

# **THE TRANSFORMING POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

## **Ted Schroder, Day of Pentecost, May 23, 2010**

“All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 2:4) The disciples were transformed from a motley bunch of second-rate hangers-on into powerful witnesses to Jesus Christ and the kingdom of God. From never having ventured out of their Galilean and Judean backyard they fanned out to carry the good news the length and breadth of the known world. Who or what changed them? The filling of the Holy Spirit.

This same Holy Spirit presided over the beginnings of creation. “The Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.” (Genesis 1:2) If God withdrew the action of the Spirit for an instant, the whole complicated structure of the universe would disintegrate and fly apart into a million fragments. It is the Spirit who holds life together.

This same Holy Spirit imparted the breath of life so that man became a living being. (Genesis 2:7) This same Holy Spirit resuscitated the people of God from the living death of exile. (Ezekiel 37)

This same Holy Spirit is present in all the world, and in every experience, and from whom we can never hide. “Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?” (Psalm 139:7)

The same Holy Spirit foretold by the prophets. “I will pour out my Spirit.” (Acts 2:17,18) This same Holy Spirit was promised by Jesus. “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you; and you will be my witnesses.” (Acts 1:8) The disciples felt the sudden shock of being filled with the identical power that had been in Jesus, and was to be continued in them as they followed him.

This same Holy Spirit who brings new, spiritual life, and whom you cannot control. “The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.” (John 3:8)

This same Holy Spirit makes it possible to believe in Jesus, who overcomes doubt. “I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, ‘Jesus be cursed.’ and no one can say, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ except by the Holy Spirit.” (1 Corinthians 12:3)

This same Holy Spirit calls us to be refreshed and renewed by the gift of eternal life. “The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ And let him who hears say, ‘Come!’ Whoever is thirsty let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.” (Revelation 22:17)

What happened to those disciples on that day of Pentecost over two thousand years ago by the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, is a paradigm of what has been happening ever since. God can take a life that is conscious of failure, and emptiness, and dissatisfaction, and shame, and transform it, and make it full, and strong, and vital, and victorious. The enduring power of the Spirit of Christ to transform people, to give meaning and purpose, to overcome addictions and immorality, to redeem lives and make them valuable, is the most compelling evidence of the work of God in every generation, e.g. John Newton: “I once was lost but now am found; was blind but now I see!”

The power of divine life that is active in the world, making life possible, is available to every man and woman to fill them with the life of God as seen in Jesus Christ. We are to regard our bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit. Therefore we are to honor God with our bodies. (1 Cor.6:19,20)

This is the message of the Gospel: “Be filled with the Spirit.” (Ephesians 5:18) Be open to the Spirit of Jesus! Desire to be filled with the Spirit! “So I say, live by the Spirit...the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.” (Galatians 5:16,22,23)

These are the characteristics of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of life, the Spirit of Jesus. If you are filled with the Spirit you will grow in these qualities: you will grow in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. These are the marks of the kingdom of God Jesus came to bring, and which his followers are establishing on earth as it is in heaven.

When you desire to be filled with the Holy Spirit you will grow in love. Incorporate 1 Corinthians 13 into your consciousness and you will find yourself able to love your neighbor, to love one another, as Christ loves you.

When you desire to be filled with the Holy Spirit you will grow in joy. Every day will be an opportunity for you to enjoy God’s grace, God’s blessings, God’s opportunities to serve him through serving others, even when life is hard and suffering is experienced. Life is given to us to enjoy and to be thankful for small, as well as great, mercies.

When you desire to be filled with the Holy Spirit you will grow in peace. As you trust in God and his provision for you his peace will calm your soul.

When you desire to be filled with the Holy Spirit you will grow in patience. You will be able to accept that God is in charge, and that your times are in his hands. You will eliminate hurry in your life, and allow yourself to slow down, and appreciate where you are and what you have.

When you desire to be filled with the Holy Spirit you will grow in kindness. You will be kinder to yourself, to those around you, to those who serve you, to those you serve, for you see them as God’s children whom he also loves and cares for, just as much as you.

When you desire to be filled with the Holy Spirit you will grow in goodness. You will fill your thoughts with whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, and whatever is admirable. If anything is excellent and praiseworthy, you will think about those things. You will live in the light and not in the darkness.

When you desire to be filled with the Holy Spirit you will grow in faithfulness. You will keep your word, your promises, your vows. You will be known as a person of integrity, whose character is honorable and worthy of trust. You will have a clear conscience.

When you desire to be filled with the Holy Spirit you will grow in gentleness. You will be tender with those who are weak, those who are poor, those who are ill or disabled. You will not rush to judgment or condemn others out of hand. You will not repay anyone evil for evil, or take revenge. You will forgive and leave vengeance to God. You will overcome evil with good.

When you desire to be filled with the Holy Spirit you will grow in self-control. You will manage your anxieties, your fears, and your anger, in a constructive way. You will be able to put criticism, falsehood, misunderstanding, and cruelty, in its proper perspective. You will be able to accept the reality of evil, consider its source, and be realistic about your expectations.

In what area do you need to grow in the Spirit? Pray for the filling of the Spirit. Pray for the transforming power of the Spirit in your life and the lives of those for whom you pray. Believe in that life-changing power. “Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we...are being transformed into his likeness by the Spirit.” (2 Corinthians 3:18)

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