

The filling of the Holy Spirit Acts 2:1-4

There is a story told of a group of fishermen on board a fishing vessel crossing a vast expanse of ocean heading along the coast line of South America. In route they encountered severe weather. It was so powerful that the ship began to break up and the crew scrambled into the lifeboats to save their lives. After the storm had subsided the wreckage ship was nowhere to be seen and they were completely lost. With little emergency rations the fishermen subsisted for a few days but within the week they had run out of the supplies and the water would run out within two days. So they prayed, cried and begged to God that they would be rescued. Water, water everywhere but not a drop to drink was literally their predicament because they knew that drinking salt water would be fatal. Finally a sailing vessel spotted them and as their captain viewed the approaching rescue ship, through his looking glass, he noticed that the crew members were pointing down into the water. What a strange gesture he thought. It took a while for the ship to reach them. When they finally were rescued and the fishermen were refreshed, the captain asked the sailor why he was pointing down into the salt water. The crew member said, "That's not salt water, You have been floating in the fresh water of the Amazon river. You could have been drinking it for days, for it contains no salt."

The lesson of this story is that the fisherman had been baking in the hot sun and parched of thirst for days while were literally sitting upon a river of refreshment. All they had to do was to reach down and drink to quench their thirst.

This story also tells us a lesson that I believe applies to the larger church's predicament today. Christians in the 21st century have, as a whole, become spiritually starved and famished. We have become dry and ignorant of the power and life which is really available to us as Christians. Rather than changing the world most Christians seem to have great difficulty in preventing the world from changing them. And as a result, many Christians see the Christian life today as an impossible task rather than an exciting adventure. And the reason for this dryness, this spiritual starvation is that much of the Church has become ignorant of the powerhouse that is available to all of us to live the Christian life. We like those sailors are living on literally a river of refreshment if we would but reach out and receive this power for ourselves.

The river, or the power house, I am speaking of is the fullness of the Holy Spirit. Now this experience has been called by many names;

Pentecostals and some Methodists have called it the Baptism of the Spirit, some call it the fullness of the Spirit, or Sanctification, but the names are unimportant. What's important is that we discover and appropriate the relationship to God which Paul described when he urged us in Ephesians 5:18 "be ye filled (to overflowing) with the Holy Spirit."

Jesus spoke of the importance of having this relationship to the Holy Spirit in Luke 24:49 when he said to the disciples, "Behold I send the promise of the father upon you; but tarry ye in the city until ye be endured with power from in high". These were saved men-men who had been with Jesus for 3 years, men who had been born again and had forsaken even their own life for Jesus. Yet He said to them, do not go out to share the good news of my resurrection, until you have been endured with the power from on high. In the book of Acts we read that on the day of Pentecost, which we celebrate today in the Christian calendar, the disciples were gathered in the upper room. And suddenly the sound of a mighty wind was heard and tongues of fire rested upon the disciples and they were empowered and filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. Then and only then did they become spirit-filled over comers ready to share their faith with the world.

The Bible teaches us that the fullness of the Spirit is a second work of grace. It is the work of grace which equips us to serve the Lord after we have been saved. It is the work of God which empowers us to live over sin and self and put Jesus Christ king over our lives. Have you my friend been filled with the Holy Spirit?

Throughout the history of the Christian church men and women have testified of their experiences of being filled with the Holy Spirit, especially in the Methodist church John Wesley preached and taught it as the second work of God's grace. He and early Methodists called it entire Sanctification. It is Article XI in the discipline and is defined as "*the work of God's grace through the word and the Spirit, by which those who have been born again are cleansed from sin in their thoughts, words, and acts and are enabled to live in accordance with God's will and to strive for holiness with out which no one will see the Lord.*" The Methodist Church came into being because John & Charles Wesley, George Whitefield and others met together at Oxford in pursuit of sanctification...only to find out that they first had to experience salvation, before being powered with the Holy Spirit. But when they understood how, they experienced both-and the spiritual explosion which took place changed the face of England and America. The first hymn in the Methodist hymnal testifies to their experience and one of the gifts of the spirit. "O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing." But not just Methodists experienced the fullness of the Spirit, it is

said of Martin Luther the father of the protestant reformation that he was not only a man who had been filled with God's Holy Spirit but that he possessed many of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Again I refer you to the Hymn that he wrote which is sung in Churches every Sunday, his most "A mighty Fortress is our God". His the 4th verse reads and I quote "the spirit and the gifts are ours through him who with us sideth."

Dr. Phineas Bresee the founder of the Nazarene Church described the importance of the fullness of the Spirit in the life of the Christian by saying, "Now this Baptism of the Holy Spirit is the blessing of Christ...the crowning glory of the work of the soul's salvation. All that ever went before it was preparation for it. Men are convicted of sin, born again and made new creatures, so that they may be baptized with the Holy Spirit. This work completes the soul's salvation.

But my friends, the most wonderful thing about the fullness of the spirit is that we can all experience this work of grace for ourselves. And it if you do it can make a significant difference in your life.

The first change is that most people filled with the spirit have a new realization of their relationship to Christ. Most come from doubt to a point of being assured of their salvation. The reason is that Paul tells us in Romans 8:16, that when the Holy Spirit fills us, "His spirit witnesses with our spirit that we are sons of God."

Secondly it is through being filled with the Spirit that you discover the spiritual gifts that God has given you. It is only through the filling of the Spirit that God can empower you with his particular gift to fit you into the body of Christ.

The fullness of the Spirit also is significant in our prayer life. Romans 8:24 tells us that if we are filled with the spirit and don't know what to pray for that the Holy Spirit prays within us with utterances and groaning that we can't understand.

An of course, by definition the fullness of the Spirit allows the believer to experience freedom from the grasp of sin in his life. Paul said, "*Walk in the spirit and ye shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.*" Paul in Romans 8:2 said, "*for the laws of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus had made me free from the law of death.*" (illustration of dad who said you haven't done all son)

To summarize, the fullness equips us to serve Christ. "*You shall receive power after the Holy Spirit is come upon you-to be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and all parts of the earth.*" It is interesting to see that after the resurrection, Peter and John and the disciples were fishing in the sea of Galilee with nets, but after Pentecost they were fishing

with the Holy Spirit for Christ and 3,000 people were saved in one day. The infilling of the spirit will make a difference in your life. Whether you be a mother, a father, single, a SS teacher, a leader in the church-everyone of us who deserves to really live for Jesus needs the Baptism or filling of the Holy Spirit.

Which brings us to our last point in the sermon. How do we receive the filling of the Holy Spirit? The first step in receiving this second work of grace is to make sure you have been born again. *“The natural man, says the Bible, receiveth not the things of the spirit for they are foolishness to him.”* The New Testament president is always-believe on the Lord Jesus, be baptized and then receive the fullness of the spirit. God is not able to pour out his spirit upon any vessel except his own and for his own use. So you must become a believer.

Secondly one must consecrate himself to God. Once God is your savior make sure he is also your Lord. The consecration of our lives takes place when we make Jesus the Lord of our lives, not just the companion. Roman’s 12:1,2 says, *“Present your bodies to God a living and holy sacrifice acceptable to God”*. We must make sure our all has been resigned to God-our families, business, and our own life and possessions. *“If there is one thing you would not be willing to give up to God today-it is not owned by you-it owns you. If we have a sin we have never confessed-we must confess and repent. Acts 5:32 teaches God gives the Holy Spirit to them that obey Him.*

The third step is to ask and receive- God wants to fill us. But we must ask in faith and receive in faith. The greatest desire of God’s heart is for every man to be filled with his Holy Spirit. God promises you this in Joel 2:28, *“In the last days, sayeth the Lord, I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh, your sons and daughters shall prophesy and your young men shall see visions and your old men dream dreams.”* But we must ask in obedience to and receive by faith. We are even commanded to do so in Ephesians 5:18 where we are told, *“Be ye not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be ye filled with the Holy Spirit.”*