Filled with the Spirit

"Be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord."
—Ephesians 5:18,19

THE EXPRESSION, 'FILLED with the Spirit,' is used a number of times in the New Testament, but not always with the same meaning. It was first spoken by an angel in a proclamation to Zacharias concerning his wife Elizabeth, assuring him that in answer to his prayer she would bear a son, and that his name should be called John. The angel further said, "Thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God." (Luke 1:14-16) Here the thought simply is that John the Baptist would be endued with God's power and blessing to enable him to accomplish a special work of reformation in Israel.

In Luke 1:41, we are told that when Mary, the mother of Jesus, visited Elizabeth and heard her salutation, "the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit." This denotes Elizabeth's great rejoicing over the miraculous events that were occurring in connection with herself and Mary. The Spirit, or power of God, was being exercised through both these women, and to their great joy.

Luke 1:67 informs us that Zacharias was "filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied." Here is a work of the Holy Spirit similar to what occurred during Old Testament times, when the prophets "spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." (II Pet. 1:21) Zacharias was undoubtedly happily in harmony with Truth and enthusiastic over the prophecy that the Holy Spirit enabled him to utter, but the Spirit did not beget him to a new life, neither did it fill him with the fruits of righteousness.

In John 3:34, it is said concerning Jesus, "He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him." This surely implies that Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit. He was so filled, and so overwhelmingly controlled in his every thought, word and deed, that everything he said, and every act of his consecrated, Spirit-filled life, expressed the mind or will of his Father who sent him. Jesus' filling with the Spirit occurred at Jordan, although even before this there was a certain preparation, in that he doubtless had acquainted himself well with the Spirit-inspired testimony contained in the "volume of the book"—that is, the Old Testament Scriptures.—Ps. 40:7

As we have noted in a previous article, the Spirit of God came upon Jesus as a miraculous revealing power, enabling him to understand the meaning of the Old Testament Scriptures. The Spirit which filled Jesus' life empowered him to perform miracles—to cast out devils, open blind eyes, cleanse lepers, heal the sick, and raise the dead. Not all the Lord's followers may expect to be filled with the Spirit in this sense.

When the promise to send the Holy Spirit was fulfilled at Pentecost, there were miraculous manifestations of this 'shedding forth' of the holy power of God. One of these is mentioned in Acts 2:4, which reads, "They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." Here, being filled with the Spirit denotes another miraculous exercise of Divine power, enabling those who were filled to speak in foreign tongues without the necessity of previous study. This was unlike the manner in which the Holy Spirit empowered Jesus to perform miracles. Later, the apostles performed miracles other than speaking with tongues.

In Acts 9:17, our attention is called to a similar instance involving a filling with the Spirit. In this case, it is Saul of Tarsus who, struck down by a blinding light on the way to Damascus, and hearing the question, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" (vs. 4) had, by the Lord's direction, gone to a certain home in Damascus to await further instructions from the Lord. Those instructions were sent to him by a disciple named Ananias. Entering the room where he found the converted persecutor of the church, Ananias said, "Brother Saul, the Lord,

even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit." Saul, or Paul, was appointed by God to take the place of Judas, and it was essential, therefore, that he be filled with the Spirit even as the other apostles were at Pentecost. He was thus filled, because he was able to perform miracles and speak with tongues, even as they.

One of the powers given Jesus and the apostles by the miraculous infilling of the Spirit was the ability to read the hearts of those with whom they came in contact. It was upon this basis that Jesus was able to call the Pharisees hypocrites. Paul was given this ability. In Acts 13:6-12, we are presented with a very interesting example of this. "Elymas the sorcerer" undertook to interfere with Paul's work, especially Paul's effort to interest a certain "deputy" in the Gospel of Christ. We read, "Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Spirit, set his eyes on him [the sorcerer], And said, O full of all subtlety and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand." Paul was able to execute this punishment upon the sorcerer because he was filled with the Holy Spirit.

A further miraculous manifestation of the infilling of the Holy Spirit is recounted by Paul in his letter to the church at Rome, writing, "I will not

dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed, Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ." (Rom. 15:18,19) Every ambassador of Christ should preach the Gospel by the power of the Holy Spirit, but it was given to the twelve apostles only to proclaim the message on a background of 'mighty signs and wonders.'

ALL DISCIPLES MAY BE FILLED

While Jesus and the apostles were the only ones of the New Creation class who were filled with the Spirit in the sense of being endued with miracle-working power from God, all the true disciples of the Master may be filled with the Spirit in the sense that God's thoughts and plans as revealed in his Word, and his will for them, become the all-absorbing, all-consuming, overwhelming power in their lives. It is this that is indicated in our text.

Immediately preceding this admonition, and in contrast with it, Paul writes, "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit." Clearly the reference here is to the intoxicating effect of strong drink. To be 'drunk with wine' means to be brought fully under the control of its intoxicating power. One who is thus intoxicated is unable properly to exercise his own mind. This is wrong, Paul indicates, and instead of this, the Christian should endeavor to be filled with the Spirit. The thought is that if we are filled with the Spirit, our fleshly minds will also be rendered

subservient, not to the stupefying effect of alcohol, but to the will of God. God's thoughts, revealing his will through his written Word, will take control so that our chief concern, our only concern in all things, will be to do his will.

FILLING THROUGH FELLOWSHIP

Having written this exhortation to be filled with the Spirit, Paul then suggests one of the ways it can be accomplished. It is through 'speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.' In a general way this suggests the privilege and the value of Christian fellowship in terms of being filled with the Spirit. In this text he seems primarily to be describing a praise service, the use of spiritual songs.

The inspirational power of music is well known. The martial strains of a military band have encouraged many young men to die for their country. So the psalms and hymns and spiritual songs of the Christian have an inspirational value in his life. When sung together, as in an assembly, the result is salutary, helping all who participate to be more fully devoted to the LORD through the renouncing of self-will, that the will of God might rule more fully in their consecrated lives.

As a rule, however, these sessions of united praise to the LORD are not a large factor in any congregation of the saints. On the other hand, the entire plan of God for his New Creation and for the world is as a melodious, harmonious song. Indeed, it is designated the "song of Moses" and "of the Lamb." (Rev. 15:3; 14:3) In Psalm 40:3, also in Revelation

14:3, it is described as a "new song." This marvelously harmonious unfolding of God's eternal purpose through Christ Jesus, as set forth by the Holy Spirit throughout God's written Word, when understood and appreciated, eclipses every other consideration of life. To know it, to believe it, to obey it, to have our lives consumed by it, is to be filled with the Spirit.

Sincere, energetic Bible study is, then, one of the potent means of being filled with the Spirit. Because of our faulty memories we cannot expect to read the promises of God once, and retain them in our minds. Besides, the Bible is so written that each time we open its Spirit-inspired pages we see some rare gem of Truth never before noticed. The poet has well said,

'Tis a mine, aye, deeper too,
Than can mortal ever go.
Search we may for many years,
Still some new, rich gem appears.
(*Hymns of Dawn*)

As we thus plumb deeper and deeper into the revealing thoughts of God recorded in the Word, and our minds and hearts yield in a rejoicing desire to bring our lives into harmony with each revealing ray of light that beams forth from it, we become increasingly filled with the Holy Spirit. Jesus received the Spirit without measure. He was perfect. We are imperfect, and the "motions of sins" in our "flesh" bar the complete infilling of the Spirit for which our hearts yearn. (Rom. 7:5) We should strive to be more emptied of self that the Holy Spirit might fill, and more fully control, our thinking, our speaking, and our acting.

FILLED THROUGH PRAYER

Jesus said to his disciples, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" (Luke 11:13) Here is an important promise, for it assures us that one of the means of being filled with the Spirit is through prayer. Through prayer, we claim the promises of God, and since we know he wants us to be filled with his Spirit, it is proper, and needful, that we earnestly petition him to this end.

But we should not expect a miraculous answer to our prayers for the Holy Spirit. The miracle-working power of God has already operated in furnishing us with his written Word, the source of his thoughts for all the New Creation class. It is true that God still uses his unlimited power in shaping his providence for us, that we might be brought into contact with his Word. He has given his angels charge over us to see that nothing can happen which will defeat his purpose in our lives. (Ps. 91:11) But in asking him for his Spirit, we must not expect that God will miraculously fill our minds with his thoughts.

When we ask God for his Holy Spirit, we must cooperate with him in the zealous use of the provision he has made whereby we might be filled. We must go to his Word. If we could but fully realize, as the consecrated people of God, that when we open the pages of the Bible and read its wonderful messages, we are looking into the mind of our Heavenly Father, and there discovering his will for us, and his thoughts toward us, how much more precious would be the hours spent in the study of

his Word! Actually, they are hours spent with God. David wrote that God's thoughts to "us-ward" are more than can be numbered. (Ps. 40:5) Those we are informed of are all in the written Word, put there by the power of the Holy Spirit, that in studying it we may be filled with the Spirit.

FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT

The infilling of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the children of God is manifested in the fruits of righteousness. Paul wrote to the brethren at Rome, "The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit. And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another." (Rom. 15:13,14) Here we observe that being filled with 'joy and peace' is a result of the indwelling Spirit of God. To be filled with the Spirit also means to be 'full of goodness' and 'filled with all knowledge.'

Paul describes being filled with the Spirit as being "filled with all the fulness of God." (Eph. 3:19) Obviously, God does not personally enter into his people, but his Spirit does, his holy mind, which he has caused to be mirrored through his Word. Paul also speaks of Christ dwelling in our hearts. We will quote this whole revealing passage: "That he [God] would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And

to know the love of Christ, which passeth [human] knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."—Eph. 3:16-19

In Philippians 1:9-11, Paul, without using the words Holy Spirit, nevertheless reveals some of the qualities of a Spirit-filled life. We quote, "This I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God." No one could be filled with the 'fruits of righteousness' without being filled with the Spirit, for the fruits of righteousness are the fruits of the Holy Spirit of God, the result of the Holy Spirit of Truth working in the heart and life.

Again, in Colossians 1:8-11 we read, "Who [Epaphras] also declared unto us your love in the Spirit. For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power [Spirit], unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness."

This is a remarkable summary of many of the things that result from being filled with the Spirit. It means to be 'filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.' If we are thus filled, we will 'walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing.' Also, we will be 'fruitful

in every good work,' the 'fruit of the Spirit' being abundantly manifest in our daily lives. Being filled with the Spirit also results in an increasing knowledge of the LORD, through the Word of Truth, which, in turn, will lead to our being 'strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power.' This power, this strength of the LORD which, if the daily portion of the Spirit-filled life, enables the Christian to be patient in trial, and long-suffering in the face of every difficulty—not merely in the sense of enduring what cannot be changed, but with 'joyfulness.'

The Holy Spirit of Truth with which every Gospel Age saint of God may, and will, be filled if he is living up to his privileges, is a gift from God. Paul mentions some of its characteristics in his second letter to Timothy. He speaks of stirring up the 'gift of God' that was in Timothy. (II Tim. 1:6) Then Paul adds, "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."—vs. 7

As we have seen, the Spirit of God is a spirit of power. His Spirit-inspired Word is a mighty power in the lives of those who yield to its directives, and are strengthened by its promises. Besides, the Spirit of God, operating through whatever agencies he may choose to shape his providence in our lives, is 'Almighty.' He alone, through the instructions of his Word, and in whatever other ways his wisdom may choose, is able to cause "all things" to "work together" for the good of his people. (Rom. 8:28) His record of achievement always has been, is now, and ever shall be, perfect. Can we doubt his mercy, his ability, who through life has been our guide?

The Spirit of God with which his people are filled is also one of love. It displaces selfishness, and all of its characteristics of envy, malice, hatred, and strife. It leads to self-sacrifice on behalf of others and kindliness in association with them. Christians who lack these qualities may question the extent to which they are filled with the Spirit.

Paul says that God has also given us the Spirit of a sound mind. This is because he has given us his own thoughts, his own mind, by which in our consecration we have agreed to be governed. The Holy Spirit of God does not change the contour of the brain to give us soundness of mind. It is simply that we have renounced our own will and ways, and are endeavoring to be guided in our thoughts, words, and actions by the holy thoughts of God as he has miraculously caused them to be recorded in his written Word.

The mind and will of God that guides the Christian may not seem sound in the judgment of the world. In fact, the reverse is true. When the Apostle Paul reasoned on the Truth before King Agrippa and Festus, this latter Roman ruler of Judea replied, "Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad." (Acts 26:24) The Greek word here translated 'learning' is the same one used by Paul in II Timothy 3:15, and translated 'Scriptures.'

In this text, Paul notes that from a child Timothy had known the Holy Scriptures, the Scriptures that in the next verse he says were given "by inspiration of God," and therefore "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."—vs. 16

Evidently Festus recognized that Paul's reasoning was based upon the sacred writings of the Old Testament, and his claim was that these had made Paul 'mad.' Surely Festus did not consider that the study of the Scriptures had given Paul the spirit of a sound mind. Paul's reply was, "I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness." (Acts 26:25) All the Spirit-inspired words in the 'volume of the book' are 'words of truth and soberness.' To the extent the Lord's people set aside their own reasoning and their own preferences and ways, and are governed by the inspired words of Truth and soberness, they will have the spirit of a sound mind.

But, as we have noted, the Christian's mind is not sound according to the human standards. Peter, before he had received the Holy Spirit, did not think Jesus was being guided by a sound mind in voluntarily surrendering himself to his enemies to be put to death. Paul's friends did not think he was acting wisely by insisting on going to Jerusalem where he knew that bonds and imprisonment awaited him. It is true, nevertheless, that the Holy Spirit of Truth does direct those who are controlled by it to lay down their lives in sacrifice. Paul admonished that we present our bodies a living sacrifice, explaining that this is our 'reasonable' service—a service, that is, which by God's standards is based on reason, reflecting the exercise of a sound mind.—Rom. 12:1

Paul sums up beautifully what it means to have the spirit of a sound mind and to be filled with the Spirit. He says "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the

things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Spirit teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."—I Cor. 2:9-14 ■