

for the week of May 15: 50 days later…

Almost all Christians that I know want to be full of the Holy Spirit, but many seem to deny their need to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Yet surely this is still the great need among men today, a powerful filling of the Spirit that will cause us

to *desire God,*  

*hunger for His word,*

*be fervent in prayer,*

*boldly share our faith*

*obey His commands*

*love those we find unlovable*

*use our gifts to build up the local church*

*give liberally*

e*xpect Him to act wondrously in our time.*

It goes without saying that such a filling of the Spirit, that could accomplish this, will also empower us to heal the sick, deliver the captive, and reconcile relationships.

Any man who wants to know how he can be filled with the Spirit must first desire to be filled. This is not as simple as it sounds. A.W. Tozer comments: “To the interested inquirer I ask these questions: Are you sure that you want to be possessed by a Sprit Who, while He is pure and gentle and wise and loving, will yet insist upon being Lord of your life? Are you sure you want your personality to be taken over by One Who will require obedience to the written Word? Who will not tolerate any of the self-sins in your life, self-love, self-indulgence? Who will not permit you to strut or boast or show-off? Who will take the direction of your life away from you and will reserve the sovereign right to test you and discipline you? Who will strip away from you many loved objects which secretly harm your soul?”

Unless you can answer an eager “Yes” to these questions you do not want to be filled. You may want a thrill or the victory or the power, but you do not really want to be filled with the Spirit. Your desire is little more than a feeble wish and is not pure enough to please God, Who demands all or nothing.

If, on the other hand, your soul cries out for God, for the Living God, and your dry and empty heart despairs of living a normal Christian life without further anointing, then I ask you: Is your desire all absorbing? Is it the biggest thing in your life? Does it crowd out every common religious activity and fill you with an acute longing that can only be describe as the pain of desire? If your heart cries “Yes” to these questions you may be on your way to a spiritual breakthrough that will transform your whole life.”

While I shy away from formulas, I would suggest that we can be filled with the Holy Spirit as we:

Surrender: “I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12.1,2)”

Ask: “If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him? (Luke 11.13)”

Obey: And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him. (Acts 5.32)

Believe: “This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? (Galatians 5.2)”

Dwight Moody was pointedly asked, “Have you been filled with the Holy Spirit?” After a moment’s pause to think he replied, “Yes, but I leak.” Man of God, a spiritless faith will never deliver the realities we long or labor for…

Enjoy your LifeGroup,

Mark

What is your earliest memory of being powerless? What would you have changed if you had the power to do so?

getting know one another better…

Exploring Acts 2.1-24

Read Acts 2

*When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. 2 And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.*

*Acts 2.5   Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven. 6 And when this sound occurred, the crowd came together, and were bewildered because each one of them was hearing them speak in his own language. 7 They were amazed and astonished, saying, “Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 “And how is it that we each hear them in our own language to which we were born? 9 “Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, 11 Cretans and Arabs — we hear them in our own tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God.” 12 And they all continued in amazement and great perplexity, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” 13 But others were mocking and saying, “They are full of sweet wine.”*

*Acts 2.14   But Peter, taking his stand with the eleven, raised his voice and declared to them: “Men of Judea and all you who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you and give heed to my words. 15 “For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only the third hour of the day; 16 but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel:*

*17 ‘AND IT SHALL BE IN THE LAST DAYS,’ God says,*

*‘THAT I WILL POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT ON ALL MANKIND;*

*AND YOUR SONS AND YOUR DAUGHTERS SHALL PROPHESY,*

*AND YOUR YOUNG MEN SHALL SEE VISIONS,*

*AND YOUR OLD MEN SHALL DREAM DREAMS;*

*18 EVEN ON MY BONDSLAVES, BOTH MEN AND WOMEN,*

*I WILL IN THOSE DAYS POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT*

*And they shall prophesy.*

*19 ‘AND I WILL GRANT WONDERS IN THE SKY ABOVE*

*AND SIGNS ON THE EARTH BELOW,*

*BLOOD, AND FIRE, AND VAPOR OF SMOKE.*

*20 ‘THE SUN WILL BE TURNED INTO DARKNESS*

*AND THE MOON INTO BLOOD,*

*BEFORE THE GREAT AND GLORIOUS DAY OF THE LORD SHALL COME.*

*21 ‘AND IT SHALL BE THAT EVERYONE WHO CALLS ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.’*

*Acts 2.22   “Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know — 23 this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. 24 “But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power.*

Close your eyes for a few minutes and imagine that you were there on the Day of Pentecost. What do you see? What is the weather like? What is the size of the crowd? What do you hear? What is your reaction to what is going on? What are you thinking? What are your questions? What is your reaction to what you are seeing and hearing?

Luke says "there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind… and there appeared tongues as of fire". Why do you think God chose to reveal Himself in this manner?

How do the Jews respond to the power of the Spirit which they witness? Why do you think they react this way?

Why do you think there is a difference between the people Luke mentions as being present (2.9-11) and those mentioned in Peter's address (Acts 2.15)?

What message does the book of Joel have for the crowd that has gathered?

Pentecost, celebrated 50 days after Passover, was far more than an agricultural holiday for 1st century Jews. It is the remembrance of the day God gave the Law to Moses on behalf of Israel. Pentecost celebrated God giving to His redeemed people the "new life" that would establish them personally and as a community. It is this "new life" that would allow them to carry forward God's purposes and provide the framework for receiving His promises.

Why do you think God chose to give the Holy Spirit on Pentecost?

Why do you think the gift of the Holy Spirit is so closely tied to language and speech on this occasion?

Why are the apostles filled with the Holy Spirit?

What are some ways that you see the power of the Holy Spirit demonstrated in your midst recently?

How could your life benefit from greater sensitivity to the Holy Spirit? How can we cultivate a greater sensitivity to the Holy Spirit?

In your life, what do you think could be hindering greater movement of the Holy Spirit? What areas of unbelief and/or fear might you need to confess/address in order to be more open to the movement of the Holy Spirit in your life?

How can your LifeGroup encourage an expectancy for the Holy Spirit to be received in your life and released to bless others through you and your LifeGroup?

my prayer requests (think of what you want to share in advance)…

praying for my group…