Filled With the Spirit – Is This Charismatic? (Questions and Misunderstandings)

Michael Hardt · 1 Corinthians 12:4 · September 29, 2024



1 Corinthians 12:4

> 4 But there are distinctions of gifts, but the same Spirit;

Galatians 5:17

> 17 For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these things are opposed one to the other, that you should not do those things which you desire;

New Darby Version © 2016 Mark Vedder · GBV Online

What does it mean to be filled with the Spirit? Do you have to be or think charismatic? In this essay, the author answers several questions on this topic.

1. **What are the most important activities of the Holy Spirit?**

We can hardly overestimate the importance of the work of the Spirit. His activity has to do with every area of our lives. It would be completely out of place to limit the work of the Holy Spirit to speaking in tongues, healings, or other miracles - or to think that the absence of such phenomena is a sign that the Spirit is not at work.

As the following list (which does not claim to be exhaustive) shows, the activities of the Spirit are extremely diverse. We have divided them into three categories:

a) Activities outside of us:

- Inspiration (2 Pet. 1:21)
- Prophecy (1 Pet 1:11)

b) Activities that have to do with our salvation [1] (with a one-time event)

- the New Birth (1 Pet 1:23; Jn 3:5)
- Indwelling (2 Tim 1:14), sealing (Eph 1:13), and anointing (1 John 2:27)
- Deliverance [2] from the power of sin (Rom 8:4)
- Baptism of the Spirit: all believers were joined together into one body (1 Cor 12:13)

- the Permanent Abiding in us (Jn 14:16, 17)

- the Bestowal of Gifts (1 Cor 12:11)

c) Activities that have to do with our daily lives:

- He gives us the awareness that we are children of God (Rom 8:16).

- He helps us to enjoy our relationship with the Father and the Son (Jn 14; Eph 2:18).

- He guides us (Rom 8:14).

- He teaches us (introduces us to the glory of Christ; Jn 16:13, 14).

- He enables us to receive the truth (Jn 16:13).

- He leads us in worship (Phil 3:3; Jn 4:24).

- He fills us (Eph 5:18).

- He gives us strength (Acts 1:8; Eph 3:16).

- He enables us to consider ourselves dead to sin (so that we do not give in to the lust of the flesh) (Rom 8:4; Gal 5:16).

- He produces the fruit of the Spirit in us (Gal 5:22-23).
- He testifies to us of divine truth and supports our testimony (Jn 15:26, 27).
- He brings about the unity of the Spirit, which we are to maintain (Eph 4:1-3).
- He leads to restoration and repentance (e.g., Rev 2,7, etc.).
- He causes us to expect the return of the Lord (Rev 22,17).

2. **What are the gifts of the Holy Spirit?**

Spiritual gifts are special abilities that the Holy Spirit gives us. They should not be confused with natural abilities such as eloquence or a sharp mind (although God can use these, too). We read in 1 Corinthians 12:4: "*Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.*" Many spiritual gifts are listed in this chapter: the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, faith, healings, miracles, prophecies, discerning of spirits, speaking in tongues, etc. Different believers have different gifts, but the same Spirit operates them and should be used for the benefit of the whole body of Christ.

3. **Have I received a gift of the Spirit? How can I know?**

The Spirit of God distributes gifts "*as He wills*" (1 Cor. 12:11). We should not focus on what we have received or could receive. Our task is to do the work that the Lord shows us. After a short time, it will become clear (to us and others) what our gift is. Our responsibility is to use it "for the benefit" (1 Cor 12:7) and out of the motivation of love (1 Cor 13).

4. **What does it mean to be filled with the Spirit (Eph 5:18)?**

The Spirit of God dwells in every believer. But we are not all (and not always) filled with the Holy Spirit. Hence, there is the appeal to "*be filled with the Spirit*" (Eph 5:18). Two states are contrasted here: "filled with the Holy Spirit" and "*drunk with wine*." The Christian is to be influenced, controlled, and led (not by wine, but) by the Holy Spirit.

To be "filled" by Him, we must make room - by straightening and removing things that hinder the Spirit. If we only make one room available to the Guest, He cannot "fill" our house and make His influence felt everywhere. It would be a shame if we closed off the problematic "rooms" of our lives to the very Person who could best help to solve these problems!

If we are filled with the Holy Spirit, this will have a great impact on us in terms of our joy, our witness, and our ministry (see Lk 1:41, 67; Acts 4:8, 31; 13:9, 52).

5. **How does the Holy Spirit empower us?**

The risen Lord told his disciples: "*But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me*" (Acts 1:8, cf. also Lk 24:49). A few days later, on the day of Pentecost, this powerful witness became clear when Peter spoke to the crowd, and 3,000 people were saved. Today, the Holy Spirit empowers us to witness for the Lord Jesus. He gives strength to our "inner man" to better know and appreciate the glories of Christ (Eph. 3:16). He energizes us for our service, hope, and joy (Rom 14:17; 15:13; 1 Thes 1:6). He does this by helping us to trust in God and His Word and not in ourselves or people (cf. Zech. 4:6).

6. **Can the Holy Spirit help us to overcome the flesh?**

As born-again believers, we have a new nature. This new nature has the right desires, but it does not have the power to act accordingly or to overcome the inclinations of the flesh (sin). For sin still dwells in us (Rom 7:15, 17). Then, the Holy Spirit comes to our aid. He enables us to live in a way that pleases God (Rom 8:4, 13). This does not mean that we overcome sin once and for all (we cannot do that). But the only way not to succumb to the demands of the flesh is to walk in the Spirit. Galatians 5 shows us the challenge we face: "*For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, but the Spirit against the flesh*" (Gal 5:17). What is the divine answer? "Walk in the Spirit, and you will not fulfill the lust of the flesh" (v. 16).

An example to illustrate: all the efforts of even 1,000 men cannot move a train even 10 cm. But when the engine driver turns the key, the power is there, and the train can travel many kilometers. It is not the engine driver's power that moves the train, but he removes the obstacle (the break in the contact) so that the engine's power becomes effective. It is the same with us: when we remove what hinders the Spirit, His power becomes effective.

Common misunderstandings

- **How can I know that I have received the Holy Spirit? Do I have to speak in tongues (i.e., languages)?**

No - the Spirit of God gave the gift of speaking a foreign and unlearned language, but only at the beginning of Christianity. Even then, not everyone spoke in languages (1 Cor 12:29, 30). How, then, can we recognize that we have received the Spirit? The simple answer is because God says so (1 Cor 2:12; Eph 1:13). We will indeed experience this too (the Spirit assures us that we are children of God; He gives joy, He

opens the Scriptures to us, etc.). But the knowledge that He dwells in us is based on the Word of God and not on our experiences or feelings (Rom 8:11; 2 Tim 1:14). Moreover, the Spirit of God Himself gives assurance: "The Spirit Himself bears witness to our spirit that we are children of God" (Rom 8:16).

- **Is it true that I need a special baptism in the Spirit or a "second experience" after I have been born again?**

No. What we need is not some special experience, miraculous gifts, or the like. What is crucial is faith in the gospel of our salvation (Eph 1:13). Through faith in this gospel, we are sealed, and the Spirit dwells and remains in us forever. But we must allow the Spirit to fill us (see question 4).

We should bear in mind that the baptism [3] with the Spirit does not automatically bring with it a spiritual state. All the believers in Corinth were considered to have been baptized with the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:13), but most of them were carnal, not spiritual (1 Cor. 3:1).

- **How is a Spirit-filled believer recognized? Does he have to speak in languages or perform other miracles?**

Miraculous gifts (such as speaking in a language one has never learned) were given at the beginning of Christianity to support the message and to show that it was the beginning of a new era (Mk 16:17, 18; Heb. 2:3, 4). But even in the early days of Christianity, not all believers had such gifts (1 Cor. 12:10, 30). The normal signs that someone is filled with the Spirit today are singing, joy, power in ministry, and witnessing - and spiritual behavior ("walking according to the Spirit," cf. Rom 8:4).

- **What is the "special anointing" that we keep hearing about?**

Some teach that Christians who reach a higher level of spirituality receive a "special anointing" of the Holy Spirit. This is supposed to result in a special power. The Bible uses the term "anointing" in connection with the Holy Spirit. But interestingly, this is not said about the "fathers" or "young men," but regarding the "little children." These are the youngest in the faith (1 Jn 2:18, 20, 27). Therefore, anointing is a privilege of every believer, not just the particularly advanced or spiritual ones.

- **Why should we not pray to the Holy Spirit?**

Because the Bible neither calls us to do so nor gives examples of such a practice (though it does show many examples of prayers to the Father and the Son). And what is the reason for this? The Holy Spirit is a divine Person, just like the Father and the Son. But the task He performs is different from that of the Father and the Son. Our relationship with Him is not as direct as our relationship with the Father and the Son (1 Jn 1:3). The Spirit helps us to enjoy fellowship with the Father and the Son.

Furthermore, we are told to pray in the Spirit (Eph 6:18; Jude 20), which really excludes the idea of praying **to** the Spirit.

Footnotes:

[1] The Spirit also works on unbelievers to lead them to repentance (Gen 6:3), even if a man can resist this work (Acts 7:51) so that those affected are never born again. This work of the Spirit is also illustrated by the servant in the parable of the "*great*

banquet" (Lk 14).

[2] Our dying with Christ gives deliverance from the power of sin (Rom 6:1-14). The Holy Spirit gives us the power to make practical use of it (Rom 8:4; Gal 5:16).

[3] The baptism with the Holy Spirit was a unique event that took place on the day of Pentecost (Acts 1:5). Those who believed later are included in this baptism (1 Cor 12:13). It is striking that various expressions are used for the reception of the Holy Spirit after Pentecost - but never the expression "baptism of the Spirit" or "baptism with the Holy Spirit," etc.).

Source https://thebiblestudy.site/article/filled-with-the-spirit-is-this-charismatic-questions-and-misunderstandings/