

Articles and Sermons :: How To Be Filled With The Holy Spirit - A.W. Tozer

How To Be Filled With The Holy Spirit - A.W. Tozer - posted by worzle, on: 2008/3/10 13:29

Almost all Christians want to be *full* of the Spirit. Only a few want to be filled with the Spirit.

But how can a Christian know the fullness of the Spirit unless he has known the experience of being filled?

It would, however, be useless to tell anyone how to be filled with the Spirit unless he first believes that he can be. No one can hope for something he is not convinced is the will of God for him and within the bounds of scriptural provision.

Before the question 'How can I be filled?' has any validity the seeker after God *must be sure that the experience of being filled is actually possible*. The man who is not sure can have no ground of expectation. Where there is no expectation there can be no faith, and where there is no faith the inquiry is meaningless.

The Doctrine of the Spirit as it relates to the believer has over the last half century been shrouded in a mist such as lies upon a mountain in stormy weather. A world of confusion has surrounded this truth. The children of God have been taught contrary doctrines from the same texts, warned, threatened and intimidated until they instinctively recoil from every mention of the Bible teaching concerning the Holy Spirit.

This confusion has not come by accident. An enemy has done this. Satan knows that Spiritless evangelicalism is as deadly as Modernism or heresy, and he has done everything in his power to prevent us from enjoying our true Christian heritage.

A church without the Spirit is as helpless as Israel might have been in the wilderness if the fiery cloud had deserted them. The Holy Spirit is our cloud by day and our fire by night. Without him we only wander aimlessly about the desert.

That is what we today are surely doing. We have divided ourselves into little ragged groups, each one running after a will-o'-the-wisp or firefly in the mistaken notion that we are following the Shekinah. It is not only desirable that the cloudy pillar should begin to glow again. It is imperative.

The Church can have light only as it is full of the Spirit, and it can be full only as the members who compose it are filled individually. Furthermore, no one can be filled until he is convinced that being filled is a part of the total plan of God in redemption; that it is nothing added or extra, nothing strange or queer, but a proper and spiritual operation of God, based upon and growing out of the work of Christ in atonement.

The inquirer must be sure to the point of conviction. He must believe that the whole thing is normal and right. He must believe that it is God's will that he be anointed with a horn of fresh oil beyond and in addition to all the ten thousand blessings he may already have received from the good hand of God.

Until he is so convinced I recommend that he take time out to fast and pray and meditate upon the Scriptures. Faith comes from the Word of God. Suggestion, exhortation or the psychological effect of the testimony of others who have been filled will not suffice.

Unless he is persuaded from the Scriptures he should not press the matter nor allow himself to fall victim to the emotional manipulators intent upon forcing the issue. God is wonderfully patient and understanding and will wait for the slow heart to catch up with the truth. In the meantime, the seeker should be calm and confident. In due time God will lead him through the Jordan. Let him not break loose and run ahead. Too many have done so, only to bring disaster upon their Christian lives.

After a man is convinced that he can be filled with the Spirit *he must desire to be*. To the interested inquirer I ask these questions: Are you sure that you want to be possessed by a Spirit Who, while He is pure and gentle and wise and loving, will yet insist upon being Lord of your life? Are you sure you want your personality to be taken over by One Who will require obedience to the written Word? Who will not tolerate any of the self-sins in your life: self-love, self-indulgence? Who will not permit you to strut or boast or show off? Who will take the direction of your life away from you and will reserve the sovereign right to test you and discipline you? Who will strip away from you many loved objects which secretly harm your soul?

Unless you can answer an eager 'Yes' to these questions you do not want to be filled. You may want the thrill or the victory or the power, but you do not really want to be filled with the Spirit. Your desire is little more than a feeble wish and is not pure enough to please God, Who demands all or nothing.

Again I ask: Are you sure you *need to be filled* with the Spirit? Tens of thousands of Christians, laymen, preachers, missionaries, manage to get on somehow without having had a clear experience of being filled. That Spiritless labour can lead only to tragedy in the day of Christ, is something the average Christian seems to have forgotten. But how about you? Perhaps your doctrinal basis is away from belief in the crisis of the Spirit's filling. Very well, look at the fruit of such doctrine. What is your life producing? You are doing religious work, preaching, singing, writing, promoting, but what is the *quality* of your work? True; you received the Spirit at the moment of conversion, but is it also true that you are ready without further anointing to resist temptation, obey the Scriptures, understand the truth, live victoriously, die in peace and meet Christ without embarrassment at His coming?

If, on the other hand, your soul cries out for God, for the living God, and your dry and empty heart dispairs of living a normal Christian life without a further anointing, then I ask you: Is your desire all-absorbing? Is it the biggest thing in your life? Does it crowd out every common religious activity and fill you with an acute longing that can only be described as the pain of desire? If your heart cries 'Yes' to these questions you may be on your way to a spiritual break-through which will transform your whole life.

It is in the preparation for receiving the Spirit's anointing that most Christians fail. Probably no one was ever filled without first having gone through a period of deep soul disturbance and inward turmoil. When we find ourselves entering this state the temptation is to panic and draw back. Satan exhorts us to take it easy lest we make shipwreck of the faith, and dishonour the Lord who bought us.

Of course Satan cares nothing for us nor for our Lord. His purpose is to keep us weak and unarmed in a fray of conflict. And millions of believers accept his hypocritical lies as gospel truth and go back to their caves like the prophets of Obadiah to feed on bread and water.

Before there can be fullness there must be emptiness. Before God can fill us with Himself we must first be emptied of ourselves. It is this emptying that brings the painful disappointment and despair of self which so many persons have complained just prior to their new and radiant experience.

There must come a total of self-disvaluation, a death to all things without us and within us, or there can never be real filling with the Holy Spirit.

*The dearest idol I have known,
Whate'er that idol be.
Help me to tear it from Thy throne,
And worship only thee.*

We sing this glibly enough, but we cancel out our prayer by our refusal to surrender the very idol of which we sing. To give up our last idol is to plunge ourselves into a state of inward loneliness which no gospel meeting, no fellowship with other Christians, can ever cure. For this reason most Christians play it safe and settle for a life of compromise. They have some of God, to be sure, but not all; and God has some of them, but not all. And so they live their tepid lives and try to disguise with bright smiles and snappy choruses the deep spiritual destitution within them.

One thing should be made crystal clear: the soul's journey through the dark night is not a meritorious one. The suffering and loneliness do not make a man dear to God. Everything comes out of his goodness on the grounds of Christ's redeemed blood and is a free gift, with no strings attached.

What the soul agony does is to break from earthly interests and focus the attention upon God.

All that has gone before is by way of soul preparation for the divine act of infilling. The infilling itself is not a complicated thing. While I shy away from 'how to' formulas in spiritual things, I believe the answer to the question 'How can I be filled?' may be answered in four words, all of them active verbs. They are (1) *surrender*, (2) *ask*, (3) *obey*, (4) *believe*.

Surrender:

I Beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God. (Romans 12:1-2)

Ask:

If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him? (Luke 11:13)

Obey:

We are His witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him. (Acts 5:32)

Complete and ungrudging obedience to the will of God is absolutely indispensable to the reception of the Spirit's anointing. As we wait before God we should reverently search the Scriptures and listen for the voice of gentle stillness to learn what our Heavenly Father expects of us. Then, trusting to His enabling, we should obey to the best of our ability and understanding.

Believe:

This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? (Galatians 3:2)

While the infilling of the Spirit is received by faith and only by faith, let us beware of that imitation faith which is no more than

han a mental assent to truth. It has been a source of great disappointment to multitudes of seeking souls. True faith invariably brings a witness.

But what is that witness? It is nothing physical, vocal nor phychical. The Spirit never commits himself to the flesh. The only witness He gives is a subjective one, known to the individual alone. The Spirit announces himself to the deep-in spirit of the man. The flesh profiteth nothing, but the believing heart knows. *Holy, Holy, Holy.*

One last thing: Neither in the Old Testament not in the New, Nor in Christian testimony as found in the writings of the saints as far as my knowledge goes, was any believer ever filled with the Holy Spirit *who did not know he had been filled.* Neither was anyone filled *who did not know when he was filled.* And *no one was ever filled gradually.*

Behind these three trees many half-hearted souls have tried to hide, like Adam from the presence of the Lord, but they are not good enough hiding places. The man who does not know when he was filled was never filled (though of course it is possible to forget the date). And the man who hopes to be filled gradually will never be filled at all.

In my Sober judgement the relation of the Spirit to the believer is the most vital question the Church faces today. The problems raised by Christian existentialism or neo-orthodoxy are nothing by comparison with this most critical one. Ecumenicity, eschatological theories - none of these things deserve consideration until every believer can give an affirmative answer to the question, 'Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?'

And it might easily be that after we have been filled with the spirit we will find to our delight that the very infilling itself has solved the other problems for us.

-A.W. Tozer

Re: How To Be Filled With The Holy Spirit - A.W. Tozer, on: 2008/3/10 15:35

A.W. Tozer has become one of my all time favorite preachers. :-D

Quote:

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Re:, on: 2008/3/10 15:41

Ephesians 5:17-19

17Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.

18And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit:

19Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;

:-D

Re: - posted by PaulWest (), on: 2008/3/10 15:42

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Re: How To Be Filled With The Holy Spirit - A.W. Tozer - posted by tjservant (), on: 2008/3/10 18:16

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Good stuff. Thanks for posting this.