

The Consequences of the Spirit's Fulness

by Roy Hession

The fullness of the Spirit leads to a song of praise to the Lord, thanksgiving for all things, and mutual submission, and it is experienced by repenting and confessing our sins.

Scripture: Ephesians 5:18

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Mutual Submission"

Description

Roy Hession emphasizes the consequences of being filled with the Holy Spirit, which are often more ordinary than extraordinary. He highlights that true fullness leads to a heart overflowing with praise, a spirit of thanksgiving for all circumstances, and mutual submission in relationships. Hession points out that the primary gift of the Spirit is revealing Christ to us, which naturally results in joy and gratitude. He stresses that submission and self-giving love are essential in all relationships, challenging believers to confess their shortcomings in these areas. Ultimately, the path to being filled with the Spirit involves repentance and a willingness to love and serve others.

Transcript

HAVING considered the Apostle's word, 'Be filled with the Spirit', we must now pass on to consider the rest of the passage, which goes on to describe the filling of the Spirit as to its consequences. The results are delineated in detail, but they are not the results sometimes associated in our minds with the fullness of the Holy Spirit. Nothing is said here of the Spirit making us wonderful preachers, or spectacular Christians in some special way. The results mentioned seem much more earth bound than that; and it is well that it is so, for many of us may never be given by God outstanding spheres of service. His work is to make us normal, so that we walk with Him all our days in what seem to be the most ordinary paths.

The first result of being filled with the Spirit is a song of praise to the Lord in the heart. The words that immediately follow 'be filled with the Spirit', are 'speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord' (PH. 5. 19). I think that means overflowing with praise and testimony to the Lord Jesus, for a newly filled person is full of Jesus! And such melody-making in the heart to the Lord can be just as real in the kitchen as in the minister's study! Indeed there is more victory in the kitchen, where a wife has learnt to walk with the Lord Jesus, than there is in the study, where a minister has not. This melody-making, however, is thoroughly rational; it is not merely the result of an emotional uplift. The fullness of the Spirit means nothing, if it does not mean the Spirit showing us continually Jesus in His various aspects, enough for all our needs; our vision is just full of Christ and of

His grace, and we cannot help but sing. As Charles Wesley puts it:

My heart is full o f Christ

And longs its glorious Master to declare;

Of Him I make my loftier songs

I cannot from His praise forbear.

This is precisely what followed as one of the first consequences of the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. 'We do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God' (Acts 2. 11), was what the hearers said that day. The fact that the disciples were speaking in other languages was quite incidental. The important thing was the subject of their speech, and that was 'the wonderful works of God'. Praise to God was what they were engaged in, and that because the Holy Spirit had shown them Jesus risen from the dead, standing at the right hand of God for them, ready to give repentance to Israel and remission of sins. It was the wonder of the grace of God in all this that evoked their praise to God that day. It was basically a simple fulfilment of the promise of the Lord, 'He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.' Their praise, their joy, their boldness were all the consequence of what they were given to see by the Spirit. Their speaking in other tongues was also the result of what they saw. Their hearts were so full of the vision of Jesus that they went beyond the bounds of speech known to them in their praise to God, and it became a sign to all those gathered at Jerusalem. The miraculous speaking in other languages would have been utterly insignificant had they not been expressing what the Spirit was revealing to them of Jesus.

So often in our thinking we associate being filled with the Holy Spirit with inspiring sensations, ecstatic joy and the ability to praise God with a new boldness and freedom, and to do so, sometimes, in other tongues. We can come to regard these as the principal things to expect, and seek them accordingly. It cannot be too strongly emphasised that they are not the Spirit's principal gift to us. His principal gift to us is to take of the things of Christ and show them unto us. Joy and praise to God follow as a simple consequence, for it is infinitely good news for helpless people like ourselves that we see in Him. The resultant praise can be in either a known or an unknown tongue. Paul said he would infinitely prefer it to be in a known tongue so that others can join in and receive the benefit of it (see 1 Cor. 14. 19), and we imagine most people would agree with him. If we make the mistake of seeking these things as His principal gifts, we shall be disappointed if we do not receive them; or in danger of making too much of them if we do. But if we are expecting the Holy Spirit to give us a new revelation of Jesus, we shall soon be 'speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in our hearts to the Lord'. Our joy will have a rational foundation, and we shall be able so to speak to others of what we see that they will be able to see the same, and join us in our rejoicing.

The second result mentioned is thanksgiving for all things 'giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ' (Eph. 5. 20). This means seeing God in everything, and knowing that all the things that come to us, no matter from what sources they begin, by the time they reach us, come to us as God's permissive will, who works all things. together for good to them that love God. That being so, they must be something for which to thank God, whether we see how they can be for good or not. Such an attitude of thanksgiving is quite impossible if we are proud and unwilling to give up our rights and our self-centredness to God : self-pity and complaining can be the only result in that case. But this precious thankfulness is closely associated with being filled with the Spirit, for God can only fill valleys,

not mountains. Whether such brokenness, as submits and rejoices in all that God allows, is the condition or consequence of the Spirit's fullness, it is difficult to say. Probably it is both. In this passage it is given as the result of the Spirit's fullness. On the other hand, the lack of this submissiveness produces sins of self-pity, murmuring and doubting, which make it impossible for us to be filled, and which must first be confessed and cleansed in the Blood of Christ. Quite obviously, our repentance and cleansing on this point alone will have to be often reiterated; for whoever went through any of the severe tests to which we are all at one time or another subjected, without, at least at first, reacting in a self-centred way? But how gracious God is to restore our attitude when we acknowledge our wrong.

The third result mentioned, and this is perhaps the most important, judging by the amount of space allotted to it in the passage, is mutual submission: 'submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God' (Eph. 5. 21). Whenever God speaks of our relationships one with another, the word He gives us is always 'submit', 'be in subjection'. In this passage, each relationship of life has this light directed upon it. Wives are to submit themselves unto their own husbands, as unto the Lord (Eph. 5.22). What a searching word this is today, when 'petticoat government' is not merely a playful phrase, but a real fact; when bossing and nagging are an accepted part in our homes. But believers must confess this, if they are to be filled with the Spirit. Then Paul passes on to husbands. They are not called to submit to their wives, it is true, for Paul is at pains in other places to emphasise the headship of the man. But the husband is required to do something even more humbling; he is to love his wife 'as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it' (Eph. 5. 25). Christ's love for the Church was a self-giving love, and the melting thing about it is that it led the Senior to humble Himself to serve the junior. In the same self-giving way, husbands are to love their wives. Though in Scripture they are the acknowledged seniors, before the Cross they cannot stand on their rights; and though senior, they are to give themselves to serve the junior, the weaker vessel, and to make her great, even as Christ did for them. How this strikes at male selfishness and male pride, and how surely must the believer confess it, if it should be manifested!

The same pattern of submission on one side and a self-giving caring on the other is seen in what is said with regard to the other relationships mentioned in the passage. Children are to submit to and obey their parents in the Lord-and I am sure 'children' here covers teenagers ! Parents, on the other hand, while bringing up their families with godly discipline, are to avoid needlessly provoking resentment in their young people by their lack of understanding or harshness. Employees are to submit to their employers, doing them service as if they were serving Christ Himself. The boss on the other hand is to have a concern for the welfare of his employees, not storming at them ('forbear threatening'), knowing that he himself has a boss in heaven, who may well want to 'have him on the mat' as to the way he is treating those he employs. Mutual submission and caring in all the relationships of life is one of the consequences of the Spirit's fullness. The bending of the stiffneck is ever God's way for us if we are to enjoy a Christ filled heart.

Let us, however, never lose sight of the fact that the way to be filled is not by trying to be more submissive or caring, but rather by repenting that we have not submitted to this one and that, and confessing that we have not loved them as we should. God reckons the Blood of His Son covering what we thus confess, and the Spirit fills where the Blood has cleansed, producing in us a sweet willingness to submit and love others.

Let us set out in full, then, this blessed and challenging passage, which gives us the cause and consequence of the Spirit filled life

'Be not drunk with wine,

Wherein is excess;
but be filled with the Spirit;
Speaking to yourselves in psalms
and hymns and spiritual songs,
singing and making melody in your
hearts to the Lord;
Giving thanks always for all things
unto God and the Father in the name
of our Lord Jesus Christ;
Submitting yourselves one to another
in the fear of God.'
(Eph. 5.18-21.)

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