

Being Filled With the Spirit -2

By David de Bruyn

We have been looking at the doctrine of the filling of the Holy Spirit. We have seen the filling of the Spirit is not to be confused with the indwelling of the Spirit or the baptism of the Spirit. We saw the filling of the Spirit is not you getting more of the Spirit; it is the Spirit getting more of you. It is a continual yielding of oneself to His control, submitting to Him in humility and faith, while seeking to please God.

The Realm

We said that the filling of the Spirit is the key to the whole Christian life. I'd like to explain that for a moment. We said the goal of the Spirit is to reveal Christ to us so that we can love Him. Therefore, every part of our Christian life is going to be aimed at cooperating with the Spirit, so as to be filled by Him with the knowledge of Christ. I think you see this in Ephesians more than once. Paul describes the pinnacle of the Christian life in Ephesians 3:19 as...

“and to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge, that you might be filled with all the fullness of God.”

“And this until we all come into the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a full-grown man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;”
(Eph 4:13)

Now this ministry of the Holy Spirit includes every aspect of the Christian life. It is the bridge between us and God's requirements. He reveals Him in the Word – by illumination. When you are Spirit-filled, the Bible makes sense and is a time of God speaking personally to you. He reveals God in His Works – by imitation. When you are Spirit-filled God reveals Himself through His works. There are three works. He does a work in you - this is sanctification. Here, the Holy Spirit shows you Christ as He makes you like Christ. You take on the divine nature. Eternal life is the life of Christ inside us. As we submit to the Holy Spirit, He increasingly causes the life of Christ in us to take over and be manifest. All the New Testament commands are details of Christlikeness. When Spirit-filled, we are enabled to do them. You have Christ's wisdom; Christ's love for others; Christ's joy; Christ's peace. The fruit of the Spirit – the life of Christ, is increasingly manifest through you as you co-operate with Him. Now you are not only seeing Him in the Word, you are seeing Him inside you. He also does a work through you; this is His Work of service. You serve your family, your local church, the Body of Christ and the world.

As you submit to Him increasingly, He shows you Christ by imitation. You are in the place of Christ, and now see His work through you. Then He does a work around us – the work of Sovereign Providence. We see God's work of preserving and governing the world around us. So, when Spirit-filled we see God's Work in us, through us, and around us – and in each case, we see and know and love God more.

A third way the Spirit shows us Christ is in His Worth, i.e. when we submit to sacrificial suffering. A Spirit-filled Person lives like Christ died – being willing to give up what they have for others. And in this place, the Spirit reveals Christ to us by identification.

So a Spirit-filled Person sees the glory of God in the Word and in God's Works – His work in you and His work through you and His work around you, and in all His Worth. You see Scripture by illumination, sanctification, service by imitation and suffering by identification, so all of life becomes a way of seeing God – by being Spirit-filled. Do you see how being Spirit-filled affects every realm of the Christian life? It is there from start to finish. When Spirit-filled, the Spirit's ministry of revealing Christ to a Christian is overflowing, abundant and unhindered.

As we see this, it is clear that being filled with the Spirit is something we should all want, all the time. So let's get closer to our goal- why does the Spirit fill us? How do we get filled, or probably better – stay filled?

The Reason

As we go through the Bible, even in the Old Testament we see the Holy Spirit filling people for service when and how He wanted to. The filling of the Spirit is God's sovereign act. But here's the pattern that I think emerges is this, when someone seeks to please the Lord, God is pleased and fills them. Let's see some Scriptures to back that up.

And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased. (Luk 3:22) And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, (Luk 4:1)

Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. (Isa 42:1)

But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the LORD commanded thee. (1Sa 13:14)

Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah. But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him. (1Sa 16:13-14)

Though certainly the Spirit could come on whomever He wanted to, the filling of the Spirit seems sure when the person pleased the Lord. It is as if when your heart and attitude pleases God, He is pleased to reveal more of Himself to you and therefore satisfy your heart with more of Himself.

All this brings us to the question of how? How are we then filled with the Spirit? It is something we are to be continually doing, so what are the prerequisites to being filled with the Spirit?

The Requirements

Well, the reason I took the time to show you the last point is because I think it sums up how we are filled with the Spirit – seeking to please the Lord. Now there are some things we must do, but you can sum them up in the phrase – please the Lord. As you seek to please the Lord, God is pleased to fill you and reveal Christ to you, and so satisfy your soul.

Now understand something – God cannot be pleased with things we try to do in our flesh. Anything pleasing to Him in terms of righteousness will be by His power

anyway, so God will not be pleased by our ability, after all, He gave it to us. Nor will He be pleased with our opportunity. He gave this to us as well. What God is pleased with is our humility. God is pleased with a heart that has the right posture before Him. The heart that wants to please Him, but realises its own inability, and looks to Him for grace – this heart glorifies God and God is pleased with it

“For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.” (Isa 57:15)

The filling of the Spirit comes to those who adopt the right heart posture before God – one of humility and faith. This heart pleases God and God is pleased to control us more manifestly, and reveal Christ to us for our satisfaction and His glory. In this posture, the Holy Spirit’s work of mediating Christ’s glory to the soul is increasingly uninhibited.

I use the phrase humility and faith because I think they are two sides of the same coin. In humility you acknowledge your position before God; in faith you act with passion, turn to Him for all that He is. So I want to try and explain this posture of humility-faith under two headings:

Acknowledge Your Position (Humility) – Act with Passion (Faith)

Acknowledge Your Position.

Here we simply agree with what God says we are. We are sinners. We are helpless without him. We are sheep. We are creatures. We are finite. We are often blind. We don’t deserve any glory. We are nothing without God. Now in Christ we have many blessings, but only by His grace by being in Christ. It’s amazing to see how Christ continually acknowledged His position before others

Then answered Jesus and said unto them:

Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. (Joh 5:19)

I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me. (Joh 5:30)

Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things. And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him. (Joh 8:28-29)

How much more should we acknowledge our position before God! The Son of God made Himself a servant for our sake – but we are that by His grace! And humility acknowledges that continually. You can sum this position up by saying – I am a slave of Christ. So I must continually remind myself of my true position – I am a slave of Christ. I am a sheep of Christ. I have no rights, no power, no will, no authority, no purpose, no life outside of Him.

Doesn’t this sound like Romans 12:1?

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." (Rom 12:1)

A living sacrifice, that's what I am, totally God's. I am His slave-sheep. I am empty of my own will, my own ways, and my own desires. I just want to please Him. If you continually acknowledge that position, you will have to do the reverse side of the coin – faith.

"Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the LORD our God, until that he have mercy upon us. (Psa 123:2)

Act with Passion.

Why 'Act with Passion'- the act of pleasing God. Seek to please Him, with all your heart. If you have acknowledged your existence as one of a slave to Christ, whose goal is to bring pleasure to Him according to Rev 4:11, then act with passion, seek to do that wholeheartedly.

You will turn to your Lord Jesus to give you strength, power, direction, purpose, life, joy and meaning. Faith, turning to Christ and this turning to Christ, as we've seen before, is a passionate act. It is not slothful, it turns and trusts with all its might. Faith is trusting Christ, seeking Him, submitting to Him, seeking Him, waiting on Him. It's abiding in Him – isn't it? When I acknowledge my position as a slave of Christ, I will passionately turn to Him for all that He is. I am empty without Him, so I need Him with all my heart. If my position is that of slave, then with passion my life must be one of stewardship. We spoke about passion and zeal a few weeks ago. The Spirit does not fill the half-hearted, for faith is not lukewarm.

We read in Colossians 1:29 the kind of balance: *"For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me."*

When you trust, submit, seek and wait with all your might, the Spirit gladly fills you powerfully. I think the more acutely we feel our position, the more passionate will be our faith. The more humble we are, the more full of faith we will be. I think this goes a long way to explaining I Thessalonians 5:19: *"Quench not the Spirit."* If we are slack, lazy, indifferent towards pleasing God, we put out the spark of God in our heart. We quench the very zeal of God. On the other hand, if we fan into flame what God has initiated, we will please Him.

Faith – turning to Christ for all He is, pleases God. We read of Stephen in Acts 6:5, that he was *"a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit,"* and he says of Barnabas in Acts 11:24 that he was *"a good man full of the Holy Spirit and of faith,"* The two go together. If a person is filled with faith, he will be filled with the Spirit.

Isn't it interesting how similar this is to salvation? At salvation we acknowledge our position before God in humble repentance, and then turn to Him in faith. Well, that is the same way our Christian life works. We must continually acknowledge the position and then act with passion. Humility-faith. In fact Colossians 2:6 says:

“As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:” (Col 2:6)

As Jim Berg put it, live the Christian life the same way you got it, with humility and faith.

Now I want to show why this continual attitude of acknowledging the position and acting with passion hinges on the Word of God and prayer. Humility-faith lives on the Bible and prayer.

Firstly, read Colossian 3:16. That is a parallel verse to Ephesians 5:18. What that means is to be Word-filled is almost the same as being Spirit-filled. The Spirit can fill you to the degree that you saturate yourself with Scripture. The reason is very simple. If you truly acknowledge your position as a slave – having no will of your own, no rights, no ambitions outside of Christ, then you are an empty vessel. But how will you now know the will of your Master; what is His goal, His ambitions, His desires? The answer is – the Word of God. It is one thing to say I want to please the Lord, but that necessitates you love and digest the Word of God which is the will of God. If you truly desire to please Him, you will take this book in, in great amounts. You will desire to know what pleases God. You could think of it like this – the Holy Spirit’s control over us is the Word of God. The more of it we have in our minds, the more His control can be exercised. Remember we said that the Holy Spirit filling us is more like a pipe than a cup. Well, the more of the Word we have, it is as if the pipe is stretched to be wider – it can handle more of God.

Now prayer. Consider Luke 11:9-13:

And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?

Now some might take this to refer to salvation, but I take a different view. I think He is speaking about the filling of the Spirit. And this is said in the context of prayer. Prayer is truly a way of acknowledging our position and acting with passion. When we pray we are saying, Lord, I am helpless, weak, sinful, and blind, without purpose. I am your slave. Help me! Guide me! Empower me. I want to please you. Give me grace. This posture of humility- faith is maintained by prayer. Fill me with your Spirit so as to do this.

Now remember that the command in Ephesians 5:18 is *“Be ye continually getting filled”*. Therefore, I think one of the keys here is an attitude of prayer that is continuous. It does not mean we pray every moment of our lives. But it does mean that communing with God in prayer becomes a natural, ongoing thing. I like the idea of Psalm 123:

“Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the LORD our God,”

Sometimes we have to divert our attention to some pressing business. But then, by default, our eyes return to our Master. After all, we’re slaves; we want to see what He wants, what He is doing, what He requires next. And silent prayers of thanksgiving, adoration, confession, supplication – these keep us in this posture of humility-faith which the Holy Spirit fills.

So when I make the Word and prayer central to my being, I will continually be acknowledging my position and acting with passion to please Him. It’s continual. That’s why Paul uses the words *‘walk in the Spirit’* in Galatians 5:16. A walk is a repetition of steps. We take step after step after step of humble-faith. Acknowledging I’m a slave, and passionately seeking to please God in dependence on Him.

I want to say one more thing about this humility-faith. There’s a little gold nugget of a verse tucked away in Galatians 5:6:

“For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.” (Gal 5:6)

Faith works by love. In other words the motive for this faith is love. Why do I want to continually acknowledge my position and act with passion? Because if I do so, the Spirit will fill me and I will see God and be satisfied in Him. You could call it the pleasure of pleasing God. When I please Him, I will be pleased. Hebrews 11:6 sums it up nicely:

“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” (Heb 11:6)

That’s why we live on the Word and prayer so as to continually acknowledge our position and act with passion because of the pleasure of pleasing Him. When we please Him, He rewards us by revealing Himself to us, which is the greatest joy and satisfaction of our souls possible. And that leads us to the final point:

The Results

When Spirit-filled the first and primary result is worship:

“Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;” (Eph 5:19-20)

As a result of the Spirit revealing Christ to us in the Word, in His Works and in His Worth, we will be filled with delight and joy in God. We see God’s glory and delight in it. We’ll be satisfied. We’ll be content. We’ll find our every need and desire abundantly fulfilled in Him. We’ll sing. We’ll praise.

Acts 13:52, "The disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit." We'll be grateful for all He is to us.

This is the main result of being filled with the Spirit – the revelation of Christ to our thirsty souls, and the joy that comes as we drink in Him, the living waters.

A second result will be servanthood (5:20-ff). We will submit to other people. Our family and work relationships will be smoother and more enjoyable. Not only that, but when filled with the Spirit, there will be power and desire to proclaim. Throughout the book of Acts, we read when someone was filled with the Spirit what did they do? They preached; they shared the Gospel. If we will continually adopt this posture before God, we will be witnessing, evangelising, soul-winning ambassadors for Christ, overflowing with infectious joy and attractive good news.

When we are filled with the Spirit, we will exhibit the fruit of the Spirit - love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. We will bear the fruit of Christlikeness.

Now who would not want a life of seeing God and growing in love for Him, being filled with power to witness about Him, having better family and work relationships and becoming more like Christ? This is what is offered to us if we will yield to the Spirit in continual humility-faith.

The Holy Spirit is in many ways the link between God the Father's love for God the Son, and God the Son's love for God the Father. And when we are filled with the Spirit – we are caught in the middle. And that's probably the most delightful place in the universe to be. You are caught in the communion of God loving His Son and seeking to display Him, and the Son wanting to glorify and please His Father.

The Holy Spirit fills us when we seek to please God. This is done by maintaining the posture of humility faith before Him – seeking the pleasure of pleasing God. This can only be done when we are saturated with the Scriptures and seeking to abide in continual prayer with Him.

Let us not quench the Spirit with indifference. Let us not grieve Him with seeking to please ourselves. Rather, for the pleasure of pleasing God, may we acknowledge our position as His slaves and act with passion to please Him.
