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THE HOLY SPIRIT

THE FILLING OF THE SPIRIT

Lesson 4

The filling of the Spirit is that work of the Holy Spirit whereby He so controls the Christian that proper Christian experience results. From the divine side, the Holy Spirit totally produces in the Christian the fruit of the Spirit. The human responsibility in the filling of the Spirit is to believe. When the Christian believes, the Spirit produces the fruit of the Spirit in the Christian. NOTE: The Christian life is supernatural and impossible to live in one's own strength. Thus, God has provided a supernatural power in the filling of the Spirit to live a Christian life.

CHARACTERISTICS OF FILLING

Meaning

Filling means control. Scripture speaks of being filled with anger or fury (Luke 4:28), fear or awe (Luke 5:26), madness (Luke 6:11) and sorrow or grief (John 16:6). One is not filled with these emotions but controlled by them.

The Holy Spirit is a person. One cannot be filled with a person but can be controlled by a person. A Christian cannot get more of the Spirit, but the Spirit can always control more of the Christian.

The filling is compared in Eph. 5:18 with drunkenness. Alcohol is an outside force that controls a person. Alcohol controls one's speech, actions and walk; the Holy Spirit does the same.

Command. "Be filled" is a command and it is to be kept. Not to keep this command is sin.

Repeated Act: "Be repeatedly filled" (present tense). Filling is done over and over again. The command is to all; therefore, all Christians can be filled.

Hindrances to Filling

The one hindrance to a full working of the Spirit in the believer is sin. The Holy Spirit is always displeased with sin in the Christian's life. Eph. 4:30 definitely implies that when the believer is in sin or disobedience that the Spirit can be grieved with the result that His influences are not so great upon him, and he is not in a position when the Spirit can give him His fullest blessing. ***"And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption" (Eph. 4:30).*** The context of Eph. 4:30 is about a misuse of the tongue.

It should also be noted what Eph. 4:30 does not teach: 1) It does not teach that when the believer sins the Spirit stops working in him. God loves the believer. When a child disobeys his parents the parents do not stop loving him or providing for him. The parents may take away certain privileges and, if need be, apply strong discipline, but they always do it because they love the child. So it is with God and the wayward Christian. 2) It does not teach that it is possible to grieve the Holy Spirit away.

Some believe that a Christian may also quench the Spirit (put out the fire); that is, that grieving deals with sins of commission and quenching deals with sins of omission. **“Do not put out (quench) the Spirit’s fire” (1 Thess. 5:19).** However, most commentators take quenching as that which the total assembly was guilty for they were despising prophecy in the church.

HOW TO BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT

It is interesting to note that as much as the Scriptures seem to testify to the filling of the Spirit, nowhere is it definitely stated how one received the filling. However, there are some verses that indicate how the believer may appropriate the working of the Spirit in his life.

John 7:37-39: This says, **“Whoever believes in me.”** Control by the Spirit involves occupation with the person of Jesus Christ as one acknowledges His sovereign Lordship over his life. **“If anyone is thirsty”**—There must be a desire to be controlled by the Spirit. **“Let him come . . . and drink”**—There must be an act of believing and a Christian must come to Christ and desire to be controlled. Desire must find its fulfillment in a positive act. **“Whoever believes in Me”** (Keeps on believing in me) —There must be occupation with the person of Jesus Christ. These words stress the importance of repeated faith in Jesus for a full working of the Spirit.

Eph. 5:18. **“Be filled with the Spirit.”** The emphasis in this verse is upon control and, to be controlled, one must be yielded to the Holy Spirit’s sovereign workings in the life.

Gal. 5:16. **“Live (walk) by the Spirit.”** To walk by the Spirit seems to imply obedience and dependence.

Acts 4:31. **“After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.”** It seems in this one case that the filling came during a time of concentrated prayer. Prayer is an attitude of dependence and submission. This verse doesn’t say they were filled by prayer but during a season of prayer, the filling came. We cannot minimize prayer.

Col. 3:16-17. **“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”** The results of letting the Word dwell in the Christian are the same as the results of letting the Spirit control the life. **“Be filled with the Spirit. Speaking to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Eph. 5:18-21).** There is a close relationship between being obedient and submissive to God’s Word and being controlled by the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion. The means for appropriating the control of the Spirit is yieldedness, which involves faith towards Christ, dependence upon the Holy Spirit and submission to God’s Word. Some have said that the key to the filling of the Spirit is summed up in the word obedience. After all, yieldedness is just one phase of obedience. Ryrie says,

“God does not ask believers either to tarry or to pray for the filling. This does not mean, however, that the filling is given without conditions. In a simple word the condition is obedience.”
(Ryrie, *The Holy Spirit*)

THE RESULTS OF BEING FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT

Since there is a filling of the Spirit, then there must be ways to detect this work of the Spirit in others and us.

Scriptural Evidences according to Paul

Eph. 5:18-21. After commanding the Ephesian Christians to be filled with the Spirit, Paul lists some very definite evidences of the filling. These evidences are as follows: 1) Singing of outward praise to God; 2) Singing of inward praise, in the heart, to God; 3) Giving of thanks for all things, good or bad. 4) Rejoicing in the Lord; 5) Giving thanks for all kinds of providential circumstances, and 6) Submitting to the Christian brethren.

1 Cor. 12:7. ***“Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.”*** Every Christian is part of the body of Christ, the Church. Each member has been given at least one spiritual gift for the effective functioning of the Body. Apart from the controlling work of the Spirit, a Christian’s spiritual gifts cannot be used properly for the functioning of the Body.

Gal. 5:16. ***“Live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify (complete, bring to fulfillment, perform) the desires of the sinful nature.”*** Unless the Christian is dependent upon the Holy Spirit, he cannot control the flesh (sin nature). The sin nature is a powerful force in the Christian but the Holy Spirit is more powerful. It does not say one will not have the passions of the flesh but one will not bring them to completion.

Gal. 5:22-23. ***“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.”*** In these verses, the fruit of the Spirit is enumerated and is the product of the Holy Spirit, being manifested in the life when one is walking by means of the Spirit (Gal. 5:16). Notice that the first fruit mentioned is love. Love is the highest Christian standard for holy living (John 13:34-35) and without love the Christian has nothing (1 Cor. 13:1-3).

Scriptural Evidences according the to Book of Acts

Acts 4:31. ***“After they prayed, . . . they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of god boldly.”*** The controlling work of the Spirit is essential for effective witnessing, and faithful witnessing brings more controlling of the Spirit (Acts 13:52). The winning of souls is God’s business (Acts 13:48; 16:14) and the main agent of soul winning is the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8). If men are to be effective witnesses, they must be rightly related to the Holy Spirit. Christians should be constantly asking the Holy Spirit to lead them to people that have been prepared to receive the gospel. God does not expect the Christian to witness in his own strength. God has provided a supernatural power that can make witnessing exciting.

Acts 7:55. ***“When they heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.”*** The controlling work of the Spirit is that power that enables men to be martyrs. God always gives dying grace to His children.

Acts 6:3. ***“Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom.”*** This verse tells us that the controlling work of the Spirit enables one for Christian service and, in context, it is necessary for serving in the office of deacon.

Acts 11:22-24. ***“He (Barnabas) was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord.”*** The controlling work of the Spirit is essential for effective pastoring of a flock.. Barnabas encouraged the flock.

Acts 2:4. ***“All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.”*** On the Day of Pentecost, the disciples spoke in tongues not by the baptism of the Spirit but by the filling. Tongues may be the result of filling, but Christians can be filled with the Spirit without speaking in tongues.

Personal Evidences

Occupation with Christ: One of the clearest evidences of the controlling work of the Spirit is that one is taken up with Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit came to glorify Christ, not Himself. ***“He (the Holy Spirit) will bring glory to me . . .” (Jn. 16:14).***

Observation by Others: Others notice that the Spirit is working in one’s life to increase the character of Christ (fruit of the Spirit).

Points to Ponder. 1). Be careful not to put too much emphasis upon the Holy Spirit. He has come to glorify Christ, not to be glorified; 2) The person, who is always fretting about whether he is controlled or not, probably is not controlled, but the person rejoicing in Christ and His work, for and in him, is the person who is controlled by the Spirit; 3). Do not make the Christian life mechanical. The control of the Spirit is dealing with the Holy Spirit, a person, not a series of facts and method; 4) Do not run your Christian life on experience but learn to walk by faith and trust God for a genuine Biblical experience; 5). There are no special formulas for living the Christian life. Today there are many man-made rules and formulas set forth as the only way to have victory in the Christian life. These man-made plans often state that Christians can attain unto something that God has not promised. God’s plan is a simple one but a necessary one: ***“Trust and obey, for there is no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.”*** And 6). Remember that all Christians have different personalities. The fruit of the Spirit will be evidenced through their individual personalities. Some people are quiet by nature; others are extroverts, etc. The fruit will be seen but don’t try to pour everybody into a mold.

THEOLOGICAL PROBLEMS RELATED TO THE FILLING OF THE SPIRIT.

1. The Bible teaches that God works 100% in man and man works his salvation out 100%.
2. The thing that must be remembered is that God has ordained the final outcome of all things but He has also decreed the means to accomplish His ends. The means deals in the areas of human responsibility. God has ordained that through faith, obedience and submission on the part of the believer, the sanctification process would be carried out.

3. From the divine side and in the practical outworking in the life, there is no place for passivity on the part of the Christian because the Holy Spirit is working 100% in him.
4. From the human side, it appears that man, because of lack of faith, unyieldedness and disobedience, can hinder the full working of the Spirit in the life.
5. In the control (filling) of the Spirit, a Christian does not get more of the Spirit, but the Spirit gains more control over the Christian.
6. The degree of the Spirit's control in the life of the Christian will depend on whether he seeks Him by faith or not.
7. Man is held 100% responsible to seek the control by the Spirit and the work of giving the control rest 100% with God. Man is responsible but God gives all the ability that man has.
8. Any Christian, babe or mature, can be controlled by the Spirit, but it takes time to learn to walk consistently by the Spirit. We progressively learn to walk by means of the Spirit. We always experience progressive victory, not ultimate victory.

COMMON MISUNDERSTANDINGS CONCERNING THE FILLING OF THE

The work of the Holy Spirit in the Christian's experience is a very important subject, but there has been much abuse of the doctrine, especially in holiness groups. Wrong teaching of the Holy Spirit will bring frustrating Christian experiences. Many people have tried this extreme emotionalism and found it very superficial and unsatisfying and have rejected Christianity, thinking that what they had experienced was Christianity.

We must avoid the extremes when teaching on the filling of the Spirit. There are some (Reformed Theology) who hardly make mention of the filling of the Spirit in their writings, and there are others (Holiness groups) who speak constantly of the Holy Spirit but with a twisted emphasis. There is a balanced teaching of the Holy Spirit.

Nowhere does Scripture teach that the filling of the Spirit involves ecstatic and great emotional experiences. A person may or may not have experience when controlled by the Spirit. Any number of environmental factors may put a person in a low physical or mental state, but there still can be control by the Spirit. God longs to keep us controlled by the Spirit while we trust Him to do it. On the Christian's part, feeling has nothing to do with it, but faith everything. The order for Christian experience is fact, faith and feeling. One may expect the Holy Spirit to continue glorifying Jesus. Do not look for emotions, do not expect exhilarated feelings—these, if present, are temporary—but expect the Spirit to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ. If Jesus is precious then you know that you are controlled by the Spirit.

Nowhere does the Scripture teach that the filling of the Spirit is a post-salvation work. It is never connected with the concept of a "second blessing." There are some that claim that the work of the cross is sufficient to save but real sanctification does not take place until one discovers the filling of the Spirit. They believe that after salvation, one must discover the secret of filling or defeat will result. To these people, the doctrine of the filling becomes all-important for Christian living. Their Christianity often becomes experience-centered rather than Bible centered. This group usually equates the baptism and the filling of the Spirit.

Nowhere does the Scripture teach that the filling of the Spirit is the same as the baptism of the Spirit. The baptism of the Spirit deals with the Christian being positionally placed into the Body of Christ, the Church (1 Cor. 12:13). The filling or control of the Spirit involves an experience and is to be repeated.

Nowhere does the Bible teach that the fruit of the Spirit is an automatic result of being filled with the Spirit. There is teaching that if all the conditions are met for filling then the fruit in its fullness will come naturally. Notice in 2 Peter 1:5-8 the believer is told to add to his faith love, knowledge, temperance, patience, kindness, etc. This is a picture of divine sovereignty and human responsibility. Scripture teaches the believer is held responsible to desire and seek the fruit of the Spirit but only God can sovereignly produce the control of the Spirit and produce the desired spiritual fruit (Eph. 5:22-23).

Nowhere does the Scripture teach that in the filling (control) of the Spirit is the “key” to the Christian life. If this was the all-important doctrine for Christian living why doesn’t Peter, James, John or Jude mention it as such in their epistles? Or why doesn’t Paul place a greater emphasis upon it? Paul mentions it only once in all his writings. If this is the “key” to the Christian life, why doesn’t any writer in the New Testament tell the Christian specifically how to be controlled? There are many dear Christians who have lived a victorious Christian life without knowing about the filling of the Spirit. POINT: The doctrine of the filling of the Spirit is a very important doctrine but the Christian life is the Christ-life as one seeks to be occupied with Jesus Christ through faith and obedience. The Christ life, however, is made real by the filling of the Spirit.

Nowhere does Scripture teach that a person must be filled (controlled) by the Spirit before he can keep any other commands of Scripture. In Eph. 5, Paul gives no more importance to being filled than walking as children of light, walking circumspectly, knowing God’s will, husbands loving wives and wives being in subjection to their husbands. In Acts we see that the filling of the Spirit was accompanied with joy, wisdom and faith (Acts 6:3; 11:29; 13:52). To be controlled by the Spirit is one of the many commands of God the Christian is to keep. NOTE: While other commands may be kept without the filling, it is questionable if there will be any joy in doing the will of the Lord without the Spirit’s control. Without the filling, service becomes a burden rather than a blessing.

FILLING OF THE SPIRIT – RELATIVE OR ABSOLUTE?

Problem

When a person is filled (controlled) by the Spirit is he filled absolutely so that all the fruit of the Spirit is being manifested completely or equally, or is he never completely controlled but only filled in relative degrees?

Possible Solution

1). Filling of the Spirit is both relative and absolute. Control (filling) of the Spirit is directly related to one’s spiritual capacity or maturity; 2). There was only one man who was completely filled or controlled by the Spirit and that was the God-Man, Christ Jesus. He had 100% spiritual capacity or maturity (John 3:34); 3). The Christian does not get more of the Spirit but the Spirit gains more control over the Christian as the Christian yields to the sovereign control of the Holy Spirit. There are many areas of a Christian’s life that are not completely yielded to God. Each Christian is somewhere along the maturity line and each has his own spiritual capacity, which varies in degrees.

Practical Aspects

1). This explains how two Christians can be controlled by the Spirit and yet the depth in one is far greater than the other but manifestations of the Spirit can be seen in both, and 2). The fruit of the Spirit

comes through our individual personalities and personalities differ. Therefore, manifestations of the Spirit, while evident in the Spirit-filled believer, will vary somewhat according to personality.

Practical Suggestions

1. Don't get too tired. If you do, go to bed. Pray about the sin in the morning.
2. Become aware of your weak areas and don't put yourself into situations that would grieve the Holy Spirit.
3. Don't run on your emotions. Experience can be deceiving. We are filled when Christ is precious and we don't necessarily have to have some exhilarating experience.
4. Listen to what the bible has to say about the filling of the Spirit and be careful not to copy the experience of other Christians in the area of the filling. God will control us through our own personalities.
5. Do not try to pour everybody into the same mold. Let the Spirit of God manifest Himself through the unique personalities of Christians.