

God's Spirit Poured Out

Ephesians 5:18-20

18 . . . be filled with the Spirit, 19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; 20 always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father. (Ephesians 5:17-20 (NASB))

A first question to consider as we continue our study of our being “filled” with God’s Holy Spirit is one that seems so very important to our Charismatic friends, and that is, “Does the Holy Spirit always actually “manifest Himself outwardly”, “make Himself known”, “show Himself”, in a “prominent” and “visible” way as He abides in us and as we worship Him? And the conclusion that I have come to from these scriptures is “yes”, He does, but not often intentionally so!

Why would that be so and why is that important for us to know? It is because, like the other two members of the Trinity, God the Father and God the Son, there is a preeminent element of “humility” that so pervades their character that it inhibits their exalting and manifesting of themselves. They each instead exalt and manifest the other members of the Trinity. God the Father defers to and gives all authority to the Son. God the Son defers to and blesses and exalts God the Father. And the Holy Spirit manifests and reveals and exalts God the Son, each of the three pointing to and glorifying the other members of the Trinity. But although neither God the Father, nor God the Son nor God the Holy Spirit exalts and manifests His own self, we are still able to see and to accept and to realize each of their majesty and dignity and grandeur and authority, each having and doing and accomplishing their own special purposes.

Here in our scripture text, we are being commanded to be “filled” with the third person of the Trinity of God, the Holy Spirit, which though being an utterly incomprehensible experience for our natural mind to imagine, is one that we must, by “faith” reach for, pursue after, receive and cherish.

So then, as you and I obey this command from God to “be filled with His Spirit”, what will be your and my actual experience? What actually takes place within our soul, our mind, our spirit as God fills us with His presence? Will we want to sing and dance before the Lord, as these words here suggest? Will we talk in unknown tongues as many of our Charismatic friends insist? Or will we simply sit quietly in our comfortable church pew as most of us Presbyterians and Baptists

and Methodists most often do trying to maintain our response as being “decently and in order”.

What will be the “outward sign”, the “manifestation” that the Holy Spirit is actually residing within our souls? Or will there even be an outward sign, a visible, outward manifestation of His presence within us? Asked in a different way, are you and I able to observe other people and know whether or not they are “filled with the Holy Spirit”? Even more, are other people able to see evidence of God’s Holy Spirit in you and me as we go through the activities of our day?

In a previous message, I mentioned a Bible Scholar that I have come to believe is trustworthy with God’s precious truths, Martyn Lloyd Jones. And he puts forth the premise that the Holy Spirit has two distinctly separate ways of manifesting His presence. Firstly, He manifests Himself by those things that He does “on the inside” of our souls, wooing us to God the Son, convicting us of sin and righteousness and judgment and convincing us of our need for a Savior. And He also further manifests Himself “on the inside” of our souls by coming to live within us, bringing with Him assurance and comfort and love and joy and peace and all the other precious “fruits of His Spirit”. And He also brings with Him special “Spiritual Gifts” and abilities, sanctifying us and changing us into very different people from who we once were.

And yes, simply because we have been changed so much by His presence and His “fruits” and His “Gifts”, there will be some level of “outward” evidence of those “inward” changes.

But Martyn Lloyd Jones contends that there is yet another far more prominent “outward manifestation” that the Holy Spirit will demonstrate as He manifests Himself through “outward signs”, such as He did at Pentecost and on other similar occasions, manifestations that are described as the Holy Spirit being “poured out” upon the souls of men, where men and women show forth a visible manifestation of being “baptized with the Holy Spirit”.

Unfortunately as we know, it is in these two distinctly different manifestations of the Spirit that whole denominations move away from their fellowship with one another; the contention by many of them being that such outward signs by the Holy Spirit are not for today’s church but were only intended for the days and times of the early church, that certain of those “Gifts of the Spirit” have ceased to be given in our day. And this divergence of beliefs has become very contentious,

especially involving our Charismatic friends. But even also among leaders within the Reformed churches such the Presbyterian and Baptist churches.

In his book, “Joy Unspeakable”, Martyn Lloyd Jones, a very conservative believer and bible scholar, speaks of a transformation that took place within His own soul, a transformation that surprised some of His other “conservative” friends, but one in which he discovered for Himself that God truly does want to make Himself “outwardly known” as well as “inwardly felt”.

And I must confess to you that I myself am very interested in knowing more about the transformation that Martyn Lloyd Jones experienced.

As I have pondered these matters in my own heart, I have equated such outward manifestations of God to a particular word, and phrase, that is used many, many times throughout the scriptures when describing the works of God, the word, “testimony”, and the phrase, “the testimonies of the Lord”.

I realize that many of these special words of God, such as, “testimonies”, and “commands”, and “precepts”, and “decrees”, and “statutes” and “judgments” all have far more than just one meaning, giving them a length and breadth that is beyond measure. But this expression, “the testimonies of the Lord” has come to have a very special meaning within my mind and heart.

These words, “the testimonies of the Lord”, seem most often to be used when there is an obvious and visible “demonstration”, an “outward sign”, a “witness” of God’s power and His presence and His provision that is able to be seen taking place!

A question . . . will everyone who sees those “outward signs” know that they are from God? Unfortunately, most often, probably not! Those who do not have the Spirit of Christ within them will often struggle to see the “hand of God” in anything that He does. But though that be true, we also know that there are times and circumstance in which even the most staunch of unbelievers will be able to know and understand. Listen, in Romans 1,

20 For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they (the unbelievers) are without excuse. (Romans 1:20 (ESV))

And in the Psalms, we are told that the “Heavens declare the glory of the Lord”, and that everyone ought to be able to look at the trees of the fields and recognize the handiwork of God”.

But it is especially within the hearts and minds and behaviors of those that have received Christ as Savior and Lord that God will make Himself most fully known. And that is the focus of our thoughts about these “testimonies” of the presence of the God, of being “baptized with the Holy Spirit” and of the Spirit of God being “poured out” upon our souls.

In his book, “Joy Unspeakable”, Martyn Lloyd Jones describes these blessings from the Lord as a confirming realization of God’s presence that is so “manifest”, so powerful, so intense that all the ordinary understandings of who God is in us will change, and dramatically so.

May I say that as I have studied these scriptures over the years, I personally see no conflict in our believing both of these biblical doctrines, that of the “indwelling presence and works” of the Holy Spirit, and that of a greater and more obvious “outward manifestation” of His presence!

And no, as of this moment in time I have not personally had such manifestations to take place in me, especially as took place in the early church, of “talking and tongues” and of performing “public miracles” and such. But I do not see where these scriptures prohibit those things from taking place today. I instead see simply that certain Spiritual Gifts are given to certain specific people but not to others, bringing a different experience of God’s presence into each person’s life. And I accept those differences.

And as we know, in this church, we do not observe designated times of “talking in tongues” or “public healing services”. But you will recall that in keeping with the instructions in James 5, we have “laid on hands” and prayed for healing. And God did heal! Those words in James 5 . . .

14 Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; 15 and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him. (James 5:14-15 (NASB))

Folks, why should there be such a controversy among the brethren about such matters as these. How “big” is our God anyway? Must we always keep Him in a

neatly defined little box so that we can understand Him better? Can we not allow Him to be bigger and more vast in His ways than the limitations imposed by our natural minds. And should we not be open to the leading of God's Holy Spirit, even and especially when His leading goes against our natural "grain" of ordinary belief.

Here in our text, we have received the command to be "filled with the Spirit". And we have a responsibility to do exactly that; because as we have said on other occasions, when God gives us a command, He has an expectation that we will respond and will obey all that He is saying. But more than that, if we are to love the Lord our God with all of our heart, all of our soul, all of our mind and all of our strength, should we not deeply desire and want and hope for such love to fill every fiber of our being? And the simple truth is, we will need the "manifest presence" of His Spirit to even begin to have that kind of love for Him. So then yes, you and I do want and need to be "filled with His Spirit", with His presence and with His "fruits" of

22 . . . love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control. (Galatians 5:22-23 (NKJV))

And we do want to be filled with the "Spiritual Gift or Gifts" that the Holy Spirit gives to us, of preaching, or teaching, or evangelism, or serving, or giving and on and on, because those gifts fully equip us to be

10 . . . His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them. (Ephesians 2:10)

But with all of those special manifestations of God's Spirit taking place on the "inside" of our souls, should we not also be receptive to the "outward" manifestations of His Spirit should Christ choose to bless us with them, the ones spoken about as God's Spirit being "poured out" upon us and our being "baptized by His Spirit"!

As we know, many of our more conservative bible scholars insist that these concepts of "God's Spirit being poured out upon us" and of "our being baptized by the Holy Spirit" are simply one in the same experience as being "filled with the Spirit". I personally do not see where that is so within these scripture and I would encourage each of you to carefully study about it for yourself.

Again, for myself, I have come to believe that because both of these doctrines are in these scriptures, then both are true and are God's will in our relationship

with Him. The two manifestations of His presence are simply for different purposes. Being “filled with His Spirit” is foundational to all that we are in Christ and is intended to be a continuous, ongoing part of our relationship with Him; and one that we must diligently pursue after it. The other manifestation, on the other hand, that of God’s Spirit being “poured out” upon us, and our being “baptized by the Holy Spirit”, is given occasionally at the discretion of Christ and is very specific to certain people at specific times and for specific purposes, the most evident purpose being that of showing forth a special outward and visible “witness” and “testimony” of God’s power and His presence.

Recall that each time God’s Spirit was “poured out” upon a person or upon a group of people; everyone watching could see and hear that it was taking place; as in the days of Pentecost when “flaming tongues of fire” were visible to everyone, and as each of the disciples spoke in “other tongues”.

The Apostle Peter, in explaining what had taken place there, said . . .

16 . . . this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel: 17 “And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; 18 even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy. (Acts 2:16-18 (ESV))

And John the Baptist had also spoken about such things in Luke 3, saying

16 . . . "I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. (Luke 3:16 (NKJV))

Again, while I have never personally experienced such “outward manifestations” of the Holy Spirit as these, I have experienced occasions when I have felt the presence of the Lord in ways that set my heart ablaze for Him. So then yes, I truly would love for Christ to pour out His Spirit upon me and upon us, because when He does, I am confident that our works and our words and our behaviors will become a powerful beacon and a “testimony” like we have never experienced before.

Will we ever talk in tongues as our Charismatic friends insist that we should? Perhaps we will, but probably not! But for sure, if God does give us such “utterance”, we will then obey and do whatever His Spirit tells us to do.

Again, may I sincerely encourage you and me to personally search these scriptures for ourselves and allow the abiding Holy Spirit to give us His knowledge and His wisdom on these matters! And He will surely do that?

One last thought. These words in verses 19 and 20 . . .

19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; 20 always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father. (Ephesians 5:19-20 (NASB))

Folks, this is part of the outward manifestation of the presence of the Spirit of Christ coming to the surface and bursting forth into psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. And this is not just some drab mumbling of a few words from the page of a hymnal. This is singing and shouting and praising the Lord with all that we have within us. This is real surrender and real worship.

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