

BEING FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT, EPHESIAN 4:1-16

The Spirit & Gifts #1

◆ **Intro:** What would happen in America, if all the churches with more than two-hundred people divided, and all the church buildings were sold and the money was given to the poor, and Christians met in garages or rented small halls as needed, and all public signage and promotions were dropped, and small group studies of God's holy word in private homes replaced corporate services, and pastors took secular jobs and were basically laymen without education, and church members took seriously the tasking of talking to neighbors about what Jesus was doing in their lives, and we had no sound equipment, or gymnasiums, or kitchens, or libraries? What do you suppose would happen? Lets just take our church? Would Sunrise die? For some it might, if an occasional weekend service is your only contact. But, the scenario I just described is in fact that of the first Church after Jesus was resurrected from the dead and the Holy Spirit was poured out on them. Fact is they didn't have a lot of the stuff we have, but they did have one special thing, the Holy Spirit. And know what happened? The church grew, and people who didn't follow God at all became believers and Christians. It went viral! A world movement that's still going!

◆ It's interesting that the risen Jesus told his church they were to be witnesses throughout the world, that they would change the world –but that they shouldn't try until he sent them the Holy Spirit!

◆ *“He told them, “This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you*

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what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.” Luke 24:46-49, NIV.

◆ Ie. Don't try this on your own.

◆ Fifty days after Easter we'll celebrate Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was given to believers. It makes me wonder. How much are we relying on the Holy Spirit, and how much have we tried to take over by our own power? For the next few weeks we'll be thinking about the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit that are given to humans like ourselves. At the end of the time, toward the end of May, we'll be offering a class so those who feel the urging of the Holy Spirit can assess their own giftedness and calling as members of his family. We call it "Discovering Your Shape". More on that later. Right now, what are some things we should know about the Spirit of Jesus that he sent after his resurrection and ascension to heaven?

◆ **1. God wants his Holy Spirit to fill me. For that to happen I need to practice asking for the Holy Spirit's filling.**

◆ Christians know that the Holy Spirit lives in them. Paul says

◆ *"Therefore I tell you that no-one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no-one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit." 1 Corinthians 12:3, NIV.*

◆ and

◆ *"Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own;" 1 Corinthians 6:19, NIV.*

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◆ The physical Jesus went to heaven, but by his Spirit he can be everywhere present. It is the Spirit that sinks Jesus' ways into us. The things Paul talks about in Ephesians 4 (being humble, gentle, patient, bearing with others in love) these are unnatural things in a fallen world. Paul's point in the opening verses here is that these come from the Holy Spirit. Verse three says unity is "of the Spirit." Verse 4 tells us that it is the fact that there is one church, one Spirit, one God, one faith, one Lord, one hope –that makes us one with each other. We just don't do the Christian kind of things well on our own. So ask for the Holy Spirit.

◆ **A.** Have you ever renounced evil spirits and commanded them to leave when they suggest dark things to your mind that you don't want? It's a powerful practice. You might want to try it. But the other half of the coin is announcing your choice for Jesus, and inviting his Spirit to come into your mind and fill the space the darkness had been taking. Jesus illustrated it like this:

◆ *“When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, ‘I will return to the house I left.’ When it arrives, it finds the house swept clean and put in order. Then it goes and takes seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first.” Luke 11:24-26, NIV.*

◆ You catch what he's saying? You can't leave a place empty and tidy. You have to replace the evil with good. Just like if you want to win over a bad habit you'd do well to create a new habit to take it's

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place. Same way with the space in your heart and mind. So it goes something like this. You see your friend drive up in a new Mustang. The chrome rims glint in the sun. You glance at your Smart Car and think to yourself “I want that Mustang. I’m gonna pour my life into work and savings until I’m driving that. Oh no, no more Mr. Smart Car for me. Look at him, why should he have that anyway? What’s so great about him. I know he did such and such. And I know this and that. God, you know, you’re not doing a very good job with rewards and such. Maybe you’re not even real...” **Then** you catch yourself! “What am I thinking? I can’t believe that stuff is going through my mind. I *renounce* the spirit of jealousy and envy. Get behind me satan.” **And** that’s good, but not the whole deal. You need to do some *announcing* to. For spiritual power do both renouncing and announcing. “I announce that I’m Christ’s. I declare I will follow Jesus way. Holy Spirit, come into my mind and reclaim territory I gave away by entertaining sin.” Are you engaged in something you know is against God’s better will for your life? Do you have a feeling, or a desire, or an emotional response to someone or something that you know is not like Christ? You need to ask the Holy Spirit into it directly. There is power in the whole equation, folks. Only the Holy Spirit can make you like Christ. We cannot do it alone. Only the Holy Spirit can make you holy. But it is not automatic. You have to seek it. Ask for it. And apply it in a situation.

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◆B. Closely related is asking the Holy Spirit questions. For spiritual direction, ask God questions! A lot of Christians have the Holy Spirit. In fact, every Christian does. But that doesn't mean we are all "filled with the Spirit." It doesn't mean we are consulting the Spirit. God commands us to be filled with the Holy Spirit, so it must be possible (Eph.5:18). God tells us not to put out the Spirit's fire, so that must be possible too (1Thess5:19). It's like having an experienced mechanic by your side while you work on your car but never asking him for advice. We do it all the time! It's like having an energy drink at your side while you labor in the hot sun, but never taking a sip.

◆*"What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures." James 4:1-3, NIV.*

◆Growth of your soul is not a time release capsule sort of thing. You have to work on your soul. Better yet, you have to ask the Holy Spirit to work on you. Have you ever tried harder to read your Bible and pray more? Have you ever tried harder to love an unlovely person? Have you ever tried harder to be bold when you're afraid? Hows that working out for you? A story sticks in my mind. It's of Corrie Ten Boom, who lived through a Nazi concentration camp in WW2 where

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the rest of her family died. After speaking on the power of God and forgiveness that got her through it, a German lady approached her and held out her hand. It was one of the camp guards and she reflected on the mercy of God that Corrie had just preached. As Corrie tells the story, she had a powerful inner reaction and could not raise her hand to take the other's. But knowing she needed to she uttered a breath prayer telling God that he could do what she could not and inviting him to use her body. At that her hand went up and embraced the other's. You might like to try such a prayer sometime: God I know I should _____ but I can't do it on my own. Please, YOU do it in me." That's when the Holy Spirit can do what you cannot. Why do you think Jesus calls the Holy Spirit our "helper", if we don't need help?

◆ "And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever--" / "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you." / "But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me." / "Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you." John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7, NKJV.

◆ Ok, what else can we learn in Ephesians 4 about the Holy Spirit?

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◆**2. God wants his holy spirit to fill me so that other peoples lives are more full!** As a believer, I have features of my father for the beauty of my family! Look, verses 7-11 talk about the resurrected and ascended Christ handing out giftedness. Jesus died bodily for our sins. He was raised bodily ascended to heaven where his power rules the universe. But he left physical remnants of his own ability here in his church, called his “body” on earth. If you are a follower of Christ, you are part of his body. You have a role, a calling, and an ability meant to display Christ on earth.

◆Now sometimes Christian people forget this. It is easy to think that the representatives of Jesus in the world are the paid professionals or the leaders of the church. And so we might live as consumers, and spectators at church. (That’s one thing I really appreciate about Sunrise: there are so many of you being the Body, it floors me sometimes.) Par for the course is people who will say things like:

◆“My friend has spiritual questions Pastor so I gave him your number.” Don’t get me wrong. I’m glad to help, but did you talk about the questions with your friend? You are Christ’s rep yourself, you know. Others say things like...

◆“I don’t know why so and so is asking us to do such and such around church. Isn’t that why we pay her?” This I believe is one of satan’s tactics. Did you notice verse 11-12?

◆*“It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of*

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service, so that the body of Christ may be built up”

Ephesians 4:11, 12, NIV.

◆ You see, we actually pay the leaders to get us to do the work! That’s right! The pastors, the teachers, the prophets are not the real ministers. They are “added-ministers”. God’s people are the ministers! This is a huge difference in thinking. Preacher, teacher, etc are more like coaches, or trainers. They are the resource for the rest of us to tap into to do our thing! Did you ever notice that a coach is actually a sideline guy or gal? Most of the time they don’t even play the game! They help everyone else play the game! It’s easy to think that your teacher is supposed to be nice, or patient, or hospitable, or witness, or share, or do devotions, or show up to pray, or to volunteer in the community. But that’s not what the Scripture says, is it?

◆ What this means is that every believer is gifted by God and is on the playing field. So, do you know your position? Have you honed your skill set? For example, especially in today’s world with big venues, and lots of shows, and amazing techno ability -it’s easy for us to think of the congregation of a church as being “in the stands” watching the praise team sing, or the pastor preach. No, no! The praise team is only there to spark your singing, to lead you. You see, the church is a team. No one person is a team. Every guard, every wing man, every relay leg –is a part of the team. God very specifically does NOT give all his talents to one person.

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◆ *“Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms.”*

1 Peter 4:10, NIV.

◆ *Isn’t that the sense of verse 16? “From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.”*

Ephesians 4:16, NIV.

◆ **Conclusion:** In closing let’s notice the final goal of God’s people appealing to the Spirit of God for power to be who they were made to be. Verse 13 speaks of becoming mature. Verse 14 speaks of not being infants. Verse 15 talks about growing up. Are you seeing a pattern or an image here? There is no growing up of a church without unity. There is no becoming a championship team without each one doing her part. Just this week in Good News Club our lesson was on this same topic of the Holy Spirit! One young girl leaned over to me and said that a friend in her church had gotten the Holy Spirit recently, and she spoke in tongues! “That’s great,” I said, “But that’s not the only thing the Holy Spirit does in people.” You see friends, when you need to apologize but can’t do it, you need the Holy Spirit. When you need to overcome a sinful desire but you can’t do it you can turn to the Holy Spirit of Christ. When you don’t know where you left something you can ask the Holy Spirit. He can tell you. Who knows? He may! You want change? You want maturity? You want growth? Let’s start asking God for it.