

Introduction



His Person



His Works



His Indwelling



His Baptizing



His Sealing



His Filling

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His Gifting



His Helping



The Holy Spirit—Our Helper

Bethany Bible Church, Adult Sunday School Class, November 13, 2011

The Pervasive and Prevailing Influence

“From the viewpoint of Christian living, the filling with the spirit is probably the most important aspect of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.”¹

So far, the things that we’ve touched on regarding the Holy Spirit have been things that He graciously does for us apart from our participation. But we now consider something He does with our cooperation, and that requires our obedience and submission--the wonderful ministry of His ‘filling’ of the believer. We’ll divide our study into three parts: (1) the character, (2) the conditions, and (3) the consequences of His filling. This morning, we begin with its character--what it means to be “filled” with the Spirit.

I. THE MEANING OF THE WORD “FILLED”.

- A. The Greek word *plāroō* (and its various forms) basically means “to make full”, or “to bring a thing to completion”. But often, this is used in the figurative sense of a prevailing influence that overwhelms a person completely. Luke 5:26, for example, speaks of people being “amazed, and they glorified God and were filled with fear . . .”²--that is, they were overwhelmingly ruled-over by a sense of reverent awe and fear. In Luke 6:11, the enemies of our Lord were “filled with rage”--so much so, that it ruled their actions, and they plotted what they might do to Him. In Luke 2:40, as our Lord grew into adulthood, we’re told that He was “filled with wisdom”. These expressions show, not so much a “quantitative” sense of “filling” as it does a “qualitative” sense of it. It speaks of being “filled” with a thing in the sense of being influenced by it in a prevailing and pervasive way.
- B. This is important to remember; because the Spirit’s influence in our lives is not a matter of “quantity”; that is, in the sense that we can have different measures or portions of the Holy Spirit. When He enters our lives, He indwells us in the fullness of His person (see John 3:34). Rather, it’s a matter of a “quality” of living; that is, in the sense that we either allow Him a completely prevailing influence over us or we do not. We are not “filled” with the Spirit like a dixie-cup is filled with water. Rather, we are “filled” with the Spirit like a dixie-cup that has submerged beneath the waves drifts along in a completely yielded manner, and is filled with all the fullness of the ocean in its vastness.

II. THE SOVEREIGN ASPECT OF THE SPIRIT’S “FILLING”.

- A. There is a sense in which we should speak of the Spirit’s filling as a sovereign act by which He takes a prevailing control of someone for a special activity or purpose. Dr. Charles Ryrie says that this “emphasizes the event of being filled in contrast to the state that results from being filled. It occurs in Luke 1:15 (of John the Baptist), Luke 1:41 (of Elizabeth), Luke 1:67 (of Zacharias), Acts 2:4 (of the group on the day of Pentecost), Acts 4:8 (of Peter), Acts 4:31 (of the believers), Acts 9:17 (of Paul), and Acts 13:9 (of Paul again).”³
- B. Dr. Ryrie explains further, “In these instances God simply overpowered these people, sovereignly filling and thus controlling them by the Spirit for some special activity. God did not impose any conditions for experiencing this aspect of filling. Also, some of the same people had this experience

more than once, the repetition being due to a new need for special service and not due to any intervening sin on the part of those people that would necessitate another filling (Acts 2:4; 4:8, 31).⁴ This is a “filling” of the Holy Spirit that is not conditioned on our choice. It’s something that the Holy Spirit does in a believer’s life as He sovereignly wishes. It’s important to point out that this involves no loss or suppression of the essential personality or consciousness of the man or woman the Spirit sovereignly fills. “And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints” (1 Corinthians 14:32-33).

III. THE SUBMISSIVE ASPECT OF THE SPIRIT’S “FILLING”.

- A. Another sense in which the Spirit “fills” someone is in the pervasive influence, enabling and control of the Spirit that the believer willingly submits to as a constant, habitual pattern of practical obedience. Dr. Ryrie describes this as “an abiding state of fullness of the Spirit rather than a specific event and which produces a character of life that may be equated with spirituality.”⁵ Some of the examples he refers to are Luke 4:1 (of our Lord), Acts 6:3, 5 (of the first helpers of the apostles), Acts 7:55 (of Stephen), Acts 11:24 (of Barnabas), acts 13:52 (of the disciples). This is a “filling” of the Holy Spirit that we willingly yield to and cooperate with.
- B. The classic passage on this type of filling is Ephesians 5:18. There Paul wrote, “And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit . . .” Note that to be drunk with wine is to be under the overwhelming influence of wine in a prevailing and pervasive way (see Acts 2:13; where the believers, filled with the Holy Spirit, were mocked by bystanders who said, “They are full of new wine”). This serves as an effective illustration for what it means to be submitted to the filling of the Holy Spirit. Instead of willingly placing one’s self under the prevailing and pervasive influence of wine (or any other such substance), they were instead to be willingly “filled with the Spirit”. Note that (1) this is put in the form of a command (that is, we are commanded to be filled with the Holy Spirit as an act of willing obedience); (2) it is (in the original language) put in the passive voice (that is, we are to passively allow ourselves to be filled with the Spirit rather than to actively seek to fill ourselves); and (3) it is put in the present tense (indicating a constant, continual habit of life). “Spirit-filling is both the Spirit’s sovereignly controlling someone for special service and the Spirit’s filling the believer with His own character.”⁶

IV. AN OLD TESTAMENT PICTURE.

- A. When the young, captive Jewish woman Esther was among the women who were being presented to the Persian King Ahasuerus in his search for a wife, the women were each given a twelve-month beauty treatment. At the end of this treatment, each woman was given whatever she desired to take in presenting herself to the king. But when it came to be Esther’s turn, she “requested nothing but what Hegai the king’s eunuch, the custodian of the women, advised” (Esther 2:15). As a result, “Esther obtained favor in the sight of all who saw her” (v. 16), and “she obtained grace and favor” in the king’s sight more than all the others. She wisely submitted herself to the prevailing influence Hegai’s guidance--since he knew best what it was that the king desired. As a result, she became the king’s bride.
- B. We too are being prepared for our Bridegroom--Jesus Christ. The wedding day is coming soon. And God the Father has graciously provided His indwelling Holy Spirit--our Helper--to prepare us for that day. We would

be very wise to yield ourselves completely to the Holy Spirit's good influence, and guidance, and 'beautification process'. He knows exactly what will please our Lord; and to the degree we submit to His prevailing and pervasive influence, to that degree we will be living a life that is pleasing in His sight.

¹Charles C. Ryrie, *The Holy Spirit* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1997), p. 155.

²All Scripture readings are taken from *the Holy Bible, New King James Version*; copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

³Ryrie, p. 157.

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵Ryrie, p. 157-8.

⁶Ryrie, p. 159.