

Statement on Holy Spirit

Constance Evangelical Free Church

The following is an expanded statement of our doctrinal position on the Holy Spirit, as stated in the Evangelical Free Church of America, Statement of Faith, article 4, which states:

"We believe that the ministry of the Holy Spirit is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ, and during this age to convict men, regenerate the believing sinner, indwell, guide, instruct, and empower the believer for godly living and service."

As a local gathering of members of the body of Christ, we do not want to exclude from our fellowship any who have received Christ as Savior and Lord. It is not realistic that we will agree on every detail concerning the teachings of the Bible. However, because teaching concerning the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer has often become a divisive issue, we make the following statement as our understanding in this matter. This statement is made in a spirit of love and unity.

We believe that:

1. The baptism, or initial experience, of the Holy Spirit happens when a person first puts their faith in Christ for salvation and is made a member of the Body of Christ. This union with the Spirit is the experience, not just of some, but of all believers. I Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3-2-3; Eph. 1:13-14
2. The Holy Spirit lives in all believers in Christ. He comes at the time of salvation, and is also the continuing source of power for Christian living and ministry. John 16:13; I Cor. 6:19; I Cor. 3:16; Romans 8:9-11; II Timothy 1:14.
3. The filling of the Holy Spirit (Eph 5:18) is a continual process repeated in the life of the obedient believer. This obedience includes nourishment on the Word of God (Col 3:16), a life of prayer (Eph 5:20), fellowship with other believers (Eph 5:19; Heb. 10:24-25) and being a faithful witness of Christ.

All three persons of the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, have the elements of personality found in man: mind, emotions, and will. As such, the filling of the Spirit is a balanced experience in all of these areas.

4. The evidence of Spirit-filling is the fruit of the Spirit in the life of the believer (Gal. 5:22-23) and victory over sin (Romans 8:13). Spirit-filled believers will also fulfill Jesus' command to love God and neighbors, and will promote unity and peace in the life of a congregation (Mt 22:35-40; I Cor. 13)
5. Gifts of the Holy Spirit are one or more special abilities given when a person first puts their faith in Christ for salvation. (I Cor. 13-14, Romans 12:3-8, Eph 4:7-16, I Peter 4:10-11) This is determined by the Giver, not the receiver (I Cor. 12:7,11, 18, 28), to build up others (Eph. 4:16) Gift discovery and development will often take

some time (Romans 12:3) and feedback from others (I Cor. 12:21-27; Acts 4:36).

6. While scripture does not necessarily teach a total cessation of prophecy or the *sign gifts, the distribution of these gifts has only been during significant periods of history. Examples of this would be during the time of Moses (Ex 4-14) Elijah (I Kings 17), Jesus (The Gospels), and the early church (Acts). Their purpose was revelation, in the case of prophecy, and in the case of sign gifts, message authentication (Ex.4:1; mark 2:10,12; John 14:11; Acts 2:11). The historical circumstances which necessitated the distribution of the sign gifts (i.e. the formation of the church at Pentecost) are not a part of our North American setting. Because of this, we see little authentic evidence or need of the manifestation of sign gifts outside of the early church context. This understanding relates solely to the sign gifts and not to God's choice to miraculously work or heal according to His will.

Based on these beliefs, we conclude the following:

1. We are, at this writing a 102 year old evangelical church. We will not affirm or promote the Pentecostal doctrine of the Holy Spirit. By this we mean a second necessary work of grace subsequent to the new birth which is evidenced by speaking in tongues. In addition, we do not affirm the need for seeking or promoting either sign gifts or prophecies.
2. We ask those who make Constance their church home to respect our character as evangelical and not attempt to make us other than what we are. As such, elders must uphold this statement, prospective members will be asked if they agree with it, and ministry leaders will ensure that ministry activities will not become a forum for the promotion of doctrine contrary to our character.
3. Regarding those in our church family whose doctrinal conviction is Pentecostal, we affirm your faith and right to live out his conviction in your personal worship. However, we also request that you honor the convictions of Constance as expressed in this Statement. Do not use your place in our family to promote other doctrine. Such practice inevitably leads to division. If you must publicly promote or express the Pentecostal doctrine or your experience, we request that you find your place in a local church where your doctrine and experience are the norm.
4. We love and respect our Pentecostal brethren as a vital part of Christ's Body. However, the unity of the Body must be a higher value than doctrinal uniformity until we are fully unified in His coming kingdom.

* The sign gifts are the gifts of miracles, healings, tongues, and interpretation of tongues. They are grouped by many theologians as those gifts used to provide a "sign" or draw attention to a messenger of God and His message.