

Spirit-filled (1) – All Of Us Filled With All Of Him

We all have different stories. Our experience of life, faith, culture, church, family etc all differ & our experiences have helped form our perspectives, cautions, frustrations & expectations. For this reason everyone's questions, reservations, concerns, frustrations etc are valid. We are all on a journey & on our journey so far we've been taught different things, influenced by different circles, warned of different things, enthused for different things. And now at this time in all our lives we're all together in the same room, part of the same church. As we develop & mature as a church I think it is very important we are aware & sensitive to one another's faith journeys. I believe this is important concerning our understanding & expectations regarding the person & work of the Holy Spirit.

As I've talked with others, from various backgrounds, about the Holy Spirit & his ministry over the years I've sensed a number of things from different people who genuinely love God & want more of him. Some are quite nervous at the mention of this subject; they wonder where it will lead. Are we all going to end up falling over or shaking on the floor, or worse, doing the conga dance around the room? Then there are others who think that's the best thing I've ever said, let's do it now – the falling, the shaking & the conga dance all at the same time! Bring it on now. Such people may feel frustrated such things aren't happening. Then there are others somewhere in the middle or who perhaps desire something else altogether. They want something to happen... they know there is more & they want the more... but they'll keep the seat belt on for a while until they're sure it's God at work & not something else – they are open but cautious. This series is for all these people, self included, because under every conversation, every frustration, every extreme, every concern & every question I have sensed a longing for the real & genuine, a deep desire for more of God – for all he has for us so we can be all he calls us to be.

The truth is all these people need each other more than they realise. This is one reason God calls us together in community. This is one reason we shouldn't isolate ourselves from other Christian streams. We need the people who are up for anything & we need the people who question everything & we need everyone in between. Neither is more or less spiritual, we are simply wired differently & for that reason we have different strengths & weaknesses, different leanings & perspectives.

1 Corinthians 3:17 says; **“Now the Lord is the Spirit & where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.”**

This means wherever, whether it be in an individual life or in a Christian gathering. The Spirit liberates those who naturally ask questions & reflect to have freedom to do so just as much as he liberates the dancers to dance. Both are worshipping. Because worshipping includes asking questions & it includes dancing, it includes listening & it includes shouts of praise & singing. It also includes a whole lot more both inside & outside our times gathered together! It includes every aspect of our lives & every part of our being.

When the Spirit really moves in people's lives & in church gatherings people are liberated to worship God as themselves, they are not forced to conform to one person's preferred pattern – that would be personality driven not Spirit-led. And there is no person apart from the Spirit who can bring the freedom Paul refers to here... People can be liberated to dance or to be still in God's presence... Of course it must also be recognised that the Spirit will also lead us beyond our comfort zones, but we do not lose our own God-breathed personalities when he does. There are also times when everyone in the room just knows it is wholly appropriate to be still & silent in his awesome presence (even the dancers), just like there are other times when everyone in the room just knows it is wholly appropriate to be exuberant in celebration (even the reflectors).

The point is for some our default will be stillness & for others it is exuberance, & that is okay – that is us being us. Neither is more spiritual than the other, neither should dominate over the other, & maybe we need to rub off on each other a bit. Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is freedom & that includes freedom to be ourselves.

In his book *'The Introvert Charismatic'* Mark Tanner writes a letter under the heading *A Letter to Charismatics from an Introvert Among You*. In the letter he writes the following... (Read on Kindle).

To be filled with Spirit means the Spirit filling our personality with his presence. When he fills us he does not cancel out who we are. No, he fills us as us. He fills our uniqueness, he fills our quirks & he fills our temperament. He does not come to squeeze us into some mould, to make us into someone else or to force us to conform to a particular style of worship; no he comes to liberate us to be who God created us to be - to worship & live for God as ourselves. As he does so he deals with the worst in us (because there are things needing changed in all of us), but he does so to bring out the best in us.

One thing about the Spirit coming upon individuals in the OT is that it gives us concrete examples of different characters being filled with the Spirit in the Bible. The Spirit rushing upon David did not look like the Spirit rushing upon Samson. The Spirit being in Moses did not look like the Spirit being in Joshua. The Spirit filled their unique identities & gave them unique callings using their unique personalities. Likewise the Spirit filling Bezalel & others (Ex 35:30-35) did not look like the Spirit rushing upon Saul & the group of prophets (1 Sam 10:5-16). The Spirit filled different groups in different ways for different tasks always for the glory of God & the advancement of his purpose. So there is both great diversity & clear focus in the ministry of the Holy Spirit. We should all be free to be ourselves, while giving others the same freedom, while at the same time becoming more & more like Christ!

Our devotion & focus is Christ & his kingdom but how that devotion & focus works out is as diverse & unique as we are. As 1 Peter 4:10 tells us; **“As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as**

good stewards of God's varied grace." Our gift includes everything about us, our calling, our personality, our unique identity, our testimony, our life, work & ministry. All that is not sin is God's gift to us. We can only steward what God has given US not what he has given to another & Peter makes clear that what God has given us is for the purpose of serving others. Therefore the reason we need to be ourselves is for the purpose of serving one another. We do not bury what God has given us we use it for him.

We cannot worship God or serve others as anyone but ourselves. This is why we need to get this vision of the Spirit personally filling & empowering us as us, inhabiting us, filling & purifying our personhood for the glory of God so that we can mature in reflecting Christ together. What is needed is **all of us filled with all of him**. That is what freedom is – all of us filled with all of him. When the Spirit fills us we are changed but don't become someone else, we are simply us flooded with the presence of God. It is not a personality transplant it is our personality wrapped & filled with the presence of God. So it's not so much that the Spirit overpowers us but that he empowers us to become all God has created & called us to be. And we cannot do so without him. For this very reason Spirit-led leadership should never be overpowering but always empowering. Church is not one human personality overpowering everyone else but every personality empowered with the Holy Spirit. That's the vision of the early church & I believe passionately that this is the new thing that God wants to do today.

This is why Jesus said; **"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 go, I will send him."** So all of us could be filled with all of him... And of course we now live in the age when the Spirit has been sent – he has come. He is not only with us but in us. Therefore we now find ourselves as hosts to the presence of God – both individually & corporately. So Paul writes in 1 Corinthians; **"Do you not know you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you"** (cf. 6:19). Bill Johnson writes; *"Jesus death made it possible to not only come into the presence of God daily, but for the presence of God to come into us permanently."* We are called to live in the reality of this.

In the middle of the story of Gideon we read a phrase; **"But the Spirit of the Lord clothed Gideon..."** (Judges 6:34). This apparently can be understood in two ways. Either the Spirit wrapping himself around Gideon or the Spirit wrapping Gideon around himself, either way the point is the same. The Spirit empowered Gideon as Gideon! In the foot notes of the *Spirit-filled Life Study Bible* it says; *"In Hebrew this literally means; 'The Spirit of the Lord clothed Himself with Gideon'"*. What a vision of what we've been thinking about: The Presence of God hosted by a person so significantly that he actually lives through them. He does not cancel out who they are but harnesses all God made & called them to be to the fullest, immersing them in Divine influence. *"It is as though their personality, their gifts & demeanour are all being expressed through God living in them."* This clothing is promised to every disciple of Jesus when he said;

“But stay in the city until you are clothed with the power from on high.” We live on the other side of the promise – the Spirit has come... There is so much the Holy Spirit wants to do in, for and through us!

“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.” (John 14:16-18)

In these verses Jesus assures his disciples he will not leave them alone but will give them another helper to help them & be with them forever. The Greek word for helper could be translated with a number of English words – advocate, upholder, champion, supporter, comforter or counsellor. The Holy Spirit is all these & more. To be filled with the Spirit is to have divine help, strength, victory, support, comfort & counsel in every aspect of our lives. It’s also helpful to point out that the opposite of an advocate is a critic... But there’s another word advocate could be translated as & it’s the one Eugene Peterson uses in *The Message*; *“I will talk to the Father, and he’ll provide you another **Friend** so that you will always have someone with you – this **Friend** is the Spirit of truth.”*

This is the word I want us to really take to heart - Friend. The primary aim of this series is that we would all have a growing friendship with & appreciation for the Friend the Father has given... The Friend who has come to inhabit & enrich every part of our personhood! We talk of having best friends, & we thank God for them, but the Holy Spirit is the Best Friend ever given by God. He can do for us what no other friend can do. He comes not to criticize, but to help, counsel, uphold & comfort us. He is the biggest supporter we could ever have in our lives. He is 100% committed to our success in life. He comes to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. Christ is our Champion without, the Spirit in our Champion within...

These messages are about the One who has come to be the best Friend of every believer in Jesus. He is the best Friend you can have whether you know it or not. You will not find another who knows you better, who can do more for you, who will always be with you, who will help you be all God has created you to be. He will be honest enough to convict you but he will also give you the power to change & will never abandon you.

These messages are about who he is & what he has done, can do & will do for, in & through you... Jesus said; **“Very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go I will send him.”** Peterson translates it; *“It’s better for you that I leave. If I don’t leave, the **Friend** won’t come. But if I go, I’ll send him to you.”* The Friend has come, & he has come for our good & to do us good! All the analogies regarding him – him clothing us, filling us, baptising us with fire etc – are to help us know him the good he has come to do us for God’s glory. God is more committed to our freedom & good than anyone else! In our Triune God we have the best Father, the best Brother & the best

Friend we could ever ask for. Our Friend has come to fill all of us with all him. It is a very personal work God desires to do in & through us & therefore he inhabits us with the Friendship of the Holy Spirit.

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RESPONCE

At the beginning of this series let's welcome the Holy Spirit as our Friend... to do something new. To help us know & appreciate him, ourselves & one another better so we can become a church full of people who are Spirit-filled & therefore free to worship God as ourselves & liberated to be God has called us to be.