**VOLUME 8; CHAPTER 14 - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**THE FILLING OF THE SPIRIT by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*They were all filled with the Holy Spirit.*

*Acts 2:4*

THAT IS THE CENTRAL AND SUPREME WORD ABOUT THE DAY of Pentecost. The sound of the wind and the sign of the fire were symbolic, and not essential. The ecstatic speech in tongues was an outcome, temporary, transient, and of no permanent value for the purpose of the propagation of the Gospel; for they did not preach in tongues, they offered praises, through the very gladness of their hearts. The supreme fact of which both wind and fire were signs, and of which speech was an immediate outcome, was that recorded in the text; "They were all filled with the Holy Spirit." The verb here is a simple one, meaning exactly to fill, but it was used figuratively in the sense of imbuing, supplying, furnishing; and whereas none of these words would convey the full meaning, yet they may help us to an understanding of that meaning. They were all imbued with the Spirit, they were all supplied with the Spirit, they were all furnished with the Spirit.

The emphasis of our text is on the act rather than on the condition of repleteness which resulted. What Luke has chronicled for us here, to which he draws special attention, is that then and there, under the conditions described, this wonder took place. Suddenly these waiting people, the eleven apostles, with the women and the Virgin Mother, and our Lord's brethren in the flesh, those who had been waiting for ten days since last they looked on the glory of the risen face of Jesus, these people were suddenly caught up by the Spirit, penetrated through and through by the Spirit, brought completely under the power of the Spirit. They were now born of the Spirit into a new consciousness of their Master, of themselves, and of all things. Suddenly, and without being able to explain the how of the infinite mystery, they found themselves in a closer companionship with Jesus than they had ever known during the days of His flesh. Suddenly there began to break on them understanding of mysterious things which He had uttered in earlier days; there came to them unveilings of the meaning of things they had watched Him do, but which they had not understood. In that hour the enigma of His own Personality was in a measure solved.

In that hour, moreover, they came to new consciousness of themselves, saw their own weakness as they had never seen it, understood their own foolishness as they had never understood it, mourned over their past blunders, discovered how narrow and incomplete had been their highest understanding of their Lord's ministry as it had expressed itself ten days before, when they asked Him if He was about to restore the Kingdom to Israel. There broke on their astonished souls the vastness of His enterprise, the glory of His mission; they found their hearts stormed by the whole wide world, and Jerusalem was but the center of the concentric circles of Judea and Samaria and the uttermost part of the world to which they found themselves the appointed messengers of their Lord and Master.

In this hour all things became new. God was new, the world was new, and life was new. This little company had been walking in a wonderful light for three years, and yet, in this moment of Pentecostal effusion and spiritual illumination, they looked back, and, lo, the whole landscape was bathed in a glory they had never dreamed of and never before looked on. Life became a rapture, a delight, an infinite possibility; and they were conscious of a power driving them out in the Name and nature of their Lord and Master to begin the great work of proclaiming Him.

That was the daybreak of Christianity. In all the full meaning of our great word "Christianity" there had been none in the world until that moment, apart from Christ Himself. These men had never understood Him, they had never been brought into very close fellowship with Him, and, more than once, as we follow the story of His teaching of them, we are conscious of the sighs that escaped Him, and of His sense of limitation and inability.

Let us reverently attempt to meditate this morning on this experience; first, in its relation to the work of Christ, and, second, in its relation to the experience of the disciples.

Inclusively we may at once say that Pentecost in its relation to the work of Christ was the culmination of the earthly mission of the Son of God and the commencement of the heavenly mission consequent thereupon. An intelligent study of these Gospel narratives and of the fact of Christianity demands that we recognize the difference between the Gospel narratives and this brief story of the book of the Acts. We may remind ourselves that that difference is marked by the very way in which the beloved physician commenced this second treatise to his friend Theophilus. As Luke said to him, "The former treatise I made, O Theophilus, concerning all that Jesus began to do and teach," he suggested the incompleteness and imperfection of all that had gone before. It was complete and perfect in so far as it was within the will and economy of God, but the past had not reached completion. We may say, superlative as the declaration appears to be, that the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Saviour of the World, began His work on the Day of Pentecost. Everything else was primary, preparatory, while necessary and fundamental. All through the public ministry, and even in the hour of the Cross, and beyond the Cross until He ascended on high, His own word will accurately describe His experience: "How am I straitened!" This is not for a moment to undervalue all that had preceded. Apart from that which had preceded, this Pentecostal effusion would have been impossible; apart from all that of which we have the narratives in our Gospels, we never could have had the wondrous apostolic service, or the early history of the Christian Church, of which the first fragment is written in this book of the Acts. So while this Pentecostal hour was the culmination of the earthly mission of Jesus, it was the commencement of the heavenly. From that moment in which the Spirit came and filled these men, may I reverently point out, the Lord Jesus could no longer say, "I am straitened." The bonds were broken, the barriers swept away, the limitations at an end, and Christianity began.

Let us trace the work of our Lord rapidly, as it is recorded for us in the New Testament. In order to do so we pass back into the heavenly places and the heavenly ages, recognizing that these are utterly beyond our final apprehension. We cannot express them, we cannot perfectly understand them, but for the illumination of our present life the veil has been drawn aside, and things have been revealed about that past. The very word "past" is a revelation of our human limitation, but we must employ it. Christ's ministry began, not on earth, but in heaven, began in that mysterious and wonderful self-emptying to which Paul referred when in his Philippian letter he spoke of Christ as being in the form of God, and yet not counting this equality with God a prize to be snatched at or held for His own enrichment. He emptied Himself.

I think it is well that we should immediately say that this is a declaration in the presence of which we must wonder and worship, and confess our inability finally to explain. Much has been said, especially in recent years, concerning that great kenosis, that great self-emptying of the Son of God, and much harm has been done by some interpretations thereof. We are warranted in saying of it so much as Holy Scripture says, that whatever functional relationship Jesus held with essential Deity He laid aside in the interest of humanity. He did not count His right of equality with God something to be held for His own enrichment, but laid it aside. Stooping from sovereignty to submission, from some form of manifestation suited to heavenly beings to a form of manifestation suited to man in the time of limitation, He took upon Him the form of man. As we thus see the work of the Son of God at its commencement as a self-emptying that laid aside all the rights of equality with God and laid aside all co-opera tion with the Spirit on the basis of equality, consenting in some infinite mystery to be born of the Spirit, and in its continuation consenting throughout the whole period of a life to be an instrument of the Spirit, we touch the profound and infinite things that lie behind the Pentecostal effusion.

The first fact in the ministry of the Son of God for human redemption was that self-emptying, and the final fact was that "they were all filled with the Holy Spirit." He first emptied Himself, and finally He filled these men with all the pleroma of Deity. This was a new activity in co-operation with the Spirit wherein, according to His own word, He did receive from the Father and pour forth on these men that infinitely mysterious and yet wonderful gift of the Spirit. Then the new day broke, the new life began, and the Christian fact was established in the world. Between that first fact of self-emptying and that final fact of the filling of these men lay all the processes with which we are most familiar. First, the Incarnation, whereby God, veiled in flesh, manifested Himself to the sons of men; the patient ministry of word and work through which the will of God was revealed to men who had lost their understanding of it, and the glory and the grace of God, which were made to shine again, so that men, seeing these things, found Him. Centrally there was the infinite mystery of the Cross, and beyond it the Day of Resurrection, whereby the bonds of death were broken and the perfection of the atoning work was sealed. Finally there was the Ascension to the right hand of power.

Our Lord emptied Himself, He was made flesh, He went about doing and teaching, He bore our sins in His own Body on the tree, He broke the power of death and arose from among the dead, He ascended to the right hand of the Father, receiving gifts, yea, for the rebellious also; He poured out the Spirit, and "they were all filled with the Holy Spirit."

The blessing thus bestowed is suggestively described to us by certain phrases of the New Testament. The work of the Spirit is described as a baptism, as an anointing, and as a sealing. Men are baptized in the Spirit, men are anointed of the Spirit, men are sealed by the Spirit, and these three phrases describe different phases of the one great and inclusive fact. The filling is the supreme matter: the filling is baptizing, the filling is anointing, the filling is sealing.

The filling of the Spirit was, first of all, a baptism, by which phrase is suggested the death into life, which is the peculiar and fundamental fact of all personal Christian experience, a dying to the false life and rising to the true, a dying to sin and rising to holiness, a dying to the world so far as the world is separated from God, and a rising into the life of the ages which is the life of dominion over all the cosmos. Baptism stands as the sign and symbol of that passing from death unto life which is the fundamental fact in all Christian experience. In that moment when these men and women were filled with the Spirit they were baptized of the Spirit into life.

The anointing of the Spirit ever signifies the preparation of those who are baptized of the Spirit for service. It is the peculiar word of the old economy, made use of in the new, reminding us of that anointing for priestly function and all holy service which men in the old dispensation passed through. The Spirit anoints for service all whom He baptizes into life to the service of God.

The filling is also a sealing. The seal is the sign of a covenant. As the Spirit of God came to these men He came as the seal of a covenant between themselves and Him, a covenant by which they belonged entirely to God and God belonged wholly to them, placing Himself in all His wisdom and all His might entirely and absolutely at their disposal, lifting them to the height of interest in His purpose, descending to the level of interest in their enterprises. In that moment when they were filled with the Spirit, filled with the Spirit as the result of the perfecting of the work of their Lord and Master Christ, they were baptized from death into life, they were anointed for all enterprise and service, and the covenant made between God and themselves was sealed.

So we pass to consider the fact in the experience of the disciples. Here again we may inclusively declare that in this filling of the Spirit men on earth were joined to the Man at God's right hand. Paul writing to the Corinthian Christians said, "He that is joined unto the Lord is one Spirit." We do no violence to the declaration if we state the selfsame truth from another standpoint, and say, He that is of one Spirit with the Lord is thereby joined to the Lord. This is the mystic side of Christianity which we must not lose. If by the use of the word mystic I suggest something unreal, then I fain would change it. This is the actual essential central fact of Christianity. Who is the Christian man? That man who is living one life with the Lord of glory, not the man who has merely seen a vision of Christ and admires it, not the man who is sentimentally in agreement with the purposes of Jesus of Nazareth, but the man who, in an infinite mystery that is always beyond final explanation, does live one life with the Lord of glory.

"They were filled with the Spirit." The Spirit proceeding from the Father, from the Son, came to them, and in that moment they lived one life with Him, and that is the explanation of the things we referred to at the commencement; a new vision of themselves, His vision of them; a new vision of the world, His vision of the world; a new vision of God, His vision of God. Their eyes were strangely and wonderfully and actually illuminated by the light of His mind and outlook. They had the mind of Christ by the baptism of the Spirit of Christ. Not only is it true that they saw as He saw; it is also true that now through their eyes He was able to look at men, through their hands He was able to touch men, and by the cession of their feet to Him He was able to travel anew through Judea and Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth. They were joined to the Lord, and the limited and localized Body of Jesus of Nazareth was thereby immediately multiplied a hundredfold, and the multiplication has continued through the centuries. Every new man, woman, boy, girl won from the territory of the world into relation with Him has become a new Body for Jesus, in which He lives, through which He looks, in which He speaks, in which He travels, and through which He comes nearer and yet nearer to the wounds and weariness of humanity, healing the wounds and resting the weariness.

If this be true, we may pass with great solemnity and reverence over the pathway of this Man as we surveyed it, and declare that now in these men these essential things of His limited ministry are realized anew. These men were filled with the Spirit and lived one life with the Son of God. Then the first principle of their life is that of self-emptying. He emptied Himself; He did not consider that which was His by eternal right something that He must hold for His own enrichment, but laid it aside. That is the story of the Spirit-filled life, that is the fundamental fact in all true Christian life. If I affirm that in any hour, or by any experience, I have been filled with the Spirit and still live a self-centred life, I blaspheme against the Holy Ghost. He emptied Himself. He that is joined to the Lord is of one Spirit; he also empties himself.

Therefore these men filled with the Spirit of God became God-manifesting men. Said Paul to the Corinthians, "Your body is a temple of the Holy Ghost!" That is the meaning of Pentecost. It resulted in such capture of the bodies of men and women that through them in all their habits and all their ways, through all their lives, God shall be manifest to men. I know there is a lonely and unique meaning in the incarnation of God in Christ Jesus, but the great principle is continued through all the Christian era, and every Christian man and woman in their day and opportunity is an incarnation of Christ, Who is the incarnation of God. It was this which Peter meant when describing the Church of God he said, "Ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of Him Who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light."

To be filled with the Spirit is to be an instrument for the manifestation of God to the sons of men.

To be filled with the Spirit is to live the life of love and service, in word and in work.

To be filled with the Spirit is to share the suffering that saves. There are lonely and mysterious and infinite elements in the passion of the Son of God that are always beyond us and from which we receive the benefits of the eternal grace. But we can share in His saving work only as we share in His sacrificial love. The fulness of the Spirit is ability to suffer with Christ on behalf of men. The fulness of the Spirit is the unlocking of the gates of life, that the life may be poured out in work and weariness and toil and travail, through which, and through which alone, the Kingdom of God can come.

To be joined to the Lord is to be one spirit with Him, and therefore it is also to have fellowship in the deathless life, to be ready to say with Paul, As dying, but behold we live, as always bearing about in the body the stigmata of Jesus, and yet always being led in triumph in Jesus Christ, so that no forces can destroy. The fulness of the Spirit is the fulness of resurrection life in Jesus.

To be filled with the Spirit is not merely to share in the suffering of the Cross and the power of the Resurrection. It is to reign with Him as the ascended One, to sit with Him in the places of authority in the heavenlies, to wait patiently with Him for the ultimate victory, and all the while with Him to reign over circumstances and happenings and forces.

Again, to be filled with the Spirit is to be able to communicate the Spirit to others. Do you challenge that affirmation? Then I pray you think of our Lord's figurative teaching as given at the Feast in Jerusalem and recorded for us in the seventh chapter of John: "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his inner life shall flow rivers of living water." And John adds, "Thus spake He of the Spirit." There is no power for Christian service that does not consist in the communication of the Spirit of God to other people, and only as we are suffused in the power of the Holy Spirit can we become the media which communicate this Spirit of God to others. He that ascended on high and received the Spirit and poured it forth on others links us to Himself in this holy life so that we also receive the Spirit in order that we may pour it forth on others.

This Pentecostal effusion is not an event of two millenniums ago, but the perpetual rushing forth of the river of life proceeding from the throne of God by the way of the altar; and whithersoever the river comes, there is life. These rivers of living water are to flow from the saints, who themselves being filled to fulness and to overflowing communicate the gift to others.

All this great ministry of the Spirit is suggestively set forth in the symbolic language of the New Testament. The symbols of the Spirit in the New Testament are those of wind, springs and rivers of water, and fire - the great elemental forces. Each has its distinctive features. The wind is in itself the very element of life. The rivers of water are always those that bring satisfaction and renewal to everyday life. The fire is always the emblem of searching purification and of perpetual energy. These are the peculiar symbols that the New Testament employs to give us some understanding of the work of the Spirit. Let us note the ideas common to all these figures of speech, the wind, the water, and the fire. They are forces mighty and mysterious. They are forces capable of destroying life. We are familiar with the hurricane that sweeps the sea, the devastating flood that destroys everything in its path, the conflagration that leaves desolation behind it. Yet all these forces are necessary to life. They demand obedience in order to render service. Obey the law of any of these forces, and the force becomes your servant. Disobey the law of wind or water or fire, and you will be destroyed.

When these men and women were filled with the Spirit they entered not only into a realm of privilege, but also into the place of responsibility. What is our responsibility to the Spirit as suggested by the symbol of wind? That we live on the heights and inhale the breath of God. What is our responsibility in view of the filling of the Spirit as suggested by the symbol of the waters? That we live in the stream and drink. What is our responsibility in view of the filling of the Spirit as suggested by the symbol of the fire? That we dwell in fire, knowing that fire destroys nothing but that which cannot be permeated and filled with its own nature, and that we quench not the Spirit.

We have no responsibility in this Pentecostal age to seek or ask for the Spirit. Our responsibility is to discover the laws of the Spirit and obey them. In proportion as we are careless of the laws of the life of the Spirit the experience fades and the power recedes. In proportion as we obey, the experience grows and the power increases.

To some it may be that all this is an unknown tongue. To them, therefore, I bring the words of Jesus, words spoken to men who had not then received the gift of the Spirit: "If ye being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him." That word is not for those who have received the Spirit, it is for those who never yet have received the gift. If you have never received the gift of the Spirit you may receive it by asking for it now. The Pentecostal effusion is not to be put back two thousand years as something dim and distant and far away. The river of God is moving, the winds of God are blowing, the fire of God is burning. Then, without sign or sound or confession made to men, ask the gift and receive.

Or it may be that having received, the vision has become dim and the forces weak. Then open again the eastern windows and yield the life once more to that Spirit Who needs no asking to enter but only the unlocking of the doors and the opening of the avenues of life. For those who thus yield there shall be repeated the experience of the first Pentecost, the baptism of fire that destroys the impure and energizes the life, the wind of God

that bloweth lustily

Our sicknesses to heal;

the flowing of the river that quenches our thirst, and then becomes the means of blessing through us to other men.