

# Section I.--Spiritual Effects.

by William Arthur

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*William Arthur's sermon emphasizes the significance of being filled with the Holy Ghost for spiritual empowerment and moral strength in believers' lives.*

**Scripture:** Luke 1:15, Acts 2:4, Acts 4:8, Acts 6:3, Acts 11:24

**Topics:** "Holy Spirit", "Spiritual Empowerment"

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## Description

William Arthur preaches about the transformative power of being filled with the Holy Ghost, as seen in the disciples after Pentecost. The Holy Spirit's work is not just about miraculous manifestations but also about moral and spiritual empowerment, enabling believers to boldly proclaim the word of God and confront challenges with strength and wisdom. The promise of the Holy Spirit is not limited to the apostolic age but extends to all believers, offering a deep, personal, and ongoing relationship with God. Being filled with the Holy Ghost results in a profound moral strength, boldness to confess Christ, and a deep communion with God, leading to a life that glorifies the Father.

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## Transcript

THE first effect which followed this baptism of fire is thus described: "They were all filled with the Holy Ghost." This expression is so clearly joined with the record of the miracle that we easily suppose that it is itself intended to express miraculous inspiration; but this is not its constant, nor even its most frequent, use in the Old Testament. It is sometimes employed to describe an inspiration antecedent to a miraculous manifestation, and sometimes one antecedent to a purely moral manifestation. Examples of the latter occur in several cases of "speaking the word of God with boldness," when the circumstances were such that human nature unassisted would have shrunk from the danger.

John the Baptist wrought no miracle; yet of him it was said that he should be "filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb." Here the expression denotes some inward and spiritual operation, which may take place in the silence of an infant's heart, and show its fruit in the quiet ways of childhood. Had he been filled with the Holy Ghost immediately before commencing to preach, we should have connected the former with the latter as an official, rather than as an inward and moral, qualification. When men were required to fill the office of deacons--not to work miracles, not to speak with tongues, but to promote the brotherhood and good feeling of the Church, by a better regulation of its daily relief to the poor--the qualification demanded was, that they should be "men full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom." Again, Barnabas "was a good man and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith." This is said of him not as accounting

for any miracles or tongues, but in relation to the fact that, when he had seen the converts at Antioch, "he was glad, and exhorted them all that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord." Again, when the apostles were first called to bear witness for Christ before the rulers, "Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them," etc. Here we have no working of miracles, no speaking with foreign tongues; but we find the man who, when left to his own strength, denied his Master, now filled with a moral power which makes him bold to confess that Master's name before the rulers of his people, and with a wisdom to speak according at once to the oracles of God and the exigency of the moment.

After this first persecution was reported to the disciples generally, they, moved and distressed, appealed to the Lord in prayer, crying: "And now, Lord, behold their threatenings; and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word." The answer to this prayer is recorded in terms more striking than in any other case, except that of Pentecost: "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." Here, being "filled with the Holy Ghost" was not followed by any miraculous effects whatever, but was an inspiration, the result of which is special moral strength--strength to confront danger and shame; strength to declare all the gospel, though, in so doing, they periled every interest dear to them.

Our Lord had promised to his disciples miraculous light and power by the Spirit; but it was not as a miracle-working power that he had chiefly foretold his coming. It was as a spiritual power, a comforter, a guide unto all truth, a revealer of the things of God, a remembrancer of the words of Christ; one who would convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; one who would embolden the Lord's servants to bear witness before the most terrible adversaries, and would guide their lips to wise and convincing speech. Had it been his design that they should expect the Holy Spirit chiefly as a miraculous power, the leading promises would have had this aspect.

When he first clearly proclaims that the Comforter should come as a substitute for his own presence, he marks the classes who shall know him, and those who shall not. The distinction between them lies not in apostleship or ministry, not in gifts or powers, but in being of the world, and "not of the world." "Whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." (John xiv. 17.) Not, "For he will work miracles by you." That was not promised to all. Not, "He will prophesy by you." That he did not promise to all. But he did promise to all who are "not of the world" that he should dwell with them and be in them. Nor is this promise confined to the apostolic age, or to the times immediately succeeding. "That he may abide with you forever" gives an interest in the personal influences of the Comforter to the disciples of all ages, as well as to those of the first days.

This promised substitute for the personal presence of Christ was one whom the world should not see who was to be invisible to the natural eye, undiscernible by the natural mind, yet known and discerned by believers, though not seen; known not by outward sign, but by inward consciousness. Our Lord's expression is to be strictly noted: "The world seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him"; not, "Ye see and know him." in one respect the disciples and the world were to be alike: neither should see him. Yet the disciples should "know" him; for "he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." Their knowledge of him was to come not by sense, but by consciousness. Was this "being in them" to be an ordinary grace of believers or to be coupled only with office or supernatural endowments? The want of it is made by St. Paul conclusive against the claim of any man to be considered even a member of Christ: "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwelt in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." This passage, however, like many others, expresses only a participation of the

Spirit in some degree, without indicating what that degree might be; leaving it open to doubt, were there no other passages bearing upon the point, whether some might not be blessed with the indwelling of the Spirit, who yet were to be debarred from the fuller privilege expressed in the strong words, "filled with the Holy Ghost."

Eyesight is the necessary basis of what is called a painter's or a poet's eye; the sense of hearing, the necessary basis of what is called a musical ear; yet eyesight may exist where there is no poet's or painter's eye, and hearing where there is no musical ear. So may the human soul be "filled with the Holy Ghost," having every faculty illuminated, and every affection purified, without any miraculous gift. On the other hand, the miraculous power does not necessarily imply the spiritual fullness; for Paul puts the supposition of speaking with tongues, prophesying, removing mountains, and yet lacking charity, that love which must be shed abroad in every heart that is full of the Holy Ghost.

"Filled with the Holy Ghost!" Thrice blessed word! Thanks be to God that ever the tongues of men were taught it! It declares not only that the Lord has returned to his temple in the human soul, but that he has filled the house with his glory; pervaded every chamber, every court, by his manifested presence.

"That ye might be filled with all the fullness of God" is a prayer at which we falter. Is it not too much to ask? Is it not a sublime flight after the impossible? Let us remember it is not, "That ye might contain all the fullness of God." That would be more impossible than that your chamber should contain all the light of the sun. But it can be filled with the light of the sun --so filled that not a particle of unilluminated air shall remain within it. When, therefore, the hand of the apostle leads you up toward the countenance of your Father; when you approach to see the light which outshines all lights, "the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus," put away all thought of containing what the heavens cannot contain; but, humbly opening your heart, say, "Infinite Light, fill this little chamber!"

Reason says, "It may be"; Scripture says, "It may be"; but a shrinking of the heart says, "It cannot be--we can never 'be filled with all the fullness of God.'" When Paul had uttered that prayer, perhaps this same shrinking of heart had almost come over him. How does he meet it? Glancing down at his wonderful petition, and up at his almighty King, he breaks out: "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,--unto him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." Yea, Amen, ten thousand thousand times. The words of this doxology had been holy and blessed in any connection; but they are doubly blessed, closely following, as they do, the prayer, "That ye might be filled with all the fullness of God." Nor should we forget that the power which Paul here adores is not some abstract and unmoved power of Deity, but "the power which worketh in us." What is this power? The Holy Ghost--"might by his Spirit in the inner man."

What a labor of expression do we find in 2 Corinthians ix. 8, when Paul wants to convey his own idea of the power of grace as practically enabling men to do the will of God! "And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work." Here we have "abound" twice, and "all" four times, in one short sentence. "Abound" means not only to fill, but to overflow. The double overflow, first of grace from God to us, then of the same grace from us to "every good work," is a glorious comment on our Lord's word: "He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive; for the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified." The believer's heart, is placed, like the cistern, in communication with an invisible source; the

source constantly overflows into the cistern, and it again overflows. Happy the heart thus filled, thus overflowing with the Holy Spirit! Where is the fountain of those living waters, that we may bring our hearts thither? "He showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." (Revelation xxii. 1.) There is the fount, there is the stream--the Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son. To the throne of grace! to the mercy seat! and you are at the fountain of all life. Nor seek a scant supply at that source. "Be filled with the Spirit" sounds in your ears; and, if you believe, not only will a well "spring up within" you, but rivers shall flow out from you.

The Spirit, as replenishing the believer with actual virtues and practical holiness, is ever kept before our eye in the apostolic writings. "That we might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God: strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness."

Putting these various expressions together, what a view do they give of the riches of grace! "All sufficiency," "in all things," "always," "abound to every good work," "fruitful in every good work," "strengthened with all might," "according to his glorious power," "according to the power which worketh in us," "filled with all the fullness of God." Eternal Spirit, proceeding from the Father and the Son, answer and disperse all our unbelief by filling our hearts with Thyself!

The expression, "filled with the Holy Ghost," places before us the human spirit restored to its original and highest fellowship. In many respects that spirit is alone in this world. It finds here nothing that is its own equal. Everything upon which it can look is its inferior in both nature and powers. Earth and sky, beasts and birds, are the instruments of its comfort, or the subjects of its thoughts, but never can share in its cares or affections. The fields never say, "We enjoy thy presence," nor the stars, "We return thine admiration." The lower animals can take no part in its deep movements of hope and fear; can shed no light on its problems of justice, pardon, and the world to come. In the spirit of its fellow-man alone can it find an equal; and in communion with it, though it often solaces, often both wounds and defiles. Yet it is the nature of man to seek an object kindred to himself, but superior. Probably this is necessary to all natures which are at the same time rational and finite. But where can man find a being kindred to himself, and yet superior to him? Below the sky he is head, yet upward his instincts turn--upward toward some one brighter or greater than himself.

What can answer to those upward aspirations of the soul? Its Creator. After years spent in search of happiness, the human spirit penitently returns toward its God, and, trusting in the atonement of his Son, finds forgiveness for the past. Then does the great Comforter, the Witness of the Father's love, the Spirit of adoption, give the manifestation of the Divine favor which David delighted to call "the light of thy countenance." This manifestation may be gentle, or it may be rapturous; but in any case it is comforting. When gentlest, it touches chords of satisfaction more delicate than were ever reached by the most subtle joy of intellect; when most rapturous, it carries with it an assent of the whole judgment such as no previous enjoyment, however tranquil, commanded. The thirst of the soul has no deeper seat than is now reached. Wisdom has no remonstrance, expectation no disappointment, fear no warning. It may be in a profound calm, it may be in an unspeakable joy; but it is with core-deep consciousness that the soul feels it has now touched, yea, tasted, its supreme good, and that, for time or for eternity, it needs no more than to abide in this blessedness, and improve this fellowship.

How can that be special which is universal? God is not far from every one of us. Every man who moves upon the earth moves in him. How, then, can he be specially present with one man more than with

another? Strictly speaking, perhaps it is more a question of manifestation than of presence. Electric agency may be present everywhere, but it rarely makes itself visible in a flash. Heat may be present everywhere, but is not everywhere manifested by fire. Jude said: "Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" God is with all, but is unseen by any eye, and, alas! undiscerned by many a spirit. He does not withdraw his presence from any part of his universe, or his care from any of his creatures; but, as a human frame may be moving amid the light of the sun, and see no light, so may a soul be moving in that universe which is fuller of God than the atmosphere at noontide is of sunbeams, and yet discern no God.

All objects require a suitable faculty, or they are unperceived. Sound exists not to the eye; light exists not to the ear; flavor exists not to the touch. It is of no avail that an object is, unless our nature has the special faculty whereby we can descry its presence. A strong magnetic power may be acting on the compass, whereon the steersman concentrates his attention; but eye, ear, hand, smell, taste, give no report of its presence to the mind; and he first learns that it was there by the crash of the ship on a coast which he thought was far away.

Our Lord said, in reply to Jude: "If any man love me, he will keep my word; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." This is more than mere presence. Presence may be unfelt, and therefore forgotten; may be with displeasure, and therefore joyless. But this is presence manifested--"We will come to him"; gracious --the coming is from "love"; habitual and involving fellowship--both of these ideas lie in, "Make our abode with him."

Two men are walking upon the same plain, and each turns his face toward the sky. The light of the sun is shining upon both; but one sees no sun, while the other sees not only light, but the face of the sun, and his eye is overpowered with its glory. What makes the difference between the two? Not that one is in darkness, and the other in light; not that one is near the sun, and the other far away; not that one has an eye differently constituted from the other; but simply that there is a thin cloud between heaven and the one, and no cloud between it and the other. The latter cannot only trace evidence that there is a sun, and that he is up, but has the presence of that sun before his face, and his glory filling his eye. So two men stand in relation to the universal and all-present God. One believes, infers, intellectually knows, that he is--aye, that he is present--yet he discerns him not; it is a matter of inference, not of consciousness; and though believing that God is, and that he is present, he sins. Another spiritually discerns, feels his presence; and he learns to "stand in awe, and sin not."

Suppose the case of a cripple who had spent his life in a room where the sun was never seen. He has heard of its existence, he believes in it, and, indeed, has seen enough of its light to give him high ideas of its glory. Wishing to see the sun, he is taken out at night into the streets of an illuminated city. At first he is delighted, dazzled; but after he has had time to reflect, he finds darkness spread amid the lights, and he asks: "Is this the sun?" He is taken out under the starry sky, and is enraptured; but on reflection finds that night covers the earth, and again asks: "Is this the sun?" He is carried out some bright day at noontide, and no sooner does his eye open on the sky than all question is at an end. There is but one sun. His eye is content; it has seen its highest object, and feels that there is nothing brighter. So with the soul: it enjoys all lights, yet, amid those of art and nature, is still inquiring for something greater. But when it is led by the reconciling Christ into the presence of the Father, and he lifts up upon it the light of his countenance, all thought of anything greater disappears. As there is but one sun, so there is but one God. The soul which once discerns and knows him feels that greater or brighter there is none, and that the only possibility of ever beholding more glory is by drawing nearer.

The operation of the Holy Spirit implies a quickening of the nature of man by an impartation of the Divine nature, and every increase of it implies a fuller communion of the Eternal Father with his adopted child. When the soul of man is "filled with the Holy Ghost," then has God that wherein he does rejoice--"a temple not made with hands," not reared by human art, of unconscious and insensible material; a temple created by his own word, and living by his own breath. In that living temple he displays somewhat of his glory. In the Shekinah of the sanctuary he could manifest majesty only. In this living temple he can manifest truth, purity, tenderness, forgiveness, justice--the whole round of such attributes as his children below the sky are capable of comprehending.

Thus inhabited, not only is the soul of man unutterably blessed, but his body reaches dignity, the thought of which might make even flesh sing: "Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God; and ye are not your own." Not your own, for purchase has been made--"Ye are bought with a price"; not your own, for possession has been taken--"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you" (1 Corinthians iii. 16, etc.) A holy man, whose presence breathes an unworldly air around him, whose name is identified with a constancy of godly actions, is a visible monument and remembrancer of God. Each member of his body is as a temple vessel. By it holy works are done, and the will of the parent Spirit on moral points expressed by material instruments. His spirit is led by the Spirit of God. His "mortal body" is quickened by the Spirit "that dwelleth in him." He not only "lives in the Spirit," but "walks in the Spirit"--his visible acts, as well as his hidden emotions, being "after the Spirit." The natural man has disappeared from his life and actions. Another creature lives. Thoughts, purposes, works, which his nature never prompted, which, when prompted by revelation, his nature could not attain to, now abound, as sweet grapes on a good vine. This precept is embodied in his life: "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin; but yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." (Romans vi. 13.)

In this the power of the Holy Ghost is practically manifested by a reversal of the relations of the human spirit and the flesh, To persons yet in the body, the apostle says: "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be the Spirit of God dwell in you." Not in the flesh, yet in the body! The unconverted man has a spirit, but it is carnalized; the play of its powers, the studies of the intellect, the flights of the imagination, the impulses of the heart, are dictated by motives which all range below the sky and halt on this side of the tomb. The spirit is the servant of the flesh; and man differs from perishing animals chiefly in this, that for carnal purposes and delights he commands the service of a spiritual agent--his own soul.

The Holy Spirit as man's regenerator reverses this state of things. He quickens the spirit, and through it quickens the frame; so that, instead of spiritual powers being carnalized, a mortal body is spiritualized; instead of soul and spirit being subjected by the flesh, flesh and blood become instruments of the Spirit. Limbs move on works of heavenly origin and intent. Thus a direct connection is established between the will of the Supreme Spirit and the material organs of man. A purpose originates in the mind of God; by his Spirit it is silently and swiftly transmitted to the spirit of his child, and by this to the "mortal body." Then, as an iron wire on the shore of the Crimea expresses the will of the British Queen in London, so do the earthly members of a mortal express, in the outward and physical world, the purpose of the Holy One. This is redemption achieved; this is adoption in its issues; this is the new life; this is human nature restored, man walking in the light--"God dwelling in him, and he in God." Then his life is a light, and a light so pure that it gives those on whom it shines, not the idea of "good nature," but of something heavenly. They see his good works, and "glorify his Father which is in heaven"; not extol his character, but feel that he is

raised above his own character, and is "God's workmanship, created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works."

A piece of iron is dark and cold: imbued with a certain degree of heat, it becomes almost burning without any change of appearance; imbued with a still greater degree, its very appearance changes to that of solid fire, and it sets fire to whatever it touches. A piece of water without heat is solid and brittle: gently warmed, it flows; further heated, it mounts to the sky. An organ filled with the ordinary degree of air which exists everywhere is dumb; the touch of the player can elicit but a clicking of the keys. Throw in not another air, but an unsteady current of the same air, and sweet but imperfect and uncertain notes immediately respond to the player's touch; increase the current to a full supply, and every pipe swells with music. Such is the soul without the Holy Ghost; and such are the changes which pass upon it when it receives the Holy Ghost, and when it is "filled with the Holy Ghost." In the latter state only is it fully imbued with the Divine nature; bearing in all its manifestations some plain resemblance to its God; conveying to all on whom it acts some impression of him; mounting heavenward in all its movements, and harmoniously pouring forth, from all its faculties, the praises of the Lord.

The moral change wrought in the disciples, by the new baptism of the Spirit, is strikingly displayed in the case of one man. A difficult service was to be performed in Jerusalem that day. Had it been desired to find a man in London who would have gone down to Whitehall a few weeks after Charles was beheaded, and, addressing Cromwell's soldiers, have endeavored to persuade them that he whom they had executed was not only a king, and a good one, but a prophet of God, and that, therefore, they had been guilty of more than regicide--of sacrilege; although England had brave men then, it may be questioned whether any one could have been found to bear such a message to that audience.

The service which had then to be performed in Jerusalem was similar to this. It was needful that some one should stand up under the shadow of the temple and, braving chief priests and mobs alike, assert that He whom they had shamefully executed seven weeks ago was Israel's long-looked-for Messiah; that they had been guilty of a sin which had no name; had raised their hands against "God manifest in the flesh"; had, in words strange to human ears, "killed the Prince of life." Who was thus to confront the rage of the mob and the malice of the priests? We see a man rising, filled with a holy fire, so that he actually forgets his danger, and seems not even conscious that he is doing an heroic act. He casts back upon the mockery their charge, and proceeds to open and to press home his tremendous accusation, as if he were a king upon a throne, and each man before him a lonely and defenseless culprit.

Who is this man? Have we not seen him before? Is it possible that it can be Peter? We know him of old: he has a good deal of zeal, but little steadiness; he means well, and, when matters are smooth, can serve well; but when difficulties and adversaries rise before him, his moral courage fails. How short a time is it ago since we saw him tried! He had been resolving that, come what might, he would stand by his Master to the last. Others might flinch; he would stand. Soon the Master was in the hands of enemies. Yet his case was by no means lost. The governor was on his side; many of the people were secretly for him; nothing could be proved against him; and, above all, he who had saved others could save himself. Yet, as Peter saw scowling faces, his courage failed. A servant-maid looked into his eye, and his eye fell. She said she thought he belonged to Jesus of Nazareth. His heart sank, and he said: "No." Then another looked in his face, and repeated the same suspicion. Now, of course, he was more cowardly, and repeated his "No." A third looked upon him, and insisted that he belonged to the accused Prophet. How his poor heart was all fluttering! And, to make it plain that he had nothing to do with Jesus of Nazareth, he began to curse and swear.

Is it within the same breast, where this pale and tremulous heart quaked, that we see glowing a brave heart which dreads neither the power of the authorities nor the violence of the populace; which faces every prejudice and every vice of Jerusalem, every bitter Pharisee and every street brawler, as if they were no more than straying and troublesome sheep? Is the Peter of Pilate's hall the Peter of Pentecost, with the same natural powers, the same force of character, the same training, and the same resolutions? If so, what a difference is made in a man by the one circumstance of being filled with the Holy Ghost!

Oh, for high examples of God's moral "workmanship"! Oh, for men instinct with the Spirit: the countenance glowing as a transparency with a lamp behind it; the eye shining with a purer, truer light than any that genius or good-nature ever shed; limbs agile for any act of prayer, of praise, of zeal, for any errand of compassion; and a tongue of fire! Oh, for men on whom the silent verdict of the observer would be, "He is a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost"! Never, perhaps, did earthly eyes see more frequently than we see, in our day, men with ordinary Christian excellences; men in private life whose walk is blameless; men in the ministry who are admirable, worthy, and useful. But are not men "full of the Holy Ghost" a rare and diminished race? Are those whose entire spirit bespeaks a walk of prayer, such as we would ascribe to Enoch or to John; whose words fall with a demonstration of the Spirit, and a power such as we conceive attended Paul or Apollos; who make on believers the impression of being immediate and mighty instruments of God, and on unbelievers the impression of being dangerous to come near, lest they should convert them --are such men often met with?

Do not even the good frequently speak as if we were not to look for such burning and shining lights--as if we must be content, in our educated and intelligent age, with a style of holiness more level and less startling? Do not many make up their minds nevermore to see men such as their fathers saw--men at whose prayer a wondrous power of God was ever ready to fall, whether upon two or three kneeling in a cabin, and wondering how the unlearned could find such wisdom, or on the great multitude, wondering how the learned could find such simplicity? Nevermore see such men! The Lord forbid! Return, O Power of Pentecost, return to thy people! Shed down thy flame on many heads! To us, as to our fathers, and to those of the old time before them, give fullness of grace! Without thee, we can do nothing; but, filled with the Holy Ghost, the excellency of the power will be of thee, O God. and not of us!

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