

The Fullness of the Spirit

by F.B. Meyer

The sermon emphasizes the importance of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer, and provides guidance on how to receive the fullness of the Spirit.

Scripture: Luke 4:1, Acts 10:38, Romans 8:16, Galatians 5:22, Ephesians 5:18

Topics: "Spiritual Empowerment", "Holy Spirit"

Description

F.B. Meyer emphasizes the necessity of being filled with the Holy Spirit for both the Church and individual Christians, likening the Spirit's influence to a vital force that empowers believers to overcome spiritual weaknesses and fulfill their divine purpose. He encourages Christians to seek the fullness of the Spirit, which is available to all who desire it, and warns against complacency in spiritual life. Meyer illustrates how the Holy Spirit transforms lives, enabling believers to bear fruit, gain victory over sin, and serve effectively. He stresses the importance of seeking this fullness with pure motives, grounded in Scripture, and maintaining a continual relationship with the Holy Spirit. Ultimately, Meyer calls for a passionate pursuit of the Spirit's fullness, promising that it will lead to a deeper experience of God's presence and power.

Transcript

"Be Filled with the Spirit." -Ephesians 5 :18

NOTHING CAN COMPENSATE the Church, or the individual Christian, for the lack of the Holy Spirit. What the full stream is to the mill wheel, that the Holy Spirit is to the Church. What the principle of life is to the body, that the Holy Spirit is to the individual. We shall stand powerless and abashed in the presence of our difficulties and our foes until we learn what He can be, as a mighty tide of love and power in the hearts of His saints.

Among the readers of these lines there may be many who are suffering from different forms of spiritual weakness, all of which are directly attributable to the lack of the Holy Spirit. Not that they are completely destitute of Him, for if they were, they would not be Christians at all; but that, being within them, He is present only as an attenuated thread, a silver streak, a shallow brook. Why should we be content with this? The Pentecostal fullness, the enduement of power, the baptism of fire, are all within our reach. Let us be inspired with a holy ambition to get all that our God is willing to bestow.

It is not difficult to show this contrast by analogies drawn from the Word of God. May we not reverently say that the ministry of our blessed Lord Himself owed much of its marvelous power to that moment when, although filled with the Holy Spirit from His birth, He was afresh anointed at the waters of baptism? With marked emphasis it was said He was filled with the Spirit (Luke 4:1), and returned in the power of the Spirit unto Galilee (v. 14), and stood up in the synagogue of His native town, claiming the ancient prophecy, and declaring that the Spirit of God was upon Him (v. 18). His wondrous words and works are directly traced to the marvelous operation of the Holy Ghost upon His human life (Acts 10:38).

Do you lack assurance? Sometimes you do not, for you feel happy and content. But these happy hours are fled. and your rest is broken, as the surface of the mountain tarp is overcast and ruffled by the gathering storm. You need a basis of settled peace, and it is only to be found first, in a clear apprehension of what Jesus has done for you; secondly, in the sealing of the Holy Spirit. It is His sacred office to witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. He is the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, "Abba, Father!"

Do you lack victory over sin? This is not to be wondered at, if you neglect the Holy Spirit. He is the blessed antidote to the risings and dominion of the flesh. He lusts against the flesh, so that we may not fulfill its lusts. When He fills the heart in His glorious fullness, the suggestions of temptation are instantly quenched, as sparks in the ocean wave. Sin can no more stand against the presence of the Holy Spirit than darkness can resist the gentle, all-pervasive beams of morning light.

If, however, He is grieved, or resisted, or quenched so that His power and presence are restrained, there is no deliverance for the spirit-however bitter its remorse, or eager its resort to fastings, mortification and regrets. The law of the Spirit of Life which is in Christ Jesus can alone make us free from the law of sin and death. But it can, and it will-if we only yield ourselves to its operation.

Do you lack the fruits of holiness? Some whom we know are so evidently filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are the praise of God, that we are instinctively drawn to them. Their faces are bright with the presence of the Lord, though they drink of the cup of His sorrows. Their spirit is tender; their disposition sweet and unselfish, and their childlike humility flings the halo of indescribable beauty over their whole behavior. We lack these graces. There is little in us to attract men to Christ; much to repel. Our boughs are naked and bare, as if locusts had stripped them. And the reason is evident. We have not let the Holy Spirit have His way with our inner life. Had the sap of His presence been mightily within us, we should have been laden with luscious fruitage; it would have been impossible to be otherwise.

Do you lack power for service? You have no burning thirst for the salvation of others. You are not on fire for souls. You have never been in agony over the alienation of men from God. And when you speak, there is no power in what you say. The devils laugh at your attempts to exorcise them. The sleeper turns for a moment uneasily, but soon falls into profounder slumber than ever. The home, the class, the congregation, yield no results. No handpicked fruit fills your basket. No shoal of fish breaks your nets. No recruits accept your call to arms. And you cannot expect it to be otherwise till you obtain the power which our Lord promised when He said: "Ye shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you." It was when the early Christians were filled with the Holy Ghost that they spake the word of God with boldness and gave witness with great power to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

These and many other deficiencies would be met. if only we were filled with the Holy Spirit. There would be a joy, a power, a consciousness of the Lord Jesus, an habitual rest in the will of God, which would be a joyful discovery to us; if only we refused to be satisfied with anything less than the full indwelling of the

Holy Spirit.

Mr. Spurgeon said once that he never passed a single quarter of an hour in his waking moments without a distinct consciousness of the presence of the Lord. When the Spirit fills the heart, Jesus is vividly real and evidently near. What is He to you? Do you awake in the morning beneath His light touch and spend the hours with Him? Can you frequently look up from your work and perceive His face? Are you constantly seeking from Him power, grace, direction? If He is but a fitful vision, you have not realized the first mark of the Pentecostal gift.

Entire consecration to the service of the Lord Jesus is a great step in advance of the experience of most Christians; but even that is not enough. It is often largely negative; but we require something strongly positive, to meet the necessities of our hearts and of our times. And this is to be sought in our entire possession by that mighty Spirit whose advent at Pentecost has dated a new era for the Church and the world.

Of course He was always in the world. It was the Holy Spirit of Pentecost who brooded over chaos, and spoke in prophets and holy men, and nerved the heroes and saints of the Old Testament time. The day of Pentecost did not introduce a new Spirit into the world, but it inaugurated an era in which the weakest and meanest of the saints might possess Him in the same measure as they did who lived upon its farther side. Before that momentous day His fullness was the prerogative of only the few, the elite, the Elijahs, and Isaiahhs and Daniels, but since that day He has been shed forth in all His plenitude on the many-on women and children; on obscure thinkers and hidden workers; on hand-maids and servants; on all and any who were prepared to fulfill the conditions and to abide by the results. Why not on us?

We are willing to admit that the special gifts of the Holy Ghost belong to the Apostolic age. Given for a specific purpose, they are now withdrawn; though it is a serious question whether they might not have been continued, if only the Church had been more faithful to her sacred trust. But the special gifts of the Holy Ghost are altogether apart from His blessed fullness. That is not the exclusive right of any age. Confined to no limited era or epoch in the history of the Church, it pours its tide of light and power around us, as the Nile in flood; nor is there a single plot or garden-ground, however remote, into which it will not come, to fertilize and enrich, if only the channel of communication be kept cleansed and open.

Alas, that many think that the Almighty, like some bankrupt builder, constructed the portico of His Church with marble, and has finished it with common brick!

"Be filled with the Spirit" is an injunction as wide reaching in its demands as "Husbands, love your wives," which is found on the same page. It is a positive command, which we must obey for our good, and all God's commands are enablings. In other words, He is prepared to make us what He tells us to become. Moreover, on the day of Pentecost, in words which are the charter of our right to the fullness of the Holy Spirit, the Apostle Peter told the listening crowds that the fullness which had suddenly come on them from the ascended Lord-and which was a direct fulfillment of the ancient prophecy was not for them only, or for their children; but for as many as were afar off, even for them whom the Lord God shall call. Are you one of His called ones? Then rejoice because that fullness is for you! Be no faithless, but believing! Lay claim at once to the covenanted portion, and thank God for having cast your lot in an age of such marvelous possibilities.

EXCITE HOLY DESIRE BY CONSIDERING WHAT THE FULLNESS OF THE SPIRIT MEANS

We cannot expect to have it if we are quite content to live without it. Our Father is not likely to entrust this priceless gift to those who are indifferent to its possession. Where the flame of desire burns low there can be no intelligent expectation that the Holy Spirit's fullness shall be realized.

And it is not enough to have a fitful and inconstant desire, which flames up today, but will remain dormant for months and years. There must be steady purpose, able to stand the test of waiting (if need be) for ten days, and to bear the rebuff of silence or apparent denial.

And yet the flame of desire needs fuel. We must muse before that fire can burn. And it becomes us, therefore, to stir up the gift that is within us by a quiet consideration of all that is meant by becoming Spirit-filled.

There is no book which will so move us in this direction as the Acts of the Apostles. It is perfectly marvelous to see what this fullness did for those who first received it. Cowards became brave. Obtuse intellects which had stumbled at the simplest truths, suddenly awoke to apprehend the Master's scheme. Bosoms that had heaved with rivalry and suspicion and desire for earthly power, now thought each better than himself and sought to excel in humble ministry to the saints. Such power attended their words that crowds became congregations, Christ's murderers became His worshipers and friends. Councils of clever men were not able to withstand the simple eloquence of indisputable facts. Towns and countries were shaken, and yielded converts by the thousand to the unlearned but fervid preachers of the cross.

All this was simply attributable to the power which had become the common property of the whole Church. And there is not a fragment of reason why it should not do so much for us. And, as we contrast that triumphant success to our halting progress, shall not we be filled with uncontrollable longings that He should work similar results by us?

We may still further secure the same results by studying the biography of saintly men belonging to recent centuries. Happy the man within reach of a library, the shelves of which are well lined with books of holy biography! He will never, never be in want of additional stimulus as he reads the stories of McCheyne and W. C. Burns, of Brainerd and Martyn, of Jonathan Edwards and others. He will not envy or repine; but he will constantly lift eye and heart to Heaven, asking that as much may be done through himself.

And moreover the promises of the Scriptures are enough to incite us to the uttermost. That rivers of water should flow from us; that we should never need to be anxious about our words, because they would be given; that we should be taught all things, and led into the whole circle of truth; that we should know Christ, and be changed into His image; that we should have power—all this is so fascinating that it is impossible not to glow with a holy desire to be charged with the Holy Ghost, as a jar with electricity. And, if needs be, we shall be prepared to bear the test of long waiting, as the faithful few did in the upper room.

SEEK THIS BLESSED FULLNESS FROM THE RIGHT MOTIVE

If you want it that you may realize a certain experience, or attract people to yourself, or transform some difficulty into a stepping-stone, you are likely to miss it. You must be set on the one purpose of magnifying the Lord Jesus in your body, whether by life or death. Ask that all inferior motives may be destroyed, and that this may burn strong and clear within you.

God will not find water for us to use for turning our own water-wheels. He will do nothing to minister to our pride. He will not give us the Holy Spirit to enable us to gain celebrity, or to procure a name, or to live an

easy, self-contented life.

If we seek the Holy Spirit merely for our happiness, or comfort, or liberty of soul, it will be exceedingly unlikely that He will be given. His one passion is the glory of the Lord Jesus; and He can only make His abode with those who are willing to be at one with Him in this. "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" But if you are actuated simply by the desire that the Lord Jesus may be magnified in you, whether by life or death; if you long, above all, that men should turn away from you to Him, as they did from John the Baptist-then rejoice, because you are near blessing beyond words to describe. If your motives fall below this standard, trust in Him to enlighten and purify them, and offer Him a free entrance within. It will not then be long ere there shall be a gracious response; and the Lord, whom you seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, and He shall sit as a refiner of silver, that the sons of Levi may offer an offering in righteousness (Mal. 3:1-3).

CONSIDER THAT HOLY SCRIPTURE IS HIS SPECIAL ORGAN

A subtle danger besets the teaching of this helpful doctrine, and one that we need to guard against. Some earnest people have magnified inner light and leading of the Holy Spirit to the neglect of the Word which He gave, and through which He still works on human hearts. This is a great mistake and the prolific parent of all kinds of evil. Directly we put aside the Word of God, we lay ourselves open to the solicitation of the many voices that speak within our hearts; and we have no test, no criterion of truth, no standard of appeal. How can we know the Spirit of God in some of the more intricate cases which are brought into the court of conscience unless our judgment is deeply imbued with the Word of God?

We must not be content with the Spirit without the Word, or with the Word without the Spirit. Our life must travel along these two, as the locomotive along the parallel rails. The Word is the chosen organ of the Spirit; and it is only by our devout coöperation; with it that we shall be enabled to detect His voice. It is by the Word that the Spirit will enter our hearts as the heart of the sun passes into our chambers with the beams of light that enter the open casement.

We need a widespread revival of Bible study. These mines of Scripture, lying beneath the surface call loudly for investigation and discovery; and those who shall obey the appeal, and set themselves to the devout and laborious study of the inner meaning of the Word, shall be soon aware that they have received the filling that they seek.

There is no better way of communing with God than to walk to and fro in your room or in the open air, your Bible in hand, meditating on it and turning its precepts and promises into prayer. God walks in the glades of Scripture, as of old in those of Paradise.

BE PREPARED TO LET THE HOLY GHOST DO AS HE WILL WITH YOU

The Holy Ghost is in us, and by this means Christ is in us; for He dwells in us by the Spirit, as the sun dwells in the world by means of the atmosphere vibrating with waves of light. But we must perpetually yield to Him, as water to the containing vessel. This is not easy; indeed, it can only be accomplished by incessant self-judgment, and the perpetual mortification of our own self-life.

What is our position before God in this respect? We have chosen Jesus as our substitute; but have we also chosen Him by the Holy Spirit as our Life? Can we say, like the Apostle: "Not I, but Christ liveth in me"? If so, we must be prepared for all that it involves. We must be willing for the principle of the new life

to grow at the expense of the self-life. We must consent for the one to increase, while the other decreases, through processes which are painful enough to the flesh. Nay, we must ourselves be ever on the alert, hastening the processes of judgment, condemnation and crucifixion. We must keep true in our allegiance to the least behest of the Holy Spirit, though it cost tears of blood.

The perpetual filling of the Holy Spirit is only possible to those who obey Him, and who obey Him in all things. There is nothing trivial in this life. By the neglect of slight commands, a soul may speedily get out of the sunlit circle and lose the gracious plenitude of Spirit-power. A look, a word, a refusal, may suffice to grieve Him in ourselves, and to quench Him in others. Count the cost; yet do not shrink back afraid of what He may demand. He is the Spirit of love; and He loves us too well to cause grief, unless there is a reason, which we should approve, if we knew as much as He.

RECEIVE HIM BY FAITH

"As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him." Faith is the one law of the Divine household. And as once you obtained forgiveness and salvation by faith, so now claim and receive the Holy Spirit's fullness.

Fulfill the conditions already named; wait quietly but definitely before God in prayer, for He gives the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him; then reverently appropriate this glorious gift, and rise from your knee and go on your way, reckoning that God has kept His word, and that you are filled with the Spirit. Trust Him day by day to fill you and keep you filled. According to your faith, so shall it be done to you.

There may not be at first the sound of rushing wind, or the coronet of fire, or the sensible feeling of His presence. Do not look for these, any more than the young convert should look to feeling as an evidence of acceptance. But believe, in spite of feeling, that you are filled. Say over and over, "I thank Thee, O my God, that Thou hast kept Thy word with me. I opened my mouth, and Thou hast filled it; though as yet, I am not aware of any special change." And the feeling will sooner or later break in upon your consciousness, and you will rejoice with exceeding great joy; and all the fruits of the Spirit will begin to show themselves.

BUT REMEMBER IT IS NOT ENOUGH TO BE FILLED ONCE FOR ALL

Like the Apostles of old, we must seek perpetual refillings. They who were filled in the second chapter of Acts were filled again in the fourth. Happy is that man who never leaves his chamber in the morning without definitely seeking and receiving the plenitude of the Spirit! He shall be a proficient scholar in God's school, for the anointing which he has received, like fresh oil, shall abide in him, and teach him all things. Above all, he will be taught the secret of abiding fellowship with Christ, for it is written, "As it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him." (1 John 2:27.)

Whenever you are conscious of leakage, when the exhaustion of service has been greater than the reception of fresh supplies, when some new avenue of ministry, or freshly discovered talent, or new department of your being has presented itself, go again to the same source for a refilling, a recharging with spiritual power, a re-anointing by the holy baptism.

Three tenses are used in the Acts of the Apostle of the filling of the Spirit, which have their counter parts still:

Filled: a sudden decisive experience for a specific work (Acts 4: 8) .

Were filled: the imperfect tense, as though the blessed process were always going on (Acts 13:52;

Full: the adjective, indicating the perpetual experience (Acts 6: 8) .

There is, of course, more in the doctrine of the Holy Spirit than is at all realized by this writer. The fiery baptism of the Holy Spirit may be something far beyond. Let us not then be content to miss any thing possible to redeemed men, but, leaving the things that are behind, let us press on to those before striving to apprehend all for which we have been apprehended by Christ Jesus.

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