

## The Church's Greatest Need By Wesley L. Duewel

### Classic Christian Writings:

Spirit-filled people are the church's greatest need today. The church has forsaken its first love (Rev. 2:4) and has lost its first power. As a result, it has largely lost its miraculous growth rate. Of few places can it be said today that the Lord is adding to the church daily those being saved (Acts 2:47). The church of our generation is facing a greater opportunity, a greater need, and a greater challenge than the church of any previous generation.

But how largely God's glory has departed from our churches! Just as Israel lost the glory of God's presence (1 Sam. 4:21), so Ichabod ("the glory has departed") can be written over the door of many places of worship today.

Our secular, materialistic age has lost God-consciousness. If this world is to be saved from the impending judgment of God and escape the chaos of self-destruction, we must be humbled before God. Our generation will come to God only when it sees new demonstrations of God's reality, presence, and power in His people individually and as the church. Therefore, the church must be revived. We must have a new visitation of God!

The responsibility of the church in our generation is greater than that in any previous age. Earth's population is multiplying rapidly, and more millions are waiting to be reached with the message of Christ than ever before. Millions today are militantly anti-God. Never before in human history has atheism had the backing of organized government as it has had in communism. The blood of a larger unreached world is upon the church today more than ever before (Ezek. 3:18).

The church has never been faced with such tremendous opportunity as it faces now. Never has such a large percentage of the world's population been able to read and write as today--and literacy continues to increase rapidly. Thus more people than ever can read the Word and Christian literature for themselves. Never has it been possible for the Christian witness to reach so many areas of the earth so quickly and conveniently as today. Television, radio, and the world wide web blanket the globe. Audio-visual aids such as slides, films, video, and even television are available for evangelistic use as never before.

Thank God for millions of true children of God around the world. Thank God for every church and organization that effectively preaches the Gospel of Jesus Christ. But although the church can be found in more places than ever before, it is largely asleep--lukewarm, lifeless, powerless. We are not impacting our generation as the early church, although few in number, impacted the people of its time.

Where must revival begin? It can come only through those who already know the transforming power of Jesus Christ. Revival can come only from God and only through His people (2 Chron. 7:14). Is your local church experiencing continuous revival today? Are you? The church reflects its individual members--you and me.

The church will be ablaze for God only when you and I are ablaze for Him. The church will be as mighty for God as you and I are mighty for God. The church will be no more Spirit-filled than you and I are Spirit-filled. We have all read the account of the early church in the Acts of the Apostles. Is God not the same today?

We have more godly examples to stir us to faith than the early church had. We know more about what revival can mean than the first-century apostles knew. We have many times more praying people today than the early church had. We have more unanswered prayers stored in heaven, just waiting for us to claim and release in holy power, than any previous generation of Christians (Rev. 8:1-5). If the apostles were privileged to reap the labors of those before them (John 4:38), think what tremendous labors and prayers we are privileged to reap in our twenty-first century.

What is the difference? Are not God's promises for us today? Is this not still the dispensation of the Holy Spirit? Did not God promise to pour out His Spirit in the last days upon all people? Yes, "In the last days," God says, "I will pour out My Spirit on all people" (Acts 2:17). Human need is just the same as or greater than ever before. God is just the same as He has always been. What is the difference?

There can be but one answer. Although more people profess to be Christian than ever before, our knowledge of theology is greater than that of the early church, and we have more recorded examples of the Spirit's mighty working in Christian biography and history than the early church ever dreamed--we do not have as much of the presence and power of God. We are not as filled with the Spirit as God longs for us to be.

There is but one prayer that we can pray for the church: "Lord, send a revival and begin it in me. Come upon Your church again in all Your power. Send Your Shekinah glory into our midst again." And there is but one hunger that must fill your heart and mine above all we have ever known: "Lord, fill me more and more with Your Spirit. Fill me more with Your Spirit than I have ever known before."

No matter what experience of God's grace you may have known, you need more of the Holy Spirit. If you have never yet experienced the infilling of the Holy Spirit, this is your greatest need. If you have had the gracious experience of a definite crisis cleansing of your heart and enduement with God's Spirit, even so, your need is for more of the Holy Spirit.

#### Are You Filled With The Spirit?

Are you filled with the Spirit? Jesus' purpose in dying on Calvary was to make you holy. "Jesus...suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood. Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore" (Heb. 13:12-13). Stopping short of a Spirit-filled life deprives Christ of the holy satisfaction of fulfilling His supreme purpose for your life.

Christ wants to cleanse you by His blood from all sin (1 John 1:7,9) and also wants to save you from willful sinning (1 John 3:6,9) and make your will one with His. Christ's desire is to make you pure and holy in this life, "to enable [you] to serve Him without fear in holiness and righteousness...all [your] days" (Luke 1:74-75).

Christ is counting on your being part of His radiantly beautiful bride, His church. "Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless" (Eph. 5:25-27).

He wants to cleanse you now so that you will never be an embarrassment to Him as His bride. He wants to display you before all the angels of heaven and introduce you to His Father. He wants your Holy Spirit-filled life of love to teach the angels more about His salvation and grace as they watch you now (Eph. 3:10-11). His ultimate purpose for all eternity is that you be in the closest relationship of love as His bride. No angel will ever become as precious to Christ as you.

You are unworthy in your own merits to be Christ's bride, but He died to make you worthy. Christ not only wants to cleanse you and fill you with His Spirit, but He wants you to be transfigured until you bear His holy likeness, even as He bears the image of the Father. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:17-18).

If you are already rejoicing in the preciousness of the Spirit-filled life, make it your joy, your constant hunger and prayer, to be ever more transfigured into His likeness. How can you measure your progress? Measure it by the depth and constancy of your desire for more of His likeness. Measure it by your prayer partnership with Jesus as you intercede for souls, His kingdom, and revival. Measure it by your openness to His guidance and your obedience to His will.

Peterson paraphrases 2 Corinthians 3:18 in *The Message*: "...nothing between us and God, our faces shining with the brightness of his face. And so we are transfigured much like the Messiah, our lives gradually becoming brighter and more beautiful as God enters our lives and we become like him." What blessed, beautiful provision God has made for us! He wants us as His bride to be blessedly like Him in holy beauty and in glory. He wants to begin transfiguring us now, and then at the resurrection He plans to glorify our bodies so that we will share His beautiful likeness for all eternity. Imagine having a face-to-face relationship with Christ for all eternity, His heart's love flowing through yours as His bride!

"Dear friends, now we are the children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure" (1 John 3:2-3). Do you realize what Jesus is saying? You will be "like Jesus." No angel will ever mistake you for a fellow angel, because you will be too much like Jesus to be mistaken for an angel. In indescribable, sacred ways you will be like Jesus.

You will experience Jesus' holy and infinite love in a very delightfully blessed and infinitely personal way, for you are personally important to Him. He will have the record of all your responses to Him--your love, your obedience in drawing close to Him, your prayer communion with Him, and your intercessory partnership with

Him as you prevailed in prayer and wept for the needs of the world and those about you.

You are not just a computer number to Jesus. You will never be lost in the crowd. Just as He has gloriously personalized His relations with you up until now, He will continue to do so forever. He is joyously awaiting you and has glorious plans for you throughout eternity.

Revelation 19:7 assures us that at the wedding supper of the Lamb, the bride will have made herself ready for Jesus. That is what you are doing now as the Holy Spirit fills and transfigures you. The more you love and worship Him, the more closely you will be bound to Him and He to you. The more you are transfigured into His likeness now, the more thrilled Jesus is as He prepares for your eternity with Him.

Therefore, let us like Paul have one constant endeavor--to know Christ better and to be transfigured into His likeness. "Whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord....I want to know Christ....One thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:7-14).

If you have not yet found the glorious blessedness of being filled with the Spirit, if you have not proved it real in your own daily living, you can enter a new day of purity and power, a new day of communion with and service for God. You can know in your daily experience what it means to be filled with the Spirit, what it is like to hunger for more of His presence and power, what it is like to obey Jesus to the full. You can begin the glorious transfiguration process, which will not be completed until you stand at Jesus's feet, changed into His likeness, thrilling to eternity's rewards. Will you be filled with His Spirit?

**Come, Oh Come, We Plead!**

Blessed Holy Spirit, come again today;  
Come, indwell us fully in a mighty way.  
We are longing, waiting for Your grace  
and power,  
Blessed Holy Spirit, come on us this  
hour!

**Chorus:**

Come upon us now! Come upon us now!  
Hungry, thirsty, longing, we before You bow.  
Work in all Your fullness in and through  
us all;  
Hungry and obeying, Lord, in faith we  
call.  
Blessed Holy Spirit, let Shekinah fall;  
May Your holy glory come upon us all.  
May Your fire and glory now on us  
descend;  
Put Your seal upon us; then in service  
send.

Blessed Holy Spirit, work so all can see;  
Exercise Your lordship--all Your ministry.  
Work in power more fully than we've seen or heard.  
It's your blessed promise, It's Your  
holy Word.

Blessed Holy Spirit, oh, do not delay!  
Come in might and glory; come on us today!  
It's for You we hunger; it is You we need!  
Blessed Holy Spirit, come, O come! we  
plead.