
Being filled by the Holy Spirit

Today I'd like to teach about the Holy Spirit. The best way of addressing this subject is to study it from the book of Acts, which describes the birth of the Church, which is the community of believers filled by the Holy Spirit of God.

At the beginning of Acts, Jesus' followers appear confused and fearful. But by the end of the book, they are well on their way to transforming the Roman world with the gospel. What brings this dramatic change? **Acts 1:8 provide us the answer: "You shall receive power."**

In Luke 24: 49 Jesus says: "...stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high." The word "clothed" describes the putting on or wearing of clothes. (Like putting on the best robe on the prodigal son, like Jesus was dressed by the soldiers.) It refers that in the same way as clothes are being worn, so also the believers will be clothed with power.

John the Baptist said in **Luke 3: 16: "He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire."** NOTE! I want to emphasize that I believe there is a difference between having the Spirit of Christ and being baptized with the Holy Spirit.

In Romans 8: 9 Paul says: "You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ."

Read: Acts 1: 4, 5, 8

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the disciples on the day of Pentecost fulfills the promise of power for mission, it is not an impersonal power; it is a manifestation of the Spirit, as a person. **The promise reveals the purpose of the gift; it is for witness! It is equipping disciples for service.**

How different that is from the perspective which many of us employ as we see the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit mainly as a resource for our own life and walk with Jesus.

The miracle of Pentecost Acts 2: 1-4

When they are gathered on that day, the Holy Spirit is poured upon the waiting disciples.... Think of this "waiting" it is an act of faith, at a designated time and place in Jerusalem. There is expectation in the air... The fearful disciples who are hiding in the upper room are so aware of their weakness, their opponents and are scared to face the reality of their life with the absence of Jesus.

Yet, they do what they are told to do. As they are waiting there is a sudden and dramatic impact of the Holy Spirit. The pilgrims to Jerusalem hear, but do not feel the force of a violent wind, they see tongues of fire which do not consume, and they hear a group of Galileans – and this is the most remarkable thing – praising God in the language which is native in their homelands! What can this mean?

As we continue to read in Acts, we find the following about being "filled" by the Holy Spirit:

1. This outpouring of the gift of the Holy Spirit **is not an isolated and unique event.** It is one of different occasions!
2. **Being filled with the Holy Spirit is both an individual and collective experience.** (John the Baptist, Elizabeth, Zechariahs, Peter, and Paul are filled on specific occasions).

3. **Being filled with the Holy Spirit is not a once-for-all-experience.** The examples of Peter (Acts 2:4, 4:8, 4:31) and Paul (Acts 9:17, 13:9) demonstrate the potential of repetition of the filling.
4. **The filling with the Holy Spirit always describes inspiration.** The filling results in different utterances:
 - Zacharia is filled and prophecies (Luke 1: 67)
 - Peter identifies speaking in tongues with prophecy. (Acts 2:4, 2:17)
 - Elisabeth's song of praise (Luke 1: 42-45)

Being "filled" by the Spirit is different than being "full" of the HS; being "full" speaks about enabling, while "filled," describes the prophetic inspiration and dimension.

The consequences of the filling with the Holy Spirit:

Let us go back in the Gospels and follow the arrest, trial, and crucifixion of Jesus. The disciples entrusted themselves to Jesus and to His ministry, but in His death, they had experienced a betrayal of their commitment, their hopes, and their aspirations.

They shattered, disillusioned and afraid of what the Sanhedrin might do to them. They had gone back to their former occupations. Yet, 2 months later, Peter, who had recently denied that he had anything to do with Jesus, proclaims before a crowd of thousands that Jesus is the Messiah. A short time after that he and John are brought before trial by the council. Here with tremendous boldness and confidence, Peter testifies that salvation only can be found in Jesus Christ, the One whom the same council had condemned to death!

Why this dramatic change?

The filling by the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost is the cause of this! **All that happened from that day onwards is directly connected to these words: "You shall be my witnesses!"** (Acts 1:8). All of the effects and gifts of the Holy Spirit that are part of the filling of the Spirit are given to confirm the commissioning of Jesus to be witnesses.

1. **Their role as witnesses**, not the spiritual experiences of tongues or prophecies, are the key to understanding what really happened at Pentecost.
2. **The gift of the Holy Spirit is not for salvation, but for witness and service.** With other words: with the transfer of the Holy Spirit to the disciples, they become the charismatic community, heirs to the charismatic ministry of Jesus Christ Himself!

Let us look at the consequences the filling on that community:

Acts 8: 14-19

Here we find we find a believing, baptized community of Samaritans, yet, without being filled by the Holy Spirit! I believe this reference clearly indicates that the filling of the Holy Spirit has a purpose for ministry and service. **Otherwise the gift had been given prior the baptism!**

Even a despised group as the Samaritans was called to engage in the missionary task! The Spirit equipped the believers for discipleship: "go out into the world and proclaim and

Acts 9: 17,18

These verses are relating to the information that Ananias receives in verse 15; the appointment to a mission that Saul received. In describing Saul's encounter with Jesus, **Luke, the writer of Acts, emphasizes his calling, not his conversion.** Saul had zeal; but that was not enough! He needed to be empowered by the Holy Spirit for service! He needed that as much as the disciples...

Acts 10: 44-46

Later on, in Acts 11:15 Peter relates this outpouring of the Holy Spirit to that which happened on the day of Pentecost. **(Relating it to purpose and experience).** We also find in Acts 15:8 that Cornelius and his household had received the gift in the same way as Peter.

Acts 19: 1-7

Here we find a community of believers at Ephesus who had not yet received the Holy Spirit. **(Paul is very clear about the fact that he knows that no-one can be a believer without the Holy Spirit, (Rom 8: 9),** he knows that these people are Christians, yet he asks them the question: **"Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?"**

Conclusion: there is no tension between the fact of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the life of every believer and the additional experience of receiving the filling or gift of the Holy Spirit!

The only thing that is clear is that the gift of the Holy Spirit is for the ones who want to be disciples of Jesus Christ.

In a number of examples, we find that the laying on of hands passes on the gift of the Holy Spirit... Yet we have to realize that it is God Himself who gives His Spirit.

Conclusion of today's study:

1. **Every believer has the Holy Spirit; without the HS one cannot believe in Jesus Christ.** His Spirit is working on every single individual right here... It is the spirit of God who is drawing you here... You might have thought I am here by my own decision... No, the Holy Spirit is drawing you, is working at your heart, and is knocking.
2. **The fact that the Holy Spirit is in the lives of all believers doesn't mean that we are filled with the Spirit for ministry and service!** (Witnesses)
3. **The fact that we have been filled once doesn't mean we should not be filled again!** (Think of Peter and Paul).
 - I believe that many of us have not been empowered in our lives and ministry because we have not been filled with the Holy Spirit!
 - I believe that too many of us have wanted the filling for our own sakes rather than for the sake of being witnesses!
 - I believe that the Jesus wants to baptize us with the power of the Holy Spirit if we want to allow Him to work through us for His own purposes.
 - I believe that the Holy Spirit wants to empower and wants to give that prophetic dimension for the sake of the Kingdom, not to tickle us with super-natural abilities and gifts to satisfy our own egos!