

The Holy Spirit

Module 2.3

“And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.”

Genesis 1:2

As we briefly outlined in Module 2.1, the God of the Bible is the Creator of all things and has eternally existed as the One True God in three distinct persons; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This is not to say that the Bible reveals three gods who act in unity, but rather one God who has always existed in three persons.

The Holy Spirit is the third member of the Trinity and has existed eternally in perfect unity with the Father and the Son. As early as Genesis 1:2, we see the Spirit of God mentioned in the Scriptures as He was involved in creation, and throughout the rest of the Old and New Testaments we find greater detail and clarity regarding His personhood and work.

Not only was the Holy Spirit involved in creation, He was also directly involved in the inspiration of the Scriptures. Peter tells us in his second epistle that, “no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet. 1:21). BDAG defines the participle *carried* as “to cause to follow a certain course in direction or conduct; to drive.”¹ It is a word that denotes both action and reaction. In this verse, the Holy Spirit is acting on men. In turn, they react and speak from God. Similarly, this word *carried* is also used of the wind in Acts 27:15,17 moving ships on the open water, and of people bringing the sick to Peter in Acts 5:16. There again, we see both action and reaction happening as this word is used to describe events. As the ship reacts to the wind and is *driven* on the water by it, so were those who wrote the Scriptures *carried* by the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is also at work in the convicting and regenerating of Believers. His convicting work certainly includes the initial conviction of sin that leads us to trust in Christ for salvation, but also includes His ongoing work of conviction (John 16:8-11). In this regard, the Spirit uses the written Word of God to lead us to the living Word of God as He glorifies Jesus in all that He does (Heb. 4:12-13, John 16:14).

Regeneration, or new birth, is the work of the Holy Spirit that happens as those who “he chose...before the foundation of the world...” (Eph. 1:4) place their faith and trust in Jesus. It is wholly and only a work of our triune God and only by His grace.²

The Charis Fellowship also believes that the Spirit fills believers today with strength and empowerment for life and ministry. As we consider the filling of the Holy Spirit, we need to

¹ William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1051.

² See Module 3.4 for a further explanation of regeneration.

make two important observations. 1) Filling is conditional and distinct from the unconditional and permanent indwelling of the Spirit. 2) Throughout the New Testament, the filling of the Spirit appears to take on both an instantaneous aspect as well as a sustained aspect.

First, the indwelling of the Spirit is the unconditional and permanent residing of the Spirit of Jesus Christ in those who have trusted in Jesus for salvation. In 1 Corinthians 6:18-19, Paul writes about this reality and grounds his commands to the Corinthian Believers in this glorious truth. He instructs them, “flee from sexual immorality...do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God?”³ Because they are the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit they should act or not act a certain way.

Furthermore, and perhaps even more clearly, Paul writes in Romans 8:9, “you, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact that Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.” Every person who trusts in Jesus Christ for salvation receives the gift of the Holy Spirit and is unconditionally and permanently indwelt by Him. To be saved is to have the Spirit. To be lost is to be without the Spirit.

In contrast, the filling of the Spirit is conditional, can come and go, and can increase or decrease. Paul’s imperative command to the Ephesian believers, to “be filled with the Spirit,” is a command he gives directly alongside the command to not be “drunk with wine” (Eph. 5:18). Both of these commands are passive imperatives which are significant and instructive for us given that the act of drinking wine is considered an active one. Paul’s point is this; the act of drinking wine invariably leaves one acted on, passively affected by the alcohol. Similarly, and yet, in contrast, Believers are to be filled with, and influenced or controlled, by the Spirit.⁴ While the indwelling of the Holy Spirit never increases or decreases, the filling of the Spirit certainly does, depending on how actively we are seeking to abide in Christ.

Secondly, throughout the New Testament the filling of the Spirit appears to take on both an instantaneous aspect as well as a sustained aspect. Regarding the sustained aspect, the Greek word *πληρόω* (*pleroo*) is used in several different passages.

The theme verse for Operation Barnabas⁵ is Acts 11:23-24 which says, “When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose, for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many

³ See also 2 Cor. 6:14 - 7:1.

⁴ While this module does not explore the wisdom, or ethical implications of alcohol use, it would behoove us to acknowledge that the issue at the heart of the commands in Eph. 5:18 is one of control. Believers are not to be drunk with wine and therefore controlled by the alcohol that is contained within. Instead, believers are to be filled with the Spirit and controlled by Him. Consequently, if the issue at stake is indeed the issue of what controls a Believer’s mind and actions, then there is ground to principally apply this text to other substances which may similarly leave the Believer controlled by something other than the Spirit. This would include other forms of drink that also contain alcohol, and also any drug, whether organic or not, that affects one’s mind.

⁵ A ministry of CE National, which is one of the Charis Fellowship’s National Ministry Organizations.

people were added to the Lord.” Here in verse 24, Luke uses the adjective form of *pleroo* and records that Barnabas was full (*πλήρης pleres*) of the Holy Spirit and faith, and the sense we get is that this is a filling that is sustained.

In Acts 13:52, Luke records one of the effects of Paul and Barnabas’ ministry and how the other Believers were strengthened by their courage and the work of the Spirit. There, Luke writes, “And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.” Here, Luke’s use of the imperfect, passive, indicative appears to indicate that these Believers were continually being filled by the Holy Spirit.

Lastly, in Ephesians 5:18 it is *pleroo* that Paul uses in his command that Believers be filled with the Holy Spirit. As the continual consumption of alcohol will continually lead one to be drunk (or as one must continually drink wine to continually remain drunk) so are believers to be continually filled with the Spirit.

However, the filling of the Spirit also has an instantaneous aspect that is given to Believers when needed during moments of trial or moments of empowerment for ministry. Here, the Greek word *πίμπλημι (pimplemi)* is used.

In Acts 2:4 Luke writes, “And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.” As the 120 waited in the upper room, they were filled with the Holy Spirit, just as Jesus had promised. This filling of the Holy Spirit was certainly instantaneous and one of specific empowering for the task that lay ahead of them; speaking the mighty works of God in the native languages of all who attended the feast of Pentecost (Acts 2:5-11). This specific act of filling by the Holy Spirit was instantaneous and did not last continually, for this is the only occurrence in Acts where such an event is recorded to have happened like this and with these people.

Luke also tells us that Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit during a moment of trial, as he appeared before the “rulers and elders and scribes gathered together in Jerusalem” (Acts 4:5). In verse eight Luke writes, “then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said...” Here again, we see the Holy Spirit filling Peter with strength and courage while also empowering him for ministry.

Perhaps the best way to understand the filling of the Holy Spirit is to consider ourselves to be like a balloon. With one strong breath of air, the balloon is filled and perhaps stretching itself to contain the air blown inside of it. However, the balloon can stretch farther if more air is blown in. After one breath we may ask, “is the balloon full?” and the answer is rightly “yes.” However, there is more room for more filling.

Similarly, Believers can be filled with the Holy Spirit, yet should always be desirous of more filling! We should never be content to be filled at the level we currently are. Rather, we should do everything we can to chase after the filling of the Spirit. This includes specifically asking for

the Holy Spirit to fill us, actively confessing and repenting of sin, spending time in the Scriptures, and obeying Jesus' command to make disciple-makers.⁶

Perhaps the best way to summarize and conclude this module is with the words of Jesus, who comforted and instructed His disciples in the Upper Room that it was better that He go away! For in doing so, the Holy Spirit comes.

Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

John 16:7–14
