

How to be filled with the Holy Spirit

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I love that line, that we've got to find a way to get this into a space that's meant for that, and this is all we've got to work with. When it comes to being filled with the Holy Spirit of God, let me state unequivocally we've got all the parts, all the information and all the stuff we need, and it's found right here in the word of God.

I want to encourage you to turn in your Bibles to the book of Acts 4. As you're turning to Acts 4, allow me to set the scene for you. The apostles Peter and John have been walking through the streets of Jerusalem. In the chapter prior to, there was a man who lay sick and he asked them and he was begging them for money and they said, "Money and gold and silver we have not, but Jesus Christ, that we do." By the mere presence of his shadow, he was healed and there has been, for lack of better terms, a skirmish that has arisen and beginning in verse 1 of chapter 4 of Acts, it says,

1 And as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them, 2 Being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead. 3 And they laid hands on them, and put them in hold unto the next day: for it was now eventide. 4 Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand. 5 And it came to pass on the morrow, that their rulers, and elders, and scribes, 6 And Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem. 7 And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, By what power, or by what name, have ye done this? 8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel,

He begins to share with them about the reality of the resurrection, what it means to be empowered by the Holy Spirit. Fast forward down to verse 13,

13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.

It is at this point that they began to verbally mock, they began to physically thrust themselves upon the disciples and what we might call persecution commences. Soon thereafter, a prayer meeting is scheduled. They gathered around, they call out to the Lord, verse 31,

31 And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

Now when we speak of the person and the role and the work of the Holy Spirit, here in Acts 4 there are two instances where it mentioned being filled with the Holy Spirit and I just want to answer three very basic questions today on what does this mean for our lives. I want to ask why is it important to be filled with the Holy Spirit, how does one be filled with the Holy Spirit, and what does it look like when it happens.

So let's begin with the why. Why is this important? Why is this critical for our lives? It's because it is "progressive." Now several weeks ago, we taught from Ephesians 5:18, it says, "Be not drunk with wine which is excess, but be filled with the Holy Spirit," and one of the things that we addressed was at the moment, at the point in which somebody acknowledges that they have a sin problem, they acknowledge that only Jesus Christ can address their sin problem, they believe that he alone is their Savior and their Lord, when they call out to him according to 1 Corinthians 6:19, the Holy Spirit comes to dwell within their lives, they become the temple of the Holy Spirit. In other words, the moment you're saved, the presence of the Holy Spirit is in your life. What we're dealing with is the movement of and the power of the Holy Spirit upon your life.

Now when I speak about being progressive, when we talk about the Holy Spirit, there is actually a wonderful illustration for us in the life of Simon Peter as we read in Acts 4. Allow me the liberty of kind of walking through this briefly. In John 20 shortly after the resurrection of Jesus, he appears unto the apostles, he breathes on them and says, "Receive you the Holy Spirit." Then right before Jesus ascends, he says, "Hang out here in Jerusalem for you will be filled with the Holy Ghost when he comes upon you." In chapter 2 of the book of Acts, verse 4, at the day of Pentecost seven days later, it says they were all filled with the Holy Ghost and they spoke with other tongues. Not only do we have the famous Pentecost event, we have the healing of the man in Acts 3, and now we have what we have read in chapter 4. These individuals come against them, they're filled with the Holy Ghost, they experience persecution, they're filled with the Holy Ghost. What we see are three instances in the life of Peter within four chapters of the book of Acts where he is filled with the Holy Spirit.

Now there are some who would say that when one is filled with the Holy Spirit, it means that there's come a point where they "have lost their relationship, lost their salvation," and they got "saved again." There's no justification for that in the Bible anywhere. Why? Because find anywhere in the book of Acts where Peter got "lost." You're not going to find it.

There are other individuals who say, "Well, what it really means is there was a time where they were backslidden, they were out of fellowship with the Lord and they repented, they came back to the Lord. That's what it means to be filled with the Spirit." Find that anywhere in the book of Acts, the first four chapters. In fact, what we discover is much the opposite. From the same man who Jesus said, "Get behind me, Satan," from the same man who denied him three times, we see his life more and more dedicated to the things of the Lord in the first four chapters of the book of Acts which tells me that biblically speaking, being filled with the Holy Spirit is progressive in the sense that we become more yielded to the movement of God in our lives.

Have you ever thought about the potential here? In other words, we have the ability as we walk with the Lord, as we yield to the Lord, to have complete and full access to all of who he is and all of his power in our lives. One of the classic illustrations that's been used throughout time and thankfully it works in our culture, particularly contemporary culture today, is the use of a water faucet or a water spigot. Whether it be in the bathroom, whether it be in the kitchen, whether be on an outside faucet or whatever it may be, you and I are privileged in our culture today, we can go and we can turn that faucet on and by the way, the Lord opened up his faucet a while ago from the skies, but we can turn it on and then we can turn it off. We can regulate how much water we believe we need at the time, but from a spiritual context when we mention that the Holy Spirit and his filling of our lives is progressive, it means that we can turn on the faucet and eventually if you turn on the faucet in your bathroom and you never turn it off, the entire reservoir that is tapped into your line will empty out into your bathroom. It will because you have access to all of it, the problem is we regulate that which we feel we need at the time.

Let's talk about this spiritually. How many times are you and I guilty of saying Sunday morning, off or on, Sunday afternoon, off. Sunday on, Monday off. You see, being filled with the Holy Spirit means that we yield ourselves to the movement of God in our lives not just on Sunday, not just at a Bible study, not just in the morning, but 24/7. Why is this concept so critical? Because I believe that many of us based on our own issues are selling short the power of God in our lives. We have the potential to be all that he desires to do in our lives if we'll just turn it on, yield to him and let him flow in and through our lives.

But this begs a very important question: what does that look like or how does that happen? It's great to talk about it but how do we do this? Now there are four things you see in the book of Acts take place and I want to go and preface it by this: do not think in like spreadsheet format here. It's not that they're successive and it's not that all four are present in every instance, but we see that when somebody is filled with the Holy Spirit, that one or more of these things has occurred.

The first one is prayer. Now you'll notice I put asterisks by the word "prayer," particularly because in Acts 4 it happens toward the end and there's a filling of the Holy Spirit before, but the very first instance of anybody being filled with the Holy Spirit, Acts 2, came on the backside or the heels of a seven day prayer meeting. Hear me clearly: you will never be filled with the Holy Spirit apart from prayer. It won't happen. And by the way, if you've ever questioned, if you've ever doubted the power of prayer, this week

should have settled it for you here at First Baptist. If you're not aware of what took place at vacation Bible school Wednesday night, as we in the sports theme that we're working through, as we had an elite former Olympic athlete who was up on the platform and demonstrating his skills and his strength before he shared his testimony in the Gospel presentation, right there suffered what we know as a cardiac arrest. For two minutes, no pulse. For two minutes, no heartbeat. And what happened? Families began to gather in the courtyard and pray. Teenagers put their arms around each other and began to pray. We as a church body began to pray and don't get me wrong, I am grateful and I am thankful for the doctors and the nurses that tended to him that night, but I think even they would say that the credit doesn't go to their hands but to the Lord himself. He is the one that allowed...and by the way, just in case you don't know, do you think it's by coincidence or accident that the day before, the lesson that our students learned was about Lazarus being raised from the dead? You talk about a personal illustration, I mean, right there.

But we prayed. Listen, you'll never be filled with the Holy Spirit apart from prayer. The second thing you see here in Acts 4 is what I want to call perseverance. They hung in there. At the beginning of chapter 4, they questioned them, "Why are you doing this?" They were all up in their business saying, "Hey, guys, could you please be quiet? Could you go somewhere else?" After they speak to them, they come back again, they persevere. They didn't quit. They didn't give up. They didn't stop. You know, it's real easy to quit when things get tough, isn't it? They didn't. If you want to be filled with the Holy Spirit, hey, Jesus didn't tell them it would be seven days until they were filled, he just said, "Wait here until it happens."

Louis Palau, the South American evangelist once said he believes most Christians give up within about two years of God showing up. You say, "Two years? That's a long time." Talk to Moses, he had to wait 40. In other words, they didn't say, "Well, it's not going our way today, I'm going to check out." They had a long-term perspective. They persevered.

Here's a third thing, though, they proclaimed or they had proclamation. If you desire to be filled with the Holy Spirit not only do you need to pray, not only do you need to hang in there or persevere, but you've got to open your mouth when it comes to the things that God is doing with your life.

Now, I want you to notice verse 13, one of my favorite verses in this chapter, "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John." Now if we just stopped right there, you'd say, "Man, I mean, these guys knew what they were doing. They had seminary degrees. They had experience. They had training. They knew what they were doing." No, not so much. They "perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus." Let me make it simple: do you know how it becomes a part of your life to talk about Jesus? You spend time with him. That's how it happens. They were filled with the Holy Spirit because they had spent time with Jesus. Hear me clearly: if all your time with Jesus is an hour on Sunday morning, you'll never be filled with the Holy Spirit. It's not going to happen. If it's only a few moments in the morning before you get going or a few moments at night, do not expect to

be filled. Now you may have the presence of the Holy Spirit but don't expect to have the power of the Holy Spirit in your life.

Last but not least, as soon as it says they had been with Jesus, the persecution begins. They begin to physically place their hand upon them, verbally mock and ridicule them. In our culture today, we're very much adamant about saying that we believe or we see the birth pangs, the persecution beginning to happen to believers individually and collectively, and I think oftentimes we're guilty of asking the wrong question. We ask the question: why are we being persecuted? Maybe we need to ask the question: why are we not? Because when they were filled with the Holy Spirit and what Jesus had done in their life came out, people didn't like it. I've got news for you: darkness does not like the light.

So how do you get filled with the Holy Spirit? You've got to spend time in prayer. You've got to hang in there and persevere. You've got to make the things of the Lord just a part of your everyday conversation and when the going gets tough and people come against you, you don't give up, give in or give out. That's the formula and I know what some of you are thinking, "Well, I think I've done all those things. Am I filled?" I want you to go to verse 32 and we'll close with this. It says,

32 And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.

I'm going to give you a litmus test: if you want to know if you're filled with the Holy Spirit, if you want to know that one day maybe in the future you can experience, "I'm being filled with the Holy Spirit," do you know what the first litmus test is, a passion for others. Not a putting up with others, not a just dealing with others, not just a hanging out with. What did they do? They saw that there were those who weren't where they were and they desired for them to be so.

Let me make it a little bit easier. You know that you're filled with the Spirit when you quit using the words I, me, myself or mine. When it comes to the things of the Lord, if you say, "Well, that's not what I would do. Or that's not the way I prefer. Or that's just not my favorite way." I've got news for you, you're not filled. End of story. You say, "Well, what if I'm right?" They were right and they didn't talk about how they felt. They were so and much more interested in others meeting Jesus, they didn't care what they did or did not possess or their own personal preferences or prejudices. You see, when we use the personal pronouns me, myself and I, we're almost guaranteeing that we're not filled with the Holy Spirit. Do you know what we are? We're filled with the flesh because it's about what I want.

Second litmus test. Notice what it says in verse 33,

33 And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all. 34 Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or

houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, 35
And laid them down at the apostles' feet.

Don't think socialism, don't think communism, I want you to think grammar. You say, "Grammar?" They laid down houses, lands, things, possessions. In other words, you are being filled or you are filled with the Holy Spirit when you allow the Lord to prune your life. In other words, the things which you have excess in, you desire those who have nothing of, that they have some rather than you have all.

Let me sum this up real quickly: you're filled with the Holy Spirit when it's no longer about you. You see, if it's about you, it's not about the Holy Spirit. And the evidence, they were more concerned with what others possessed, what others had, what others experienced than even maybe their own rightful availability and access to whatever it may be. You see, you and I have access to, we have the availability to be completely yielded to and filled with the Holy Spirit. The only thing keeping us from this biblical reality is the person you look at in the mirror every single day.

Let's pray with our heads bowed and our eyes closed. As we talk about being filled with the Holy Spirit, as we talk about yielding to the Holy Spirit, I want to make this clear: you can't be filled with something that you don't possess and maybe you're here this morning saying, "This is foreign to me. This is a whole new concept. I don't even know about this whole Jesus thing." But maybe just maybe you're that person here in this room or on the other side of those cameras, maybe you're that person today saying, "Do you know what? I'd love one day to be filled but right now I just want to be forgiven." I've got some great news for you. You don't have to sign up for a bunch of classes or courses, you don't have to check off boxes, in fact the Bible says, "Whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved," and if today your desire more than anything is just for your sins to be forgiven, for your soul to be saved, and for a relationship with Jesus Christ to be established, maybe today is the day to have that conversation. You don't have to have this conversation out loud, you don't even have to say the same words that I might say, but maybe your conversation would go a little something like this. "Jesus, today I just want to admit, I'm the problem and you're the answer. God, I believe today that you loved me so much that you were willing to be born on my behalf. I believe you loved me so much that you were willing to live a sinless life on my behalf. I believe you loved me so much you were willing to pay the price for my sins on the cross and raise from the dead so I could be forgiven and I could be saved. God, today I recognize I don't have all the answers to the world's problems but I know that Jesus Christ is the answer to my sin problem. The best way I know how, I'm asking you to forgive me, I'm asking you to save me. And God, today, I want to turn my life over to you."

With our heads still bowed and our eyes still closed, maybe that's the conversation you had with the Lord today. We'd love to have a conversation with you, just the opportunity to celebrate what God not only has but is doing in your life.

Lord, as we come to this time in our service, thank you that you haven't given up on us. Thank you that you haven't pushed us to the side. Thank you that you haven't said, "Well,

that's one too many times." But in your providential will, you have gathered us together to hear about your grace and your mercy and the movement of your Spirit in and through our lives. God, I pray whatever that means, we would simply yield to you today. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

I'm going to ask you to stand with me as our team leads us. Whatever decision, I'll be here at the front.