

Being Filled with the Holy Spirit

Acts 2:4, “**And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit**” is a historical fact, in which the 120 disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Ephesians 5:18, “**Be filled with the Spirit**” is a command to all of God’s people. Hopefully, all believers in Christ ask the question, “How can I receive and be filled with the Spirit?” By looking at the Lord’s disciples, we can observe how they were prepared in two ways: firstly, for receiving the Spirit and secondly, for being filled with Him. Christ does not give the Spirit to an unprepared soul. Unfortunately, Christians have not been adequately taught that there are conditions to following Christ, and therefore, they remain infants in Christ, carnal (1 Corinthians 3:1-3; Hebrews 5:11-14). We must deny the self, take up our cross, and follow Christ (Matthew 16:24) each and every day of our lives in order to grow spiritually and to exemplify Christ’s work of salvation in our daily living. And the same holds true for receiving and being filled with the Spirit every day.

Christ could not simply give us the Spirit without any preparation. Therefore, it is of extreme consequence to ask the question, “What is needed if I am to receive and be filled with the Spirit?” The book of Ephesians unveils the fact and need of all believers, all sons of God, to be filled with the Spirit for our daily life and in our daily life (1:7-8, 13; 2:12, 22; 3:16; 4:3, 30; 5:9, 18; 6:17). It is not enough to desire and look for the Spirit as a Spirit of power for outward work, but we must hunger and thirst above all else that our inner life be filled with the Spirit. Outward manifestation of the power for work will issue forth from the inward organic life in the Spirit, but the opposite is not necessarily true. What is necessary for an apple tree to bear apples? We cultivate the life of the apple tree so that it becomes strong and healthy (Luke 2:52), manifesting proper growth and development. The fruit, the apples, will come spontaneously. If I allow the Holy Spirit to daily strengthen and fill my inner life, the fruit of power will come. The disciples all received the Holy Spirit and were all filled with the Holy Spirit, becoming examples to us.

Let’s consider the preparation the Lord afforded His disciples. In particular — Who were they? What had they done? What had Christ done for them?

1. Christ’s Disciples Left All

The disciples were men who had forsaken all for Christ. They spent three and half years with Jesus, the Christ, in His school of preparation for Pentecost. John, the Baptist, foretold this, “**He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire,**” (Matthew 3:11). Christ chose and called each of them with the intentional thought of training them to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit to carry out the spreading of the gospel (Acts 1:8). Jesus set the precedent that it is not enough to say you believe in Him in order to receive and be filled with the Spirit. He cultivated the ground of salvation while He was with them.

Similarly, God's servants often do not just physically baptize a desirous candidate without first "testing" them for a period of time. A person may be sincere, earnest, and even committed to making such a decision, but that does not mean they are truly saved in Christ and ready for baptism. Is there satisfactory evidence in their daily living that they are regenerated? Baptism is only a ritual or religious sacrament if the person being baptized is not genuinely regenerated and ready to follow Jesus at all costs. Baptism must be a continuation of the life operation of the Spirit within us. In other words, our growth in Christ and ability to follow Christ after baptism is based on the foundation we laid prior to baptism.

Christ tested His disciples for over three years before He allowed them to be baptized with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. They had given up all for Christ. For instance, Peter, Andrew, James, John and at least three other disciples had left their fishing nets and family businesses. Matthew left his lucrative taxation business. All of them had to forsake everything they had and knew, to follow Jesus. Christ confirmed this necessary step by saying, **"If anyone comes to Me and does not hate father and mother, wife, and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple."** (Luke 14:26) **"Anyone who loves his father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me; and anyone who does not take up his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me."** (Matthew 10:37-38) Saints, reflect on these verses and ask yourself if you have ever made such a decision and commitment to follow Christ. If not, then you have not truly received the baptism of the Spirit and cannot be filled with the Spirit in your daily life.

On one occasion Peter said, **"Lord, we have forsaken all and followed You."** (Matthew 19:27) That monumental decision represented the first indispensable step in their preparation for the Baptism of the Spirit at Pentecost. Christ can only impart His divine life and Spirit into those who give up all to receive Him. Too few Christians today even have this understanding, not to mention, the reality. Jesus Christ comes to us with the same demand to forsake all in order to be His disciple. There are many who try to be filled with the Spirit — and it is better to try than not to try — who have no conception of what it is that has to be given up. I must let go of the world (fame, fortune, and power; 1 John 2:15-17); I must let go of family and friends so far as the supreme place in my heart is concerned; I must be prepared to let go of any and all possessions (Matthew 19:16-22), I must not pursue the honor of men (Colossians 3:22-23) but must continually deny the self, including my intellect, my heart's affections, and anything I would consider my own. Everything must be sacrificed and made subordinate to God's high calling – the Holy Spirit dwelling in me.

The Holy Spirit is not some thing or activity we can sign up for or perform in our own strength. He is the Person of Christ (2 Corinthians 3:17-18) available to us so that **Christ can make home in our hearts** (Ephesians 3:14-17). The Spirit's operation will take charge of me down to every last breath of my life, every word proceeding out of my mouth (Ephesians 4:29-30), and every thought and motive I conceal (2 Corinthians 10:5c; Hebrews 4:12-13). He will stop at nothing less than the displacement of the self-life to make room for His life. Christ has made it clear that the most important thing on this earth, the only thing worth living for, is to

receive and be filled with the Spirit (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13; Romans 8). This requires absolute and utter surrender to Christ Who desires to live in us, dwell in us, possess us, and exercise complete dominion over us. Is this your experience? Is this your desire?

It is helpful to follow others' example in yielding to Christ. For instance, many have forsaken all for Christ and have consecrated themselves, even taking vows (Numbers 6:1-27; Romans 14:4-9; 2 Corinthians 9:6-15). They sing songs and pray to give all to the Lord: friends, time, career, and possessions (Ephesians 5:19-20; Colossians 3:16-17). They have declared that they have left all for Jesus, vowing to forsake every selfish thing, personal pleasure, personal gain, and a status in the world, in order to surrender all to Jesus. This is the first necessary step to be filled with the Spirit. Trust God, and He will do it. When you surrender all to Christ, come under the solemn conviction — you can be filled with the Holy Spirit, and take every step God shows you (2 Corinthians 10:5c; Romans 10:17). However, if there is anything in which your heart condemns you, beware! (1 John 3:20-22). If you have not truly forsaken all, such as sins you are unwilling or unable to give up, like your own opinion, your temper, your own schedule, your own preference, your fears and anxieties of life, your love of the world, your inability to be built up with others in Christ, etc., how can you expect to be filled with the Spirit? You cannot be.

You should not hesitate any longer to relinquish your pathetic self-existence to the loving heavenly Father Who is waiting to fill you with His holy, blessed, divine Spirit. Offer to the Lord all your worldly ambitions, your fleshly passions, your pursuit of pleasure and happiness, and your own will. Long to be filled with the Holy Spirit so the divine life and nature can dwell within you fully every moment (2 Peter 1:4). This is the “pearl of great price (Matthew 13:45-46) and is worth paying any price to obtain. Remember, the first condition of receiving the Holy Spirit is to forsake all, just as the Lord's disciples did.

Do I Have to Quit My Job?

The Lord's disciples did, in fact, quit their jobs, their occupations, their livelihoods in order to follow Jesus. So, do we need to do the same in order to follow Christ and to be filled in Spirit? Yes, and no. It is not in most of our mindsets to quit our job, but on the contrary to get the best job with the most potential for earning. The latter ambition is the self. Whether we quit our job or not is up to the Lord, not us. We are strangers and sojourners on this earth (1 Peter 2:11; Ephesians 2:19; Philippians 3:20; John 15:18-19; 17:16; Hebrews 11:13-16) and must be willing to move at a moment's notice based on the Lord's word as pictured in the Old Testament when Israel moved according to the cloud by day and the fire by night (Exodus 13:21). Romans 12:1 says that we are living sacrifices, meaning we give up all of our rights, all of our efforts, and all of our intentions, desires, and goals in order to seek God with all of our heart so that He is well-pleased. We must be ready to lay down our soul life each and every minute as a sacrifice to God as we serve Him. Matthew 7:24-25 tells us that we must hear and obey the Lord by putting into practice whatever He speaks to us. If He tells us to take a job, we take a job. If He tells us to quit our job, we quit our job. We live day by day in the Lord's presence, hearing and obeying Him for our every step and doing all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (Colossians 3:17-23). We need to live by faith and faith

comes by hearing the word of God (and obeying it; Romans 10:17). Practically speaking, the Lord had many followers, who provided for His and His disciples' needs (food, clothing, shelter) as well as the needs of others. In Acts 2:42-47 and 4:32-37 the believers had all things in common. They lived in houses and had possessions which implied they had livelihoods, jobs, to supply these things. Their willingness to give up their possessions for the benefit of all the saints is an indicator of their obedience to Christ.

2. Acknowledging Self-Despair & Coming to the End of Self

The second condition of following Jesus and receiving the Holy Spirit to fill us completely is that we allow the Spirit to bring us into utter self-despair, indicating we have come to the end of self. Christ's initial teaching was clear and vivid: forsake everything for me. The disciples left their boats and fishing nets, they left their careers and livelihood in order to follow an unknown path without any outward security or guarantees. Yet, later on Christ taught them an even more difficult lesson — to forsake self. The Lord said to all His disciples, **“If anyone wants to follow me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.”** (Luke 9:23) When they heard this word, they did not apprehend how terrible the power of self within them was, nor had they ever considered that they too must “take up their cross” and be crucified just as the Lord was. The cross represents the termination of the old creation, namely the annihilation of the self. In order to be willing for this to happen, we must be brought to utter self-despair, realizing that the self is the greatest enemy of God, and that only the cross (death) can allow God's work in our lives.

Two things took place at the Lord's Supper (Luke 22; John 13). First, a dispute broke out among the disciples as to who should be chief. This was a manifestation of the self, mainly pride. They were thinking of their own glory, and of the place they would have in the new kingdom which was going to be set up. Second, when Christ was led away to be crucified they all forsook Him and fled. Everyone had said, “I will never forsake You” in their self-confidence. Peter boldly spoke up, **“Even if all men forsake You, I never will!”** (Matthew 26:33) Even after the Lord told Peter that he would deny Him three times, Peter retorted, **“Even if I should die with You yet will I not deny You.”** (Matthew 26:33) All of the Lord's disciples were filled with a self-confident spirit, a spirit whose nature originated in Satan (Matthew 16:21-23). The Lord was fully aware of this Satanic self-confident spirit when He took them to Gethsemane. There He began a time of trial and testing in order to expose them so they would have opportunity to perceive who they really were in order to repent and come to Jesus.

In the garden of Gethsemane, the Lord went to pray to the Father and all His companions fell asleep; unable to pray even for one hour (Matthew 26:40; Mark 14:37) because the self-life cannot possibly follow Christ. Even the Lord's closest companions, Peter, James, and John, who were taken into the inner garden alone with Jesus, could not stay awake. They were overwhelmed by the spiritual battle and their self-life was no match for God's enemy. The Lord rebuked them all for falling asleep, but the lesson of self was not done. They still had hope in following the Lord according to the self. While still in the garden, the soldiers came and bound Jesus. Peter drew a sword and started to fight, but the Lord stopped him (John 18:10; Matthew 26:51). The self was still attempting to fight the

spiritual battle, but the Lord intervened. Then, as the soldiers took Jesus away from the garden all forsook Him and fled. This was proof that they were still in the self-life attempting to follow Jesus because the fruit was fear, rejection, and abandonment. Yet, this was still not the lowest point; the self never gives up even in its failure. There was more to be exposed.

After a short time, Peter and John, mustered some courage and went to the house of the High Priest in order to be near the Lord (John 18:15). Yet, this is where Peter utterly and unequivocally denied His Lord. And afterward Jesus looked him in the eyes, causing Peter to run out and to weep bitterly (Luke 22:54-62). Christ was condemned unjustly as a criminal to the inhumane sentence of Roman crucifixion. He was taken to Calvary where His beloved disciples stood at a distance in disbelief and horror! Their hopes completely perished! They were brought to utter self-despair! What passed through their minds and hearts when they saw their Lord crucified, tortured, dying, dead, and buried? They had hoped for a new kingdom, which would rule over Rome and all other nations. Instead, all hope of the kingdom was gone forever in their eyes. They had hoped their Lord was to reign in glory as king of Kings and lord of Lords, yet now all was lost. Their hope was totally gone. Worst of all, they had trusted in themselves that they loved Jesus and would be faithful to Him even unto death. They had boldly declared their loyalty and allegiance to Christ, but when the battle raged on they ran in fear for their own lives, protecting, and preserving the self. Now they stood in shame, guilt, and despondency, hardly daring to look at each other or speak to one another.

The self is an almost impregnable fortress that prevents us from obeying the Lord (2 Corinthians 10:4-5). It is full of deception especially towards itself! We are so easily fooled and beguiled by Satan. You would think that the disciples would have stopped trusting in themselves after all this, right? Wrong. John 21 records events that occurred the morning of the Lord's resurrection, showing again that the disciples still clung to the self, trying to hold onto any hope. They had heard of His resurrection, and even observed some evidence of it (John 20), but it did not cause them to rejoice or run to find Jesus. They did not believe nor did they understand what had happened. Peter and 6 others went back to their former occupation, fishing. They attempted to find solace in their own way, the self. But the Lord met them there! What a marvelous love and kindness from God! The salvation from the self begins with the Lord's appearing to us. We cannot deny the self on our own. The Lord told the fishless fishermen to cast their nets on the opposite side of the boat that they had been using. They hesitated at first because it had been a long night of catching nothing and after all, they were the experts. When they obeyed the Lord, the catch of fish (153) was so great that the boats began to sink, yet the fishing nets did not tear (21:11). Even then, the disciples were uncertain that it was the Lord Jesus. They must have reasoned, "How could a man that we saw mutilated and killed be standing on the shore?" Inwardly, they knew it was Jesus (John 21:12), but they were not accustomed to following Him from within. The Lord spoke to Peter directly about his denials and how he should shepherd and feed the Lord's flock (21:17). Peter must have thought the Lord was crazy to give him such a responsibility after all of his failure within the past week.

God Exposes Our Self-Life

Spiritual truth must be revealed and received spiritually (1 Corinthians 2:11-16). We cannot grasp God's intent and purpose simply by reading the Bible or through superficial prayer. So, let's look deeper into the Lord's death and resurrection as it relates to terminating the self. The Sabbath day of rest (after the Lord died) was a day of unutterable anguish to His followers and especially to His 11 disciples. On one hand, the Lord lay dead in a tomb. On the other hand, the disciples existed as if dead while living. They had given up everything they knew, everything they possessed, to follow the Lord Jesus for 3 ½ years and now He is dead! Why would God allow such a thing? In His wisdom, He caused His disciples to pass through an ordeal that would break down all of their self-trust, self-reliance, and self-confidence in anything external and anything originating or propagated in themselves. They needed to come to the point in which they held absolutely no hope at all in self; and realized that there was absolutely no possibility for rescue. This was a condition of utter self-despair, and was prepared by God so that they could receive and be filled with the Holy Spirit. Only then, can the Holy Spirit come to take the place of self-life. This is the experience Paul wrote of in Galatians 2:20, **"I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me. And the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God Who loved me and gave Himself for Me."** Christ's death was not so we could have an easy pass to heaven or a life of liberty to do as we see fit "in Jesus' name". Jesus' death makes death available to all who desire to follow Him. The resurrection life that proceeds out of His death enables us to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Him. It is only out of the grave of self that the Spirit life can arise. The Holy Spirit must work this into each one of us without any human assistance and without any hope of rescue from any source other than God Himself. Everything we once relied upon on this earth becomes broken, empty, hopeless, helpless, worthless and useless to us so that we will turn to Christ.

God Disciplines Us So We Trust in Him

God allowed all of the detailed events surrounding His death and resurrection for two reasons, one negative and the other positive. On the negative side, we have to see for ourselves that we exist and attempt to follow the Lord according to the self, but that this self is desperately wicked and sinful. It can never please the Lord (Romans 8:6-8). If we remain in the self, we will utterly deny, forsake, and flee from our beloved Lord in His hour of agony and death just as His disciples did. On the positive side, once we allow the Spirit to shine on us and we are enabled to willingly empty ourselves as the Lord did (Philippians 2:5-8) and to become poor in spirit (Matthew 5:3), we can now receive and be filled with the new life of the Holy Spirit. On the day of His resurrection, Christ breathed into His disciples the Holy Spirit (John 20:22). After His resurrection, the Lord spent 40 days teaching the disciples about His invisible presence; He was now living within them as the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 15:45b; 2 Corinthians 3:17). Although they did not quite understand all the Lord was to them, they realized there was nothing to do but trust. Not long after the Lord ascended into heaven the Holy Spirit was poured out and filled them, at Pentecost (Acts 1-2). It was at this time, they were delivered from self-confidence, the Spirit filled them all, and amazing works of power followed.

Joel 2 depicts God's care of His people, Israel, who had forsaken him. He intentionally and purposefully sent "**His great army among them**" (2:26) so "**They would know that He is in Israel, that He is the Lord their God, and that there is no other**" (2:27). God sent the "great army" of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome (the various locusts mentioned) to utterly expose Israel's improper attitude, position, and behavior before God. His call to Israel was that "**They rend their hearts and not their garments and return to God with all of their heart with fasting, weeping, and mourning.**" (2:12-13) Once Israel admitted their condition before God and repented to Him, confessing their sin, He would restore to them the years the locusts had taken away (2:25). All of this shows how God deals with His people both in the Old Testament and presently in the New Testament. He will allow the rain, the flood, and the winds to beat against us (Matthew 7:24-27) so that we get exposed (our self-life) to the point that we become hopeless in the self and repent, turning to God as our only Source of Life.

I trust that as you read this message God will bring you to the end of self. Oh, it is a blessed thing! You may be willing to ask, "Am I prepared to be filled with the Holy Spirit?" But are you convicted by the Spirit to the point of utter self-despair? It is easy to ask for the baptism of the Holy Spirit, but are you aware of the dangers of such a request? Crouching behind your motives is a secret self-satisfaction, harboring a lack of humility, and a lack of utter emptiness before God. We must be willing to forever abandon the self and only then will we not deny our precious Lord Jesus Christ. We must pursue the Lord to deny self, asking God to cast it out, and to give us a broken and empty heart (Psalms 51:17; Matthew 5:3) that is prepared for the filling with the Holy Spirit. Consider how many lessons the Lord brought His disciples through to expose their self-life, preparing them for the filling of the Spirit. We must expect the same kinds of lessons, bringing us lower in our own eyes, even to the extent of self-despair. We will feel humble before God and man, knowing that even one moment in the self means that self is ruling me, self is working in me. Self always tries to improve and follow God according to its own strength, capacity, and understanding. This is the state of most Christians. Are you going to try for years to improve self, to bind self with chains, to make self something not so very wicked as it is? Or will you finally admit and confess, "There is no hope for self; there is no helping the self; I will trust Christ to come in and take possession?"

God the Father longs to have a church of believers filled with the Holy Spirit, and He has an abundance of the Spirit. He has purposed to give it to you as He gives the water and air, freely and abundantly. The river of the water of life is flowing full from the throne of God (Revelation 22:1). He wants His children to hunger and thirst to have their whole being saturated, fully dominated, ruled, and possessed by the Holy Spirit of God (Matthew 5:6; 1 Peter 2:2). Saints, if you have been brought to self-despair by the Spirit's operation, thank God! If you have not, are you willing to cast self at the feet of Jesus, and to fall in utter helplessness and say, "Lord, I cannot conquer self; I have been struggling with this matter too long (Galatians 5:17) and I have failed because I still depend on the self rather than You; have mercy upon me! From now on, I want none of self but all of You."

3. Having an Intense, Personal, Affectionate Relationship with Jesus

The Trinity as the Model and Source

The Lord's disciples were men who had an intense personal attachment to Jesus. The Triune God (Father, Son, and Spirit) are intimately, affectionately, personally, and intensely related and attached to each other. The purpose of salvation is to bring us into this same relationship (1 John 1), into this same attachment (2 Corinthians 1:21-22). In essence God is One, but in operation, He is three. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit that the Father gives, and He comes through the Son, Jesus Christ. He is the Spirit of God's Son, and when we are united and incorporated with the Son of God (John 14:20; 17:21) we get the Spirit of God (1 John 2:20-27; 2 Corinthians 3:17-18). The Spirit guides us into all reality (John 16:13), meaning that He brings the reality of Jesus to His believers. Firstly, Christ taught His disciples to cling to Him, to love Him, to delight in Him, and to lean their whole weight upon Him. In living over three years with them, He taught by His life what love was. Because the Spirit was not yet (John 7:39) and was not yet breathed into them (John 20:22), their self-life ruled their life and actions. But despite all of their failures, they grew to love Christ truly. On one hand, there was ingratitude, blatant failures, self-confident boasting and self-seeking, and sins of the flesh. On the other hand, they loved Jesus and had given all to follow Him. Many would think that such sacrifice is worthy of great reward in God's eyes, but it is not! Yes, the Lord's life prompted them to give up their careers and live with Jesus, but their love of Jesus flowed out of the self and therefore, it is not well-pleasing in God's eyes. Without the Spirit dwelling in them, their failure to listen and obey Christ would never end! Even with such an intense personal attachment to Jesus, the self lived on and hindered God's work. Yet, without such an intimate union with Christ nothing could ever change.

Christ's redemptive work on the cross satisfied God's righteous requirement towards sin (Romans 3:21-25). Through that work, Christ is now seated in the heavens with the Father (Ephesians 1:20; Colossians 3:1). Yet, He is also standing and walking (Romans 8:34; Acts 7:55-56; Revelation 1:12-20) doing the work of intercession (Hebrews 7:25) to lead us on to a better life, where we would have power to conquer self and sin. Jesus was the divine pattern of denying the self and of being filled in the Spirit for over three years (1 Peter 2:21). He walked on the earth as a friend of sinners (Luke 7:31-34; Matthew 11:16-19). He loved all people, especially His followers! He humbled Himself to serve them! He lived out His kindness and goodness every day! Oh, how He loved them! It is written, "**Having loved His own, He loved them unto the end,**" (John 13:1), meaning that He gave up His life for them (1 John 3:16). Divine love issues out of death. The Lord laid down His soul-life figuratively and literally, allowing the release of the divine life to us (John 12:24). This love had captured the disciples' hearts. They loved His teaching, and they loved Him. Initially, they denied the self to forsake all and follow Him. Next, the Lord would bring them to see their wicked self-life that prevents them from doing His work. Then, they need to know love. Even in their unfaithfulness they clung to Him. When He died, though they had forsaken Him, and believed Him dead and gone forever, they still loved Him, their hearts were attached to Him.

The third step in the preparation for the baptism of the Holy Spirit is having a heart that clings to Jesus with an intense and continual love. There are some Christians in whom there is very little personal attachment to the Lord Jesus. A man may preach sermons about Christ, talk about Him, work for Him, and give generously, but this is not what I am speaking about. What was the accusation of Christ against the church at Ephesus? **“You have left your first love.”** (Revelation 2:4). There was no personal, tender, affectionate, and intimate love to Jesus. Paul did not long to have outward teaching or outward knowledge. On the contrary, He willingly gave up all to **“know Him”** (Philippians 3:7-10). Paul’s desire was an intimate, affectionate relationship with Jesus. There are some people who talk about being filled with the Spirit, and pray for it, but they do not know what it is to cling to Jesus as a personal friend, as a devoted brother, and as an intimate companion, being like-souled (Philippians 2:1-4, 20-22). Once the soul is filled with the Spirit there is a tenderness of feeling, an affection that supersedes all other loves, a clinging of the heart to Jesus in all circumstances, a deep yearning of the renewed soul, and a longing for Him that grows over time and never diminishes.

Love Out of Self or Out of the Spirit

Satan knows all too well that God desires us to have an intense, personal attachment to Him through Christ. Therefore, he always works to deceive, steal, and even kill (John 10:10). One great trap set by Satan through the self is to allow us to love Jesus, even delight in Him as the joy of our heart, only to seek how we can do something for Him and lose sight of the intimate, affectionate, personal union with Him. We seek to sacrifice for our Lord Jesus, but do not realize that our sacrifice is not of the Spirit, but out of self. Samuel told Saul that **“To obey is better than sacrifice”** (1 Samuel 15:22), and He taught His disciples to **“Desire mercy and not sacrifice”** (Matthew 9:13; Hosea 6:6). Human nature is to sacrifice as a replacement for love. It was easier for Saul to disobey the Lord by not waiting when facing death so he took matters into his own hands and performed the sacrifice that only priests were allowed to perform before God (1 Samuel 13:5-15). The Lord exposed the Pharisee’s duplicity in that they create all kinds of statutes and ordinances of sacrifice which they thought would please God, but it did not! (Matthew 23) Jesus placed obedience in love on the highest plane rather than self-seeking, self-satisfying sacrifices. In contrast, love is the foundation of all God does (Ephesians 1:4) and must be the sole reason for our following Him (2 Corinthians 5:14). Love primarily focuses on the relationship we have with Christ, not on our actions, activities, and sacrifices we perform. If we want to recognize what love really is, we must study the life of Jesus and meditate on 1 Corinthians 13 and Galatians 5:22-23. Remember that the self is not capable of divine love and therefore, we must always deny the self, take up our cross daily and follow Him (Luke 9:23). Love issues forth out of death. 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 tells us that Paul was motivated by the love of Christ. He was not driven by any outward compulsion, but by inward love, and this love came out of death in resurrection: **“For the love of Christ constrains us because we have judged this, that One died for all, therefore, all died. And He died for all that those who live may no longer live to themselves but to Him who died for them and has been raised.”** 1 John defines the deepest essence of love: laying down our lives for others. That is what Jesus did for us and that is what we will do when we love others. It is not an emotion, but the divine life rising from the dead when we consider others. Only then, can we esteem others more excellent than ourselves (Philippians 2:3). Only then can we bear wrong when we serve others (2

Timothy 2:24). Only then can we bless those who curse us and pray for those who persecute us (Matthew 5:44). Only then will our good works be acceptable in God's sight (2 Peter 1:10-11; Romans 12:1; Philippians 4:18).

It is God's desire that we firstly give up all to follow Him, and secondly, we see the utter hopelessness and failure of self to the point of repentance (2 Corinthians 7:10). Now, we need to seek and pursue further to apprehend the love of Christ (Ephesians 3:17-19). We must love Christ with all of our heart, all of our soul, all of our mind, and all of our strength, and to love our neighbor as ourselves (Matthew 22:37-39; Mark 12:29-31). This is the greatest commandment and must be our heart's daily prayer so we never end up as the Church in Ephesus (Revelation 2:1-7). Oh, that I could know Him better! (Philippians 3:10) Oh, for the time when God possesses all of my heart, and causes me to love Jesus, Jesus first. Praise God for every soul that is broken, who says in faith towards God, **"Lord, You know all things, You know that I love You."** (John 21:15-17) It was this ground, the ground of love, that allowed the Lord to send Peter to feed His flock despite all of his failures. Take courage, say it with boldness, as Peter did, or say it sorrowing; but say it. You are on the right path to be baptized with the Holy Spirit because Jesus wants people who are full of intense love to Him.

Peter had touched intense love to Christ and became an intensely affectionate loving person by the time he wrote his epistles. Therefore, he could tell us to love one another with a pure heart fervently (1 Peter 1:22; 4:8). One easy test of whether we serve Christ out of love or self is to look at our heart and ask, "Do I have fervent, affectionate, intimate, and burning love for Christ and others?" If you are honest, you may admit that your religion is more in your intellect and thoughts, in the work, activities and outward sacrifices that you feel capable of performing; rather than a burning, zealous, and intense love to Jesus and others. "O, Lamb of God, who loved us and gave Yourself up for us! Shine on us to expose how we allowed self to produce our limited love for You and others. We have been so busy with ourselves, with our study, with our preaching, with our visiting, with our working for You — and we did these things "for You", but now realize how little time we have in Your presence to enjoy love, so little time for abiding in You and allowing You to abide in us (John 15:4-5), so little heart and longing for intimate union!"

Saints, let us fall down on our faces and repent with weeping (James 4:1-10), making confession to the Lord that although we want the Holy Spirit and somehow convinced ourselves through doctrine that He was dwelling in us, we fall far short and the fruit of our hearts and lives exposes this. Let us pray, "Lord, I have so little love because self has dominated my life, but now I seek this intense, affectionate, intimate, personal love with You and the saints. Lord, shine and expose any and all sins that hinder this kind of loving relationship. Lord, let my love now be a tender, intimate fellowship showing that my whole being is filled with the love of God. Lord, fill me with Your Spirit." This requires a lowly, humble heart of faith that brings us to nothing, but God not only accepts us, but sends the Holy Spirit as a pledge to us, pouring out His love to us (Romans 5:5; Ephesians 1:14; 4:30; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22).

4. Accepting the word of Christ about the coming of the Spirit in faith.

The disciples were men who believed. In other words, they had faith in Christ, which is the only way we can be well-pleasing to God (Hebrews 11:6). This is not a self-originating faith, but the faith of Christ (Galatians 2:20). Acts 1 depicts the disciples gathering together for ten days after Christ's Ascension. They were waiting and praying in faith. What is faith? And what did they actually believe? If we were to ask them, and they were honest and genuine, they could not tell us exactly. **Faith is the conviction of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen** (Hebrews 11:1). **We live by faith, not by appearance** (2 Corinthians 5:7). The disciples had read in the Old Testament regarding the Holy Spirit coming down on prophets and how the Holy Spirit would be poured out on all men (Joel 2:28; Acts 2:17). However, they did not know about the Holy Spirit dwelling in the believer all day, and the Holy Spirit bringing the joy and presence of Jesus into their hearts. They simply believed. Our Master said that He would send the Holy Spirit and they laid hold of His word. Faith means that Christ speaks, and we believe and are convinced that what He says is true. **Faith comes by hearing and hearing through the word of God** (Romans 10:17).

There are two important avenues that we must consider. First, do we have such faith operating in us day by day? In order to answer this question, you must evaluate your fruit. Are you filled in the Spirit all day long? If not, then, you do not live by faith. Second, how can people like us, who are full of self, who are full of failure, who repeatedly deny our Lord and forsake Him, how can we think the Holy Spirit comes from heaven to fill us? We are unworthy creatures! The disciples knew firsthand how much their self-life not only hindered their faith, but even blocked it completely when the Lord suffered. Yet, once **He breathed the Spirit into them** (John 20:22), faith began to operate. Of all people, Peter had a reason to quit and never try to follow the Lord again. He not only failed numerous times, but his failures became public record! Yet, that was his self-life, and his life became such an important object lesson for the rest of us. Peter was filled with the Spirit, and he began to live by faith. He allowed the Spirit to expose his self-life so he could deny the self. He took the grace of Christ to take up his cross. And by faith he believed and obeyed the Lord's word and followed Him. This was a new Peter, a new man, in Christ. **The old things had passed away** (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Do you believe you are elect of God? (Ephesians 1:4) In faith we answer, "He said it". Are you resting upon the word of God? A life filled in the Spirit is unlike any human invention or religion. Being filled in Spirit produces the fruit of the Spirit, which exhibits love as the greatest virtue; a love we live out all the day long — love to our spouse, to our children, to our relatives, to our neighbors, to our coworkers, and to the most unlovable people, to wicked, and sinful unbelievers, and even to our enemies who mistreat or abuse us. Have you said in faith, "The Holy Spirit can fill my soul and dwell in me morning and night?" Repent of any unbelief (Hebrews 3:12) which tells you that this is too high for a man on earth, that a man in the flesh cannot live filled with the Spirit all day long. That is unbelief. Some rationalize that their disposition is not kind and loving, so, they could never have this fullness. Saints, to be content to live without the filling of the Spirit or to excuse it away is unbelief and disobedience to God! (Hebrews 3:7-14; 4:10-11) Beloved children of God, beware of unbelief, repent and confess, "I do believe what Jesus says: that the Father delights to fill a child of His

with the Holy Spirit. I do believe that the life of the Holy Spirit is meant to be lived by me every day of the week and every moment of my life. I do believe what the Scriptures say, that “the Holy Spirit is able to fill me with God's love, so that my life manifests humility, tenderness, kindness, gentleness, meekness, and joy, giving thanks and glory to God and the Lord Jesus at all times.”

Believe what God has said, and what God is willing and waiting to do by the power of the Holy Spirit, though you don't feel it, believe it in your heart. Faith is a solemn thing because it brings us into contact with God Himself! We cannot contact God and remain the same, and we all must stand before God and give an account to Him (2 Corinthians 5:10; Romans 14:12; Hebrews 4:13). The gospels show many examples of people who came into contact with Jesus, but then walked away in unbelief. They valued their business more than Christ. They valued their property and possessions more than Christ. They valued fame, power, or appreciation of men more than Christ. But most of all they valued their self-life more than Christ (Luke 9:24-26; Matthew 16:25-27). It will not be a good day for them when they have to give an account to God. Oh, set your heart upon a life overflowing with the Holy Spirit in which the Spirit manages everything: our possessions, our business, our finances, our relationships, our decisions, our preferences, and all things. He will teach you how to live when you are full of Him.

5. Longing and Thirsting to be Filled in the Spirit

The disciples not only believed in the Lord Jesus by faith, but they longed and thirsted to be filled in the Spirit. When Jesus was crucified and took His last breath, there was an earthquake. This physical shock also created an internal shock wave in the disciples' spirit. In their utter despair of themselves and with inexpressible shame and disgrace for having treated Jesus as they did, they learned to long for something better (Hebrews 11:39-40). After His resurrection, the Son of God walked 40 days upon the earth, working into His followers' hearts an expectation that filled them with assurance, and enabling them to wait and pray in one accord for an additional 10 days prior to Pentecost (Acts 1:3-4, 14; from Passover to Pentecost is 50 days total). 120 men and women, followers of Jesus, who appeared contemptible and hypocritical in the eyes of the world, waited in full hope and expectation for the promise of the filling of the Holy Spirit. There was no hope in the self, but now, in their spirit, they felt an assurance and knowledge-surpassing belief that caused them to drop all selfish ambition, preference, rights, and pursuits, in order to pray in one accord, without any dissent or unbelief!

Are you willing to do this? May God bring us to it! Are you ready to say, God, fill me with the Holy Spirit? Some people think it must come as a great emotion, stirring their whole being. It does not always come that way. It may come as the night dew on the grass, quiet and gentle. It is not necessary for people to talk and shout or experience some frenzy as in a sporting event. No, we place our whole being at His disposal and in faith receive the gift of God, the Holy Spirit. As an empty vessel, we separate ourselves to be filled with the Holy Spirit, and allow Him to take full possession of our lives in every detail. Faith in us will believe that the Lord has given us His life for this very purpose: to be filled with the Holy Spirit. We must claim it from Him and trust Him for it. A river can be filled in

two ways: suddenly and violently or calmly and persistently. In South Africa treacherous valleys, called dry rivers, exist, but higher up the river bed an immense thunderstorm appears, producing floods of water that pour down with such a rush that it causes the stream in these lower valleys to rise eight or ten feet high in an instant, and it keeps on rising until it overflows its banks. How did it get full? Suddenly, with violence. On the contrary, sometimes rivers fill up slowly and gradually. There are great snow-covered mountains that gently fill their streams and rivers by gradual melting snow. There is little commotion as the stream rises slowly and gradually, but the river gets full, until its banks overflow. The Spirit's pouring out can be just like these two types of rivers! There are souls in whom the filling of the Holy Ghost comes with great emotion. There are other souls who come trembling, and full of fear; they are prepared and they say to God, "O God, it is Your will that I should be filled with the Holy Spirit from morning to night. I long for it. I believe You will give it." They say it quietly, and humbly claim it in faith. "Lord, I believe You have done it."

Remember, the Holy Spirit is the heritage of God's church, meaning that all of God's children have been pledged the Spirit (Ephesians 1:13-14). It is not meant for a special group of disciples alone, nor is it something extraordinary that can only be experienced by a few (Acts 19:1-7). Every child of God can be filled and led by the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18; Romans 8:14-16). The fullness of the Holy Spirit is available to all who desire to live the holy life of God in all their thoughts and actions (1 Peter 1:14-16). Are you ready for such a filling of the Spirit?