

Chapter Six

Be Filled with the Spirit

“⁸ For ye were sometimes darkness, but now *are ye* light in the Lord: walk as children of light: ⁹ (For the fruit of the Spirit *is* in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) ¹⁰ Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. ¹¹ And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove *them*. ¹² For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret. ¹³ But all things that are reprovèd are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light. ¹⁴ Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. ¹⁵ See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, ¹⁶ Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. ¹⁷ Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord *is*. ¹⁸ And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:8-18).

In the account of the exodus of Israel from Egyptian bondage, we read of horrible plagues and wondrous miracles. We read of God’s intervention on behalf of His children. We read of God’s provision and protection as He led them out of Egypt and went before them in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. His presence was always visible. Yet the people of Israel did not learn to trust Him. They believed in Him, but they did not trust Him. They feared Him, but they did not trust Him.

For two years God led them by the hand trying to teach them to trust Him. At Kadesh-Barnea God tested them to see if they had learned this simple lesson. They did not. Because of their failure, for the next 38 years the nation of Israel wandered in the wilderness for one simple reason, they refused to believe God and trust Him with their lives. All those over the age of 20 years of age died in the wilderness in those 38 years. What should have been a time of great blessing and rejoicing became a 38 year long funeral procession.

The saddest part of this story is that the largest majority of those delivered from Egyptian bondage never experienced the blessings of their promise land because they never learned to trust God with their lives. They could trust Him with their salvation, but not their lives. The vast majority of Christians are like these people. Because of their inability to trust God with their lives, they continue to wander in the Wilderness of Sin just waiting to die, never knowing what they are missing.

Wilderness wandering Christians seldom (if ever) consider what they are missing because they have never entered into their Promised Land. The only Christianity they have ever known is the wilderness. Their only knowledge of God is what He does for them, never what He can do with them.

They feel comfortable in their wilderness Christianity because they do not have to experience the difficulties of war, the embarrassment of spiritual defeats, the suffering of a battlefield Christianity. What they are really missing are the blessings and promises of God for their lives and for the lives of their children, grandchildren and generations beyond that. They abandon their inheritance in Christ to remain in the wilderness thinking they are safe and secure. Nonetheless, they will die in their wilderness. They will have wasted their life and their potential.

Their lives will be numbered with the millions who died in the wilderness, their footprints in the sand forever erased by the winds of time. They become nameless nobodies, forgotten even by their descendants. They leave no permanent mark on the world, except perhaps a smudge on the face of time; a dirty little reminder that one of God's rebellious children has been here and gone.

That is not the testimony I want my life to leave in this world. What is it that allows a person to be transformed from a wilderness wandering Christian into a conquering, God blessed, Promised Land believer? It is learning to trust God with our life and turning that life over into His control. That is what the Bible calls being "filled with the Spirit."

Have you ever considered the potential available to you once you learn to habitually yield your life to the control of the Holy Spirit? Do you think you are realizing your potential as a Christian?

Our potential in Christ is a person totally beyond our comprehension.

What if you possessed the same potential to be used of God as Moses, the Apostle Paul, or any other great Christian? What is the one single thing that makes them different?

Their lives were totally yielded to and controlled by the Holy Spirit. This is the only thing that keeps us from being the kind of person that they were. It is also the only thing that keeps us from being a victorious Promised Land Christian. We do not need to die in the wilderness.

Potentially every Christian could realize the evangelistic accomplishments of the Apostle Paul.

When a person learns to be habitually filled with the Holy Spirit and live in fellowship with the Lord, his life is one of overwhelming potential for God's use. Being filled with the Spirit turned a stumbling, bumbling Peter into a great evangelist with the power of the Holy Spirit in the words he spoke.

“¹ And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. ² And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. ³ And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. ⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. ⁵ And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. ⁶ Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. ⁷ And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? ⁸ And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? ⁹ Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers

of Rome, Jews and proselytes,¹¹ Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.¹² And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this?¹³ Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine.¹⁴ But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words:¹⁵ For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day.¹⁶ But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel;¹⁷ And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:" (Acts 2:1-17).

Because Peter was filled with, and controlled by the Holy Spirit, the word he spoke came forth in the power of God with boldness and clarity.

Because Peter was filled with and controlled by the Holy Spirit, 3,000 people were convicted in their hearts, converted to Christ, born again, baptized and joined the church in one day.

Although the gifts of "tongues" and special revelation ended with the Apostles, the miracle of being filled with the Spirit and being empowered by Him did not. Because early Christians were filled with the Spirit, they were able to live in one accord, witness with boldness and change the world with the gospel of Christ. That potential is still available.

Does being filled with the Spirit (*learning to trust God with our life and yield it to His control*) sound like a panacea (cure all) for the Church? It is!

Does being filled with the Spirit (*learning to trust God with our life and yield it to His control*) sound like the answer to the needs of wilderness wandering Christians today? It is!

Only when Christians get tired of being spiritual anemiacs and get tired of the death march of wilderness wandering Christianity, tired of defeat and discouragement and tired of a wasted life for Christ, will they learn to trust God with their lives and yield themselves to His control.

"Wherefore be ye not unwise," (Ephesians 5:17)

Do not be ignorant about God's will. His will is that all Christians learn to be controlled by the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18).

Too many Christians view being filled with the Spirit as some spiritual fantasy. Others think being filled with the Spirit is for just a select few.

A subtle trick of Satan is to keep believers wandering in the wilderness, thinking they do not have the power or abilities to take on the giants of opposition in the Promised Land.

In your flesh you do not. However, when the Spirit of God fills you, He fills you with His power. He divinely energizes your abilities with His power and multiplies them exponentially.

God wants us to “understand” His will in the matter of getting victory over the giants occupying our Promised Land.

His will is that we live victorious. That victory is ours when we are filled with the Spirit.

Read Ephesians 6:10. It is through learning to trust God with our life and in yielding control to Him that we find His “strength,” and where “the power of His might” comes from.

Read Ephesians 6:11. Learning to trust God with our life and yielding control to Him is where “the whole armor of God” comes from. Wilderness wandering Christians never put on the armor of God because they never intend to enter the Promised Land.

Being “filled with the Spirit” is the “will of God.” When we fail or refuse to do the will of God, what is that called? (SIN!)

It is sin not to be filled with the Spirit of God, yet how many Christian think about it each day. It is the same sin that kept Israel in the wilderness for 40 years.

Although being filled with the Spirit is a matter of choice, it is not a request from God. It is a command. It is the ultimate imperative for spiritual success. The filling of the Spirit is needed for every aspect of the Christian life. In fact, it is the Christian life. Being filled with the Spirit is putting gas in an empty tank, spark to a dead battery, fire to a dead spark plug, but most important, it is putting the Spirit of God at the drivers wheel of our lives.

The second our flesh gets into the drivers seat, the Holy Spirit’s ministry changes from a controlling ministry to a convicting ministry. If our character and personality are not being completely transformed we are not being filled.

“And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.” (Acts 4:31)

What do we see here? We do not see a group of weak, cowering Christians, huddled together, overwhelmed by fear, wandering in the wilderness feeding on one another. We see a powerful group of people transformed by trusting God with their lives and yielding control to Him.

The most challenging period of Church history was not 2,000 years ago. It was not the Reformation of 500 years ago. It was not the Great Awakening of 200 years ago. The most challenging period of Church history is always today? In it lies our potential for a tomorrow.

Chapter Six

Questions for Discussion

1. What is the single and most important lesson that Israel failed to learn in the first two years after their deliverance from Egyptian bondage?
 - A. Do you think you have learned this lesson?
 - B. If so, how do you know you have?

2. Why do Wilderness Wandering Christians miss the Promised Land experience?

3. What is the one thing that transforms a Wilderness Wandering Christian into a God blessed, Promised Land believer?

4. Do you think you possess the same potential to be used of God as Moses, Joshua, Elijah, or the Apostle Paul? What gave them the ability to realize the potential in them?

5. Read Ephesians 5:17. What are a couple of ways that Christians are ignorant about the filling of the Spirit?
 - A. _____

 - B. _____

6. What does God want all believers to “understand” about His will in the matter of getting victory over the giants occupying their Promised Land?

7. Being “filled with the Spirit” is the “will of God.” What is it called when a Christian fails or refuses to do the will of God?

8. Read Romans 6:11-13 and 12:1-2. What will take place in your life as the result of habitually being filled with the Holy Spirit?

9. Read Acts 4:31. What was an outward manifestations of being controlled by the Spirit?
 - A. Is this evident in your life?
 - B. If it is not evident, what decision do you need to make today?