

Benefits of Belief XI -- The Filling of the Spirit - Part III. The initial filling of the Spirit which may accompany the conversion experience of each new believer.

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Preacher: Marvin Wiseman

[0 : 00] Before you move away from Romans chapter 8, I just want to emphasize a couple of verses that Gary has read because the concept that we are going to be dealing with this morning is a little bit different as regards the subject, the filling of the Spirit. All through this passage, you will note that there is an obvious contrast made between the Spirit and the flesh. And this simply means that there is a very valid and important distinction that is realized within the lives of each and every one of us. First of all, if one is an unbeliever, has never come to faith in Christ, they are in the flesh and the flesh is all they have. That's their total operating package. That's all they can function with because that's the essence of their being. It is of the flesh.

And we are not talking about physical flesh as in flesh and bones. We are talking about the original Adamic nature in which they were born. Someone who has not become a believer in Jesus Christ remains in Adam. They are in the flesh. They are unregenerated. But if they have come to personal faith in Jesus Christ, they are in the sphere of the Spirit. That is, they now have a Spirit within their own life that has been energized and made alive through the miracle of regeneration by the Spirit of God. That's what is regenerated at the point of salvation. It is the internal Spirit.

The unbeliever, of course, has never experienced that. Even as a believer, with a Spirit that has been made alive by virtue of divine regeneration, even that believer may still function and operate out of the flesh. There is no justification for doing so. We do so because we choose to. You must understand that just because you have become a believer in Jesus Christ, it does not mean that you have a regenerated will. Your will or volition remains intact. You are responsible for it. And as a result, you, as an act of your will, may render your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. Or you may render the members of your body as instruments of unrighteousness.

It's entirely up to you. You do not have a volition or will that has been invaded by God and overcome by God so that He makes you do what you ought to do. You ought to know better than that. You know He doesn't do that. He gave you a volition and He respects your volition. And when we choose to go astray from the paths that we know are right, it is because we choose to do so. It is a deliberate act of the will. It is not something that we cannot help. It is something that we choose not to help.

[3 : 41] This means I am responsible. I have no one else to blame for my actions. No one. But only when I accept full responsibility like that can I affect a change.

Because as long as we are blaming someone else or some other condition or some other situation for our bad behavior, we can't do anything about it. We take up the victim role.

But once we accept responsibility and say, yes, I did that. I know I shouldn't have done that. It's my fault. I am to blame. I have no excuses. I'm responsible.

Taking ownership is a big, big item. And I'll promise you one thing. You will go nowhere spiritually if you're not willing to do that.

Now, here in verse 4, Paul says, In order that the requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh, that is, operate out of our old Adamic nature, but according to the Spirit.

[4 : 58] Now, what I am going to pose is this. When we are walking according to the Spirit, that is the filling of the Spirit.

That is being filled with the Spirit. And he goes on to say, Those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh.

In other words, this means that if we are according to the flesh, even as a believer, if we are thinking according to the flesh, it means that our minds are fixed on things of the flesh.

And this always has to do with temporal things. Always has to do with things of this world. cares, worries, desires, ambitions, all of these things that we tend to grope and grasp for are things of the world.

[6 : 04] Paul said in Colossians 3, If you, or since you are risen with Christ, seek those things which are above.

not the things that are on the earth. All that is saying is, if you have new life in Jesus Christ, if you have been regenerated by him, and you are a child of God, make sure that your focus and fixation is on things eternal and things spiritual.

things that really matter. Most of the stuff that we give so much time and attention to and so much concern about don't amount to a hill of beans in the big picture.

And yet, they consume so much of our mental and emotional energy and we worry and fret and stew and grasp and for this cloud of fluff that is forever fleeting and disappearing.

We're chasing after these rainbows and these pots of gold that don't amount to anything and yet, they seem to command the bulk of our time and attention and industry and everything else.

[7 : 28] And it's just crazy. It is operating out of the flesh as opposed to fixing our minds and hearts on things eternal. It means developing a value system that really matters.

That is the things of the spirit. And when we are functioning that way and operating that way, when that is our agenda and that is our goal is to be pleasing to God, that is the filling of the spirit as opposed to the filling of the flesh.

Now, let us go on and take just a couple of more verses here and then I want to present some propositions for you. Verse 8, Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

It is axiomatic if one is an unbeliever, they cannot please God. Even the plowing of the wicked is an abomination to God. There is no way that they can please God because everything they do is tainted with the flesh and therefore is unacceptable.

And if a believer is walking in the flesh, he can't please God either. There are lots of believers who are displeasing to God because they are consumed with matters of the flesh, things temporal.

[9 : 12] However, verse 9, you are not in the flesh but in the spirit. So, what excuse do you have for not pleasing God? This is the argument that Paul is saying.

You aren't in the flesh. you are in the spirit if you have been regenerated by the spirit of God. Now, if anyone does not have the spirit of Christ, he does not belong to him.

And if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, and we dealt with that in an earlier session, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness.

And then verse 12, so then brethren, we, talking about believers, we are under obligation. We have a debt to pay.

And our obligation is not to the flesh. We owe nothing to the flesh. Flesh has no claim upon us.

[10 : 13] The flesh cannot, it cannot commandeer us. It cannot order us about. We can succumb and give in to the flesh, but it is because we choose to do so.

It is not because the flesh has this incredible grip and strength and power over us so that we cannot help but give in to it.

No, that isn't the way it is at all. We have resources available to us that surpass those of the flesh, but they have to be triggered by our will.

will. And if we do not will it, we will not trigger it, and we will succumb. Do you know what you call that?

You call that sin. They are sins of the flesh. They may involve ego. Very often they do. It involves some kind of act or attitude of behavior that is displeasing to God and dishonoring to Jesus Christ.

[11 : 23] And every one of us without exception is very, very capable of that. So we are under obligation not to the flesh to live according to the flesh.

That is a fleshly lifestyle. Or if you are living according to the flesh, flesh, you must die. But if by the spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

That verse in and of itself really deserves exposition that we're just not able to give it now. For all who are being led by the spirit of God, these are sons of God.

And I am equating walking in the spirit with the filling of the spirit. I am equating being led of the spirit with the filling of the spirit. And all of this was birthed out of that passage that is so familiar in Ephesians chapter 5 when we were discussing benefits of being a believer and the ministry of the spirit of God is certainly one of those major benefits.

And we pointed out to you that God has provided several benefits for all who are believers. And we have undertaken an examination of one in particular for the past few sessions, that being the filling of the spirit.

[12:48] It is the key to victorious living for the Christian. You will recall in an earlier session we coupled this with the passages in Romans chapter 6 and about yielding our members as instruments of righteousness, etc.

how this is all connected. and we provided you with a 50 page photocopy from the book by Theodore Epp on the commentary on Romans 6 and quantities of them are available back there. The supply was exhausted. It has been replenished. If you did not get one earlier, please pick up one on your way out and it will be of real help to you. Noting earlier, we pointed out to you that the baptism of the spirit, the indwelling of the spirit, the sealing and adoption of the spirit are all works of the Holy Spirit that are realized at the point of personal salvation.

Every believer without exception has been a recipient of those gracious acts of the spirit of God. Even if you did not know it at the time and even if you do not know it now, it is still true.

Yet, the filling of the Holy Spirit is the result of the believer yielding himself to God and we are commanded to do so.

[14:09] This is not optional. This is a command that we are responsible to fulfill or we are disobedient in not doing so. This too, I believe, occurs at the point of personal salvation or what is called conversion.

conversion. So, let me just try to clarify this if I may. And I realize that it is starting to get fuzzy. I would suggest that virtually every believer has experienced what we are calling the filling of the Spirit at least once in their life.

more likely several times, but every believer probably at least once. And I say that at the point of conversion.

There was a precise time in your life, even if you cannot pinpoint it now, when you passed from death unto life, spiritually.

It may have been as a very young child. It may have been as a mature adult. And you may not be able to plot on a calendar exactly when that took place.

[15:37] I know my wife Barbara did not know exactly when she came to faith in Christ. She said it was somewhere when she was around 12 or 13 years of age, when her mother communicated the gospel to her and she began to understand and she made a decision for Christ.

But she does not know exactly when that was. I do. Because my circumstance and situation was radically different from hers. Very easy to pinpoint mine.

December 8, 1956, at about 3 o'clock in the afternoon on a Saturday. Something took place in my life.

My human spirit was regenerated. And I passed from spiritual death unto spiritual life. The filling of the spirit is that which occurs when God consciousness, God awareness is foremost in your mind and pervades your very being so that it occupies all of your thinking.

You are caught up in it at that moment. I think this is probably what happens at the point of salvation when just about everyone is converted.

[17:07] Whenever that is. Now, it may be very difficult for a young child, someone very young, to be able to get their mind around this. But I'm simply saying that when we come to faith in Jesus Christ, at the point of salvation, our minds and hearts are at that precise time, so focused on and so filled with the idea of God and of Christ and of what was accomplished in order to secure our salvation, everything else is incidental.

Everything else is pushed aside. Everything else is secondary. The thing you are focused on and thinking about at that moment that fills your mind and heart is Christ and him crucified.

The thoughts of God, you are thinking after him. Everything else is extraneous. What is it that you are filled with at that moment? I think that's our text.

We are filled with the Spirit at that moment. We are saturated. He occupies our thinking. It may even be a euphoric kind of thing.

It may be very difficult to describe. The feelings and emotions, especially if you were converted as an adult and you have more of an ability to appreciate those things.

[18 : 41] You may well remember what it was like. You may well remember the feeling, the sensation that you had, the thing that you were preoccupied with.

You were then filled with the Spirit. I want to make one thing as clear as I can. The filling of the Spirit, contrary to the way it is often expressed and often believed, is not some mystical experience whereby the Spirit of God just overwhelms you and subjects you or commandeers you or overpowers you and gives you some kind of special ability or whatever.

That's not what we're talking about. The filling of the Spirit as set forth here in Scripture and as commanded is much more practical and available to every believer much more so than you would suspect.

I forever want to dismiss the idea from your mind that the filling of the Spirit is some really rare unusual thing that God has reserved for only a few special elite people.

That's nonsense. We are all as believers commanded to be filled with the Spirit.

[20 : 16] Ephesians 5. That is to be the norm for the Christian. And all it means is your priorities, your agenda, your lifestyle, your desire, your goals are all God-centered.

Not self-centered. self-centered. If they are self-centered, you are walking in the flesh and you are serving the flesh.

You cannot serve the flesh and the Spirit simultaneously. You're going one way or the other. What is it that dominates your life?

What is it that dominates your thinking? What are you filled with? You know, everybody's filled with something. Some people are just, have you ever heard the expression, he is so full of himself?

What is that?

That's the flesh. Some people are so filled with it, you can see it sticking out their ears. They are totally self-absorbed. It is all about me.

[21 : 32] me. Well, what is all about me? Everything is all about me. That's the flesh and it just crawls all over us.

It is Adam through and through. As opposed to walking in the Spirit where our minds are focused and centered on that which really matters.

There's a little song, a little chorus that we used to sing, with eternity's values in view, Lord, with eternity's values in view, may I live each day for Jesus with eternity's values in view.

only one life will soon be passed. Only what's done for Christ will last.

All the rest of it is fluff and stuff, sinking sand, evaporating right before your eyes, passing away.

The lust of the world, pride of life, lust of the eyes, all of these things are passing away.

[23 : 04] But he that doeth the will of God shall abide for it. What does it mean to do the will of God? Filled with the Spirit.

That's all. This is not some fanatical, mysterious, mumbo-jumbo type thing. this is day in, day out, conscious, consistent, living with Jesus Christ at the center of your life and everything goes out from that core.

He is the very hub and everything goes out from. That's a Christ-centered life as opposed to a self-centered life. Self-centered lives come naturally.

We all come with one of them. It's standard equipment. We are born that way. And when we feed it and feed it and feed it, we just become more and more and more egocentric and everything becomes more and more and more about us.

But when we are regenerated by the Spirit of God, we are given the ability to march to a different drumbeat. And that's because Christ is there at the center of our life.

[24 : 20] That's all it means to live a Spirit-filled life. And if we do, guess what you're going to produce? Of course, you know. You're going to produce love, joy, peace, long-suffering, goodness, gentleness, meekness, temperance.

That's the fruit of the Spirit. That comes from living a Spirit-filled life. The filling of the Spirit may occur multiple times in the life of the believer.

And I am satisfied that it does. Do you know why? Because we are not consistent. We cycle in and out of the filling and we go from the filling of the Spirit to the filling of the flesh.

To the filling of the Spirit to the filling of the flesh. That's part and parcel of who we are because we do not have a Spirit that is, what shall I say?

Totally sanctified. The time is coming when we will, but we do not now. And the point I'm saying is our will remains intact. Our will remains intact.

[25 : 30] And you can be a believer who is thinking and operating out of the filling of the Spirit and along comes a temptation. What are you going to do?

if you say no to the temptation, you continue right on with the filling of the Spirit. If you succumb and give in to the temptation, guess what?

You have just set the filling of the Spirit aside and you have taken up a nice healthy dose of the flesh. And you operate in the flesh. And what brings you back to the filling of the Spirit?

an awareness of where you are? A repentance? An acknowledgement of your sin to God?

Thanking Him for the forgiveness that He provided through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ?

And what do you experience then? You come back to your central core, back to the focus again, and you are back on track walking in the Spirit. Until the next time you are confronted with some kind of temptation.

[26 : 39] temptation. What I am saying, and the thing I want you to get now, is that the will is at the center of this all the time. You can go either way you choose.

The will is yours. so, if a believer may be filled with the Spirit multiple times, it can only mean that in between those times of filling, he is not filled with the Spirit.

He's filled with something else, and that is the flesh. What happened? I'll tell you what happened.

Romans 6 happened. We yield ourselves as instruments to the flesh, then we are filled with the flesh, and the will remains active and intact.

Let me put it this way. We are filled with whatever we yield ourselves to. that thing to which we yield becomes the dominating force and influence in our lives.

So, the question is, filled with what? And if it is the flesh, it can take any one of a hundred avenues.

[28 : 06] Filled with the flesh may mean that you are filled with a love of money.

Your consuming passion is to acquire and to gain money. I talked with a young man one time who was about 32 years of age, and he said his ambition in life was to become a millionaire by the time he was 40.

money. And I asked him why he was willing to set his sights so low. Here was a young man who was consumed with the idea of getting rich.

Everything about his life was focused on that area. That was his driving engine.

that was the thing that propelled him. It was to make a million dollars. Some people walking in the flesh, their minds are filled with pornography.

[29 : 20] They spend hours on the computer looking at pornographic sites, buying pornographic material and movies and such.

they are what they are filled with. Whatever you are filled with dominates your life, dominates your thinking, establishes your agenda, orders your priorities.

Whatever it is you are filled with, if it is your job, your business, that's the thing that consumes you, that occupies all of your mental and emotional energy.

That's all you think about. As opposed to what the psalmist said, God is not in all their thoughts.

Now, it doesn't mean that for God to be in all your thoughts, it doesn't mean that you go around all day thinking to yourself, God, God, God, God, God, and you never think of anything.

It means that God has his rightful place in your life, and you assess and evaluate everything from that point.

[30 : 35] He comes first in everything. That's a spirit-filled life. We are filled with whatever we yield ourselves to.

That thing to which we yield becomes the dominating force and influence in our lives. And the admonition of scripture is, to be filled with the spirit. And that spiritual values, spiritual principles, spiritual ideals, they become the dominating force and influence in our lives.

We, we ourselves determine that with which we will be filled. That is so important to understand.

We ourselves determine that with which we will be filled. That's your decision. Some references that I think will help shed some light on this are all found in the book of Acts.

And I want you to look at them because they are perfect examples of what we are talking about now. And the first has to do with Acts chapter 2.

[31 : 59] And I would like you to just begin with verse 1. Now you know if you have been here for any length of time at all, know our position regarding dispensational distinctives and how we view the day of Pentecost.

And yet there is a principle here regarding the filling of the Spirit and how it ties in with what we are talking about that I want you to see. So I am not speaking about this passage from a dispensational point of view but from the point of view of the ministry of the Spirit of God.

And when the day of Pentecost had come they were all together in one place and suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Now let me say this if I may.

This is at the conclusion of a ten day period of time. following the recent ascension of Christ he told them to stay in Jerusalem until they were endued with power not many days hence.

So here are these disciples apostles. The Lord has been resurrected 50 days earlier.

[33 : 11] They were with him for 40 of those days. At the end of the 40 days he ascends to heaven and they are told to wait in Jerusalem until they are endued with power.

Now let me ask you a question. What do you think was on their minds? What do you think consumed their thoughts during those ten days?

Do you think the only thing that Peter could think of during that time was, man I sure wish I was back on the lake of Galilee. I sure wish I was up there fishing again.

I wonder if there's any new boats out this year. I'd really like, is it a stretch to suggest that after the ascension of their Lord, after he commanded them to wait in Jerusalem until they were endued with power not many days hence, is it a stretch to suggest that these people were really fixated on what was going to happen, how it was going to happen, what this endowment with power was going to mean, and relive the incident of Christ's ascension right before their very eyes as they watched him go into heaven, and the angels that were standing there.

Is it too much to suggest that these men's minds were filled with that? They were overcome with that. They lived in heightened anticipation and expectation of what all this was going to mean, and they talked to one another about it, I think it just consumed their thinking, and their planning, and their expectations.

[35 : 08] And let's read on. Verse 3, There appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues.

things. Now, we tend to think, we tend to think, Pentecostals and non-Pentecostals tend to think that this filling of the Spirit was miraculous, and that's what enabled them to speak in these unknown languages.

I don't think that's the thing that's being said at all. I think the filling of the Spirit is something that they experienced because of what their minds and hearts were filled with at the time.

And it wasn't because they were filled with the Holy Spirit that the Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost. I do not think that's an association that can be made at all.

In other words, let me put it this way. Most of our Pentecostal friends would take the position, if you were filled with the Spirit, you could speak in tongues too. Here's the proof.

[36 : 24] I don't think that's what it's saying at all. There are going to be other times when they are going to be filled with the Spirit and there won't be any speaking in tongues. And all I am saying is they did not speak in unknown languages because they were filled with the Spirit.

That's the natural assumption. And it seems to be saying that, but it isn't saying that. The filling of the Spirit is completely separate and apart from that. And the speaking in the unknown languages was just a phenomena for that day.

It wasn't because they were filled with the Spirit. Look at verse 13. Others were mocking and saying, I know what they're filled with.

They're filled with wine. These guys are drunk. That's what they're filled with. wine. Well, that was their conclusion because even they knew that you tend to act in accordance with whatever it is you are focused on and filled with.

And these seem to be expressing some kind of weird presence that they couldn't identify.

[37 : 46] and the only thing they could attribute it to was these guys are really smacked. I mean, they're just but it wasn't that at all, of course. Now, if you will look at chapter 2 and verse 38.

Well, verse 37. after Peter had preached this tremendous message and had laid these people out as a nation for having crucified their Messiah, it says, when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart.

That means Peter's message really penetrated, really got through to them. And they said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, brethren, what shall we do?

And Peter said to them, repent. You need to reverse yourself, you need to completely change your mind about Jesus Christ and who he is, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, which you earlier rejected, for the forgiveness of your sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Now, they did not even possess the Holy Spirit because they were not even believers. May I suggest that when these did, verse 41, those who had received his word.

[39 : 22] What do you think they were filled with when they received his word? just coming from a position of repentance?

If they complied with what Peter said when he told them, you've crucified the Messiah. This is the one God sent. You put him on a cross.

And 3,000 of these people agreed. They said, man's right. Can't believe we did that. But we did. We did that. We can't undo it. What can we do? And Peter said, you can completely reverse yourself. Real repentance means you cannot undo what you did.

But would you if you could? repentant if the answer to that is yes, that's real repentance.

[40 : 30] Now, none of us has the power to do that. None of us has the power to undo something we did earlier. But would you if you could?

That's a test of repentance. I think there are 3,000 people here who are saying, yes, we certainly would. Do you know what else you could say about these people?

They got it. They saw the light. There's an even old gospel song written about that.

I saw the light. I saw the light. That's what this means. Now, if they repented, and I think they did, and they submitted themselves to John's baptism, if they saw the light, if they got it, what do you think they were filled with?

What do you think they were consumed with? What do you think was the only thing they were thinking of and about? Would not their hearts and minds have been focused on what they did in orchestrating the crucifixion of Christ, and how wrong they were, and how sorry they were, and how they would love to undo it if they could?

[41 : 53] I think they were not only receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit, they were filled with the Spirit. They were filled with something. They were filled with awe, filled with amazement, filled with wonder, and filled with God-centered thoughts.

things. I have just a couple of more references, and look if you would please, at chapter 3, and verse 9.

Acts chapter 3, and verse 9. With a leap, this is the man at the temple gate, beautiful, he stood upright and began to walk, and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping.

This is right after Peter and John had been used of God to heal this man who was born blind, or laying from his mother's womb, walking and leaping and praising God, and all the people saw him walking and praising God, and they were taking note of him as being the one who used to sit at the beautiful gate of the temple to beg alms.

And they were, well, look what they were filled with. They were filled with wonder and amazement at what happened to them.

[43 : 11] In other words, their minds and hearts were just completely overtaken, consumed by the reality of this actual miracle right before their eyes.

They were just awestruck, dumbfounded, speechless, filled with wonder, filled with amazement. You see, all I'm saying is whatever you're filled with is whatever you're filled with. Believers are to be filled with the Spirit.

That is synonymous with being filled with, thoughts of, focus on, center of, God, who he is, what it's about, your role, your position in this, your responsibility, his provision, it is simply a God-ordered, God-centered life, which is supposed to be the norm for all believers.

believers. And if you take believers who are filled with that, they are going to make an incredible impact wherever they are.

[44 : 27] Can't help it. Because their attitudes and their actions become infectious. That's the way it's supposed to be.

Chapter 6. I told you I only had one more. I lied. I guess that wasn't filled with the Spirit, but, oh, well, this is so good, but I, I, I, I just, I have to quit.

I do have a few more references, but I'll reserve those for, for next. Tell me this. Have you gotten a little bit of a different handle on the subject of the filling of the Spirit?

I have. And I've been struggling with trying to get this thing organized in my mind of what it means and what it does not mean. And my suspicion is that for so many, many years that I have been in the ministry, I have always thought of this simply as a supernatural act on the part of God that the believer has very little to do with and the Spirit of God just kind of arbitrarily comes upon whomever he comes upon and manifests himself to them and this person just kind of mysteriously functions and operates under this compelling power of the Spirit of God.

and you know, that's the way it is in some places of Scripture, particularly in the Old Testament. But that isn't the norm of what Paul is talking about and the filling of the Spirit.

[46 : 22] It is a very doable. Did you get that? It is very doable. Listen, this is not something reserved for super Christians and out of the reach of most of us.

That is not true at all. This is supposed to be the norm. And when you are filled with the Spirit, you are doing nothing more than walking after the Spirit.

You are living out the dictates of Scripture. You are functioning under the authority of Scripture and it is reflected in your attitude and in your actions.

Christians, this is the normal Christian life. Filled with all the fullness of God.

Father, for what we do not understand, we pray for light. We thank you for what we have grasped.

We know that our understanding is far from as clear and as full as we would like.

[47 : 29] would you be pleased to take what little we may have gained from today and use it as a stepping stone to further information and appreciation and realization in the lives of each and every one of us.

Thank you for your truth. Thank you for your great love and patience with us regarding the truth.

Dismiss us now, we pray, with your blessing in Christ's name. Amen. Amen.