

*Excerpt From: How to Be Filled with the Holy Spirit,
A.W. Tozer.*

We must captivate our minds for the Christ. What are the images, words and thoughts that constantly fill our minds. We are urged to have the Mind of Christ. We are told to think on the things that are good and noble. We are to set our minds on things above. Paul writes:

Romans 8:5-7

For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so.

We are instructed to take every thought captive for the sake of Christ. That means to consider it and examine it. Is this thought Christ like and in keeping with the mind of Christ? We must captivate our minds and we must fill them with thoughts about God and not about the flesh.

We must meditate on God's word. Because the same Spirit that lives in us inspired the writing of the Bible we find the Spirit in the words of the Scriptures. Thus, when we read the Bible we read the words of the Spirit. If you want to get to know someone you read their diary or their schedule or autobiography. If you want to know the Spirit you read the Spirit's book. We meditate on God's word. Simply we don't just read it but we think about it, pray it, consider it and apply it.

We choose to get acquainted with the Spirit. Tozer writes on this point:

“Cultivate the art of recognizing the presence of the Spirit everywhere. Get acquainted with the Holy Ghost and then begin to cultivate His presence. When you wake in the morning, in place of burying your head behind the Tribune, couldn't you get in just a few thoughts of God while you eat your grapefruit?”

Remember, cultivating the Holy Ghost's acquaintance is a job. It is something you do, and yet it is so easy and delightful. It is like cultivating your baby's acquaintance. You know when you first look at the

little wrinkled fellow, yelling, all mouth, you don't know him. He is a little stranger to you. Then you begin to cultivate him, and he smiles. (It isn't a smile at all. He has colic! You think it is a smile, and it is such a delight.) Pretty soon he wiggles an arm, and you think he is waving at you. Then he gurgles and you think he said “Mama.” You get acquainted!”

Excerpt From: “How to be Filled with the Holy Spirit.” iBooks.

The Holy Spirit is a person and we must acquaint ourselves with the Holy Spirit everyday.



Plug In

Acts 2:1-21



What is the first thought when you hear the term Holy Spirit? For many of us it is mystery more than certainty. For some of us we might think of power and then others may think of it as strange and odd. Many of us feel oddly about the term Holy Spirit because we grew up with the term Holy Ghost. The King James Version used this term to describe the third person of the Trinity. The term comes from the translation of the, *gast* which simply meant spirit. In the days of the KJV the term spirit meant more of evil spirits and not of a personhood. Now of course the opposite is really true. So many times when we hear the term Holy Spirit we still think Holy Ghost and ghosts in our minds are interpreted to mean bodiless spirits that inhabit a place and space.

In addition, when we use terms concerning the Holy Spirit they too fall short of our experience. We speak a lot in the church about “living in the Spirit” or “walking with the Spirit” but the truth is for many those too are just words. They are religious talk that sounds good, but what does that exactly look like?

We use terms like the power of the Holy Spirit and yet, for many the thought of power in their lives seems distant and all too rare experience. We are told in the Bible that when we accept Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord, we are in that moment of salvation filled with the Holy Spirit. This Spirit is described as dynamics in the scriptures that is power or dynamite. It is the kind of power that changes things, circumstances and most of all people. Yet, in the church today, I am afraid that most of us would say we spend our lives feeling powerless and not powerful. We feel powerless in our culture, powerless in our work, powerless in our relationships and most of all powerless to change our own choices.

We are told that the very power of the living God dwells in our lives and yet, we feel powerless. There is some kind of disconnect. It is almost

like someone has tripped on the power cord and it has come loose from the socket. When we look at it there appears to be a connection, but the truth is the connection has been interrupted and the power is off.

In our text today, the Holy Spirit comes at Pentecost and the disciples are forever changed. There is not only an inward boldness, but also outward expressions of the power that has come to them through the Holy Spirit. Those who once were hiding quietly in rooms are now in the streets preaching. Those who were once uncertain about the future seem confident about what their future is to be.

We have been following the story of Jesus and the crucifixion has happened, resurrection has occurred. Jesus has spent time appearing and teaching and Jesus has ascended into heaven with the promise that His disciples would be his witnesses to the ends of the earth. However, before they went out, they needed to be prepared and empowered. They were told to go to Jerusalem and wait on the promise of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus had promised that God would send the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit would remind them of what Jesus had taught and guide them. It is interesting that the Holy Spirit is as much the promise and gift of God as was Jesus. We many times think of the Holy Spirit as somehow second-class in the Trinity. There is God the Father, then the incredible gift of Jesus and then the afterthought of the Holy Spirit. However, that is not the Biblical view of the Trinity. The Holy Spirit is as much God as God the Father and the Son. Thus, the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost is as much the promise and the gift as was Jesus when He was born in Bethlehem. The Holy Spirit is the gift of God the Father and is God.

The story of the day of Pentecost and the coming of the Holy Spirit is in the best terms mysterious. The disciples are waiting and praying. In their



Trinity Baptist Church
4815 Six Forks Rd * Raleigh, NC 27609 * (919) 787-3740

TRINITY PULPIT

obedience and in God's time the Holy Spirit comes. There is a supernatural occurrence that is described as tongues of fire that rested on them all. We are told that all of them were filled with the Spirit. In addition, one of the evidences of that day of the Holy Spirit was that they could not only speak in their own language, but in the languages of others who had gathered in Jerusalem for the feast. Thus, when they went out to proclaim the good news people heard it and responded.

What we can say about this story is that whatever task God calls you too, God will empower you to perform. God will enable you to do what God calls you to do. Here Jesus had said you will be my witnesses and now by the power of the Holy Spirit the disciples had become just what Jesus said they would be. They were His witnesses.

The disciples testified and Peter preached that first sermon of the church, which was in one term "Jesus." We are told that once Peter had preached his sermon that 3,000 came to faith that day. What an incredible day. What can we say for certain about this event? We can say that with the coming of the Holy Spirit there was power and lives were changed.

Why then if this same power dwells in us do we not witness more change in lives of others and in our own? That is a hard question, but it needs to be addressed. How can we plug into this power that already dwells in us?

Let's begin by thinking correctly about the Holy Spirit. We first need to be reminded that the Holy Spirit is God.

In his book "How to Be Filled with the Holy Spirit" A.W. Tozer writes:

"Now, what is the Holy Spirit? Not who, but what? The answer is that the Holy Spirit is a Being dwelling in another mode of existence. He has not weight, nor measure, nor size, nor any color, no extension in space, but He nevertheless exists as surely as you exist."

The Holy Spirit is not enthusiasm. I have found enthusiasm that hummed with excitement, and the Holy Spirit was nowhere to be found there at all; and I have found the Holy Ghost when there has not been much of what we call enthusiasm present. Neither is the Holy Spirit another name for genius. We talk about the spirit of Beethoven and say, "This or that artist played with great spirit. He interpreted the spirit of the master." The Holy Spirit is none of these things. Now what is He?

He is a Person. Put that down in capital letters—that

the Holy Spirit is not only a Being having another mode of existence, but He is Himself a Person, with all the qualities and powers of personality.

Excerpt From: A.W. Tozer "How to be Filled with the Holy Spirit."

We can say that the Holy Spirit is a person, but more so that the Holy Spirit is a divine person. That is the Bible attests that the Holy Spirit is God. The Holy Spirit is as much God as Jesus and the Father are God. Thus, when we speak of walking in the Spirit or living in the Spirit or the Holy Spirit dwelling in us we are speaking of the very presence of God in our lives.

The Holy Spirit is God and if we want to live with the power of the Holy Spirit we must desire God. We must want God above all else. What does it mean to receive the Holy Spirit and be filled with the Holy Spirit? I think these may be two different terms and thoughts.

First of all, we receive the Holy Spirit at our moment of salvation. I know there are some differences of opinions on this and they are not without some Biblical foundations, but the overwhelming experiences in the New Testament are of those who come to faith in Jesus are Baptized and are filled with the Holy Spirit. These are all of one experience. Here in Acts we have the 120 those who were followers of Jesus and then received the Holy Spirit. However, when they tell the news the 3,000 who came to Jesus and received the Holy Spirit.

The Bible teaches us that when we accept Jesus as Lord we in that moment receive the Holy Spirit. We do not have to wait for another moment. We do not have to beg God for the Holy Spirit. We do not have to persuade God to grant to us the Holy Spirit. We in the moment of salvation have the fullness and completeness of God in our lives. Why then do we still feel so powerless?

I think there is a difference between receiving the Holy Spirit and being filled with the Holy Spirit. The term for being filled with the Holy Spirit is constantly a term in the Bible of constantly being filled with the Spirit. There is an action to this term. It is the picture of not a static moment, but a living breathing process. When we speak of being filled with the Holy Spirit we are speaking of the power that comes from the Holy Spirit that already lives in us.

I think of one of our problems is how we think of the Holy Spirit in regards to the Spirit's power. We many times view the power of the Holy Spirit as something for us to possess and use for our benefit. We think of the power of the Holy Spirit as some sort of magical amulet

that we rub or an incantation that we recite. We think of the Holy Spirit as that which we possess to get what we want from life. This cannot be further from the truth.

In our text, it is not that the disciples take hold of the Holy Spirit it is the Holy Spirit takes hold of them. They become under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Paul would say do not be drunk with wine, but be filled with the Holy Spirit. Do not be influenced or under the influence of wine, but be under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

We do not possess the Holy Spirit for our purposes, but the Holy Spirit possesses us for God's purposes. Once we get the order straight, then and only then can we truly begin to experience the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

To be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit I think we need three things. First, there is understanding. We must understand that the Holy Spirit is and is with us. The Holy Spirit is already in our lives fully and completely. Put to rest the thought that the Holy Spirit is for others and not for you. Put to rest the idea that the power of the Holy Spirit is for only the spiritual elite. As Tozer puts it "we must decide that the Holy Spirit is for me." It is God's desire that we be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Second, we must recognize that to be filled with the Holy Spirit requires submission to the Holy Spirit. Billy Graham in his book on the Holy Spirit writes that submission to the Holy Spirit means submission to God. It begins with repentance and confession. We repent of our sins and confess our need of God. Secondly we submit by offering our very lives to God. This is about God using our lives and not us using God.

Third, we need faith. In our text the disciples are empowered and they submit themselves to God's will and then they act on faith. They go out into the city and begin proclaiming the good news of the gospel. We understand we have the Spirit and so we submit our lives to God and the natural step is faith. This leads us to actions of faith. It is in that moment of action we begin to see the very power of the Spirit displayed.

The Spirit dwells in us for the purpose of God's power being displayed in our lives. So notice this cycle. Understanding, that leads to submission, that leads to faithful acts and we then experience the power of the Spirit, which only takes us to a deeper understanding,

WE DO NOT POSSESS THE HOLY SPIRIT FOR OUR PURPOSES, BUT THE HOLY SPIRIT POSSES US FOR GOD'S PURPOSES. ONCE WE GET THE ORDER STRAIGHT, THEN AND ONLY THEN CAN WE TRULY BEGIN TO EXPERIENCE THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN OUR LIVES.

more submission and more faithful acts. All of a sudden we are living in the Spirit, walking with the Spirit and empowered by the Spirit.

So how can we cultivate our relationship with the Holy Spirit? Let us remember that the Spirit is a person and just as we think of our relationship with anyone we know that relationships take time and cultivation. I want to share five thoughts for us as we close today. How we can begin to cultivate our relationship with the Holy Spirit.

First, we must choose righteous living. There is no substitute for living as God intends for us to live. We cannot expect to experience the power of the Holy Spirit if we are not willing to desire and choose holy lives. Paul tells us to present our bodies as a living sacrifice holy and pleasing to God. We are reminded that our lives are not our own, but they are bought with a price so we must offer our lives to the one to whom they belong. We must present our "members" that is our very bodies to Christ. What we do in the

flesh does affect us spiritually. It is a tragic mistake to think that what we engage in physically has no spiritual consequence. We must choose to live holy lives. That is our lives must be different, other than everyone else around us. I am not suggesting we stop engaging in our culture. I am not suggesting we become hermits or that we do not enjoy this wonderful world that God has given us. I am simply saying that there are times we should say no. That is not for me because of Jesus and yes this is for me because of my faith in Jesus. I want to be pleasing to God above all things. We must choose holy living.

We must seek to glorify Jesus above all things. The Holy Spirit has come to teach us about Jesus and remind us of the teaching of Jesus. It is all about Jesus being glorified. Tozer writes:

"Are you sure that you want your personality to be taken over by One who will expect obedience to the written and living Word? Are you sure that you want your personality to be taken over by One who will not tolerate the self-sins? For instance, self-love. You can no more have the Holy Ghost and have self-love than you can have purity and impurity at the same moment in the same place. He will not permit you to indulge self-confidence. Self-love, self-confidence, self-righteousness, self-admiration, self-aggrandizement, and self-pity are under the interdiction of God Almighty, and He cannot send His mighty Spirit to possess the heart where these things are."