

# filling, Indwelling & Baptism of the Holy Spirit

By Mark E Moore, PhD

Each of these three terms refers to a particular aspect of the Holy Spirit's interaction with us. Caution: Biblical terms are sometimes slippery. They don't stay precisely where you put them. In other words, these definitions do not have scientific precision and will overlap to some degree into the others depending on the passage you are in. However, the texts in which these terms are found still give a general sense of their meaning.

## I. Filling

To be filled with the Holy Spirit essentially means that *a person is empowered by the Holy Spirit* – s/he is *controlled* by the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:15, 41, 67; 4:1; Acts 2:4; 4:8, 31; 6:3; 7:55; 9:17; 11:24; 13:9, 52). In the same way that a demoniac is possessed by a demon, so a Christian should be possessed by the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Cor 2:9-3:4; Col 1:10; Gal 5:16; Eph 4:30; 1 Thess 5:19). The Bible describes this state as “filled with the Spirit.” This has implications as to how a Christian walks, behaves, and speaks. In particular, the Holy Spirit is interested in empowering us to live Godly lives and enabling us to speak boldly our witness for Christ. Quite often, in fact, right after reading the phrase “Filled with the Spirit” one reads an account of a person proclaiming the good news of Jesus.

Being filled by the Spirit, however, doesn't necessarily mean a person is saved, merely that s/he is *used* by the Spirit to accomplish a particular task. The Spirit can empower unsaved people to accomplish great things for God (case in point: Balaam). Thus a non-Christian can be filled with the Holy Spirit and a Christian may not be. For example, Paul urges Christians to be filled – assuming that they are not fully filled – by being *controlled* by the Spirit rather than by wine (Eph 5:18). Again, Peter, post-Pentecost, was said to be filled afresh with the Spirit and thus empowered to proclaim the gospel (Acts 4:8). In short, being filled means being empowered and this is not equivalent to being saved.

## II. Indwelling of the Holy Spirit

This is the term that means *a person is saved*. It describes the mystic union between a believer and the creator. Sometimes it is referred to as the “gift” of the Holy Spirit (John 7:37-39; Acts 11:17; Rom 5:5; 1 Cor 2:12; 2 Cor 5:5), at others times it is called an “anointing” (Lk 4:18; Acts 4:27; 10:38; 2 Cor 1:21; 1 John 2:20, 27), or even a “seal” (2 Cor 1:22; Eph 1:13; 4:30). Whatever it is called, it is essential for salvation (Rom 8:9; 1 Cor 6:19). If we are not indwelt by God's Spirit, we are not saved.

A couple things need to be clarified here. First, the indwelling of the Spirit is not an event that happens to us, but a relationship between us and God. It is neither hocus-pocus, nor mechanical. It is not something measured or weighed. It is the covenantal love we share with God through the blood of Christ. While filling may be an event that happens to us and then passes, indwelling is that permanent adoption into God's eternal family.

Second, because many confuse indwelling with filling, they talk in terms of being permanently filled with the Spirit. You'll sometimes hear things like, “You can't be more filled than being full – if you have the Holy Spirit you have all of him.” or “Christians must leak if they need to be refilled with the Holy Spirit.” We should avoid such silly talk. It is misleading to press the metaphor of the filling of the Holy Spirit into physical descriptions. The Holy Spirit doesn't fill us in the same way water fills a jar. Therefore, Christians can need fresh filling of the Holy

Spirit. Although we will never need a fresh indwelling – that is a permanent state granted through God’s grace.

### **III. Baptism of the Holy Spirit**

The baptism of the Holy Spirit was originally prophesied by John the Baptist (Mt 3:11; Mk 1:8; Lk 3:16; Jn 1:33; Acts 1:5). Jesus somehow inundates believers in the Spirit (as opposed to baptizing unbelievers with fire). Now what exactly is this baptism? Here’s what we know for sure. It is identified twice in the book of Acts (2:1-4; 10:44-46; 11:16). Here we find the Apostles’ (cf. Acts 1:26; 2:1, 5, 7, 14, 37) and Cornelius’ household speaking in tongues as evidence of God’s approval. At Pentecost, God was validating the Apostles as spokesmen and witnesses of the Resurrection. At Cornelius’ house, God was validating the first Gentiles as *bonafide* prospects for conversion. In neither case was the Baptism of the Holy Spirit equivalent to nor necessary for salvation. The Apostles were already saved and Cornelius commenced to be baptized in water according to the normal 1<sup>st</sup> century practice of Christian conversion. Bottom line: The only two times the N.T. identifies the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, it was not for salvation but for approval. Traditionally, the Christian Church of the Restoration Heritage has held that these two episodes alone constitute the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Could the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, however, refer to more than just these two events? When John prophesies about this baptism (Mt 3:11), he seems to promote it as an experience the whole crowd could receive by accepting Jesus. Thus, our initial impulse is to look for a broad fulfillment of this promise, not just two incidents. This has been the stance of the Pentecostal church. They argue that a person is saved and sometime later has a rather phenomenal "experience," in which s/he feels "slain". Speaking in tongues, which should be received by all believers, becomes proof of the baptism in the Spirit. This is seen as the stage of maturity where a believer accepts his/her full blessings in Christ. The problem with this view is that the Bible does not support a two-stage conversion, nor does it indicate that a tongue is a gift for every believer.

So how can the Baptism of the Holy Spirit apply to every believer? Let us offer a third view. Every Christian receives the baptism in the Holy Spirit, but it is not necessarily received with the supernatural Holy Spirit phenomena. This takes place, for the most part, at the moment of conversion and baptism, (consider Acts 8 and 19 as possible exceptions). As I am baptized in water, Jesus, as the baptizer of the Spirit, inundates me in his Spirit. I become immersed in God and water. I come into Him and He comes into me. Since water immersion is also connected with the Spirit (Mt 3:11; John 3:5; Acts 1:5; 2:1-4; 10:44-46; 11:16; 19:1-6; Titus 3:5), that too may come under the umbrella of being baptized with the Holy Spirit. Both 1 Corinthians 12:13<sup>1</sup> and Ephesians 4:5 would support such a connection. We come into a relationship with the Holy Spirit through the blood of Jesus. This is enacted by water immersion (Rom 6:1-4; Gal 3:27; Col 2:12). Thus, “The Baptism of the Holy Spirit” is an umbrella term that specifically describes Pentecost and Cornelius yet also appropriately describes what Jesus does to Christians at the point of conversion.

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<sup>1</sup>All seven uses of the phrase “baptism in/of” the Spirit are in the dative case. 1 Cor. 12:13 uses the same words as well as the same grammar as John the Baptist in speaking of Spirit baptism. Thus it appears that Paul and John are talking about the same thing.