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THE HOLY SPIRIT OF GOD

Reading: Ephesians 5:15-6:9

5. THE FILLING OF THE SPIRIT

Homer Lindsay tells the gripping story of an air tragedy which occurred in his seminary days in Forth Worth, Texas. One morning at breakfast he was reading the Fort Worth Star Telegram. An article told of a tragic plane crash. A young student pilot was making one of his final training flights. Evidently he froze at the controls. Fear does cause people to freeze up at times. His instructor was heard yelling, ‘ **Turn over the controls. Turn over the controls.**’ The student pilot didn’t and both were killed in the crash. Tragedy can occur when those who are in training don’t turn over the controls to the wise instructor. In the Christian life we must learn to turn over the controls. Indeed is this not what being filled with the Holy Spirit is all about ? *It is simply living each moment under His sovereign control.*

Now in this series on ‘ **The Holy Spirit of God,**’ we have stressed the importance of **vocabulary.** A great deal of confusion, I believe, is caused by the failure of many believers to use the vocabulary of the Bible. Some today speak in terms of being ‘ *slain,*’ in the Spirit. Others speak of a ‘ *baptism.*’ of the Spirit. Still others refer to a ‘ *filling.*’ of the Holy Spirit. How do we work through all this confusion on this subject ? Well, it is important to

note that in the Bible there are some things we are never commanded to be. We are never told to be baptised in the Spirit. (1 Cor 12:13) We are never told to be indwelt by the Spirit. (Rom 8:9) we are never told to be sealed with the Spirit. (1:13) Why ? Because the moment we came to the Lord Jesus we were indwelt, sealed, and baptised with the Spirit. ***It’s all part of the salvation package.*** These sovereign acts of God are never repeated, never withdrawn and they are guarantees that the believer is eternally secure and has a glorious standing in Christ. These ministries of the Spirit are linked with our ***position*** in Christ. This is what God did for us, the moment we believed. We could say they are ***Positional:*** they have to do with belonging to Christ’s body, but the filling of the Spirit is an ***Experiential Truth.*** Paul never said, ‘ *be baptised with the Spirit,*’ he was not championing a second work of grace. What Paul is talking about is a continual daily filling.

Now many are bewildered about what it means to be filled with the Spirit. Some tell you that you must have some kind of ecstatic experience and speak in tongues, while others approach the subject stoically. They simply recognise that the Holy Spirit is present, but think He makes little or no difference. Both are wrong for the filling or controlling of the Holy Spirit is a profound reality in the Christian’s life and understanding it can change your life. So it is to this “ ***Filling of the Holy Spirit,***” that I want to direct your mind this ... ! Notice,

(1) THE COMMAND

Is this there a mandate or command to be filled with the Spirit ? Well, Paul states in this key verse, “ *Be not filled with the Spirit.*” (6:18) Now Greek scholars tell us a lot about this statement. They say that there are four things to note about the verb ‘ *filled.*’ ***It is in the imperative mood, in the plural form, in the passive voice and in the present tense.*** (John Stott) If we put all that together we can see that the imperative is a command, the plural is addressed to all those reading the Epistle, the passive means that the filling will be “ *done to them,*” and the present shows that it is to be an ongoing experience. That’s why some people like to paraphrase the expression “ *be being filled with the Spirit.*” So this is a command not a suggestion. That’s why Paul immediately precedes this verse by saying in (5:17) The will of the Lord is to be filled with the Spirit. Let me break this down a little further, and ask you to notice,

(a) THE PEOPLE EMBRACED HERE:

For the verb which Paul uses in the text is in the *plural number*, and that means these words are addressed to the whole Christian community. None are eliminated. None are left out in the cold. It is for everyone who has a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. This is to be the norm for every believer. Vance Havner the old American preacher from North Carolina used to say, “ ***that the average Christian is so subnormal, that when he becomes normal, everybody thinks he is abnormal.***” Well, the Spirit filled life is to be the normal experience for every Christian. None of us is to get drunk, all of us are to be filled with the Spirit. *Did you notice the context*

in which this phrase is set ? It’s set within the context of husbands and wives, parents and children, management and employees. My to be ‘ *filled with the Spirit,*’ is not for a spiritual elite in extra ordinary circumstances but for ordinary Christians in ordinary Christian service. How do I know ? Well, a quick look at the Book of Acts unearths some wonderful stories of God’s grace and ability as He worked in and through the lives of very ordinary people who had one thing in common, they were all filled with the Spirit. Impetuous people like Peter were filled with the Spirit (Acts 4:8) courageous people like Stephen were filled with the Spirit (Acts 6:3 7:55) Good people like Barnabas were filled with the Spirit (Acts 11:24) Outstanding people like Paul were filled with the Spirit (Acts 9:17 13:9) Responsible people like those early brethren or deacons were filled with the Spirit. (Acts 6:3)

You see, Peter need the filling to preach for Christ (Acts 4:8-12) Stephen needed the filling to suffer for Christ (Acts 7:55-60) Barnabas needed the filling to exhort for Christ (Acts 11:23-24) and Paul needed the filling to rebuke for Christ (Acts 13:9-10) You see, this is not just something for preaching this is something for living. Do you know this ministry of the Holy Spirit in your life ? Is this normal Christian living for you ? (a)

(b) THE PERIOD EXPRESSED HERE:

You see, the tense of the verb is in *the present tense*, and gives the thought of continuance. ‘ *Be ye continually being filled with the Spirit,*’ or ‘ *go on being filled with the Spirit,*’ or ‘ *Be ye constantly, moment by moment being*

controlled by the Spirit.’ Until when ? Until glory. You see, this is not an initial and final happening, it is a daily moment by moment infilling. You see, God’s blessings for yesterday were wonderful but they won’t suffice for the blessings we need tomorrow. Do you know what ? You can be filled with the Spirit one moment and not be filled with the Spirit the next moment. Do you remember Simon Peter ? You remember the Lord Jesus Christ said, “ *Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am ?*” (Matt 16:13) And there was a variety of answers. “ *But whom say ye that I am ?*” And old Simon Peter always had the answer. “ *Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God.*”

(Matt 16:16) “ *And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou Simon Bar-jona for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee but my Father which is in heaven.*” (Matt 16:17) Peter was filled with the Spirit as he gave witness to Jesus Christ. And then the Lord Jesus began to talk about the cross. Do you remember ? And when Christ began to talk about the cross, Simon Peter pulled the Lord Jesus aside and said, “ *Now, wait a minute, Lord. Let’s not talk about this cross business.*”

And the Saviour looked at Simon Peter and said, “ *Get thee behind me Satan for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.*” Isn’t that something ? One moment Christ said, “ *Blessed art thou Simon,*” filled with the Spirit. The next moment He said, “ *Simon, you are like Satan.*” My would you not testify to the fact that you and I have had the same experience ? One moment filled with the Spirit of God, one moment in victory in the Lord Jesus and the next moment allowing Satan to fill us with his defeat and his

acts and his deeds. My this is an experience that needs to take place every day in our lives. An often-used phrase is this, “ *There is one baptism, there are many fillings.*” (Acts 2:4, 4:8 Gal 2:11) Many times we sin, instead of Spirit control, there is self-control, therefore we restrict His operation in and through our lives and we need to be filled afresh. Are you continually filled ? Are you moment by moment controlled by the Spirit of God ? Are you filled with the Spirit at this very moment ? (a) (b)

(c) **THE PICTURE EMPLOYED HERE:**

For Paul paints a picture here, he gives us a graphic illustration. Do you see what he says “ *And be not drunk with wine*” (5:18) Now why did Paul speak of being drunk with wine in the same context of being filled with the Spirit ? Why did he use the picture of being drunk ? Well, Ephesus was a city of Greek culture, and a wine country where overindulgence was common. So Paul says, ‘ *Just as the citizens of Ephesus give themselves over to the wine god Bacchus, so the believer must be completely given over to the true and living God.*’ Now what happens when a person is filled with wine ? *It affects the totality of his life.* It affects his walk, his talk, his mind, his body, his home, his money. So when a Christian is filled with the Holy Spirit it affects his whole life. It affects his walk with God, it affects his talk, his tongue is under control, it affects his home, it affects how he gives to the work of the Lord. You see, to be filled with the Spirit is to be controlled by the Spirit. This word ‘ *filled,*’ (pleroo) in the New Testament was mainly used to get across the idea of total control. Whenever the Gospel writers wanted to

Speak of someone who was dominated by his emotions he used this word '*filled.*' (pleroo) Do you recall that when people saw the wonder working power of the Lord '*they were all filled with fear,*' (Lk 5:26) Dr. Luke also tells us that the Jewish leaders were '*filled with madness and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus.*' (Lk 6:11) When Christ was breaking the news of His impending departure to His disciples he said, '*Because I have said these things unto sorrow hath filled your heart.*' (Jn 16:6) What does it mean to have hearts that are filled with fear, madness and sorrow ? It means that these emotions so grip and control the heart that other things become of secondary importance. A person who is filled in this sense is no longer under his own control but under the control of that which dominates him.

My to be filled with Spirit is not to have Him somehow progressively added to our life until we are full of Him. No, rather it is to be under His total domination and control. Think of a glove. Until it is filled by a hand, a glove is powerless and useless. It is designed to work but it can do no work by itself. It works only as the hand controls and uses it. ***The glove's only work is the hands work.*** It does not ask the hand to give it a job and then try and complete the job without the hand. Nor does it gloat or brag about what it is used to do, because it knows the hand deserves all the credit. My a Christian can accomplish no more without being filled with the Spirit, than a glove can accomplish without being filled with a hand. Are you living under the Holy Spirit's domination and control ? Does He exercise complete sway in your life ? Are you living each moment under His sovereign

control ? (1)

(2) THE CONDITION

How can I be filled or controlled by the Spirit ? I was interested to discover that the *verb here is the passive voice.* Some have translated it, '*Let the Holy Spirit fill you.*' There is no ritual, no formula. We must turn from any known sin. We must open ourselves to God's Word so that it dwells in us richly. (Col 3:16) We must yield to the Spirit. All of this as, Dr. John McArthur reminds us will take into account three pertinent truths. There must be,

(a) A SURRENDERING OF YOUR LIFE TO CHRIST:

Is this not what the drunkard does ? He abandons himself to drink. Is this not what we are to do ? Tell me, has there been an abandonment of your will, intellect, emotions as well as your time, talents, and treasure to God's complete control. This involves a Negative: We could translate paraphrase (Rom 6:13) like this '*do not offer the parts of your body to sin as instruments of wickedness.*'

(Rom 6:13) Do you recall when Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem after a long absence ? Tobiah the enemy of God's people had established himself in the Temple. Incensed by that, Nehemiah cast him out, lock, stock and barrel. Afterwards he cleansed the temple and restored the symbols of Jehovah's presence. (Neh 13:6) Is that not what we need to do now ? Paul says, "*our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit.*" (1 Cor 6:19) But do you know the problem ? They are often filled with sinful clutter, practice and habit. The result ? The Holy Spirit is

grieved and His operation is restricted in our lives. Do you need to throw out sinful clutter ? But there is also a Positive: for Paul says, “ *yield yourselves unto God.*” (Rom 6:13)

*Jesus, fill now with Thy Spirit
Hearts that full surrender know
That the streams of living water
From our inner man may flow*

I heard about an old deacon who would come down to the altar in his church every year when they had ‘ *revival meetings.*’ He would pray, ‘ *O God fill me with thy Spirit, Oh, God fill me up, fill me up.*’ Each year at the revival meetings would be the same. ‘ *O God fill me up,*’ and then he would go out and live the rest of the year like the Devil. One year he came down to the altar and began to pray, ‘ *O God fill me up, fill me up.*’ The pastor who knew his lifestyle finally got tired of him. So when the old boy got going, “ *Lord fill me up, fill me up.*” The pastor cried out, “ ***Lord don’t do it he leaks.***” My are you serious about this Spirit filled life ? Then you must turn from any known sin and gave yourself completely to the Lord. (a)

(b) A STUDYING OF THE WORD OF CHRIST:

Do you recall Paul’s command to the Colossian believer’s ? He says, “ *Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly* in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” (3:16) Do you know something ? They are exactly the same results as

follow being filled with the Spirit. You see, the filling of the Spirit is not some mystical experience, given to the spiritual elite through secret formula. *Rather, it is simply taking the Word of Christ (Scripture) and letting it indwell and infuse every part of our being.* To be filled with the Spirit of God is to be filled with the Word of God. And as we are filled with God’s Word, it controls our thinking and action, and we thereby come more and more under the Spirit’s control. As Charles Spurgeon said, the Christian’s blood should be “ ***bibline,***” bleeding Scripture wherever he may be pricked or cut. My do you long to be filled continually ? Well, then are you taking time with the Word of God ? Is your delight in the law of Lord continually ? (a) b)

(c) A STANDING IN THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST:

You see, as the late Tom Orr reminds us a person who always full of wine keeps close by the source of it. Is this not where we need to be ? Close to the Lord Jesus. This is where Peter always wanted to be. When the Lord Jesus walked down the road Peter went with him. (Matt 16:13) If Christ went up a mountain Peter went with him. When the Saviour said, “ *Will ye also go away ?*” It was Peter who said, “ *Lord to whom shall we go ?*” (Jn 6:67-68) Peter got into trouble only when he got away from the Lord. When he stayed close to Christ he said and did amazing things. Did you ever think about,

1. Peter Before Pentecost:

Before Peter he was marked by ***Miraculous Words:***
At Caesarea Philippi Christ said, “ *Whom do men ?*”

Peter responded, “ *Thou art the Christ*,” (Matt 16:13)

Before Pentecost he was marked by ***Miraculous Works:***

Do you recall it was Peter walked on the water to go to Jesus ? (Matt 14:28-29) Before Pentecost he was marked by ***Miraculous Courage:*** When the soldiers came to arrest Christ in the garden, Peter took out his sword and cut off the right ear of Malchus. (Jn 18:10) He was ready to take on the whole Roman army. Peter was able to do the miraculous because he was in the presence of Christ, but when Christ was taken from him, Peter did not have the courage to admit knowing Him. But on the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit came to indwell the disciples. Now look at,

2. Peter After Pentecost:

After Pentecost he was marked by ***Miraculous Words:***

For it was Peter, bold as a lion, who preached that mighty message, on the day of Pentecost. (Acts 2:22) After Pentecost he was also marked by ***Miraculous Works:*** Do you recall him going up to the temple and saying to the paralysed man, “ *Silver and gold have I none*,”

(Acts 3:6) Still again after Pentecost he was characterised by ***Miraculous Courage:*** for it was Peter who stood before the Jewish Sanhedrin and said, “ *We cannot but speak*,” (Acts 4:20) Now the key to Peter’s boldness in the early church was that he was “ *filled with the Spirit.*” (Acts 2:4) And for Peter to be filled with the Holy Spirit was like walking next to the Lord Jesus. Tell me, what about your communion with the Saviour ? Is it real ? Is it regular ? Do you take time to be holy ? Do you speak often with your Lord ? (1) (2)

(3) THE CONSEQUENCE

What is the evidence of being filled with the Spirit ? Is it speaking in tongues ? No. Is it falling on the floor ? No. Is it barking like a dog ? No. Is it dancing up the aisle waving flags ? No. Well, what then are the marks of this Spirit filled life ? Well, notice that Paul tells us there will be,

(a) A GLADNESS ABOUT US:

Do you see (5:19) For the first consequence of a Spirit filled life is not mountain moving faith, not an ecstatic spiritual experience, not even dynamic speaking ability, its simply a heart that sings. Spirit filled people overflow in song. In the early days believers were so filled with the Spirit that even when they were taken and cast into prison they were praising the Lord. Now you could hardly get a hallelujah. Have we lost the joy of the Lord ? The joy of Him who said ‘ *these things have I spoken unto you that my joy might remain in you and that your joy might be full.*’ (Jn 15:11) (a)

(b) A GRATEFULNESS ABOUT US:

‘ *Giving thanks for all things*,’ (5:20) Do you know what the Spirit filled life rules out ? A grumbling, complaining, negative, sour spirit. A city missionary in London was called to an old tenement building where a woman lay dying in the last stages of a terrible disease. The room was cold and she had nowhere to lie but on the floor. When the missionary was asked if there was

anything he could do she replied, ‘ *I have all I really need, I have Jesus Christ.*’ Deeply moved the missionary went home and penned these words.

*In the heart of London city
Mid the dwellings of the poor
These bright and golden words were uttered
“ I have Christ. What want I more ?”
Spoken by a lonely woman dying on a garret floor
Having not one earthly comfort
“ I have Christ. What want I more ?”*

A medieval legend tells of two angels sent to earth by the Lord to gather the prayers of the saints. One was to gather the petitions and the other the thanksgivings. The angel responsible for petitions was not able to carry them back to heaven in one load, while the angel responsible for thanksgivings carried his back in one hand. (Lk 17:11) In our western society we has a people have so much, yet I wonder have we lost the spirit of appreciation ? Brethren, why are you so hesitant to say ‘ *thanks to the Lord,*’ at His Table ? (a) (b)

(c) A GRACIOUSNESS ABOUT US:

Look if you will at (5:21) This is the submission of love in all the relationships of life. *Do you ever think of the difference Spirit filled husbands and wives would make in the home ?* What a difference to have Spirit filled employers and employees would make in the work place. Do you not think it would make a difference if we had Spirit filled pastors, elders, deacons and saints in the

church ? My do you see that being filled with the Spirit affects life at every point ? It affects the church relationship: (5:19-21) the domestic relationship: (5:22-6:4) and the business relationship. (6:5-9) The great preacher Charles Spurgeon once said, “ *If there were only one prayer which I might pray before I died it would be this, “ Lord send your church men and women filled with the Holy Spirit and with fire.”* Is this not what we desperately need ? D.L. Moody was preaching and witnessing quite a bit of blessing. However there were two women in the church who detected something was missing in his preaching so they began to pray for him. They told him so and he was angry. Eventually he joined them, and one day in New York city he felt that God was dealing with him.

He handed his life afresh to God and the Spirit of God took control of him, and the Lord remarkably used him. So much so that everyone all over was talking about the evangelist. A committee gathered together to discuss the coming of Mr. Moody for a gospel campaign. One young unimpressed minister said, “ *I don’t see why we have to have D.L. Moody for a campaign, after all has he a monopoly of the Holy Spirit ?”* One old man of God rose to his feet and said, “ *Young man, we who know D.L. Moody personally know that that D.L, Moody has no monopoly of the Holy Spirit, but we know this that the Holy Spirit has a monopoly of D.L. Moody.*” That’s it. Has the Holy Spirit a monopoly of your life ? You have all of Him, has He all of you ? Are you willing to sing and mean it “ **Have thine own way Lord ?”**

