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Acts 2:1-13
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Filled with the Holy Spirit

Visiting a church for the first time can be very intimidating. I remember as a young naval officer trying out a church with my roommate near our Navy base. I was a fairly new believer. We had no prior knowledge of this congregation. Mind you this was before the internet and live-streaming.

When we showed up, everyone was speaking in tongues. But no one was interpreting it. People raised their hands and danced in the aisles. It seemed like people were intoxicated. It was complete chaos. We were like fish out of water. We couldn't get out of that place quick enough!

I remember thinking, if that is what being filled with the Holy Spirit is like...
NO THANK YOU.

Through our series on the Holy Spirit, we've learned that upon putting our faith in Jesus Christ, that the Holy Spirit comes and takes residence within us. In that moment, we are given a deposit, a guarantee, a promise that as children we belong to God and what belongs to God will return to God one day. We are also grafted with the buds capable of producing all of the fruit of Jesus' Spirit from our lives...love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. And we are given at least one spiritual gift to help build up the church and to mature us in Christ.

Billy Graham wrote, "Three main expressions used in the Old Testament for the work of the Holy Spirit on human beings are: He came upon people...He rested on people...I have filled him/her with the Spirit of God."¹

So if the Holy Spirit cannot be taken away from us, then what exactly does it mean to filled with the Holy Spirit? Why do we need to filled with the Holy Spirit? How do we get filled with the Holy Spirit? What happens when we get filled with the Holy Spirit? That is what we are turning our attentions to today.

In the Old Testament, the Prophet Joel wrote to the Southern Kingdom of Israel of the coming judgement and urged them to repent and turn to God. After they had done so, God promised that one day the Holy Spirit would come and fill all people.

¹ Billy Graham, *The Holy Spirit, Activating God's Power in Your Life* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1988), 17.

Joel 2:28-29

“And afterward,

I will pour out my Spirit on all people.

Your sons and daughters will prophesy,

your old men will dream dreams,

your young men will see visions.

Even on my servants, both men and women,

I will pour out my Spirit in those days.”

And then in the New Testament Book of Acts, we see how that promised was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. Please join me as we read from Acts 2:1-13 and we listen for the Word of the Lord.

Acts 2:1-13

2 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.

2 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. **3** They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. **4** All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

5 Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. **6** When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. **7** Utterly amazed, they asked: “Aren’t all these who are speaking Galileans? **8** Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? **9** Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, **10** Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome **11** (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!” **12** Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, “What does this mean?”

13 Some, however, made fun of them and said, “They have had too much wine.”

Let us pray. Prayer of Illumination.

Sailing provides a perfect picture of what it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Sailors know that there is an incredible force that exists in the wind. While they may not be able to see the wind, they can certainly feel it when it blows. A good sailor reads the tell tale signs of the wind and harnesses it’s incredible strength by hoisting the sails on the boat. With the wind in it’s sails, the boat is propelled through the water and can be steered wherever the sailor wants to go. But if the sails are never hoisted, the boat just remains dead in the water.

The same thing is true with being filled with the Holy Spirit. We can only be powered to go and do incredible things for God when we are filled with the Holy Spirit.

Notice that the disciples in our scripture were at the right place at the right time when the Spirit's power blew into town. Just before his ascension into heaven, Jesus gave them these specific instructions. "Do not leave Jerusalem but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John's baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."²

They remained obedient to Jesus, stayed in Jerusalem and waited...so that when the Holy Spirit came, they were ready to go wherever the Spirit led and do whatever the Spirit asked. In this case, they were given the ability of speaking in the native languages of God fearing Jews who had come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Weeks. And they were able to share the Gospel and people began giving their lives to Jesus. To some, it was amazing and powerful. To others, it seemed like they were drunk.

The Apostle Paul in his letter to the Ephesians said, "Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your hearts to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ."³

"Be filled with the Spirit" is both a command and an invitation. It is not an option. The Greek verb *plērousthe*, in the present continuous tense, means "*keep on being filled*." This is not a one time event, it is a continual process. We might say, "keep the sails of your heart open so that the wind of the Spirit can fill them."

Notice how Paul contrasts this action with being drunk. "Do not get drunk." Again another command. When a person is under the influence of alcohol, they are controlled by that substance. Alcohol as an inhibitor removes the guards that prevent us from doing, saying, or thinking things that we would not normal do.

But being filled with the Holy Spirit means that we are consciously choosing to be controlled by God instead. It's a process of yielding to God. Surrendering to God. So when we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we are then under God's influence and control. Our words, attitudes, and actions are shaped by God as we molded more and more into the character of Jesus Christ.

Paul describes what being filled with the Spirit looks like. We speak to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. We sing and make melody to the

² Acts 1:4b-5

³ Ephesians 5:18-21

Lord with our hearts. We give thanks to God in all things. We submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. We produce the fruit of the Spirit. We worship with gratitude and humility.

In the Old Testament there are several examples of people being filled with the Spirit. Pharaoh recognized Joseph as a man in whom the Spirit of God lived.⁴ Bezalel was filled with the Spirit of God which gave him skill and creativity to build the tabernacle.⁵ Joshua was filled the the Holy Spirit and given wisdom when Moses laid hands on him.⁶ The Spirit came upon Gideon to give him courage, upon David to give him leadership, and upon the prophets to give them God's word. The Spirit of the Lord came upon Samson.⁷ Through Ezekiel, God promised: "I will put my Spirit within you and cause you to walk in my ways."⁸

In the New Testament, Mary was overshadowed by the Spirit when she conceived Jesus. Her cousin, Elizabeth, was filled with the Holy Spirit when she recognized Mary and Baby John in her womb left for joy. Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit when he prophesied upon John's birth.

There was the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost which we heard about today. The early gathering of believers were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the Word of God boldly.⁹ Peter and John were filled with the Holy Spirit while on trial and given boldness to speak to the religious leaders. Saul, who later became the Apostle Paul, was filled with the Holy Spirit upon his conversion. And Barnabas Paul's missionary companion was described as a good man filled with the Holy Spirit and faith.¹⁰

So we can see that from the beginning of the Bible to the end, the pattern is clear: The Holy Spirit fills God's people for God's purposes - for worship, for witness, and for service. Being filled with the Spirit isn't a rare experience for the spiritually gifted. It should be the normal way of our Christian life.

Why does God fill us with His Spirit?

The Holy Spirit transforms our character into the image of Jesus Christ. When we are filled with the Spirit, our hearts are transformed from the inside out. We become more like Jesus and produce more of the fruit of his Spirit - not by striving harder, but by surrendering, yielding our lives to the Spirit.

⁴ Genesis 41:38

⁵ Exodus 31

⁶ Deuteronomy 34:9

⁷ Judges 13:25

⁸ Ezekiel 36:27

⁹ Acts 4:31

¹⁰ Acts 11:24

Take this glove for example. By itself, it can do nothing. But when my hand fills the glove, it becomes animated, purposeful, and capable. The glove doesn't act on its own strength. It acts as my hand moves. We are that glove. The Holy Spirit is the hand of God within us.

The Holy Spirit empowers us for service. Jesus said, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses."¹¹ The Spirit gives us courage to speak, wisdom to act, and compassion to serve. Without the Spirit, ministry becomes a burden. With the Spirit, ministry becomes a joy.

The Holy Spirit helps us to understand God and God's ways better. Billy Graham states, "It is the business of the Holy Spirit to lift the veil Satan has put over our minds, and to illuminate them so that we can understand the things of God."¹²

The Holy Spirit enables us to have intimacy with Christ. Jesus promised the Spirit as "another Counselor... who will be with [us] forever."¹³ The Spirit doesn't just empower us; He brings us into deep communion with Jesus. To be filled with the Spirit is to experience Christ's living presence within us.

Pastor Tyler Staton says that the way to cultivate this intimacy is through spiritual friendship or "intentionally inviting another person into your sense of the Spirit's whisper and asking that they refine your attention and response."¹⁴

Now, how do we actually live this out?

First, we need to desire the Spirit's presence. The Psalmist likens this, "As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul longs for you, O God."¹⁵ Jesus said, "'If anyone is thirsty, let them come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of their heart will flow rivers of living water.'"¹⁶ The Spirit fills those who are thirsty. My friends do we want more of Him than we want the things of the world?

Second, we need to surrender to the Spirit's power and become obedient to the Word. The Apostle Paul exhorted the Romans "to present our bodies as living sacrifices holy and pleasing to God, as our spiritual act of worship."¹⁷ The Spirit

¹¹ Acts 1:8

¹² Billy Graham, *The Holy Spirit*, 31.

¹³ John 14:16-17

¹⁴ Tyler Staton, *The Familiar Stranger (Re) Introducing the Holy Spirit to Those in Search of an Experiential Spirituality* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2025), 108.

¹⁵ Psalm 42:1

¹⁶ John 7:37-38

¹⁷ Romans 12:1

will fill every space we open to Him - but He will not fill what we keep closed. Is there a place in our lives that we've kept off limits to God?

Third, we ask and believe. Jesus said, "How much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"¹⁸ God desires to have relationship with us and is not reluctant to fill us with his presence. In fact, he delights to do so. All we need to do is ask in faith.

Again, Pastor Tyler Staton states, "To hear God's voice, it would seem, is one of the most potent and most dangerous aspects of Christian spirituality."¹⁹

Fourth, we stay connected to the Holy Spirit through worship and Christian community. The author of Hebrews says, "Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another - and all the more as we see the Day approaching."²⁰

Billy Graham claimed, "If we recognize that in our church gatherings God is really in our midst personally, it will deepen our worship."²¹

How do we know if someone is filled with the Spirit? What evidence might there be?

They have Christlike character full of the fruit of the Spirit. Love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

They have a bold witness and are not afraid nor ashamed to speak about Jesus naturally or joyfully.

They experience joy-filled worship and have a heart that delights in praise.

They offer humble service and display a willingness to put others needs above their own.

They are mature and grounded in faith, not tossed back and forth by the waves of circumstance, or blown here or there by every wind of teaching or human deceitfulness.²²

They have the ability to "discern between Holy Spirit's whisperings and the deceiver's scheme." Tyler Staton asks, "What part of you is being inflamed by this inner voice - your shallow hungers or your deep longings, your ego or your soul? Discernment is, in large part, the spiritual practice of differentiating between the listening ear of your ego and your soul."²³

¹⁸ Luke 11:13

¹⁹ Tyler Staton, *The Familiar Stranger*, 98.

²⁰ Hebrews 10:25

²¹ Billy Graham, *The Holy Spirit*, 28.

²² Ephesians 4:14

²³ Tyler Staton, *The Familiar Stranger*, 105-106.

And finally, the true evidence of a person filled with the Holy Spirit is not emotional excitement, not jumping around and speaking in tongues or dancing through the aisles like a drunk person, but a life that has been transformed. The Spirit-filled life looks like Jesus living His life through us. My friends, do our lives look like Jesus living his life through us? If not, then let us start by asking for a good dose of the Holy Spirit today.

So as we close this series on the Holy Spirit, may we believe that Holy Spirit is not a luxury for a few, but a necessity for all who follow Jesus. May we know that we don't have to earn the Spirit, but simply yield to it. And may our lives, our homes, and our church overflow with the presence of the Holy Spirit — that the world might see Christ in and through us. Amen!