

The Old-Time Evangelistic News

Evangelist W. Paul Redmond Sr.

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Being Filled With The Holy Ghost (Part 2) (Ephesians 5:18)

We continue this month considering the great subject of being filled with the Holy Ghost. We began by looking at The Meaning of Being Filled with the Holy Ghost. The first aspect of that meaning was The Definition. We looked at the first two words that are both translated filled—*pimplemi* and *pleroo*, and left off considering the third word—*pleres*. *Pleres* is used five times in the New Testament, and is always translated full. Last month, we looked at the first two instances in Luke 4:1 and Acts 6:3 where this word occurs.

The next time we find the phrase “full of the Holy Ghost” is in Acts 6:5. It is used to describe Stephen. Now all of these men were full of the Holy Ghost because that was one of the requirements of them given by the apostles in Acts 6:3. But the Holy Ghost makes a special note about Stephen. He is said to be “full of the Holy Ghost.” Every time I read that I wonder if that could be said about me. If Scripture were being written today (it is not; we have all of the Bible that we will ever have), would the Holy Ghost make a special note about me as being full of the Holy Ghost? Are you full of the Holy Ghost, and would the Holy Ghost describe you as being full of Him? Remember the word means “filled up, covered in every part, thoroughly permeated with.” Is it true of us in our modern churches that we are thoroughly permeated with and covered in every part with the Holy Ghost?

The next time that we find the phrase “full of the Holy Ghost” is in Acts 7:55. Again, it is used in connection with Stephen. Now, instead of being chosen as a deacon, he is confronted with men that oppose the Gospel that he is preaching. He rebukes them for their opposition by calling them “stiffnecked and uncircumcised.” It is interesting to

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notice that a man full of the Holy Ghost will rebuke those that are in opposition to the Gospel. A person that is full of the Holy Ghost will not seek to get along with those that oppose the Gospel. He will not fellowship with them; he will not have them come to preach for him; and he will not go preach for them. A man that is full of the Holy Ghost will know if what is preached is right with God’s Word or contrary to it. When something is contrary to God’s Word, he will point it out, whether it be Roman Catholicism, Mormonism, Seventh Day Adventism, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Islam, Hinduism, or any other false religion or cult. He will rebuke those that are contrary to the Word of God.

Notice also that one who is full of the Holy Ghost will have endurance in persecution. We might like to think that if we are full of the Holy Ghost, then the Devil will not bother us. That is not the case. In fact, the Devil may take more notice, and we may face even more opposition and perhaps even persecution. That is what happened to the early church and to many believers all the way down to the 20th century. But even when persecution came, the Holy Ghost gave endurance. Stephen was gnashed on, and yet did not whine or complain. He saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. Even as the stones began to fall, he asked, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.” Being full of the Holy Ghost will enable us to endure persecution.

The final time the phrase “full of the Holy Ghost” is used is in Acts 11:24. It is used to describe Barnabas. Barnabas would become greatly used of the Lord in the first missionary journey with Paul, but at this time he was what we would classify as an “assistant” to the apostles. He was not one of the eleven, and was not the leader of the church in Jerusalem, but he was full of the Holy Ghost. Someone may say that they are not a preacher, or that they are not in a leadership position, but that does not exclude you from being obedient to the command of being filled with the Spirit. It is a command for all believers!

I hope that looking at the meanings of these words has given you a

better understanding of what it means to be filled with the Spirit. As a reminder, the words mean “to fill; to wholly take possession of; to be illuminated, sanctified, and guided by His influence; to fill to the full; to flood; to diffuse through one’s soul; to pervade; to take possession of one’s heart; to control; filled up; covered in every part; thoroughly permeated with.” So often when we hear the word filled we think of a glass filled with water. But that is not an adequate picture of the meaning of being filled with the Spirit. Perhaps a better picture would be of a sail, filled with the wind, and thus powered, guided, and controlled by that wind. The word *pneuma* in the Greek language also means wind and is sometimes translated that way (see John 3:8). As the sailboat is useless without the wind, so are we useless without being filled with the Spirit. As the sailboat is usable when the sails are filled, so are we usable when filled with the Spirit. One final analogy, the rudder of a ship guides the ship where the captain, or the one in control, wants to take the ship. We must break the rudder of our life, and let the Holy Ghost control us. We cannot pray for His filling and then expect to be in control. Remember that one of the meanings of filled is control. We must let the Spirit control us. We must let Him lead, and then be willing to follow.

Not only do we notice the definition when considering the meaning of being filled with the Spirit, but also we see The Distinction. Ephesians 5:18 begins with a command to not be drunk with wine. As we have seen, the idea is control. The believer is explicitly commanded not to be under the control of wine. This is a clear distinction between the believer and the unbeliever. The unbeliever is more likely than not to be under alcohol’s control. However, the believer is not to allow anything to control him, but the Holy Ghost. Scripture clearly says wine (this is beer, wine, whiskey, or any other intoxicating drink) is not to control the believer, but the application is far-reaching. The believer is not to allow anything to control him other than the Holy Ghost. Television, movies, clothing, husbands, wives, children—nothing should control the believer, except the Holy Ghost. Many believers like to think that they are all right because they do not drink. They follow the admonition in the first part of the verse explicitly, but they allow something else to control them. O believer!

Be not drunk with wine—do not be controlled by anything else! Be filled—controlled—by the Spirit!

Now that we know the meaning of being filled with the Holy Ghost, we will ponder **The Method of Being Filled with the Holy Ghost—How does it happen?** When the Lord was laying this message on my heart, this thought was perhaps the most difficult to undertake. The command was given in Ephesians 5:18, but how to obey that command was not. I have heard several messages on being filled with the Spirit, but I could not recall anyone ever saying how we could be filled. Perhaps some preacher had mentioned how, but I could not remember if anyone had or not. As I began studying for this message, and compared Scripture with Scripture, the Holy Ghost revealed to me how to be filled with Him. I hope it will be as much of a help to you as it was to me.

The first step to being filled with the Holy Ghost is Asking. In Luke 11:13, Jesus says, “*If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?*” This verse is talking about the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. Up until this time, and in all of the Old Testament, the Holy Ghost did not continually indwell His people. He came upon certain ones to empower them for a particular ministry, but then would leave them. Christ is letting the disciples know that they could now ask for the Holy Ghost to come upon them, but He is also giving them a glimpse of what would take place on Pentecost. In the New Testament age, the Holy Ghost continually indwells every believer (Romans 8:9). At the moment of salvation, the Holy Ghost comes into and indwells every believer. We do not have to ask for Him to indwell us; He does it at the moment of salvation. But while this verse was fulfilled at Pentecost, I believe it has application for us. We do not have to ask for the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, but we do need to ask for the filling of the Holy Ghost. In this verse, Christ gave the admonition which serves as an example to ask for the filling, but consider some other verses.

In Acts 1:14, the apostles and other believers met and “continued

with one accord in prayer and supplication.” What were they praying for? Among other things, they were praying for the Holy Ghost. Some commentators believe that they were already indwelt with the Spirit as a result of Jesus breathing on them and commanding them to receive the Holy Ghost in John 20:22. Thus in Acts 1:14, they were praying for the filling of the Holy Ghost. They had received the person; now, they needed the power and would receive it. Regardless of when one sees the person of the Holy Ghost as first coming upon the apostles—John 20:22 or Acts 2:4—the example is set by the apostles to pray and ask for the Holy Ghost to fill us.

The next verse is clear. By Acts 4:31, the Holy Ghost indwelt the believers. In Acts 4:31, they gathered and prayed. “And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.” They had been filled before, but now they met and prayed and were filled again. It is a wonderful picture of the continual command given in Ephesians 5:18. How can we be filled with the Holy Ghost? By asking Him to fill us. In Ephesians 1:15-23, Paul says that he prays for the Ephesians. One thing that he prays for is that they might receive “the spirit of wisdom and revelation.” Who is this? The Holy Ghost. How do receive the fullness of the Spirit? By asking. May we begin to ask to be filled with the Spirit.

(For the beginning of this message see our June 2008 NewsLetter; for the conclusion of this message see our August 2008 NewsLetter.)

