

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE BELIEVER

Indwelt and Filled with the Spirit



What does being filled with the Spirit mean? Some answer by saying believers have all of the Holy Spirit but the Holy Spirit may not have all of us! Keep in mind there is a difference between the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and the filling of the Holy Spirit. All believers in Jesus Christ have God's Spirit living within us but not all believers live filled or controlled by the Spirit's power. We are indwelt by the Holy Spirit at the time of our salvation but we are filled by Him when we submit to Him.

In **Acts 6:5**, Stephen was chosen for service in the early church because he was full of faith and the Holy Spirit. His being full of the Spirit did not only happen when he served in the church. Stephen was full of the Spirit when he faced death as the first Christian martyr.

Read Acts 7:55 (ESV) ⁵⁵ *But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.*

After only a short period of service on earth for the kingdom of God, Stephen faced a painful death of stoning because of his belief in Christ and yet we find that he remained so full of the Holy Spirit that he saw Jesus standing and waiting for him in heaven as he approached his death.

When Paul and Barnabas were on a missionary journey to Antioch, they experienced both blessing and conflict in their ministry there. Even after prominent Jews raised up persecution against them, we read:

Read Acts 13:52 (ESV) ⁵² *And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.*

Heartfelt praise and worship is the mark of genuine Holy Spirit experience. Most churches today need to place more emphasis on the truth that receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit is a real, life-changing experience – not just words or a prayer you pray and then forget and move on with your life never being changed.

At the moment of salvation, the Spirit of God permanently seals each believer in Christ for eternity. The New Testament Scriptures clearly teach that no one has the Holy Spirit until he or she turns to God and *asks* to receive His indwelling Presence. Jesus said that being indwelt by the Spirit is a gift from God.

Read Luke 11:13 (ESV) ¹³ *If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"*

This indwelling of the Holy Spirit within us is the way our salvation is accomplished and sealed. The indwelling is sometimes called an anointing. In scripture, oil is a symbol of the Spirit of

God. We are ‘anointed’ with the Holy Spirit for the purpose of service to God and His kingdom. The permanent indwelling/anointing of the Spirit is not for a select few believers, but for all believers. Paul wrote in *2 Corinthians 9:15 (ESV)*¹⁵ *Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!*

God Lives in Us

Read 1 Corinthians 3:16 (ESV)¹⁶ *Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you?*

Since we are ‘God’s temple’, we should be a holy place for the Holy Spirit to dwell. Each of us builds into the church family what we build into our own personal temples of God. Veteran missionary to India, Amy Carmichael, used to say, “The work will never go deeper than we have gone ourselves.”

What the Indwelling Spirit Does for Us!

Read Romans 8:9-11 (ESV)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.*¹⁰ *But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness.*¹¹ *If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.*

A Christian is anyone who has the Spirit of God living in him or her. If you have sincerely trusted Christ for your salvation and acknowledged him as Lord, then the Holy Spirit lives within you and you are a Christian whether you ‘feel like it’ or not.

The indwelling Spirit gives us **hope** in a hopeless world! *Galatians 5:5 (ESV)*⁵ *For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness.*

The indwelling Holy Spirit gives us **direction**! *Romans 8:5 (ESV)*⁵ *For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.*

The indwelling Holy Spirit gives us **strength**! *Ephesians 3:16 (ESV)*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,*

Indwelling Is Not Filling

Let’s remind ourselves of the difference between indwelt and filled with the Spirit:

- (1) All believers are sealed by the Spirit.

- (2) All believers are indwelt by the Holy Spirit.
- (3) Being filled with the Spirit means that we are controlled by the Spirit of God who lives within us.

Read Ephesians 5:18 (ESV) ¹⁸ *And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit.*

Spiritual filling is much deeper than the emotions of the moment. Being filled with the Spirit is connected to our daily walk with the Lord. It is an ongoing endeavor to relinquish control to the Spirit. There is an old movie entitled God is My Co-Pilot. When we are filled with the Spirit, God is My Pilot – **NOT** My Co-Pilot. **Colossians 3:2 (ESV)** ² *Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.*

Paul told the Ephesians not to be controlled by wine. We all have seen lives that have been controlled by wine (and many other pleasures of this world) and the result of that control is never good. The person under the control of alcohol is under a power greater than his own. The same is true when the Christian is controlled by the Spirit – that person is under a power greater than his/her own. It is the Spirit's power who breaks the hold the flesh has upon us. Not being filled with the Spirit has much to do with spiritual immaturity.

Read 1 Corinthians 3:1-3 (ESV) ¹ *But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ.* ² *I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready,* ³ *for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way?*

Paul explained that there are two kinds of saved people: mature and immature. A Christian matures by allowing the Spirit to teach and lead. The immature Christian lives for the things of the flesh and has little interest in the things of the Spirit. Naturally, new believers are not spiritually mature and part of the ministry of the church is to help new Christians grow spiritually. Paul, however, is writing to long-time Christians. He is addressing babyish Christians who have never grown up. Christians who do not cross over to spiritual maturity are often bitter complainers itching to do battle with those around them, and most certainly barren of fruit of the Spirit.

On the other hand, the Spirit-filled believer seeks personal spiritual growth, serves others without concern for recognition, and produces spiritual fruit. Theodore Epp comments that when self is in control we have carnality; when the Spirit is in control we have spirituality.

Yes, even the immature Christian is indwelt by the Spirit of God but we all must avoid living like Peter Pan with an 'I'll never grow up' attitude. We miss so many blessings when we fail to be filled with the Spirit on a continuing basis. When you recognize you have been childish in your faith, don't despair – even mature Christians have 'childish moments' on occasion.

When we speak of the total control of the Spirit, we can think of our lives as being made up of many rooms and turning over every room of the house to the Holy Spirit. There is the financial room and the pleasure room and all of the other rooms that make up life. All these should be turned over to the direction and leadership of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit does not take control of our lives automatically the moment we believe. It is true that He regenerates us and baptizes us into the Body of Christ and seals us. But, if He is to control our daily experience, it is done only with our permission. When we receive Christ as personal Savior, the Holy Spirit does not control us until we recognize that He is a member of the Godhead indwelling us for the purpose of directing our lives. When we show complete confidence in His control and turn everything over to Him, by an act of the will, then we are filled or controlled by the Spirit.

As we walk with Him over the years, we will continue to recognize areas (it might not be an entire room – maybe just a nook or cranny) where we continue to shut Him out. When we recognize even the tiny places we have kept for our self, it is time to give way to a fresh abandon of our control to Him.

John 6:63 (ESV) ⁶³ *It is the Spirit who gives life;
the flesh is no help at all...*