

IMMANUEL BAPTIST CHURCH

SERIES: LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

LESSON: AN INTRODUCTION

JOHN 3:3; ACTS 19:2

JULY 11, 2021

MAIN IDEA

We study the Holy Spirit as a church because the fulfillment of our mission depends only on the work of the Spirit.

PURPOSE

To introduce the learner to our study on life in the Spirit, and to show them the pattern of the work of the Spirit in an individual church.

INTRODUCTION

For the next four weeks we will begin a study on the work and ministry of the Spirit simply titled, Life in the Spirit. We are motivated to do this because we sense the Lord is moving among us and we simply want to ask, Lord, what is next? It will be difficult to understand what the Lord is doing unless we understand the work of the Holy Spirit.

John 3:3

In John 3:3 Jesus is speaking to Nicodemus who has been told he needs to be born again. To help clarify, Jesus says about the Holy Spirit: "The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

From the words of Jesus, we learn that,

1.) The Spirit cannot be controlled.

We cannot *control* the speed or the direction of the wind. In the same way the Holy Spirit is a person with a will. His presence cannot be manufactured, manipulated, or controlled. He does what He wills.

2.) The Spirit is mysterious.

Perhaps you identify with this. We understand God as Creator and we understand that Jesus recreates, however, we know little about the Holy Spirit. We identify with Jesus words!

As someone said, "We cannot create the Fire, but we can prepare the wood." This is what this study is about: we want to prepare ourselves to receive the work of the Spirit even though we cannot control it or fully understand it.

So, if we cannot fully understand the work of the Spirit, then why even try to study the Spirit? That is a good question, and today's lesson is about: why should we study the Holy Spirit? Before we answer that question, let's look at an even more penetrating question.

Acts 19:2

In Acts 19:2 Paul asked this penetrating question, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?"

Paul is asking this question to a group of believers in Ephesus. They were not at Pentecost when the promised Holy Spirit first descended and thus had not yet experienced the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit coming in the book of Acts should not have been a surprise. It was prophesied in Joel 2:28 that God would pour out His Spirit. When the Spirit came upon believers in Jerusalem in Acts 2, Peter explains the events in the light of Joel 2. This was the expected fulfillment of prophecy.

Further, God did not disadvantage those who were not in Jerusalem on that day. The Spirit came again here in Acts 19 and in Acts 10 as a demonstration that he was coming for all people who were followers. The Spirit is showing his availability to *all* believers, not just some. After these events in Acts, as we will see in this study, God now gives the Holy Spirit to all believers. In fact, no one can be saved without the drawing of the Spirit.

The truth that the Holy Spirit comes on every person at the moment of their salvation is so clear to Paul that he later says, "Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Him" (Rom. 8:9). Wow. That's *very* clear.

Charles Spurgeon said it bluntly,

For, remember the Holy Ghost is the author of all spiritual life. Life does not lie latent in natural men for themselves to stir up, but until the Holy Spirit visits them, men are dead in their trespasses and sins. If, when you believed, there was no the impartation of life by the Holy Spirit, your believing was a dead believing, the mere counterfeit of living

faith. If the Holy Ghost has not been with you since your conversion, every act of your religion has been formal, dead, and unaccepted.¹

Which brings us back to our question, did you receive the Holy Spirit? The answer, for every believer, is yes. But now we have to wrestle with what the presence of the Spirit means for us individually and our church.

In the following weeks, we will discuss

- The Person and Work of the Spirit
- The Filling of the Spirit, and
- Prayer and the Spirit

For now, let's think about the New Testament pattern of the Spirit.

We believe that God is stirring something in our church toward prayer. However, when God stirs you to pray, you can always ask, toward what end? Why pray? Where is all this going?

Well, there is a definite pattern or paradigm to the Lord's work in the Bible.

Note to Teachers

In this introduction we have subtly suggested two reasons to study the Holy Spirit, both a corporate reason, and a personal reason.

The corporate reason we study the Spirit is simple: The Lord promises to move on His people as the Scripture promised in Joel 2, fulfilled in Acts 2, and promised for all local congregations. The study of the Holy Spirit lends itself to understanding what the Lord is doing among us as a church.

Many in your class may have never been a part of God stirring a body and moving them in corporate prayer. Now is a time to encourage them that this sense of God's revival should be the expectation. We long for the moving of the Spirit. This will be the focus of the individual lesson.

The individual reason we study the Spirit is that personally, we must be gripped with the reality of the Spirit's work in our lives. While this is not often common to talk about, now is the time.

¹ Spurgeon, Charles. Ed. Robert Hall. *What the Holy Spirit does in a Believers Life*. Lynwood, WA: Emerald Books. 1993, p. 106.

God is moving in our body about prayer, which is a natural gateway into a study of the doctrine of the Spirit. In this study we are, in a limited way, both harnessing our sails for this moment, and capturing some basic Bible doctrine.

EXPLANATION //

Paradigm

There is a pattern to the work of the Spirit in the Bible, and the book of Acts specifically. The pattern is this:

When we focus on God, we experience the fullness of the Spirit, He leads us to fulfill His plans and work.

The pattern is Focus, Fullness, and Fulfillment.²

1. Focus

God can do what he wants to do at any time. He is sovereign. In His sovereignty, He chooses to move in response to our hunger for Him. He does not need us. Nor does He need our permission to move. Yet the witness of Scripture is, and our own personal testimonies, is that God moves in response to our desperate pleas for His presence. Sam Storms said it like this,

It is important to God that we ask him for things he knows we need. From a human perspective it might seem quicker and far more efficient if God were simply to bypass prayer and get on with the giving! But that is not his way. He finds particular honor and glory in being the One to whom we must humbly receive what we need.³

Perhaps as you look back on your life you can recall particular times when it seems God was more active than at others. I certainly can. In those times, often they are associated with real focus on the things of God; perhaps even a desperation for God.

What does it mean to focus?

² The following section is based on Josh Smith's sermon, "Focus, Fullness, and Fulfillment." Preached in the chapel at Southeastern Seminary, 2013.

³ Storms, Sam. *Practicing the Power*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017. p. 48.

By focus we simply mean that we take the Christian life seriously. Think about all the things we take seriously. We work in a serious way, we focus on our finances, we focus on hobbies in a serious way, and we focus on the development of our family in a serious way. If we neglected our family or work, we would be considered derelict. They are important!

We deem each of these pursuits as worthy of our full attention. And yet, let's be candid. The source of all life, God himself, often gets the left overs of our attention once we have expended it on things that we perceive bring us immediate satisfaction and security.

At some point we grow up. As individuals and as a church. We get real. We begin to take life in God serious. This is what we mean by focus.

Focus includes prayer, study of the word, obedience, and corporate gathering to what God is calling us to do. It is the "humble recognition of my desperate need for God that drives me to seek God."⁴

Note to Teachers

Now, before we move on to the result of this, it might be wise as teachers to park here a bit. As a church we have been seeking God in prayer. Borrowing the model from Joel 2, we called a Solemn Assembly of sorts and tried to confess every sin to God. As a result, the next step in spiritual awakening is to long for the filling of the Spirit. It seems right and good to discuss this.

However, some may not have been there, and some simply are not there. Even in my conversations with people at the church, some are expecting God to move while others are ambivalent.

You know your class and can evaluate, but this might be a moment to press in as teachers if you sense that your class is still in this first stage of not really focusing on the Lord.

So, we have focused on the Lord. But often this is where things stop. Can you relate to this? A crisis comes, we get serious about the faith, then we come down from the mountain and that is it. There are many reasons for this. Perhaps one reason is that we don't know what is next. After we repent of sin and rid ourselves from it, something must replace it. Where there is an emptying of sin, there must be a filling of the Spirit.

Movements of God in our lives often sputter out because they are not fueled by the ongoing work of the Spirit.

In other words, the focus is a means to an end. Focus should lead to Fullness.

⁴ Smith, Josh.

2. Fullness

Remember the story of how the church began? It is recorded in Acts 2. Peter preached and 3,000 people were baptized in one day! They began to have favor with the city, they began meeting house to house. No one had a physical need because they shared all their resources with others. It was incredible.

We all want an Acts 2 moment. We would love to see 3,000 people saved! And get this, it was after a 10 min sermon (which could rank as another miracle)!

But there is a *reason* for this *result*.

In Ephesians 3:20, 21 is the glorious prayer of the Apostle Paul. Paul writes,

²⁰ Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

God can do more than we ask or think! How glorious. Yet it is preceded with v. 19, where Paul prays that "...you may be filled with all the fullness of God."

What does it mean to experience the fullness of the Spirit? We will cover this in the weeks ahead. In summary, our salvation depends on the work of the Spirit. The Spirit gives us life (regeneration) and the Spirit keeps us saved (sealing). But while we are sealed with the Spirit at one moment, and for all time, at the moment of our salvation we are commanded to be filled with the Spirit (Gal. 5:18).

So, we are at once *sealed* with the Spirit, thus our salvation is secure. Yet, for all our lives we are seeking to stay *filled* with the Spirit. One sealing, many fillings.

The reason we seek the filling of the Spirit is that from that filling flows the fulfillment of all we want for our lives and for our church.

So, how are we filled with the Spirit. Well, remember there is a reason for the result. If we are serious about prayer, the study of God's word, obedience to the Lord, and participation in the local body, then the result is that we are filled with the Spirit of God. And, as we will see, sin quenches the fire of the Spirit, and prayer stokes the fire of the Spirit.

This may sound mysterious to us. But seeking to be filled with the Spirit is natural to the Christian life. This should be a natural part of our conversations. Why? Because to be filled with something is to be controlled by it. This is why Paul compares it to drunkenness. Drunkenness is

a sin, but it has a parallel to the Christian life. In both cases we have invited something in us to which we surrender the control of our lives.

The expectation of God is not that we are like every other person in the world with the difference that we go to church on weekends and sin a little less.

The expectation of a believer is that they have given control to the Holy Spirit. This should be normal, this should be what we teach our children, this should be the expectation of our leaders: The indwelling power of the Holy Spirit.

3. Fulfillment

As a church, this is how we fulfill the mission. God leads us to focus on Him. As we focus, we long for, expect, and experience, the presence of the Spirit. In the fullness of God's presence, He gives us grace to fulfill the mission he has called us to do. This is the way.

Fred Hartley notes that there is a pattern to the Fullness/Fulfillment pattern in the following New Testament passages:⁵

"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you [fullness] and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth [fulfillment]." Acts 1:8

The entire book of Ephesians; *Chapters 1-3 [Fullness], Chapters 4-6 [Fulfillment]*

The Lord's Prayer *"Our Father in Heaven, "Hallowed be Your Name" [Fullness] "Your Kingdom come" [Fulfillment]*

"I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you [fullness], and you have overcome the evil one [fulfillment]." 1 John 2:14

"But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high [fullness]." Luke 24:49b

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations [fulfillment]." Matthew 28:19

⁵ Hartley, Fred. "The Kingdom Rhythm of Fullness-Fulfillment." College of Prayer International. https://www.collegeofprayer.org/uploads/3/7/5/9/37593771/monthly-mentoring_june-2018_the-kingdom-rhythm-of-fullness-fulfillment.pdf

We have great ambitions for ourselves, for our families, and for our church body. Yet, all of these come on the other side of the fullness of the Spirit. We do not want to move unless God is moving us forward.

CONCLUSION // ...have life in His name.

So, if this is true, and I believe it is, when we **focus** God, we cry out to Him in prayer. This is what we are seeing in our own congregation. What we should expect is the **fullness** of the Spirit: to be filled with the power of the Spirit. This fullness of power is God's means to the end of fulfilling the mission. Fullness leads to **fulfillment**.

This again should be no surprise to us. It was prophesied in the book of Joel,

And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit. Joel 2:28,29

Notice that it says this shall come to pass afterward. This is after they called the solemn assembly. This is after they confessed their sins to God and began to **focus** on Him. Then after this God pours out His Spirit. Then, listen to what the prophet says next,

And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. Joel 2:32

We often think of this passage from Romans 10:13. Perhaps you heard this verse as the culmination of the Romans Road to salvation. However, this is not an isolated verse. Paul, in Romans, is quoting the prophet Joel. The fullness is driving the fulfillment.

We have a great mission to be fulfilled. The mission is the great commission. It is behind me every Sunday as I preach. We are given the charge to go into the all the nations teaching and baptizing. It is tempting to forget the last part, "I am with you always even to the end of the earth." We cannot go out on the mission without the presence of Jesus. Being filled with the fullness of His Spirit is the fuel for the fulfillment of the mission.

When Jesus said this, the disciples were not anxious for the fulfillment of the mission. They wanted to see it right then. Luke records what happened:

⁶So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" ⁷He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. ⁸But you will receive power when the

Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” Acts 1:6-8.

They wanted the fulfillment right then! Lord is *now* the time? The plan was different. The plan was for their focus to remain, the fullness to come, and *then* the fulfillment. We gather each Sunday in the wake of their obedience.

The sun never sets on the mission. All around the world the Gospel is advancing. But Gospel advance began right in the moment when they waited on the Lord. The focus on the Lord, leading to the fullness of the Spirit, and finally the fulfillment of the mission.

PERSONAL TESTIMONY

When I was a freshman in college these truths began to settle on me. I realized that anything significant was going to be a result of the work of the Spirit. My friends and I began to consume anything we could read on the work of the Spirit. Of course, we longed for the “unusual manifestations” of the Spirit. Where He would do something out of the ordinary.

Yet, what we really needed was a fundamental understanding of the work of the Spirit. We needed to understand who He was and what He did.

Our goal is that we all understand the work of the Spirit with NO FEAR, so that our children will see the work of the Spirit, recognize His work, and walk in the Spirit without fear. When our generation focuses on God, experiences the fullness of the Spirit, and the fulfillment of the mission, the generational transfer can take place! How thrilling.

This is life in the Spirit.

PRAYER

Close in prayer, asking God to press this truth that was studied.

COMMENTARY / RESOURCES

Put Resources that could benefit the teacher: videos, podcasts, sermons, etc.

Cymbala, Jim. *Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire: What Happens when God's Spirit invades the Hearts of His People*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997.

Hamilton, Jim. *God's Indwelling Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Old and New Testaments*. Nashville: B&H, 2017.

Hartley, Fred. The Kingdom Rhythm of Fullness-Fulfillment. College of Prayer International. https://www.collegeofprayer.org/uploads/3/7/5/9/37593771/monthly-mentoring_june-2018_the-kingdom-rhythm-of-fullness-fulfillment.pdf

Smith, Josh. "Focus, Fullness, Fulfillment," sermon preached at Southeastern Seminary, Wake Forest: 2013.

Ware, Bruce. *Father, Son, and Spirit: Relationships, Roles, and Relevance*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2005.