

Thirst To Be Filled With The Holy Spirit

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of seeking the fullness of the Holy Spirit in our lives, highlighting the need for a deep thirst and persistence in pursuing God's blessing. Using the example of Jacob wrestling with God, it encourages listeners to be honest about their shortcomings and to seek a transformation in their spiritual walk, leading to a life filled with the power of the Holy Spirit and a changed identity as a child of God.

Scripture: Genesis 32:24, Matthew 3:11, Philippians 4:13, John 7:37, 1 Corinthians 9:24, Philippians 3:13

Topics: "Seeking the Holy Spirit", "Transformation through Persistence"

Description

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Transcript

Remember one thing, the word gospel means good news. Never forget that. If somebody presents a gospel to you that sounds like bad news, that's not the gospel.

Like for example, if you hear a message that says you're so far gone that there's no hope for you. Is that good news or bad news? That's why Jesus, you know, before he died on the cross, he forgave the thief. You know, when you read the Bible carefully, you read that when it was a normal custom for them to offer some type of anesthetic to people who were being crucified because the pain was so great.

They gave it to the robbers and to Jesus. You know, they held it up for him to drink and he said, no, I don't want it. The robbers probably took it.

That is at the beginning of his crucifixion. But you read at the end of his crucifixion in John 19 that he took it. So, I mean, anybody would like an anesthetic when you're being crucified.

It was some type of wine or something they gave to relieve the pain, a little bit of mercy those Roman soldiers showed the criminals. And I've often thought, why did he refuse it when it was offered the first time? Have you noticed that in the account of the crucifixion? I'm not sure exactly where it is. It's in one of the accounts of the crucifixion in the Gospels.

But finally we read in John 19 he took it. And the reason is because unlike all these other guys being crucified, he had a lot of work to do during the next three hours. He was six hours on the cross.

The last three hours he was in hell. By hell I mean forsaken by God. The experience of hell is not fire and worms and all that.

Those are ways in which Jesus expressed what hell is like. But it's much worse than fire and worms. It is being forsaken by God and we don't have a clue what that is like.

It's much worse than fire and worms, I'll tell you that. It's a terrible thing. There's no place in the world today which is forsaken by God.

There's mercy everywhere. Even the terrorists are not forsaken completely by God. But once a person goes into hell, you know that rich man who was in hell, he pleaded for a drop of water.

He didn't have a tongue in hell. His tongue was on earth. His body was on earth.

But that sense of being drained out and forsaken made him cry out and just by the way he's been crying out for 2,000 years now. There's no escape. That man who did not care for that poor beggar, who was his brother by the way, did you know that? He was not a stranger.

It's not like we see some stranger lying on the road. It's not like the beggars we see in India. Every person living in Israel was a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

The rich man in that story was a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and Lazarus, the poor beggar sitting at his gate was also a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He was his brother. That's why it was such a crime.

It was his brother sitting at the gate begging for food and the dogs licking his sores and this guy didn't care for him. The Bible says if a person doesn't care for his own brother, how can he talk about the love of God? And while the rabbis and all were singing his praises because he gave a lot of money to the synagogue, the poor man was already in hell and he's been there for 2,000 years now. It's a terrible thing to be in hell.

But Jesus did not drink at the beginning because he did not want to be anesthetized. He had to be alert. He had to be alert for a number of reasons.

Number one, he had to pray to the Father to forgive all these people who were crucifying him. They were harming him. They did not know what they were doing.

They did not know they were crucifying the Son of God. Number one, he had to forgive them. He had to care for his mother.

Imagine hanging on the cross. That shows the devotion he had for his mother. He would not let his mother interfere with his ministry because right in the marriage of Cana he said, woman, what have I got to do with you? Don't come and interfere in my ministry.

But he cared for his mother, teaching us that we must never let our parents or any relatives interfere with our calling when we seek to please God. But we must love them and care for them, even if you're hanging on a cross. That's the example of Jesus.

He had to do that and he couldn't have done that if he was anesthetized. He had to tell John to take care of his mother. And he had to forgive that thief and tell him that he would be in paradise that day.

He had to listen to that thief's prayer and forgive him and give hope for us that even at the last minute the person can repent and enter God's kingdom. What a wonderful message there is there in the forgiveness of the thief. The worst criminal can be forgiven at the last minute if he repents.

But when he gets to heaven he'll have this regret that he couldn't show his gratitude to Jesus by living a life that pleases him. Those who are converted at the last minute may be in heaven, but they'll have a lot of regret. I don't want to be converted at my deathbed.

I was converted when I was 19. I wish I were converted even earlier so that I could live a little more for Jesus. My regret is that I have had only 62 years to live for the Lord.

I wish I had more. So Jesus had to be alert and that's why he didn't take that anesthetic the first time. But once the six hours were over and he said he was going to say it is finished, then he took it at the last moment.

So we see there that in the case of the Apostle Paul I was mentioning how even though he messed up so much of his life, he could still finish his course. And that's a great encouragement. As I told you the word gospel means good news.

Jesus came with good news. There's good news for the thief on the cross. There's good news for all those people who killed him when he forgave them.

And there's good news for those who made a mess of their life. See, very few people are converted. I mean I've heard of people who are converted when they are three or four years old.

I believe even a little child can accept Christ. But very few are sincere and devoted from the time they are three or four years old. Almost all believers are converted later on in life, by which time they've done so many wrong things.

They never sought God's will in marriage and they married the wrong person. Or they entered into an unhappy marriage. Or they took some other decisions concerning their job and profession.

So many things which they regret now. I'm sure all of us all of us, including me, including the Apostle Paul if they could look back over their life they say I wish I had made certain other decisions when I was 15 or 20 or 25. There's hardly anybody on earth who doesn't have that regret, even among believers.

And even after we are born again some of the decisions we have made, we have regrets because we sought our own. And that got us into a lot of problems perhaps. And even if it didn't bring us into problems we miss out on the will of God in so many areas.

Or we wasted a lot of time which could have been spent studying God's word and blessing other people. So many regrets. That's why that word I shared with you is a great blessing.

The time of ignorance God overlooks. But now he commands everyone to repent. I remember someone who did not want to take water baptism.

He came from a church that practiced child baptism. Yeah, you can be born again without taking baptism but obedience involves baptism, water immersion baptism. So this guy had accepted the Lord and when someone told him brother you know that every Christian in the Acts of the Apostles got baptized as soon as they were born again not when they were children.

And he replied saying but the dying thief was not baptized. So this wise preacher told him you're not a dying thief, you're a living thief. So you can't take the excuse of the dying thief.

You can get baptized. You need to get baptized. So we thank God that God overlooks our times of ignorance but that should give us such a sorrow.

You know I really began to take my experience, the reality of the Christian life only when I was 16 years after I was born again. Because I didn't have anyone to, I wish somebody had taught me these things when I was converted at the age of 19. Boy my life would have been so different.

But God allowed me to go 16 years living a Christian life. I'd even given up my job to serve the Lord. Very sincere but inwardly defeated.

Didn't know how to be a part of a New Testament church. I was just attending a regular denomination church and never knew what it was to build the body of Christ. And thank God it finally, when I was 35 years old in the mercy of God we started the first CFC in our home in 1975 the 17th of August and never forget it.

It was the beginning of a new age in my life. And so I see the result of that now in so many parts of the world that God has done. So what I want to say is I told young people in our own church in Bangalore as you folks are 16, 17 years old and you have the opportunity to hear what I heard when I was 35.

And so you can start running the race when you're 17. The race I started running when I'm 35 and you start running it when you're 17. So you should actually overtake me spiritually.

But you know I don't think you'll overtake me. And I'll tell you why. Because I have such tremendous regret that I wasted those first 35 years of my life that I am running full speed and never looking back.

And I don't think you guys are running full speed. You're looking here and there with other interests but you're not going to overtake me. I wish you would overtake me.

I wish that every one of the brothers would overtake me and be far more spiritual than I've ever become. But you've got to be zealous my brother, sister if you have regret over your past life, your decisions your decisions in marriage, your decisions in the way you brought up your children your decisions concerning your job and the way you handle money and everything else the more regret you have, the faster you should run. That's what makes me run fast.

I say, Lord, I've got so much, so many years to make up for. Wasted life. Wasted years.

I've got to make up for that. It's like someone running in a marathon race and played the first fool for the first half an hour and all the others have gone way past and he says, boy, I've got to make up time and he runs and runs. There are people who have fallen down in a race and got up and run and come first.

There's a verse in 1 Corinthians 9 which says, run in order to win. Let me show you that verse. Never forget it.

Keep it as a motto in your life. 1 Corinthians chapter 9, verse 24. Good motto to have in your life.

All of you. Especially those who are sorrowful about the years you've wasted. 1 Corinthians 9, verse 24, the last part.

Run in such a way that you may win. But you say, I've tripped up tripped up, wasted so many times. Never mind.

Get up and run and you can still win. And let me encourage you. To whom is he writing this? He's not writing this to a bunch of spiritual people.

He's writing this to the Corinthian Christians and if you read chapter 3, they were the most carnal worldly, fleshly Christians. It was the worst church at that time. And to those people whose lives were worse than yours, they were taking each other to court.

There was adultery going on in their midst. To those Christians, Paul says, you can run in such a way that you can win. So I want to say to every one of you sitting here, there's hope for every single one of you.

Don't ever say that there's no hope for you because of your past life. It makes absolutely no difference to God. The blood of Christ has taken care of your past and now you have to say, Lord, I want to press on to the future.

See what Paul said in Philippians in chapter 3. This is the man, I told you, who wasted half his life doing worse things than any of us have done. Persecuting Christians, killing them, taking them to court. And imagine, I often think of the sorrow that Paul would have had when he got up to preach in a church in Jerusalem or somewhere and he sees sitting there the mother of somebody he killed.

Imagine if Stephen's mother was sitting there. Every time Paul saw her as she spoke, he said, boy, I killed her son. You don't have that regret.

You haven't done such bad things. God took a man like that who he called himself a chief of sinners. God took a man like that and made him finish his course and have one of the greatest ministries that any Christian could have to be an example for us.

He says, follow me because I follow Christ. So don't let any of you have any regret over your past to such an extent that you say, well, I messed up too badly. I don't care how old you are.

Even if you're 70 years old, it makes no difference. Make sure you don't waste the rest of your life in regret. Put it behind you.

Put it under the blood of Christ. The Lord says, I don't remember it. Then you also don't remember it.

But make the memory of your past failures give you such zeal to say, I'm going to run faster. See what Paul says in Philippians 3. He says in verse 13, I don't regard myself as having laid hold of what, the previous sentence, what Christ laid hold of me. Christ laid hold of me, he says, to make me like him.

Christ has laid hold of every one of you and me to make us like him. Completely like him. That's his goal.

In your attitude, love, goodness, mercy and purity and everything to make you 100% like him. And Paul says towards the end of his life, I haven't got there yet. I still see, I've got a passion to become like Christ,

but I haven't got there fully yet.

But, this is what I want you to say to yourself. Verse 13. One thing I do.

Forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead. I press, I'm running fast to reach the finishing line. The goal of the upward call of God to become like Christ.

Let Paul's example challenge you. And those of you who are young, boy, you guys are really lucky. What an opportunity you have to live your whole life for Christ.

I wish I had given my life to Christ when I was five years old. I could have so much more to give him. You know, there's a song I often sing to myself when we sing in the church.

By and by when I look on his face, beautiful face, thorn-shadowed face, by and by when I look on my Savior's face, I wish I had given him more. More, so much more. More of my life than I ever gave before.

By and by when I look on his face, I wish I had given him more. It challenges me. I sing it to myself.

I urge you to learn that song and sing it to yourself often. And don't ever regret in that day and say, oh, I wish I had given you more. Now is the time to think about it right now.

Forgetting what lies behind, reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press toward the goal. My goal is not to become a world-famous preacher. No.

My goal is not to travel countries or do anything. My goal is to become like Jesus Christ, even if I don't go anywhere outside my own town all my life. Jesus never traveled the world.

Israel is such a small country, smaller than any of your states in Australia. But he was quite happy there. And in that small country, he ministered for three and a half years, lived for 33 and a half, and I finished my course.

He finished his work. So let your passion be to finish the rest of your life, to finish what God, to reach, to become like Christ, to become like him. Lord, I want to be like you.

Every day there must be a passion in your life. Lord, show me where I'm not like you. You husbands, ask God to show you where you're not behaving like Christ towards your wife.

And you wives, ask yourself where you're not submitting to your husband, like the churches to Christ. That's not for the husband to check up. No.

That's for the wife to judge herself. Husbands only have to decide whether they're loving their wife like Christ loved the church. You know, just like you don't read other people's letters.

I hope you don't read other people's letters. There's a letter God has written to your wife. Submit to your husband like the churches to Christ.

Husbands, don't read that letter. That's not for you. And don't quote that to your wife.

Because some husbands do that. They say, hey, you know, it says you must submit to me. You're reading somebody else's letter.

That's a sin. You mind your own business. Read the letter written to you.

Husbands, love your wives like Christ loved the church. Pursue that. Yeah, it's a wonderful life.

Now the question is, how shall I endure till the end? How shall I have the strength to live this life? How can I ensure that one week from now, I'm back in this backslidden state I am in right now? How can I ensure that one month from now, I don't forget everything I've heard in this conference and go back to an up-and-down type of experience? How can I come into this life where there's a steady growth upwards? I want to say to you that God, our Christian life is like getting an education. Every year, like your son or daughter goes from one grade to the next grade and the next grade. You don't want any of your children to sit in the same grade even for two years.

One year is a maximum. But imagine if they sit in the same grade for three or four years. Why? You'd say, what's wrong with my son? What's wrong with my daughter? She's sitting in the same class for four years.

That's the sorrow that your Heavenly Father feels when he sees you in the same level year after year after year, murmuring and complaining, just like you did last year or the year before. Even though the Bible says, finish with all murmuring and complaining. It's a clear word in Philippians 2. Do everything without grumbling, without murmuring.

Everything. It's a challenge. Philippians 2.14. Read it sometimes.

Do everything without grumbling and complaining. What a lovely verse to put on the wall of your home. Do everything without grumbling or complaining.

Your home can be a little bit like heaven on earth. But you'll never get there if you don't pursue it. One thing I do, forgetting what is behind.

You see, sometimes the devil keeps on reminding you, you did this, you did this in the past, you did this in the past. What a mess you made of your life. That's like driving with your foot on the brakes.

Do you ever drive with your foot on the brakes? You have to do that sometimes in India because there are cows and human beings and all on the road. And so you don't know what you're going to hit. So you've got to have your foot on the brake almost all the time.

But that's not how you guys drive. But if you try to drive with your foot on the brakes, you won't make much progress. And that's what many Christians are doing.

Always looking back, oh, I made a mess there, I made a mess there. Forget it. If it's under the blood of Christ, forgetting what is behind, pressing forward to what is behind.

Look at the finishing line. Nobody wins a hundred meters race if they're looking back all the time. Look in front, finishing the race.

And the strength to finish this race, let me turn you to John's Gospel, chapter 7. We read here in verse 37. It says here Jesus cried out. Do you know that Jesus was a very soft-spoken preacher? When he preached, you don't have to turn to it, but I can read a verse for you that says Matthew 12, 19.

When he preaches, his voice will not be heard in the streets. That means when he preached in a house, those houses were small in Israel in those days. The guy walking on the street wouldn't hear Jesus

because he wasn't this yelling, screaming type of preacher.

He spoke gently and softly. His voice will not be heard in the streets. He will not cry out.

Matthew 12, 19. So don't be impressed by the preachers who cry out and shout and things like that. Jesus is not in that category.

His power was in the effect of his words, not in the volume of the sound. That's why I don't shout. I try to imitate Jesus in everything possible, even in the way I preach.

But we read once he did shout. The only time we read Jesus shouting out in his message and that's when he told people to come to him and be filled with the Holy Spirit. John 7, 37.

The last day Jesus stood and cried out. That's the other thing you see. He stood almost all the time.

He would sit and speak. You see in John chapter eight, verse two, he sat down. John 8, verse two.

He sat down and spoke. When he was the salmon on the mountain, he sat on the mountain and spoke. Sometimes he sat in a boat and spoke.

Most of the time Jesus sat and spoke. And there's a symbolism there also. The Old Testament prophets never sat and spoke.

They stood up. Every prophet stood and spoke. Because they were like teachers.

The teacher in a classroom doesn't sit down and speak. Everywhere in the world a teacher in a classroom stands up. And the Old Testament prophets were teachers.

Jesus was a father. Like a father sitting around the dining table, speaking to his children. That's how Jesus preached his messages.

They were his sons and daughters. He was not a teacher. He was a father.

You know the difference between a teacher and a father? Paul once told the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 4. He says, if I scold you, I'm scolding you like a father, not like a teacher. He says that in 1 Corinthians 4. Read it sometime. What is the difference? Think of a young boy who's not very good at mathematics.

Arithmetic. And he's in the fourth grade and he's studying some subject, some part of mathematics. And he just can't get it.

He can't understand it. Sometimes there's some things in math that are a little difficult to understand. And all the other students in the class are very clever.

They get it. They get it. Except this one boy.

This little 11-year-old boy is sitting in the class. He can't understand. He says, teacher, I can't understand it.

And the teacher explains it a second time and a third time. He says, I still can't understand. The teacher gets fed up.

He says, get out of my class. I can't hold up the class just because you don't understand something. Get out of this school and go and sit somewhere else.

I don't have time to teach you this. All the others are advancing and you're just dragging everybody behind. Get out.

Go and join some other school. And that poor boy goes out weeping. And he goes home.

And his dad comes home in the evening and says, what happened, son? And he cries and says, Dad, I just don't understand some things in mathematics. And the teacher got fed up with me and told me to get out of the class, never to come back to the school. I don't know what to do.

What should I do, Laura? What should I do, Dad? I'm not so intelligent. And the dad says, don't worry, son. I'll teach you.

And he sits with his son that night, explains everything. One hour. Personal tuition.

And the boy says, Dad, this is a tough thing. I still can't understand it. I'm sorry.

And the dad says, don't worry. Tomorrow is another day. When I come back from office, I'll sit with you again.

That boy doesn't have to cry. He's got a loving dad. And the second day, he still can't grasp it.

You know, some things in mathematics can be pretty complicated. And the dad is determined. My son is going to understand this.

And however long it takes, I'm going to explain it to him. And one day, because if the light suddenly came on in his mind, he said, Dad, I got it now! And the dad's more excited than the boy. That is the difference between a teacher and a father.

Jesus is a father. He'll never give up on you. Remember that.

Even if you say, after 10 explanations, I can't understand it. Never mind. I'll try again.

He's worked like that with me. And that is why I seek to be like that to others. And I never want to give up hope for anyone.

In any of our churches. Anywhere in the world. I can have hope for the worst.

Worst people. Sometimes I go to a home in one of our CFC families. I've had this experience a number of times.

And the mother or father will turn to one and say to me, Brother Zach, this son of mine is really wayward. He's not interested in following the Lord. Some of my other children are okay.

Pray for him. You know what I do? I say, I pray for the parents. I think it's the parents who need to be prayed for.

I said, I'll pray for your parents. And then I say to them at the end, I have more hope for this boy than for all the others. Because in all my 60 years of being a Christian, I've learned the story of the prodigal son.

Everybody thought in that story that the elder boy is the good boy. He's going to make it. But finally, you know who got the ring on his finger? The father had a ring on his finger, which he kept and kept deciding which son should get it.

And you know who got it? The younger son. Yeah. That's how God is.

Because that younger son had no high thoughts about himself. He'd made such a mess of his life. And I've seen many prodigals like that changed completely just because they were encouraged instead of being criticized.

Instead of being compared with other children. I never do that. I tell parents, never, never, never compare one son with another.

Either someone who's doing better or someone who's doing worse. Just don't do it. You must love your wholehearted spiritual son as much as your thoroughly wayward son or daughter.

That's how God is. Jesus said, I did not come for the righteous. I came to call sinners to repentance.

The Pharisees were the ones who only met with the righteous. Oh, you righteous people come here. You sinners get out.

Once when Jesus sat with a whole lot of sinners, he said, what did they ask you to decide? What is your master doing in sitting with sinners? And Jesus said, who are the people who need a doctor? Those who are healthy or those who are sick? You guys think you're healthy. Well, I didn't come for you. These guys know they are sick.

I came for them. That's how I look at wayward sons and daughters when I see them in any family. I have hope for them.

And I hope parents will also have hope for them. Because God has hope for them. So Jesus cried out with a loud voice here in John 7.37 saying, if anyone is thirsty, I don't care whether you're the biggest backslider, whether you wasted so many years of your life.

Are you thirsty today? Are you thirsty for the dive of life? I've been speaking about a godly life where you don't do your own will, but you do the will of God. You do everything for the glory of God. And you want to make something out of your life.

Then he says here, see John 7.37 Come to me, he says, and drink and from your innermost being will flow rivers of living water. What will come out of your life is not a few drops, but rivers. And this he spoke about the Holy Spirit, whom those who believed in him were going to receive.

That is on the day of Pentecost. Because the Spirit was not yet given, John 7.39 because Jesus was not yet glorified. Have you ever meditated on that verse? People have asked me about this.

What do you mean the Holy Spirit was not given? Don't you read in the Old Testament that the Holy Spirit came on David, anointed him. The Holy Spirit came on King Saul, came on the prophets, came upon even Gideon. The Spirit came and the Spirit came upon them and came upon Ezekiel.

I said, that's right, came upon, always upon, upon, upon, never in, never, never in. If I cover this glass of water with a lid and I pour any amount of water on top, that's the Spirit upon, upon, upon, upon the Holy

Spirit. Inside of the glass, if it's filthy, it will remain filthy.

If it's empty, it will remain empty. Because it's upon, upon, what has been poured upon. When the veil was rent, when the division between soul and spirit was rent, the lid came off, then the Holy Spirit could come within the Spirit.

That's the meaning of the rent veil in the temple. It's all very simple. That's what happened when Jesus died.

The veil was rent and the Spirit could come into my spirit and I could experience what even John the Baptist did not experience. He had the Spirit upon him. The Spirit upon is for ministry and those people could not have a ministry without anointing of the Spirit.

But many of those people like Gideon, the Holy Spirit came upon him to fight against the Midianites and defeat them and then at the end of it, you know what he did? He must read the end of Gideon's story. After winning such a fantastic victory, anointed by the Holy Spirit, we read the people of Israel just almost worshipped him because he was such a wonderful leader and when they came to him, he said, okay, if you want to show your gratitude, give me all your gold. You women, pull out your gold from your ears and take out your gold bangles and chains.

It's just like some preachers. Give me all your money because I blessed you. Jesus never did it.

The apostles never did it and in CFC churches, we never do it. But Gideon did that and he collected all that gold and you know what he did with it? You read there in Judges chapter 9, I think it is. He made it an idol.

This man who was once anointed by the Spirit, that's the result of a pawn. You can lose it. It's gone.

David had the Spirit upon him. He wrote those wonderful Psalms. You know that he wrote the Psalms as a young 29-year-old boy? Young man because the Spirit was upon him.

Look at all the wonderful Psalms that we read. Remember it was written by a young 28-year-old David. The Spirit was upon him.

But when he backslid, he could kill Goliath when the Spirit was upon him. Finally! But when he backslid, he fell into sin with Bathsheba. He didn't have any inner strength.

I warn young people from the example of David. I ask young people, can you answer this question? Who do you think is stronger, Goliath or Bathsheba? Tell me. Who has more muscles? Who can knock David down? Goliath or Bathsheba? David knocked Goliath down in one blow.

Bathsheba knocked down David with one look. Just like a lot of girls knock down men today. Even Christian men with one look.

Remember, Bathsheba is stronger than Goliath. Be careful. The only way to overcome is for the Spirit now to come in and fill me.

How can I do that? Jesus said, first of all, are you thirsty? Are you thirsty for the type of life that you have heard described in these last couple of days? You say, Lord, I want this life. I want to be an overcomer. Not to get a name for myself.

Not to be known as some great saint or any such stupid thing. But, Lord, because I want to please you. I want to show my gratitude to you.

I don't want to see you one day and wish I had given you more. I don't want to wish I had given you more then. I want to give you more right now.

That's why I want this inner strength of the Holy Spirit. The Lord says, come to me. You want to be filled with the Holy Spirit? Come to me.

You remember what John the Baptist said? He said, I can't baptize you in the Holy Spirit. Matthew 3, 11. He said, I can baptize you in water.

That I'll do. But only Jesus can baptize you in the Holy Spirit. You know, people have gone to Pentecostal churches and seen a lot of pastors lay hands on them and praying for them to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

And what do they get? Some man puts his empty hands on somebody's empty head. You don't get anything. So sometimes people, having seen that, come to me and say, Brother Zach, please lay your hands on my head so that I can be filled with the Holy Spirit.

I say what John the Baptist said. I said, I can baptize you in water. Go to him, the Lamb of God.

He is the one who baptizes in the Holy Spirit, not me. My putting my hand on your head a hundred times will not fill you with the Holy Spirit. The Bible says we've got to lay hands on people when they are sick.

So I do that. When people are sick, I obey God's word and pray for them. Or when we are setting apart elders, lay hands and pray for them.

I say, I can't lay hands and fill somebody with the Holy Spirit. No. I think God gave those apostles, a few of them, that special power, but he certainly hasn't given it to anybody I have seen in my life.

Don't let anybody fool you with that. I remember once when I came to Australia many, many years ago, and I think it was in Perth. In one of the meetings, one young lady came to me.

She wasn't a member of our church. She came as a visitor to one of our meetings. She was from Perth.

She said to me, Brother Zach, some visiting American preacher came here a few days ago and preached about being filled with the Spirit and told all those who wanted to be filled with the Spirit to come forward and he would lay hands on them. I wanted it and I went forward and he laid hands on my head and prayed for me. My whole life has been messed up since that day.

I'm all in confusion and depression and I don't know what happened. I said, you are ignorant. You should not allow any Tom, Dick or Harry, some stranger, to come and lay hands on your head.

It could have been an evil spirit that he was communicating to you. You should never do it. I warn everybody in our churches.

Don't let some unknown person come and lay hands on your head even to pray for you for your sickness. You must have confidence that that man is a godly man. Then you can ask him to lay hands on your head even for sickness or pray for you or bless you in some way.

But if you want to be filled with the Spirit, don't go to a man. Go to him. Like John the Baptist said, I can only baptize you in water.

Go to Jesus. He is the one who fills with the Holy Spirit. Ask him to lay his nail-pierced hand on your head filled with the Holy Spirit.

Jesus said, come to me. And when he said, come to me, John 7, 37, why do you go to man? He said, come to me. But don't come to me if you are not thirsty.

And that's another thing. I remember in my early Christian life when I was born again and I went to an assembly where they studied and studied the Bible. That was good.

I learned to study the Bible there. But they never emphasized being filled with the Holy Spirit. So I was like a person who got all the outer shell, but there was no power within.

And I was like a person who was given this lovely car, but I didn't know that I could drive it. And I was pushing it, pushing it, and pushing it, never making much progress. That is my Christian life.

Not realizing that I could sit inside the car and start the engine and the car would take off. I was in that assembly that never preached the fullness of the Spirit. And I found some other Pentecostal churches that preached about it, but I found a lot of it was fake.

People babbled things and said they were filled with the Holy Spirit, but I never saw the fullness of the Spirit in their life. So I came away from there and I said, I don't want this and I don't want that. These people never speak about the fullness of the Spirit, and those folks got a fake one.

I said, Lord, I don't want either of those. And I knelt down in my room and I said, Lord, I want you to meet with me. I don't know where to go, but you said come to me.

I've come to you. I want you to fill me with the Holy Spirit and change my life. I prayed.

I fasted. I longed. And it was in two stages that God filled me.

I don't know why it was like that. And they were separated by some years. But God finally filled me with the Holy Spirit and that changed my whole life.

It changed my ministry. It gave me an anointing in my ministry that I never had before. It gave me a power in my life to overcome sin, to take up the cross, to put myself to death when people provoked me or taunted me or tempted me or did whatever, to love people who hurt me, to forgive those who harmed me, to pray for those who spitefully used me.

I got this inner power, the Holy Spirit. You remember I showed you this verse yesterday? I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me and strengthens me through the power of the Holy Spirit. I can't do everything in the world.

I can't jump ten feet. I can't run the hundred meters in nine seconds or even ten seconds. But I can do everything that Jesus wants me to do.

Everything. I'm strengthened to do everything God wants me to do. Come to me and rivers of living water will flow.

So like I said, when the lid is removed, the veil is rent and the Holy Spirit can now come inside. The veil, what is the veil? I told you it's the will, the will that is broken and yielded to Christ. And the Lord comes in and fills me and it's like a fountain that fills up from within and flows and flows and flows and flows and becomes like a river blessing people here, there, and rivers in many directions.

That can be your life. You can't manage it on your own. Jesus says come to me and drink.

But you've got to be thirsty. What do I mean by thirsty? Now there are degrees of thirst. Now right now I may be a little thirsty and I say, yeah, I'm happy to drink a little water.

But if somebody told me this water costs a hundred thousand dollars. And I say, I'm not that thirsty. Thank you.

I'm not going to pay that much for a glass of water. I'm not that thirsty. That degrees of thirst.

But supposing I'd been wandering around in a desert for seven days without water and I'm about to die and somebody offers me water saying, I'll give this to you if you give me your entire bank balance and everything you own. What do I do? I say, no, no, no, I can't do it. I'll gladly give it to him because I'm about to die.

I want my bank balance to be useful for me then. I say, sure, take my bank balance. Give me that water.

I want to live. That is thirst. When you have that type of thirst for the Holy Spirit's power you'll be filled.

But when it's a casual yeah, Lord, I'd like a little sip of water. You're not going to be filled, I tell you that. When your thirst is so desperate that you're willing to give up anything because the Holy Spirit is the most valuable gift God can ever give us.

It's himself. And you say, Lord, I believe that is worth everything in this world. I'm willing to give up my money, my job, my time, anything you want, any sin, any bad habit anything in my life, even the good things you want to take away, I'm willing to give it up.

I want to be filled with your Holy Spirit. When you get to that place, I don't know when you'll come to it. It took me quite some while to come to it.

I would fast and I'd pray and seek God and examine myself and search my heart at night before I go to bed and during the day cry out and in the midst of my falling and backsliding I'd say, Lord, help me, help me, help me and one day all of a sudden my life was changed. And it's been completely different since then. The graph of my life which is going down, down, down started going upward.

And what a wonderful journey it has been since then. That's when God started CFC. And I realized that you can't build a church without being filled with the Holy Spirit.

Completely out of the question. On the day of Pentecost they were filled with the Holy Spirit and that's when they went out and built a church. Before Paul could go and build a church he had to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

And that's what all of us need. You may not be an apostle or a preacher. To be a good mother to your children you need to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

You need to be a Spirit-filled mother. I think Timothy's mother was like that. Her father, Timothy's father was a businessman who was more interested in making money.

And his mother brought him up single-handedly. And why do I say she was a Spirit-filled woman? Because when Timothy was around 20 years old he had become such a godly man with such a good testimony. Imagine a mother who single-handedly brought a boy up for 20 years to be such a godly man that the father was not at all interested.

He was doing it single-handedly that the apostle Paul said, I want that guy on my team. Can you imagine if the apostle Paul selected your 20-year-old son to be on his team and you as a mother that single-handedly brought up that boy. Why? You couldn't have done it without the power of the Holy Spirit.

And Spirit-filled women who brought up their children for God. Timothy's mother is pronounced Eunike in the Greek. Hardly anybody knows her name.

But she was the secret behind Timothy. It's not only for men like Paul. It's for mothers like Eunike, the mother of Timothy.

For men and women the most important thing is to be filled with the Holy Spirit because your life can be a blessing to others. Seek God my brother, sister. And you know I'll conclude with one passage of Scripture on how to seek God for the fullness of spirit.

Turn with me to Genesis and chapter 32. Here we read of a man called Jacob who had been broken by God. God had been trying for 20 years to break this man, but he did not break.

Finally, God broke him through his labor for his father-in-law. Just like Moses. Moses was broken in 40 years through his father-in-law.

Sometimes God uses a difficult father-in-law to break a man. That's how He did it with Jacob with Laban. And that's how He did it with Moses with his father-in-law Jethro.

And finally Jacob is broken and he's alone with God praying. And he wrestles. You read in Genesis 32 God came down in a human form and wrestled with him, verse 24.

Genesis 32, 24. And finally He broke him once more by touching his thigh socket and dislocating his thigh. And Jacob was limping ever after that day.

And then God was testing him and said, Okay, Jacob, let me go. I'm going. And listen to these words.

This is how you can be filled with the Holy Spirit. When you can say like Jacob, I will not let you go until you bless me. Yeah, God was testing him.

Sometimes He tests us. You remember when Jesus went to the house in Emmaus with those two disciples after the resurrection? When they came to the house, Jesus wanted to go in, but He wanted to find out if those guys were eager. So it says there Jesus pretended that He wanted to go somewhere else.

He acted to test them. And they pleaded with Him. No, no, no, Lord.

He said, no, no, no. I've got to go. I've got to go.

I've got to go somewhere else. No, Lord, You've got to be here. No, I've got to go.

No, You've got to be here. And He went in and their eyes were opened. They got a revelation.

He broke bread with them. And they saw Him as the resurrected Christ. They didn't know who He was until then.

So it's always those who lay hold of God and say, Lord, I will not let you go. You know, God will test you to see are you going to be persistent in this? Or will you give up after some time? My life would have been completely different if I had given up after some time. I said, no, I'm not going to give up.

Jacob's example is mine. I will not let you go. I don't care how long it takes until you bless me and fill me with the Holy Spirit and give me that assurance.

And then one more thing. He asked him, verse 27, what is your name? You know what the word Jacob means? Jacob means deceiver. Twenty years earlier when he had put on some animal skin, Jacob had put on some animal skin on his hands to pretend that he was a hairy person like he saw his brother.

And he went to see his father Isaac to get the birthright, which the father wanted to give to Isaac. Isaac was blind. So he touched his skin and said, oh, this is okay as he saw.

And he asked him, what is your name? You know what Jacob said? He saw. Now the same question God asks him here. What is your name, Lord, deceiver? That's what Jacob means, by the way.

Deceiver. What's your name? Lord, I'm a deceiver. Lord, I'm a backslider.

Lord, I'm a shrewd person who takes advantage of others. I'm a proud person, Lord. What's your name? Lord, I'm a proud person.

Because you're honest and you're willing to be broken and you're thirsty. I'll bless you. And it says, you have striven with God and men and you have prevailed.

And he blessed him there, verse 29. And Jacob said, boy, I've seen God face to face. And the Lord told him, verse 28, your name is no longer Jacob.

Your name is Israel, means a prince of God. That's what God will say to you. Spiritually, your name will be changed.

Your life will be changed. Have an eager desire, my brothers, to meet with God. God himself.

And to be filled with the Holy Spirit and to make that a regular feature of your life. To meet with God every day. To be filled with the Holy Spirit every day.

This is the real new covenant life. It's not a doctrine. It's not a theory.

Okay? Let's bow our heads and pray. Even if you haven't understood everything, if you've got a hunger, you're on the right track. Heavenly Father, I pray for these dear brothers and sisters, especially those whose hearts a sense of need has been stirred up.

I pray that they will seek you. I pray that none of them will be discouraged over their past failures. I pray you'll assure everyone that the times of ignorance God overlooks.

And he says, I will not remember your sins anymore. Forget what's behind. I have declared you righteous through the blood of Jesus.

The Lord says, look ahead to what is ahead and run the race. The Lord will bless you, meet with you, and make you a blessing to others. Heavenly Father, make that true to every thirsty soul here.

We pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

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