

**MARANATHA BIBLE-PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH**

20 January 2019

"Present every man perfect in Christ Jesus" (Colossians 1:28)

Address: 63 Cranwell Road, Singapore 509851

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Sunday School: 10 am

Sunday English / Chinese Worship Service: 10.45 am Sunday Chinese Worship Service: 7.30 pm

Wednesday Prayer Meeting: 8.00 pm

Rev Colin Wong (HP : 9665 8160); Elder Daniel Tau (HP : 9761 5415); Elder Peter Ong (HP : 9626 7045)

**HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN
THE MINISTRY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT?**

The subject of the Holy Spirit is a touchy one in many conservative churches. Some of these churches do not preach much about the Holy Spirit and His ministry in the life of the believer. The mention of the Third Person of the Holy Trinity may raise an eyebrow. Fellow church people may conclude that you have become "charismatic." I am afraid many of these churches are downplaying His Person, ministry and influence in the church.

How much do you know about the Holy Spirit and His ministry since conversion? When Paul came to Ephesus, he found some disciples there, and he asked them whether they had received the Holy Spirit when they believed in the Lord. To his surprise, they had not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit (Acts 19:2).

Are we like these disciples of old? Do you know that when you believe in the Lord, the Holy Spirit indwells you and shall be in you forever? (John 14:16, 17; 1 Corinthians 12:13) Do you know that a person who does not have the Spirit of Christ in him is not a Christian at all? (Romans 8:9).

The doctrine of the Holy Spirit is very important to every Christian. We are living in the age of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said to His disciples before He went to the cross that He must go away in order that the Holy Spirit may come (John 16:7). The Holy Spirit has come since the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4). He has been doing a mighty work in our midst since then. Christians around the world have experienced His mighty power. We read it in the history of the Christian Church. We heard it from missionaries today. For some of us, we even experienced it in our own Christian experience.

In his sermon on "What is Revival," the late Dr. Martyn Lloyd Jones cited a historical event written by the great and saintly Jonathan Edwards about a visitation of the Spirit of God in the little town of Northampton in Massachusetts in 1735.

Here is what Edwards wrote: “This work soon made a glorious alteration in the town. So that in the spring and summer following, the town seemed to be full of the presence of God. It never was so full of love nor so full of joy and yet so full of distress as it was then. There were remarkable tokens of God’s presence in almost every house. It was a time of joy in families on account of salvation being brought to them. Parents rejoicing over their children as newborn, husbands over their wives and wives over their husbands. The doings of God were then seen in His sanctuary. God’s day was a delight and the congregation was alive in God’s service. Everyone earnestly intent on the public worship. Every hearer eager to drink in the words of the minister as they came from his mouth. The assembly in general were from time to time in tears while the Word was preached. Some weeping with sorrow and distress, others with joy and love, others with pity and concern for the souls of their neighbors. This is God visiting His people. Days of heaven on earth, the presidency of the Holy Spirit in the Church, life abundant given to God’s people without measure.”

This is what revival is all about. When God’s children are full of the Holy Spirit or are being filled with the Holy Spirit or are being influenced by the Holy Spirit, things begin to happen. They are full of life, full of the joy of salvation and full of courage to speak for the Lord (Acts 4:31). But unfortunately, one of the reasons why Christians are not quickened spiritually or made alive and live victoriously and triumphantly is because they do not know the Holy Spirit and His ministry.

There was a crisis in the early church. As the number of disciples grew, the Greek-speaking Jews complained against the Hebrew-speaking Jews that the widows among them were neglected every day when food and other assistance were distributed. The apostles told the congregation to choose among them seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom and put them in charge of this problem (Acts 6:3).

What does the term “full of the Holy Spirit” mean? What does the Bible mean when it speaks of the fullness of the Holy Spirit? Writing to the Ephesians, Paul said, “And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18). Here Paul draws a contrast between two things – a person who is filled with wine and a person who is filled with the Holy Spirit. The person who is filled with alcohol is controlled or dominated by alcohol. Its presence and power have overridden his normal abilities and actions. He is under the influence of alcohol. However, the Christian who is controlled by the Holy Spirit is under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Whatever he does, he does it with the help of the Holy Spirit, not with his own strength and ability.

A Spirit-filled Christian is a spiritual Christian. He is under the influence of the Holy Spirit. He is sensitive to the prompting of the Holy Spirit. He is keeping in-step with the Holy Spirit. This is the kind of candidate that the apostles told the congregation to look for and appoint to do the Lord’s business. The selection of elders or deacons is never based on performance but on godly character which is the outcome of a Spirit-filled life (1 Timothy 3:1-13).

Before the church appoints someone to office, the first thing the leadership must do is to make sure that the candidate is a Spirit-filled Christian, not his contribution to the church or performance in the church. According to Paul, this candidate must have a good report not only

from the church people, but also from the people outside the church (1 Timothy 3:7).

The Church of Jesus Christ needs Spirit-filled men and women to do ministry. God's work is to be done in God's way. The work of God is not done by human wisdom, intelligence, power or ability but by Christians who have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16). The Bible says, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts" (Zechariah 4:6).

E.M. Bounds aptly said, "What the Church needs today is not more machinery or better, not new organizations or more and novel methods, but men whom the Holy Spirit can use. The Holy Spirit does not flow through methods but through men. He does not come on machinery but on men. He does not anoint plans but men."

"Natural ability and educational advantages do not figure as factors in this matter; but capacity for faith, the ability to pray, the power of thorough consecration, the ability of self-littleness, an absolute losing of one's self in God's glory and an ever-present and insatiable yearning and seeking after all the fullness of God—men who can set the Church ablaze for God; not in a noisy showy way, but with an intense and quiet heat that melts and moves every thing for God." God can work wonders if He can get suitable men.

Where are the Spirit-filled Christians in our church? Let them come forward to render their services to the Lord.

Any Christian who is not filled with the Holy Spirit is a defective Christian. He is weak and fallible. He is easily tempted and trapped by the evil one. He lives a life that is full of carnality and his way displeases the Lord.

Paul exhorts Christians to be filled with the Holy Spirit in Ephesians 5:18. This verse contains a negative and a positive command. The first is, "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess" and the second is "but be filled with the Spirit." The negative command is "be not drunk" with wine. Paul did not forbid the drinking of wine (1 Timothy 5:23; 3:3; Titus 1:7). He said, "Do not be intoxicated" or "Do not be filled" with wine.

Vincent gives a vivid picture to explain what it means to be filled with wine. He says, "A curious use of the word occurs in Homer, where he is describing the stretching of a bull's hide, which in order to make it more elastic, is soaked with fat." The word, therefore, refers to the condition of a person in which he is soaked with wine. Paul was against drunkenness or intoxication.

The phrase "wherein is excess" gives a warning of overindulging in drinking. It is not wine alone that is castigated but drunkenness with wine (Homer A. Kent). The word "excess" comes from the word "save." With the Alpha privative (a), it means "unsavingness" or "no salvation." It expresses the idea of an abandoned, debauched, profligate life.

The positive command is, "but be filled with the Spirit." The phrase means "to be possessed as much of the Spirit as one can contain." The Present Tense of the command points to an action that is to be repeated from time to time or an action that is continuous. Therefore, to be filled with the Spirit is not a once-for-all experience but it has the idea of continuously being

filled in the original Greek language. Literally speaking, every Christian is to keep on being filled with the Holy Spirit. You and I must be under the influence of the Holy Spirit all the time.

This command is to be obeyed, and it is binding on all of us Christians everywhere in every age. There are no exceptions. Therefore, to be filled with the Holy Spirit is not optional but a command. If we are not being filled with the Spirit, we are sinning against God.

This teaching of the continuous filling of the Holy Spirit is also Jesus' teaching in John 4 and 7. In speaking to the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4, Jesus said, "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:13, 14). Later Jesus spoke of the Holy Spirit in the same way in John 7:38 – "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water" (John 7:37, 38).

The phrase "out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water" speaks of the constant supply of the Holy Spirit's blessing available to all Spirit-filled Christians. This supply is never exhausted because it has its source in the Holy Spirit who is inexhaustible.

Nowhere in the Bible are Christians commanded to be baptized by the Spirit or to be indwelt by the Spirit. Both are actions which God performs when we sinners trust Christ for salvation (1 Corinthians 12:13). However, Christians are commanded to be filled with the Spirit on more than one occasion (Acts 2:4; 4:8, 31; 7:55). A point to note is that the voice of the verb is passive, and it means to say that Christians are acted upon by the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is not given to us on a rental basis, by that I mean, to pick and choose the times in which we become spiritual. No. Our secular life and home life should be as spiritual as our Sunday church experience. No one should be a godly Christian in church only and a devil at home. He is to be a Spirit-filled Christian wherever he is, and all the time. If he falls into sins, what he needs to do is to confess his sins, repent from his sins and ask the Spirit to fill him again.

A Spirit-filled Christian is a dynamic Christian. He is full of radiance. The problem with the church today is that countless Christians do not know the Person and ministry of the Holy Spirit. Worse still, many of them do not experience such overflowing blessing from the Holy Spirit because they do not want it or they refuse to meet the conditions God sets up to get it.

My dear reader, do you desire to be filled with the Holy Spirit of God? Have you been feeling thirsty lately? Have you been feeling dry spiritually? Have you been losing your spiritual appetite? The Holy Spirit is the answer to your spiritual thirst and hunger. Jesus said, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water" (John 7:37, 38).

One of the prayers of the Welsh Revival in 1904 was: "Fill me, Holy Spirit, fill me, More than fullness I would know: I am smallest of Thy vessels, Yet, I much can overflow."

Let us avail ourselves to the mighty Holy Spirit of God so that when He fills us to the fullness, we will become vessels of blessing to the church and the world. Amen.

Pastor Colin Wong

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Theme for the Quarter :

THE MINISTRY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Combined Worship Service :

Rev Colin Wong

speaks on

The Holy Spirit Drawing

(Scripture Text : John 6:44, 65; Responsive Reading : John 6:22-59)

[*End of MM*]