

Be Filled with the

SPIRIT . . .

—Ephesians 5:18

By James E. Gibbons

AMAZING! What a fantastic and lofty thought that Deity would indwell earthly mortals, that we can actually be filled with the Spirit of the living God! But, is this something to be thought incredible or strange that God would take His abode in a godly person, a real Christian? We think not. We are to “be filled with the Spirit.”

Varied and Contradictory Viewpoints

This belief is not new, although there are many, varied, and contradictory viewpoints in the religious world today (and all of them are not enlightened).

Some blandly speak of the Holy Spirit, even his indwelling, and then hurry on by. For all practical purposes he is nil and void in their lives. Others deify their human emotions, calling their feelings and thoughts the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (and crave some kind of emotional overwhelming as evidence of God’s presence). Many peculiar things are identified as the working of the Holy Spirit.

Furthermore, some flatly state that the Holy Spirit does not indwell human beings, that we would be Deity if he did. Others say it would be equivalent to demon possession. Then others from their human level of experience ask, “How can one person dwell in another?” And then we are told that the only way the Spirit indwells a Christian is through the Word. The Word is the Holy Spirit.

In reply to these opposing concepts, and our thoughts will be more fully developed in the words that follow, it is our conviction that we do not necessarily “feel” the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, but because we have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, we feel. A person does not feel life in his body, but because life is in his body, he feels. And as to how the Spirit specifically and empirically dwells in us, we do not have the answer. We do not even know how that our own spirit dwells in us, let alone the Holy Spirit. But we believe it. And the Word is no more the Holy Spirit than a person’s words are that person.

Indwelling Individually and Collectively

We believe the New Testament teaches the personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit in Christians, whether individually speaking or collectively. Many verses could be brought forward, but we will only present a few. The apostle Paul asks the question, “What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost [Spirit] which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?” (I Corinthians 6:19) Then in Romans 8:9 he says, “But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the *Spirit of God dwell in you*. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” So, the Holy Spirit is looked upon as dwelling in Christians individually.

Interestingly, Paul also asked in I Corinthians 3:16, “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?” When he says, “ye [you] are the temple of God,” and “you” here, in the original language of the New Testament, these pronouns are plural. So, in some sense, the Holy Spirit indwells Christians, or the church, collectively as a group. Could this be what the Lord had in mind in Matthew 18:20 when he said, “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them”?

The Naos of the Holy Spirit

Individually (I Corinthians 6:19) and collectively (I Corinthians 3:16), as we have just noticed, reference is made to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit as in a temple. This calls to mind the temple of the Old Testament where God chose to put His name and to honor with His presence. In the New Testament there are two words translated temple, *hieron* and *naos*. The first word, *hieron*, is more generic referring to more than the temple itself, including the precincts of the temple mount, i.e., the outlying porches and buildings. The second word, *naos*, is more specific as it has reference to the temple proper wherein was the Holy of Holiness (and wherein God manifested Himself). In fact, the root from which this word comes signifies to dwell. *Naos* is the word fittingly and always used by Paul when he says that Christians are the “*temple* of the Holy Spirit.” We are the sacred dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. That is what it means.

Two Ways of Being Filled with the Spirit

The New Testament speaks of being filled with the Spirit in two ways. There was what we will call the charismatic filling (limited in its scope and duration, and not involving salvation) and the regular filling (universal in its promise and purpose, being part of salvation).

A classic example of the charismatic filling is found in Acts 2:1-4. Here, on the day of Pentecost, it says that “they were all *filled with the Holy Ghost* [Spirit], and began to speak with other tongues [languages], as the Spirit gave them utterance” (2:4). Getting us ready to understand what

was about to happen in reference to Elymas the sorcerer (and how), Acts 13:9 reads, “Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) *filled with the Holy Ghost* [Spirit], set his eyes on him [Elymas the sorcerer]. (Elymas was stricken blind). The charismatic filling of the Spirit served its unique purpose in miracles being wrought, supernatural knowledge, and in divine inspiration. This filling of the Spirit is not promised, nor is it in evidence, in the church today (Hebrews 2:3,4; I Corinthians 13:8-13).

Paul had the regular and universal filling of the Spirit for all Christians in mind when he said in Ephesians 5:18, “And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess [debauchery]; but be *filled with the Spirit*.” In this same book, Ephesians 3:16 and 17 reads, “That he [God] would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his *Spirit in the inner man*; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith...” These verses are spoken generically to all Christians, and the admonition in 5:18 means to be progressively “filled with the Spirit.”

How We Are Initially Filled and Progressively Filled with the Holy Spirit

We are concerned about the universal filling of the Holy Spirit. This takes place initially, when we become a Christian, and progressively, as we remain a Christian.

Remission of Sin and the Promise

Obviously to have the indwelling of the *Holy Spirit*, sin must be gotten rid of. The Spirit will not come into a life filled with sin. In the second chapter of Acts we read of the New Testament church getting under way and sinners responding to the preaching of the gospel. Notice more in particular. “Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost [Spirit]. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call” (Acts 2:37-39). When we genuinely repent and are baptized, remission of sins takes place. The Holy Spirit as a gift is promised. Peter makes it plain that the obtaining of remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit in this way is universal. To restate this truth, he said, “For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.” This includes everyone who will ever respond to the gospel message.

Sons of God and the Spirit

This is what the Lord called being “born again” (John 3:5; Galatians 3:26,27). We become children of God. Consequently Paul writes in Galatians 4:6, “And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his

Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.” This feeling that reaches out to God is prompted by the Holy Spirit within us because we are now God’s children. “Abba” is Aramaic, the native tongue of Israel at this time. In it we hear the very personal babbling of a baby. It is very much like a little one saying “Daddy.” It means the same as father, but is more personal and intimate in feeling.

Obedience and the Spirit

A significant Scripture is found in Acts 5:32. Here it speaks of the “Holy Ghost [Spirit], whom God hath given to them that obey him.” Certainly the initial obedience when one becomes a Christian, as in Acts 2:38, is involved. But more is implied. Faithful obedience to the Lord facilitates the ongoing and progressive filling of the Spirit. The Lord said in John 14:23, “If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.”

Indwelling Our Hearts By Faith

According to Paul in Galatians 3:14, we “receive the promise of the Spirit through faith,” and not by the works of the law. The “we” includes Jew and Gentile. As already noticed, this faith is exercised initially when we repent and are baptized for the remission of sins whereby we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (In Acts 2:36 “know assuredly” signifies faith; this is followed by Acts 2:37-39). Then Paul’s prayer for the Ephesians was, “That he [God] would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; *That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith...*” (Ephesians 3:16,17). Christ, or the Holy Spirit, dwells in our hearts according to our faith. The more we trust, the greater is the capacity for the indwelling and filling of the Spirit.

Perhaps here would be a good place to again mention Ephesians 5:18,19 along with Colossians 3:16. These two epistles were written at the same time, and many things in them are parallel in thought. In the Ephesians reference, Paul says to “*be filled with the Spirit*; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.” In the parallel Colossians reference, 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.” He speaks of the Spirit dwelling in them and the Word dwelling in them. These thoughts are very closely related. The Word produces faith (Romans 10:17), and then, as we have seen, by faith the Spirit dwells in our hearts. Thus, the presence of the Word makes possible the indwelling of the Spirit. Faith activates it. Likewise, the Word is the “sword of the Spirit” (Ephesians 6:17). As such, not only is it used externally in spiritual warfare, it helps us sever sin from our lives so that the Holy Spirit can live within us.

The Filling Is Up to Us

Therefore, in view of all of these wonderful truths, whether an indwelling takes place and we are actually filled with the Spirit or not is up to us. The fact that we are admonished to “be filled with the Spirit” implies that we have some control over whether we will be filled or not. And a container must be open before it can be filled. Are we surrendered and open unto God?

The following Scriptures further indicate that the things we do have a bearing on the working of the Spirit in our lives.

- “For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that *soweth to the Spirit* shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting” (Galatians 6:8).
- “This I say then, *Walk in the Spirit*, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh” (Galatians 5:16).
- “And *grieve not the holy Spirit* of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption” (Ephesians 4:30).
- “*Quench not the Spirit*” (I Thessalonians 5:19).
- We can “*Resist the Holy Spirit*” (Acts 7:51).
- We can “*tempt the Spirit*” (Acts 5:9).

Being Filled with the Spirit

Now with all of these amazing truths stored in our minds, and the potential that is there, let us ponder what will be in evidence and accompany being filled with the Spirit. Indeed if God dwells in us, our lives will be above the ordinary. We will be above the rat race and dog-eat-dog world. There will be noble and distinguishing characteristics and results in our lives. A Spirit-filled person will be spiritual. With the indwelling of God we can’t help but be like God, godly. Let us highlight these truths.

To Be Filled With The Spirit Is to Know Love

God is love (I John 4:8,16), and conversion to Christ is an experience of love. The apostle Peter, looking back to his reader’s induction into Christianity, said, “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever” (I Peter 1:22,23). Paul tells how a brother from the church at Colosse had visited him at Rome, telling about the Colossian Christians. He continued, “Who [the brother] also declared unto us your *love in the Spirit*” (Colossian 1:8). He further continued by admonishing them to be “knit together in love” (2:2). Paul places love first as the primary and crowning fruit of the Holy Spirit in Galatians 5:22,23. In a sense we can love without having the Holy Spirit, but we cannot have the Holy Spirit without loving, for God is love. Paul makes it plain in I Corinthians 13

that the charismatic filling and gifts of the Spirit, as evidenced in the early church, were inconsequential without love. These things were passing. And without love they were nothing. God is love, and, like God, love goes on forever.

To Be Filled With The Holy Spirit is to Be Holy

From ancient times, God said, “Be ye holy; for I am holy” (Leviticus 11:44; I Peter 1:16). To be filled with the Holy Spirit of necessity we would have to be holy, for it is the Holy Spirit. God is holy. The word “holy” means separate. Sinful flesh and the Spirit clash and are antagonistic one to another. The first part of Romans chapter 8 deals with this. Paul writes, “And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness” (Romans 8:10). Verse 13 reads, “For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify [put to death] the deeds of the body, ye shall live.” Paul appeals to the concept of the body being the temple of the Holy Spirit to prompt people to live a holy life free from immorality (I Corinthians 6:18-20). The Holy Spirit is again appealed to in I Thessalonians 4:3-8 in living a life of sexual purity. When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we will not have our lives cluttered and filled with the things of the world. We are to be separate. But this happens in reverse with those who don’t have the Holy Spirit. Jude wrote, “These be they who separate themselves [from us], sensual, having not the Spirit” (Jude, verse 19).

Being Filled With the Spirit Makes Us Speak Up for the Lord

The charismatic filling of the Holy Spirit and the regular filling perhaps overlap here. Both fillings point toward evangelism. Revelation 22:17 reads, “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” In carrying out the Great Commission, the Lord promised that he would be with his disciples always, even unto the end of the age (Matthew 28:18-20). His presence was (and is) there in the person of the Spirit. With the promise of the charismatic filling of the apostles, Jesus said, “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost [Spirit] is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Acts 4:8 reads, “Then Peter, *filled with the Holy Ghost* [Spirit], said unto them...” And thus he preached to them. Acts 4:31 likewise reads, “And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all *filled with the Holy Ghost* [Spirit], and they spake the word of God with boldness.” These men “filled with the Spirit” are said to have “filled Jerusalem” with their doctrine (Acts 5:28). The Spirit directed Philip to go, join himself to

this chariot, and preach to the Ethiopian passenger (Acts 8:29), as well as directing Peter to the household of Cornelius (Acts 11:12). The record of Paul and Barnabas being sent out from the church in Antioch likewise has the Holy Spirit directly involved. “As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, *the Holy Ghost said*, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away” (Acts 13:2-4). And thus the story continues throughout the book of Acts. Men filled with the Spirit couldn’t keep their mouths shut. There was work to be done. They had to share the good news.

A Song in Our Hearts That Comes Out

The Lord said “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh” (Luke 6:45). The word “abundance” signifies a surplus and an overflowing. The heart is full and overflowing. It comes out. Paul also said in II Corinthians 4:13, “We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak.”

Not only is this true in evangelism, but in another way. Paul admonished, “...*Be filled with the Spirit*; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord” (Ephesians 5:18,19). Being filled with the Spirit puts a song in our hearts, and it will come out.

Things That Accompany Being Filled With the Holy Spirit

The following Scriptures likewise are very interesting, revealing, and worthy of our meditation. There are many wonderful things that accompany being filled with the Holy Spirit when he truly is in our lives.

Illustrations in the Seven and Barnabas

- “Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost [Spirit] and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business...And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost [Spirit], and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch” (Acts 6:3,5).
- “For he [Barnabas] was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost [Spirit] and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord” (Acts 11:24).

Other References

- “And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost [Spirit]” (Acts 13:52).
- “For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost [Spirit]” (Romans 14:17).

- “Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost [Spirit]” (Romans 15:13). ·

- “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith [faithfulness], Meekness, temperance [self control]: against such there is no law” (Galatians 5:22,23). ·

- “For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth” (Ephesians 5:9). ·

- “And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost [Spirit]” (I Thess. 1:6).

This really is a fascinating study, and we have by no means covered the subject. Yes, when we become Christians the past is taken care of with the remission of our sins. But we do not become children of God to be left orphans. By means of the Holy Spirit God takes His abode in us. As we trust and submit ourselves to God, the Spirit indwells and empowers us to live the Christian life. We become more and more godly. He is there as an earnest to the grand finale that awaits us in eternity (II Corinthians 1:22; 5:5; Ephesians 1:13,14). We trust that this humble effort at studying this fascinating subject will prompt you to a deeper study and commitment to God. This will result in you indeed being “filled with the Spirit.” Let this be realized in your life. □



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