



## Position Paper

# The Fullness of the Spirit

Experiencing the Holy Spirit for many believers has been limited to just the doctrinal belief that they were indwelt with the Holy Spirit at the time of their belief. But the awesome, joyful and empowered life in and by the Holy Spirit has and continues to be elusive for much of the church. The gap between what we read about the early church and what we actually expect and experience has widened rather than converged. It is critical that the church recovers in its worship and discipleship the fullness of the Spirit.

We can see from scripture that even the early church struggled to keep in step with life in the fullness of the Spirit and easily fell back to just doing life by merely human effort. In Galatians 3:1-5 Paul exhorts the church with these words:

“You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. I would like to learn just one thing from you: did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort? Have you suffered so much for nothing – if it really was for nothing? Does God give you His Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard?”

## What do we mean by the “fullness of the Spirit”?

In Ephesians (3:19; 4:13 and 5:18) Paul uses the terminology: “that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God”; “attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” and “be filled with the Spirit.” These ideas are synonymous for growing, maturing and experiencing life in and by the Holy Spirit to the fullest. It is the work of the Spirit in our lives which causes us to believe, helps us grow in the faith, and empowers us to live for His kingdom purposes.

## The Indwelling and Sealing Work of the Spirit

*Jesus + nothing = salvation/justification*

This is where a person initially puts their faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior. They believe. They are born again. (John 3:3-6) This according to scripture is by grace through faith. This can only occur by the inner illumination and regeneration by the Holy Spirit working on a person’s heart.

**All believers are indwelt by the Holy Spirit**

“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever - the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.” (John 14:16-17)

### **All believers are sealed by the Holy Spirit**

“And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession – to the praise of his glory.” (Ephesians 1:13-14)

### **The Sanctifying Work of the Spirit**

*Jesus + obedience = sanctification*

Because of Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection believers are free from the power of sin and death to walk in the newness of life by the Spirit.

#### **All believers are free from the power of sin and death**

“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.” (Romans 8:1-2)

#### **All believers are to have victory over sin by the power of the Holy Spirit**

“Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation –but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.” (Romans 8:12-14)

### **The Filling/Empowering Work of the Spirit**

*Jesus + power = manifestation*

Many believe that when someone believes in Jesus that they receive all the Holy Spirit that they need at that time. Yes, we are indwelt with the Holy Spirit at the time of conversion. It is the secret work of the Spirit on our heart which regenerates us and allows us to be born again in a new relationship with God the Father through Jesus Christ. But this is different than being filled/empowered by the Holy Spirit. Another issue that some people raise is; the empowerment of the Holy Spirit is divisive because it splits the Body into the haves and the have-nots. But again according to scripture it is clear that not all believers are filled with the Spirit in the fullest sense. Also, not all believers are experiencing the same level of intimacy with God. God’s promise is to, “come near to God and he will come near to you.” (James 4:8) It

takes hunger on the part of the believer and earnest pursuit to receive all the things that God has for them. (1 Cor. 14:1)

Should we seek an initial “baptism-empowerment with the Holy Spirit” or is this something that just happens at conversion?

There are some traditions which hold that the “baptism with the Holy Spirit” takes place at the time of conversion. There are others who think that the “baptism with the Holy Spirit” happens sometime after conversion. There are scriptures to support both of these experiences, so we believe that there is an initial “baptism/empowerment with the Holy Spirit” which should ideally occur at conversion, but often does not for many reasons. One of the main reasons is that the new believer may not have been taught about the blessings and gifts of the Spirit or the church leadership did not lead the new believer into proper understanding of the blessing and empowerment of the Spirit.

There are seven scriptures in the New Testament referring to the “baptism with the Holy Spirit”:

“I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.” (Matthew 3:11)

“I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.” (Mark 1:8)

“I baptize you with water; but he who is mightier than I is coming, the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.” (Luke 3:16)

“He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’” (John 1:33)

“John baptized with water, but before many days you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 1:5)

“I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, ‘John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’” (Acts 11:16)

“For we were all baptized in one Spirit into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free – and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.” (1 Cor. 12:13)

We can see two important things from these verses: it is Jesus who will do the baptizing and it is with fire. Why is fire added to the issue of being “baptized with the Holy Spirit?” The main

reason is that when Jesus baptizes His people with the Holy Spirit it is a pouring out, a coming on, a filling, a receiving of power. All of these terms are used in the book of Acts to describe the experience of being baptized with the Holy Spirit. This experience is separate from the secret hidden work of the Holy Spirit in sealing, indwelling, regenerating the believer and separate from the sanctifying work of the Spirit.

Now we must deal with 1 Corinthians 12:13. Is it referring to the same thing as the other verses? Many have taken this verse to be saying the same thing as the other verses, basically that all believers are baptized with the Holy Spirit at conversion. Unfortunately some have used this one verse to interpret all the other verses in the Gospels and Acts referring to the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

But is this the proper understanding of what Paul is saying in 1 Corinthians and what the Gospel writers were talking about when they referred to the baptism with the Holy Spirit?

“This is not primarily some work of the Holy Spirit (baptism with the Holy Spirit). It is the Lord Jesus Christ’s act. It is his action – something he does to us through the Spirit or his giving to us, in this particular way, of the Spirit...Now here it seems to me is something that is there, plain and clear, on the very surface of this whole subject and yet people get confused over it, and quote 1 Corinthians 12:13 – ‘For by one Spirit are we all baptized.’ Of course we are. Our being baptized into the body of Christ is the work of the Spirit, as regeneration is his work, but this is something entirely different; this is Christ baptizing us with the Holy Spirit. And I am suggesting that this is something which is therefore obviously distinct from and separate from becoming a Christian, being regenerate, having the Holy Spirit dwelling within you. I am putting it like this – you can be a child of God and yet not be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” (Martyn Lloyd Jones, *Joy Unspeakable*, p.23)

1 Corinthians 12:13 is clearly speaking of the secret work of the Spirit in placing new believers into the universal body of Christ. This work is part of His sealing and indwelling work at the time of conversion. There is no filling of the Spirit, receiving the power of the Spirit, the coming on of the Spirit, or the pouring out of the Spirit anywhere in this context. Also, there is not any baptism with fire like we see in Acts. Many have confused the secret hidden work of the Spirit at conversion and the sanctifying work of the Spirit with the empowering work of the Holy Spirit in coming on his people which can occur at conversion, but many times not until a later time as we can see in Acts.

When the Apostles chose the first deacons in Acts 6 the main requirements were, “Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom.” (Acts 6:3) How did the church know that these men were “full of the Spirit”? It is clear from the text: “Now Stephen a man full of God’s grace and power did great wonders and miraculous signs among the people.” (Acts 6:8) And in Acts 8:6 we can see the power Philip ministered under,

“When the crowds heard Philip and saw the miraculous signs he did...” These men obviously had experienced the indwelling/sealing Holy Spirit as well as the sanctifying work of the Spirit, but they also were experiencing the filling/empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

So, this raises a big question for all those who follow Jesus, especially spiritual leaders: *Do we meet this requirement today – are we full of the Holy Spirit?*

This should not be a condemning question or a discouraging question. It should be a question which holds out to all of us the incredible inheritance and life in the Spirit that is truly available for us today if we will go for it. The problem has been that we have not exercised our faith to go after it.

There are many verses within Acts used to describe the experience of the baptism with the Holy Spirit (filling/empowerment):

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” Acts 1:8

“All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.” Acts 2:4

“God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear.” Acts 2:32-33

“Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off – for all whom the Lord our God will call.” Acts 2:38-39

“Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus. After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the words of God boldly.” Acts 4:29-31

“Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom...They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit.”  
Acts 6:3, 5

“But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

Simon himself believed and was baptized. And he followed Philip everywhere astonished by the great signs and miracles he saw. When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. When they arrived they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them; they had simply been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.” Acts 8:12-16

“Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord-Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here – has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.’ Immediately something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, and after taking some food, he regained his strength...At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God.” Acts 9:17-20

“While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit has been poured out even on the Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said, ‘Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have. So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.” Acts 10:44-48

“While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples and asked them, ‘Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?’ They answered, ‘No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.’ So Paul asked, “then what baptism did you receive?’ ‘John’s baptism, they replied. Paul said, ‘John baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus. On hearing this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.” Acts 19:1-6

We can see from these verses that there are many ways that Luke used to describe the baptism with the Holy Spirit (filling/empowerment). Scripture does not indicate what the specific experience of receiving the baptism with the Holy Spirit should look like. What we can see though is that it is truly “an experience” where the believer receives power for ministry, new boldness, joy unspeakable, and spiritual gifts to list a few possible things. There has been great confusion and controversy in trying to define this experience and give proper terminology. Since 1900 there has been in America basically three Pentecostal/Charismatic movements and the issue of the “baptism of the Holy Spirit” has been at the very center of these movements.

We as a church are not specifically aligned with any of these churches or denominations. We can and should learn from them though.

So, for the sake of not being misunderstood or being labeled something we are not we here at Crossroads are simply going to use the terminology of experiencing an initial filling/empowerment of the Holy Spirit and the ongoing pursuit of the filling/empowerment of the Spirit in our lives.

The question we should be asking ourselves and others is: *Have we been filled/empowered by the Holy Spirit and are we pursuing His fullness in our lives?*

We should all be pursuing the fullness of the Spirit's work in our lives. There is more than the indwelling/sealing work of the Spirit for us. There is more than the sanctifying work of the Spirit for us. There is the filling/empowering work of the Spirit which Jesus promises in John 14 when He said we would do greater things. And our spiritual life can become compartmentalized into just sin management without growth in the spiritual gifts and the manifestation of the Spirit's power in us and through us to others.

### **About Salvation and Sanctification (from Crossroads Beliefs Statement)**

*We believe in an initial (filling/empowerment) baptism of the Holy Spirit and the ongoing pursuit of the believer to be filled with the Holy Spirit.*

*We believe this (filling/empowerment) baptism and filling of the Holy Spirit should manifest itself through the fruits of the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit.*

*We believe all the gifts of the Spirit are for the church today as they were for the early church.*

### **3 Distinct but Intimately Connected Experiences of Salvation**

We can see within the scriptures that there are 3 distinct experiences of salvation.

#### **(1) Conversion:**

This is where a person initially puts their faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior. They believe. They are born again. (John 3:3-6) This according to scripture is by grace through faith. This can only occur by the inner illumination and regeneration by the Holy Spirit working on a person's heart. It is here that a person is baptized into the body of Christ as mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:13.

#### **(2) Water Baptism:**

This is an act of obedience which the new believer follows to give a public profession of the inner work of the Holy Spirit in saving them. We can see in scripture that this was usually the first step of obedience which the new believer followed after they believed. Water baptism

does not save anyone it is obedience, evidence that one has truly trusted in Christ as their Savior and Lord. This is one of the major regular celebrations in the life of the church.

### (3) Filling/Empowerment of the Holy Spirit:

Water baptism is something we are commanded to do in obedience to our Lord – it is an issue of obedience. Empowerment with the Spirit is something which God brings upon His people. It is something which is to be sought after because it is promised to those who believe and are baptized. Now the empowerment of the Spirit can occur either before water baptism (in Cornelius' and Paul's experience) or it can happen at the same time as water baptism (Jesus' example) or it can happen after water baptism. All three experiences; conversion, water baptism and the empowerment of the Spirit should ideally occur at roughly the same time.

### **Scripture presents expectation for the Empowerment of the Holy Spirit**

As can be seen from studying the above verses there was an expectation within the early church that any one who believed in Jesus was to be baptized into the name of Jesus Christ and then to receive the filling/empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

In some cases like in Acts 16 all that Luke records about Lydia's and the Phillippian Jailer's households is that they believed in the Word of God and then were water baptized. Luke does not record their specific experience of being filled with the Holy Spirit. So from all the above passages could it ever be conceived that the Apostles or Paul who lead someone to faith in Jesus not pray that they were filled/empowered with the Holy Spirit? No, they never would be satisfied with just profession without infilling power. Sadly, so much of the church has just be operating from here for way too long and leaving people confused about this critical aspect of our spiritual inheritance.

The Apostles and Paul were concerned that all believers had genuinely received the empowerment of the Holy Spirit – why is this so lost today?

### **Paul's experience of the empowerment and ongoing filling of the Holy Spirit**

In Acts 9 we can see the account of Paul's own conversion experience. He first met Jesus on the Damascus road and believed. Secondly, a believer named Ananias was led by the Lord to come and pray over Paul for the filling, the baptism of the Holy Spirit. And thirdly, Paul immediately was water baptized out of obedience to Jesus.

And we can see that these three important blessings were how Paul ministered to others as he traveled planting churches. For Paul, living for Jesus was never solely about words. He understand that the fullness of the gospel message of Jesus was not only preaching the good news but demonstrations of the Holy Spirit's power.

Some downplay the filling/empowerment of the Holy Spirit in Acts because they say they do not see an emphasis on it in Paul's other letters. This is unfortunate and a clear missing of what the scriptures do say. We can see from the following passages that Paul's hunger for more filling of the Holy Spirit after his initial filling/empowerment with the Holy Spirit from Ananias' prayer was clearly displayed in his ministry.

“Therefore I glory in Christ Jesus in my service to God. I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done – by the power of signs and miracles, through the power of the Spirit. So from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ.”  
Romans 15:17-19

“For in Him you have been enriched in every way – in all your speaking and in all your knowledge – because our testimony about Christ was confirmed in you. Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed.” 1 Corinthians 1:5-7

“My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power.” 1 Corinthians 2:3-5

“For the Kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power.” 1 Corinthians 4:20

“Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues.” 1 Corinthians 12:7-10

“Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort? Have you suffered so much for nothing – if it really was for nothing? Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard?” Galatians 3:3-5

“For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction.” 1 Thessalonians 1:5

**What are some common barriers to going after and experiencing the empowerment of the Holy Spirit?**

There are two primary barriers today keeping people from going after the filling/empowerment of the Holy Spirit. The first barrier is past church experience which did not teach on this and maybe even taught against it. This is a huge barrier which takes much time talking with others about what the Word says, not what church tradition says and time in prayer to bust through. The second main barrier is past church experience which abused the spiritual gifts and the idea of the filling/empowerment of the Spirit.

It is very important to realize that the filling/empowerment of the Holy Spirit does not equate to spiritual maturity. When this is not shepherded properly by church leadership some who have experienced this can easily be led to think they are now more mature than others. Spiritual maturity can only come with consistent obedience to the Word and ideally it should be accompanied by the filling/empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

Some will say that the receiving of the filling/empowerment of the Holy Spirit was something only for the early church and that only Apostles could impart and pray for others to receive it. However, in Acts 9, Ananias, just a regular disciple prays for Paul to receive.

## **How do we know if we have received the filling/empowerment of the Holy Spirit?**

From the above scriptures we can see that most of the time the clear evidence of the filling/empowerment of the Holy Spirit was seen through the receiving of spiritual gifts. We cannot say that there is one specific spiritual gift which is the gift proving one has been baptized by the Spirit. But we can say that if a person is resistant to any of the gifts of the Holy Spirit they are quenching the Spirit and their ability to receive from the Lord.

Many believers have taken a *laissez faire* approach to the gifts by holding to 1 Corinthians 12:11, "All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines." They simply state, "I will get what I get, if God wants me to have it." But this attitude is more quenching than hungering for God. Because the Lord determines who gets what in two ways. First those few who receive in the midst of the overflow of the Spirit's work in times of corporate revival. (Cornelius; household) Secondly and primarily, people receive through earnest pursuit of God; "Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy." (1 Corinthians 14:1) The question is, "How hungry are we for God and to experience His promises?"

So, how do we know when we experience the filling and empowerment of the Holy Spirit? Simply, you just know!! You might receive an immediate spiritual gift, especially if you are seeking one, you might receive a new boldness in the faith, you might receive joy unspeakable. One thing for sure is that once you taste the pouring out of the Holy Spirit in your life, you want more!! More love and more power for His glory!!

## How to Pursue the Fullness of the Spirit at Crossroads?

We desire everyone to come into a personal vibrant saving relationship with Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. Only Jesus has dealt with the sin, shame and guilt we all experience and only He offers the forgiveness of sins by grace and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit to truly live a new life in His abundance. It is God's desire that all are saved and come to know Him through Jesus Christ, so it is our passion as well.

If you are a believer in Jesus Christ and you are:

- not sure you have experienced the filling/empowerment of the Holy Spirit
- not sure you know what the filling/empowerment of the Holy Spirit is
- struggling to have victory over certain sins and darkness
- struggling to have victory over certain emotional bondages
- struggling to see any evidence of the Spirit's power in your life - testimony
- desiring to receive and operate in the spiritual gifts
- desiring to serve under His power more
- desiring to have greater boldness and joy for His kingdom

If any of these are true for you and you are desperate for more of Him please know that the elders, staff and leadership of crossroads would love to minister alongside you to see God through the power of the Holy Spirit do a great work in your life for His glory and our mutual encouragement. Please start by coming forward during one of our services or contacting one of us directly. We see this as a vital part of discipleship; teaching and showing people how to walk in the fullness of the Holy Spirit's power.