

## Hindrances to Receiving the Baptism in the Holy Spirit

Note 1: Throughout this lesson “baptism” is referring to the “baptism in the Holy Spirit”, not water baptism.

Note 2: Throughout this lesson I will refer to receiving “it”. By this I do not mean the Holy Spirit himself, because the Holy Spirit is not an “it”, but a personal being. I mean the experience of the baptism.

Note 3: This lesson will not deal with the reality, or scriptural basis for the baptism, nor how to receive, as that has been dealt with earlier. It can be found on my website in the “Christian Basics” page, entitled “The Baptism in the Holy Spirit”.

We can broadly state the reasons for those not receiving as – they don’t know about it, they don’t want it, they think they have it already, or they have tried and given up. We will now expand on these.

### 1. Ignorance

This does not mean stupidity or anything derogatory, but simply that a person has not been taught that there is such an experience to be had. We have had to overcome centuries of church ignorance and neglect on this issue.

### 2. Indifference

This person has heard of the Baptism, and is not really opposed to it, but simply does not think it is important enough to pursue. They have not studied the Word about the issue, and don’t care enough even to consider the issue. It is impossible to receive the Baptism, or any other spiritual good, in a state of indifference.

### 3. Membership in a denomination that has rejected it

Such people may or may not agree with their church stand, but know that if they ask questions, or get it, they will be “asked” to leave. Actually, there is Biblical precedent for this – Jn. 12:42-43 – “Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue. For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.”

### 4. False teaching

**Some say they have received it automatically, inevitably, and unconsciously at salvation**, and so say that any subsequent significant move of the Spirit in their lives is not a baptism, but merely a “filling” with the Spirit. This is partially correct but very significantly wrong. The Bible does speak of people being “filled with the Spirit” after being baptized with the Spirit. e.g. Ac. 4:8 and 4:31. After Peter and John had been released from questioning, they prayed (verses 24-30, and “... the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.” These were mostly, if not all, people who had experienced the outpouring on the day of Pentecost.

The error is not a distinction between a one-time baptism, and a future filling that could happen at any time, but in believing that a person receives the baptism just by being saved. The apostles and the 120 on the day of Pentecost were obviously born-again believers as they were waiting for “the promise of the Father”. The Samaritan believers in Ac. 8 were obviously saved and water-baptized at the preaching of Philip (8:12), but Peter and John were sent up from Jerusalem to make sure they also received the Spirit-baptism (8:14-17).

Even the original baptism was called a “filling” in Ac. 2:4, so the distinction is not just in the word, but between a one-time coming of the Spirit into a believer in fulfillment of Jesus’ promise, and subsequent fillings of inspiration, power, boldness, or anointing.

Also, Jesus said in Lk. 11:13. “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?” Why would we ask for something if it happens automatically? At salvation we are asking for forgiveness from Christ, and probably have no thought or even conception of the working of the Holy Spirit. The only time in the Bible when the baptism was given unasked for is in Ac. 10, when the Holy Spirit fell on Cornelius and his household at the preaching of Peter. This was clearly exceptional and was meant as proof to the disciples that God intended to save the Gentiles also.

We do not deny that the new birth is itself a work of the Holy Spirit. He is the one who regenerates a person and gives them repentance and faith to believe. In this sense no one can be saved who does not have the Holy Spirit. But Jesus distinguished between having the Spirit “with you” and having him “in you” (Jn. 14:16-17).

**Some say it has passed away with the early church**, along with miracles. Usually they say that God only intended these things to be temporary, as a “kick start” for the expansion of the church, and that it is no longer necessary since we have the NT in written form. Of course the problem is that there is no place in the Bible that supports this. None of the purposes of the baptism have changed. This also ignores the fact that millions of Christians all around the world have experienced it, especially since the early 1900’s.

**5. The offense of “tongues”** (this is probably at the root of most opposition)

**Some do not understand the distinction between the gift of tongues, and tongues as the evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit.** The gift of tongues (1 Cor. 12:4-11) is a ministry gift in the church which is much like prophecy, where God is speaking to the church through a person. To be understood it must be interpreted. Not everyone has this gift. Tongues as it occurs in Ac. 2, 10, and 19, in those receiving the baptism in the Spirit, is not interpreted (although it may be understood by speakers of that language), because we are not talking to men but to God, speaking his praises or making prayers. Paul says we pray in the Spirit and we pray with the understanding. We can even sing in the Spirit, and bless with the Spirit (1 Cor. 14:15-16). The Bible shows that when the Holy Spirit fell on people in this way, they spoke in tongues. Why would we think that this has changed?

**Many say they have received it “but without tongues”.** They have had some emotional or significant moving in their heart, and call this their baptism. Others say that they asked, so they must have received. Or they wanted it, so they must have it, but with no outward evidence. The is to rely on emotions and feelings instead of the Word. We should look at the Bible everywhere it is discussed, and let that be our guide.

If they would be honest, they would admit that they want to believe they have it, but NOT with tongues. They want to put conditions on God – I want everything you have for me, but not that way!” This is probably due to either fear or pride, or both.

**6. Bad experiences**

**There are some churches, individuals, or “outpourings” that just seem “crazy”.** While we should be very cautious in saying that something is “of the devil”, yet some of these things do not have any appearance of a holy moving of God. The danger is that observers will “throw the baby out with the bath water”, concluding that all “charismatic” activities are wrong.

**Some say that one cannot be saved without speaking in tongues.** Someone said this to me before I had received. By God’s grace I rejected that idea without rejecting the Biblical experience. On the contrary, a person cannot receive the baptism unless they are already saved. In some instances (Cornelius) it happened at almost the same time, but not really. Usually there is a significant separation in time.

**Some people are well-meaning but overbearing.** If we come on strongly with no tact, empathy, or real compassion for people, it will be obvious, and so they will reject not only us but our message.

**7. Occult activities and spiritual bondage**

I have no direct experience or verses for this, but have heard of people who had had very extensive involvement with witchcraft or other forms of occult, who could not receive the baptism until going through deliverance.

**8. Because they have not asked for the Holy Spirit**

Lk. 11:13 was quoted above – “... how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?” If you don’t want it, or if you think you already have it, then obviously you wouldn’t ask. But it still remains that “ye have not because ye ask not”. The Holy Spirit is given to those who are saved already, and who desperately want the same experience they read of in Ac. 2, 8, 10-11, and 19, in the same manner, with the same evidence, and for the same purpose.

**9. They have tried but so far have not received**

If someone feels pressured, or asks before they are totally convinced of its validity, having lingering fears or doubts, then they will not receive, and then tend to become hardened. They either think they have received it without evidence, or that maybe it isn’t scriptural after all, or that it just isn’t for them. In other words, they base their belief on their experience instead of the Word (“It must not be right because I haven’t received it.”).