

Maintaining Spiritual Fullness

by Harold E. Schmul

Harold E. Schmul emphasizes the importance of maintaining spiritual fullness through faith, obedience, and continuous reliance on the Holy Spirit.

Duration: 40:08

Scripture: Acts 2:2

Topics: "Spiritual Fullness"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of maintaining spiritual fullness in the life of a believer. He highlights that in the new birth, the believer's focus should be on the fullness of Christ and the Holy Spirit's work in making the things of Christ real and alive in their heart. The preacher also mentions that maintaining spiritual fullness is a lifelong journey that requires faith and obedience. He concludes by stating that there are three reasons why believers must strive to maintain fullness, although these reasons are not mentioned in the given transcript.

Transcript

Man, I told these gentlemen on the platform, I said, if you fellows can make it short, I think I can too. We're right about on time, so it's good to be here this afternoon and to be with you. Amen.

But thank God for this lovely day, the day the Lord has made, this lovely congregation. We're continuing a thought begun, oh, I guess, maybe yesterday morning. Yesterday morning we talked on, from the theme of maintaining the fullness.

And we begun by calling your attention that in the new birth, the repentant, confessing believer's gaze is fixed with a full focus on the fullness of Christ, and that he is a partaker of that fullness through the Holy Spirit in the new birth. And we emphasize the place of both the gaze of the believer fixed upon Christ, where Christ fills the horizon of his life, and where the Holy Spirit, who makes all things new, including the new creation, Christ's other self, makes the things of Christ real and alive in the heart of the new believer, and that it is the beginning of a relationship that God intends shall never end. There's a point of beginning in the will of God.

It happens in a moment of time when old things pass away and all things become new. And from that point on, we continue to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. And that line is to be an unbroken line from earth to glory, from that point of instantaneous entrance into the kingdom of

God, all the way to the inside of the city where the lights are on forever, and where the leaves never fade.

Somewhere between this point, and here there may be more than one place to stop, no doubt there are, but that does not break the continuity of the line, and at that point, we'll say it's the second point, the point of crisis, the point of cleansing. It likewise has a focus on the promises of Christ concerning the Spirit. It also has a focus on the promise itself, which is a promise of the outpoured Spirit upon His disciples.

It is not a different kind of grace. It is the same grace. Now the heart is cleansed.

The tar bucket, so to speak, has been to the fire and totally cleansed, and now it is filled so that there's no foreign substance. We're filled with love, the pure, unadulterated, perfect love of God. In the new birth, we stated that there was love, but not perfect love.

There was joy, but not joy unspeakable and full of glory. There was peace, peace with God, but not the peace of God, and so there was an assurance, and there was an assurance of faith. The life is filled with Christ, and the horizon, as well as the gaze of the believer, is fastened upon Jesus, and that's a wonderful relationship.

In that second relationship, the cleansing of the heart from all sin, love is now made perfect, joy unspeakable and full of glory. But the emphasis is not on emotional fullness, neither in the beginning, nor in the second crisis, nor in the end. The emphasis is on the fullness of righteousness, and the fullness of Christ, who would bring us to the measure of the stature of a man.

The emphasis is upon a fullness of holiness, holy living, temperance, moderation, patience, long-suffering, and the maturation of the fruit of the Spirit that had already begun in the new birth. For a little while this afternoon, I would like to talk about maintaining the spiritual glow or maintaining spiritual fullness, and this will just touch it lightly. I hope to have you out of here by about 3.30, and that would make everybody say amen.

There's a fellow clapping his hands back here already, so that's a good sign, a sign he's happy already. Emptied of sin, filled with the Spirit, drawing nigh with God with a continuation of that good work that He has begun within us. So let us turn to the Scripture.

Let's take a look at Acts, very familiar sections in Acts. Only calling your attention to the second chapter, a sound from heaven, the rushing mighty wind filling all the house where they were sitting. They were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they began, and in the book of Acts the word filled, or the word full, or the word joy, or the word rejoice are all key phrases, sometimes relating to what happens in a revival, such as a Samaria where there was great joy in that city, and other times relating to other aspects of the Spirit's work.

But here, in this instance, on the day of Pentecost, their hearts were purified by faith, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost. Men and women who had been made to drink of one Spirit were continuing to drink at the fountain open for the needy, hungry, thirsty souls of mankind. The river that was promised by Jesus is now flowing out of them, and now the believer, the sanctified believer, continues to drink through faith and obedience, and maintains fullness for the overflow of the rivers that flow out of him to a thirsty and a dry as well as a barren world.

And we drink of this Spirit, we maintain the fullness of the Spirit always by two spiritual walking sticks, faith and obedience, and without either of these we fall by the wayside. It's imperative that we understand that

we walk by faith, saved by faith, sanctified by faith, kept by faith, and live a life of faith. The faith, the fullness of which we speak and the fullness that we endeavor to point your attention to concerning a maintained fullness is a fullness that is maintained the same way it was obtained.

That is by faith. And as I mentioned the other day, our basic emphasis is on emotional fullness, and much of our evangelistic appeal is an emotional fullness. We load our alters with people who do not feel exactly as they ought to feel, that they're not where they ought to be even though they have no idea where that place is.

That in their mind it is some kind of an emotional arbor where the grapes are full or where the melons are luscious or where the fruit hangs on the tree, and that to them is the place they ought to be. But the walk with Christ is a walk of faith. Sometimes it's through the vineyard, sometimes it's through the valley, sometimes it's on the mountain, and sometimes it's through the darkness of some measure of misery or that may settle over the soul.

But the walk with God is a walk of faith, and it's a walk of obedience, it is a walk in full obedience and conformity to the knowledge of His will as we understand it from the Word of God and the leading of the Spirit of God according to the Word of God, and this walk is maintained by faith and obedience. And so I emphasize once again, it is not an emotional fullness. Now you will get emotionally full at times, you'll have an emotional high, like Peter and the others on the day of Pentecost, you'll have times of spiritual intoxication.

And when they were charged with being drenched or drunken, Peter said, not so, the shops haven't been opened yet, it's too early in the day. This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel. We are not under the affluence of alcohol, this is the outpoured Spirit of God upon our souls, and he began to proclaim and to prophesy.

So there are spiritual highs, and there are spiritual lows, and oftentimes the spiritual highs in your life or in my life depend a lot not only upon environment, but upon circumstances, but a whole lot upon human personality as well as temperament. And there are some people that soar high. They go higher than I could ever dream of going, and they also can sink very, very low.

Some of them carry their own snorkeling equipment with them on the way down. I tell some of them, the only time you and I cross a common line is when you're either going up or coming down. I am a very, very even disposition kind of fellow, and I don't have highs.

I cannot soar with David in the Psalms, neither do I sink with Ezekiel or Job in some of their moments of tremendous depression. It's a matter of temperament as well as some aspects of environment. But there are people who can soar, and those people write poetry, and they play music, and they play in the stars.

Their backyard thing is just in the starry heavens and the galaxies, and what glory and blessing. But when they're on the bottom snorkeling, you seldom find anyone that's any lower than they. But that's why we need to understand it's a life of faith.

It's a faith life, the life I now live in the flesh. It's a life lived in the flesh, but it is lived by the faith of the Son of God who loved me. So it's a faith life.

It is lived in the flesh. And as long as you have this treasure in earthen vessels, then, my friend, you and I are subject to the whims and fancies of our humanity. But we thank God that we have an anchor, and that

anchor is an obedient faith, a faith that worketh not by feeling, but a faith that worketh by love.

I'm going to give you three quick little reasons here why I must maintain fullness. And I'd like to say this in preliminary, that probably our basic fits and spurts and stops and fevers and distempers and sicknesses and anemia and whirliness and powerlessness in the church stem from a consistent lack of fullness of the Spirit in our lives. When the spiritual level of fullness pertains in the church, then there's a minimum of problems and difficulties.

Things go smoothly and relatively easy. I am not saying there are no problems. I am not saying there be no emergencies.

But I'm saying these little areas that oftentimes we spend a lot of time trying to correct either with legislation or from the pulpit or with a stick or perhaps a club are best addressed by getting the people to contend for an outpouring of the Spirit upon them, urging the people to maintain spiritual fullness. For in maintaining the fullness of the Spirit, we maintain the power and the grace, the righteousness, the machinery of the church is oiled so as to carry the work of God forward. Well, if there's probably any one great error in our movement, it's the error, once filled always filled.

And there's only one other error as bad as that, and that's once in grace always in grace. Our people pretty much have the notion, well, I was filled once. I was sanctified.

What more want I yet? Some people came about last night. They couldn't. I didn't go down there, but I was there in spirit and disposition.

Some couldn't understand why good people are found at the altar. My friend, Christ is the altar, and you and I never get so far in the grace of God. But what we find, a great humbling and a great affection at the place of prayer and at the altar.

And when you're too saintly and too godly to find a spot at the altar of prayer, receiving from God whatever your soul may need at that special time in life and behavior, you've gone beyond what anyone else that I've ever met in this lifetime ever possessed. When a holy man will find himself humbling himself at the foot of the cross and the presence of Christ, and he is continually and constantly seeking for more. And instead of putting a barrier up around the altar, we need to make the altar accessible and let our people know that regardless of what their need is, whether it's physical or whether it's financial or whether it's a crisis relationship or whether it's a special anointing or endowment for a task or responsibility that is beyond their human powers, this place is available for all people to find the necessary help.

And in such a place, we as the children of God gather about one another and pray, possibly at times even laying hands one upon another, that God will sustain and supply in a very special way. No, not once filled, always filled as we are going to see in readings in Acts chapter 4. If you read Acts chapter 2, we have the story of Peter and John going up to the temple and we've had a sermon on that theme already in this camp. They went up to the temple at the hour of prayer, they met a lame man, he fastened his eyes upon Peter and John, they extended a hand, he was lifted up, he was healed instantaneously, went to the temple leaping, shouting, praising God, and then a great concourse of people gathered round, and Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, begins to preach and to proclaim.

And there are problems with his proclamation. He talks of Christ and of the resurrection, the manifest glory of God in Jesus Christ, the Son, and he preaches long enough, hangs on long enough, until the scribes

and Pharisees get there. And chapter 4, and the Pharisees came upon them, and they were grieved to see this kind of a demonstration.

They were grieved to see these men of limited knowledge and learning, nevertheless persuading men that Christ was alive. And so they interrogated them, and they worked them over somewhat verbally, threatening them and saying, we cannot deny but what there's been a notable miracle accomplished here, but we want you no longer to speak in this name, and we want you to leave here and shut your mouths and get out, and leave us alone in this place. And being let go, they went to their own company.

And you'll find this in chapter 4 and verse 23 and 24. They go back to the disciples, and they report their activity. They didn't elect a committee.

They didn't decide to put, run into politics in the town and get a new committeeman or a new councilman. They decided that instead they would have a prayer meeting. They didn't wring their hands.

They didn't cry. They didn't inform people how poorly they'd been treated. They called for prayer, and they gathered together, and there's rather a very interesting prayer, something like some of ours.

And chapter, verse 24, they informed the Lord that He is God and that He is the maker of the heaven and the earth. And here's a very lovely and beautiful prayer that builds their faith and that focuses their attention on a prayer hearing, and a prayer answering, and a miracle working God. And they call attention to the sovereignty of God and the determined counsel of God.

They know they're in the will of God. They are not fearful of the consequences of what has taken place. But they have one great concern, and they are praying that the servants with all boldness, verse 29, may speak Thy word by stretching forth Thine hand to heal, and that signs and wonders continue to be done in the name of Thy holy child, Jesus.

And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost. And they spake the word of God with boldness, the multitude of them that believe were of one heart and of one soul. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection, and great grace was upon them all.

You see, friends, in the terrible situations of life, in life's tensions and troubles and tribulations, the soul's capacity is stretched. The soul is dynamic, not static. And into this situation, they recognize that if they are to continue the ministry of miracles and of salvation in the name of the holy child, Jesus, that they themselves must maintain the same level of fullness that they obtained on the day of Pentecost.

They are not re-sanctified here. It's the same group, it's the same people who are now addressing God, and the tensions of the world are real. The heat and the fire of opposition and persecutions have already been lighted.

They recognize that trouble is on every hand. And so, rather than fail in the ministry, rather than fail the departed Christ who is at the right hand of the Father, rather than come short in any manner, rather than be intimidated, they will pray for boldness, they will pray for courage, they will pray for a continuation of His work. But in order for there to be a continuation of His work through them, there must be a continuation of His flowing power, His flowing presence, His filling presence in them likewise.

And so, they did not finish or conclude their prayer until there was a response from heaven. And the response from heaven is so much like what happened on the day of Pentecost that our Calvinistic friends say, this is the second Pentecost. My friend, this is the God-planned program for His people, that a level of spiritual supply, a plentitude of the Spirit accompany our life and our ministry, our basic weaknesses of evangelism and of stability, the inroads of worldliness and carnality, and the disappointing aspects that are cropping up from time to time in the old groups as well as in the come-out groups.

The problem is still the same today as it was thirty-five years ago or centuries ago. It's a matter of maintaining the fullness of the Spirit in the heart and the mind, the lives of believers. The issue has not changed.

It is still the same. The soul is dynamic. And it's these tensions of life, it's these difficulties of life, it's the perplexities of life that stretch us.

We are also stretched by reading. We are stretched by hearing. We are stretched by fellowship.

We are stretched by preaching. The sermons we have been listening to have been blessed to our hearts because they've stretched our soul. And the demands in the arena of life were such that fullness was the only answer to the tensions they faced and the problems that perplexed them.

Instead of calling another board, instead of running back home, instead of setting up some kind of surveillance system to make sure that nothing really happens, as we often do in our conferences and assemblies, we have--we put up--we're in trouble with worldliness, so we put up a higher fence. We establish another committee. We get a finer mesh wire.

We put out the watchdogs and the sniffers, and we're going to find out the heretics. Our basic problem is that we are an impoverished people in the realm of the Spirit. We cannot survive in the turmoil and the tensions of today's world merely on academics, merely on just lovely expositions or beautiful Bible stories or a fine understanding.

I mentioned somewhere, maybe it was at UBS, that some time ago, a number of months ago, I was in a camp, and the general opinion seemed to be that if we could just--if the evangelists would just answer the many questions that are in the minds of the people about dress and divorce and jewelry and television, if they could just come down and address these questions academically, then we'd be ready for revival. The basic problem are not academic questions. They are not theological questions.

The basic problem, my friend, are spiritual issues that must be settled and through obedient faith in God that bring the fullness of the Holy Ghost. You say, must there be no strictures? Must there be no conferences? Must there be no committees on resolutions? I never said that. I'm simply saying that's an oversimplification of the manner in which to handle the problem.

If we could get the church on the offensive, if we could get the people leaving home filled with the Spirit as Peter and John did the day they went into the--into the temple, and in this unexpected situation, they find an opportunity. The poor beggar fastening his eyes upon him represents a cripple-dying world who are looking to us. And most of the time, we hand them another resolution or we say, we've just formed another committee.

We're going to look into your condition. We'll do something about it a little bit later on. You'll be hearing from us.

The need is a great need, an instantaneous need. This need was 40 years old when they approached it, and many of our needs are at least 40 years old or older, and still nothing has happened. O God in heaven, help us return to the life and the ministry of the Spirit, and each of us, you and I, as individuals, return to obedient life of faith in God where the small details of life, the crossing of the T or the dotting of an I, whatever the small minute matter may be, in my life is completely taken care of apart from what is happening in someone else's life.

And our weakness and our carnality and our wildness and the anemia and the powerlessness of our entire movement that goes, I'm not talking to any other movement. I'm talking to the conservative, hollow crowd that had hoped for so much and longed for so much and at times have boasted of so much, have so little to show. It's not basically because we have no standards.

It's basically because this standard, the standard of the fullness of the Spirit in the life of the individual believer, be a continuing process and a continuing outflow out of the innermost beings, continue to flow rivers of living water. But when we cease to drink at the fountain, how can the rivers flow? When we fail to apply ourselves to the source, how can we hope to have a river flow to a thirsty and a dry and a needy, barren world? No, survival, complete survival depends upon maintaining fullness. Our survival as a movement, our survival as a college here, our survival as camp meetings and conventions does not depend half as much on human personality as we think, not nearly as much upon accreditation and, and degree programs as good and as wholesome as they are in their place.

In the end, at the final moment of it all, this entire movement, any movement born of the Spirit of God only continues on as they maintain to drink from the same source. The rivers flow only as we maintain fullness, and I'm trying to tell you that we started off full. You know what happened in Samaria? There was great joy in that city.

They preached Christ and they were full. We could all, if I could just put everybody this afternoon on one of these sunbeams and transport us all back 20, 30, 50 years to the point of our conversion, the spot where we were saved, there'd be so much noise and racket in this auditorium this afternoon. If you could be turned in a moment of time to that moment and you would stand as you stood then, bawling, squalling, crying, running, shouting, pleading, jumping, sobbing, or just falling quietly to your knees, if we could get back to that moment where each of us would be transported to that fine point in yesterday, friends, the folks down in the library and the people over here in the buildings that'd be coming out to see what in the world was going on.

The real problem is that you and I are not living lives that are full. Having drunk, we have failed to keep on drinking. Having been to the fountain, we have failed to stay and satiate our soul until the spiritual intoxication is carried to the marketplace and to the street.

In closing, it's 3, 28 and a half or something, just a couple remarks. The song of the soul depends on a full heart. Be filled with the Spirit, speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns.

There are a great many places where the movement has lost its song. The song flows from a full heart, from full lips. Is that right? The song of the soul flows from hearts that are filled.

Be not drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit. Our second church was Meadville, Pennsylvania. We lived across the street from some neighbors that had a different lifestyle than we did.

Very timid, backward kind of fellows lived in that house across the street. They did well to just sort of tip their hat, you know, and they were rather frightened of the young reverend, and they didn't want to get too close to a preacher. He might capture them, you know, and carry them away into spiritual captivity.

They just stayed on their side of the street pretty much, and even attempted to get close to them and visit them, always met with considerable guard. I really didn't know what my status with them was until the first or second New Year's that I spent in that town. It was about 1 o'clock in the morning, maybe closer to 2, and I heard a racket outside.

What a noise. I was going on, and I tumbled out, and I looked out the window, and I saw my neighbors. They were hollering and talking, and they were talking about, That preacher over there, let's sing a song for a preacher.

And they were weaving back and forth, the four of them were weaving back and forth and gesturing up there toward my window. They didn't see me, even though I was seeing them. Oh, come on first, give me a hand, you should sing for the preacher.

Let's give him a shot, he's a pretty good kind of a guy. And believe it or not, they got together, and they started singing, So aid I do line, and they gave us a rendition, you know. They didn't know I was listening in.

They had no idea I was within bow shot. I was enjoying every bit of it. I looked out there, here these fellows are serenading me.

They're full. They've just come from down on River Street where they'd been selling that stuff all night long. They were under the affluence of alcohol considerably.

The timidity and the fear and the backwardness had disappeared, and their real love for the old, for the little old preacher was in their heart. They really wanted to be friends in this condition. They felt like they could do it in the darkness, and they could do it in the quiet of the street, but there they were.

I was brought up in a home where there was a lot of drinking and alcoholics, and while I did not appreciate the fact that they were so under the affluence of alcohol and so damaging themselves, I nevertheless was somewhat pleased to think that in such a moment those fellows felt good about me, that they wanted to do something for me. They wanted to sing for me. Dear friend, the world is waiting for a song.

They're waiting for the church to sing it, but we've been in some kind of a captivity to the world, to monetary things, to mercenary things, to materialism, to some aspects of our own luxury and ease, and our own humanity, our own lovely, luxurious lifestyle, until, friends, we are not filled with God. We've been drinking at other cisterns. We've been drinking from sources, and we are full.

We are intoxicated, but not intoxicated on God. We are filled, but we are not filled with the Spirit. My plea is that you and I, you and I will maintain personally and individually the fullness of the Spirit.

Oh, dear friends, the song of the soul depends upon the fullness of the Spirit. I'm sure all of you can remember times without number our G. Flexen telling the story, that very familiar story, of how he became overburdened with responsibilities and cares. You know it.

I'll not take the time to tell it, but he did tell the members of his class that the birds were not singing in his soul, and he pushed his chair back and went to prayer. And humbly, it's not a matter of getting saved for Flexen, not a matter of getting sanctified for Flexen. It's a matter of maintaining fullness.

And those of us that knew him across the years know that there was one thing that characterized R.G. Flexen, and that was he was a man of anointing. He was a man of power because, because, because he was a man that to himself insisted upon fullness, the fullness of righteousness, the fullness of God, the fullness of obedience. We sit back.

Flexen was a quiet fellow, sat here with his legs crossed and his hands folded, and his jaw set and looking off in the distance, but he was very much alive, but he was a man who was full of God. And when he stood, you knew he was a man full of God. It was more than human charisma.

It was more than just personal dynamic. It was God, God in this wonderful good man's life. That was true of Wesley.

It's true of others. I like that little story they tell about Wesley who's riding through the countryside apprehended by a highway robber, came out of the bush and halted Wesley and said, Your money or your life, sir. Great giant of a man, well over six foot tall, raw boned, man of the soil in the woods, Wesley lost his pocketbook, lost his watch, lost his personal belongings.

And when he had them in his pocket, he got on his own horse and rode away into the brush. But while he was riding away, Wesley called after him, The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses us from all sin. And that verse of Scripture followed the highwayman, but that verse was anointed, came from the heart of an anointed man.

Twenty years later, Wesley was walking across one of the many bridges in London and he was apprehended by a tall, robust fellow, raw boned character with a huge Bible under his arm. And he took Wesley who only was about five foot two and weighed a hundred and twenty pounds. He turned him around and he said, Be you John Wesley.

Wesley startled and surprised, looked up and said, Yes, yes, I'm John Wesley. He said, You remember being apprehended by a highwayman who took all your goods? Wesley said, I do remember. He said, I was that highwayman.

But he said, Blessed be God, sir. The verse of Scripture you quoted followed me off into the night. And he said, Days later, I found a place and made my peace with the Savior.

And I'm a Baptist preacher today and I'm preaching the gospel of the kingdom. I'm talking about living in the fullness of the Spirit. My friend, it's serious not to keep your cup full.

It's serious not to keep your well full. It's serious not to be so full that you are literally flowing rivers of living water from your life. All you have to do is turn to Acts chapter 5 and notice one thing.

After this wonderful thing that happens in Acts chapter 4 where the Spirit of God is poured out upon them and where the people lay their wealth at the apostles' feet and where there's great power and great grace upon the people, the first word in chapter 5 is but, but, but. But a man named Ananias and Sapphira, his wife, and you know their story. And when Peter talked to them, he said, Why hath Satan fill thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost? It appears we have an -- we have a choice.

Be filled with the Spirit or be -- or lose out. Get dry and cold and carnal. Get withered and get invaded.

Be filled. It's amazing the things that have happened that you and I have seen happen in the lives of people, right? Gone to false cults, gone to the world, doing things that we -- they never would dream of doing. How did it happen? They failed to keep full, and Satan filled them.

Let's stand together. Our Father, we thank Thee this afternoon for the gracious promises left us in the Word. Help us to make application to them.

Help us to, by obedient faith, walk in the light, maintain the fullness of the Spirit where I, in any degree or measure, have failed. Have mercy upon me and forgive me, oh, that the mighty fullness of the Spirit might characterize the last days of this camp meeting. May there be spiritual Amazons that'll flow through this tabernacle and flow on these grounds.

These young people that are going out into the white and harvest fields, may their hearts be ablaze and their lives be filled and their souls inundated by the power of Thy Spirit. And by obedient faith, may they walk this way victoriously. In Christ's name, amen.

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