



ARTICLE

HOW TO BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT • BILL BRIGHT

During the depression a man Yates owned a ranch in West Texas. Because he did not earn enough money to make his ranching operation pay, Mr. Yates was in danger of losing his ranch. His family, like many others, had to live on government subsidy.

Day after day, as Mr. Yates grazed his sheep over those rolling West Texas hills, he was no doubt greatly troubled about how he would be able to meet his financial obligations. Then a seismographic crew from an oil company came into the area and told Mr. Yates that they felt there might be oil on his land. They asked permission to drill a wildcat well and he signed a lease contract.

At 1,115 feet they struck a huge oil reserve. The first well came in at 80,000 barrels a day. Many subsequent wells were more than twice as large. And Mr. Yates owned it all! The day he purchased the land he received the oil and mineral rights. Yet, he had been living on relief a multimillionaire living in poverty. The problem? He did not know the oil was there. He owned it, but he did not possess it.

I do not know of a better illustration of the Christian life than this. The moment we become children of God through faith in Christ, we become heirs of God, and all of His divine supernatural resources are made available to us. Everything we need including wisdom, love, power to be men and women of God and to be fruitful witnesses for Christ is available to us. But most Christians continue to live in self-imposed spiritual poverty because they do not know how to appropriate from God those spiritual resources which are already theirs.

It is useless to try to live in our own power the kind of life God has commanded us to live. Our strength must come from the Lord! The Holy Spirit came to enable us to know Christ. When we receive Christ into our lives, we experience a new birth, and are indwelt by the Spirit. The Holy Spirit enables us to live and share the abundant life which Jesus promised to all who trust Him.

LACK OF FAITH

Many Christians are not filled with the Spirit because of a lack of knowledge. Unbelief keeps others from experiencing the abundant life. There are still other Christians who may have been exposed to the truth concerning the person and ministry of the Holy Spirit but who, for various reasons, have never been able to comprehend the love of God. They are afraid of Him. They simply do not trust Him.

Suppose, when my two sons were young, they had greeted me with these words: "Daddy, we love you and have decided that we will do any thing you want us to do from now on as long as we live." What do you think would have been my attitude?

If I had responded to their expression of trust in me as many believe God will respond when they surrender their lives to Him, I would have taken my sons by the shoulders, shaken them, glared at them sternly and said, "I have just been waiting for this. I am going to make you regret this decision for as long as you live. I am going to take all the fun out of your lives give away your toys and make you do all the things you do not like to do.

Many people believe that this is the way God will respond when they say, "Lord, I surrender the control of my life to You." They do not understand how much God loves them. Do you know what I would do if my sons came to me with such a greeting? I would put my arms around them and say, "I love you, too, and I deeply appreciate this expression of your love for me. It is the greatest gift which you could give me and I want to do everything in my power to merit your love and trust."

Is God any less loving and concerned for His children? No, He has proved over and over again that He is a loving God our heavenly Father who cares deeply for His children. He is worthy of our trust

FILLED BY FAITH

How can one be filled with the Holy Spirit? We are filled with the Spirit by faith. We received Christ by faith. We walk by faith. Everything we receive from God, from the moment of our spiritual birth until we die, is by faith. Do you want to be filled with the Holy Spirit? You can be filled right now, wherever you are, by faith.

You do not have to beg God to fill you with His Holy Spirit. You do not have to barter with Him by fasting, weeping, or begging or pleading. For a long time I fasted, prayed and cried out to God for His fullness. Then one day I discovered from the Scriptures that the "just shall live by faith." We do not earn God's fullness. We receive it by faith. Suppose that you want to cash a check for a hundred dollars. Would you go to the bank where you have several thousand dollars on deposit, place the check on the counter, get down on your knees, and say, "Oh, please, Mr. Teller, cash my check?" No, that is not the way you cash a check. You simply go in faith, place the check on the counter, and wait for the money which is already yours. Then you thank the teller and go on your way.

Millions of Christians are begging God, as I once did, for something which is already available just waiting to be appropriated by faith. They are seeking some kind of emotional experience, not realizing that such an attitude on their part is an insult to God a denial of faith, by which we please God. In Hebrews 11:6 we are told, "Without faith it is impossible to please God...."

HEART PREPARATION

Though you are filled with the Holy Spirit by faith and faith alone, it is important to recognize that several factors contribute to preparing your heart for the filling of the Spirit.

First, you must hunger and thirst after God and desire to be filled with the Holy Spirit. We have the promise of our Savior, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."²

Second, be willing to surrender your life to Christ in accordance with Paul's admonition in Romans 12:1, 2 (Living Bible): "And so, dear brothers, I plead with you to give your bodies to God. Let them be a living sacrifice, holy - the kind He can accept." When you think of what He has done for you, is this too much to ask? Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but be a new and different person with a fresh newness in all you do and think. Then you will learn from your own experience how His ways will really satisfy you.

Third, confess every known sin which the Holy Spirit brings to your remembrance and experience the cleansing and forgiveness which God promises in I John 1:9 (LB): "But if we confess our sins to Him, He can be depended on to forgive us and to cleanse us from every wrong. And it is perfectly proper for God to do this for us because Christ died to wash away our sins."

COMMAND AND PROMISE

There are two very important words to remember. The first is command. In Ephesians 5:18(KJV) God commands us to be filled: "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit." Not to be filled, controlled and empowered by the Holy Spirit is disobedience. The other word is promise, a promise that makes the command possible: "This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him."

Now, is it God's will for you to be filled, controlled and empowered by the Holy Spirit? Of course it is His will for it is His command. Right now, then, you can ask God the Holy Spirit to fill you not because you deserve to be filled, but on the basis of His command and promise.

If you are a Christian, the Holy Spirit already dwells within you. Therefore, you do not need to invite Him to come into your life. The moment you received Christ, the Holy Spirit not only came to indwell you, but He imparted to you spiritual life, causing you to be born anew as a child of God. The Holy Spirit also baptized you into the body of Christ. In I Corinthians 12:13, Paul explains, "For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body."

There is but one indwelling of the Holy Spirit, one rebirth of the Holy Spirit, and one baptism of the Holy Spirit all of which occur the moment you receive Christ. There are many fillings, as is made clear in Ephesians 5:18. In the Greek language in

which the New Testament was originally written, the meaning is clearer than in most English translations. This command of God means to be constantly and continually filled, controlled and empowered with the Holy Spirit as a way of life.

If you wish to be technical, you do not need to pray to be filled with the Holy Spirit, as there is no place in Scripture where we are told to pray for the filling of the Holy Spirit. We are filled by faith. However, since the object of our faith is God and His Word, I suggest that you pray to be filled with the Holy Spirit as an expression of your faith in God's command and in His promise. You are not filled because you pray, but because by faith you trust God to fill you with His Spirit in response to your faith.

Have you met God's conditions? Do you hunger and thirst after righteousness? Have you confessed every known sin in your life? Do you sincerely desire to be controlled and empowered by the Holy Spirit? If so, I invite you to bow and pray a prayer of faith right now. Claim the fullness of the Holy Spirit by faith:

"Dear Father, I need You. I acknowledge that I have been in control of my life and that, as a result, I have sinned against You. I thank You that You have forgiven my sins through Christ's death on the cross for me. I now invite Christ to take control of the throne of my life. Fill me with the Holy Spirit as You commanded me to be filled and as You promised in Your Word that You would do if I asked in faith. I pray this in the authority of the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. As an expression of my faith, I now thank You for filling me with Your Holy Spirit and taking control of my life."

If this prayer expressed the desire of your heart, and you met God's conditions of heart preparation, you can be sure that God has answered you.³ You are now filled with the Holy Spirit whether you "feel" like it or not. Do not depend on emotions we are to live by faith, not feelings.

You can begin this very moment to draw upon the vast, inexhaustible resources of the Holy Spirit to enable you to live a holy life, and to share the claims of the Lord Jesus and His love and forgiveness with men every where. Remember that being filled with the Holy Spirit is a way of life. We are commanded to be constantly controlled by the Holy Spirit. Thank Him for the fullness of His Spirit as you begin each day and continue to invite Him to control your life moment by moment. This is your heritage as a child of God.

1. Galatians 3:11, King James; 2. Matthew 5:6; 3. 1 John 5:14,15.