

CONTINUOUSLY BE FILLED

By Rev. Will Nelken

How many of you came to church *with* someone else—your parent, child, or friend? Would you stand up for a moment? (All the males, sit down.)

To those who are standing: What if the person who just sat down were to disappear from your life... And what if I offered to replace your loss with a comprehensive list of 1001 facts about that person... Would you be satisfied with that exchange? Isn't it possible that the list I provide would actually give you more information about that person than you knew before? Wouldn't you like to know that person better? (Everyone, please sit down.)

What's wrong with the picture I've just described?

Knowing facts about a person is not the same as knowing the person, or having the person in your life.

Knowing God

The celebration of Pentecost is about knowing God better. It's about entering into a lively relationship with God through being filled with the Holy Spirit. And it is about growing from fruitfulness to *more* fruitfulness, to *MUCH* fruitfulness through the increasing activity of the Holy Spirit in your life.

Isn't that better than just being acquainted with God, based solely on knowing the facts contained in the Bible?

No wonder Peter urged the crowd on Pentecost Sunday (in Acts 2:38-39), *"Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This promise is to you, to your children, and to those far away—all who have been called by the Lord our God."*

Get to know God—directly and personally! That is the message of Pentecost to the world.

Fruitfulness

Apart from such a relationship, you cannot fulfill the destiny of your life. You cannot become or do all that you were designed for. Because this is God's world. And you were made to live in it *with* Him. The fruitfulness of your life is dependent on that. Listen to these words from Jesus Christ:

John 15:1 "I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener. ² He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn't produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more. ³ You have already been pruned and purified by the message I have given you. ⁴ Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me.

⁵ "Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶ Anyone who does not remain in me is thrown away like a useless branch and withers. Such branches are gathered into a pile to be burned. ⁷ But if you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted! ⁸ When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples. This brings great glory to my Father.

Like a garden, Jesus tends your life, in order to produce fruit... *more* fruit... *much* fruit. This is how God our Father receives glory: through the produce of your life as a Christian. Therefore, Paul wrote:

Ephesians 5:15 So be careful how you live. Don't live like fools, but like those who are wise. ¹⁶ Make the most of every opportunity in these evil days. ¹⁷ Don't act thoughtlessly, but understand what the Lord wants you to do. ¹⁸ Don't be drunk with wine, because

that will ruin your life. Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit, ¹⁹ singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, and making music to the Lord in your hearts. ²⁰ And give thanks for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Ever Be Filled

“Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit.” How many of you recognize that this verb is expressed in the imperative? *“Be filled.”* It is a command. It is necessary. It is expected.

Moreover, it is a particular tense in the Greek language that expresses an action begun and continuously, or perpetually, repeated. The Amplified Bible translates it as, *“Ever be filled and stimulated with the Holy Spirit.”* We could also translate it as, *“Be continuously being filled with the Holy Spirit.”*

Being filled with the Spirit is more than an event... it is a lifestyle!

And the reason it must be is because there is an ongoing conflict between our flesh and the Spirit of God within us. *“What your selfish nature wants is contrary to what your spiritual nature wants, and what your spiritual nature wants is contrary to what your selfish nature wants. They are opposed to each other. As a result, you don’t always do what you intend to do”* (Galatians 5:17).

This is a conflict we will face every day, often multiple times each day. So, when Paul urges us to live victoriously, he does not imagine a static victory that no longer sees conflict. Instead, he is urging us to face the battle—each and every battle—with confidence in the Spirit’s power to give us victory... again.

How can we overcome the selfish desires of the flesh and be continuously filled with the Holy Spirit?

Moody once illustrated this truth as follows: “Tell me,” he said to his audience, “How can I get the air out of this glass?” One man said, “Suck it out with a pump.” Moody replied, “That would create a vacuum and shatter the glass.” After many impossible suggestions, Moody smiled, picked up a pitcher of water, and filled the glass. “There,” he said, “all the air is now removed.” He then went on to show that victory in the Christian life is not by “sucking out a sin here and there,” but rather by being filled with the Spirit. This is more than a theory.

Let me take you briefly to St. Margaret’s Bay, in the southeast of England. It is a beautiful site, with high, white cliffs punctuating the shoreline.

There is a well there, along the shore, that is always covered by the sea at high tide. Strangely enough, however, its waters remain fresh and pure, uncontaminated by the salty waters of the sea. Fed from the hills above, the well has a constant supply of fresh water pouring into it, which effectively prevents the ocean from filling it with salt water.

If you stay full of the Holy Spirit, it will prevent the powers of the air, the pollution of this world, from finding a resting place within you. Now, how do you do that?

As Then, So Now

Here is the principle that Paul taught: *“Therefore, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in Him”* (Colossians 2:6).

Well, let’s see... how did you receive the Spirit’s fullness in the first place? Was it an act of faith? I’m sure it was. So, how will you continue to walk in Spirit-fullness? Also by acts of faith. Not by what you see. Not by how you feel. But by trusting in the words of God and the love of Christ and the presence of the Holy Spirit.

In practical terms, how can I be continuously being filled with the Holy Spirit? Just as you received Him at the first. I offer four suggestions:

- Focus on Jesus
- Keep your mind in the Word
- Ask God for it
- Surrender your will to His

Focus on Jesus

Stop focusing on self-help methods and practice the Word of God. Stop trusting in your religious efforts and depend on Jesus instead. Stop depending on your promises to change and improve, and rely instead on what Jesus Christ has already done on your behalf.

If you focus on yourself, instead of Jesus, if you seek what you want, and what pleases you, there will be no room for the Holy Spirit in your life. You have to make room for Him by shifting your focus.

Keep Your Mind In the Word of God

If you keep your mind in the world around you, following the trends, looking to the pacesetters, listening to the pundits, instead of the established Word of God, you will be misled.

It's not what your parents have said, or what your therapist has said, or what your teachers have said, but what has God said. Choose to learn what God has said, what God has promised, what God has commanded, and then act on that.

Peter said, *"This promise (of the Holy Spirit) is for you, and for your children, and for those who are outsiders—as many as the Lord our God will call."*

Ask God

Some people simply neglect to ask God for this marvelous gift. They imagine that if God wants

them to have it, then He will make it happen. If you are a parent, you know how special it is when your child asks for something you already want to give him. Some gifts wait only for that—the asking.

Some people fear the changes that may accompany God's good gifts. Trust His love and goodness. Any change required will also be good.

God gives His Spirit to those who "ask Him." Don't just sit by the door waiting for God to open it. Knock on the door. Knock on it like one who expects to be received. Knock on it like one who will not take "No" for an answer, because God has already made a promise.

Surrender Your Will to God

The baptism with the Holy Spirit, as I've said, is not an event, but a lifestyle—a lifestyle of surrender to God, a lifestyle that follows Christ's lead. Don't seek an experience, pursue a relationship with God through the Holy Spirit.

It's fine to make plans, but when God directs your steps another way, will you say, "Not what I want, but what You want"?

If you insist or persist in doing things your way, you will miss so much wisdom that others have to offer, and so many opportunities that God has provided. Learn how to yield to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

"Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart."