

A SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE

As already pointed out, when the Scriptures talk about being filled with the Spirit, it is in a metaphorical sense and actually refers to being filled with the Spirit's word. This is letting Christ's word richly dwell within one, as Paul's parallel passages to churches in the same area indicate.

Colossians 3:16 -- *Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing...*

Ephesians 5:18-19 -- *And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs....*

It is only by the commonality of the Word that Christians can truly be in unity, with no division, made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment (1 Corinthians 1:10). In the first century, the gospel was God's power for salvation (Romans 1:16) and the gospel is what called people to God.

2 Thessalonians 2:14 -- *And it was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Being Spirit-filled for the average Christian is NOT being baptized by the Holy Spirit. This occurred only twice in the first century; once, as the Spirit was poured out upon the Apostles at Pentecost (Acts 2), the second pouring was upon the first Gentile converts, to convince the Jerusalem church that God had also accepted them as His people (Acts 10 & 11). It came with a sound like wind and appearance like tongues of fire, something both seen and heard (Acts 2:3,33; 11:17-18). It is not seeing "visions" (Colossians 2:18), for these are specified by Paul as something that will "defraud" one of the prize of salvation, as does self-made religion and commandments of men (Colossians 2:23).

Paul's defining of love (1 Corinthians 13:1-13) is inserted in the middle of a lengthy dissertation on spiritual gifts. Love was a better way than the desire for gifts (12:31). The gifts were the childish things that were to be put away (13:8-11). Christian love (*agape*) was the mature end, for it was something of the reason and the result of proper persuasion (Acts 17:2; 18:4; 2 Cor. 5:11). When one is filled with the Scriptures, then one loves God enough to consent to His commands (John 14:15; 1 John 2:5); and loves His people (1 John 4:11-12). This is being Spirit filled!

1 Timothy 1:5 -- *But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.*

THE INDWELLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

1. A PROBLEM OF SPIRITS

For many in the religious world, to have the Spirit of God in their life is viewed as a possession counter to the type of possession done by demons in the gospel accounts. This possession begins with the receiving of Jesus into the heart or with the baptism of the Holy Spirit. It manifests itself in either an experience "better felt than told", a voice within telling what to do, or as an outward manifestation with the speaking in tongues.

What this misunderstanding of the indwelling of the Spirit does is help subvert and sidestep the Word of God and bring a person's personal feelings and desires to the forefront as precedent. One does what one wants and believes it is the divine will. If one is hearing voices in their heads telling them what to do, then they should be very careful as to what the voices are telling them. If the Spirit can possess us today then so can demons. In the final analysis, the "voices" must be judged by the Word of God, so one might as well just use the Bible for their guide in the first place.

1 John 4:1 -- *Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.*

1 John 4:6 -- *We [the apostles and their writings] are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.*

2. EXPLANATION VERSUS SCRIPTURE

The most modest explanations certain Evangelical Faiths make as to what is supposed to occur when the Spirit takes possession is that: [1] As you read the Scriptures they suddenly become clearer, [2] You look back and get a definite sense that God has worked in your life, and [3] You are talking with a person and "suddenly you sense an unmistakable impression that you should tell them about what Christ means to you." Of course, none of this is found in Scripture.

To demonstrate how even these explanations are damaging, consider:

- A. We are told to study the Scriptures to make them clearer (2 Timothy 2:15), so do we stop studying and let something else guide our understanding? What if it is a demonic spirit trying to lead us away?
- B. We should constantly be doing God's will so that we will know that God is working in our lives (Romans 8:28; 12:1-2; Phil. 2:12-13).

