

LIVING THE CHRISTIAN LIFE VICTORIOUSLY

PART 8 – SHOULD EVERY CHRISTIAN BE FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT?

There are those who would say that the Holy Spirit is not for the “Ordinary Christian,” rather that it is to be reserved for pastors and missionaries only.

Others hold that the measure of the Holy Spirit at our conversion when we accepted God’s gift of His Son, is the same as the power the disciples received on the Day of Pentecost.

Still others will express a lethargic hope that someday, by and by, they might be blessed by the filling of the Holy Spirit.

And of course there is that group who just don’t want their minds to be confused with facts. The subject of God’s Holy Spirit is one to avoided, it’s a scary subject and pursuing this subject can result in embarrassment,

If I believed that any or all of these were what scriptures tell us, I certainly would not have spent over two months on the subject. There is more and a whole lot more.

The scriptures, time and again, illustrate that the Holy Spirit is available to Jesus’ disciples, and not just in small doses but in sufficient magnitude that, if it were the desire of God, we in our obedience would have the ability to move mountains.

If this were not so, I would not tell you, but I will leave it to you faithful Bereans to search the scriptures, specifically the New Testament, to discover these truths for yourselves.

But before we seek the Holy Spirit in our lives on a full-time basis, we really need to ask ourselves one simple yet far-reaching question:

“Am I certain that I want to be filled with the Holy Spirit of God?”

Why must we ask this of ourselves?

Recall that the Holy Spirit is as both Jesus and God in His gentleness, and love towards us; nevertheless, He will expect, even demand, unquestioning obedience in everything if indeed we wish Him to remain in us, to become the Lord of our lives.

We need ask further, “Am I willing to have my personality supplanted by another spirit, even if it is God’s Spirit?”

If we invite the Holy Spirit in to take charge of our lives, He will not tolerate in us the sins of self that most Christians tolerate and even accept as being AOK. And by the term “sins of self” I am referring to self love, self pity, self indulgence, self seeking, self righteousness, self defense, and you probably can add to this list.

The point is that when we invite the Holy Spirit to be in charge, we will find that He will be in total opposition to the ways of the world, and He will take us in a direction where we never expected to go. He will take the tiller of your life away from you and chart a new course, He will lead you in ways that will cause you to be tested, He will discipline you and chasten you whenever you stumble; all for the sake of your soul. In the process, you may find that you have become bereft of the borderline pleasures that other Christians enjoy but which, to you, have become an introduction to sin.

Yet throughout all of your journey with Him, you will find that the Holy Spirit is a never ending source of love;

- a love that is vast in its care of you,
- a love that is so mighty that nothing can overpower it, even yourself,
- a love that is so abounding and wondrous you will not even miss those things of the world that he has moved you away from;
- a love that will cause you to look on the hurts and losses as pleasures and triumphs.

Yet throughout it all, the flesh will kick against the goads, will whimper under the yolk that ties you to Jesus' way, and cry out against your cross, claiming it to be too great a burden to bear.

And as you, with the help of the Holy Spirit, overcome the world, the flesh, and the Devil, you will be permitted the solemn privilege as Paul said in Colossians 1:24, to "...rejoice in my sufferings ... and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the Church."

Knowing now that inviting the Holy Spirit to indwell our spirit will lead to pain, loss of pleasures, and the loss of self in our goals, we need to ask again, "Do we really want to be filled with the Holy Spirit?"

If you are thinking that this is severe language, we must never forget for an instant that the way of the cross is NEVER easy! The appeal to follow shining and glamorous popular movements in the Church is as false as the beauty and light we see in the lure of the Prince of Darkness when, for that instant of temptation, transforms himself into an angel of light.

If, in our own timidity and fear, we fail to express that the bearing of our crosses will bring difficulty and hardship, we are not being true to the call of Christ, and the result is that those who may otherwise become faithful followers of the Lord will in all likelihood experience disappointment and quite probably will turn away; a tragedy for which we will be held accountable.

If we are still inclined to seek the infilling of the Holy Spirit, then we must have an all-consuming desire to be so filled; a mere interest will not get us where we need to be. The desire to be filled must be the biggest thing in our lives; it should be so acute that all other desires at the time will be crowded out. The degree of fullness that we attain is directly proportional to our desire to be filled.

The biographies of the saints teach us that the way to spiritual greatness has always been the way of much suffering, strife and pain. The way of the cross, which we will travel in commemoration on Good Friday, was a way of agonizing pain and suffering for Jesus who deserved none of it. It is the same for us, and even though we deserve it, we will be prone to complaining of our hardships.

Yet today, there are those who paint a very different picture of the way of the cross. For them it has become something that is beautiful and enjoyable. It is as if they believe that the way of the cross is something to which one can look forward. It is mind boggling to think that the walk to the gallows, the electric chair, the injection room, or the firing squad can be thought of as being something of beauty or joy.

Nor can the infilling of the Holy Spirit be viewed as joyous and beautiful, it comes with a price just as did our salvation, but the price that brings the pain also brings redemption.

But what about those of us who find ourselves in complete despair and in a place of utter emptiness, frustration, disappointment, distress, and darkness?

We can take comfort in the knowledge that self-despair, when accompanied by faith, can be a good friend because it destroys one of the heart's most potent enemies, self reliance, and it can be the catalyst that prepares our soul to receive the Holy Spirit.

Thus we should ever be on the lookout for those times when we feel especially estranged from our loving God, for if we fail to recognize the opportunity that we have to turn to Him and rely on Him, we will wind up resisting His call to us and we may miss out entirely on all the benefits that our loving heavenly Father has for us.

But if through faith we are alert and turn to Him and cooperate with Him, He will take away those comforts that we have relied on, our self-image perceptions, stripping us bare to our very roots which are in Him, and show us how painfully small we are before Him. Then and only then can we begin to comprehend the meaning in Jesus' proclamation, "Blessed are the poor in Spirit."

This breaking down of our self-image, a false image that is not of Him, indeed will be painful, yet throughout it God will never desert us, never leave or forsake us, never show wrath towards us nor rebuke us. Throughout it all He will keep us as the apple of His eye and watch over us as a mother watches over her child. And though we may be brought to our knees in pain and crying out as Jesus did, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" He is there with us and His love will never fail us.

And to be sure that our theology is straight, we must accept that though we may go through a period of suffering, we do not, as a result of our suffering, earn the right to receive the anointing of the Holy Spirit nor does this, laying bare our souls, make us any dearer to God. It serves only to prepare us for the infilling of the Holy Spirit.

A.W. Tozer wrote in his book, In Pursuit of Man:

“The filling with the Spirit then, requires that we give up our all, that we undergo an inward death, that we rid our hearts of the centuries-old accumulation of Adamic trash and open all rooms to the heavenly Guest.”

It is my sincere hope that through our spending time together in this eight-series study of the Holy Spirit that we each have a burning desire to become vessels into which the Holy Spirit will elect to indwell, that we are so convicted of our need to seek this indwelling, that we will immerse ourselves in God’s word much as a fish is immersed in the sea.

This immersion can only become a reality when we choose to meditate on God’s Word day and night. This cannot be done in typical American fashion by taking a course, completing a Bible study, or occasionally attending church. We need to fix our hearts and minds on the scriptures so that when the influences of our natural life press in to steal our attention, we may have a mental reflex to keep His Word and Truth before us ever in our minds.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.