



Conducted by
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"We read in the Bible of people being 'filled with the Spirit.' Is it possible to be 'filled with the Spirit' today?"

The first statement is absolutely correct. In the New Testament scriptures - and it is the New Testament scriptures with which we, as Christians, are concerned - there are no fewer than ten references to this 'filling,' and they involve a wide range of personalities and occasions, mentioned in the Gospel according to Luke, the book of Acts and the letter to the Church at Ephesus.

To the question in the second sentence, the answer is an emphatic 'Yes!'

The Ephesian Christians were told, *"Do not get drunk with wine . . . but be filled with the Spirit"* (Eph. 5:18).

It is significant that *'be filled with the Spirit'* is not offered as one-time mysterious experience, as some religious groups seems to think, but is in the tense known as *'the constant emphatic,'* which means that this filling should be the abiding, ongoing condition of the Christian's life.

Furthermore, notice that it is an *'imperative.'* This means that it is not proposed as an option but is a command which God expects to see obeyed. And, if the letter to the Ephesians has any relevance at all today, this command is still valid.

Perhaps it is the use of that word 'filled' and the failure to understand its significance, which is the reason why there is so much error in circulation concerning the nature and work of the Holy Spirit.

Far more could be written on these matters than can possibly be dealt with in the space at our disposal, but it is enough to say that many mistakenly suppose that the Holy Spirit is some kind of impersonal influence or energy which God uses to accomplish His will in the world. Such views have been taught by groups such as the 'Mormons,' 'Christadelphians,' and 'Jehovah's Witnesses,' whilst the founder of 'Christian Science' - so called - Mrs. Eddy, wrote that the Holy Spirit is 'divine science' and by this she meant her own writings!

THE INDWELLING SPIRIT

All of these groups - and there are others - clearly ignore the fact that when the scriptures mention the Holy Spirit, or the Spirit of God, personal pronouns are constantly used and the attributes of personality are ascribed to Him. In other words we are told that He leads, guides, speaks, chooses, may be grieved and is even capable of loving. Thus to be 'filled with the Spirit' should not be thought of as an action comparable to the filling of an empty container with liquid, or the 'charging' of a battery with energy. He is an intelligent member of the Godhead, and the expression 'filling' is

a figurative way of telling us that we must allow the Holy Spirit to so control our lives that He is able to help us in ways which not only enable us to become more Christ-like, but which also make it possible for us to enjoy the assured and satisfied life which God desires all His children to experience.

The word 'filled' is the rendering of the word '*pleroo*' and means 'to fill up,' or 'to diffuse completely.' Therefore, when we read that in the New Testament times believers were 'filled with the Spirit,' we are to understand that they had received the Spirit of God into their lives and had allowed Him to take control.

The importance of this is shown in 1st Cor. 3:16, "*Do you know that . . . the Spirit of God dwells in you?*" See also 2nd Cor. 1:22, which teaches us that God has placed the Holy Spirit in our hearts as the guarantee or pledge of His intention to redeem us completely.

Notice, also that the Galatians were told that God "*has sent the Spirit of His Son into your hearts,*" Gal. 4:6, whilst the Romans were warned that "*if everyone does not have the Spirit of Christ he does not belong to Him*" Rom. 8:9, and that "*all who are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God,*" Rom. 8:14.

CONCLUSION

To be 'filled with the Spirit' does not mean to have some sort of ecstatic spiritual experience, or some strange sensation - no tingling electrical feeling surging through one's body! It is the result of the yielding of the heart and life to the Spirit of Jesus Christ (Gal. 4:6), and the evidence of a willingness to allow Him to take control.

Acts 2:38 promises two blessings to the obedient believer; firstly, the forgiveness of sins and, secondly, the gift - '*dorea*,' or 'free gift' - of the Holy Spirit.

This means that the Holy Spirit Himself is *God's personal gift to the Christian*. But a gift is not a 'gift' until it is accepted. We must be willing to open our hearts and lives (2nd Cor. 1:22) to allow the Holy Spirit to enter and take charge.

He will then be able to guide us through the Word of God, which He Himself inspired, and as we submit in obedience to what is revealed in the Word, the Spirit will be able to exercise more and more control in our lives.

If we fail to obey that which we know from the Word to be the Will of God, to *that* extent we diminish the Spirit's control over us, because we reject His guidance and reduce His influence on us - and we thus 'grieve' Him (Eph. 4:30).

Furthermore, if we continue to refuse to be guided by Him, He will be 'quenched' (1st Thess. 5:19), and this means 'suppressed' and eventually extinguished.

In other words, He will leave us.

Let us remember, as we study the scriptures, that since the Holy Spirit today guides through what He has revealed in the Bible to be the will of God no one who is in ignorance of God's Word can be led by the Spirit.

I recall a statement made by F.F. Bruce:

"Being filled with the Spirit implies more than being indwelt by Him. In some believers He has little more than a foothold, being almost crowded out by a number of considerations. Paul is eager that his converts should be under the undisputed control of the Spirit."

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