



Truth Matters

A Publication Discussing Matters Related To Truth Because Truth Matters

Scripture Reading

Week of
February 13th - 19th



Monday

- ❖ Exodus 37, 38
- ❖ Psalm 31
- ❖ Mark 3

Tuesday

- ❖ Exodus 39, 40
- ❖ Psalm 32
- ❖ Mark 4

Wednesday

- ❖ Leviticus 1, 2
- ❖ Psalm 33
- ❖ Mark 5

Thursday

- ❖ Leviticus 3, 4
- ❖ Psalm 34
- ❖ Mark 6

Friday

- ❖ Leviticus 5, 6
- ❖ Psalm 35
- ❖ Mark 7

Saturday

- ❖ Leviticus 7, 8

Sunday

- ❖ Leviticus 9, 10

Being Filled With vs. being Full Of the Holy Spirit

by Philip Bramblet

Pastor Powers recently taught a Sunday School lesson that included some discussion about being filled with the Holy Spirit. Due to his customary verbosity (i.e., he talks a lot), Pastor didn't have much time to get into a full explanation of this biblical term. So I thought I'd take this opportunity to help us think this idea through a little.

The first observation one should make about this idea of being filled with the Spirit is that Luke is the *only* biblical author who uses it (in his Gospel and Acts). This may come as a surprise to some, but it shows that it is uniquely Luke's way

of describing an operation of the Spirit. Matthew, Mark, and John never mention it. Peter, James, Jude, and the author of Hebrews never use this phrase. Neither does Paul.

Wait a minute! What about Ephesians 5:18, where Paul says, "Don't be drunk with wine, in which is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit?" Good question. The fact is, Paul uses a different Greek construction here than Luke uses in his writings. The way this verse is translated in most translations is misleading, in my opinion. Paul is not saying here that we should be

filled with the Holy Spirit as the *content* of the filling (as Luke describes); rather, he is saying that we should be filled with the Holy Spirit being the *means* of the filling. A precise translation would read, "be filled by means of the Spirit." So Paul is talking about being filled *by* the Spirit, not *with* the Spirit, which are two different things. So back to Luke.

The real key to gaining some insight into this phrase is in observation number two, which is that

... continued on page 2

Preaching as Performance

A Possible Inconsistency in Rejecting Entertainment

I am finding a disturbing trend developing in my heart. The trend has to do with an emphasis on preaching. Is it possible to have a misdirected emphasis on preaching in the corporate worship of a congregation? I think so.

Don't get me wrong. Across the evangelical spectrum, there is a glaring dearth of true preaching. My concern is aimed much closer to home. I am addressing a concern that within the walls of sound truth-driven churches, there is a misguided emphasis on preaching. By preaching I mean the public oration of a sermon. By preaching I mean the skill of public address.

In the circle of churches that

I travel, we generally dismiss the so called "church-growth," "seeker-driven" philosophy of ministry. We tend to despise the abandoning of the pulpit for the drama. We tend to loath the mindset that doctrine is irrelevant. (Quite frankly, I believe the seeker-driven crowd has high-jacked the word relevant and morphed it into meaning something a kin to palatable. That is another issue entirely.)

In the circle of churches that I travel, we have a strong, almost, insatiable desire, for hot, strong, passionate preaching. We want speakers who grab our attention and fuel us with a passion for God by their mere oration and public speaking talent. We have people flocking to

the best preachers and filling up their churches by the thousands, all the while justifying it by an apparently just desire for good preaching. That is what raises my concern.



... continued on page 3

Being Filled With vs. being Full Of the Holy Spirit

...Continued from page 1

Luke uses two different words in Greek to describe this filling. You wouldn't know this from your English translation, because both words are translated with the idea of filling. Let's examine all the passages that use these words and compare the two.

The first word Luke uses for the filling of the Spirit is *pimplemi* (pronounced pim-play-me). Here are the passages where Luke uses this word.

Pimplemi¹

♦ Luke 1:15-17a - John the Baptist "will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah."

♦ Luke 1:41-42 - "And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, and she exclaimed with a loud cry, 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!'"

♦ Luke 1:67 - "Now his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied."

♦ Acts 2:4 - "And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began

to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."

♦ Acts 4:8 - "Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them..." Note v. 13 - "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled."

♦ Acts 4:31 - "And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness."

♦ Acts 9:17 - "And laying his hands on him he said, 'Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.'"

♦ Acts 13:9 - "Then . . . Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at [Elymas the sorcerer], and said, ' . . . the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a time.' And immediately a dark mist fell on him, and he went around seeking someone to lead him by the hand."

Now compare the passages where Luke uses the other word for filling, which is *pleres* as an adjective (pronounced play-race), and *pleroo* as a verb (pronounced play-ro-oh).

Pleres/Pleroo²

♦ Luke 4:1-2a - "And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil."

♦ Acts 6:3 - "Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty."

♦ Acts 6:5 - "And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip . . ."

♦ Acts 7:55 - "But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God."

♦ Acts 11:24 - Barnabas "was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith."

♦ Acts 13:52 - "And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit."

STOP RIGHT HERE! Before you read on, go back over these two lists and compare them for yourself. **See chart below.** Do you see some general differences between how Luke uses these two words for filling? Now let me describe the differences I see:

Special Fillings

Based on these observations, it

seems that *pimplemi* describes a special filling of the Spirit. It is a special outpouring of the power of the Holy Spirit. When this filling occurred, great, amazing, and unusual things happened! This filling describes an event when the Holy Spirit worked mightily through someone. This type of filling is not necessarily related to spirituality, however, because it is sovereignly bestowed. We have no record of any prerequisites that had to be met in order to receive this filling, and no one is ever recorded asking for it. The Holy Spirit sovereignly decided to step in and work powerfully through the person's proclamation. When the proclamation is complete, the Spirit's special filling of that person is over (at least until the next time the Spirit decides to do it again).

Normal Fullness

Pleres, on the other hand, is used to describe those who are characterized by a particular quality. Besides being full of the Holy Spirit, the seven deacons were full of wisdom, i.e., they were wise. Stephen and Barnabas were full of faith, or, characterized by faith; faithful. The disciples were filled with joy, i.e., joyful. So when Luke uses this word, he is saying that this person is characterized by the Holy Spirit. In other words, he is spiritual - a mature believer.

... continued on page 3

| Pimplemi | Pleres/Pleroo |
|---|---|
| Used 8 times | Used 6 times |
| Usually a verb (an action) | Usually an adjective (a description) |
| Usually an aorist passive (emphasizing the act itself) | As a verb, an imperfect or present passive (emphasizing a continuous or progressive aspect) |
| Emphasizes filling as an event | Emphasizes filling as an attitude |
| No conditions stated (nothing is implied as prerequisite to this filling) | Implied conditions (only godly believers could be described this way) |
| Sovereignly bestowed (never recorded as being asked for or expected) | Preexisting disposition (describes something the individual already is) |
| Unsought power | Abiding spirituality |
| Repeated act | Progressively more apparent condition |
| Repeated for a new task, not because it was lost due to sin | Indicates Christian maturity, not a repeated action |
| Enablement for a special, specific task - usually effective proclamation | Multi-faceted implications - everything that characterizes a spiritual person |
| Unusual | Intended to be normal |

¹Verb meaning "to fill; to fulfill." Used 24 times in the New Testament, sometimes literal (the disciples' boats were filled with fish - Lk. 5:7), usually figurative (filled with an emotion, such as rage - Lk. 4:28; or amazement - Acts 3:10-11). Used 8 times in connection with the Holy Spirit.

²Pleres is an adjective meaning "full of."

Being Filled With vs. being Full Of the Holy Spirit

...Continued from page 2

If you apply the *pimplemi* idea of being filled with the Spirit to the situation in Acts 6, it doesn't fit. How could the congregation choose seven men full of the Holy Spirit if that filling is a temporary, sovereignly bestowed filling? They might be filled when chosen, but lose the filling the next minute! The process of choosing would have to be repeated every time one of the men lost the filling of the Spirit.

Conversely, try replacing the filling metaphor in the *pimplemi* verses with "characterized by the Spirit" or "spiritual." Again, it doesn't make much sense. But substitute these words in the *pleres* passages and it makes perfect sense. This normal fullness describes an abiding quali-

ty of spirituality. The special fillings describe a sovereign, temporary act of the Spirit for a specific task. These are two different kinds of filling.

General Application

When the difference between these two types of being filled with the Holy Spirit is correctly understood, much confusion is cleared up and the truth is very refreshing. One realizes that being full of the Spirit is not a mysterious plane of spirituality which causes the subject to glow in the dark, become translucent, have intense "spiritual" feelings, or even lead thousands to the Lord. Rather, being full of the Spirit refers to consistent Christian living, or spiritual maturity. When you consistently

choose to yield to the direction of the Spirit by obeying God's Word, rather than choosing to yield to the flesh by disobeying God's Word, you become a person who is characterized by the same qualities that characterize the Holy Spirit. You are spiritual. You are full of the Spirit. This is the kind of filling upon which we should focus our everyday efforts.

What about the special filling? There's no record of prerequisites or prayers asking for it. Does that mean we shouldn't ask for it? Well, would you like to be filled in this special way for powerful proclamation of the gospel? Yes? Is this desire motivated by a longing for God's glory? Yes? Then by all means, go ahead and ask for it, but recognize that it doesn't come through meeting a list of conditions,

neither does God promise it. It comes sovereignly through an act of the Holy Spirit. Everyone who was filled in this way was simply proclaiming the gospel the way they always did. It was the Spirit who decided in which instance to step in and work powerfully. In other words, if you want the special filling of the Spirit that leads to powerful and effective proclamation of the gospel, you have to be in the habit of actually sharing the gospel. If you never evangelize, you'll never be filled in this way. If you do evangelize, then *any instance* could be the time the Spirit chooses to fill you in this special way and act powerfully.

Much of the material for this article came from Pettegrew, Larry D. *The New Covenant Ministry of the Holy Spirit*. New York: University Press of America, 1993. Chapter 8.

Preaching as Performance

...Continued from page 1

I admit up front that this may all sound like the ranting of a jealous preacher who preaches only to a small church week-in and week-out. That may be the case. I do have an evil heart prone toward deceit. On that, I invite anyone to help me see my motives more clearly.

But how much of our desire for passionate preaching is simply a different version of the same desire for entertainment that we despise in other wings of evangelicalism? How much of our desire for passionate preaching is really nothing more than a kind of vicarious living through the lives of a few men who have actually fallen in love with God? Does such preaching help me love God? Or, does it only help me love loving God? There is a profound difference! A person can have a zeal for God that falls short of his glory (cf. Israel in Romans 10:2).

I am concerned that as the so called people of God we are falling out of love with the truth proclaimed and replacing it with a love for the manner in which it is proclaimed.

How many Christians would leave their God-centered, Christ-exalting mega-churches where the doctrines of grace are clearly preached and

Reformed doctrine rings loudest so as to go and listen to a less gifted orator who has the same, if not better grasp, of the doctrine and who walks just as closely, if not closer, with the same God. The only thing that keeps that man's church small is his inability to please the crowd.

I believe with every fiber of my truth-loving being that God's people are lovers of the truth (cf. 2 Thess. 2:10 where a mark of an unbeliever is that they do not love the truth). That means that God's people are to be content-driven listeners and not oration-driven listeners. God's people should never say, "He is a good teacher but not a very good preacher." Such statements smack of an entertainment-based criterion for judging a man's gifts. How many more lay-men would more readily accept their role as potential teaching elders in a church if they did not think they had to fill the shoes of the show-man up front on Sunday?

I, for one, do not like the pressure I put on myself to "perform" each Sunday morning. "So we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts" (1 Thess. 2:4).

"God, deliver me from any prideful desire to preach with eyes of a man-pleaser. Help me to faithfully teach your sheep laid to my stewardship and shepherd them to a love for truth! Amen."