

Spirit-filled (6) – A Blessing For Us With A Purpose Bigger Than Us

There are a few possible mistakes we could make regarding being filled with the Spirit. The first is we could enjoy the experience while forgetting its purpose. If this happens we may find ourselves having a good time without making any real progress or impact on the lives of others. Another possible mistake is we could know the theology without experiencing the reality. Bill Johnsons warns that; *"Many stop short of a divine encounter because they are satisfied with good theology."* We could become experts in the theology of the Holy Spirit without experiencing the power of the Spirit which propels us out of our comfort zones into the mission field.

A third mistake we could make is to understand the central purpose, & even experience it, but fail to see its affects are also for our good. This is what I want to focus on as we continue to think of the second aspect of the Spirit's ministry - empowerment. It is one thing to understand the central purpose of baptism with the Spirit is to make witnesses of us, but it's also important we understand how it does so. I want us to get that Spirit-baptism is not merely God empowering us so we simply get a job done for him. It's not as cold as that. It is much warmer, personal & loving. Jesus wants to empower us to make a difference in this world, yes he does! But he desires to do this by assuring us of his presence with us; and by bringing confidence, freedom, breakthrough, joy & courage into our lives. He desires to do so by gifting us personally with what we need to fulfil our unique part in his global purpose. This is how he makes us witnesses.

Baptism with the Spirit gives us a sense of God's immediate presence. Being filled with the Spirit gives us confidence & purpose in God's call on our lives. The way it empowers us is by flooding our lives with God's presence & power in a way that produces confidence & boldness. That we might go out into our world fully equipped to play our part in Christ's mission. Our involvement in God's purpose is as much for our good & growth as it is for the worlds. It's always been that way. Like with Moses, Ruth, Peter & all others our good & growth is wrapped up in God's plan to work through us for his glory & the benefit of others.

At times, when I've heard teaching on this subject it is emphasised that being filled with the Spirit is not about us experiencing thrills & goose pimps. I understand the warning. This is often said in reaction to the extreme of enjoying the blessing while forgetting the purpose. However I want us to see that being Spirit-filled is even better for us than thrills & goose pimps. When we explore the purpose, results & affect's this reality had on the disciples, & continues to have on disciples, we find that *baptism with the Spirit is a blessing that is for us with a purpose bigger than us.*

Think of what happened to the disciples at Pentecost. Here are a group of people who up to this point had failed to fully grasp the teaching of Jesus. They had deserted or denied him in the hour of his greatest anguish. When Jesus left them they didn't really know what to do with themselves. Every time the door

rapped in the upper room they feared for their lives... Their vision for the future was cloudy at best. Then they were filled with the Spirit & they suddenly know what they're about & they're suddenly bold enough to do whatever it takes for the gospel. What a transformation, what an injection of confidence, power, vision & faith. All of a sudden they believe they possess something the world needs.

Peter who had denied Jesus is the first to get up & publically witness to Jesus on one of the busiest days of the year in Jerusalem. Peter the man who was crippled with a fear of being recognised as one of Jesus disciples became Peter the unashamed witness who laid down his life for the cause of Christ! Peter, as well as the others, was delivered from what was holding him back. When they were filled with the Spirit the sense of failure, fear & disillusionment departed from their lives & they became the most confident, determined & focused of people. We need some of that today... We can have some of that because the promise of baptism with the Holy Spirit is for us as much as it was for Peter & the others (Acts 2:39).

So the purpose of baptism with the Spirit includes what is best for us even though it does not stop there. Part of its purpose is to deliver us from fear, timidity & insecurity so we can live the Christian life with confidence, courage, certainty & clarity. This is for our good & it's also for the good of others. Part of its purpose is to fill us with a sense of victory so we don't have to live in light of yesterday's failures... Part of its purpose is to fill us with joy so we can remain upbeat & strong in the midst of the challenges of life & ministry... Part of its purpose is to fill us with the belief that we have been given something by God that this world needs & for this reason we cannot hold back...

All this is for our good, it is liberating & empowering, & all this equips us to be effective witnesses in this world. Imagine a church full of people crippled with insecurity, timidity, fear & disillusionment... Imagine a church made up of individuals who don't believe they have anything to offer the world, who don't really understand or believe in what they're doing. What's the point? May as well close shop! Now imagine a church that is confident and courageous, made up of people who know & believe in what they have been entrusted with, who believe they have been called, gifted & sent by God, who believe in what they are doing. This is the difference being filled with Holy Spirit makes. It fills us with all the confidence & courage we need & helps us shake of our inhibitions & just go for it because we believe we have been empowered & gifted by the Holy Spirit...

This is not arrogance, this is dependence on God & genuine dependence on God produces great confidence in God! This is not about being full of ourselves; this is about being full of God – the source of true confidence! This is a reality we need to rediscover! This is a reality that could make all the difference in our lives & church. Psalm 3:3 says; **“But you O Lord, are a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head.”** Is your head hanging down today like the disciples before Pentecost..? This is the experience that

will lift your head & fill you with the confidence & courage you need... God does not want his people going around with heads down...

May we experience a fresh baptism with the Holy Spirit in these days, for our good & for the good of others!

This is a reality which will fill our lives with God's power & it is something which overflows out of us! In the leaders seminar at Wondrous Malcolm Duncan noted that; *"The church is not like a bucket that catches all the blessing, but like a drainpipe through which the blessing of God Spirit flows."* Jesus said in John 7:37; **"If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified."**

The reality of being filled with the Spirit provides both what we need & it flows out of us for the benefit of others. In Jesus' analogy the thirsty person is satisfied to the point living water flows out of them. I believe this Scripture is describing the reality of baptism with the Holy Spirit. It is for our good but it does not stop there! It is a blessing for us with a purpose that is bigger than us! This is why we are commanded in Scripture to be continually filled with the Spirit...

We know from John 20:22 that the disciples received the Spirit at some level before Pentecost. No one can be a Christian; can be born again without the Holy Spirit. Romans 8:9 says; **"Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him."** This is clear. However it's also clear the disciples, who had received the Spirit at some level, were not filled/baptised/immersed/overflowing with the Spirit until the day of Pentecost. This is what we're talking about now. This filling, this empowering of the Spirit for mission, ministry & life! This is what I'm encouraging us to thirst for so the living waters can flow out of our hearts... For if we are going to have something to offer others in this spiritually barren world then we need to be full & overflowing! And to return to the drainpipe analogy we need to examine our hearts, lives & attitudes to see if there are any blockages which could hinder the Holy Spirit flowing through us.

Let me finish today with one more Scripture. Paul said to Timothy in 2 Timothy 1:5-8. I'll read it in the Amplified Version:

"I am calling up memories of your sincere... faith (the leaning of your entire personality on God in Christ in absolute trust and confidence in his power, wisdom, and goodness), [a faith] that first lived permanently in [the heart of] your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am [fully] persuaded, [dwells] in you also. That is why I would remind you to stir up (rekindle the embers of, fan the flame of, and keep burning) the [gracious] gift of God, [the inner fire] that is in you by means of the laying on of my hands... For God did not give us a spirit of timidity (of cowardice, of craven and cringing and fawning fear), but [he has given us a spirit] of power and of love and of calm and well-balanced mind and discipline and self-control. Do not blush or be ashamed then, to testify to and for our Lord, nor

of me, a prisoner for his sake, but [with me] take your share of the suffering [to which the preaching] of the Gospel [may expose you, and do it] in the power of God."

This is the Spirit & power Jesus wants to clothe us in. Like Timothy God has a ministry, a gift package for each person. When Paul talks about the gift of God that is in Timothy he could very well be taking him back to the moment he was first baptised with the Holy Spirit. For the laying on of hands is one means by which early Christian's received the filling with the Spirit! We can't be certain but it's a real possibility since this reality is what empowers & equips God's people for service.

Keith Warrington writes on verse 6 *"that this gift is within Timothy, though he does not identify it. Paul may be referring to Timothy's... commission to ministry, or to the particular gift of the Spirit that enables him to function in ministry. Since Paul, alluding to fire within the word "rekindle", says that God gave this gift to Timothy, it is possible that he is referring to the Spirit himself, who is associated with power, love and self-control."*

Personally I believe Paul is talking about the whole package. For the gifts, the calling, the ministry are nothing without the presence & power of the person of the Holy Spirit. As I reflected on this possibility a clear picture began to develop in my mind of the Holy Spirit filling all of us afresh with his presence & power. As he done so each one of us was given a unique gift package which contained everything we need to accomplish the part God has for us to play in mission, ministry & life. Our part is not every part... it's important to know this when judging ourselves & others... when the Spirit fills us he equips us to play our part so he equips different people in different ways. It's always been this way. For example in **Exodus 31:1-11** we read of God equipping two men in very specific ways...

It's the presence & power of the Holy Spirit filling our lives which gifts us with all we need & which will give us the courage & confidence to use the gift package he has personally graced us with. These things will bring fresh freedom, significance, purpose & blessing into our lives but it will not stop there. For a fresh baptism or filling with the Spirit is a blessing for us with a purpose that is bigger than us! This is an exciting vision Scripture gives us but I believe there is one other important thing we need to take note of...

R. T. Kendall says; *"Four proofs you have been filled with the Holy Spirit: love, power, fearlessness and self-control."* Paul wrote to Timothy **"for God has not given us a spirit of fear but of power and love and self-control."** This verse brings a much needed balance in case we go over the top & forget the purpose is bigger than us. Keith Warrington writes; *"All believers must use their gifts with power, love and self-control—all of which are possible under the influence of the Spirit, and all of which ensure that gifts will not be used in an insensitive, tentative or undisciplined manner."*

The same Spirit who fills us with passion & power gives us the self-control & love we need to channel it for the good of others. The same Spirit who empowers us with charismatic gifts gives us the reigns of self-

control & love to harness our gifting for the good of others. Because *the filling of the Spirit is a blessing that is for us with a purpose that is bigger than us!*

SOME THINGS THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS COME TO DO IN & FOR US.

John 14:26; 16:12-15 (cf. 1 Cor. 2:10-16) – He teaches us

John 16:7-8 – He convicts us

Acts 1:4-8 (cf. Acts 2:1-13) – He makes us witnesses

Romans 5:5 – He fills our hearts with love

Romans 8:1-13 – He helps us stop sinning & do what pleases God

Romans 8:26-27 – He helps us pray

Romans 15:13 – He fills us with joy, peace & hope

1 Corinthians 12:7-11 – He gives us spiritual gifts

2 Corinthians 3:17-18 – He brings freedom

Galatians 4:4-7 – He helps us know God as our Father...

Galatians 5:16-25 - He guides us & produces godly fruit in us

Ephesians 3:14-16 – He empowers & strengthens us

1 John 4:13 – He proves our faith is real

There is so much the Holy Spirit wants to do in, for and through us! This is why Paul tells us not to quench the Spirit in 1 Thess. 5:19...