

VII

FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT

And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18).

A person who is drunk with wine is said to be “under the influence.” They do not behave in an ordinary way. They are really not “themselves.” They act differently. They walk differently. They talk differently. They are “under the influence” of bottled spirits.

We are not to be drunk with wine, but we are commanded to be “filled with the Spirit.” Under the influence of the Holy Spirit, we also assume a new personality. We are not “ourselves” any longer. We act differently. We walk differently. And we talk differently. We are “under the influence,” not of bottled spirits, but of the Holy Spirit. Or to use the vocabulary of Scripture, we are “filled with the Spirit.”

BEYOND THE VEIL

At this point I must resist the temptation to become theological and to state my own personal views on various Scriptures. This, I fear, would become a merry-go-round of dispute which might take your eyes off of Christ and rob you of the personal joy of entering in boldly into the holiest of all. Beyond the veil is that profound "filling" of the Spirit which enables mortal men like you and me to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think by means of that new power operating within us (Eph. 3:17-20).

While many in the Christian world find the Holy Spirit a major subject for debate and dispute, there are others who find the Holy Spirit a major source of strength and power.

W. CARL KETCHERSIDE

W. Carl Ketcherside was born in abject poverty in a crude miner's cabin on May 10, 1908.

He was an exceptionally gifted child and when he entered the first grade he was advanced to the second in only two weeks, the third by Christmas, and was in the fourth grade by the end of the school year. At one point he averaged reading a book a day for a period of seven years.

For more than forty years, Brother Ketcherside was a leader in one of the most narrow and factional groups in Christendom. He frequently engaged in public debates with other Christian leaders. Now he describes his former ministry as that of a "piece" maker instead of a "peace" maker.

A dramatic change, however, came over him in 1951, while preaching in Belfast, North Ireland. In that divided and strife torn part of the world he saw his bigoted and divisive mentality in a new light. One night he knelt alone on the cold floor of an unheated church house. A deep snow was on the ground outside. For more than an hour he wrestled with his own conscience while the persistent Christ continued to knock at the door of his heart.

Over and over the Scripture came to mind, "behold I stand at the door and knock." Carl said that this had been one of his favorite Scriptures and he would speak on this subject on the last night of his gospel meetings. It now dawned upon him that these words were not spoken by Jesus to an alien sinner, but to lukewarm Christians.

At last, in desperation, he opened his heart to Jesus in a new and living way. Carl testifies that Jesus Christ did just exactly what He said He would do. He arose from his knees a new man. From that day until this, he has promoted love and unity in the body of Christ.

At the time of this writing he is in his late 70's and is pioneering a new work among the poor in the inner city of St. Louis.

The Scriptures teach, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness . . ." (Gal. 6:1).

This is precisely what W. Carl Ketcherside is doing. I personally see him as a man who is "filled with the Spirit," allowing the personality of Christ to progressively dominate his life with power and love.

JACOB AND ISRAEL

Students of the Scripture will recognize that Jacob and Israel were both names for the same man.

Jacob is an uncomplimentary name which means "heel catcher." He was so named because his hand was on the heel of his twin brother at the time of their birth (Gen. 25:26). Throughout the first part of his life, he was always conniving to trip up his brother and to manipulate men like a wrestler seeking to gain an advantage over an opponent.

How aptly this describes many Christians, always trusting in themselves, or their hard work, or their cleverness. Such manifest a form of godliness but have no power.

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Jacob went through a cleansing process in the land of Padan Aram. His father-in-law, Laban, deceived and tricked him and changed his wages ten times. This was undoubtedly a part of the maturing process which transformed Jacob, the heel catcher, into Israel which literally means the "Prince of God."

The new name was given to him at Peniel, where he learned to have power with God. Now instead of trying to manipulate men, Jacob had learned to prevail with God, hence he was hereafter known as "Israel." Hosea makes reference to this contrast by writing,

He took his brother by the heel in the womb, and by his strength (or in his manhood) he had power with God (Hos. 12:3).

BOB MOOREHEAD

Bob Moorehead had just such an experience as this in 1969, when he was ministering in Enid, Oklahoma. His ministry was going well on the surface, but his personal life was in a state of crisis. Not only was he ready to throw in the towel with reference to preaching, but even with regard to the Christian life itself.

He now considers his ministry to have been "in the flesh," and the 17 hour days had finally taken their toll. He was burnt out, withered, and shriveled.

In desperation he sought for the reality of God. Words do not do justice to the traumatic struggle which a man goes through in his own personal Peniel, but Bob Moorehead testifies that he came out of that experience a different man. He did not hear any voices, see any visions, or speak with other tongues, but he believes he was "filled with the Spirit." It was a turning point in his life and his ministry. Everything changed: his marriage, his preaching, his relationship with his wife and children . . . He states that his hunger for the Word of God went from "0 to 1000."

Bob is quick to point out that he was already saved . . . and that as such he possessed the indwelling Spirit of God. Perhaps

this is the difference. In the first place he had the Spirit, and in the second the Spirit had him.

Not long after this life changing encounter with Deity, Bob felt led of God to leave his church in Oklahoma, and serve a little congregation in Kirkland, Washington. The church in Washington was only about one tenth the size of the church in Oklahoma. Naturally the salary would be smaller too . . . and the living expenses would be higher. Oklahoma is described by some as the "Buckle of the Bible Belt" and Washington state was more like a Babel of carnality by comparison.

The difference between these two ministries, from Bob's perspective, is very significant. When we study the two, it is like comparing Jacob with Israel, or Ishmael with Isaac. In the first instance, Bob felt that he was operating "in the flesh," now he feels that he is "in the Spirit."

The little church in Kirkland, Washington, has grown from 70 to 80 to over 3,000 in attendance. They achieved a measure of national prominence when they received a single day's offering in excess of 1.5 million dollars. At the time of this writing, they are still growing and now are in a building program costing in excess of \$7,000,000.

The church there sponsors an annual meeting called "Peniel." They are quick to acknowledge that the power and growth which they have experienced comes not from men, but from God, and they are anxious to encourage others to experience this power too.

SPEWED OUT OF THE MOUTH

Juan Carlos Ortiz offers an interesting insight into Revelation 3:16, "So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth . . ."

With his uncanny ability to use simple illustrations to bring light on profound truths, he describes the joy of taking a bite of charcoal broiled steak. It is delicious beyond description,

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but as it goes down his throat a dispute begins to take place. The gastric juices of his system want to take that bite of steak and destroy its identity. They want to completely break down and assimilate that bite of steak into his body. The bite of steak, however, has no intention of losing its own identity. The struggle between the two has a tendency to make the body very uncomfortable. As the choking sensation becomes more violent, the undigested food will go one way or the other. It will be assimilated into the body . . . or it will be spewed out.

The believer who insists on maintaining his or her own identity, his or her own plans, his or her own future, will be spewed out.

Being "filled with the Spirit" involves self crucifixion to the extent that Christ becomes all.

Paul expressed it beautifully,

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me . . ." (Gal. 2:20).

THIS IS YOUR ROOM

On numerous occasions I have been a guest in someone else's house. Usually, I am shown the place which will be "my room" for the duration of my stay. Courtesy demands that I respect the privacy of my hosts. Because I have been invited as a guest in their home does not give me the right to wander into their private bedroom and start going through their dresser drawers.

I am a guest, but not a master. I do what I am told and respect the boundaries and limits which my hosts may place upon me.

Quite frequently, this is the way that we invite Jesus into our lives. We want Him as a guest, but we do not intend for Him to go wandering around in our personal areas or disrupting our personal plans.

Sometimes our experience of being "filled with the Spirit" is gradual and progressive.

We begin by inviting Jesus into the living room. After we become comfortable with Him there, we may let Him spend some time in the family room, or perhaps in the children's bedrooms. Some time later we may let Him into the kitchen, or the study where we keep our financial records, and perhaps ultimately into our own personal bedroom so that He becomes a part of the most intimate relationships of our lives.

Each time we invite Jesus into a new area of our lives, the only regret that we have is that we did not do it sooner. God is good! Those who trust their lives with Him will not only discover life, but life abundant! He needs to be invited into every area of our lives . . . not just as a guest . . . but as Lord of all!

. . . BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT . . .

In this book we have said much about subjectivism. We have tried to create an atmosphere of sensitivity and submission to the Spirit of God in every reader.

This section, however, should not be all that subjective. I do not know of any way that a sincere believer can read around or explain away this Biblical command,

. . . and be not drunk with wine wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit . . .

Permit me to offer several suggestions which may help you to obey this Biblical command.

First of all, we need to be empty if we expect to be filled. You can't fill a bucket up with water if it is already full of something else. It seems that God's filling comes to fill the vacuum created when everything else, and everyone else has failed.

Secondly, we are told that God gives His Spirit to those who ask Him (Luke 11:13). The context of this Scripture involves the friend at midnight who received what he wanted because of his importunity and persistence. This is obviously the way we become filled with the Holy Spirit.

Thirdly, the Scriptures teach that God gives His Spirit to those that obey Him (Acts 5:32). It is remarkable how many people want the Holy Spirit, but have no desire to obey God. The "gift of the Holy Spirit" is associated, in particular, with the command to receive water baptism (Acts 2:38).

Fourthly, conversion is instantaneous, but transformation is a process. The one occurs immediately . . . the other takes place over the course of an entire lifetime. Our experiences with God grow more wonderful as our heart enlarges and grows. Being filled with the Spirit is not a one time experience which is never repeated . . . it is a progressive relationship which deepens and grows as we mature in Christ.

Finally, those who desire to be filled with the Spirit should get immediately involved in a deep and serious study of the Word of God. No contact which we have with the Spirit world is more reliable or better authenticated than the Holy Bible. There is no better way to comprehend the will of God or the mind of the Spirit than by the study of the Bible.

ONE SPIRIT

The Scriptures teach that, ". . . he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit . . ." (I Cor. 6:17).

Just as husbands and wives become one on their wedding night, the believer becomes one with Jesus spiritually in the process of conversion. But husbands and wives go through many years of adjustment and development. The couple who celebrates their Golden Wedding Anniversary will probably be able to communicate on a deeper level and with greater understanding than they did many years before. Much of this communication is "nonverbal." So also the Holy Spirit is able to communicate nonverbally with those who are Christians.

One word which the Scriptures use to describe our relationships with Jesus is "fruit." Fruit is not just something which is seen externally, it is rather the outward manifestation of the

inward nature. You do not gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles.

Thus, when the Lord inhabits the temple of our earthly bodies, he transforms us from the works of the flesh to the fruit of the Spirit. We are not "conformed" by pressure from without. We are "transformed" by Jesus from within.

Sometimes it is difficult and perhaps even impossible for the Christian to determine which ideas came from his own mind . . . and which ideas came from the mind of the indwelling Spirit.

For he that is joined unto the Lord is one Spirit . . . let us be filled with Him!

THOUGHT QUESTIONS FOR CHAPTER VII

1. When seven men were selected to serve tables they were to be "full of the Holy Spirit . . ." (Acts 6:3). How did they tell which men were "full of the Holy Spirit"?
2. How can "spiritual" people be identified according to Galatians 6:1?
3. How often should one pray for the Holy Spirit (Luke 11:13)?
4. Compare people who are "drunk with wine to excess" and those who are "filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18).
5. Compare "works" and "fruit" (Gal. 5:19ff.).
6. Why do some people argue so much about the Holy Spirit?
7. Discuss "nonverbal" communication and consider how the Holy Spirit may communicate with us "nonverbally."
8. Which is more important, Bible study or prayer?
9. Will a person "filled with the Holy Spirit" ever contradict the written Word of God in the Bible?
10. How can Bible study help us to be filled with the Spirit?

