

What Does It Mean To Be Filled With The Holy Spirit?

Rich Nathan

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God's Empowering Presence

1 Corinthians 12:13

For those of you who weren't here this past week, we had a worship conference at the church for the entire week. About 1100 were registered for that conference and it was just a marvelous time. I do not recall when I have enjoyed the presence of God so thoroughly as this past week. The worship was extraordinary, but not because of the musical quality, although the musical quality was very good. The real blessing of the week was the presence of God. He was very evident and I felt personally touched by God in a way that I haven't experienced for quite a long time. I don't know that I am particularly bad at receiving the presence of God, or particularly good. I have had a lot of dramatic experiences in my life with God, but they tend to be spaced for me. And it has been quite a number of months since I have really personally felt a strong touch by God. But that happened again several times this week and I am always grateful for God's presence when it comes to me. And, of course, I saw the presence of the Lord dramatically touching many others.

Now, I began a series several weeks ago on the Holy Spirit. When I began the series I said that I think that many Christians are only doctrinally Trinitarian. By that I mean that many Christians, because they grew up in the church or someone taught them the Apostles Creed or the Nicene Creed or they have been taught basic Christian doctrine, understand that the Christian name for God is Trinity. To be a Christian means that you believe God is a Trinity, one God subsisting in three persons—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We believe in God the Father; God the Son; and God the Holy Spirit.

And you cannot be a Christian without believing that God is a Trinity. This is the most fundamental thing you can say about God. There is nothing more basic than you understand God in three persons, blessed Trinity.

Well, it seems to me that many Christians are only doctrinally Trinitarian; they have an almost non-existent relationship with the Holy Spirit. The average Christian, I believe, and some of you have been in or are currently in this category, the average Christian could not answer the question, "What is the nature of your relationship to the Holy Spirit?"

The Holy Spirit is a gray blur, so vague in people's minds that they would respond blankly. They would respond, "I don't know. I didn't know I was supposed to have a relationship with the Holy Spirit."

As I recounted a couple of weeks ago, I heard recently of a young man who stormed out of a Christian Fellowship meeting because he said, "You guys talk too much about the Holy Spirit. I am going to find a Christian group that doesn't speak about the Holy Spirit at all."

Now, while it is possible to find such groups, and unfortunately many such groups abound, they ought not properly bear the name Christian because to be a Christian means to be fully Trinitarian and to have a full relationship with God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Now, if you've been here at Vineyard for any length of time, you've heard me say that one of the goals of the Christian life is Christlikeness – to live our lives like Jesus; to do the works of Jesus and to have the character of Jesus; to serve in inconvenience like Jesus did; to respond to difficulty the way Jesus did; to heal the sick the way Jesus did. But of course the question is how do you take people like us and make us kind, loving and gracious, not angry all the time? How do you take people like us and cause us to be able to lay our hands on someone and heal them? I can't do that, but Jesus can, and the secret to living the Christian life is to be filled with the Spirit of Jesus.

What I want to do is tackle one of the really important subjects and, in fact, one of the really controversial subjects in the Christian world: the filling with the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of Jesus. What I want to do is attempt to answer the question: What does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit?

This is a hot topic. You can really generate in the Christian world a tremendous amount of heat, in fact, there is often more heat than light on this subject. It is a highly controversial subject in the Christian world; it is also essential that we understand it. What does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit?

What I would like to do is begin with the story of a woman named Agnes Ozman, who was attending a Bible college in Topeka, Kansas named Bethel Bible College – a Bible College led by a former Methodist pastor named Charles Parham. Now, Charles Parham was an interesting guy. He was moving in a variety of different Christian circles that were prominent during the 1890's. Many of these Christian circles in the 1890's were teaching that the Lord's return was very near, but it was going to be preceded by a mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit's mighty outpouring would be like the outpouring that occurred on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2, the beginning of the Christian church.

Parham began to preach these views of a worldwide revival and a mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit. In any case, he started this Bible College in the summer of the year 1900 and began to teach his students to expect the Holy Spirit to come. The sign that the Holy Spirit had come and been poured out upon them would be that they would all speak in other tongues; in a language that they had never learned but that would be given spontaneously by the Holy Spirit. Parham believed this would turn Christians into instant missionaries, like in Acts 2. So Parham formulated classical Pentecostal theology – baptism in Spirit as a second experience, with speaking in tongues as the sign.

Well, the students studied Parham's views and believed what he said. One of his students was Agnes Ozman. Agnes stayed in Topeka over the Christmas break with some friends and they decided that they were going to fast over Christmas and pray that the Holy Spirit would come and baptize them and that they might receive the gift of tongues. They spent several days in fasting and prayer. At 12:01 a.m. on January 1, 1901 the first minute of the first day of the first year of the 20th century, Agnes Ozman felt the Holy Spirit poured out over her body and she began spontaneously speaking in tongues. This century was started by this fresh new experience of the Holy Spirit in a most obscure place—Topeka, Kansas and an unknown woman.

Agnes Ozman's experience was talked about at the school and, then, many other students began to get the same experience over the next several days. Charles Parham, himself, had that experience and began preaching about it. He eventually set up a Bible training program in Houston, Texas where an African-American man came, a man named William Seymour attended. This is now 1905. William Seymour came to

Parham's training institute. At the time, southern racial laws did not permit the mixing of races. William Seymour had to sit outside the class and listen to Charles Parham's teaching on the baptism with the Holy Spirit accompanied by speaking in tongues.

William Seymour believed the message, although he, himself, did not have any experience, but he believed it and began to teach it. About six months later, he felt himself inundated and drenched with the Spirit and he began speaking in tongues. Seymour took this message out to Los Angeles and started a series of meetings on a street corner called Azuza Street in Los Angeles when the little house he was meeting in became too full. And the Azuza Street Revival of 1906 that lasted until 1908 gave birth to what is known as the Pentecostal movement, the charismatic movement and the movement that we are a part of that we are involved with which is sometimes called Third Wave. I call it the Empowered Evangelical movement. All told, the Pentecostal, Charismatic and Empowered Evangelical wing of the church includes about 400 million Christians.

One quarter of all Christians and the vast majority of Protestant Christians are now identified with the Pentecostal/charismatic or Vineyard-kind of church worldwide. 400 million Christians. And all of this began with one woman, she was about 30, one woman in an obscure place in Nowhere, Kansas, having this experience with the Holy Spirit accompanied by speaking in tongues on the first minute of the first day of the 20th century. And then God marked the 20th century by a fresh outpouring of the Spirit.

So, what is the problem? Why should there be any controversy around this? Why isn't everyone just thrilled and saying, "Well, if Agnes and 400 millions of her friends had this wonderful experience with God, we want it to"? Why has Agnes Ozman's experience and many of the Pentecostal and charismatic experiences been such a subject of debate and discussion?

Well, one of the problems was in how these early Pentecostals explained their experience. Do you understand that you always need to draw a distinction between an experience and the explanation for that experience? An experience may be valid and from God and, yet, the explanation for that experience, the reflection upon it, the theologizing of it, the attempt to root that experience in a verse of scripture or a doctrine may be faulty. Many people don't know that you need to draw a sharp line between an experience and the explanation for that experience.

So folks listening to a faulty explanation for an experience, especially in the conservative evangelical portion of the church, folks listen to a biblically faulty explanation of an experience and they immediately conclude, "Ah, that experience could not be from God. That must be an experience sent to you by the devil." Or "That experience is simply your emotions and subjectivity because you have not correctly labeled your experience."

Friends, let me give you a very important nugget of truth. One can have a valid experience with God and, yet, give that experience an invalid explanation. The fact that their explanation is faulty does not mean that their experience was faulty. My approach to people's experiences is to generally not question the experience unless the experience took place in an occult setting and was obviously attended by some demonic kind of ritual. If someone tells me they were seeking God and were looking to Christ and then they had this dramatic experience where a number of things happened to them, their body, their emotions, their feelings, and as a result of that experience they now feel more free to worship, or they love their husband more, or they have become more bold in their evangelism, I do not ever question the validity of their experience for

two reasons: Number one, I found very early on in my Christian life that you could not talk someone out of an experience. It is absolutely fruitless to challenge someone's experience because you can't talk them out of it.

But, number two, who am I, who are you to become the judge of experiences? What gives us the right or the authority or the vantage point to challenge someone else's experiences? How do we know what God will do with another person or what God has determined as another human being's needs?

What we can challenge and what is appropriate for discussion are the explanations for an experience. People's reflections upon their experiences often betray faulty theology, a bad reading of scripture. What people tend to do is to have an experience and then looking back on it as it were through a rear-view mirror, they look back into the Bible and work their theology not from the Bible toward their experience, but their experience toward the Bible. Kind of like what people do with end time prophecy. Look, Saddam Hussein is a dictator in Babylon, we must be living in the Revelation 14 last days, and Mikhail Gorbachev must be the Antichrist because he has a big red spot on his head. It is appropriate for us to challenge that method and to say, "I think there is a better biblical explanation for your experience."

All of this is to say that just because someone has a faulty explanation doesn't mean they had a faulty experience. And even if you can poke holes in the way that someone reasons out what happened to them, doesn't mean that you have poked holes in what God has actually done in their lives.

What was Charles Parham's explanation for what happened in the life of his student, Agnes Ozman, what happened then in his own life and then what happened in William Seymour's life and the whole birth of the Pentecostal movement? What was Charles Parham's explanation?

Charles Parham said that what was going on was what he called the baptism in the Holy Spirit, a second experience after salvation always marked by speaking in tongues. He called what happened to Agnes Ozman, who was clearly a Christian, he called it the baptism in or the baptism with the Holy Spirit. And it is because of that explanation that we have been fighting and debating in the Christian church for almost 100 years now.

Where did Charles Parham get his view that the experience that Agnes Ozman had ought properly be labeled "baptism in the Holy Spirit" and that it is always a second experience accompanied by speaking in tongues? Well, if I can reconstruct the argument, there are a number of bases for this opinion, but here is the basic outline, if I can reconstruct it for you.

If you have a Bible, open it to John 20:21. It is one of Jesus' post resurrection appearances where he walked into the room, apparently through the wall. I have always taken it to be that the writer here is implying that the door is locked and Jesus didn't need the door. He didn't come through the window. He apparently had a different body than he did in his pre-resurrection existence. And he seems to have walked through the wall. He comes in the midst of the disciples and it says in John 20:21,

"Again Jesus said, 'Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.' And with that he breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'"

Here is the first concept in the traditional Pentecostal understanding. The disciples received the Holy Spirit in John 20:21 and became Christians, regenerated by

the Spirit. But then, if we flip over the Acts 1:4, we see Jesus speaking to the disciples right before Jesus ascended into heaven and it says this:

“On one occasion while he was eating with them, he gave this command, ‘Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’”

And then in verse 8, we read:

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.”

And finally, in Acts 2 the Holy Spirit does come on the day of Pentecost. It says in Acts 2:4,

“All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues.”

Here is the argument, friends. The disciples received the Holy Spirit in John 20—that would be their salvation experience. But then Jesus clearly says you need to wait in Jerusalem to be baptized with [or in] the Holy Spirit and that experience occurred on the Day of Pentecost. Therefore, baptism with or in the Spirit is a clear second experience. If you look at Acts 2, it was accompanied by speaking in tongues. That is the basic outline of the argument.

Now, a Pentecostal might point to a few other occurrences in the book of Acts where we seem to have a two stage event, but it is modeled most clearly here with the disciples. How do you explain this? Is baptism in the Spirit the appropriate label, the appropriate explanation for these experiences like Agnes Ozman had and Charles Parham and 400 million other Christians have had? Or do we have here an example of a valid experience with a faulty explanation?

I believe that what we are seeing in the Pentecostal and charismatic worlds with these dramatic touches by the Holy Spirit is an example of valid Holy Spirit experiences with faulty explanations. Let me explain why real simply.

Again, if you have a Bible, let's look at 1 Corinthians 12:13,

Paul writes, “We were all baptized by one Spirit into one body whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free, and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.”

Paul is clearly saying in this text that this baptism that is often explained as a second experience after salvation given to some people in the Agnes Ozman, Charles Parham, William Seymour theology, this baptism is something we all share in. It is quite clear from 1 Corinthians 12:13 that baptism in the Spirit is part and parcel of being a Christian. There is no Christian in Corinth that didn't share in this baptism. This baptism is what makes one a Christian.

Well, a few of you might say, “Rich, I used to attend a Pentecostal church and they said that there is a difference in being baptized in the Holy Spirit that Jesus promised in Acts 1 and being baptized by the Holy Spirit that Paul speaks about in 1 Corinthians 12:13. I admit to you that 1 Corinthians 12:13 looks like a universal experience. Paul, in no way, suggests that this is a second blessing that would come after salvation. I admit that 1 Corinthians 12:13 does not look like a two-stage event, “But Rich, I was taught that baptism in the Spirit is different than baptism by the Spirit.”

Friends, I want to tell you, this is a very popular teaching in the Pentecostal/charismatic churches in order to stay with the idea of a second experience after salvation called baptism in the Spirit. The teaching is that when you are baptized in the Spirit, Jesus is the baptizer and the element in which you are baptized into is the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, when you are baptized by the Spirit, the Holy Spirit is

the baptizer and the element, well there are different ideas of what you are baptized into, but it could be that you are baptized into the body of Christ. "By one Spirit, we are all baptized into one body."

Is there a difference between being baptized in the Spirit as in the book of Acts, and being baptized here in 1 Corinthians by the Spirit? Well, you know we might be able to argue for a distinction except there is this one little problem. The distinction only exists in English translations of the Bible. Most of you know that the New Testament was not originally written in English. It was written in Greek. And in Greek the same exact words are used in 1 Corinthians 12:13 as are used in the book of Acts and in the gospels. The same Greek preposition "en" is used in all cases.

What I am saying is, friends, unfortunately, Pentecostals in an effort to bolster this two-stage theology, have built a case on a difference in English between 1 Corinthians 12:13 and the book of Acts that does not exist in the Greek New Testament. The distinction collapses when you read it in the Greek. Paul is actually saying, "In one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, both Jews and Greeks, slaves and free, and all were made to drink of one Spirit."

What is the conclusion? The conclusion from 1 Corinthians 12:13 is baptism in the Spirit is something shared by all Christians. Jesus is the baptizer and we are plunged into the Holy Spirit.

"How do you explain the John 20 text, Rich, and the idea that the disciples received the Spirit then and in Acts 1 were promised the Spirit later on?"

Well, the way that I would explain it is with a two-fold explanation. Number one: I personally believe that John 20 was a prophetic action. That Jesus was acting out, as it were, a drama that they were going to receive the Spirit. Just like the Old Testament prophets, he was saying, "I am the baptizer in the Spirit" and then they received the Spirit later on.

But secondly, we must understand that in some fashion, the disciples in the gospels in the book of Acts were in a transition period. That they were saved is unmistakable. They were through the gospels because they were followers of Christ and recognized him to be the Christ and it is apparent to me that they were very much saved even before the Day of Pentecost. But I see them in this transitional period being akin to an Old Testament believer who has the Holy Spirit in some measure and has some degree of faith, but doesn't have the full measure of the Spirit promised to new covenant believers. They received that full measure of Spirit on the Day of Pentecost.

We do not live in a transition between the old and the new covenant. We are new covenant believers. And so when we are saved, we receive the Holy Spirit and that reception of the Holy Spirit can properly be labeled "baptism in the Holy Spirit."

"Rich, why is the label thing such a big deal to you?"

Well, you know, I think that it ought to be a big deal for this reason. My real concern with Pentecostal/charismatic two-stage teaching is that it draws a distinction between some Christians and other Christians in the church. Some have been baptized in the Spirit and so they ride first class to Heaven, and some have not been baptized in the Spirit and so they travel to Heaven but they travel in coach or in baggage. And to that extent, what the Pentecostals are doing is very much like what Christians have done throughout the ages. Carve up the body of Christ into various classes of Christians some of whom are, in a certain sense, better than others. The old medieval church used to separate out from among the world of Christians the priest and the saints from the ordinary Christian. In the 19th century, the separation was between the

ordinary Christian and the entirely sanctified and holy Christian. In the 20th century, the distinction grew to the ordinary Christian and the true disciple. The ordinary Christian simply received Jesus as Savior. The true disciple received him as Lord. And then we have the Pentecostal movement saying that we have the ordinary Christian and then we have the Spirit-filled or Spirit-baptized Christian.

I believe none of these distinctions can be sustained in the New Testament. The New Testament knows of only one distinction: the distinction between a non-Christian, who has not yet turned to Christ for salvation and the Christian who has turned to Christ for salvation. There is only one gulf in the New Testament: the gulf between being in Christ and not being in Christ. There are only two roads: the wide road and the narrow road; not three roads—the wide road, the narrow road and the narrower road. There are two destinies: heaven and hell; two gates. You are either a follower of Christ or you are not.

I really have a problem with the distinction drawn in the body and the use of labels like “Spirit-filled” to mark out this super class of Christian, this unusual type of person who rises above the ordinary Christian. And I think the language of baptism in the Spirit is particularly not adept at explaining what happens to Christians who have an experience with the Holy Spirit.

Now, it is a funny thing, but those who would draw distinctions in the body between ordinary Christians they are associated with often think of themselves as being “spiritual” and I put that in quotes. The rest of the Christians are carnal, they are worldly and have less of the Spirit than the spiritual ones. In fact, in New Testament terms, the person who draws distinctions between some Christians and others, we are “Spirit-filled” and those folks over there are not “Spirit-filled”, we are baptized in the Spirit and those over there are not baptized in the Holy Spirit, they are just ordinary, fleshly, carnal Christians are misusing New Testament language. The New Testament says, “The one who makes the distinction between some Christians and others is the worldly, carnal one.” 1 Corinthians 3 says this: “Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual, but worldly mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food for you are not ready. Indeed, you are still not ready, you are still worldly.”

Why is a Christian labeled worldly or carnal? Because they have not had this experience of baptism in the Spirit? No. Because there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not acting like mere men? When one says “I follow Paul” and another “I follow Apollos” are you not mere men? They are worldly because they are drawing distinctions and carving up the body of Christ.

I would strongly encourage you, friends, to get rid of labels as much as you can in terms of your view of the body of Christ. Someone is either a Christian or not a Christian. Drop the lingo of “spirit-filled” or “baptized in or with the Spirit”. That kind of distinction in the body is carnal, it is not spiritual.

Having said all of that regarding faulty explanations, let me remind you of my basic principle: I believe that people have valid experiences and faulty theologizing and reasoning about it. And having shot at the Pentecostal/charismatic explanation, may I shoot in the other direction for a moment at conservative evangelicals?

I stand right in the center of these two streams, Vineyard does, and so I guess I am shooting at myself in both directions. But you know, if Pentecostals can be charged with faulty explanations, conservative evangelicals can be charged with faulty experiences. One writer about 20 years ago said, “Conservative evangelicals attack charismatics because the medicine bottles that charismatics use are labeled in a faulty

way.” And, of course, if you have falsely labeled medicine bottles, they could hurt you or even kill you. I have tried to describe the hurt that can be caused by a falsely labeled medicine bottle. You can divide the body and it can produce hurt to people who find themselves riding always second class where some of us ride first class on our cruise ship to heaven.

But on the other hand, he said, conservative evangelicals may have properly labeled medicine bottles, but they are empty. Thousands of words are on the labels of conservative evangelicals, but the medicine bottles are empty. Oooh, that stings. But it is true. Many conservative evangelicals can tell you what the baptism in the Spirit is, but they have had no experience with the Holy Spirit. And many conservative evangelicals have theologized about their non experiences and passed it off as if no experience with God, no feeling of God, no touch by God is a normal thing in the Christian life.

In a moment, I am going to demonstrate in my conclusion that there is nothing more abnormal than a Christian not being touched, not feeling, not experiencing the Holy Spirit. There is nothing more abnormal, from a biblical perspective, than a Christian not experiencing the touch of God from time to time in their life.

You know, some conservative evangelicals have tried to straddle the fence and have said, “Well, we believe in the filling of the Holy Spirit. We just don’t think there is an experience accompanied with it necessarily.”

I don’t know how many of you have had occasion to read one of those little booklets published by Campus Crusade for Christ. The booklet is titled “Have You Been Filled With the Holy Spirit?” We used to call it “the little dove book” because it has a little dove on it and it teaches you how to be filled with the Spirit. It says the way to be filled with the Spirit is to pray to be filled and to repent of all known sin and to ask God who promises to give us the Holy Spirit, and then it makes this point: it says, “And then having asked God, thank him for filling you with the Spirit.” Don’t wait for any experience. Don’t expect that you are going to have one of these dramatic Agnes Ozman plunging into the Spirit, this drenching with the Spirit, you just having read the promise that if anyone asks God for the Spirit, they will get him, you just stand on that promise and believe that God has filled you with the Spirit whether you can feel anything or not.

Conservative evangelicals often accuse Pentecostals and charismatics of “name it and claim it” theology. I just declare that I am healed and stand on that whether I am healed or not. Conservative evangelicals laugh at that and say, “Ha! That is so silly. You are obviously not healed. Why would you claim you are healed?” But if there has ever been a name and claim it theology, it is this idea that having asked God to fill us with the Spirit, we claim that we are filled with the Spirit whether we experience anything or not.

Friends, the Pentecostals have it head and shoulders above conservative evangelicals when they say, “Wait a minute. There are these dramatic touches by God, these dramatic experiences with God, that you just don’t take by faith, you feel. And maybe we have labeled it wrong. But we know there is medicine to be had in those bottles. We’ve tested the medicine, we’ve been healed. We know that there is something that God does that drenches a person that changes a person. We know that we are different because we have had one of these dramatic experiences and we want to urge other Christians to seek God for such experiences.

Maybe we have labeled them wrong. Maybe they ought not properly be called “baptism in the Holy Spirit” but there is something beyond just taking it by faith. Nowhere in the Bible does one take the filling of the Spirit by faith. Nowhere do you read someone simply saying, “Well, I felt nothing. I have experienced nothing. No sense of God whatever, but I am just taking it by faith that I am filled the Spirit and I am going to walk along as though I am.” That is just auto suggestion. That is just you talking to yourself. There doesn’t need to be any interaction with God for that to happen.

Friends, throughout history and the history of the church and in the Bible, people have had dramatic experiences with the Holy Spirit. I would suggest to you that this is normal Christianity to have occasions, not every day, maybe not every month, but occasions when the heavens burst upon you and you are thoroughly drenched with the Holy Spirit.

Do you know that you cannot point to a great evangelical preacher or evangelist in the last several centuries who has not had one or two or more dramatic experiences with the Holy Spirit? I am not talking about Pentecostals now. I am not talking about charismatics now. I am talking about solid, card-carrying conservative evangelicals. Read your history. Every one of the successful evangelists and preachers had one of these experiences in the last several centuries.

Let me read to you a few of their experiences to bolster your faith that we, in the Vineyard, stand in a long line of witnesses to the dramatic touch that you ought to expect to receive from God in your relationship with God. Here is an experience that Charles Finney writes about. Charles Finney was the great evangelist and later founder of Oberlin College. He explained his experience using charismatic language. He called it a baptism in the Holy Spirit, whatever the explanation.

He said, “I received a mighty baptism of the Holy Ghost. Without any recollection that I have ever heard of the thing mentioned by any person in the world, the Holy Spirit descended upon me in a manner that seemed to go through me body and soul. Indeed, it seemed to come in waves and waves of liquid love.” He described his experience as “waves and waves of liquid love.” I love that language. “It seemed like the very breath of God. It seemed to fan me like immense wings. I wept aloud with joy and love and I do not know, but I should have literally bellowed out with unutterable gushings of my heart. These waves came over me and over me one after another until I recollect I cried out, ‘I shall die if these waves continue to pass over me,’ yet I had no fear of death.”

This is a common thing for someone to be so inundated, so touched, so filled with the Holy Spirit that they cry out to God, “Stop it or I am going to die!”

D.L. Moody, who was the greatest evangelist of the 19th century, the greatest evangelist since the apostle Paul except for Billy Graham in our century using modern media, modern organizational techniques, but no one in history up until the time of Billy Graham led more people to Christ than D.L. Moody. The founder of Moody Bible College, a dispensationalist school, listen to what Moody says happened to him:

“I began to cry as never before for a greater blessing from God. The hunger increased and I really felt that I did not want to live any longer. I kept on crying all the time that God would fill me with his Holy Spirit. Well, one day in the city of New York, oh what a day, I cannot describe it. I seldom refer to it. It is almost too sacred an experience to name. Paul had an experience of which he never spoke for fourteen

years, I can only say that God revealed himself to me and I had such an experience of his love and presence that I had to ask him to stay his hand.”

He was so overwhelmed that he felt that he was going to be physically crushed. And this experience propelled him forward to be used as an evangelist in several different continents.

I can read to you a similar experience in the life of Jonathan Edwards, the greatest American theologian who ever lived. I could read to you an experience in the life of Billy Graham that Billy Graham said changed his ministry forever, when he felt himself inundated by the Holy Spirit some time after he was saved. Good men, godly men all have testified in Christian history to dramatic experiences with the Spirit after they were saved.

By the way, I want to tell you as just a personal note, that I have personally had a number of these kinds of experiences in my own life. I am speaking to you today as a witness to events that have happened to me. I am not just talking out of history or even just out of what the Bible teaches, but I have never found or felt. I am talking to you out of history and out of the scripture, but also out of personal discovery and experience of what history and the Bible testify to. I have personally experienced the Holy Spirit on a number of occasions in a dramatic way. Well, if you don't call these experiences after conversion “baptism in the Spirit” then what would you call them?

What would I label these experiences? Well, I would use Bible language for the experiences of the Spirit after someone is converted. One way to describe what is happening to people when the Holy Spirit comes to touch them in a dramatic way is to say that the Holy Spirit came upon them. Look at Acts 10:44, “While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all those who heard the message.”

And then look over at Acts 11:15, “As I began to speak the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning.”

Look back at Acts 1 and Jesus’ promise in Acts 1:8, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you.”

You know, we in the Vineyard have become accustomed to saying, “Come, Holy Spirit.” Many people have come up and questioned us and said, “How can you ask the Holy Spirit to come when the Holy Spirit is omnipresent?”

The Bible has no problem using that language of “come upon” or suggesting that the Holy Spirit could come in a way that he wasn’t there before. Jesus certainly knew in Acts 1:8 that the Holy Spirit was omnipresent. But he is talking about a difference between his general, universal presence and his dynamic felt presence. There is a difference between the omnipresence, the all pervading presence of the Holy Spirit and a felt-experience, powerful presence. I find it interesting that the Bible describes it as the coming of the Spirit.

So we can say that what happened to Agnes Ozman and her friends is that the Holy Spirit came upon them. We could say that what happened to these folks is that the Holy Spirit was poured out on them. As Peter says in Acts 10:45, “All the circumcised believers who had come with Peter were amazed because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also.”

And in Acts 2 Peter talks about the experience that he had using the concept of outpouring. Acts 2:16-18 Peter says, “This is what was spoken of by the prophet Joel and in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh and your sons and daughters will prophesy and your young men shall see visions and your old men shall dream dreams.”

I think it is appropriate to say that what happens when someone is touched in a dramatic way by the Holy Spirit is that the Holy Spirit has been poured out upon them. That is good language. It is good Bible language. And it will work. We see coming upon by the Holy Spirit. Another one is the Holy Spirit fell upon someone. The reason I like that language is because it describes the suddenness of one of these events, the forcefulness of one of these events. A person may or may not be searching for or seeking out this experience and yet suddenly the Holy Spirit falls upon them or comes upon them or is poured out on them. It is all good language and it will work.

But you know, the most frequently used term for one of these dramatic events is the filling with the Holy Spirit. I think the best way to describe a Holy Spirit experience after someone gets saved is to say about that person is that they are filled with the Holy Spirit. Not as a concept—they are not claiming it by faith even though they felt nothing. But these dramatic experiences are best described by the language of filling.

In Acts 2:4 it says that the disciples at Pentecost were all filled with the Holy Spirit. Before the disciples were filled, the house was filled. The sound from heaven came like a rush, a mighty wind and filled the house where they were sitting. The filling of the house signifies this dramatic presence of God in a very intense way in the meeting place. Sometimes you can feel that happen. You are worshiping God and there seems to be a filling of the room with the presence of God. And then suddenly, one by one, people themselves are filled.

You see this language of filling with the story of Saul of Tarsus. Three days after Saul's encounter with the glorified Jesus, Ananias went to the blinded Saul and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus that appeared to you has sent me to you that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." Acts 9:17. And then in Acts 13:52 there is an account of disciples filled with joy and the Holy Spirit.

Then you see in Acts 4:8 that when Peter was standing up in front of the Sanhedrin, it says he was filled with the Holy Spirit and said to them, "Rulers and elders of the people". And perhaps the clearest example of this filling with the Holy Spirit as another experience is Acts 4:30-31. The apostles are gathered together and they are praying. Their prayer is this: "Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your Holy Servant Jesus. [And then here is the key.] After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the Word of God boldly."

I believe that the best explanation for what is happening to Christians after they come to Christ after all these experiences, I believe the best label to tag onto those things are the filling with the Holy Spirit. It is interesting to me that these fillings with the Holy Spirit are not just one time events, like conversions, or a second stage event that happens to a person once and never again. I can demonstrate to you, if I had the time, from the book of Acts that the same people who are filled once with the Spirit are later on filled again and again and again.

Some people say, "How can you be filled when you are already full?" If you are full of the Spirit, isn't it like a glass of water? And once the glass is full, you are full?

I like one writer's suggestion, he says, "No. The filling of the Spirit is not like a glass of water being filled up so you can't hold any more water. The filling of the Spirit is like blowing air into a balloon. The same balloon that has a certain amount of air can expand to have more air. Just because you have had an experience with the Holy Spirit doesn't mean that you don't need a fuller experience with the Holy Spirit. And yet, a still fuller experience with the Holy Spirit. And still more of the Holy Spirit.

Why would I want to be filled with the Spirit and have one of these dramatic encounters? Just so that I can get goose-bumps? Just so that it would feel nice? I could walk around saying, "I just had this wonderful time." Do I want to be filled with the Holy Spirit so that it is just another way for Christians to entertain themselves?

We need to be filled with the Spirit in order to successfully live the Christian life and do the works of Jesus.

Flip back with me to Luke. You say, "Why do I need to be filled with the Spirit, Rich? Why do I need one of these dramatic Agnes Ozman/Charles Finney/D.L. Moody/Apostle Paul/Peter and all these other experiences? Why do I need that?"

Well, I believe you need it for the same reason that Jesus needed it – to live the Christian life successfully and to do the works of Christ successfully. Do you know that Christ is our model for living the Christian life? We are called to imitate him. He is the paradigm. He is the exemplar. He is the model for living the Christian life. We look at him and we say, "Ah, okay, he is the example and I should walk in his steps." When you are making decisions, do you say, "What would Jesus have done if he were in my place?" and then you make your decision. You make your choice.

Jesus chose to live not out of his deity. When he performed his miracles, he did not perform them because he was God. He performed them as empowered by the Holy Spirit, relying on the Spirit in the same way that we would rely on the Spirit. Why do we need to be filled with the Holy Spirit?

Well, because Jesus did and that was the way he lived and did what he did. Look at Luke 4:1. It says, "Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the desert." He was full of the Spirit, verse 1. He was led by the Spirit, verse 1. And then in verse 14 it says, "Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit and news about him spread throughout the whole country."

In verse 18 Jesus said, "The Spirit of the Lord is on me because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the captives and recovery of sight for the blind."

Do you understand that at every point in Jesus' ministry, we see the activity of the Holy Spirit? He is full of the Spirit and is led by the Spirit. He is empowered by the Spirit. The Spirit of the Lord is on him, anointing him. Jesus' last name, "Christ", means anointed one, the one upon whom the Spirit rests. The scriptures say that before Jesus healed, the power of the Lord came upon him. Luke 5:17.

The way Jesus did deliverances was because he was filled with the Spirit. In Matthew 12:28, "If it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you." He exercised the ministry of deliverance by none other than the Holy Spirit and his filling and empowering.

Why do you need to be filled with the Spirit? Because you cannot live the Christian life well or do the works of Jesus without the Spirit's filling. Friends, you need to be drenched with and inundated by, you need to be totally immersed in and you need to have the Holy Spirit fall on you, come on you and be poured out upon you and completely fill up your inner being.