described similar events e.g. missionaries being moved (on occasion – as an exceptional occurrence, and not the norm) by the Holy Spirit to speak in tongues when meeting new converts in unusual lands, and the natives understanding the words being spoken.

It was directly after the Day of Pentecost upper room Holy Spirit experience that Peter publicly preached about Jesus. His words "pierced the hearts" of some so much that they asked Peter, "what should we do?" (i.e. to get right with God). His clear and very direct answer was that which we've already twice referenced: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost," (Acts 2:38). Meaning, "do what we have done in obedience to Jesus and then you, too, shall have the same experience." The scripture continues, "For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did he" (Peter) "testify and exhort, saying, **Save yourselves** from this untoward generation."

A disciple's personal prayer life: Tongues for individual edification

Paul the apostle proclaimed, "I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all" (1 Corinthians 14:18). He also explained that "He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself" (1 Corinthians 14:4). Edify means build, meaning to grow and strengthen his relationship with God.

Spirit-filled people have the freedom to speak in tongues unto God any time they want to throughout the day and night, whether during a dedicated prayer session or simply while going about their day. Again, they don't understand what they are saying when they do so, but that is an exciting and comforting thing. That is, their minds – and other people – cannot corrupt this beautiful and powerful direct communication with their Creator.

In fact, the Bible tells us this: "Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost," (1 Corinthians 12:3). It is only through the person of the Holy Spirit within you that you can lay claim to Jesus as Lord over your life, "if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you" (Romans 8:9).

For the most part, speaking in tongues throughout our lives with the Lord will fall into this "personal prayer life" category or purpose.

During public church meetings: "Tongues as a sign, with interpretation"

Most scriptures to do with speaking in tongues can be found in the Book of 1 Corinthians. This is a letter that was written by the apostle Paul to the Spirit-filled church at Corinth, and the writings focus on public fellowship gatherings, including the conduct thereof. This point is very important

to remember because it helps us to realize that the instructions and explanations that Paul gives relate to group gatherings and not to a disciple's personal life.

1 Corinthians tells us that tongues is a sign (i.e. of being filled with the Holy Spirit; of God's presence), however in this Book, Paul also warns the people not to speak in tongues all at once during a public meeting in case an unbeliever comes in, hears the commotion of strange languages, and concludes that the people are crazy. The specific scripture says, "If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?" (1 Corinthians 14:23).

But, Paul does not leave it there. He declares a solution: speaking in tongues during a meeting can still occur in order to demonstrate the sign, but it should be operated in a way that is orderly and comfortably received (read 1 Corinthians 14:26-33). In these verses, Paul is correcting his brethren for their competitive, prideful pursuits - trying to be used by God for every thing for which they had the ability to be used. After all, they were all filled with the same Holy Spirit, so all of them could therefore manifest every one of the supernatural abilities (or extraordinary powers) of the Holy Spirit. Yet, Paul was instructing them that though they *could* do this, it didn't mean that they *should* do this. The Corinthian fellowship had developed a habit of getting out of control, and Paul was bringing them back into line, to a place of peace ("Let all things be done decently and in order," 1 Corinthians 14:40).

The "interpretation of tongues" mentioned in the verses cited above refers to one of the other nine supernatural abilities of the Holy Spirit. Paul instructs how this is to be manifested during fellowship gatherings, in conjunction with the operation of "tongues as a sign." When God moves upon someone with an interpretation, the Holy Spirit gives the speaker, or another church member, either a direct interpretation or a theme on which to expound according to the Word of God.

Unfortunately, many churchgoers throughout the years have taken this "manifestation of tongues together with interpretation" way out of context such that many believe tongues should not – and perhaps even can not – ever be operated "unless there is an interpreter" (whether publicly or privately). This is a grave misconception. First of all, the instruction "...if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God..." in 1 Corinthians 14:28 simply means that if no interpretation comes forth directly after a message in tongues is spoken during a public meeting, the person who spoke out in tongues is to simply wait and be at peace before the Lord, looking for the interpretation to come. If no interpretation comes, then no further tongues are operated. However, this scripture has no impact on or relevance to a disciple's *personal* prayer life, and it in no way undermines the *value* of operating "tongues as a sign" during church gatherings.

All or Nothing

It's also important to understand that the Holy Spirit is a "He," not an "it." He, the Holy Spirit, is a spiritual entity and He is part of God – God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. You've either been filled by Jesus with the Holy Spirit as the means of your personal connection with the living God, or you haven't – it's very simple. You can't receive a certain part (or parts) of the Holy Spirit and then get the rest later (as some people suppose or have been taught, generally unwittingly).

Also, some want to conveniently believe that we all automatically have the Holy Spirit and we just have to be “awakened” to its presence within us. This is an incredibly tempting philosophy, but it’s only that – a man-made idea.

Others might try to convince you that believers receive different gifts from God and that only some people get the ability to speak in tongues. But, this belief most often stems from an incorrect interpretation of 1 Corinthians 12. (Refer to the scripture commentary under 1 Corinthians 14:23 at the end of this article for more information.)

There are nine gifts (extraordinary powers, or supernatural abilities) of the Holy Spirit and nine fruits (works, acts, or deeds) of the Holy Spirit. Think of them as the personality or character of the Holy Spirit, if you like. And, because He the Holy Spirit is a complete entity, the *whole* personality/character of the Holy Spirit comes to dwell within you upon the anointing. You gain access to *all* of the gifts and the ability to bear *all* of the fruits – for your own strengthening, for the benefit of others as you seek to serve God (and not just “get” from Him), and for the glorification of Jesus’ name.

After all, your own “self” is made up of *every* part of you. It comprises your physical body, your intellect, your emotions – everything. If someone considered just one body part, that is not you. If they only wanted to focus on your mental abilities, that wouldn’t be you either. Likewise, the Holy Spirit has His own all-encompassing traits.

So, though some might try, the Holy Spirit simply cannot be dissected. As the Holy Spirit is a complete spiritual being, you’re complete once you’re born again of water and of the Holy Spirit. (Colossians 2:10, “And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power.) From then on, it’s up to you to *use* the power God has given you. It’s this *ongoing use* of the Holy Spirit that keeps you heading toward the kingdom of God:

Romans 8:13-14, “For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.”

Those who are intent on trying to dissect the Holy Spirit need to ask themselves the following question: If speaking in tongues is so beneficial on a personal level (as the apostle Paul points out many times in 1 Corinthians), why would God withhold it from anyone? Despite popular belief (again, mostly stemming from a misunderstanding of 1 Corinthians 12 – please review the commentary below under 1 Corinthians 14:23 if you haven’t yet done so), God doesn’t gradually “dish out” gifts like “presents” to believers as He feels like it. This is perverting the meaning of the word “gifts” as it is used in Scripture.

The Biblical word used in the context of gifts of the Holy Spirit is “charisma” which means “spiritual endowment” or “miraculous faculty/capability,” or as mentioned earlier, “extraordinary power” – not “something given” or “a present” as in the words “dōma” and “dōron” which are used in completely different scriptural contexts, nor “dōrea” which is used when referring to the gift of the Holy Spirit (given by God through Jesus to born again believers as a *whole* free gift).

Most people love the thought of someone giving them a present or a gift, and this is the kind of thought many people mistakenly apply to the concept of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, thinking they might receive these “*optional* bonuses” from God gradually over the years. Rather, 1 Corinthians clearly mentions the gifts of the Holy Spirit as you would refer to a person’s talents or skills (e.g.

“He has the gift of the gab.”). 1 Corinthians talks about them being *manifested* (not “given”) at different times in a believer’s life as situational needs arise - that is, as the believer appropriately operates the various powers of the Holy Spirit (not “as God dispenses them”). God *does* move upon born again believers to show forth the supernatural abilities of the Holy Spirit, but they are *always there* to be used.

To add to this, the Bible tells us that “God is no respecter of persons” (Acts 10:34). He treats everyone equally. So, when people are seeking for the Holy Spirit they can expect to receive the same as what the disciples received on the Day of Pentecost (the day when the Holy Spirit was first sent to dwell within the followers of Jesus). They can expect the fullness of the “charisma” that makes up the Holy Spirit to fill them and empower them.

So, if you're someone that truly believes that you *are already* filled with the Holy Spirit, then you *will* have the ability to speak in tongues. Perhaps you're like one of the many churchgoers we've met around the world that received the Holy Spirit a long time ago, speaking in tongues briefly, but were never properly counseled on how to maximize "walking in the Spirit" on a daily basis. If you think this is the case with you, the best thing to do is to seek the Lord diligently in prayer. ("How to get empowered with God’s power, today!" on our Get Reading page will help you further.)

Another popular misconception is that the Holy Spirit kind of comes in two stages. It’s a very vague premise, so it’s difficult to explain, but basically the belief is that you “get” the Holy Spirit automatically upon repentance or water baptism (at which point you are said to be saved), but afterward you can receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This second experience is considered optional – a kind of extra empowerment for the purpose of God’s work. This is another example of an appealing philosophy, but it’s full of holes when examined in the light of Scripture:

1 Corinthians 12:13, “But we have all been baptized into one body by one Spirit, and we all share in the same Spirit.” (NLT)

Ephesians 2:18, “For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.”

Ephesians 4:4-6, “There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all...

Acts 8:12, 14-17, “But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women...Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.” *Note that the people of Samaria repented, were baptized in water, but did not receive the Holy Spirit – at all – until they were prayed for by Peter and John. Indeed, Peter and John would not have made such a long journey if it were not imperative that the people receive the Holy Spirit anointing, for their salvation’s sake. Also note the words, “For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.” The apostles could boldly and confidently proclaim that none of the people had yet been filled with the Holy Spirit – obviously because the “signs following” (see the Signs Following section above) were not yet evident.*

To summarize, the Bible distinctly tells us there is one Spirit only, and it is by the anointing of this Spirit that we are made to be members of the one "called" body of people, sanctified for God's service. Let's say that again using different vocabulary: There is one Holy Spirit, and it is only when we're ordained by this Holy Spirit that we are considered to have entered the one group of people that is being selected and set apart by God to continue the work of Jesus Christ upon this earth, and with Him in the age to come. After all, the word "church" in the English Bible originates from the Greek word "ekklesia" which means "calling out" or "calling forth." To reference the introduction of this "Truth Is Power" article, God is searching the hearts of mankind around the world and reconciling with those that are truly sincere about no longer walking independent lives, but instead being dependent on Him as their Creator and Father:

Romans 8:14-17, "For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, 'Abba, Father.' For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God's children. And since we are his children, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God's glory. But if we are to share his glory, we must also share his suffering." (NLT)

The Personal Challenge

At the end of the day, each one of us is personally accountable for our own choices. The Word of God instructs us all to "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12). It also warns us "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 15:50).

The fact is that without the presence of the Holy Spirit dwelling within you, it will be categorically impossible for you to be where God is (in the spiritual realm you cannot see nor hear with your limited eyes and ears). It'd be like trying to walk through a brick wall. The Holy Spirit is the power that will change you, reconciling you with the Father and making it possible for you to transition from life on earth to everlasting life with God. And, only through Jesus can this change happen.

Ask yourself, "Isn't it better that I judge myself guilty (of living independently of – and sinning against – God) — and do all that Jesus expects of me in order to rectify that — *now* rather than take things casually and eventually find out that I made the wrong choice?" After all, this is what God is looking for from His creation that has gone astray – humility, repentance (which requires action and not just words), and obedience to Jesus.

So, if you're honest with yourself and with God, and if you sincerely desire eternal life in the Kingdom, you'll do what it takes to swim against the tide of popular belief within man-made religion and beyond, and embrace Truth:

Galatians 1:10, "For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ."

Matthew 7:13-14, "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

Luke 6:46, "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"

Matthew 7:21, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of

heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.”

And, once you *are* born again of water and of the Holy Spirit, you will seek to diligently follow Christ’s teachings. There are over 40 commandments that Jesus spoke about during His three-year ministry. These highlight the Christian way of life, and they are the key to being raised to be with Jesus when He returns:

Matthew 5:16, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”

Matthew 6:33, “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, **and his righteousness**; and all these things shall be added unto you.”

Matthew 24:46, “Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.”

John 14:15, “If ye love me, keep my commandments.”

1 Corinthians 10:12, “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.”

Your conversion is just the beginning. What matters most is how you live your life from this point forward – and that’s the whole point of the infilling of the Holy Spirit: to empower you to live in Jesus’ name! Read (on our Get Empowered page) what God has to say about “walking in the Spirit.” Learn who you are in Christ and what God’s will is for you. And then, experience the Empowered Christian Life!

For more detailed topical information, please follow the ChristiansRULE® PowerUp Program on our Get Empowered page.

*Want some advice on **how** to seek God for the Holy Spirit and set your life on a brand new course this very day? Refer to the following post on our Get Reading page: **How to get empowered with God’s power, today!***

And, don’t forget that we can pray with you to receive the Holy Spirit! We can even help you be water baptized. Distance is no barrier, either! Simply email us at info@christiansrule.com and one of our ChristiansRULE® team members will get in touch with you.*

** Contrary to popular belief, you do not need to depend upon the leader of some church organization with an academic certificate and a title to baptize you. The authority to baptize is given by God only, and the recipient of that authority is any person that has been born again of water and of the Holy Spirit and is continuing to walk in Truth.*

The Following is a “Scriptural Pathway” Summarizing The Salvation Experience

The following will help you to see that the Holy Spirit (Holy Ghost) is imperative for salvation (entrance into the kingdom of God) and that the infilling of the Holy Spirit is consistently accompanied by the initial outward sign of speaking in tongues (a spiritual prayer language

that only God can understand).

John 3:3-7 tells us that we must be born of water and the Holy Spirit to enter the kingdom of God.

Luke 11:5-13 tells us that with persistent asking, seeking, and knocking for the Holy Spirit, God *will* give it to us.

Mark 16:15-20 lists the signs that *shall* (meaning *will*) follow those who believe. “They shall speak with new tongues” is one of the signs.

John 4:21-24 states that true worshippers will worship God in the Spirit. **1 Corinthians 14:14** explains *HOW* to worship God in the Spirit: “For if I pray in an *unknown* tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful.”

Jude 20-21 reinforces this: “But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.”

1 Corinthians 14:2 explains even more about speaking in tongues: “For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth *him*; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries.” So, too, does **1 Corinthians 14:14**: “For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful.”

In **1 Corinthians 14:18-19**, Paul is thankful that he speaks in tongues more than others, but he recognizes that when meeting together in a group, tongues is not as valuable as compared to praying in tongues during his personal, private prayer time.

1 Corinthians 14:23 mentions “all speaking in tongues at once.” This implies everyone in the fellowship meeting *had the ability* to speak in tongues. The Holy Spirit encompasses nine miraculous “gifts” (**1 Corinthians 12:7-11**) – which means “extraordinary powers” or “miraculous capabilities,” but brethren are expected to keep the gifts in perspective *whenever they come together as a group*.

To better understand this, it helps to know that Paul’s entire focus in the Book of 1 Corinthians is the people’s *conduct during fellowship gatherings*. The fellowship at Corinth had become very extravagant and competitive, and God instructs that everything must be done “decently and in order” (**1 Corinthians 14:40**), so Paul’s intent is to bring them into line with God’s will.

When Paul mentions individual gifts at the beginning of **1 Corinthians 12**, he’s not implying that certain people get *given* certain gifts by God, rather that certain people (when they relax and let God steer the wheel and move upon people according to *His* will) will be *used* by God to exercise certain of the supernatural powers of the Holy Spirit (that dwells within them all) at various times – according to the needs of the fellowship. In other words, Paul is saying, “Don’t try to outdo one another and strive to exercise all the gifts of the Holy Spirit every time you come together. One week you might use the gift of Wisdom, the next week the gift of Knowledge, the next week the gift of Healing, etc. But, bear in mind that they all come from the *same* Spirit that you have *all* been given, and it is God you should rely upon in terms of how the *use* of all these gifts is divided amongst the brethren when you gather together.”

1 Corinthians 14:4 compares fellowship life against our private prayer life with the Lord. Paul says that when he speaks in tongues, he edifies (builds, promotes growth in) himself. So, though it’s the least useful gift – in terms of helping *others* – during fellowship gatherings, it’s certainly the

most powerful gift to activate for *personal* benefit whenever outside of the group.

The Book of Acts is a crucial and inspiring history of the Holy Spirit in action. This Book informs the reader of the first outpouring of the Holy Spirit. It also explains how anyone can receive it and how to know when you have it.

In **Acts 1:5-8**, the disciples are told by Jesus to wait in Jerusalem, that they would receive the Holy Spirit, and that the experience would be powerful. Jesus spoke of His necessity to depart from this earth in order for the Holy Spirit anointing to be made available (**John 7:37-39, John 16:7, John 14:26**).

In **Acts 2:4**, the disciples were *all* filled with the Holy Spirit, and they began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them words to speak.

Acts 2:33 explains that the Holy Spirit can be seen (i.e. mouth speaking) and heard (i.e. it's an audible noise).

Acts 5:32 mentions that the Holy Spirit is given to those that obey God (this includes Jesus' instructions for salvation in John 3:5-7).

Acts 7:51 states that people will resist the Holy Spirit despite its necessity for salvation.

Acts 8:14-16 is proof that people can be baptized in the name of Jesus without having yet received the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 8:17-18 mentions that Simon *saw* that through the laying on of hands the Holy Spirit was given.

Acts 10:44-46 is the first account of Gentile people (those outside of God's chosen nation) receiving the Holy Spirit. The very moment they were filled with the Spirit was *known* because the disciples heard the Gentiles speak in tongues.

Acts 11:15-17 emphasizes the fact that even the Gentiles received the Holy Spirit in the same manner as the disciples at the beginning (the beginning is described in **Acts 2:4**).

Acts 11:26 records the first time the disciples were called Christians (meaning "anointed ones").

Acts 15:8-9 states that there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles after they receive the Holy Spirit.

Acts 18:25-28 mentions Apollos (an eloquent man who was very knowledgeable of Scripture) being further instructed in the way of the Lord. Even though he had been fervently following after God, he was not yet filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, so Aquila and Priscilla "expounded to him the way of God more perfectly."

Acts 19:1-6, records the account of twelve believers who had not yet received the Holy Spirit. When the Apostle Paul laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them and they spoke in tongues.

Overall, there's nothing in the Bible that says you need to give your heart to Jesus, or just

“accept” Him as your Savior. However, the Bible does say to... “Repent,” (turn from your ways and toward God instead) “and be baptized,” (by full immersion i.e. completely under water) “every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38).