

# Be Filled and Be Filled Now!

by Roy Hession

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*Roy Hession emphasizes the imperative and continuous nature of being filled with the Holy Spirit, highlighting the importance of faith and repentance in the process.*

**Scripture:** Romans 3:3-6, 1 Corinthians 2:6, 1 Corinthians 6:13, 1 Corinthians 13:8, 2 Corinthians 3:7, Galatians 3:17, Galatians 5:4, Ephesians 2:15, 2 Thessalonians 2:8, 2 Timothy 1:10, Hebrews 2:14

**Topics:** "Christ's Work", "Spiritual Freedom"

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## Description

The preacher delves into the concept of 'katargeo,' which means to render something powerless or ineffective. This term is often used in the New Testament to describe the nullification or abolition of various things, such as the Law, sin, and death, through the work of Christ. The perfect tense of 'katargeo' signifies a permanent effect, emphasizing the lasting impact of Christ's work. By exploring the multiple instances of 'katargeo' in the Bible, believers can grasp the profound truths associated with the work of Christ and the freedom it brings.

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## Transcript

'And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled

with the Spirit;

Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,

singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;

Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in

the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;

Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.' (Eph. 5. 18-21.)

LET us look more closely at this great apostolic word, 'Be filled with the Spirit' and let us note the grammar involved in that word 'be filled', for it has helpful lessons to teach us. First it is in the imperative mood, that is, it is a command. It is just as much a command of God to be filled with the Spirit, as it is not to be drunk with wine, which is the phrase that immediately precedes it. If we are not cleansed by the Blood of Christ and filled with God's Spirit, we are disobeying God. To be filled with the Spirit is not optional, but obligatory

on every Christian, whether a housewife, a business man or a preacher. Indeed that fullness is as much commanded at the sink as in the pulpit, and it is not commanded for our compliance at some future date, but now!

Secondly, this verb 'be filled' is in the passive voice. It is not fill yourself, but be filled. It is something that is done to us, not something we can do ourselves. This implies that all we have to offer is emptiness. If only we were more content to take that position before God, we would be more often filled; instead of which, we are all the time making attempts to come other than as empty sinners and to meet our own needs, when we should be letting Him do it. Being filled with the Spirit is not an attainment, but an 'obtainment', obtained through simple faith by those who know and acknowledge their emptiness. They were saved by grace without works, and they expect to be filled on the same principle. Nowhere is the necessity for us to present only our emptiness better expressed than in Mary Shackleton's lovely hymn, two verses of which read:

But though I cannot sing, or tell, or know  
The fullness of Thy love, while here below,  
My empty vessel I may freely bring;  
Oh Thou, who art of love the living spring,  
My vessel fill.  
I am an empty vessel, not one thought  
Or look of love I ever to Thee brought,  
But I may come and come again to Thee  
With this the empty sinner's only plea,  
Thou lovest me.

A word of testimony may help here. On one occasion there had been real defeat in my walk as a Christian and I was much oppressed with a sense of failure. I turned idly to a notebook of mine, and saw two words which I had scribbled there some time before, 'Be filled'. They seemed to come as a direct word from God to me.

'But Lord,' I said, 'I am such a failure.'

'I know,' He replied, 'but be filled.'

'But not so soon after defeat,' I said, 'I must surely improve first.'

'You need do nothing of the sort first,' He said, 'Be filled and be filled now.'

'But how can I when I feel so oppressed with my sin?'

'The Blood of Jesus cleanseth from all sin,' He replied patiently. 'Be filled and be filled now I'

Be filled, be filled, be filled was all that came back to me in reply to every doubtful thought. This was the last message I would have expected from God that day. To go from the lowest to the highest so immediately seemed impossible. But when I saw the power of the Blood of Jesus to cleanse completely, I could only bow my head and say 'Amen, Lord' to both His command and promise, and receive the cleansing and the filling. A day of rich blessing followed and others got something of the overflow.

The simple truth is that the fullness of the Holy Spirit is not merely for super-saints who by their consecration and devotedness may be deemed to have qualified, but sinners and failures who have learnt to repent and who see the perfect, present cleansing available to them in the Blood of Jesus. Thank God, whereas this word is in the imperative mood, it is in the passive voice. This simply means that 'it is of faith, that it might be by grace', and this in turn means that 'the promise might be sure to all the seed' (Rom. 4. 16), not only to saints of high attainments, but to feeble, failing people like some of us. Grace by its very nature makes the promise sure to failures who admit their failure, and they can do that now. Someone has said, 'The Spirit's fullness is not the reward of our faithfulness, but God's gift for our defeat'. He was not given to the disciples in Acts 28 as the culmination and reward of their wonderful service, but in Acts 2 when they had proved themselves cowards, meeting behind barred doors.

There is, therefore, no need to struggle for self-improvement first, for that is to seek the Holy Spirit 'not by faith, but, as it were by the works of the law' (Rom. 9. 32). Nor is there any need to wait for Him, as some have thought no need to wait, that is to say, any longer than it takes us to be willing to call sin, sin and come to the Cross with it. The Holy Spirit has already been given. True, the disciples were of old told, 'Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high' (Luke 24. 49) but that was because the historic moment of the giving of the Holy Spirit had not yet come. But now that He is given, all may be filled-and filled now.

The third thing to note about the word 'be filled' is that it is in the present continuous tense. This, of course, is not apparent in the English translation. Indeed in the English language we do not use the present continuous tense at all. In the Greek, however, this word here, 'be filled', is literally 'be being filled'. In other words, it is not a command that we be filled once-for-all or even occasionally, but that we be filled continually. It is not a static experience. The figure the Lord Jesus uses of the fullness of the Spirit in John 4 is of a spring of water leaping up in us. 'The water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up unto eternal life' (v. 14, R.S.V.). There is nothing very static about that!

The fact that we are to go on being filled with the Spirit is of tremendous importance, and I would beg the reader to give special attention to this point. Unless we go on being filled with the Spirit, the great initial experience by which we may have begun will become but a memory of the past, while in the present we are empty, defeated and dry. Indeed it is a sad and rather depressing thing to hear a man tell of a past filling, if he cannot tell you of a present one too. The fact of his silence about the present is often an indication that nothing is happening in the present. Indeed I had better be silent about my testimony of what happened further back in the past, if I have not a testimony of His fullness right now in the present.

The honest fact is that sometimes nothing is happening in the present with us, in spite of all our experience in the past. The blessing is ours today as we continue in His light today. But one refusal of the light, one refusal to accept conviction at any point, however small, will block the flow of the Spirit. But the command, 'be filled', that came to us yesterday comes to us again today in our present condition; and the Blood that cleansed us yesterday will cleanse us today, if we will repent today, and the Lord Jesus who filled our cups to overflowing yesterday will do the same today. Our need for a continuous filling with the

Spirit is matched by the continuous cleansing from sin which the Blood of Christ imparts. Indeed 1 John 1. 7 has another of these hidden present continuous tenses. It should read, 'If we walk in the light, as he is in the light ... the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son goes on cleansing us from all sin.' This continuous cleansing is, however, not automatic; it only goes on cleansing as we go on walking in the light, that is, go on saying 'yes' to what that light reveals, which in turn means go on repenting.

A lady missionary from East Africa told me how she was greeted once by one of the African Christian leaders who asked her, 'Are you praising the Lord this morning, sister?'

'If you want to know the truth I'm not,' she replied, 'not this morning.'

'Why is that?' he asked.

After a moment's hesitation she replied softly, 'I lost my temper in my bungalow this morning.'

All he answered was, 'Has the Blood of Jesus lost its power?' and quietly passed on. That was just the message she needed. She saw it had indeed not lost its power and it was not long before she had come to the Lord in repentance and been cleansed and filled afresh, with a consequent new testimony of praise to Him.

Even the most outstanding initial experience of being filled with the Spirit can only be maintained by a constant readiness to be cleansed in the Blood of Christ from the smallest things as they come. Without such continuous cleansing and continuous fullness, the great initial experience will become little more than a sad memory, which only accuses us of our present emptiness and coldness. Indeed a conspicuous experience in the past has sometimes proved to be a life-long liability to a man, for he is always haunted by the memory of that experience which in spite of his struggles, he cannot regain. But if we are willing to 'walk in the light, as He is in the light', saying yes quickly to all that light reveals as sin, the Blood of Jesus will keep on cleansing us from all sin, grace will restore what sin has taken away and our experience of the Spirit's fullness will be fresh and up-to-date.

All this has many important implications-one of them being in the matter of fellowship. The fact that some Christians have had an experience of the gifts of the Spirit (speaking in tongues, healing and the like) and some have not, has sometimes imposed a strain on their fellowship one with another. The fact that a man has had an experience of the gifts of the Spirit will not of itself prevent sin coming into his heart, and once it has come, no harking back to those past experiences or endeavouring to gain new ones will restore peace. For that he must come to the Cross of the Lord Jesus as a sinner, as empty as if he had never had any great experiences. Nothing but the Blood of Jesus can wash away his stain and make him whole again. There he will meet others who have likewise found the inability of their respective doctrinal backgrounds to help them in their time of need and who are repenting at the Cross. There is not a thing to choose between the whole lot of them! They are just a bunch of sinners, but sinners who are finding for that very reason the middle walls of partition between them broken down and themselves having fellowship with one another. If we were only willing to live more on the basis of a 'now' relationship with God, we would find the fancied ground of our superiority to one another crumbling beneath our feet. In the 'now' we would have to confess sometimes that things had gone wrong with us, and in the 'now' would have to find our way to the feet of Jesus for restoration. There we would find ourselves drawn in love to others who were being equally honest.

No harking back to past experiences, then, can take the place of this honest dealing with God in the present. But this dealing with God is not all repentance, it is faith too. And faith, as someone has said, is not asking for what we have not got, but making use of what God says we have. It is our response simply to God's Word. The Word comes to us and faith believes and says, 'Thank You, Lord'. But the Word has got to come to us, or else faith is merely an effort of our own. To illustrate I may quote my experience in writing this book. As I was at work on the earlier part my mind seemed dull and lifeless and my heart uninspired. I said to myself, 'If ever there was a time when I did not feel filled with the Spirit, it is now. And yet I am trying to write about it.' In that condition I was tempted to strive in prayer and ask God desperately for what I felt I did not have. But mercifully I just had not the strength to do any such agonising. Along that line I felt defeated before I began. I felt too that to go hunting round in my heart for something to repent of would also be mere self effort. At an end of myself, I could only tell the Lord my condition. That morning in my reading, God's Word came to me; it was the first text in Daily Light for December 2nd. 'Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things' (1 John 2. 20). God said I had it. As I turned to my Bible and read further, I saw that the passage referred to went on to say, 'And as for you, the anointing which ye received of him abideth in you' (v. 27, R.V.). I saw that He said that the anointing I had received of Him, abides, or to use another word, remains, and does not change. It was God who said I had this and it did not change. I did not have to think it up, it was God's given word to me in my needy condition. How safe, then, to turn from my feelings or lack of them, to receive the Word and say, 'Thank you, Lord!' And how quickly new life, enlargement of heart and help came to me from the Holy Spirit. I saw again the truth that faith is not asking for what we have not got but making use of what God says we have.

I give it as my experience that I have never come out of coldness and deadness except by faith. For even where repentance seems to be the dominant act, there yet has to be faith. Never has deliverance come by some longed-for climactic experience suddenly hitting me. There has certainly been the longing for some such experience and the praying for it. But the feebleness of my desires and of my praying has made me despair and give up ere I had begun. Then came His word, declaring some blessed fact of grace, then faith believing it to be true, followed by God's performance of that which was declared and promised, so that one could say at the end, 'He hath both spoken unto me, and himself hath done it' (Isa. 38. 15). Experiences, there have been, plenty of them, but invariably following faith.

In the light of all these rich provisions of His grace, do we not hear Him say to us

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