

(Power From on High) 9. Filled With the Spirit

by A.B. Simpson

To be filled with the Spirit is to be filled with Christ, and to live a life of personal union with and constant dependence upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

Scripture: Exodus 40:34-35, 2 Kings 4:1-7, Luke 19:12-26, John 15:5, Acts 2:4, 1 Corinthians 12:7, 1 Corinthians 12:13, Ephesians 5:18, Colossians 2:9-10, 2 Timothy 1:6

Topics: "Spiritual Empowerment", "Holy Spirit"

Description

A.B. Simpson emphasizes the distinction between having the Holy Spirit and being filled with the Holy Spirit, illustrating that many believers may possess the Spirit yet lack the fullness that empowers their lives. He draws parallels between natural phenomena and spiritual realities, explaining that just as a shallow stream lacks power compared to an overflowing river, so too does a believer need to be filled to experience the fullness of Christ. Simpson outlines the effects of being filled with the Spirit, including joy, holiness, and the ability to serve others, while also providing practical steps for believers to be filled, such as being empty, hungry, and open to God's leading. Ultimately, he encourages believers to seek the fullness of the Spirit for a transformative life that overflows with God's blessings to others.

Transcript

"They were all filled with the Holy Ghost." Acts 2: 4. "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit." Eph. 5: 18.

I.

These words imply that there is a difference between having the Spirit and being filled with the Spirit. These disciples, on the day of Pentecost, had, in some measure, received the Spirit previously. The Lord Jesus must have meant something when He breathed on them and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." And the disciples to whom the apostle wrote the Epistle to the Ephesians had already been "sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise," which was the earnest of their inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession; but they were not filled with the Spirit.

What this difference is we may not be able to state explicitly or accurately. Our theories and definitions may be at fault, and it is probably unnecessary that we should understand all about it theoretically. The most important thing is that we should feel after it until we find it; that we should long for it and press forward to receive it. It is very probable that many a soul is converted without being distinctly conscious of

the process at the time, and that many a Christian receives the gift of the Holy Ghost when he is stumbling after it and reaching out for it in the darkness and the dimness of spiritual trouble. And so we may not know all about this, but we may earnestly desire it and persistently seek until we find it. All divine conditions transcend our understanding, and our most real, intense and important experiences often come to us by processes which we our-elves could not explain.

The most familiar operations of the natural world afford a forcible illustration of this distinction. We all easily understand the difference between the shallow stream and the overflowing river. In both cases there is water, but in one case it is a feeble current, while in the other it is an overflowing stream that drives the innumerable wheels of the factories along the shores. The power all comes from the fullness which causes the overflow.

We can easily understand the difference between a boiler full of water and a boiler full of boiling water. In the one case it is cold water which fills, but which has no power; in the other it is the water converted into steam, driving the wheels of the mighty engine and carrying the cars across the continent along the iron track.

That single degree of temperature makes all the difference in the world between power and impotence. The Scriptures of truth bear out this distinction with the greatest possible clearness and force.

In writing to Timothy, the Apostle Paul says, in the first chapter of the second epistle and sixth verse, "Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands. God hath not given us the Spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."

The gift was already bestowed and fully recognized, but it was like an expiring flame -- the embers of the fire were falling into ashes, and the flame was almost dead. The word used is rekindle, stir up the fading embers, rekindle the fire -- be filled with the Spirit.

Again, in 1 Corinthians 12: 7, we read, "But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal." This word "profit" expresses the whole difference between receiving the Spirit and being filled with the Spirit. Every one may receive the Spirit, but only a few "profit withal"; that is, improve the gift, develop it, exercise it, and reach its utmost fullness.

All this is perfectly unfolded in the beautiful parable of the pounds, Luke 19. The one pound given to each servant is the special endowment of the Holy Ghost, power for service; but the improvement of the pound, in each case, is different, according to the diligence and fidelity of the servant. And so the outcome of each life is different, and the final reward bears the same proportion. It is a wonderful and solemn truth and places an awful responsibility upon every one of us for the right use of God's spiritual gifts, and especially that Gift of gifts, the blessed Holy Ghost Himself.

In the twelfth chapter of First Corinthians and the thirteenth verse, we have another remarkable statement: "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."

It is one thing to be baptized into the one body by the Spirit; it is another thing to drink into that one Spirit. The first is an act; the second is a habit. The first brings us into a relationship; the second is the true use of that relationship, the drinking of His fullness until we become filled, and the habit of abiding in His fullness so that we are always filled.

Once more, the same truth is very beautifully taught in the story of the widow and her pot of oil, already referred to in connection with 2 Kings 4: 1-7. That little pot of oil represents the Holy Ghost; but the outpouring of the pot of oil into all the vessels which the widow borrowed from her neighbors, illustrates the fullness of the Spirit, as we receive Him into all the needs of our life, and into all the circumstances which God's providence brings to us as opportunities for the development of our spiritual life and the richer fullness of the Holy Ghost.

So many have the Holy Ghost confined in a little pot of oil and hidden away on the shelf of a cabinet. God wants us to go out into all the needs of life, and pour that divine fullness into every vessel that comes to us, until our whole life shall be a living embodiment and illustration of the all-sufficiency of Christ.

II.

Let us now inquire what are some of the effects and evidences of the filling of the Holy Ghost.

1. To be filled with the Spirit, in the first place will bring us the fullness of Jesus. The person and work of the Holy Ghost must never be recognized apart from the person of Christ -- to do this is sure to lead us into Spiritualism. Natural religion recognizes the spirit world. Spiritualism is full of it. The priestess of Apollo was called the Pythoness, because she inhaled a spiritual influence until her whole body became swollen like a python, and her whole being was alive with intense spiritual force; but it was the spirit of evil; it was a spirit apart from the person of Christ and the true God.

The Holy Ghost never comes to us apart from Jesus. He is the Way to the Father, and He is the Way from the Father to us; and the blessed Spirit when He comes witnesses not of Himself but of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us be very careful of this. It is possible to become inflated with a spiritual influence, and yet to ignore and even disobey the Lord Jesus Christ, and to be led into pride, self-sufficient sentimentalism, and even sin.

The object of the Holy Ghost, like that of an artist, is to picture Jesus upon the canvas and make Him real to us, while the blessed Actor Himself is, in a measure, out of sight.

The more we are filled with the Holy Ghost, the more we recognize Christ, depend upon Christ, live upon Christ alone. Therefore this very word "filled" is used in connection with Him.

In Colossians 2: 9, 10, we have these two remarkable relative verses, "In Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and ye are complete in Him." Literally translated, it reads, "In Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead in a bodily form, and ye are filled with Him." God fills Jesus; Jesus fills us. Christ is the ideal man, the pattern of what a man should be, and God has put into Him all that humanity needs to be to satisfy Him; therefore, in order that we should be true men, we must relive His life, reproduce His personality, receive Him, grow up into Him, and live Him in all the completeness of His glorious life.

So we read, "Of His fullness have all we received, even grace for grace." We ourselves are insufficient for every situation, and the great business of the Holy Ghost is to bring us up to the situations of life and show us our insufficiency, and then reveal to us Christ and bring Him into our life as the supply of our needs. So in connection with that wonderful promise of the Holy Ghost in the fourteenth chapter of John, the true sequel is, "I am the Vine, ye are the branches. Abide in Me and I in you. He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for apart from Me ye can do nothing."

This is the life into which the Holy Ghost brings us, the life of personal union with and constant dependence upon the Lord Jesus Christ. To be filled with the Spirit, then, is to be filled with Christ, and so live that our constant experience and testimony will be, "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me."

2. To be filled with the Spirit will exclude the life of self and sin, and will, of course, bring us into a life of holiness, righteousness and obedience.

We read in Exodus 40: 34, 35, that "when the cloud of the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle, Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation; because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle."

This is the true picture of a Spirit-filled man. The indwelling and in-filling of the Holy Spirit excludes self and sin. There is no room for Moses when the glory of God fills our being.

3. The filling of the Holy Ghost will bring us joy and fullness of joy. "These things have I spoken unto you, "the Master said after He had given us the promise of the Spirit, "that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." And so the apostle prays that "the God of hope may fill us with all joy and peace in believing, that we may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost."

The fullness of the Spirit must crowd out pain, doubt, fear and sorrow, and bring the joy of Christ to fill our being. What is it that makes the melody in an organ? It is not the touch of skillful fingers only on the keys, but it is the filling of the pipes by the movement of the pedals. I may try in vain to play the most skillful tune, unless the organ is filled; and so our songs of praise are dead and cold until the breath of God fills all the channels of our being. Then comes the heart-song of praise and the overflowing fountain of gladness.

4. So all the fruits of the Spirit come from the Spirit-filled heart. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, faith, temperance." These are all fruits or, at least, the fruit of the Spirit, and spring spontaneous from the fullness of the Holy Ghost.

When, a few years ago, I stood at Hebron and looked at the pool of David and saw it overflowing, my friend turned to me, and said, "This is the token by which we know that the valleys of Judea are filled with water, and its plains will be covered with fertility and luxuriance. The rains have been abundant because the pool of David is full at Hebron, and the sources of irrigation are ample."

And so when the heart is full of God, the life will be full of godliness. Spontaneously and sweetly will spring up all the fruits of righteousness, holiness and blessing, and "the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose."

5. Again, the Holy Ghost can fill our minds and understandings with knowledge and light, and control our thoughts with harmony and sweetness and strength. The peace of God that passeth all understanding will keep our hearts and minds, and our thoughts will be stayed upon Him, and "brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."

6. Yes, our very bodies will feel the fullness. The Holy Ghost is a true tonic for physical energy and perfect health. The fullness of the Spirit is the elixir for body and brain and being. To be filled with His blessed life will make our feet spring, our nerves steady, our brain strong, our circulation regular, and our whole being at its best for God and holy service.

7. Then, also, our very circumstances keep time to the blessed fullness of the heart within.

Like the widow's pot of oil that flowed out into every vessel, so the presence of God touches everything that comes into our life, and we find that all things work together for good to us if we love God and fulfill His purpose.

Our circumstances will become adjusted to us, or we become adjusted to our circumstances, and the whole of our life, "fitly framed together," will become vigorous, and full of power and blessing.

8. The blessing will no longer be expended upon itself; but we shall have enough and to spare; it will overrun until there is not room to receive it, and the residue will become the inheritance of a suffering world. These are the lives God uses, and God cannot use us until we are running over.

It was when Cana's water was poured out that it was changed from water into wine. It was when Ezekiel's river ran from the sanctuary to the desert that it grew deeper and broader and fuller. And it is when our lives are lost in self-forgetting love that we know all the fullness of God.

III. HOW MAY WE BE FILLED?

1. We must be empty.

I have a phonograph into whose sensitive gelatine cylinders I dictate my literary work. One busy day, I dictated a large amount of matter, filling up every cylinder. I spent nearly two days getting through a great amount of literary labor, and felt very much relieved that it was off my hands.

But when my typist proceeded to copy the messages which I had spoken to these cylinders, she could not understand the words, they were all jargon and confusion. The reason was very simple. I had neglected to shave off the former dictation before giving the new message. I had really dictated a lot of matter into ears that were already filled and, therefore, it had made no impression. My work was lost, my labor was in vain. But I learned a lesson that was worth all it cost, and that is, that we must be empty before we can be filled. God cannot speak His messages into full ears. The Holy Ghost cannot pour His fullness into those who are already full.

2. We must be hungry. For "He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich hath He sent away empty." The caravans on the burning desert, when they cannot find the accustomed well of water, let loose the thirsty harts and they sweep over the burning plains, panting with thirst, until they find the water brooks.

And so the hungry heart always finds the living bread, the thirsty soul is always filled with water. There is nothing that finds God so quickly as an earnest soul. We always find Him when "we search for Him with all our hearts."

3. We must be open if we would be filled. "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it." We must be free from prejudice and preconceptions of truth that shut us up from God's voice. We must be adjusted so as to catch His whisper and understand His will.

4. We must receive as well as ask; we must believe as well as pray; we must take the water of life freely; we must know the secret of drinking the living water, if we would be filled.

5. We must wait upon the Lord. The heart is too large to be filled in a moment; the soul is too great to be satisfied with a mere mouthful. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." We must "continue in prayer"; we must be much at the throne of grace; we must learn the secret of communion as well as supplication; and as we thus wait upon the Lord, we shall be filled until we shall find it a luxury to give forth our blessing to others.

6. And finally, if we would be filled, we must learn to give as well as receive; we must empty our hearts, that they may be refilled. God is a great economist and He loves to bless those who make the best use of their blessings, and become in turn a source of blessing to others.

The Holy Ghost is given for service; God cannot bless a selfish soul; and there is no selfishness more odious in His sight than that which can hoard God's spiritual blessing, and let others die in ignorance of the gospel, and suffer through selfish neglect.

"The liberal soul shall be made fat, and he that watereth others shall be watered himself." In this blessed work of winning the lost and giving the gospel to the world, we shall find our own rich reward, and "the fullness of the blessing of Christ."

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