

WALKING IN AND THE FILLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Christian must learn God has provided a way to get progressive deliverance over sin. From the divine side, God has given every Christian the indwelling Holy Spirit who is carrying out a work of renewal on the total personality of the Christian so as to conform him more and more to Christ in his daily life.

From the human side, the Christian has a responsibility in the sanctification process and that is to walk in dependence on and be filled by the Holy Spirit. Sanctification is not an automatic process, because the Christian cooperates with the Holy Spirit in the realization of the work of sanctification.

While the new nature gives the Christian new desires for holiness, the Holy Spirit gives the power to carry out these desires. As the Christian depends upon the Holy Spirit by walking in Him and being filled by Him, by faith, there is supernatural power to live the Christian life.

WALKING IN THE SPIRIT Galatians 5:16-21

The Christian Walk (16)

“So I say, live (walk) by the Spirit.”

The Christian is to walk in the Spirit. God has given this command because He desires the Christian would conform to Christ. God commands the Christian because the Holy Spirit is at work in him through progressive renewal and sanctification. God is not requiring something of the Christian that he has no ability to do. He can walk because God is at work in him.

This is a command, so the Christian may or may not keep the command, but there are consequences if he does not keep it. This command is in the present tense which indicates walking in the Spirit is something we should be doing all the time, but obviously we are not doing it all the time or we would not be commanded to be repeatedly walking in the Spirit.

When a person is walking in the Spirit, he is doing something. There is activity. Christians are to have a positive and active obedience to the Holy Spirit. Walking in the Spirit is a life of action lived by a positive, dynamic faith.

Christians are told to “walk in the Spirit” which could be better translated, “keep on walking by the Spirit.” To walk by the Holy Spirit is to be dependent upon the Holy Spirit by faith, and one cannot be dependent upon the Spirit without submission to His divine will. Christians are to be submitted to a person, for the Holy Spirit alone can give us the supernatural power to defeat sin in our daily lives. As we submit, yield, obey, depend upon the Holy Spirit, we will begin to progressively defeat sin. Submission to the Holy Spirit means we acknowledge His right to rule in our lives and we want His will and not our own.

“And you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature (flesh).”

This is a promise that the Christian who is walking by means of the Holy Spirit will not gratify (fulfill, perform) the lusts of the sin nature. It does not say the Christian will not have the lusts of the flesh but will not perform, gratify or fulfill them.

The sin nature is constantly enticing the Christian to do evil, but if he is walking in dependence upon the Spirit, he will not yield to the temptations of the sin nature when it manifests its ugly self.

The Conflict with Sin (17)

“For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.”

The Holy Spirit and the sin nature are two antagonistic forces which are constantly warring within the true Christian. When the Christian obeys the command to walk in the Spirit, the flesh violently opposes him. When a Christian yields to the desires of his flesh, the Holy Spirit opposes and convicts him.

A Christian may choose to will a certain course of action but when he begins to act, he always finds a conflict in thoughts, works and deeds. A Christian does not always suffer defeat, for many times he experiences real victory but he is always in the battle of conflict.

The Works of the Flesh 5:19-21a.

“The acts of the sinful nature are obvious (such as these).”

Every Christian has a sin nature and the capacity to do any sin. The acts (works) of sin are merely the fruit of the sin nature which is the root to all sin.

“Sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery”

These are sins in the area of perverse sex.

“Idolatry and witchcraft,”

These are sins in the area of religion.

“Hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissension, factions, envy”

These are sins in the area of society.

“Drunkenness, orgies”

These are sins in the area of alcohol and drugs.

“And the like.”

This is only a representative list, for there are thousands of other manifestations of the sin nature. The sin nature always manifests itself in the self-life: “I” and “me” and “mine.” The self-life keeps the Christian from the free life of the Spirit. Money: “I like things.” Pride: “I want to be accepted by society.” Security: “I like my home, my job, my friends and I’m settled down, so to serve Christ will disturb my easy, secure way of life.” Selfishness: “I want my own way.”

The Warning (5:21b)

“I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the Kingdom of God.”

Paul gave this warning to professing Christians so that they would not think they could habitually feed the sin nature and still get to heaven ultimately. This is a particular kind of unregenerate person—the man who says he is a Christian but is constantly producing the acts of the sin nature, giving no evidence of a changed life.

THE FILLING OF THE SPIRIT

What is Filling? (Eph. 5:18): *“Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.”*

The basic concept of “filling” is control. We are not filled up with the Spirit, but controlled by the Spirit. The Bible speaks of being filled with wrath (Luke 4:28), fear (Luke 5:26), rage (Luke 6:11) and sorrow, (John 16:6). We are not filled with these emotions but controlled by them.

The Holy Spirit is a person not an influence. It is impossible for one person to be filled with another person but one person can be controlled by another person. **A Christian cannot get more of the Spirit because the Holy Spirit is a person indwelling him, but the Spirit can always control more of the Christian.**

The filling of the Spirit is compared with drunkenness in context. Alcohol is an outside force which controls the whole person. When one is drunk, his mind, will and emotions are controlled by alcohol and this affects his speech, his actions and his walk. So it is with the filling of the Holy Spirit, for

He controls the whole personality (will, mind and emotions) and this affects how one speaks, acts and walks in Christ.

A Command

A failure to keep this command is sin.

Repeated Act

This is in the present tense: *“Be repeatedly and continuously filled.”*

Filling is to be done over and over again, for we need constant control by the Spirit. Christians are indwelt with the Holy Spirit only once at the moment of conversion, but they are filled with the Spirit thousands of times after conversion.

Subjects

The command to be filled is to all. Therefore, all Christians can be filled with the Holy Spirit. The filling or controlling work of the Spirit is what God intends for every Christian to experience, and without the filling we are living a subnormal Christian life.

Necessity

After conversion, we will have sin. Acts of sin hinder the full working of the Spirit in the Christian’s life. Sin may be active rebellion or passive indifference. Sin is not only breaking God’s law but failing to do what we know we should do. It is possible to grieve the Holy Spirit but it is not possible to grieve Him away (Eph. 4:30). When we grieve the Holy Spirit, His influence over us is diminished and we do not get his fullest blessing.

How To Be Filled With the Spirit. The Bible nowhere tells us specifically how to be filled. However, there are verses which imply how we are filled.

John 7:37-39.

There must be a thirst to be controlled by the Spirit.

A person must come to Christ in obedience and drink.

A person must keep on and repeatedly believing in Christ (present tense).

Eph. 5:18. One is controlled when drunk. For one to be controlled by the Holy Spirit, he must be yielded to the Holy Spirit’s sovereign workings for his life.

Gal. 5:16. To walk in the Spirit seems to imply obedience and dependence.

Acts 4:31. While praying, these Christians were filled with the Spirit.

Col. 3:16-17 cf Eph. 5:19-21. The results of letting the Word dwell in the Christian are the same results as letting the Spirit control the life. There is a close relationship between being obedient and submissive to God’s Word and being controlled by the Spirit.

Conclusion. A person filled with the Spirit is yielding to the Spirit, which involves faith towards Christ, dependence upon the Holy Spirit and submission to God’s Word.

THE EVIDENCES OF THE FILLING OF THE SPIRIT

Eph. 5:19-21. 1. speak in psalms and hymns; 2) singing in the heart; 3) giving thanks for all things; 4) submitting to one another.

Acts 4:31: We speak for Christ.

Acts 13:52: The Holy Spirit brings joy.

Acts 7:55: The Spirit gives grace to die as a martyr.

Acts 6:3: The Spirit enables Christians to do Christian services.

Acts 11:22-24: The filling is needed to effectively pastor the flock.

Acts 2:4: Tongues on the Day of Pentecost was due to being filled with the Spirit.

Personal Evidences

Others will notice the Spirit is working in one's life the character of Christ, which is the fruit of the Spirit.

The greatest evidence that one is filled with the Spirit is that he is occupied with Christ and not himself (John 16:14).

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

The Products of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23)

"But the fruit of the Spirit is..."

Spiritual fruit is the outward evidence of the power of the Holy Spirit working inwardly. When man is filled with the Holy Spirit and walking in dependence upon the Holy Spirit, the sin nature is not only negatively controlled but there is the positive producing of the fruit of the Spirit. The "fruit" is singular, for there is a unity to the fruit of the Spirit, when the Christian is dependent upon the Spirit, certain Christian characteristics are produced in the life—nine beautiful fruit of the Spirit. This fruit will be evidenced in the total personality of the Christian (mind, emotion, and will).

"Love, joy, peace..." Evidence in relation to God.

"Patience, kindness, goodness..." Evidence in relation to people.

"Faithfulness, gentleness, self-control..." Evidence in relation to himself.

The Problems Connected with the Fruit of the Spirit

The Problem of Time. Time is required in fruitbearing. When a person becomes a Christian, the fruit of the Spirit will show up to some degree almost immediately but it will be years before that person matures enough to produce the desired fruit.

"Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither." (Psa.1:1-3a).

The Problem of Degree. As we walk in the Spirit and mature in Christ, there will be different degrees of fruit. We should see more fruit as we progress in the Christian life. For instance, it is reasonable to conclude a Christian should have a greater capacity for love ten years after his conversion than what he had at his conversion.

The Problem of Quality. With time, knowledge of the Bible and application of God's Word to our lives, we can expect not only more fruit but a better quality of fruit. For instance, after we have been saved ten years, we can expect a more mature love to flow from our lives than we experienced when we were first saved.

The Problem of Responsibility. Some people have wrongly reasoned that if the Holy Spirit is going to produce the fruit of the Spirit in them that they do not have to do anything but wait for the Spirit

to work. They think that the fruit will come automatically. Not so, for our responsibility is to exercise faith and obedience. We are to work at love, joy, peace, gentleness, faithfulness, etc. while we are trusting the Holy Spirit to produce it in us.

“For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins. Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall” (2 Pet. 1:5-10).

[See CHART #1]

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

Learn to walk by faith and not by sight. God’s Word is true and His Holy Spirit is with us whether we have feelings or not. There are periods of time when we have no noticeable feelings but we know we are filled if we have met the conditions for filling. By faith, we trust God to bring the fruit in His time.

Be careful not to put too much emphasis upon the Holy Spirit. He has come to glorify Christ: *“He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you”* (John 16:14). The Christian life is the Christ centered life: *“For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain”* (Phil. 1:21). 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 controlled by the Holy Spirit. Individuals or groups that are constantly emphasizing the Holy Spirit do not have a Biblical emphasis.

Do not be driven by your emotions. There will be some powerful experiences in your life at times. But Christians who are constantly looking for new kinds of experiences to make them feel good are really very fleshly in their lives. Immature Christians are always looking for super experiences so they will feel good. They want Christian activities which will entertain them so they will have uplifting (warm-fuzzy) feelings. We must amuse or lose these folks.

Do not make the Christian life mechanical. The control of the Holy Spirit is dealing with the Holy Spirit, a person, not a series of facts and methods. There is no simple formula for living the Christian life, for in reality it is a love relationship between two persons.

Do not fake spirituality or force yourself to act a certain way because you are told it is the thing to do for your Christian success image. Always be ready to do God’s will according to the Word of God, but do not be poured into any man-made molds. Be what you are, but always be open to be all that God wants you to be.

Do not copy the experience of other Christians in the area of filling. Each Christian has his own personality and the Holy Spirit will control and manifest Himself through each personality. No two Christians will have the exact same experience when controlled by the Spirit. Never compare your life with another Christian, but always lay your life before God and ask Him to mold your personality according to His divine will.

Do not exaggerate the spectacular. A person may have a few “mountain-top” experiences and write a book around these few experiences. He may not tell of his common everyday walk with the Lord in the valleys of life. Every person has a few mountain top experiences but the controlling work of the Spirit is to give us the power to live the Christian life in the everyday existence of ordinary living.