**Being Filled with the Holy Spirit**

By Charles Strong of [www.bibleone.net](http://www.bibleone.net)

Although the mandate of Scripture for every Christian is to be “filled with the Holy Spirit,” as seen in **Ephesians 5:18b**: “*. . . be filled with the* [Holy] *Spirit*,” it is a process and goal often misunderstood by Christians, both laity and clergy or student and professor alike.

There are those who believe it is a “second act” of God bestowed upon His children, much like that of being “*born again* [from above]” (**John 3:3**), the grace-gift of salvation that God bestows on any person who will “*believes on the Lord Jesus Christ*”(**Acts 16:31**) — which is to say anyone who by faith alone accepts the payment for sin that only Jesus Christ could and did pay at Calvary — and is thereby instantly and permanently “*passed from* [spiritual] *death into* [spiritual] *life*” (**John 5:24**). And once this “second act” occurs, the Christian is empowered to speak in an unknown spiritual language and/or enabled to perform miraculous healings, both unsupported by correct interpretation of Scripture.

Then there are those who believe the “filling with the Holy Spirit” is bestowed on the believer the moment he “*believes on the Lord Jesus Christ*,” but which can be taken from him when there is unconfessed sin in his life, also unsupported by correct interpretation of Scripture.

So the question remains, “What does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit?” And to properly understand the answer, one should first properly understand God’s complete plan of redemption for man, a brief outlay of such follows.

(For a comprehensive study of God’s complete plan of redemption for man [spirit, soul, and body], please see [click on] <http://bibleone.net/BF03.htm>)

The Christian life and all that pertains to it is a product of God’s grace (His unmerited favor toward mankind). God’s plan of salvation for man, unlike what many in Christendom teach, is actually a three-fold prospect, i.e., salvation of the spirit, salvation of the soul, and salvation of the body.

**In brief:**

1. *Salvation of the spirit* is the one-time and never to be retracted gift of eternal life to an individual. It is totally based on the *Person* (Deity) and *work* — atoning sacrifice on the cross of Calvary — *of Jesus Christ*. It cannot be associated with any merit or self-effort by man. And it can only be apprehended (entered into through a “birth from above”) by *faith* (a genuine willful act of trust) *alone*. To put it succinctly, salvation of the spirit, which is normally referred to by fundamental Christianity by the general term “salvation,” is **by faith alone in Christ alone** (**Acts 16:30**, **31**; **Ephesians 2:8**, **9**).
2. *Salvation of the soul*, at times addressed insufficiently as “sanctification” within theological presentations within Christendom, and although is based on the person and work of Jesus Christ, is that part of man’s composition that represents his *life lived as a Christian*, which connects him to the material world, and which is adjudicated at the Judgment Seat of Christ with only millennial varieties in view (**James 1:21**; **Hebrews 10:39**; **1 Peter 1:8**, **9**; **Matthew 16:24-27**; **24:13**).
3. *Salvation of the body*, which any Christian can easily understand, takes place subsequent to his placement of faith in Christ’s finished work on the cross for his eternal (spirit) salvation. The body continues to exist in a state of degradation (i.e., death), only to be redeemed (saved) at its resurrection (**1 Corinthians 15:48-54**).

At the salvation (of the spirit) experience a person is instantaneously and permanently subject to several actions of and by the Holy Spirit.

* The believer is *baptized* (immersed) into the Body of Christ by the Holy Spirit, which is in fact his unification with Jesus Christ. (**Matthew 3:11**; **Mark 1:8**; **Acts 1:5**; **1 Corinthians 12:13**; **Galatians 3:27**)
* The believer is *indwelt* by the Holy Spirit, i.e., the Holy Spirit in whole takes up residence within the believer. (**John 14:7**; **Romans 8:9**; **1 Corinthians 3:16**; **6:19**; **Galatians 4:6**; **1 John 2:27**; **3:24**)
* The believer is *sealed* with and by the Holy Spirit. This is the believer’s assurance (“*guarantee*”) of eternal security. (**2 Corinthians 1:22**; **5:5**; **Ephesians 1:13**, **14**; **4:30**)
* The believer is granted one or more *spiritual gifts* by the Holy Spirit, which is/are to be used in God’s service. (**1 Corinthians 12:4-11**)

These actions of and by the Holy Spirit are permanent, never to be retracted under any circumstances by God or nullified by man. In addition with these permanent actions of and by the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit is available to the believer to lead and guide, and, in fact, *work through* the believer in the Christian life.

The believer really only has two choices after the salvation experience. He may attempt to live for Christ under his own power (self-efforts and works), which (self) righteousness is “*as filthy rags*” in the sight of God (**Isaiah 64:6**) and will only produce “human good” (works) that are characterized in Scripture as “*wood*, *hay* *and straw*” to later be consumed by God’s fiery judgment; or, he may live being *filled with the Holy Spirit* and thereby produce “divine good” (works) that are characterized in Scripture as “*gold*, *silver* *and precious stones*,” which will not be consumed by God’s fiery judgment and for which he will be rewarded (**1 Corinthians 3:11-15**).

To live for Christ under one’s own power will be severely self-defeating as the Christian appears before the Judgment Seat of Christ (**2 Corinthians 5:10**; **Romans 14:10**; **Revelation 22:12**); and issues and determinations at that time will exclude him from being a part of the “bride of Christ,” excluding him from ruling and reigning with Christ in His millennial kingdom. On the other hand, to be filled with the Spirit, to allow Christ to live through Him; the Christian will fair well at Christ’s Judgment Seat, will become part of Christ’s bride and will rule and reign with Him during the coming millennial kingdom (**2 Timothy 2:12**; **Revelation 19:7-9**).

The Holy Spirit and His works were present at the Creation, were prevalent throughout the Old Testament and will be a permanent part of the Christian throughout eternity. Even though the Holy Spirit initiated a unique ministry toward the believer (permanently baptizing, indwelling and sealing) at Pentecost, He temporarily filled individuals prior to this time (**Luke 1:15**).

**What is the *filling with the Holy Spirit*?**

The words “fill” or “full” as they relate to the Holy Spirit and the believer come from the Greek word *pleroo*, which in essence means *to be completely influenced and empowered by*. In effect it is a condition that exists when the Holy Spirit controls a believer both inwardly (his thoughts and motives) and outwardly (his actions). A person who is *filled with the Holy Spirit* evidences the “*fruit of the Spirit*,” which is “*love*, *joy*, *peace*, *longsuffering*, *kindness*, *goodness*, *faithfulness*, *gentleness*, *self-control*” (**Galatians 5:22**, **23**).

Some of the phraseology used in the New Testament that represents the concept of the *fullness with the Holy Spirit* follows:

* Filled with/of the Spirit (**Luke 1:15**; **4:1**; **Acts 2:4**; **6:3**; **7:55**; **11:24**; **13:9**, **52**, **Ephesians 5:18**)
* Led by/of the Spirit (**Luke 4:1**; **Galatians 5:18**)
* Walk in the Spirit (**Galatians 5:16**; **5:25**)
* Moved by the Spirit (**2 Peter 1:21**)
* Walk in Christ (**Colossians 2:6**)
* Christ dwell [be at home or “full residence”] in your heart (**Ephesians 3:17**)

**The Key**

For certain Christians are commanded to be “*filled with* [‘walk in’] *the Spirit*” (**Ephesians 5:18**; **Galatians 5:16-25**), but to properly understand this requires one to “compare Scripture with Scripture.” Comparing **Ephesians 5:18-20** with its companion passage in **Colossians 3:16** reveals that to be “*filled with the Spirit*” is comparable to letting “*the Word of Christ dwell in you richly*.”

To say it in another way, the more we allow God’s Word to permeate us, the more we are *transformed*, the more God’s Spirit can control us, the more we are able to “*walk*” in Christ, to focus on Christ (the Author and Finisher [Perfecter] of our faith [**Hebrews 12:2**]) until Christ is *formed* in us (**Galatians 4:19**). This is essentially what Christ meant when, as He was praying for His disciples, He said, “*Sanctify* (set apart [to holiness]) *them by Your truth*, *Your Word is truth*” (**John 17:17**).

Simply put, the filling with the Spirit is the degree in which the Christian absorbs God’s Word throughout his life. As he reads, studies, and absorbs God’s Word; the more he is transformed by the Word, resulting in Christ being formed in him.

Again, how is the Christian *filled with the Spirit*? There is only one way. Since there is a unique and definite link between Jesus Christ, the living Word of God, and the written (God-breathed) Word of God (the One reflecting the Other), the Christian is to immerse himself in the “*implanted Word*,” which will transform him progressively to spiritual maturity and the eventual *salvation of his soul*. The comparison between the companion passages of **Ephesians 5:18-20** and **Colossians 3:16** confirms that a Christian is “*filled* [controlled] *with the Spirit*” when “*the Word of Christ* *dwells in him richly*.”

*Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness*, *and receive with meekness the implanted Word*, *which is able to save your souls*. (**James 1:21**)

*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God* (lit. God-breathed), *and is profitable for doctrine*, *for reproof*, *for correction*, *for instruction in righteousness*, *that the man of God may be complete* [mature], *thoroughly equipped for every good work*. (**2 Timothy 3:16**, **17**)

*And do not be conformed to this world*, *but be transformed by the renewing of your mind*, *that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God*. (**Romans 12:2**)

**What impedes the *filling with the Holy Spirit*?**

The *filling with the Holy Spirit* in any believer can only be impeded or hampered by *sin*. When the believer, who always has the God-given ability to exercise choice, selects to sin against God, he thereby *quenches* (Greek: *sbennumi*, to extinguish; to dampen, hinder or repress) and *grieves* (Greek: *lupo*, to cause sorrow or emotional pain to) the Holy Spirit. This in effect limits the Holy Spirit’s influence in the believer’s life. In other words, the Holy Spirit when confronted by willful sin in the believer withdraws His ability to empower and lead the believer.

To this, **there is only one remedy**:

*If we confess our sins*, *He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*. (**1 John 1:9**)

To confess sin is *not* penitence. It *is* calling sin what it is, to own up to it, not making any excuse for it. When a Christian who recognizes that he has sinned against God takes responsibility for it before God, then God immediately forgives it. It is simple, and as complex, as that!