



Are you a super Christian or just an average Christian? Have you been anointed by the Holy Spirit and entered the realm of the miraculous and glorious or do you just sort of...exist? This is how many in the Christian community treat the Holy Spirit. In their economy, there are two kinds of believers. There are the ordinary saved believers and then there are believers who are filled with the Holy Spirit. This anointing comes as a second blessing and the way it is often described, it turns you into a higher level kind of Christian. That may not be their intent but the result is that you often end up with a two-tiered kind of Christianity—the haves and the have nots. In fact, after the first service this morning, a man who had a Pentecostal background told me that they felt their church was superior to all others—that they had arrived.

And it's not just the charismatics who have this teaching about the Holy Spirit. Methodists were taught the exact same doctrines from John Wesley and his followers. Wesley taught a second transforming work of grace, distinct from and subsequent to the new birth, in which the Spirit roots out of the Christian's heart all sinful motivation.

- "In this is perfection, and glory, and happiness: the royal law of heaven and earth is this, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.' The one perfect good shall be your one ultimate end"¹
- "deliverance from inward as well as from outward sin"²
- "a Christian is so far perfect as not to commit sin"³

As a brand new believer, I was taught something similar to this. I really was excited when I got saved at age sixteen. I didn't grow a lot in those early years, but I knew I was radically saved. No question about that. My best friend in high school who led me to the Lord explained this higher level sort of Christian. One day in study hall he told me that he had "dedicated his life to the Lord." I was intrigued because I did not know that Christianity was a two-step process. No one had ever told me that before. But he knew a lot more than I did, so it must have been true. I just figured that one day I would also dedicate my life to the Lord and take the next quantum leap forward in my faith. So once again, you have the two-tiered Christianity—in this case, the

dedicated and the non-dedicated. For Wesley, either you had Christian perfectionism. For Pentecostals, either you are baptized in the Spirit or you are not.

Have you ever had a similar experience? When Karen and I were working at an ELCA summer camp there were several charismatics who kept trying to get the rest of us to receive the Holy Spirit and speak in tongues. Karen has a better memory of this than I do so they must have given up on me. ☺ Such people are well-intentioned but they can cause much confusion and even discouragement. If I am a second tier kind of believer, how much hope is there for me? If I am part of the have-nots, will I ever be able to progress in my walk with the Lord? So these are very practical issues and not merely the splitting of theological hairs.

This is not to say that there are not levels of spiritual maturity among all believers. That's not what I am talking about but rather a misuse of the doctrines of the Holy Spirit that can hinder encouragement and growth.

Outside of the church, Jesus is probably more misunderstood than anyone else but within the church, I think that distinction belongs to the Holy Spirit. For the prior two message we have been exploring what it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit. As a reminder, here is how I would outline the passage.

Look carefully then how you walk:

not as unwise

but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.

Therefore do **not** be foolish,

but understand what the will of the Lord is.

And do **not** get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery,

but be filled with the Spirit

- addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs
- singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart
- giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ
- submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

So some Christians talk about being anointed by the Spirit, baptized by the Spirit, indwelt by the Spirit and filled with the Spirit. Do all of these just mean the same thing and how do we avoid the excesses when it comes to the Spirit? I mentioned this a few weeks, but it's important to understand that:

1. Every believer is permanently indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

2 Timothy 1:14—*By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.*

Romans 8:11—*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.*

This indwelling is permanent and unchangeable. But what about David's prayer in Psalm 51 where he cried, *Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me* (Psalm 51:11)? Under the Old Covenant the Holy Spirit did not permanently indwell people. There were special times of filling that would come and go. Even King Saul prophesied through the Spirit and he was not a Godly man. So David's prayer was a prayer that could not be prayed today. There is no need to ask the Lord not to remove his Holy Spirit because that is no longer possible.

2. Baptism by the Spirit happens at conversion and is identical to being indwelt by the Spirit.

Acts 1:5—*For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.*"

Baptism of the Holy Spirit is not something that happens to you later. Now from the perspective of the apostles, it did happen later because the Holy Spirit had not yet been given at Pentecost. When Jesus made this promise in Acts 1 just prior to his ascension, it was the same promise he had made in the upper room in the gospel of John. *Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you* (John 16:7). Just before he died, Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would come and just before he was taken to heaven, Jesus again promised that the Holy Spirit would come. This final time he referred to it as a baptism of the Holy Spirit.

But the Holy Spirit only came once at Pentecost. And then Paul affirms that this baptism of the Holy Spirit is what happens to us at conversion. *For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body* (1 Corinthians 12:13). Baptism of the Holy Spirit is not something that happens to you later in life as a second blessing or filling. It is identical with conversion.⁴

3. Anointing of the Holy Spirit is also identical with conversion.

Anointed is a word that gets thrown around a lot in Christian circles. Let's read 2 Corinthians 1:21-22 and you should be able to easily decide what this is and when it happens. *Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.*

Notice how similar this is to the first chapter of Ephesians

13 In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory (Ephesians 1:13-14).

Can you tell when this anointing happens? Does it happen at conversion or does it happen later in the Christian life? Clearly, it is past tense for the believer. We have already been anointed and sealed with the Holy Spirit. This is not a second blessing. This is not a two-tiered kind of Christianity—the haves and the have nots. If you are saved by grace alone by faith alone in Christ alone, then you have been baptized by the Holy Spirit and anointed by the Holy Spirit.

You have also been sealed by the Holy Spirit and regenerated by the Holy Spirit. But there is something that happens to the believer after conversion.

4. Being filled with the Holy Spirit is a command.

By the mere fact that Paul wrote “Be filled with the Spirit” immediately tells us that this is something that we do or that happens to us after conversion. Whatever it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit (Here’s a helpful definition, similar to what I shed before.),⁵ we already know that it is categorically different than being indwelt, baptized or anointed by the Holy Spirit. And since it is a command it means that it is obtainable by every believer. Whenever God commands obedience he always supplied the ability to obey (see Colossians 1:29). He will never command something that is impossible for us to do through the power that he supplies. This is not a two-tiered Christianity. This is not the haves vs. the have-nots. Any believer can be filled with the Holy Spirit and indeed, must be filled by the Holy Spirit.

5. Being filled with the Spirit is a plural command for the entire church.

This is an important dynamic of the command itself. It is not only spoken to each of us. It is spoken to all of us. It’s not just you be filled with the Holy Spirit but rather YOU be filled with the Holy Spirit. This is part of what it means to shepherd the body. As one of the shepherds of Grace Church, it is my privilege and responsibility to help us all obey these plural commands. Right? It’s not enough for me to be filled with the Holy Spirit but I want to help all of us to be filled with the Holy Spirit. It’s not you and me. It’s us. So in this sense, I need to be filled with the Holy Spirit so that I can come alongside of you to help you be filled with the Holy Spirit.

You know when the airline attendants are walking through their pre-flight instructions—what do they always say in regard to the oxygen masks? If you have a child traveling with you, they always instruct you to first put on your own oxygen mask before you put a mask on your child. I always feel bad for the little kid sitting on the seat next to his parent because he doesn’t have a mask on. It seems a little odd until you realize that it only takes 18 seconds before you will lose consciousness. If you don’t put your mask on first, you may not remain conscious enough to put on your child’s mask. You pave the way and then bring your child along with you.

This is the role of a shepherd, whether you are a pastor, and elder, a parent or just a good friend. YOU be filled with the Holy Spirit. All of you and each of you but some of you have to lead the way first. In order for YOU—all of you to be filled with the Spirit, some of you need to get there first.

6. Being filled with the Spirit is an ongoing command.

We have established that it happens after your conversion but unlike the way some Pentecostals describe it, it is not a single experience post-conversion. It is ongoing. Wesley called it entire sanctification but others like myself believe the Bible teaches progressive sanctification. On the one hand it can be an overwhelming to think that we can grow steadily throughout our entire Christian lives but never reach where we want to be. But that is better than being told that you have already arrived and you don’t feel like you have or else you know you are on the outside looking in. You’re a have-not and you don’t know how to join the club of the other super Christians.

It's an ongoing command because sanctification is an ongoing work. I was not filled with the Holy Spirit at all times this past week. What about you? But I can confess that and be filled again this week.

7. Being filled with Spirit is mostly routine obedience.

Those who teach a second blessing or entire sanctification are generally seeking after more experiences. B.B. Warfield was an old Princeton theologian when Princeton still stood for something—barely. And he was very critical of Wesley's doctrines. "They love the storm and the earthquake and the fire. They cannot see the divine in 'a sound of gentle stillness,' and adjust themselves with difficulty to the lengthening perspective of God's gracious working" (Works, vol. 8, p. 561). Stephen Nichols states, "The teaching of perfectionism lends itself well to the mountaintop experiences, to the excitement of the camp meeting, or to the heat of the revival fires. It does not fare so well in the ordinary experience, it does not readily tell one how to live in the valley."⁶

Charismatics can tend toward this kind of excess as well. They are looking for the next prophecy, the latest healing, the next exciting experience of the Holy Spirit to come down the pike. Walking with the Lord and being filled with the Holy Spirit is mostly simple obedience in the mundane parts of life. It's mostly routine with occasional bursts of activity or emotion. Most of our life is ordinary and requires ordinary kind of obedience. Patience and gentleness with our kids. Love and respect for our spouse. A regular habit of time in the Word—daily, simple tasks of obedience. This is being filled with the Spirit.

But that's not to say that you don't ever feel or experience the Holy Spirit. It's ordinary but it's not boring or bland, which comes out in the next principle.

8. The Spirit helps you to discover and experience deeper truths.

In John chapter 16, Jesus said, "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth." This is exactly what happened to Ray Olson about fifteen years ago. Ray has been a pastor, a church planter and then director of church planting for our District. He raised eight children, had a happy marriage and a successful ministry by all accounts. But in all of those years he had missed a vital truth. He missed this truth in Romans 8.

For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. (Romans 8:15-17).

He knew the basic truth of adoption as sons but did not truly experience it. Once the Holy Spirit revealed this truth and drove it into his heart, he has never been the same since. He experienced it as radical acceptance by God, something he did not experience in his family of origin. That is what happens when doctrine seeps into your heart. The Holy Spirit does that.

An even more dramatic thing happened to the son of my former senior pastor in Sauk Prairie. Ryan and I had dinner with Dennis at the conference we attended last week. Like Ray, he knew

the truths of the gospel but after he was serving as a youth pastor for several years, he experienced it so deeply that he thinks he may not have been saved before that. His wife says that he was saved before then, otherwise it means that she would have married an unbeliever! This is the unlimited power of the Holy Spirit. A pastor can teach or preach all day long and have little effect but if the Holy Spirit is in it, there's nothing that cannot happen.

9. Being filled with the Spirit can confirm the call to ministry.

In 1984, I was sitting in a Grace Brethren Church in Mansfield, Ohio, listening to Pastor Sonny preach on Acts 8. The name of the sermon was *Yes, Lord*. I forget a lot of small details in life but this one is forever burned in my memory. Almost the entire time he was preaching, there was a burning in my Spirit—a powerful prompting. And my heart was racing like mad. I checked my pulse and my heartrate was 160. Normally I have to be running a long distance at a good clip to get my heartrate that high but I was just sitting there in the pew. This continued for the whole service and when he gave the altar call, I rushed forward with tears streaming down my face. That was not the totality of my call to vocational ministry but in saying “Yes, Lord,” I was opening myself to whatever God wanted for my life.

This has happened to me a few other times. Once at the same conference I attended last week. Tim Farrell was there and can tell you how the Holy Spirit fell like a heavy rain on the whole group. I have had other times sitting in the quiet of my house or out in a field at night when I was a camp counselor.

These are all examples of the Holy Spirit doing miraculous work in my life and the lives of others. We will experience the Holy Spirit as we are filled by Him. These can be emotional and wonderfully intimate but we should not seek the experience itself. Seek the Lord and sometimes these deeper experiences will come your way. But again, we mostly experience him in the ordinary parts of life. He will bring conviction of sin; deeper truths of intimacy; calling to serve in a ministry; encouragement for your tired and troubled soul; and power in your ordinary life.

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¹ John Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfectionism*, p. 12.

² *ibid.*, p. 26

³ *ibid.*, p. 25

⁴ See Titus 3:4-6 to see a great example of how all three members of the Trinity cooperate in this process. *But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, 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, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior* (Titus 3:4-6).

⁵ “To be filled with the Spirit is to come under progressively more intense and intimate influence of the Spirit.” <http://www.samstorms.com/all-articles/post/the-filling-and-anointing-of-the-holy-spirit---part-i>

⁶ <https://www.ligonier.org/blog/imperfections-perfectionism/>