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Bridgeway Church / Foundations  
The Holy Spirit (3)

*The Holy Spirit: Who is He and How do I Experience Him?*  
**Part Three**

**The Filling of the Holy Spirit**

*Distinguishing between Baptism in the Holy Spirit and the Filling of the Holy Spirit*

What does the Bible say about the differences between being baptized in the Spirit and being filled with the Spirit?

1. Spirit-baptism is a metaphor that describes our reception of the Holy Spirit at the moment of our conversion to Jesus in faith and repentance. When we believe and are justified, we are, as it were, deluged and engulfed by the Spirit; we are, as it were, immersed in and saturated by the Spirit. *Results:*

- a) we are made members of the body of Christ, incorporated into the spiritual organism called the church (1 Cor. 12:13); and
- b) the Spirit comes to indwell us permanently.

Spirit-baptism is therefore *instantaneous* (i.e., it is not a process), *coincident* with conversion, *universal* (i.e., all Christians are recipients), *unrepeatable*, and *permanent*.

2. Spirit-filling is also a metaphor describing our continuous, on-going experience and appropriation of the Holy Spirit. ***To be filled with the Spirit is to come under progressively more intense and intimate influence of the Spirit.*** Spirit-filling can be forfeited and subsequently experienced yet again, on multiple occasions, throughout the course of the Christian life. There are *two senses* in which one may be filled with the Holy Spirit:

First, texts which describe people as being “*full of the Holy Spirit*” as if it were a *condition* or consistent *quality* of Christian character; a moral *disposition*; possessing and reflecting a maturity in Christ.

See Luke 4:1; Acts 6:3,5; 7:55; 11:24; 13:52 (lit., “they continued to be full” [imp. tense]. This is the “ideal” condition of every Christian. It emphasizes the *abiding state* of being filled.

Second, texts which describe people as being “*filled with the Holy Spirit*” to enable them to fulfill or perform a special task or to equip them for service or ministry.

- a. either life-long; an office or particular ministry - see Luke 1:15-17; Acts 9:17; or,
- b. in a spiritual emergency; an immediate and special endowment of power to fulfill an especially important and urgent task. Thus, someone who is already filled with the Spirit may experience a further/additional filling. I.e., no matter “how much” of the Holy Spirit one may have, there’s always room for “more”! See Acts 4:8,31; 13:9; Luke 1:41,67. Also, in Acts 7:55 Stephen, though “full of the Holy Spirit”, is again “filled” with the Spirit to prepare him to endure persecution and eventual martyrdom, as well as to “see” the vision of Jesus.

Note especially the cause and effect relationship between being *filled with the Spirit* and *inspired speech*. See Luke 1:41 and its relation to 1:42-45; Luke 1:67 and its relation to 1:68-79.

There is no indication that these asked to be filled or empowered; it was a sovereign work of God; as they walked in obedience and made themselves available, God “filled” them in accordance with their need. Cf. OT instances - Ex. 31:3; 35:31; Num. 24:2 (Balaam); Judges 6:34; 14:6,19; 15:14; 1 Sam. 10:6; 16:13.

In summary:

- 1) To be filled with the Spirit is different from being baptized in the Spirit. There is one baptism, but multiple fillings.
- 2) In no NT text are we commanded to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. There is no appeal to do something in order to be baptized; no exhortation, no imperative.
- 3) On the other hand, we *are* commanded to be filled with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18).
- 4) It is possible to be baptized in the Holy Spirit, to experience the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and yet *not* be filled with the Spirit. E.g., the Corinthian believers.
- 5) To be “full of the Holy Spirit” is to reflect a maturity of character; it is the ideal condition of every believer. To be “filled with the Holy Spirit” is to experience an anointing for power, purity, proclamation, and praise.

#### *A Closer Look at Spirit Filling in Ephesians 5:18*

1. Being filled with the Spirit is contrasted with being drunk with wine. Thus, it is a question of influence, control, or power. If you insist on getting drunk, be inebriated with the Holy Spirit! Please note, however, that the force of this exhortation is not that Christians should stagger and slur their speech as those drunk with wine do. The influence of the infilling Spirit is *moral* in nature, the results and tangible evidence of which is the *spiritual and relational fruit* that Paul describes in Galatians 5. Paul envisions a community of people (the church) whose lives are so totally given over to the Spirit "that the life and deeds of the Spirit are as obvious in their case as the effects of too much wine are obvious in the other" (Fee, 721).
2. Paul does not say, "be full of the Spirit," as though one were full of Spirit in the same way one is full of wine. He says, "be filled by/with the Spirit." The emphasis is on being filled to the full by the Spirit's presence. Cf. Eph. 3:19 where Paul speaks of being "filled unto the fullness of God," i.e., of being filled up with God himself.

There is considerable disagreement among commentators on the proper translation of the Greek preposition *en*. Does Paul mean we are to be filled “with” the Spirit, as if the Spirit is himself the content with which we are filled? Or does he mean we are to be filled “by” the Spirit, the content of which is not clearly specified? O’Brien takes the latter and proceeds to argue that “the earlier uses of the ‘fulness’ language in Ephesians are determinative for understanding what that fulness is here at 5:18” (392). He points to “fulness” language in 1:23; 3:19; 4:10 and concludes “that the *content* with which believers have been (or are being) filled is the fulness of (the triune) God or of Christ. No other text in Ephesians (or elsewhere in Paul) focusses specifically on the Holy Spirit as the *content* of this fulness. It is better, then, to understand 5:18 in terms of the Spirit’s mediating the fulness of God and Christ to the believers” (392). O’Brien’s view, however, is by no means certain.

3. The verb is imperative; i.e., it is a *command*. This is not a suggestion or a mild recommendation or a polite piece of advice. Being filled with the Spirit is not optional. It is obligatory.
4. The verb is plural. “The fullness of the Holy Spirit is emphatically not a privilege reserved for some, but a duty resting on all” (Stott/60). The exhortation has primarily to do with community life, i.e., the need for God's people to be so collectively full of God's presence that their worship is transformed, their relationships are transformed, their lives as a totality are transformed.
5. The verb is present tense, indicating that Paul envisions a continuous, on-going experience. This is not so much a dramatic or decisive experience that settles things for good, but a daily appropriation. Says Gaffin:

“This command . . . is relevant to all believers throughout the whole of their lives. No believer may presume to have experienced a definitive filling of the Spirit so that the command of verse 18 no longer applies. Short of death or the Lord’s return, it continues in effect for every believer.”

6. The mere fact that we are *commanded* to be *filled* implies that a Christian faces the danger of being “low” (but never empty!). We are always in need of refreshing and renewal.

7. In view of this command, we should cease speaking of the “second” blessing and begin to seek God for a “third” and a “fourth” and a “fifth” and . . .

8. What is the *consequential evidence* of being filled with/by the Holy Spirit? See Eph. 5:18ff.

- a) *Speaking to one another in ministry* (“The first sign of fullness is fellowship” [Stott]). Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs can have a didactic purpose.
- b) *Singing to God* (wholehearted worship in corporate fellowship).
- c) *Gratitude* (for all things at all times).
- d) *Mutual submission* (as over against being self-assertive and demanding).

It is helpful to see the structure of the passage in order to observe that the filling of the Spirit produces or results in these specified activities:

*Do not get drunk on wine  
But be filled by/with the Spirit,  
  
speaking to each other  
with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs,  
singing and making music to the Lord,  
with your hearts  
giving thanks to God  
for all things  
in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ  
submitting yourselves to one another  
in the fear of Christ.*

*How, then, may I be filled with the Spirit?*

1. Keep a clean heart and walk in holiness. Sin grieves the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30-31).

2. Pray for it. See Luke 11:13. Could it be that this exhortation to pray for the Holy Spirit flows from Jesus' own experience of the Spirit? Could it be that he himself prayed for continued, repeated anointings, infillings or fresh waves of the Spirit's presence and power to sustain him for ministry, and here encourages his followers to do the same? Three observations:

1) Where Luke says the Father will give the "Holy Spirit" to us Matthew says he will give "good things". Why the difference? John Nolland suggests that "it will be best to see that, since from a post-Pentecost early church perspective, the greatest gift that God can bestow is the Spirit, Luke wants it to be seen that God's parental bounty applies not just to everyday needs (already well represented in the text in [the] Lord's Prayer) but even reaches so far as to this his greatest possible gift" (*Luke*, 632).

2) Since this exhortation is addressed to believers, the "children" of the "Father", the giving of the Spirit in response to prayer cannot refer to one's initial experience of salvation. *The prayer is not by a lost person needing a first-time indwelling of the Spirit but by people who already have the Spirit but stand in need of a greater fulness, a more powerful anointing to equip and empower them for ministry.*

3) The petition of v. 13 is part of the instruction on persistence and perseverance in prayer that began in 11:1. *Thus we are repeatedly and persistently and on every needful occasion to keep on asking, seeking and knocking for fresh impartations of the Spirit's power.*

3. Walk in step with the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:25). Be sensitive to his leading and prompting, ever pursuing his presence.

4. Thirst after Jesus! See John 7:37-39.

*Additional Texts regarding Post-Conversion Experiences of the Holy Spirit*

There are several other texts that speak of *post-conversion encounters or experiences* with the Holy Spirit that are related to but not identical with infilling.

1. There is the impartation of revelatory insight and illumination into the blessings of salvation (Eph. 1:15-23; cf. Isa. 11:2). Here Paul prays that God will impart to them the Spirit yet again, so that he might supply the wisdom to understand what he also reveals to them about God and his ways. This is something for which we must pray (both for ourselves and for others). There are dimensions of the Spirit's ministry in our lives that are suspended, so to speak, on our asking.

It strikes some as odd that Paul would pray for the Spirit to be *given* to those who already have Him. But this hardly differs from Paul's prayer in Eph. 3:17 that Christ might "dwell" in the hearts of people in whom Christ already dwells! Paul is referring to an experiential enlargement of what is theologically true. He prays that, through the Spirit, Jesus might exert a progressively greater and more intense personal influence in our souls. Thus, in both texts Paul is praying for an expanded and increased work of God in the believer's life.

2. There is also the anointing of power for the performance of miracles as seen in Gal. 3:1-5 (esp. v. 5). Paul clearly refers both to their *initial reception* of the Spirit (v. 2) and to their *present experience* of the Spirit (v. 5). The unmistakable evidence that they had entered into new life was their reception of the Spirit (v. 2). Fee explains:

"The entire argument runs aground if this appeal is not also to a reception of the Spirit that was dynamically experienced. Even though Paul seldom mentions any of the visible evidences of the Spirit in such contexts as these, here is the demonstration that the experience of the Spirit in the Pauline churches was very much as that described and understood by Luke -- as visibly and experientially accompanied by phenomena that gave certain evidence of the presence of the Spirit of God" (*God's Empowering Presence*, 384).

Paul speaks of God as the one who continually and liberally supplies the Spirit to men and women who in another sense have already received him. This is especially evident when one takes note of Paul's use of the *present tense* (i.e., "He who *is supplying* you with the Spirit"). Evidently there is a close, even causal, relationship between the supply of the Spirit and the resultant working of miracles. That is to say, "God is present among them by his Spirit, and the fresh supply of the Spirit finds expression in miraculous deeds of various kinds. Thus Paul is appealing once more to the visible and experiential nature of the Spirit *in their midst*" as the ongoing evidence that life in the Spirit, predicated on faith in Christ Jesus, has no place at all for 'works of law'" (Ibid., 388-9).

3. Paul also speaks about the provision of the Spirit to face hardship with hope (Phil. 1:19). I don't believe he is thinking so much of the "help" the Spirit gives, but of the gift of the Spirit himself, whom God continually supplies to him (and to us!). In other words, the phrase "the supply/provision of the Spirit" (an objective genitive, for those of you know a little Greek) points to the Spirit as the one who is himself being given or supplied anew to Paul by God to assist him during the course of his imprisonment.

4. In 1 Thess. 4:8 the apostle speaks of the continuous exertion of strength from the Holy Spirit necessary for purity. He specifically says the Holy Spirit is given "into" (*eis*) you, not simply "to" you. The point is that God puts his Spirit inside us (cf. 1 Cor. 6:19). The use of the Greek present tense emphasizes the ongoing and continuous work of the Spirit in their lives. If Paul had in mind their conversion and thus their initial, *past* reception of the Spirit, he would probably have used that tense of the verb (aorist; cf. 1:5-6) more appropriate to that sort of emphasis. In context, Paul's point is that the call to sexual purity and holiness comes with the continuous provision of the Spirit to enable obedience. Thus the Spirit is portrayed as the ongoing divine companion, by whose power the believer lives in purity and holiness.

5. The Spirit is also responsible for our deepened awareness of adoption as sons and increased confidence and assurance of salvation. It is the work of the Spirit to intensify our sense of the abiding and loving presence of the Father and Son (see Rom. 5:5; 8:15-17; John 14:15-23). There are times in the Christian life when the believer finds himself more than ordinarily conscious of God's love, his presence, and power (see Eph. 3:16-19; 1 Pt. 1:8). In other

words, there is a heightened, increased, or accelerated experience of the Spirit's otherwise ordinary and routine operations. Why would God do this, you ask? I like J. I. Packer's answer:

"Why should there be this intensifying -- which, so far from being a once-for-all thing, a 'second [and last!] blessing,' does (thank God!) recur from time to time? We cannot always give reasons for God's choice of times and seasons for drawing near to his children and bringing home to them in this vivid and transporting way, as he does, the reality of his love. After it has happened, we may sometimes be able to see that it was preparation for pain, perplexity, loss, or for some specially demanding or discouraging piece of ministry, but in other cases we may only ever be able to say: 'God chose to show his child his love simply because he loves his child.' But there are also times when it seems clear that God draws near to men because they draw near to him (see James 4:8; Jeremiah 29:13,14; Luke 11:9-13, where 'give the Holy Spirit' means 'give experience of the ministry, influence, and blessings of the Holy Spirit'); and that is the situation with which we are dealing here" (*Keep in Step*, 227).

Consider the experience of that great American evangelist, D. L. Moody (1837-99):

"One day, in the city of New York -- oh, what a day! -- I cannot describe it, I seldom refer to it; it is almost too sacred an experience to name. . . . I can only say that God revealed himself to me, and I had such an experience of his love that I had to ask him to stay his hand. I went to preaching again. The sermons were not different; I did not present any new truths, and yet hundreds were converted. I would not now be placed back where I was before that blessed experience if you should give me all the world -- it would be small dust in the balance."

Howell Harris (1714-73) describes his experience this way:

"June 18, 1735, being in secret prayer, I felt suddenly my heart melting within me like wax before the fire with love to God my Saviour; and also felt not only love, peace, etc. but longing to be dissolved, and to be with Christ; then was a cry in my inmost soul, which I was totally unacquainted with before, Abba Father! Abba Father! I could not help calling God my Father; I knew that I was his child, and that he loved me, and heard me. My soul being filled and satiated, crying, 'Tis enough, I am satisfied. Give me strength, and I will follow thee through fire and water.' I could say I was happy indeed! There was in me a well of water, springing up to everlasting life, Jn. 4:14. The love of God was shed abroad in my heart by the Holy Ghost, Rom. 5:5."

6. Some, such as Martyn Lloyd-Jones, have found in Eph. 1:13 and the "sealing" of the Holy Spirit another instance of an experience of the Spirit that is separate from and subsequent to conversion.

### *Conclusion*

In view of these many passages, it comes as no surprise that Jesus should encourage us to ask the Father for more of the Spirit's ministry in our lives, as he does in Luke 11:13. Could it be that this exhortation to pray for the Holy Spirit flows from Jesus' own experience of the Spirit? Could it be that he himself prayed for continued, repeated anointings, infillings or fresh waves of the Spirit's presence and power to sustain him for ministry, and here encourages his followers to do the same?

Where Luke (11:13) says the Father will give the "Holy Spirit" to us Matthew (7:11) says he will give "good things". Why the difference? John Nolland suggests that "it will be best to see that, since from a post-Pentecost early church perspective, the greatest gift that God can bestow is the Spirit, Luke wants it to be seen that God's parental bounty applies not just to everyday needs (already well represented in the text in [the] Lord's Prayer) but even reaches so far as to this his greatest possible gift" (Word Biblical Commentary on *Luke 9:21-18:34*, 632).

Since this exhortation is addressed to believers, the "children" of the "Father", the giving of the Spirit in response to prayer cannot refer to one's initial experience of salvation. The prayer is not by a lost person needing a first-time indwelling of the Spirit but by people who already have the Spirit but stand in need of a greater fullness, a more powerful anointing to equip and empower them for ministry. In fact, the petition of v. 13 is part of the instruction on persistence and perseverance in prayer that began in Luke 11:1. Thus we are repeatedly and persistently and on every needful occasion to keep on asking, seeking and knocking for fresh impartations of the Spirit's power.

**These texts would appear to dispel the concept of a singular, once-for-all deposit of the Spirit that would supposedly render superfluous the need for subsequent, post-conversion anointings. The Spirit who was once given and now indwells each believer is continually given to enhance and intensify our relationship with Christ and to empower our efforts in ministry. But we need not label any one such experience as Spirit-baptism.**

Perhaps an illustration will help in bringing this to a conclusion. Let us suppose that you reach into the cabinet for medication to relieve a persistent headache and take hold of what you believe is aspirin. Unfortunately, the label on the bottle has long since worn off. Nevertheless, the medicine works. Fifteen minutes after swallowing two tablets, your headache is completely gone. Your spouse then informs you that the medicine you took was, in fact, Tylenol. Does this news cause your headache to return? It shouldn't. The medicinal value of the Tylenol is not diminished simply because you mislabeled it. Calling it aspirin in no way altered the physical properties of what was, in fact, Tylenol.

My point is that the reality of "extra-conversion" experiences of the Holy Spirit is not undermined should it be discovered that we have "mislabeled" the event. The spiritual "medicine", so to speak, still works. Whereas I prefer to reserve the terminology of Spirit-baptism for what all experience at conversion, the fact that the Pentecostal applies it to a subsequent, and more restricted, empowering does not in and of itself invalidate the latter phenomenon. The important issue is whether or not the NT endorses *both* the initial saving work of regeneration and incorporation into the body of Christ on the one hand, *and* the theologically distinct (though not always subsequent) work of anointing for witness, service, and charismatic gifting on the other. I believe that it does.

So what happened to Paula? In my opinion, Paula was converted to saving faith in Christ at the age of eleven while at church camp. At that moment she was *baptized in the Holy Spirit*. The Holy Spirit also came to permanently indwell her. On that night nine years later Paula was *filled with the Holy Spirit* as she cried out to the Lord to renew her commitment and empower her for a life of service to His glory.

### **Discussion Questions**

(1) Define the "filling" of the Holy Spirit. Have you experienced this yourself? On what occasions? What was it like? In what ways did it help you in life and ministry? Was it an experience you could feel, or was it in some way beneath the level of conscious thought?

(2) At the close of the first section of this lesson there were five summary statements. Read them again and discuss whether or not you agree with each one. If you don't, why not?

(3) Look again at each of the texts cited that seem to prove that a Christian can expect and should pray for experiences of the Spirit subsequent to conversion. Are you persuaded by them? Why should we not call these Spirit baptism, or should we?

(4) Do you think that speaking in tongues is the inevitable sign of having been baptized in the Holy Spirit? Give reasons for your answer. Give biblical texts to support your position.