

## The Six Ways the NT Talks about the “Filling of the Spirit”

Kingdom Life Church

### A. *That which happened to Jesus’ followers (the 120) on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2*

1. This was in fulfillment of Jesus’ promise that they would be “clothed with power from on high,” i.e., infused with supernatural power (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8; 2:4, 33).
2. Both John the Baptist (Mark 1:8/Matt 3:11/Luke 3:16) and Jesus (Acts 1:4-5) referred to this as being “baptized with the Spirit.” It appears to be what happens when the Spirit is received at salvation (Acts 2:38; 9:17; 1 Cor 12:13; Eph 1:13-14; cf. Rom 8:9), though in Acts sometimes it is associated with or imparted through (?) prayer and the laying on of hands (Acts 8:15-17; 9:17; 19:6).
3. “It seems clear from comparing Acts 1:5 with Acts 1:8 and Acts 2:4 that baptism with the Holy Spirit and being filled with the Holy Spirit are to be equated. Nothing is to be found in the book of Acts (and Acts is the principal source of information about the person and work of the Spirit in the literature under discussion) to indicate that the Holy Spirit once imparted was ever taken away from those to whom it was given—church or individual” (G. F. Hawthorne, s.v. “Holy Spirit,” *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments* [IVP; 1997], 494).

### B. *Day-by-day filling as an ongoing aspect where one’s life is to be characterized by the attributes of God*

#### 1. **Ephesians 5:15-21**

#### **Colossians 3:16-17**

<sup>15</sup> Look carefully, then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, <sup>16</sup> making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. <sup>17</sup> Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. <sup>18</sup> And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be [continually] filled with the Spirit [*plērousthe en pneumati*], <sup>19</sup> addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, <sup>20</sup> giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>21</sup> submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. (ESV and so throughout unless indicated otherwise.)

<sup>16</sup> Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. <sup>17</sup> And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

2. **Eph 3:16-19:** “<sup>3:16</sup> I pray that according to the wealth of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inner person, <sup>3:17</sup> that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, so that, because you have been rooted and grounded in love, <sup>3:18</sup> you may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, <sup>3:19</sup> and thus to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled up (*plērōthēte*) to all the fullness (*plērōma*) of God [i.e., exhibit the attributes of God in full measure]” (NET).
3. **Acts 6:3, 5a:** “Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full (*plērēs*) of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. . . . And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full (*plērēs*) of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip” (ESV).
  - a. “These sayings clearly refer to the enduring possession” (G. Delling, s.v. *plērēs*, *TDNT* 6 [1968] 285).
  - b. Luke’s description of Barnabas in **Acts 11:24** fits here too: “he was a good man, full (*plērēs*) of the Holy Spirit and of faith.”

4. **Acts 13:52:** “And the disciples *were filled* [*plēroō*] with joy and with the Holy Spirit.”
5. I recommend reading Cru’s (Campus Crusade for Christ) foundational message on the day-by-day filling or controlling ministry of the Holy Spirit at <http://www.cru.org/train-and-grow/transferable-concepts/be-filled-with-the-holy-spirit.html>

C. ***Subsequent “fillings” or “baptisms” (Luke does not distinguish the two) or “anointings” (my terminology) with the Spirit.***

1. These enable believers “to go beyond the limits of their own innate human abilities so as to carry out a God-given mission in fulfillment of Jesus’ words, ‘You will receive power [focused power, power to achieve some good end] when the Holy Spirit comes upon you’ (Acts 1:8)” (Hawthorne, 494). The following seem to fit here:
2. Effective speech or powerful prophetic preaching (Acts 4:8, 13; 6:10 [cf. 6:5]; Luke 12:11-12)
3. “[W]hen faced with real threats to their life and welfare, supernormal courage to speak the word of the Lord with boldness and carry to completion the task they believed God wanted them to accomplish regardless of the consequences (Acts 4:31; 7:54–56; 20:23; . . . )” (Hawthorne, 494-95). Cf. Eph 6:19-20; Acts 13:46; 14:3.
4. “The Holy Spirit on occasion lifts certain people in an ecstatic, trancelike state above their confining human limitations and heightens their natural faculties, intellectual and spiritual, so that they are able to see and know things other people cannot see and know (Acts 7:55; 10:19; 20:23; Rev 1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10; . . . ), to peer into the future and predict events yet to come (Acts 11:28; 21:12). Perhaps in a similar ecstatic manner, the Holy Spirit comes to the aid of God’s people in prayer (Jude 20; cf. Rom 8:15–16, 26–37; Gal 4:6; Jn 4:23–24; . . . )” (Hawthorne, 495). Cf. Luke 1:41-42, 67.
5. Inspired guidance (Ac 13:2; 16:6-10) and visions leading to or promising protection and assurance (Acts 18:9-10; 23:11; 27:17-21, 23-24).
6. Inspired insight that results in bold steps to heal (Acts 3:1-11; 14:9-10) and the performance of miracles which advance and confirm the gospel message (Acts 13:9-12; 14:3). See Brother Yun and Paul Hattaway, *The Heavenly Man* (Mill Hill, London: Monarch, 2002), 193.

\*\* There is some overlap with the above in D.

D. ***Gracious appointments for a particular ministry, office, or martyr experience***

1. **Luke 1:15:** “[F]or he [John the Baptist] will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled (*plēsthēsetai*) with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb.”
2. **Acts 7:55-56:** “But he, full (*plērēs*) of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. <sup>56</sup> And he said, ‘Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.’”
3. **Acts 9:17:** When Ananias told Saul of Tarsus on the Damascus road that he would be “filled with the Holy Spirit” (**Acts 9:17**), this was the occasion when God gave Paul his apostolic ministry to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15; 26:16-18).
  - a. Paul refers to this in **Eph 3:7** when he says: “Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God’s grace, which was given me by the working of his power.” Paul refers to this “ministry appointment” in several places in his letters (cf. Eph 3:2; Col 1:25).

- b. When David prays in **Psalm 51:11**, “Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me,” I believe he is asking God not to remove the spirit or office of kingship from him. This is what God did to King Saul because of his disobedience (cf. 1 Sam 9:15-17; 10:1-9; 11:14-15; 13:13-14).
- c. Some believe that Paul is referring to the real possibility of losing his salvation in 1 Cor 9:27 when he says, “lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.” However, like King David in Psalm 51:11, he may be referring to the possibility of being disqualified from his apostolic office. About twelve years later in his second Roman imprisonment just before his death, Paul was able to say in 2 Tim 4:7: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.”

#### E. **Anointing for powerful ministry in “emergency” or “heavy” situations**

1. **Acts 4:8**: “Then Peter, *filled with the Holy Spirit*, said to them, ‘Rulers of the people and elders, . . .’” This is how Luke introduces Peter’s bold address to the Sanhedrin. Craig Keener writes in his *IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* on Acts 4:8: “In the Old Testament, the Spirit often came upon God’s servants for specific tasks (e.g., Ex 35:31; Judg 14:6) and is especially associated with prophecy and prophetic speech (i.e., the ability to speak what God is saying).”
2. **Acts 4:31**: “And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all *filled with the Holy Spirit* and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.”
3. **Acts 13:9-10**: “But Saul, who was also called Paul, filled (*plēstheis*) with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him <sup>10</sup> and said, ‘You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy, will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord?’”
4. **Phil 1:19**: “for I know that through your prayers and the help [or supply] of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance.” Cf. also the help of the Spirit for boldness in witness (cf. Eph 6:18-20)  
 “As we have noted elsewhere [See, e.g., on 1 Thess 4:8; Gal 3:5; Eph 5:18.], Paul has none of our hang-ups over whether a Spirit person can ‘receive the Spirit.’ If that language does not work well for us, it did for Paul. He could not imagine the Spirit in static terms. Hence he can speak of believers’ [*sic*] being ‘given’ the Spirit (1 Thess 4:8), or being ‘supplied’ with the Spirit (Gal 3:5; here), or of fanning the Spirit into flame (2 Tim 1:6). For Paul the resident Spirit is ever being given or ‘supplied’ anew in the individual believer’s or community’s life. So here. Paul knows his own need of the Spirit in a fresh way if Christ is to be magnified in him personally in the soon-to-be-unfolding events of his present imprisonment” (Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, 741-42).

#### F. **Filling for charismatic praise to God (i.e., speaking in tongues)**

1. **Acts 2:2-4**: “And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled [*eplērōsen* c. acc. from *plēroō*] the entire house where they were sitting. <sup>3</sup>And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. <sup>4</sup>And they were all filled [*eplēsthēsan* from *pimplēmi*] with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.”
  - a. What did the tongues consist of? **Acts 2:11** says these Spirit-filled believers were “telling in our own tongues the mighty works [*ta megaleia*] of God.” The verb form of this word is used in:
    - **Acts 10:46a**: “For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling [*megalyōnō*] God.”
    - **Acts 19:16-17**: “And the man in whom was the evil spirit leaped on them, mastered all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. <sup>17</sup>And this became known to all the residents of Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks. And fear fell upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was extolled [*megalyōnō*].”

2. In **1 Cor 14**, tongues speech is clearly directed toward God; 2, 14-15, 28): it's content is praise and thanks.
  - a. **1 Cor 14:2**: "For one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God; for no one understands him, but he utters mysteries in the Spirit."
  - b. **1 Cor 14:14-16**: "For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful. <sup>15</sup> What am I to do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also; I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing with my mind also. <sup>16</sup> Otherwise, if you give thanks with your spirit, how can anyone in the position of an outsider say 'Amen' to your thanksgiving when he does not know what you are saying?"
  - c. **1 Cor 14:28**: "But if there is no one to interpret [tongues], let each of them keep silent in church and speak to himself and to God." The idea of "to himself" would be better translated "by himself," i.e., "when alone," since it stands in contrast to "in the church" (A. Robertson and A. Plummer, ICC commentary on 1 Corinthians, 693).
3. **Acts 19:6**: "And when Paul had laid his hands upon them [the disciples of John the Baptist who had just believed in Jesus], the Holy Spirit came on them, and they *began* speaking with tongues and prophesying." We are probably right to understand that they were praising God for their salvation through "the name of the Lord Jesus" (v. 5) which Paul had just preached to them (v. 4).

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"And as it was true of Jesus, so it is true of his followers: 'As the Father has sent me, even so I send you' (John 20:21b). As Jesus was filled and equipped by the Spirit, so those who belong to Jesus are filled and equipped by the Spirit (Acts 2:4), or at least potentially so (Eph. 5:18). The Acts of the Apostles (or 'of the Holy Spirit'), to say the very least, was intended to show something of the nature of those things that God is able to do through people who yield themselves willingly to the influence of the Spirit. Through the Spirit those people of the very early church were enabled to preach boldly, convincingly, and authoritatively (Acts 2:14-41), to face crises and surmount obstacles with a courage and resoluteness and power they never dreamed they had (4:29-31), to cheerfully face persecution and suffering, and even to accept death with a prayer of forgiveness (5:40-41; 7:55-60), to heal the sick and raise the dead (9:36-41; 28:8), to arbitrate differences and bring about peace (15:1-35), to know where to go and where not to go, what to do and what not to do (16:6-10; 21:10-11), and so on. There is no reason whatsoever to believe that what was true of those earliest Christians is any less true of Christians in this century. . . . God's program of enabling people to burst the bounds of their human limitations and achieve the impossible is still in place and still effective--that program that involves filling people with his Spirit, filling them with supernatural power" (Gerald F. Hawthorne, *The Presence & the Power: The significance of the Holy Spirit in the life and ministry of Jesus* [Word, 1991], 238).

"In contrast with some approaches that treat Luke's interests [in Acts] as merely historically descriptive . . . , Luke is presumably interested in calling the church of his own day to depend on the same empowerment of the Spirit that he reports. Because he associates the Spirit with signs, witness, and church growth, it seems unlikely that he conceives of the Spirit's coming as simply a theoretical theological designation with no expectation of experiential effects in the life of the church. Because Luke believes that the outpouring of the Spirit yields an eschatological empowerment (2:17), it is hardly plausible that he would relegate this eschatological experience only to the past. He presumably believes that it is available for those who seek to experience God's gift, like his characters who sought the outpouring of the Spirit in prayer and faith (1:14; 4:31; cf. 8:15; 9:11-12, 17; 10:4; 13:2-4; Luke 11:13) and/or received this experience through the mediation of those who were known to be strong in it (Acts 8:17; 9:17; 19:6). Why else would he emphasize this point so often?

"Luke presents the outpouring of the Spirit as the direct result of the ascension (2:33), the proof that Jesus is the one authorized to pour out God's Spirit and hence Lord and Christ (2:34-36). Here is the central theological pivot of Luke's transition between [Luke and Acts]: as Jesus has ascended, he has sent the Spirit to his witnesses to carry on the mission (1:8-11). Whereas the initial commission focuses on selected apostolic witnesses (1:2, 8, 24; 10:41; later, cf. 9:15), the Pentecost event [Acts 2:1-13] theologically democratizes the empowerment and commission for all believers (2:39; cf., e.g., 8:4, though such references are comparatively rare, since they are incidental to Luke's more biographic focus on key narrative figures). Again, all these elements are factors supporting Luke's expectations that the experience he reports is paradigmatic for and continues in his day: Jesus remains exalted as Lord and Christ; the mission remains in progress; and the promise of the empowering Spirit is for all believers past and present (2:39)" (Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary. Vol. 1: Introduction and 1:1--2:47* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012], 1:781).