

“THE RECEIVING AND THE FILLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.”

First Christian Reformed Church

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Scripture Texts: Acts 1:4-5, 8

Introduction.

We often quote from Heidelberg Catechism Question one, “Christ, by His Holy Spirit, assures me of eternal life and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for him.”

I want to show this morning from Scripture there is a difference between *receiving* the Holy Spirit and being *filled* with the Holy Spirit; that there’s much more to the Spirit’s work and power than just conversion. He brings us to eternal life and He empowers us to live holy lives.

We have all been taught that at conversion we receive the promised gift of the Holy Spirit. That is true and very important to know and understand. Let me remind you of this from Scripture.

The Holy Spirit regenerates and gives new life. This is receiving the Holy Spirit.

John 3:5-6 Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

Titus 3:5-7 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, **6** whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, **7** so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

I Corinthians 2:14 The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.

I Corinthians 15:50 I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

Romans 8:9 You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.

I Corinthians 12:3 no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except in the Holy Spirit.

“In regeneration, the Holy Spirit unites us to Christ independent of any cooperation from our unregenerated human nature. He quickens us through the outward call cast forth by the preaching of His Word, disarms our innate hostility, removes our blindness, illuminates our mind, creates understanding, turns our heart of stone to a heart of flesh -- giving rise to a delight in His Word -- all that we might, with our renewed affections, willingly & gladly embrace Christ” (Monergism website).

Without the Holy Spirit you cannot be a Christian and you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. That’s a spiritual impossibility. It’s as simple as that. You can’t confess Christ without the Holy Spirit.

This regeneration of the Holy Spirit is an instantaneous one-time event. One moment we are spiritually dead and the next moment we are spiritually alive in Christ. The Holy Spirit is absolutely essential to our salvation and eternal life.

The Holy Spirit fills us and empowers us to live this new life.

But there's more. It's essential that we desire the Spirit of Christ to rule in us, to cleanse and convict us. He are called to walk by the Spirit, pray in the Spirit, live by the Spirit, grow in grace by the Spirit, put on the armor of the Spirit and show the fruit of the Spirit.

Let me ask you a question, when were the apostles converted, when did they receive the Holy Spirit? Was it at Pentecost? At least two things indicate no not then.

First, when Luke speaks of a baptism of the Spirit for the apostles in Acts he makes no reference to regeneration. Nowhere do we get the idea that up to the point of Pentecost the apostles were dead in trespasses and enslaved to sin and completely darkened in their understanding.

Second, we have repeated evidence from the gospels that the apostles already have the Holy Spirit before Pentecost.

John 6:44 No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.

Matthew 16:16-17 Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." 17 And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.

John 17:8 For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me.

John 20:21-22 Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." 22 And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

Finally let's look more closely at the writing of Luke at the end of his gospel and the beginning of his history in Acts.

Luke 24:45 Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, 46 and said to them, ... 49 "behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."

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; 5 for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

... 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."

Acts 2:4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

First, these texts make no mention of regeneration or conversion. Jesus doesn't say stay in Jerusalem until you are born again. There is no mention of being grafted into membership in the body of Christ.

Furthermore, these texts seem to be focusing on an empowering for ministry and service, an anointing for extra-ordinary work.

Finally, if we look further into Acts we see that there are many references to the apostles being filled with the Holy Spirit and we know it isn't referring to an initial regeneration of the Holy Spirit but rather some further filling, empowering, or releasing of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 4:8 "Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them..." spoke with such power and boldness that...**Acts 4:13** Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished.

Just a little latter in **Acts 4:31** 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.

In **Acts 9** we read where Paul receives the Holy Spirit. But a little latter Luke adds, "But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Christ" (vs. 22).

Then, in **Acts 13** Luke tells of a situation where Paul was filled with the Holy Spirit (vs. 11).

What is this filling or empowering of the Holy Spirit?

It's not something that divides the body of Christ into super-spiritual Christians and second-class Christians. Nor do I believe that speaking in tongues is the only sign of someone who has been baptized or filled by the Holy Spirit.

In Pentecostal theology there can be the implication that if you don't speak in tongues then you don't have the Holy Spirit. Paul makes clear in **I Corinthians 12:10** that not everyone receives every gift and not everyone speaks in tongues.

This filling also doesn't mean that some people have more of the Spirit and some less. Like one has 60% and another 85%. The Spirit is a person. When you have Him, you have all of Him. Some describe it as a great release of the Spirit, or a greater empowerment or of being more surrendered to the Spirit. Some liken it to a greater pouring out of the power of Spirit as in times of revival. There is something more going on here.

An Illustration from Lloyd-Jones

Let me use an illustration from the great British pastor, Martin Lloyd-Jones who got it from Thomas Goodwin, a brilliant Puritan pastor and scholar in the 1600's.

"He describes a man and his little child, his son, walking down the road and they are walking hand in hand, and the child knows that he is the child of his father, and he knows that his father loves him, and he rejoices in that, and he is happy in it. There is no uncertainty about it all, but

suddenly the father, moved by some impulse, takes hold of that child and picks him up, fondles him in his arms, kisses him, embraces him, showers his love upon him, and then he puts him down again and they go on walking together.

That is it! The child knew before that his father loved him, and he knew that he was his child. But oh! this loving embrace, this extra outpouring of love, this unusual manifestation of it--that is the kind of thing. The Spirit bearing witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.

This is the outstanding characteristic of the baptism with the Spirit. God give us grace to examine ourselves in the light of these things. ... Do you know anything of the glory of God, this immediacy, this certainty, this absolute assurance given by the Spirit that banishes all doubt and uncertainty and you know that God loves you in particular with an everlasting love in Jesus Christ?" (Lloyd-Jones, *Joy Unspeakable*, p. 95-96).

"The child is simply stunned. He doesn't know whether to cry or shout or fall down or run, he is so happy. The fuses of love are so overloaded they almost blow out. The subconscious doubts—that he wasn't thinking about at the time, but that pop up every now and then—are gone! And in their place is utter and indestructible assurance, so that you know that you know that you know that God is real and that Jesus lives and that you are loved, and that to be saved is the greatest thing in the world. And as you walk on down the street you can scarcely contain yourself, and you want to cry out, "My father loves me! My father loves me! O, what a great father I have! What a father! What a father!" (Piper, sermon on Acts 1:4-5).

This morning I have simply tried to show that I believe there is something more going on at Pentecost than just receiving the Holy Spirit for the first time, that there's a difference between receiving and filling.

When Luke speaks of baptism in the Spirit at Pentecost and beyond there's a fresh filling or a greater experience of being empower with greater victory over sin and a greater boldness of faith and a deeper joy and sense of God's love and presence. This is something on-going and repeated as we see throughout Acts.

I want to stir your hearts and minds to seek and desire new and greater things. I want to create a hunger in us for more, better, higher, fuller, richer, deeper experiences of God's love and grace and power and victory in our lives.

This is a call to heart religion. This is a call to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. This is a call to experience a revival of love and joy in your life. This is a call to know with deeper assurance how long and high and wide and deep is the love of God for you. This is a call to come out of the wilderness and desert, out of the dryness of just having the form of godliness and experience the power, the same power that raised Jesus from the dead.

Do you ever wonder if there is more than this? Is there a setting past normal? Is revival possible, real revival, not man-made revival? What's it like to have an overwhelming sense of the very presence of God in our lives? To have such an assurance of our faith and an increase of our faith that we have a new found boldness? To have a greater victory over sin? To have a greater compassion for the lost?

This is a call to not be satisfied with the status quo. This is a call to press on and pray for more, a call to be asking, seeking, knocking kinds of Christians.

Ephesians 1:16 I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, **17** that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, **18** having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, **19** and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might **20** that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places.

Ephesians 3:14 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, **15** from whom [all fatherhood] in heaven and on earth is named, **16** that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, **17** so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, **18** may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, **19** and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Prayer: We believe in you, Holy Spirit. We affirm your presence and your power. We worship and adore you. We love you and we desire you. We want to know you better and to experience all that you have for us. Be glorified in our worship and in our lives. Come, consuming fire. We surrender our lives to the flames of your refining, purging, purifying fire.

Come, Holy Spirit, have full dominion over us, in our homes, in our tempers, in every word of our tongues, in every thought of our hearts, in every feeling toward others, have full possession. Prepare our hearts and lives at this table to receive the fullness of your Spirit, for your glory, for your namesake, that we might know you and love you and obey you and be your bold witnesses proclaiming your death until you come. This we ask in the name of Jesus. Amen.