



Pentecost: An Invitation to a Spirit-filled Life

Sermon Outline

Theme Development

David W. Augsburger in *Communicating Good* has set forth in practical perspective what it means to live the Spirit-filled life:

“Incarnation means enfleshing. To put God’s Word into human form, to express it in human terms, to live it out in a human body. To flesh out the truth of God in the grubby interchange of the workbench or the marketplace.” Paul calls it “living in the Spirit.”

The Spirit-filled life, therefore, reaches beyond an experience in point of time to affect the moment-by-moment realities of life—into the kitchen, on the job, into the classroom, or wherever life is lived. Too long the baptism in the Holy Spirit has been shut up in the prayer closet, while it was intended to be the dynamic that would be manifest in the busy interchanges of life. At times the church has been more concerned about an initial evidence than permanent, life-changing evidences. The purpose of this message is to set forth the challenge of living out the Spirit-controlled life.

Text and Setting

The text is taken from Paul’s letter to the Galatians (5:16–24). The setting is Paul’s teaching on the contrast between the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit.

Paul’s readers, the Galatian Christians, were torn between the old ways of Judaism and the gospel of freedom as preached by Paul. It seemed untenable to them that God’s demands could be met by faith in Christ alone without adherence to the many requirements of the Law. Paul’s gospel seemed oversimplified and in violation of the religion of their fathers.

The conflict is apparent in much of Paul’s writings. In fact, the Book of Romans is dedicated to a clear setting forth of justification by faith alone without the requirements of the Law. The Law is viewed as death — an unattainable standard; while the way of faith is viewed as life — a free provision of grace. Imagine the difficulty for one schooled in Judaism to come to believe that God’s demands had been fully met in Christ and all that was now demanded was faith. The problem of legalism is not foreign to our day. Any notion that a man can gain merit with God marks a revival of Judaism. Positional sanctification cannot be earned; it is freely received by faith.

Man, according to the gospel, is placed in right standing before God by simply accepting what has already been done for him in Christ.

In Galatians 5 Paul answers what must have risen as an obvious question: “Since salvation is by faith alone, does it not follow that man has no responsibility?” Paul says no. Once the right position with God has been attained by faith, then the believer must begin living out the life in the Spirit. “For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh” (verse 13, NASB).¹

Words To Be Defined

Make mention of the works of the flesh (Galatians 5:19–21), but at the same time carefully set forth the fruit of the Spirit.

1. Love: Agape — “love.” To love even though there is nothing in it for you — the kind of love that said: “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”
2. Joy: Chara — “joy.” This means to be filled with joy, even when every circumstance says you should be filled with sorrow.
3. Peace: Eirene — “peace, quietness, rest.” To be at rest, even when everything around you is restless.
4. Long-suffering: Makrothumia — “steadfastness, endurance.” To continue on, even when all indications are that you should give up.
5. Gentleness : Chrestotes — “goodness, uprightness.” To do right in attitude and action, even when there is absolutely no outward support for reason to do so.
6. Faith: Pistis — “trust, reliance.” To believe, even when not having seen — to trust, even when not having touched. To go on believing when it does not make sense to do so.
7. Meekness: Praotes — “humility, courtesy, considerateness.” To lay your life down and be kind, even when there is no encouragement whatever to be kind. To smile back, though you are spit upon.
8. Temperance: Egkrateia — “self-control.” To stay in the middle of the road when every force of abuse is trying to pull you off.

In addition, these two words:

1. Spirit: Pneumatos — “wind, air, breath.” The Spirit of God is His creative, dynamic force. It is the same wind (Spirit) that brooded over the chaotic waters in creation. It is the wind of Ezekiel’s valley of dry bones, the wind of Nicodemus’ conversion, the wind of Pentecost, and the wind of inspiration (God breathed words, 2 Timothy 3:16).
2. Flesh: Sarkos — “flesh.” In Paul’s writings “flesh” usually refers to the base and carnal nature of man. However, it is also linked to all human efforts to gain merit with God through self-endeavor (flesh).

Supportive References

The Scriptures speak often of men who were filled with the Spirit:

1. John the Baptist (Luke 1:15)
2. Jesus (Luke 4: 1)
3. Peter (Acts 4:8)
4. Stephen (Acts 7:55)
5. Barnabas (Acts 11:24)
6. Paul (Acts 13:9)

It is a profitable study to place these men alongside Paul’s list on the fruit of the Spirit and note what qualities were obviously present.

Relevant Questions

1. Is the baptism in the Spirit only a power for service? No. In light of all Scripture, the central purpose of the Spirit’s work is to glorify Christ in the believer’s life. The dynamic of the Spirit is not so much a “show of demonstrable power” as it is the convincing presence of the life of Jesus being lived out in the believer’s life. God is not interested

in exhibitionism for the sake of the spectacular. He is rather concerned about quality of life and attitude of spirit. This is not to ignore the emphasis of Acts 1:8.

2. What is the evidence of the Spirit-filled life? In the pattern of the Book of Acts, it is clear that the coming of the Spirit was marked with a clear physical sign — the presence of tongues. However, tongues was meant only as a convincing first physical sign. The fruit of the Spirit is the continuous evidence of the Spirit's work.

3. If the fruit of the Spirit is not apparent, is that person Spirit-filled? No. He perhaps once was, but in no way does that experience hold true today if it is not renewed and lived out on a continuous basis.

4. Why do those who claim the most sometimes possess the least? First, the one who makes such a determination may be judging and incorrect. Second, it is a misnomer to assume that a claim to spirituality is any proof of spirituality. People are prone to deception here as well as in other areas.

5. How is the Spirit-filled life entered into? Initially, through the experience of the baptism in the Spirit. Second, through the continuous fellowship of Christ by means of His Word and prayer.

Possible Outlines

Following are suggested outlines in development of the theme:

Outline 1

1. Games people play
 - a. Acting as spiritual to gain status with men
 - b. Equating spiritual manifestations with spiritual understanding
 - c. Trying to manipulate God to make Him fit spiritual categories that further the selfish ends of men
2. Realities people need
 - a. The baptism in the Spirit is neither toy nor gimmick; it is God's gift to every believer to bring his life into conformity to His will.
 - b. The fruit of the Spirit is the only true measure of spirituality.
 - c. The way of the Spirit is to flow out of the believer into every facet of human encounter.

Outline 2

1. Obstacles to receiving the baptism in the Spirit
 - a. An inadequate scriptural understanding
 - b. The fear of counterfeit
 - c. The false idea that a specific a specific pattern of receiving must be followed
 - d. The fear of emotionalism without continuing evidence substance
2. How to receive the baptism in the Spirit
 - a. The "gift" principle; not earned but received
 - b. The "faith" principle; not fully understood but received
 - c. The "sovereignty" principle; accepted as the Spirit directs
3. Evidences of the Spirit-filled life
 - a. Tongues as the first physical sign
 - b. The fruit of the Spirit as the continuing evidence

Invitation

Spiritual receptivity is based on hunger and thirst. All who do hunger and thirst, with purity of motive and heart, may be sure that what is received will be bread and not a stone. The Spirit-filled life is not optional-it is the provision of the Spirit for every believer.

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