

(Spiritual Fullness #1) Come to Me and Drink

by Ernie Hile

The sermon emphasizes the importance of experiencing spiritual fullness, which is the result of coming to Jesus and drinking from Him, and cooperating with the Holy Spirit to be transformed to be like Christ.

Duration: 1:21:03

Scripture: John 7:37-39, Romans 8:29, Colossians 1:28

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Holy Spirit"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the goal and purpose of spiritual fullness. He emphasizes the need for our minds to be transformed by the salvation of Christ. The speaker encourages the audience to open their hearts to Jesus and allow Him to flood their lives with His life-transforming love. He also references John's Gospel, where Jesus is identified as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world and the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. The sermon concludes with a description of a joyful celebration and Jesus standing up to address the crowd.

Transcript

Good evening, dear brothers and sisters. It's just a wonderful, wonderful, wonderful blessing to be here among you. I'm waiting for translation.

Not very often I get a chance to speak without translation. But it's a joy beyond my ability to describe to be here tonight. And look out and see all your beautiful faces, some of them I've known for many, many years.

Some I just saw you this weekend. This is a wonderful joy to be here. I do have pictures.

You can see them later. I promise I will not show slides. But you know what I'm about to say is absolutely true.

Our Lord is utterly, utterly faithful. He cannot fail us. It's impossible.

If he just the minutest thing, if he ever failed in the slightest little thing, the whole universe would collapse. So we can trust him completely. I feel like after the hymns that we've sung tonight, I don't have anything else to say.

I feel like that basically we have sung what is in my heart. So you'll just have to bear with me going over the hymns that we've just sung. So if you would turn with me please to the Gospel of John, chapter 7. And we'll just read three verses to begin with.

John chapter 7, verses 37 through 39. Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out saying, If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the scripture said, from his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.

But this he spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive. For the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. Let's pray together.

Lord, we thank you for your continued mercies on our life. The abundance of your grace that we experience day by day, hour by hour, moment by moment. We do want to just declare tonight and give you thanks that you have never been unfaithful to us.

You have always demonstrated faithfulness and mercy in all of your dealings with us. Thank you for what you have already spoken to us and done in our lives this day. Thank you Lord that as we come here we can also bring before you the prayers that have already been prayed.

So that Lord, that you can be free to work among us tonight. Lord, it's wonderful to know, in one hand it's wonderful to know that you know everything about us. And yet on the other hand, it causes us to have fear.

But we're so grateful that you are the one who is full of grace. And so we can trust you to see all that's in us and see what it is that you desire to do. Now Lord, we believe that before the foundation of the world you knew about our meeting tonight and a rich, abundant provision has been made.

And every one of us come under that anointing of your Holy Spirit. Lord, we want you to accomplish what was in your heart when you brought this meeting together. We confess to you that without you we can do nothing.

And so we come and cast ourselves totally upon you, dependent upon you for the accomplishment of your purpose here tonight. Lord, be glorified among us and in us. We ask it in your name.

Amen. You notice this verse 37 begins by calling attention that there was a great feast in Jerusalem. This feast, as I understand it, was the Feast of Booths.

A time when the children of Israel would either come to Jerusalem or if you lived in Jerusalem they would leave their homes and build temporary shelters out of limbs from trees to remember how the Lord had been with his people during their wilderness wanderings and how that he daily provided for them food from heaven and water that gushed from a rock. This is what they were celebrating. Now there are those who have studied this carefully and the information that we received from them was that at this time the Jewish people would celebrate this feast by going down to the Pool of Siloam.

A priest would lead the procession and he would take a golden pitcher and he would take water from the Pool of Siloam and once again they would head back up to the Temple, to the altar area. With much celebration, much joy. Trumpets blowing, maybe even cymbals being clanged, but much joy and probably dancing as well.

Celebrating as a way of remembering what the Lord had done in the past. So I want you to get the picture of what is happening when we see what John tells us our Lord Jesus did. I want you to get the picture of all this thing that's going on.

And Jesus, it says, stood up. Now what I have in my mind is that he found an elevated place to stand on. Now I want you again, I want you to get the picture.

All of this is going on. The priest is now taking the water, pouring it out on the east and on the west and the people are witnessing this. And the Lord Jesus stands up and says, Is anyone thirsty? With a loud voice he cried out.

Now you can believe he had their attention. But he said, If there's anyone thirsty, let him come unto me and drink. For he who believes in me, as the scripture says, out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.

Then John goes on to explain to us that our Lord Jesus had reference to what would take place after his crucifixion, after his resurrection, and after his ascension. After he was glorified. When he sat down at the right hand of majesty on high.

Then the Lord Jesus would do something that would be able to make it possible for this which he promised to become a reality. So when he stood up that day, he was not planning to fulfill his promise to them then. But he said, If any man is thirsty, let him come to me and drink.

Now those who have a knowledge of the language, the Greek language, have suggested that our Lord used a kind of language that would have said, If anyone is thirsty, let him keep coming to me and keep drinking. It's not a once for all thing. It's something that we have to do on an ongoing basis.

Continuous, active action. Something present, active, tense. Something that is continuing to happen.

Now my dear brothers and sisters, I think that this may be the place where some of us get stuck in this matter. It's because some of us would like to believe that all I need to do is come one time and drink once. And that is all that I need to do.

But I think the secret is in this matter of learning the necessity of coming and drinking. Now I, like my brother Dana, have felt like that tonight we want to focus on the individual experiencing spiritual fullness and the Lord willing, tomorrow evening, to focus on the church experiencing spiritual fullness. So here tonight we have this wonderful, wonderful statement of our Lord Jesus.

A promise. And you know it's a wonderful promise because it's to anyone. If anyone is thirsty.

Now it's not without condition. There are conditions. But if the person is willing to meet the conditions, then we can be absolutely sure that our Lord will fulfill what He said.

That's why we emphasize in the beginning He is utterly, utterly faithful. He cannot make a promise like this and then not fulfill it. He cannot.

Therefore we can be totally convinced that if the conditions are met then we can experience what our Lord is talking about here. Now, probably, in the minds of those who were there, matter of fact, it has been suggested that probably they sang a part of Isaiah 12.3. Let's look at it. Isaiah chapter 12.

Therefore you will joyously draw water from the springs of salvation. And one translation I read is that you will with joy bring up buckets full of water from the well of salvation. And so probably this was one of the songs that they were singing as our Lord Jesus stood and made this declaration.

Now, some of you have had to put up with me in the past and you know that I like to do things in somewhat of an organized way. Now, I praise God for those dear brothers who can just stand up and speak and they don't have to say point one, point two, point three. But brothers and sisters, I ain't that way.

I like to give you my points. Last Sunday, for those who were in Queens, how many were there? Eight. Tonight you get a break.

Only six. Now we're focusing on spiritual fullness. And first I want us to consider together the goal, the purpose for spiritual fullness.

Secondly, the source of this spiritual fullness. Thirdly, the agent of this spiritual fullness. Fourth, the vessel of this spiritual fullness.

Fifth, the conditions for spiritual fullness. And finally, number six, the results of spiritual fullness. So you ready to go till twelve? Well, at least you know what my intentions are, whether I ever get them finished or not is another issue.

But I hope you see, brothers and sisters, that there are some things here that we need to consider together. We need to fellowship. We need to meditate together, as our brother said this morning, about this matter of spiritual fullness.

I am in one hundred percent agreement that it is the mercy of God that we are here on this occasion fellowshiping about this matter of spiritual fullness. So let's first of all consider a few things about the goal, the purpose, the objective of spiritual fullness. Now, I understand, I think I do, that ultimately God's purpose is fullness.

We'll fellowship tomorrow night, Lord willing. His purpose is to fill the whole universe with the glories of his Son. So, ultimately, he's concerned about fullness.

But in terms of us, I think there is another goal that he wants to produce, to bring about, by having us experience spiritual fullness. Now, it's true. I agree one hundred percent that the final product is that God and man will be beautifully, wonderfully, completely blended together.

Now, we will never become God. Let's get that clear. God created us men and women, human beings, and for all of eternity we're only going to be human beings.

Not going to be angels. We're going to be human beings. But we're going to be a lot different than we are now.

Praise God. Amen. Much different.

We're going to have a spiritual body and a lot of other wonderful things are going to take place. But let's think, first of all, in terms of what it is that God is seeking to accomplish in our life now through this matter of spiritual fullness. Let's look in Colossians, chapter 1. Colossians, chapter 1. The last verse.

Listen carefully to what our brother Paul has to say. I'm sorry. Verse 28.

We proclaim him, that is, the Lord Jesus Christ, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom so that we might present every man complete in Christ. Now this is what I think God's objective in our life is. It's to bring us to a place of completeness.

To where our being, who we are, comes to the place where God himself is satisfied. Now I want to remind you, which you already know, that our God is a perfectionist. And you know what, dear brothers and sisters? He is not going to rest until you and I arrive at that place of perfection.

Now I'm not suggesting for one second that during this earthly life that we will ever attain to that. But this is God's objective. And I think it is one of the reasons why he wants us to experience spiritual fullness.

Now maybe another way of saying this is this wonderful statement of Paul in Romans chapter 8. I know that some of the brothers and sisters who have to listen to me in recent years have gotten a little tired of me repeating myself. Maybe they think I've got a couple of screws loose. I don't.

But brothers and sisters, you know, there are just a few verses in these last few years that have seemed to wrap themselves around my heart and I can't get free from them. And what Paul says in Romans 8.29 will not let me go. He says, Those whom he foreknew, he predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Dear, dear brothers and sisters, I have difficulty believing that. I know it's true. But when I look at me, I don't see how it's possible.

Conformed to the image of the Son of God. So, brothers and sisters, the reason the Lord wants us to experience spiritual fullness is so that the Holy Spirit is free to move in us and work in us to transform us to be like our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the purpose.

It's not so that you and I can have spiritual goosebumps, although there's nothing wrong with having some goosebumps once in a while. There's nothing wrong with having a spiritual experience like Paul talked about in 2 Corinthians. I was lifted up into the third heaven and I saw things that I shouldn't mention and talk about.

Well, some of us need some experiences like this along the way. But brothers and sisters, please keep in mind that regardless of what our experience is, if it's really from the Lord, not some counterfeit, but a real experience from the Lord, then the Lord is using that to accomplish something impossible in your life. That is to conform you and me to the image of His Son.

Can you believe it, brothers and sisters? Now, I know that love is blind and I know some people don't believe that, but for many of us, love is blind. And that means we don't see ourselves as we really are because we love ourselves too much. We refuse to look at the things that are so wrong, so unlike our Lord Jesus.

And brothers and sisters, if we were able to see it, we would probably go into a pretty deep depression because we see the impossibility of it in ourselves. But we have a Heavenly Father who through His Son and by His Spirit is able to do exceedingly, abundantly beyond. You know, when Paul was trying to describe this or declare this, he had to keep adding, exceedingly, abundantly beyond all that you can think or ask.

So don't look at yourself. If you do, you'll get discouraged because you see how impossible it is. Now, my dear brothers and sisters, what we're talking about is taking the Lord Jesus and putting Him here and with our understanding of Him, of our seeing of Him, stand Him here and then you stand alongside of Him.

Oh, my dear brothers and sisters, impossible, humanly speaking. But this is why the Lord wants us to experience spiritual fullness, is so that this job, this will be accomplished and the end product will be that you and I will be transformed into being like our Lord Jesus Christ, where God can look at us and see us as holy and without blame. He can look at us and be just as pleased with us as He is with His own Son.

As I shared with the brothers and sisters on Sunday, brothers and sisters, if you and I lived a thousand lifetimes and spent 20 hours a day seeking to make yourself like Jesus, do you know what your accomplishment would be after the thousand years? You would be a total failure. You cannot make yourself one whit like Him. But this is what God is after.

And brothers and sisters, there ought to be a joy that wells up within us that God is not going to leave us the way He found us. We're talking about eternity, brothers and sisters. And God doesn't want us to be this way for eternity.

And can I say this to you? I don't want you to be the way you are for eternity. And I don't want to be the way I am for eternity because you have to live with me. And I have to live with you.

And sometimes we don't make it easy for each other. You know, there's also this issue of the Kingdom of God. When our Lord Jesus came here, His forerunner, John the Baptist, and the Lord Jesus Himself, their message was repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand.

My brothers and sisters, I think what God wants us to do is to so cooperate with the Holy Spirit, to be so under the influence, to be filled with the Holy Spirit, to be so under His influence that the Kingdom of God, here and now, is something that we are experiencing. Not just something that we're going to enter into. I know, I don't think I understand, there's coming a time when the Lord Jesus is going to set up His Kingdom here on this earth and reign here for a thousand years.

But the Kingdom is already here. And so the Lord wants us to know how, here and now, to live in the reality of that Kingdom under God's government. Citizens of the Kingdom of God.

Living in it. Obey the rules, the principles of the Kingdom. Here and now.

So this should be true in us individually. A number of years ago, our brother Dana helped me very much with this matter of the Kingdom. He simplified it for me.

He said, wherever Jesus is Lord, there is a Kingdom. So you see that this matter of the Holy Spirit invading our lives is to bring us to a place where the Lord Jesus Christ is genuinely, really, practically our Lord. Not just something we sing in a song, but something we experience day after day.

We're living in His government. And so the Holy Spirit, if He is free to work in us, if we're experiencing His fullness, then He will always bring us to the place where we are bowing our knee and obey our Lord Jesus Christ. What is the difference, brothers and sisters, of being led by the Spirit of God and following Jesus as a disciple? What is the difference? There is no difference.

To be led by the Spirit is to be a faithful disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. And being a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ is you're being taught how to live in the Kingdom of God here and now. Another way of looking at this is that the Lord wants us to be overcomers.

Our dear brother this morning pointed out to us the situation that we are presently living in. And brothers and sisters, I wish I could say tonight that the Lord has made it clear to me things are going to get better. But I don't think they're going to get better, brothers and sisters.

I don't think it's going to be any easier next year if the Lord carries than it is today. I think the thing is going to intensify even more. And it is God's heart that every one of us in this room and yea, every one of His dear children would find the Lord Jesus Christ in such a way that in their daily life they would be overcomers.

They would overcome the situation. Dear saints of God, our God is not in the least honored or glorified when you and I are overcome by the circumstances and situations in our life. It means that my dear brothers and sisters, we haven't discovered the Lord Jesus in the way that we should have.

He is the overcomer. And He wants us to be overcomers. And there's special promises in Revelation 2 and 3 to those who overcome.

And so what the Holy Spirit wants to do in invading our life, of bringing in the fullness, is to enable us to overcome! To be victors! Not to be taken in, but to overcome these things that we encounter in our lives. Another thing I think we need to see is that as our Lord Jesus said in John 15, I am the true vine. My Father is the husband.

I am the vine and you are the branches. Now what is the issue our Lord wants us to see? The issue is fruit. Fruit, more fruit, much fruit, and fruit that remains.

So what does this mean? It means that you and I need to find a way by the grace of God, by the working of the Holy Spirit, to stay firmly attached to our Lord Jesus Christ. Now dear brothers and sisters, let's not let this be just language that we use. Or even a doctrine that we teach.

But to know this experientially. Discovering day after day that being attached to Him is the thing that produces the fruit that our Heavenly Father is pleased with. So maybe these will just give you a general idea of what I think is the goal.

Why do we need to have spiritual fullness? Secondly, the source. Now, very clear brothers and sisters. I don't have to say too much about this.

Because the Lord Jesus said, if any man is thirsty, where does he need to go? Huh? Isn't it wonderful? He makes it so simple. You don't have to go running around all different places. One place you can find it all.

In the Lord Jesus Christ. This, to me, is a manifestation of mercy. It's not a religion.

It's a relationship with a living person. He's alive, brothers and sisters. I know we can't see Him with these eyes.

But He's more alive than we are. He is seated there at His Father's right hand. He is both Son of God and Son of Man.

Wonderfully blended together. Seated there at the Father's right hand. And He says, if any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink.

So, I don't think He can make it any simpler than that, brothers and sisters. Nothing confusing about that. I didn't say it was easy.

I'm just saying He makes it so simple for us. That is so easy. It's like John says in 1 John 5. The life is in the Son.

If you have the Son, you have the life. If you don't have the Son, you don't have the life. You just have one place to go to.

And it's to someone who loves us with a love that you and I, I don't think we'll ever be able to fully appreciate. Oh, we can appreciate it. But brothers and sisters, I don't know.

I don't know what the Lord has planned. If He's going to somehow give us an instant replay of our whole life and show us how here at this point when you didn't even know there was such a person as the Lord Jesus Christ, and He in His love sovereignly caused something to happen and it redirected you, and finally you ended up coming into a living knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. I don't know how He's going to do it all.

But brothers and sisters, He loves you. He doesn't want anything but the absolute best for you. He will not take anything away from your life.

He will not ask you to throw anything away that has any value at all. But you know the problem, brothers and sisters, in what Paul said in Romans 7, I know that in me, and in my flesh, there is no good thing. So what does that mean? It all has to go.

But He's not going to leave us in a vacuum. He's not going to leave us empty. He's going to fill us with something so precious, indescribable, that's going to have eternal ramifications.

So, I don't know what some of you think about our Lord Jesus, what your experience of Him has been, but I hope what your experience has been lines up with what we find in the Word of God. That He's a living Lord who loves you with an everlasting love. Who loves you with a love from which no one can separate you.

You can't even separate yourself. Or you can shut the door. You can even put a lock on it.

But that's not going to stop Him from loving you. You know who's going to win in the end? So why not give up now? Kick down that door. Unlock it.

Open it up wide. Ask Him to come in and flood your life with this life-transforming love. So, Lord Jesus says, come to me.

Now, He had said this also in Matthew chapter 11, but here the issue is coming and drinking and having rivers of living water flowing out. You know, in the beginning of John's Gospel, John was given the responsibility of identifying our Lord Jesus. And John identifies Him in two primary ways.

One day, some of the disciples of John were there and John sees the Lord Jesus coming. Remember He said, Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. So, He identified Him first as the Lamb

of God.

But He didn't stop there. He tells us that the One who had sent Him told Him that the One upon whom you're seeing the Spirit descending and remaining is the One who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. So, John identifies Him both as the Lamb of God and as a baptizer in the Holy Spirit.

So, the Lord Jesus here now is inviting us to come to Him because the anointing of the Holy Spirit has already come upon Him. He has received the Spirit without measure. No limit.

Now, the Holy Spirit had to work in a limited way in the people in the Old Testament, in saints in the Old Testament. And in most of God's people today, He still has to work in a limited way. Not because there's not a rich supply, but because of the vessel.

But with the Lord Jesus, there was no hindrance. There was no reason to measure out the amount. So, He received the Holy Spirit without measure.

And at this point, He becomes the anointed of God. He becomes the Christ. Now, you know, sometimes, brothers and sisters, we get ourselves in a difficult place by not taking time to stop and consider some of the things the Word of God has to say.

But you know, for some people, even believers, they think that Christ is Jesus' last name. Jesus is His first name, and Christ is His last name. Yes, brothers and sisters.

I know because I've asked people. But this is not true. He is Jesus the Christ.

Or Christ Jesus. The Greek word is Christos. But the word in the Old Testament was Messiah.

But what do these words mean? The anointed one of God. The one upon whom God was going to pour out His Spirit without measure. And He was going to fulfill all of the promises that God had made.

And so, our Lord Jesus Christ is the anointed one. And now, because He is the anointed one, He is in the position of anointing others. Of baptizing them in the Holy Spirit.

Because He is the baptizer. Now, we'll fellowship quickly about this tomorrow night. But basically, the Holy Spirit was poured out.

The Lord Jesus did the baptizing on the day of Pentecost. But we can all have our individual experience of what happened on that occasion. So, our Lord Jesus is the baptizer in the Holy Spirit.

Now, let's just back off for a moment and go over what we just mentioned a moment ago. Our Lord Jesus is the eternal Son of God. Now again, in the minds of some believers, He had His beginning when He was born in Bethlehem.

It's not true, brothers and sisters. He is the eternal Son of God. He is always throughout eternity.

There's never been... You can't even talk in terms of time. But there's never been a time when He has not been the Son of God. He has always been.

God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And they are all three equally God. So in your mind, don't put the Father here, the Son here, and the Spirit here.

If you do, you're wrong. Because they are all equally God in the fullest sense of the word that we heard our brother talking about this morning. Everything that's true about the Father is true about the Son and the Spirit.

Everything that is true about the Son is true of the Spirit and the Father. They are equally God. And our Lord Jesus Christ has always been the Son of God.

But in Bethlehem, 2,000 years ago, He became the Son of Man. He became a human being. He was incarnated.

He came into a human body like we have, except it had been conceived by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, it wasn't tainted by the sin of the Adamic nature. So He came.

He lived an absolutely perfect life. At His baptism, the Holy Spirit came upon Him. And He began to fulfill the ministry of demonstrating and proclaiming the Kingdom of God.

And then ultimately, He was crucified. He was buried. He was raised from the dead.

And 40 days later, He ascends back to the right hand of the Father. And He has been there for this 2,000 years. But my way of stating it is this.

His first official act, if we can put it that way, as the sovereign ruler, as God and man blended together, His first official act was to pour out the Holy Spirit. To baptize 120 people in the city of Jerusalem with the Holy Spirit. So I want us to see that the source is in our Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

It is the Father and the Son working in perfect concert, sending the Holy Spirit during this period of time after the ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ until He comes back again. It is the Holy Spirit who is here on earth who is the one who makes all the things of God a reality to us. All the things of Christ can only be ours experientially through the Holy Spirit.

And so our Lord Jesus Christ alone is the source. He is the baptizer. Now we can argue about what all of this means and we will not get anywhere.

But we can come to see, dear brothers and sisters, that our faithful Lord is in this position and He desires it in His heart to pour out and bring us into an experience of spiritual fullness. Not through some impersonal thing, some impersonal influence, but through a person, the Holy Spirit, who the Lord Jesus refers to as the periklitos, the comforter. The New American Standard Version translates it helper.

It is a word that is not easy to translate into English. The word periklitos means one who has been called alongside. In 1 John it is used in a way to talk about an advocate.

We have an advocate with the Father. Jesus Christ the righteous. The same word, periklitos.

We have someone here from the Lord Jesus Christ, from the Father, as our advocate, to be with us in every situation and to help us, to be our helper in practical ways. He is here to lead us in to this experience of spiritual fullness. As a matter of fact, He is the one, as we will see in a moment, He is the one who brings about the spiritual fullness.

Being full of the Holy Spirit and experiencing spiritual fullness, in my understanding, is one and the same thing. So that brings us to this point of the agent of spiritual fullness. It is the Holy Spirit.

Now please don't forget, He is 100% God. The same way that the Son is 100% God and the Father is 100% God. So please don't somehow, in your understanding, lower Him to a level or depersonalize Him.

Feel like He is some kind of influence. He is a real person. And He can be grieved.

He can be offended. He can be disobeyed. But He is here to take... Listen to me, brethren.

He is here to take that fullness that we heard about this morning in our Lord Jesus Christ and make it available to us. It is the only way you can memorize the whole Bible and pray 20 hours a day and it will not produce it in itself. But the Holy Spirit, if we meet the conditions, is prepared to bring us into the experience.

Not just doctrinal understanding. That's important. But to bring us into the experience of what it means to come into spiritual fullness.

I have a very small library in Brazil by comparison to some of these other brothers. But I recently decided I was going to try to find the books that I do have on the Holy Spirit. And I discovered I have more than 30 books on the Holy Spirit.

And so I've begun to read them. And many people have many different interpretations about the ministry, the person. Not so much about the person, the Holy Spirit, but the ministry and the results of the Holy Spirit working in our life.

And how do you experience the Holy Spirit? Do you experience all of the Holy Spirit when you were born again? Well, I have one stack of books that says yes. Do you have a crisis experience afterwards? And you have an additional experience of the Holy Spirit? Another stack of books says yes. So we're caught in this situation to where sometimes we can get so caught up in the yeses and the noes that we miss what it is that the Lord wants us to see.

But if we can remember that it is the Holy Spirit's God, how can I put it, God-given responsibility. The Father and the Son have sent Him here on a mission. And it's to take all that was accomplished by our Lord Jesus Christ and all the riches that are in Him and make them available experientially for us here and now as His people.

Now, there's no question that the Holy Spirit was very much with our Lord when He was here. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit. He was anointed by the Holy Spirit.

He was filled with the Holy Spirit. He was led by the Holy Spirit. So we can say that His life was a life lived under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

And now He's been sent in a special way after the ascension of our Lord Jesus to help us come into an experience of spiritual fullness. And as you will discover, if you haven't already discovered, you know, our God doesn't like assembly lines. You'll notice if tonight if we had opportunity for many of you brothers and sisters to give your testimony of how you came to know the Lord Jesus Christ, we would be wonderfully blessed by hearing the multitude of different ways.

Because the Lord treats us as an individual, as a person. He doesn't ignore who we are. And therefore, He takes these into consideration.

The same thing is true in our coming into an experience with the Holy Spirit. Even though the offer of spiritual fullness is available, sometimes we have to come into it in our own individual way. Now, you know it's not a very good practice to give personal illustrations, give examples out of your own life.

But I feel safe in doing this because dear brothers and sisters, I was totally oblivious to what was happening. So I can't take the least amount of credit for what I'm going to share with you. I shared with some of the brothers and young brothers and sisters last week about my own experience of coming to know the Lord.

And for me, you know, beyond words. But I had a real experience with the Lord to where in the depth of my being, no one could have convinced me that there was not a living God. So I came to know Him.

And then a few months later, I'm just telling you what happened to me. You don't have to believe it if you don't want to. I know it happened, but it's okay.

I was driving my car. I was in Pensacola, Florida. And I was driving my car down a road next to the Gulf of Mexico there in Pensacola.

And the only way I can explain it, brothers and sisters, is that the Lord's presence came into my car. Now, here I am. I'm a believer.

Six months. I never had a Bible in my life. I never read the Bible.

And after I became a believer, someone gave me a Bible. But I knew nothing. I had never read about all of these things.

So that's why I can say to you, you know, it's all Him. But anyhow, let me ask you a question. If you're driving down the road one day in your car by yourself, and the Lord's presence comes into the car, what are you going to do? And you have no idea what's happening.

You don't know that it's the Lord. You just have this sense that He's there. And even though I'd come to know Him, I'm a believer.

Six months. So I didn't know what to do. So, like Peter, he didn't know what to do, so he talked a lot.

Well, I didn't know what to do, so I had a 1950 Mercury. Nice looking car. And it had big floorboards in the front.

And I laid down on the front of those floorboards. And when I was laying there, I sensed the Lord saying to me, Ernie, I want you to give your life to me. Now, what He had done for me, I had no choice.

I had to say yes, Lord. I mean, I had a choice, but you know what I'm saying? I didn't have a choice. Because I was in love with Him.

I would have done anything. But I did not understand. I did not understand what was happening except this encounter.

So a week or so later, I go to the pastor where I came to know the Lord, and I share with him my experience. You know what he told me? The Lord has called you to be a Baptist preacher. Yes.

So what do I know? I plan to go to college and seminary and end up being a Baptist preacher. But during my days in college, in the Baptist church, after you give your life in this way, they license you to be a preacher. That means you can conduct funerals and weddings.

And then later, they ordained me. I'm not really sure what that all meant, but anyhow, it meant that I could become a pastor of a Baptist church. Here I am in Alabama.

And I'm going to school. I'm working at night from 5 o'clock till 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning. Saturday night.

Sunday morning, I'm pastoring a church 75 miles away. My wife and my son, we get up and we travel up to 75 miles. I preach Sunday morning.

Like Dana says, you have to preach three times a week. Sunday morning, Sunday night, Wednesday night. Well, fortunately, I didn't have to go Wednesday night.

But I had to preach Sunday morning, Sunday night. Now, I'm going to school, working a full-time job. I've been up until 3 o'clock on Saturday night.

And then I get up early and drive to 75 miles. And I preach on Sunday morning. And then I'm required to go out and have dinner with somebody, go to their home, and then visit the people who are sick in the afternoon.

And then we have another meeting that night. And I can remember again and again and again, sitting there, waiting for my time to get up and speak. Feeling like I don't even have enough energy to stand up, let alone speak.

But I'm here to testify to you. The Lord is able. Something happened when I stood up.

A strength came into me that was not my own. And He enabled me to try to minister His Word. Now, some of you knew my first White Zola.

And after that long day and feeling like I was a total failure as a preacher anyhow, every Sunday night I would say to Zola, Zola, no more. I quit. I give up.

No more. Well, after a year of that, she finally just learned to turn it all off and knew I wasn't serious about it. But what I'm trying to say is the Holy Spirit is to be there to be for us and to us what we have in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, at that point in my life I knew nothing about the Holy Spirit in terms of what the Scriptures talk. But I was recently reading a book that helped me. And he pointed out that in the book of Acts their understanding of the Holy Spirit didn't come from reading the Bible and studying the Scriptures.

You know how it came? From experience. Now, I'm not saying we should praise God we have the Word of God to check us out. But what I'm saying they hammered this thing out.

And I'm encouraging us tonight to find how real the Lord wants to be to us through the ministry of the Holy Spirit in every situation. He knows everything about everything. Doesn't mean we don't have to do something.

But sometimes He enables us something to happen that goes beyond the natural. And something of the spiritual dimension comes into our experience. What am I saying? I'm saying, brothers and sisters, certainly you need to give yourself 100% to the Lord.

I don't mind saying to you, you need to do what I did that day. I didn't know what I was doing. But you need to do the same thing.

You need to give yourself 100% to Him. Consecrate your life to Him. And say, my life is yours and I want to learn how to obey you.

But then, brothers and sisters, we need to learn the lessons that the Holy Spirit wants to teach us. Now, what is the vessel? We have seen the goal, the source, the agent. But what is the vessel? Where is it that we experience spiritual fullness? Now, brothers and sisters, again, I don't know how much some of you have meditated and read in the Word of God, but you see, before God ever created man, He designed him.

He's not like some of us. You know, I used to do some woodworking, but I never drew a plan. I just start cutting wood.

And you can imagine some of the messes that I make. But you see, the Lord never does it that way. And since He does everything perfectly, His design was perfect.

And He designed man in such a way that the fullness of God could come and abide in Him. And then that fullness would influence the rest of His being. And this is what was being offered, I understand, to Adam in the garden with the Tree of Life.

The tree that Adam never got a chance to eat from. God was saying to man, if you come to this tree and eat of this tree, then you will begin to experience the fullness, the spiritual fullness that I created you, designed and created you for. Now, you remember in 1 Thessalonians 5, verse 23, Paul's prayer for these believers in Thessalonica.

May the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely. May your spirit, soul, and body be preserved complete without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is very, very important.

If we're going to live in the reality of spiritual fullness, you need to have an understanding of how God has created you. So that you know that in your spirit is to be the master of your life. Your decisions about your life are not to be made on the basis of how you think, how you feel, what you desire, or what your body wants.

Now, all of that has to be taken into consideration. But this is not the control center. The control center of our life is to be our spirit.

And when Adam ate of that tree of the knowledge of good and evil, something very tragic happened. He died. He didn't die physically, and he didn't die psychologically, but he did die spiritually.

His spirit went into a comatose state. And there was no communication between God and man. And so, as the Scripture says in Ephesians chapter 2, we are dead in trespasses.

Dead toward God. We cannot do the will of God. We cannot know God.

We may have information about Him, but you cannot know Him because your spirit is dead. But you know what happens? It's what the Lord Jesus talked to Nicodemus about. Nicodemus, you must be born again.

You must be born. It's not optional. If you're going to see the kingdom, you're going to enter the kingdom, you must be born again.

And what happens is that the Holy Spirit takes the life of our Lord Jesus Christ and puts it inside of our spirit. Spirit to spirit. We are then born of the Spirit.

And the life of Christ begins to emerge in our spirit. And then hopefully, that life which is the spiritual fullness will then begin to influence everything else that happens in our life. If things go the way the Lord wants them to go.

So first of all, let me say, you've been designed by God to live in spiritual fullness. You've been created by God to live in spiritual fullness. But something went wrong.

But you've been redeemed. Hallelujah, brother. You've been redeemed.

You've been saved. You've been delivered. And now, as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, your spirit is alive.

You know God. That's why I said to you, that day when it happened to me, I knew that I knew that I knew that I knew. And no one had to tell me.

Why? Because I come to know the living God. He came to indwell me. I didn't understand it.

I could have not explained it to anybody. I'm not sure I can explain it today. But anyhow, brothers and sisters, this is the miracle that God takes His own uncreated, eternal resurrection life that is in Christ and puts it inside of us.

And this radical transformation begins. And so that our spirit becomes the control center. It doesn't mean we don't think.

It doesn't mean we don't have feelings. It doesn't mean I don't have to make choices. It doesn't mean I don't need to be concerned about my physical body.

But before, brothers and sisters, our situation was that the spirit and the soul had joined in a conspiracy against the spirit. And so this has to be overcome. And so the Holy Spirit comes to indwell us, to bring us into an experience of spiritual fullness.

Now, I heard what our brother Dana said this afternoon and I agree with him. But in the beginning of our Christian life, our capacity for the Lord Jesus Christ is limited. It doesn't mean that, you know, what can I say? It's going to grow.

I don't know, I don't have a good illustration for this, but let's think about a power plant. Who has these, I wish somebody, megawatts. Is that right? How many, how many, how much electricity can a power plant produce? How do they measure it? Anybody know? Megawatts.

In the power plant is all these megawatts. But it depends on the wires that transmit it. Nothing wrong with the power plant.

It also depends upon the receiving of electricity. And sometimes the wires are too small. They can't carry how many megawatts.

They can only carry a few. And that's what I think we're like in the beginning. There's a limited capacity for the life of Christ to flow through us.

But brothers and sisters, it is the role of the Holy Spirit to increase that capacity in us. And so we become, our spirit becomes a shrine. As we sang in one of our hymns.

A temple. A place for God to take up His presence, His residence within us. Now I know that many of us live day after day after day after day sometimes, and are totally oblivious to the reality.

If you are a genuine believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, I didn't say if you're religious. I didn't say if you read your Bible. I said if you have had an encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ, you've come to believe in Him and the Holy Spirit has called you to be born again, then brothers and sisters, He's going to go on to do some work.

But it's the beginning. It's the beginning. But that's why Paul says, his goal was to present every man perfect, complete, conformed to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Think about this matter of being conformed. How does it take place? My understanding is the Holy Spirit brings a life, puts it inside the deepest part of our being. Remember what the Lord Jesus says? From your innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.

Well, that life is there. But He wants that life to influence everything about us, how we think. Oh, brothers and sisters, what a problem this is.

Some of us need to have the salvation of our minds. You want me to illustrate? Let's suppose if it were possible. I think I shared this one other time here.

But let's suppose it were possible to take a camcorder, drill a hole in your head, and take a picture of all the thoughts that you had today. Put them on a video, and then we show them up here. Anybody willing to volunteer? Don't think so, brothers and sisters.

So what does this prove? It proves that there's a work that still needs to be done. The Lord wants us to learn by the Spirit of God the influence of this fullness of spiritual life can change the way we think. We can become spiritually minded.

We can have our minds set on the Spirit rather than upon the flesh. You know that some of the thoughts that you have, you have nothing to do with the Spirit of God. But it doesn't have to remain that way.

This is salvation. So the Holy Spirit, in His great love for us, puts us under discipline. Oh, we don't like that.

But there's no other way, brothers and sisters. If you want to be conformed to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ, there is no other way. There are no shortcuts.

This is it. It's life plus discipline equals character. And if you're trying to avoid the discipline, the Holy Spirit doesn't have another way.

You're just postponing it. Maybe it might make it more difficult for you. Because if somehow you're seeking to cooperate with the Holy Spirit and He puts you in a place and you're trying to get out of that place, I guarantee you He will create another one just like it or maybe even worse.

I remember a number of years ago, the Lord gave me this picture. I don't have visions. But He gave me this picture of the cross here.

And I saw the cross, but I dug a hole down underneath the cross to try to avoid it and come out the other side. Guess what was there? Another cross. Yes, brothers, there is no other way.

Don't try to avoid it. Don't try. You're only postponing it and the Lord has His own designed ways of producing the character of Christ in you.

Don't look at other people. So our hearts are the vessels and it becomes a control center. Don't think for a moment to destroy your soul.

He just wants to deliver it from that torrentic power of the old Adamic nature and from our self-life. We mentioned earlier about the kingdom of God. It seems to me, brothers and sisters, there are three kingdoms that you and I need to be concerned about.

First of all, the kingdom of darkness. The kingdom of this world over which Satan, God's archenemy, and our archenemy is the ruler. He's the king, if we can put it that way, over this world system.

Then there is the kingdom of our God and His Christ. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the king in this kingdom. But there's another rival kingdom.

You know what it is? The kingdom of self. A number of years ago, I was thinking about this whole matter, and I decided to go to Webster's Dictionary and look up this word self. Anybody have any ideas how many times the word self is used in the Webster Dictionary? Anybody want to hazard a guess? Nobody? Over 400.

What does this mean? It means, brothers and sisters, that this is an issue to be looked at. Because here's what's happened. You remember in Isaiah chapter 14? When Isaiah is talking about the king of Babylon, and it's actually speaking about Satan and his encounter with God in the prehistoric times.

Five times he says, I will. I will. I will.

I will. I will become like the most high God. Now, brothers and sisters, I don't mean to put any of us into a depression, but dear brothers and sisters, the same poison that got into Satan has found its way into us.

And our I, our ego, our self-life, sometimes is the biggest hindrance to us experiencing spiritual fullness. So when the Lord Jesus came and began to make disciples, right from the outset, the first thing he said, if any man wants to be my disciple, he must do what? Deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. Now, what does it mean to deny yourself? Have you ever tried to say no to yourself? Does yourself listen? Does it want to cooperate? As I heard our brother Stephen say one time, he's a petty tyrant.

He wants his own way at all cost. And the Lord's solution for him is for us to learn to say no to him, to deny him, to deny him access to our being, to control us, to influence us. You know, dear brothers and sisters, as our brother Dana shared this afternoon from that passage in Philippians 2, it says about our Lord Jesus that he emptied himself.

Now, I know it means he emptied himself of all his rights. But what I think what may help us to understand what that means is that he always said no to himself. Now, his self-life was not influenced the way ours is.

But he still had a self-life. Remember when he said in John's Gospel, I only do what I hear. I only do what I see my father doing.

I do nothing of my own initiative. I only say what I hear my father say. Now, that's the denying of the self.

That's saying no to the self and yes to the will of God. So, brothers and sisters, we need to learn how to do this so that our self-life doesn't become that hindrance to spiritual fullness that the Lord wants us to have. Well, our time is gone.

Let me just quickly mention a couple of things. In terms of fullness, the condition for fullness, the Lord Jesus says that we must come to him and drink and to believe in him. It's faith, brothers and sisters.

It's faith that would cause you to find a time and a place to get alone with the Lord and settle some of these issues. First of all, does your life belong to him? Are you thirsty? See, this is another issue. Are you thirsty? And I have to say, dear brothers and sisters, we do things in such a way among us as God's people sometimes to where people are not thirsty.

They're satisfied. They may be drinking from the wrong vessel and the wrong thing, but somehow they find a false sense of satisfaction. Please forgive me.

I'm greatly concerned about this megachurch movement in the United States. Why? Because people are being satisfied with something other than the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, I could be wrong, and if I am, I want to stand corrected and please forgive me.

But dear brothers and sisters, it's possible for us to be drinking from the wrong fountain and have a false sense of satisfaction. So we need to learn to come to Him and to drink, to believe in Him, to believe in Him in the fullest sense of all that the Scripture said revealed Him to be. For Him to be the Lord.

Don't call Him Lord, Lord, and then don't do what He says. It's a contradiction. It's a lie.

It's an insult to Him to call Him Lord and then continue to do your own thing. So there are conditions, and it has to do with our hearts, my brothers. Broken, contrite, poor in spirit is the conditions that we need to have.

If we have some sense of pride that we have arrived some place, that we've been in this way for so long, or I have read my Bible, or whatever else you want to do, like Paul did in Philippians 3. He made his list. You may have your list, but that list may prevent you from actually entering into the experience of spiritual fullness. Well, the last thing.

The results. And out of your innermost being shall flow rivers of living water. Now, you need to go through the Scripture sometime and consider this whole matter of rivers beginning in Genesis, in Ezekiel, in Isaiah, Revelation.

But listen to this wonderful promise. I wish I had a better vocabulary. But what would we use to describe such a promise that out of your innermost being shall flow not just one, but rivers of living water.

Now, some of you know I live in Brazil. And you know what river there is in Brazil, right? What big river is there in Brazil? The Amazon. You know what I heard someone told me just this week? Do you know how wide the Amazon is when it flows into the ocean? Anybody have any idea? I was totally ignorant of this.

200 miles wide! From here to Washington, D.C. Maybe you and I are satisfied with a smaller river. But the Lord, brothers and sisters, we need to find a practical way of taking the Lord up on His offer. If we come and drink and believe in Him, then He says out of our innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.

Now, what can we expect these rivers to... What's flowing out through these rivers? Well, I think the number one thing is the love of God. He has flooded our hearts with the love of God. And as we sang in one of the hymns tonight, I wish I could remember it, but anyhow, dear brothers and sisters, the Lord wants to channel through us.

It's an endless, measureless... What other words can we use to describe the love of God? There is no end to it. I've forgotten the words, but you know what I'm trying to say. There's an unlimited, measureless supply, bigger than the Amazon, that God wants to cause to flow out through us.

And oh, my dear, dear brothers and sisters, where we need to cause this river to flow is among us, first of all. We have not loved one another the way we should. You know what I'm talking about.

And so, this needs to become very practical. A river of life that into our meetings, as our brother Dana said, if we come having spent time seriously before the Lord about the meeting, and when we come to the meeting, we come with a river flowing of life to other brothers and sisters. So, where can we go? All the rivers that can flow, He has to decide.

But He has His own wonderful way of producing these rivers in us. Sometimes, it seems to me, He uses a kind of a natural means to create the river. But then there are some times when He uses a crisis.

And I was thinking this afternoon, the difference between the Panama Canal and the Grand Canyon, the Colorado River. The Panama Canal was created by man. The natural thing.

But what about the Colorado River that flows through the Grand Canyon? How was that one created? Through a crisis, huh? You think maybe? You think maybe, brothers and sisters, that it's in a crisis that God produces a channel for His life and love and light to flow through us. I don't know what to say, brothers and sisters. I mean, I have tried to wrestle with these words of our Lord.

And the only place I can come to is this was not just empty words. And they weren't just for then. It was after He was ascended that this was to take place.

And my understanding is, it is available to us all the way until He returns. And the choice is ours. Are you thirsty? Are you willing to come? Are you willing to pay the price to drink and to throw away the other things that you're becoming satisfied with? Get free from this external kingdom of the world and try to find a way, by the grace of God, to get free from the tyrant inside who always wants His way.

And we can discover and experience. What a wonderful thing it would be is that every one of us in this place tonight would have a testimony to give next year or next week or next month. The Lord began to produce a river in me flowing out.

Well, you have to, my brothers and sisters. I share this best I know how. But I believe this is what God, the Lord wants for every one of His dear ones.

This is part of your birthright. It's available to you. Not just a few.

Well, let's pray together. Thanks for your patience. Gracious Father, in the name of Your dear Son, we want to thank You for Your Word.

Thank You for Your Holy Spirit who makes it a living Word, who really takes it and uses it to speak to our hearts. Lord, I ask You to give my brothers and sisters discernment tonight, to discern what was Your voice. And Lord, having discerned, give us all grace.

By Your Holy Spirit, help us to believe You and to come to You and keep on drinking so that, Lord, for Your glory, for the fulfillment of Your purpose, rivers will begin to flow out of our lives. And we ask it in the name of our Lord Jesus.

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