

LESSON 4

EMPOWERED BY THE SPIRIT

Instructions:

1. Read through the handout 3 times this week.
2. Write out the 3 things that stood out to you most. These may be things that were new to you or possibly things the study helped you better understand. The goal is to help you dig into the study and better understand the information. Be prepared to discuss these things next week in class.

i. _____

ii. _____

iii. _____

3. In your own words explain the difference between being baptized in the Spirit and being filled with the Spirit, provide a verse or two to support your explanation:

4. If someone asked you, "how do you know if you are filled with Holy Spirit?" What would you say?

EMPOWERED BY THE SPIRIT

In previous lessons, we've seen over and over our dependence upon the grace of God in the Christian life. The very plan of salvation is the story of God's gracious initiative to send His Son to die on the cross for sinners who were as yet in rebellion against God. Having responded to the gospel, Christians then learn that their response was actually rooted in God's gracious choosing and calling of them before the foundation of the earth. In the fight for holiness, (see Lesson 3), we find that all our efforts have their start in the sanctifying work of God, who "works in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13). The Christian life is truly "all of grace, from first to last."

Because of this, God never intended believers merely to "trudge on" in their own strength. Indeed, one of the great promises of Scripture comes at the very end of the book of Matthew, just after the giving of the Great Commission: "And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:20). In this lesson, we will explore more fully the source of strength for the Christian walk: the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit.

I. The Holy Spirit: God's Active Presence

A. While God is omnipresent (present at all places at all times with all of His being), He makes His presence known in different ways for different purposes.

- He can be present to bless, to sustain, to punish, or to empower.

B. God manifested His presence in various ways throughout history, but these reached a climax in the person of Jesus Christ.

John 1:1, 14: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth."

C. In the church age, God's presence is primarily manifested in the world, and especially in the church, in the person of the Holy Spirit.

John 14:16-18: "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know Him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you."

"The work of the Holy Spirit is to manifest the active presence of God in the world, and especially in the church." —**Wayne Grudem**

D. Christians have the great privilege, not only of trusting in God's omnipresence, but of personally experiencing His nearness.

Romans 8:15-16: "For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God..."

James 4:8: "Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you."

- E. God's active presence among His people accomplishes many things. It is not uncommon for people to desire the more dramatic aspects of this, such as miracles, healings, or prophecy. Scripture, however, portrays the Spirit's work as pervasive and multifaceted. To fully appreciate God's active presence, we need to recognize the countless ways in which the Spirit is at work in and among us.

II. The Holy Spirit: God's Saving Presence

The New Birth. The greatest miracle one can ever experience is the miracle of regeneration, in which the Holy Spirit changes our nature and imparts spiritual life to us. Nothing can ever compare with this mighty work of the Spirit in our lives.

Titus 3:4-7: "But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

III. The Holy Spirit: God's Purifying Presence

- A. The Holy Spirit. One of the Spirit's primary activities is to remove sin from our lives and to make us more and more holy, just as God Himself is holy.

2 Corinthians 3:18: "And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit."

See Lesson 3: Sanctification

- B. The Fruit of the Spirit. As the believer cooperates with the work of the Spirit in his life, the Spirit produces "fruit" in his life, consisting of godly attitudes and behavior. This supernatural work is the opposite of our natural tendencies, and is the reproduction of the life of Christ in the believer.

Galatians 5:16, 22-23: "But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh...But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, of faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law."

IV. The Holy Spirit: God's Empowering Presence

In addition to effecting regeneration and sanctification, the Holy Spirit also empowers believers for Christian witness and service. The inaugural experience of this empowering work is often referred to as being "baptized in (or with) the Spirit". (1 Corinthians 12:12-13)

- A. To be baptized in the Spirit is to be immersed in the Holy Spirit by the risen Christ, resulting in an awareness of God and empowerment for Christian life and ministry.
- I. This "immersion" is foretold by John the Baptist in each of the four gospels (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16 and John 1:33) and by Jesus (Acts 1:4-5). It is the "promise of the Father"—God's empowering presence for the new covenant age.

Acts 1:4-5, 8: "And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, 'you heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.'...But 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.”

2. The purpose of this activity of God’s Spirit is spiritual empowerment, both to stimulate consistent growth in godliness and to enable the believer to bear witness concerning the gospel and to serve the Lord with spiritual power.

Galatians 5:16: “But I say, walk by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.”

Acts 1:8: “But 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.”

- B. Baptism in the Spirit is only the beginning of a process of empowerment that God desires for every believer.

1. The New Testament envisions a process of repeated, continual fillings of God’s Spirit throughout the believer’s life.

Acts 4:8, 31: “Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them...And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.”

2. The Holy Spirit desires to fill each believer continually with increased power for Christian life and witness. Our responsibility and privilege is to live a life of dependence upon God, surrendering daily to His Spirit in order to be continually filled, empowered, and strengthened to live lives for His glory.

Ephesians 5:18: “Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit...”

- C. Baptism in the Spirit is a one time event that God does at salvation (1 Corinthians 12:13). This is different than Ephesians 5:18’s command to “*be filled with the Spirit*”.

1. Ephesians 5:18, “be filled” is:

- a. Passive: meaning someone fills you, you do not fill yourself, you receive the action.
- b. Present tense: meaning to be continuously. Be being kept filled by the Spirit.

2. Peter was baptized with the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost but was also filled again at other times.

Acts 2:1-4: When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Acts 4:8:

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders of Israel:

Acts 4:31

And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.

D. What does it mean to be filled with the Spirit? How do I know if I am being filled?

I. Many believers live defeated lives due to confusion about this issue.

a. This is not another experience that you need to wait on or pray for. Believers have been given the Holy Spirit at salvation. God has given us divine power in order to live lives for His glory.

2 Peter 1:2-3: Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue

b. Being filled with the Holy Spirit does not mean we get Him in portions, as if the Holy Spirit is divided or given out in doses as we mature. We already know that we receive the Holy Spirit in full at salvation. A couple of pictures that might help are:

i. Wind in a sail: A sail boat is moved along by the wind filling the sail. In the same way we should be filled with God's Holy Spirit and He should be moving us along in the Christian life.

2 Peter 1:21: for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

ii. Salts affects on food: Salt will permeate meat in order to flavor and preserve it. God wants His Holy Spirit to so permeate His children's lives that everything they think, say, and do will reflect His glory.

iii. Total control: The person who is overcome with sorrow is no longer under his own control but is totally under the control of that emotion and is no longer able to balance it with happiness. In the same way, the Holy Spirit desires to be in complete control of our lives.

Jesus' example...*Mark 1:12 Immediately the Spirit **drove Him** into the wilderness.* (ekballo, strong word, thrust Him)

2. What does being filled with the Holy Spirit look like?

a. Being filled with the Holy Spirit is not a mystery; it speaks of surrender to God and death to self. It is a life surrendered to God for His purposes and glory.

Being filled with the Holy Spirit involves confession of sin, surrender of will, intellect, body, time, talents, possessions, and desires. It requires the death of selfishness and the slaying of self-will. When we die to self, the Lord fills us with His Spirit. ---**John MacArthur, Jr**

V. Pursuing God's Empowering Presence

Because God invites us to draw near to Him (Hebrews 4:16; James 4:8) and commands us to be filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18), we can have confidence that He will respond to our pursuit of Him.

- A. Diligently practice the spiritual disciplines, especially the study of God’s Word, prayer, and worship.

Amazingly, God desires an intimate relationship with us, and the spiritual disciplines are means God has given us to commune with Him, receive His grace, and grow in godliness.

“The Spiritual Disciplines then are also like a channel of God’s transforming grace. As we place ourselves in them to seek communion with Christ, His grace flows to us and we are changed. That’s why the disciplines must become priority for us if we desire to be godly.” —**Donald Whitney**

- I. The Bible is God’s self-revelation to man. In it we learn what God is like and how we are to respond to Him. There is no more important activity for the Christian than reading and meditating upon the Word of God.

- a. Being filled with the Spirit is synonymous with being filled with the Word of God. We can see this in comparing Paul’s instructions in Ephesians 5 and Colossians 3.

The instruction...

Ephesians 5:18: “Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit...”

Followed by...

(5:22) Wives, submit to your own husbands (5:25) Husbands, love your wives (6:1) Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. (6:4) And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.

The instruction...

Colossians 3:16: Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom

Followed by...

(3:18) Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. (5:19) Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them. (5:20) Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord. (5:21) Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.

A person should be studying and meditating upon the truths of Scripture daily in order to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Being filled is not a spectator sport but is something that God has already given the believer ability to do. He has provided the power and the means but the Christian must do his part.

- b. Prayer is communication with God. It is the lifting up of our hearts, thoughts, and desires to God. When we pray, we communicate with God. We communicate our gratitude, confess our sins, submit our wills, present our requests, and pour out our worship. We also allow Him, through His Holy Spirit and through His Word, to search our hearts for sin, illumine our minds with His truth, encourage our souls with His promises, and assure us of His love through Christ.
- c. Fellowship: corporate gathering

In the life of this church, we recognize the importance of our Sunday morning corporate meetings. These times provide a context where we can worship God together, hear the word of God proclaimed and taught, and be built together in our mission as a church.

i. Other Corporate Contexts

In our church, there are a variety of other gatherings that take place within various ministry spheres. Growth Groups also play a critical role in our life together as a church. Each of these contexts provides opportunities for us to experience God's active presence together as we seek Him through worship, the teaching and application of God's Word, and fellowship with each other.

VI. God's Active Presence: Our Privilege and Need

As believers, we should never be satisfied with anything less than the nearness of God—His active presence. He has promised to draw near to us, and He empowers us by the Holy Spirit to glorify Him and serve Him more effectively as He accomplishes His purposes through the church. To be a Christian is to be marked by the presence of God, and how gracious He is to give us the Holy Spirit to empower us for our lives, our service to Him, and our life together as a church. How desperately we need this. And how wondrous it is that we can pursue this in faith, and do so together.