

THE ROLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN PREACHING

by
David M. Doran*

This topic is of vital importance because preaching is the God-ordained means for accomplishing His purposes in this dispensation (1 Cor 1:18–25), and the work of the Holy Spirit is essential to make preaching effective (1 Cor 2:1–5). A defensible statement of the local church’s mission might be that it exists to honor God by making and maturing disciples who are becoming like the Lord Jesus Christ. This mission statement contains three components: a doxological aim (to honor God, Eph 1:12; 3:21) expressed in discipleship activity (make and mature disciples, Matt 28:19–20; Eph 4:11–16) which should result in Christlike attributes developed in individual believers so that the church forms a pure bride for the Savior (Eph 5:25–27).

THE PRIMACY OF PREACHING

Biblical preaching is crucial to the fulfillment of each element of this mission. The Scriptures reveal that the aim of honoring God is supremely accomplished through Christ-centered preaching because it is a method which is foolishness to the world, and God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise (1 Cor 1:26–31). The preacher is charged with a message that declares that the Creator God who has revealed Himself in His Son and in the Scriptures reigns (Rom 10:14–17; cf. Isa 52:7). That message declares “the glory of God in the face of Christ”¹ (2 Cor 4:6). Such preaching calls for surrender to this great God, and such surrender is a confession that Jesus Christ is Lord (Rom 10:9) which results in the glory of the Father (Phil 2:11). As Piper has rightly observed, “the goal of preaching is the glory of God reflected in the glad submission of the human heart.”²

*Dr. Doran is Chancellor and Professor of Practical Theology at Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, and Pastor of the Inter-City Baptist Church in Allen Park, MI.

¹Unless otherwise noted all Scripture quotations are from the NASB.

²John Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), p.

The record of Acts is clear that the fulfillment of the Great Commission (making and maturing disciples) is accomplished by the means of preaching, and that this advance is best described as the spread of the Word (4:31; 6:7; 8:4; 8:25; 10:42; 11:1; 11:20; 12:24; 19:20). The strategy employed by the apostles and early church was proclamational. They were devoted to the ministry of the Word (Acts 6:4; 18:5). Modern church growth theories may minimize the role of preaching in reaching unbelievers, but the Scriptures certainly do not.

The Bible is equally clear that preaching is the chief means by which Christlikeness will be formed in God's people. Paul writes, "We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ" (Col 1:28). It is not insignificant that the gifts of the risen Christ to His church are all speaking gifts—apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers (Eph 4:11). The proper exercise of these gifts³ is essential "for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ" (Eph 4:12–13).

THE EMPOWERING WORK OF THE SPIRIT

While the purpose of this article is to examine the nature of the Spirit's role in preaching, it is doubtful that any would dare deny the need for His work. It is clear that the Lord believed that His disciples would need power (Luke 24:49) and that the promise of the Spirit is their access to this power (Acts 1:8). Modern excesses regarding "power" have rightly brought forth strong criticisms, but we cannot allow ourselves to react in such a way as to ignore or minimize the New Testament emphasis on powerful ministry of the Spirit through the preaching of the Word (1 Cor 2:1–5; 1 Thess 1:5). In fact, Paul's great encouragement to press on in the face of tremendous trials and troubles was that God had given him a "ministry of the Spirit" (2 Cor 3:8, 12). Lloyd-Jones is correct to warn us against being controlled by fear, "You can be so afraid of disorder, so concerned about discipline and decorum and control, that you become guilty of what the Scripture calls 'quenching the Spirit.'"⁴

It is quite possible that some contemporary fundamentalists have

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³Eph 2:20 seems to limit the apostolic and prophetic gifts to the founding days of the church.

⁴D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Joy Unspeakable* (Wheaton, IL: Harold Shaw, 1984), p. 18.

allowed wrong views and teachings regarding the nature of the Spirit's work to dull in them a hunger for dynamic ministry through the power of the Spirit. They may have forgotten that the New Testament expectation is that the proclamation of the Word is to be a display of the power of God (1 Cor 1:17, 18; cf. Rom 1:16), and that the early church experienced this power through the work of the Holy Spirit (Acts 4:31, 33; 1 Thess 1:5). The Apostle Paul was so zealous of having this power in him that he was gladly willing to endure his thorn in the flesh (2 Cor 12:9–10). The clear implication of the New Testament is that we can actually minister without the power of God. Paul could have preached at Corinth in such a way that it was not in demonstration of the Spirit and power (cf. 1 Cor 2:4), or he could have ministered at Thessalonica "in word only" (1 Thess 1:5; cf. 1 Cor 4:19–20).

The crucial questions before us are these: what do we call this work of the Holy Spirit, and how do we obtain or benefit from it? As in any operation of God in the souls of men and among men, these questions are not easily answered. The work of the Spirit seems to always involve an element of mystery for us (cf. John 3:8). The result is considerable confusion about the proper biblical terms and theological framework to discuss the Spirit's work of empowering. The purpose of this article is to examine a popular view that His work is best described as a special endowment with power that comes as a definite experience subsequent to conversion.

POPULAR VIEWS OF THE SPIRIT'S ROLE IN PREACHING

C. H. Spurgeon

Few preachers have enjoyed the power of God upon their ministries to the degree enjoyed by Charles Haddon Spurgeon. The power of the gospel radiated through his preaching and propelled him to an almost unparalleled position as a pastor and evangelist. Spurgeon was abundantly clear about his belief that it was the work of the Spirit that accomplished such great things; he sought to communicate his burden for Spirit-empowered preaching to his students in the most urgent of terms.

We believe ourselves to be spokesmen for Jesus Christ, appointed to continue His witness upon earth; but upon Him and His testimony the Spirit of God always rested, and if it does not rest upon us, we are evidently not sent forth into the world as He was. At Pentecost the commencement of the great work of converting the world was with flaming tongues and a rushing wind, symbols of the presence of the spirit [*sic*]; if, therefore, we think to succeed without the Spirit, we are not after the Pentecostal order. If we have not the Spirit which Jesus promised, we cannot perform the

commission which Jesus gave.⁵

Even more pointedly, Spurgeon warned, "Unless we have the spirit of the prophets resting upon us, the mantle which we wear is nothing but a rough garment to deceive."⁶

Spurgeon's absolute plea for the necessity of the work of the Spirit is rooted in his belief about the task the preacher faces.

To us the presence and work of the Holy Spirit are the ground of our confidence as to the wisdom and hopefulness of our life work. If we had *not* believed in the Holy Ghost we should have laid down our ministry long ere this, for "who is sufficient for these things?" Our hope of success, and our strength for continuing in service, lie in our belief that the Spirit of the Lord resteth upon us.⁷

His views of depravity, rooted squarely in the Scriptures and often painted in the most vivid of images, left him no hope in his native abilities. "I shall not attempt to teach a tiger the virtues of vegetarianism; but I shall as hopefully attempt that task as I would try to convince an unregenerate man of the truths revealed by God concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment to come."⁸ Given the impossibility of this task, no wonder his conclusion, "Except the Lord endow us with power from on high, our labor must be in vain, and our hopes must end in disappointment."⁹

It is certain that all would agree with this end assessment, but we must remember that when Spurgeon speaks of having the Spirit rest upon us, he is not merely speaking of being regenerate and indwelt by the Spirit. His comments refer to an experiential work of the Spirit in and upon the preacher.

Even so we have *felt* the Spirit of God operating upon our hearts, we have known and perceived the power which He wields over human spirits, and we know Him by frequent, conscious, personal contact. By the sensitiveness of our spirit we are as much made conscious of the presence of the Spirit of God as we are made cognizant of the existence of the souls of our fellow-men by their action upon our souls, or as we are certified of the existence of matter by its action upon our senses. We have been raised from

⁵C. H. Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students* (reprint ed.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), p. 187.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid., p. 185.

⁸*An All-Round Ministry* (reprint of 1900 ed.; Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1994), p. 322.

⁹Ibid.

the dull sphere of mere mind and matter into the heavenly radiance of the spirit-world; and now, as spiritual men, we discern spiritual things, we feel the forces which are paramount in the spirit-realm, and we know that there is a Holy Ghost, for we feel Him operating upon our spirits. If it were not so, we should certainly have no right to be in the ministry of Christ's church.¹⁰

This experiential element of the Spirit's work, for Spurgeon, is grounded in the new birth, but must be utmost present in those who preach the Word. The absence of the Spirit's presence and power "lies at the root of many useless ministries."¹¹

It seems that Spurgeon's was not a finished theology of the Spirit's work that fleshed out all the terms and their respective nuances. He did speak of an "anointing"¹² and an "unction from the holy One"¹³ but seemed most at home with the language of filling. The flexibility in his terminology reflects his admitted inability to define precisely this work of the Spirit.

What is it? I wonder how long we might beat our brains before we could plainly put into words what is meant by *preaching with unction*; yet he who preaches knows its presence, and he who hears soon detects its absence;... Such is the mystery of spiritual anointing; we know, but we cannot tell to others what it is.¹⁴

The anointing of the Spirit cannot be manufactured but "is in itself priceless, and beyond measure needful if you would edify believers and bring sinners to Jesus."¹⁵

Whatever the term used, Spurgeon believed that the work of the Holy Spirit on the preacher was direct and sensible, so he could describe his experience as being "distinctly conscious of a power working upon me when I am speaking in the name of the Lord, infinitely transcending any personal power of fluency, and far surpassing any energy derived from excitement."¹⁶ This work can be so profound that

the divine Spirit will sometimes work upon us so as to bear us completely out of ourselves. From the beginning of the sermon to the end we might at

¹⁰Spurgeon, *Lectures*, pp. 185–186.

¹¹Ibid., p. 195.

¹²Spurgeon, *An All-Round Ministry*, p. 329.

¹³Spurgeon, *Lectures*, p. 50.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Spurgeon, *Lectures*, p. 192.

such times say, "Whether in the body or out of the body I cannot tell: God knoweth." Everything has been forgotten but the one all-engrossing subject in hand. If I were forbidden to enter heaven, but were permitted to select my state for all eternity, I should choose to be as I sometimes feel in preaching the gospel. Heaven is foreshadowed in such a state....¹⁷

We find in Spurgeon the blending of a deep desire for the experience of the Spirit's work with the perspective of practitioner. He does not wrestle with the technical theological matters of this subject. His eye is single: power in the pulpit. We must have this power, and we cannot have it without the Spirit. If we have the Spirit upon us, we know it as we preach and our hearers know it as well. For Spurgeon, this work is an anointing, an unction from on high that is the legacy of Pentecost which ought to be sought fervently.

Reuben A. Torrey

From the rather undefined views of Spurgeon, we move to consider a more dogmatically defined view of the Spirit's work in the life of the believer. R. A. Torrey's views on the work of the Spirit have had considerable impact on the thinking and terminology of fundamentalists.¹⁸ Since Torrey viewed this as the indispensable element of effective ministry, he accordingly preached and wrote much on this subject, which he called the baptism with the Holy Spirit.¹⁹ In his estimation the various expressions in Scripture for the Spirit's work are "practically synonymous" for this work.²⁰

Torrey offered a fairly descriptive definition of the baptism with the Spirit as: (1) "a definite experience of which one may and ought to know whether he has received it or not;" (2) "an operation distinct from, and additional to, His regenerating work;" and (3) "always connected with and primarily for the purpose of testimony and service."²¹ He viewed

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸ E.g., John R. Rice refers repeatedly to the teachings of Torrey as a historical precedent for his own (*The Power of Pentecost* [Murfreesboro, TN: Sword of the Lord, 1949], pp. 155–161).

¹⁹He was so convinced of its centrality that he could write, "The New Testament has much to say about the necessity for the baptism with the Holy Spirit," yet offer very little textual support for such a claim (see R. A. Torrey, *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit* [reprint ed.; Springdale, PA: Whitaker House, 1996], p. 215).

²⁰Ibid., p. 187. Among the expressions he included in this are "the Holy Ghost fell," "the gift of the Holy Ghost," "received the Holy Ghost," "the Holy Ghost came on them," "the promise of my Father," and "endued with power from on high."

²¹Torrey, *Person and Work*, pp. 187–198.

the distribution of spiritual gifts as a result of Spirit baptism, but stressed that in spite of diversity of gifts “there will always be power, the very power of God, when one is baptized with the Holy Spirit.”²² That gifts are bestowed with Spirit baptism seems apparent from 1 Corinthians 12:13ff., but Torrey would make the baptism, and therefore the distribution of gifts, as generally subsequent to conversion. Additionally, his emphasis on special power bestowed at the baptism seems to be a major distinctive of his position.

That power was the central focal point of Torrey’s view of Spirit baptism is obvious from arguments for and illustrations of its necessity. “It is evident then that the baptism with the Holy Spirit is absolutely necessary in every Christian for the service that Christ demands and expects of him.”²³ It is equally “evident that the baptism with the Holy Spirit is an absolutely necessary preparation for effective work for Christ along every line of service.... This endowment of power is through the baptism with the Holy Spirit.”²⁴

It is also plain from human experience and church history that some who have neglected this truth discover their error and are propelled to more fruitful ministries. Torrey observes,

Religious biographies abound in instances of men who have worked as best they could until one day they were led to see that there was such an experience as the baptism with the Holy Spirit and to seek it and obtain it. From that hour, there came into their service a new power that utterly transformed its character.²⁵

This observation presses him to conclude,

A distinguished theological professor has said that the question, “Have you met God?” ought to be put to every candidate for the ministry. Yes, but we ought to go farther than this and be even more definite. To every candidate for the ministry we should put the question, “Have you been baptized with the Holy Spirit?” and if not, we should say to him as Jesus said to the first preachers of the Gospel, “Sit down until you are endued with power from on high.”²⁶

Based on these statements it is clear that Torrey believed in a special endowment with the Spirit which was prerequisite to powerful ministry.

²²Ibid., p. 206.

²³Ibid., p. 220.

²⁴Ibid., p. 219.

²⁵Ibid., p. 207.

²⁶Ibid., p. 221.

David Martyn Lloyd-Jones

Lloyd-Jones used the terms unction, anointing, and baptism in the Spirit as essentially interchangeable. He seemed to tilt toward the terms unction and anointing, but formally defended the position that the baptism in the Spirit found in Acts is an empowerment for ministry. For Lloyd-Jones “the real object of the ‘the baptism with the Holy Spirit’ is to enable men to witness for Christ and His salvation with power...it is not given primarily to promote sanctification; it is a baptism of power, or a baptism of fire, a baptism to enable one to witness.”²⁷

This ministry of the Spirit is essential for effective ministry. With regard to the apostles, Lloyd-Jones makes the following assessment,

They seem to have all the necessary knowledge, but that knowledge is not sufficient, something further is needed, is indeed essential. The knowledge indeed is vital for you cannot be witnesses without it, but to be effective witnesses you need the power and the unction and the demonstration of the Spirit in addition.²⁸

This belief was strengthened by his view of the context of ministry. He found no comfort or hope in human resources.

Take the situation with which we are confronted today. Look at the task, look at the state of the world, look at the modern mentality. Without believing in and knowing something of the power of the Spirit, it is a heart-breaking task. I certainly could not go on for another day but for this. If I felt that it was all left to us, and our learning and our scholarship and our organizations, I would be of all men most miserable and hopeless. But that is not the case. What we read of in the New Testament is equally possible and open to us today; and it is our only hope.²⁹

Whereas Torrey seemed to address this concept more for believers in general, Lloyd-Jones focused on this ministry of the Spirit with particular regard to preachers. His interest in the subject was not disinterested, for he longed for a ministry marked by divine power. He once wrote to his friend Philip Hughes, “Oh! How I long to know exactly what Paul meant in 1 Corinthians 2:1–5 and to experience it in my ministry. I have become tired of all else and when I read of Whitefield I feel that I have never really preached in my life.”³⁰ In another place he wrote, “To me there is nothing

²⁷D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), p. 308.

²⁸*Ibid.*, p. 308.

²⁹*Ibid.*, p. 315.

³⁰Cited in Tony Sargent, *The Sacred Anointing* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books,

more terrible for a preacher, than to be in the pulpit alone, without the conscious smile of God."³¹

How is this work of the Spirit upon the preacher to be defined? Lloyd-Jones uses strong words to describe it:

It is the Spirit falling upon the preacher in a special manner. It is an access of power. It is God giving power, and enabling, through the Spirit, to the preacher in order that he may do this work in a manner that lifts it up beyond the efforts and endeavours of man to a position in which the preacher is being used by the Spirit and becomes a channel through whom the Spirit works.³²

Lloyd-Jones called this work a "divine afflatus" to describe the dynamic of the Spirit's work in carrying along the preacher. Although he advocated diligent study,³³ he believed that the preacher should not be tied to his preparation so that he may be free to follow the Spirit's leading. Sargent articulates the model involved in Lloyd-Jones' imagery, "Dependent upon the Holy Spirit, he [the preacher] should enter the pulpit and open the Word of God. He should endeavor to unfurl the sails of his mind to the wind of the Spirit and proceed along the course which the Holy Spirit directs."³⁴

When the Spirit is at work in the preacher, Lloyd-Jones believes that he knows it.³⁵ His description of the experience is similar to the one offered by Spurgeon above.

How does one know it? It gives clarity of thought, clarity of speech, ease of utterance, a great sense of authority and confidence as you are preaching, an awareness of a power not your own thrilling through the whole of your being, and an indescribable sense of joy. You are a man "possessed", you are taken hold of, and taken up. I like to put it like this—and I know of nothing on earth that is comparable to this feeling—that when this happens you have a feeling that you are not actually doing the preaching, you are looking on. You are looking on at yourself in amazement as this is happening. It is not your effort; you are just the instrument, the channel, the vehicle: the Spirit is using

1994), p. 18.

³¹D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Revival* (reprint ed.; Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1987), p. 295.

³²Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, p. 305.

³³"Careful preparation, and the unction of the Holy Spirit, must never be regarded as alternatives but as complementary to each other" (Ibid.).

³⁴Sargent, *Sacred Anointing*, p. 36.

³⁵D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *God the Holy Spirit* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1997), p. 252.

you, and you are looking on in great enjoyment and astonishment.³⁶

Do the people who are listening recognize it?

They sense it at once; they can tell the difference immediately. They are gripped, they become serious, they are convicted, they are moved, they are humbled. Some are convicted of sin, others are lifted up to the heavens, anything may happen to any one of them. They know at once that something quite unusual and exceptional is happening.³⁷

An element that contributes to the wonder of this work by the Spirit, in Lloyd-Jones' view, is the sovereignty of its bestowal. He did not subscribe to any mechanistic view of obtaining this anointing. It is in the hands of the sovereign God to bestow as He wills.

I often say that the most romantic place on earth is the pulpit. I ascend the pulpit stairs Sunday after Sunday: I never know what is going to happen. I confess that sometimes, for various reasons, I come expecting nothing; but suddenly, the power is given. At other times, I think I have a great deal because of my preparation: but, alas, I find there is no power in it. Thank God it is like that. I do my utmost, but He controls the supply and the power, He infuses it.³⁸

This does not mean that Lloyd-Jones viewed God's bestowal in any way as arbitrary or capricious.

There are times when, entirely outside his control, he [the preacher] is given a special authority, special power, an unction which is unusual. And there are good reasons for its bestowal. There are circumstances which he himself is not always aware of, which he only discovers afterwards. Somebody may have come to the congregation who needs a particular message or word, and the preacher, without knowledge on his part, is guided to say something that is just appropriate to that particular state and condition. There is, therefore, this special endowment of power which is called "the anointing". It is something that one should seek and covet, it is something for which one should be constantly praying.³⁹

The "givenness" of the Spirit's unction should not keep the preacher from seeking it with full earnestness and faith. Lloyd-Jones concludes his book on preaching with these words,

What then are we to do about this? There is only one obvious conclusion.

³⁶Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, p. 324.

³⁷Ibid., pp. 324–325.

³⁸Sargent, *Sacred Anointing*, p. 59.

³⁹Ibid., pp. 97–98.

Seek Him! Seek Him! What can we do without Him? Seek Him! Seek Him always. But go beyond seeking Him; expect Him. Do you expect anything to happen when you get up to preach in a pulpit? Or do you just say to yourself, "Well, I have prepared my address, I am going to give them this address; some of them will appreciate it and some will not?" Are you expecting it to be the turning point in someone's life? Are you expecting anyone to have a climatic experience? That is what preaching is meant to do.... Seek this power, expect this power, yearn for this power; and when the power comes, yield to Him. Do not resist. Forget all about your sermon if necessary. Let Him loose you, let Him manifest His power in you and through you. I am certain, as I have said several times before, that nothing but a return of this power of the Spirit on our preaching is going to avail us anything.... This "unction", this "anointing", is the supreme thing. Seek it until you have it; be content with nothing less. Go on until you can say, "And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." He is still able to do "exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think."⁴⁰

Stephen and David Olford

A more recent advocate of "anointed preaching" is Stephen Olford, who, along with his son, David, has written a new book on expository preaching which includes a special emphasis on the Spirit's anointing.⁴¹ Their basic premise is straightforward, "We move from the preparation of an expository sermon to the dynamics of incarnational preaching. Only the Holy Spirit can transform a manuscript into a message."⁴² The foundation pattern for this operation of the Spirit is the ministry of the Lord Jesus. Even though Jesus enjoyed the ministry of the Spirit prior to His baptism, "there came a crisis in the life of Jesus when He appropriated (by faith and prayer [Luke 3:21–22]) the anointing of the Spirit to fulfill His messianic mission.... As preachers, we likewise *need* this 'sacred anointing.'"⁴³

The Olfords, in contrast to Torrey and Lloyd-Jones, distinguish the anointing of the Spirit from the baptism with the Spirit.⁴⁴ They believe

⁴⁰Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, p. 325.

⁴¹Stephen F. Olford with David L. Olford, *Anointed Expository Preaching* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1998).

⁴²*Ibid.*, p. 214.

⁴³*Ibid.*, p. 216.

⁴⁴Interestingly, at one point Olford (p. 227) changes a quote from a biography of D. L. Moody to honor this difference. The quote recounts the famous interaction between Moody and the two women who were praying for Moody to receive power. Olford records it as, "they told him about the definite [anointing] of the Holy Spirit."

that Spirit-baptism is “a *one-time* experience (Eph 4:5), and is synonymous with regeneration or new birth.”⁴⁵ The anointing of the Spirit “represents our *vocation* in Christ...the anointing for preachers (and believers generally) is for *special* Christian service. It is ‘the Promise of the Father’ (Acts 1:4, 8) and is referred to as *endowment with power* (Luke 24:49)... As the filling suggests an *inward* working of the Spirit, the anointing stresses the *outward* clothing with power.”⁴⁶

Tying their understanding of the anointing to the Lord’s ministry, the Olfords argue that the anointing has two purposes: “to reach people and to preach the gospel.”⁴⁷ The anointing gives the preacher a tremendous authority in proclaiming the gospel that can “penetrate the hearts of saint and sinner alike.”⁴⁸ The pathway to this anointed authority in preaching is holiness, yieldedness, and prayerfulness.⁴⁹

While they do not elaborate very deeply on the effects of the anointing on the preacher, they certainly emphasize its necessity and the urgency with which it should be sought. They conclude their discussion with this appeal,

We, the authors, can testify to the reality of Moody’s experience of the anointing. The difference it makes is the difference between night and day. Fellow preacher, we urge you to proceed no further in your work for the Lord until you have believed the promise (Acts 1:4) and received the power (Acts 1:8), both as an initial act of faith and then as a continual appropriation of faith.⁵⁰

Summary

While others could be added to this survey, these representatives present the essential components of a popular view of the Spirit’s ministry, namely that the Spirit’s work should be identified as a special baptism or anointing that endows the preacher with divine power. Common among these positions is its experiential nature, i.e., the preacher experiences this endowment. Some articulate this experience as a crisis experience which is as at least as, if not more, definite than one’s

What they told him about was the baptism of the Holy Spirit!

⁴⁵Olford, *Anointed Expository Preaching*, p. 216. He also makes a distinction between these two, baptism and anointing, and the filling of the Spirit.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 216–217.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, p. 222.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, p. 227.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, p. 218.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, p. 228.

conversion. For example, Torrey says “there is none of this indefiniteness in the Bible. The Bible is clear as day on this, as on every other point. It sets forth an experience so definite and so real that one may know whether or not he has received the baptism with the Holy Spirit and can answer yes or no to the question, ‘Have you received the Holy Ghost?’”⁵¹ This element of a crisis experience of the Spirit seems to be a commonality, yet none would argue for a single experience of the Spirit’s baptism/anointing.

Even Lloyd-Jones, who was not governed by a two-stage view of sanctification, advocated a “crisis theology of the Spirit” which he believed was rooted in the book of Acts and substantiated throughout church history.⁵² For him, and the others, the crisis experience was an outpouring of the Spirit, experienced in dramatic form initially, but also repeated in the course of ministry and proclamation. Torrey could even argue that we “need repeated refilling with the Holy Spirit” and that “even after one has been baptized with the Holy Spirit, no matter how definite that baptism may be, he needs to be filled again and again with the Spirit.”⁵³

When the discussion focuses on how this work of the Spirit may be obtained, each offers a unique perspective. The one common requirement identified by all for receiving this special work of the Spirit is prayer.⁵⁴ Torrey articulated the most extensive formula for receiving the baptism with the Spirit, a seven-step pathway.⁵⁵ Spurgeon offers many helpful observations about obtaining the Spirit’s power for ministry, but without the somewhat mechanical nature of Torrey’s seven steps.⁵⁶ Sargent sees in Lloyd-Jones five requirements for receiving the unction of the Spirit.⁵⁷ The variety of answers posed by these teachers reveals that the issue is not as clear as they might suggest.

In conclusion, we may simply say that all agree that this special work of the Spirit is essential to effective ministry, but not all are agreed as to what it is and how we may obtain it. These two issues, terminology and methodology, expose the basic problems in the popular approach to

⁵¹Torrey, *Person and Work*, pp. 188–189.

⁵²Sargent, *Sacred Anointing*, p. 282.

⁵³Torrey, *Person and Work*, p. 229.

⁵⁴Sargent, *Sacred Anointing*, p. 96; Spurgeon, *Lectures*, p. 196; Torrey, *Person and Work*, p. 247; Olford, *Anointed Expository Preaching*, p. 218.

⁵⁵Torrey, *Person and Work*, pp. 232–259.

⁵⁶See *All-Round Ministry*, pp. 315–339.

⁵⁷Sargent, *Sacred Anointing*, pp. 95–101.

the Spirit's role in preaching.

CRITICISMS OF THE POPULAR VIEW OF THE SPIRIT'S ROLE

The most basic issue relates to defining the Spirit's empowering work, that is, what should this work be properly called? It is my contention that it is improper to describe it in terms of the baptism with the Spirit, anointing, or unction as they are defined biblically. By using these terms in a manner which is not consistent with the biblical usage, this position creates confusion, improperly restricts to a few what God has given to all believers, blurs the distinction between the effects of Spirit baptism and genuine empowering, and dangerously opens the door to fresh communications from God.

Confusing Initial Reception and Subsequent Empowerings

The most significant issue at stake in this discussion is the proper biblical and theological understanding of the believer's initial reception of the Holy Spirit. By virtue of the arguments that Torrey and Lloyd-Jones make regarding the baptism with the Spirit, their position results in confusing usage of terms and the mishandling of several key passages.

Their insistence on equating references to Spirit-baptism, pouring out, filling, anointing, etc., puts them in the position of seeming to contradict themselves. For example, Torrey spends extensive time arguing that the baptism with the Spirit is a repeatable endowment with power, but then turns to suggest that perhaps it would be best to reserve the term "baptism" for the initial reception of the Spirit and use filling for subsequent empowerings.

The question may arise: Should we call these new fillings with the Holy Spirit "fresh baptisms" with the Holy Spirit? To this we would answer that the expression "baptism" is never used in the Scriptures of a second experience, and there is something of the initiatory character in the very thought of baptism. So, if one wishes to be precisely biblical, it would seem to be better not to use the term "baptism" of a second experience but to limit it to the first experience...it would be well to speak of one baptism but many fillings.⁵⁸

This certainly fits well with the terminology of Acts, but it does not seem to be compatible with all the arguments he has made for his own position, namely that the baptism with the Spirit is an endowment with

⁵⁸Torrey, *Person and Work*, pp. 230-231.

power which may and ought to occur repeatedly.⁵⁹ In fact, he is not really consistent with his own counsel, for writing later in the same work, he says, “My *first experience* of being baptized with the Holy Spirit....”⁶⁰ Such vacillation severely undercuts their definitions and descriptions of this work of the Holy Spirit.

More significant is the failure to handle adequately the explicit statements of Scripture that tie the baptism with the Spirit to conversion. This connection is clearly pointed out by Peter in his sermon on Pentecost. Peter clearly announces the offer of the gospel in these terms: “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and *you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*” (Acts 2:38, emphasis added). Verse 39 even expands this promise to apply “for you and your children and for all who are far off, *as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself* (emphasis added). Ironically, Torrey uses v. 39 as proof that the baptism with the Spirit is intended for all believers while disconnecting the promise of this verse from the conditions of its fulfillment recorded in v. 38. In other words, he correctly declares that the promise of the Spirit is available to all believers (v. 39), yet ignores the fact that the text says the reception of the Spirit is joined to salvation (v. 38).⁶¹

Three points are important to buttress my argument regarding its use in Acts. First, verse 33 has already identified the manifestations of Pentecost as the pouring forth of the promise of the Holy Spirit. In light of Acts 1:4–5, which joins the concepts of the promise of the Father and the baptism with the Holy Spirit, it seems clear that Acts 2:33 includes Spirit-baptism. This is what Peter offers to his listeners. Second, Peter explicitly ties the reception of the gift of the Spirit to God’s salvific call of people to Himself (Acts 2:39) which is evidenced by repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (v. 38). Third, the argument made by Torrey and Lloyd-Jones that the disciples were already converted men ignores the entire point of Pentecost being the initial outpouring of the Spirit as promised in Acts 1.⁶²

⁵⁹Lloyd-Jones evidences the same confusion. He writes, “the baptism of the Holy Spirit is the initial experience of glory and the reality of and the love of the Father and the Son. Yes, you may have many experiences of that but the first experience, I would suggest, is the baptism of the Holy Spirit” (*God the Holy Spirit*, p. 240). Later in the same work he writes, “The baptism, I suggest, is the initial experience, the filling is an experience that can often be repeated” (p. 243).

⁶⁰Torrey, *Person and Work*, p. 250. Emphasis added.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, pp. 222–226.

⁶²The thrust of their argument is based on the assumption that their opponents equate Spirit baptism with regeneration (cf. Lloyd-Jones, *God the Holy Spirit*, pp. 236–237). To claim that Spirit baptism occurs at the point of conversion is not the same as saying that Spirit baptism is regeneration. Again, they fail to consider the dispensa-

The same observations can be made with regard to Acts 5:32 (“Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him”⁶³). The evidence is equally, if not more, convincing when one considers the outpouring of the Spirit upon Cornelius and his household. Acts 10:44–45 record that the “Holy Spirit fell upon those who were listening” and that “the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also.” Peter’s reflection on this event in 11:16–18 joins the promise of Spirit-baptism (v. 16) to the gift received by the disciples at Pentecost⁶⁴ after they had exercised faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (v. 17).

Moving outside of Acts, other NT passages seem clear that the reception of the Spirit is at the point of conversion. For example, Titus 3:5–6 (“regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us”) uses the language of pouring in connection with the point of conversion.⁶⁵ It is quite amazing that both Torrey and Lloyd-Jones would make such strong use of Galatians 3:2 in defense of an experiential reception of the Spirit subsequent to conversion, since the point of Paul’s argument is clearly referring to conversion. Paul’s question clearly refers to their initial acceptance of the gospel by faith. This is evident from his expression of shock that they are being bewitched away from the gospel (v. 1), and by his direct question in verse 3, “Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?” To dislocate verse 2 from initial conversion destroys Paul’s argument. Paul is clearly tying their conversion through faith with the reception of the Holy Spirit.⁶⁶

Restricting to a Few What Belongs to All Believers

Another set of NT texts also makes it difficult to accept the Torrey/Lloyd-Jones position. 1 Corinthians 12:13, 2 Corinthians 1:21, and

tional significance of the day of Pentecost, i.e., many, if not most, dispensationalists believe that the OT saints were regenerate, but they do not believe that they were Spirit-baptized. Cf. John Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958), p. 32; Alva J. McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom*, (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1974), p. 287.

⁶³Verse 31 supplies insight into what “obey Him” means—repentance that leads to the forgiveness of sins.

⁶⁴Acts 10:47 makes this same connection, “who have received the Holy Spirit just as we did.”

⁶⁵Paul uses the same verb as Acts 2:17.

⁶⁶Ronald Y. K. Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), p. 130.

1 John 2:20, 27 use their key terms (baptism, anointing, and unction respectively) with reference to all believers, not just a select few. In other words, these texts teach that all believers partake of Spirit baptism and have been anointed (received an anointing). Torrey seems to acknowledge this, but his answer is simply to argue that all of the Corinthians had indeed received this special baptism.⁶⁷ Lloyd-Jones chooses the same path, “therefore it seems to me that it is more than likely that most members of the early church received the baptism of the Holy Spirit.”⁶⁸ I suppose that it is impossible to deny their assumption, but it seems to be an overly convenient way of circumventing the problem and reveals a very idealized view of the early churches. It is surprising to find the kind of baptism articulated by Torrey and Lloyd-Jones being argued as universally bestowed upon the carnal Corinthians (or the apostatizing Galatians for that matter).

Opening the Door for Direct Communication from God

While the other criticisms of the popular view center on the meaning of baptism with the Spirit or anointing, another concern raised by the language used focuses on the tendency to open the way for direct communication from God to the preacher and to his hearers. Because the ministry of the Spirit seems to be viewed as a continuation of the prophetic mold,⁶⁹ statements are made which tend in that direction. For example, Spurgeon encouraged his college graduates to leave room for divine assistance:

I do not see where the opportunity is given to the Spirit of God to help us in preaching, if every jot and tittle is settled beforehand. Do let your trust in God be free to move hand and foot. While you are preaching, believe that God the Holy Spirit can give you, in the self-same hour, what you shall speak; and can make you say what you had not previously thought of; yes, and make this newly-given utterance to be the very arrowhead of the discourse, which shall strike deeper into the heart than anything you had prepared.⁷⁰

⁶⁷Torrey, *Person and Work*, p. 201.

⁶⁸Lloyd-Jones, *Joy Unspeakable*, p. 182.

⁶⁹Spurgeon’s comment, “Unless we have the spirit of the prophets resting upon us, the mantle which we wear is nothing but a rough garment to deceive,” shows this linking of the offices (*Lectures to My Students*, p. 187).

⁷⁰*An All-Round Ministry*, pp. 349–350. Jack Deere (*Surprised by the Voice of God* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996], pp. 89–91) recounts several of Spurgeon’s own examples and explanations of this Spirit-directed speech in order to make the case for contemporary prophecy.

Lloyd-Jones, due to the deliberate attention he gave to the subject, is even more open to such assistance from the Holy Spirit. His choice of the word “*afflatus*” to describe the work of the Spirit in giving unction indicates that he attributed a level of inspiration to the process. One of his chief examples of this work of the Spirit was the ministry of Howell Harris, a Welshman contemporary of Whitefield. Harris explained his preaching practice in these words, “I took no particular texts but discoursed freely as the Lord gave me utterance. As to the subject of my discourse, it was all given unto me in an extraordinary manner without the least premeditation, it was not the fruit of my memory, it was the effect of the immediate strong impulse felt in my soul.”⁷¹ It seems that Harris’ experience became somewhat paradigmatic for Lloyd-Jones. Note his comments on Harris’s assertion, “I ask a question at this point. Was not this what the New Testament calls prophesying? Was this not the prophesying that we read of in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14? I would venture the opinion that it is. This is a man delivering what is given to him. It is not *revelation* but *inspiration*.”⁷²

While it is beyond our purpose here, this is what has led some to see Lloyd-Jones as a forerunner of the current prophecy movement.⁷³ For our purposes, the observation is made to suggest that the hunger for a fresh experience of the Spirit fully compatible to that of the early church seems to lead one invariably to an openness to the same type of communication from the Spirit available to them.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this article was to examine the validity of the popular usage of the language of Spirit baptism and anointing to describe a special endowment with power as a definite post-conversion experience. Since all believers have been Spirit baptized and anointed by God, it is not proper to use these biblical terms in a non-biblical manner. Additionally, the view that spirit baptism is a post-conversion experience does not

⁷¹Cited in Sargent, *Sacred Anointing*, p. 35. It may be valuable to note that Lloyd-Jones, according to Sargent, appears to have been favorable to the idea of “direct leadings” and “impressions on the mind” by the Holy Spirit which was embraced by both George Whitefield and Howell Harris. For an interesting, and enlightening, account of Jonathan Edwards’ critical response to Whitefield’s tendency toward these impulses, see Iain Murray, *Jonathan Edwards* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1987) pp. 240–242.

⁷²Cited in Sargent, *Sacred Anointing*, p. 90 (italics added by Sargent).

⁷³This seems to be Sargent’s conclusion. John Piper, “A Passion for Christ-Exalting Power” (unpublished paper, pp. 8–10) sees Lloyd-Jones clearly in this vein. Deere, *Surprised by the Voice of God*, clearly sees Spurgeon in this light; cf. footnote 70.

square with NT teaching on the subject.

Given these criticisms of the popular usage of the phrases “baptism with the Spirit,” “anointing/anointed,” and “unction of the Spirit,” I do not believe that we should perpetuate their usage in our discussions of preaching. Also, it would be best that prayer for preaching should not invoke these ideas (e.g., “anoint your preacher”) and discussion of the giftedness or fruitfulness of preachers would be better served without these images (e.g., “he is an anointed preacher”). This does not in any way minimize the desire that so often prompts the unbiblical use of these terms and images. My contention is that one may have a very intense desire for the Spirit’s work in preaching without mudding the theological waters through inaccurate use of terms. In fact, the quest toward the noble goal of Spirit-empowered preaching will be aided by the elimination of unneeded confusion and improved concentration on the true access to that power.⁷⁴

⁷⁴Although it is not the purpose of this article to address the question of obtaining the Spirit’s empowering, it is hoped that a later article will be able to address this important issue.