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WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE FILLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

A. The definition of the filling. It is that sovereign act whereby the Holy Spirit fills and controls the life of the repenting sinner.

B. Some examples of the filling

1. Pre-Pentecost examples

   a. John the Baptist

   "For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb" (Luke 1:15).

   b. Elisabeth

   "And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost" (Luke 1:41).

   c. Zachariah

   "And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied …" (Luke 1:67).

2. Post-Pentecost examples

   a. The 120 in the Upper Room

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

   b. Simon Peter

   "Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel" (Acts 4:8).

   c. The apostles

   "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" (Acts 4:31).

   d. Stephen

   "And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch" (Acts 6:5).

   "But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God" (Acts 7:55).

e. Paul

"And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost … Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him" (Acts 9:17; 13:9).

f. The disciples in Asia Minor

"And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost" (Acts 13:52).

g. Barnabas

"*For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord"* (Acts 11:24).

C. The differences between the indwelling and the filling

The following illustration may help clarify this distinction: A guest is invited into a home. But upon entering that home he is immediately confined to a small room somewhere near the front door. For awhile, he may even be forgotten by his host. Finally, however, the owner of the house is convicted concerning his shabby treatment of the houseguest. He thereupon gives his guest free access to every room in the house.

In this illustration the Holy Spirit is, of course, the invited guest. The host is the believing sinner, and the house stands for his life. The difference, then, between the indwelling and the filling is the difference between being confined in a small room somewhere and being given free access to all the rooms. The filling, therefore, does not mean the believer gets more of the Holy Spirit, but rather, the Holy Spirit gets more of the believer.

One of the most helpful overviews ever written on this subject is Robert Boyd Munger's classic book entitled, *My Heart—Christ's Home.* In it, the author has just invited Christ to visit his home and proceeds to show him the various rooms including the library, the dining room, living room, recreational room, etc. Here, in allegorical fashion, is Munger's account as he ushered the Savior into the study:

> The first room we looked at together was the study—the library. Let us call it the study of the mind. Now in my home room of the mind is a small room with thick walls. But it is an important room. In a sense, it is the control room of the house. He entered with me and looked around at the books in the bookcase, the magazines on the table, the pictures on the walls. As I followed his gaze, I became uncomfortable. Strangely enough, I had not felt bad about this room before, but now that he was there with me

> looking at these things, I was embarrassed. There were some books on the shelves that his eyes were too pure to look at. On the table there were a few magazines a Christian has no business reading. As for the pictures on the walls—the imaginations and thoughts of my mind—some of these were shameful.
>
> Red faced, I turned to him and said, 'Master, I know this room really needs to be cleaned up and made over. Will you help me shape it up and change it to the way it ought to be?'
>
> 'Certainly,' he replied. 'I'm glad to help you! I've come to handle things like this! First of all, take all the materials you are reading and viewing which are not true, good, pure and helpful, and throw them out! Now put on the empty shelves the books of the Bible. Fill the library with the Scriptures and meditate on them day and night. As for the pictures on the walls, you will have difficulty controlling these images, but I have something that might help.' He gave me a full-sized portrait of himself. 'Hang this centrally,' he said, 'on the wall of your mind.' I did, and I have discovered through the years that when my thoughts are centered on Christ, the awareness of his presence, purity and power causes wrong and impure thoughts to back away. So he has helped me to bring my thoughts under his control, even though the struggle continues.
> (Intervarsity Press, Downers Grove, Ill., pp. 11, 12)

The rest of the book then records Jesus' penetrating appraisal as He walks through the remaining rooms. Each room brings its own share of embarrassment to the homeowner. Finally, in the concluding section the frustrated resident sees the wisdom in transferring the title deed! Munger writes:

> Then a thought came to me. I said to myself. 'I have been trying to keep this heart of mine clean and available for Christ, but it is hard work. I start on one room and no sooner have I cleaned it than I discover another room is dirty. I begin on the second room and the first one is already dusty again. I'm getting tired trying to maintain a clean heart and an obedient life. I just am not up to it!'
>
> Suddenly I asked, 'Lord, is there a possibility you would be willing to manage the whole house and operate it for me just as you did that closet? Could I give to you the responsibility of keeping my heart what it ought to be and myself doing what I ought to be doing?'

> I could see his face light up as he replied, 'I'd love to! This is exactly what I came to do. You can't live out the Christian life in your own strength. That is impossible. Let me do it for you and through you. That's the only way it will really work!' 'But,' he added slowly, 'I am not the owner of this house. Remember, I'm here as your guest. I have no authority to take charge since the property is not mine.'
>
> In a flash it all became clear. Excitedly I exclaimed, 'Lord, you have been my guest, and I have been trying to play the host. From now on you are going to be the owner and master of the house. I'm going to be the servant.' Running as fast as I could to the strongbox, I took out the title deed to the house describing its assets and liabilities, its condition, location and situation. Then rushing back to him, I eagerly signed it over, giving title to him alone for time and eternity. Dropping to my knees, I presented to him, 'Here it is, all that I am and have forever. Now you run the house. Just let me stay with you as houseboy and friend.' (Ibid, pp. 40, 41)

In light of the above, the verb *controlling* would more accurately apply to this work of the Spirit than that of *filling.* This is to say He should not be thought of as gasoline in the tank, but rather a designated driver behind the wheel in the "automobile" of our lives!

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