

Th122 Foundation Doctrines

Lesson Th122 – 15 Baptism: The Power to Witness

What makes a man brave? Is it possible for a man who acts cowardly to become brave? It is very hard for a person to stand up against forces that seem overwhelming. But when that person has access to something very powerful, they suddenly are not fearful, but are confident. In this lesson you will learn that the Baptism in the Holy Spirit gives supernatural power to the one baptized. This power was promised to us by Jesus. And it is given to us for a very special purpose.

Just before Jesus ascended into heaven, he spoke to his disciples and said this; “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest parts of the earth” (Acts 1:8). The promise of power to the believer comes through the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. The purpose of the power is to be a witness at home, across your nation, and even to the rest of the world.

Peter was a fisherman and one of Jesus’ first disciples. He was not highly educated and had a rash impulsive personality. Of all of the disciples, Peter was the one who was quick to offer an opinion. Sometimes he got it right; often he got it wrong.

Now Jesus and the disciples had just completed celebrating the Passover meal. Judas had left to betray Jesus to the Jewish Priests. So, after singing a hymn, Jesus and the eleven left the upper room. They walked through the streets of Jerusalem as night fell. Jerusalem was not a large city by modern standards. With a population of perhaps 20- to 30,000 people, it would be considered a small city today. But, Jerusalem was a walled city which held the most holy place in all of Judaism, the temple of God. So, the disciples slipped out of the city through one of the gates located in the eastern wall. Before them rose a small mountain ridge covered with olive groves, rightly called the Mount of Olives.

As they walked, Jesus shocked them with a prophetic statement. “This very night you will all fall away because of me, for it is written: ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered’” (Matt 26:31). All of the disciples knew that he was the shepherd and they the sheep.

While the disciples grieved when they heard this, impetuous Peter had to boast of his bravery. Peter said, “Even if all fall away because of you, I never will.”

Jesus looked at Peter with fondness and said, “Truly I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times.”

To this Peter again declared, “Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.” And all the other disciples said the same (Matt 26:33-35).

Before the night was over, Jesus was arrested by a mob and all the disciples fled, including Peter. Jesus was led to the house of Caiaphas, the high priest, where all of the scribes

and elders were gathered. Now while Jesus was inside suffering a mockery of a trial, Peter and John entered into the high priest's courtyard. A servant girl came up to Peter and said, "You also were with Jesus of Galilee." But Peter denied it.

Peter moved over to the courtyard's gateway only to be met with another servant girl, who also accused him of being with Jesus. Again, Peter denied it. A short time later a few others in the courtyard came up to Peter and said, "Surely you are one of them; for even the way you talk gives you away."

Then Peter began to curse and swear, "I do not know the man!" Suddenly a rooster crowed. Peter realized he had done exactly as Jesus had said he would. He had denied Christ three times. Peter thought that he was so brave, and yet, deep inside he was cowardly. In deep embarrassment and shame, Peter went outside and wept bitterly (Matt 26:69-75).

Jesus was crucified, buried in a tomb, and raised back to life on the third day. He appeared to his disciples on many occasions. On the fortieth day, they all stood on the mountainside, as Jesus promised his disciples the power of the Holy Spirit. He then ascended into heaven. The disciples returned to Jerusalem to pray and wait for the gift that Christ had promised.

The disciples waited for ten days in prayer and expectation. They were all gathered together in the upper room of a building on the day of the Jewish festival, called Pentecost. This feast happened on the fiftieth day after Passover and was a time of great celebration as all Jews came to Jerusalem to celebrate the wheat harvest. Because of this the streets were packed with Jewish visitors from throughout the Roman Empire. It was early in the morning, just 9 a.m. Suddenly a tremendous rushing wind burst into the upper room. Everyone there was filled with the Holy Spirit and began to praise God in languages they did not know.

The noise was so great, that the people of Jerusalem came running to see what was happening. They stood around in shock as they heard God being praised in the languages of their home countries. Some said that the disciples were drunk. Others thought that they had gone mad. But something supernatural was happening! Peter, the coward who denied Christ three times, suddenly stepped forward. He was a changed man. Raising his voice, he began to preach under the powerful anointing of the Holy Spirit. He spoke not as a man full of fear, but as a man empowered with supernatural boldness. At the end of his sermon all the people were grieved because of their sins and cried out, "Brothers, what shall we do?"

Then Peter gave the first altar call in church history saying, "Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call" (Acts 2:37-39). And with that, 3,000 people became believers.

This is the story of two Peters, one a braggart and a coward, the other a bold preacher. What made the difference? The difference was exactly what Jesus promised before he ascended into heaven. "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you and you will be my

witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest parts of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

This story is **important** because it teaches you just how much the Baptism of the Holy Spirit can change and empower those who are baptized. Like Peter, you can boldly proclaim God’s truth to those around you, as the Holy Spirit gives you power.

The **main truth** of this story is that in our own strength we will fall short of becoming the witnesses to the world that God intended for us to be. We need the power of the Holy Spirit to anoint our words and help us overcome our weaknesses.

Let’s **review** the main points of this lesson by answering these questions:

1. What was Peter really like before Jesus’ death? [Pause]
 - A. If you said that Peter was a braggart and a coward, then you are correct.
2. What was Peter like after he received the Baptism in the Holy Spirit? [Pause]
 - A. If you said, “Peter became bold after the Holy Spirit came upon him,” you are correct.
3. What did Jesus say the power of the Holy Spirit was for? [Pause]
 - A. If you said that the Holy Spirit would give them power to be witnesses, you are right.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to pray and ask God to fill you with his Holy Spirit and to make you a bold witness for Christ. Memorize the words of Jesus to the disciples: “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest parts of the earth” (Acts 1:8). This is his promise to each of us today.