

**The Gift
and the Fulness
of the Spirit**

By R. A. LAIDLAW

THE GIFT AND THE FULNESS OF THE SPIRIT

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"Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but *be filled with the Spirit*; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord."--- (Eph. v. 17-19).

WE must not confuse *being filled with the Spirit* with the *Gift of the Spirit*. If we do not see a clear cut and definite difference between these two, we can never have an intelligent grasp of what *being filled with the Spirit* means. That there is a difference is clear from the verses quoted above.

In A.D. 56, according to Acts xix, these Ephesian Christians had received the Gift of the Spirit; and then, eight years later, writing from prison, in Rome, Paul tells them to *be filled with the Spirit*. If the gift and being filled were the same, there would be no need so to write.

The Gift of the Spirit comes at conversion (Acts ii. 38); being filled with the Spirit comes at consecration (Rom. vi. 13). They may be close together or years apart.

The Gift is the entrance of the Spirit (John vi. 63); being filled is the exit of the old self (Col. iii. 9). Obviously we cannot be full of the Spirit if we are half-filled with self.

The Gift is the birth of the new man (John iii. 5); being filled is the death of the old man (Eph. iv. 22, 23). The second may never happen, for it is tragically possible to live and die a carnal Christian.

The Gift is peace with God, the sin question settled (Rom. v. 1); being filled is the peace of God garrisoning the heart (Rom. viii. 6). Divine complacency in all circumstances.

The Gift of the Spirit is sin completely judged; being filled with the Spirit is fellowship completely established. We know the first, thank God. What do we know of the second ?

The Gift of the Spirit is eternal--He abides with us for ever (John xiv. 16); being filled is conditional, so we are to "grieve not" and "quench not" (Eph. iv. 30).

The Gift of the Spirit comes on talking Christ as Saviour; we are filled on crowning Christ as Lord. The first makes us saints; the second, bondslaves.

The Gift means the penalty of sin gone; being filled, the power of sin broken (Acts i. 8).

The Gift means deliverance from death; being filled means victorious life.

The Gift may leave us carnal Christians (I Cor. iii. 3); being filled makes us spiritual Christians (Rom. viii. 9).

The Gift of the Spirit governs our standing with God; being filled with the Spirit, our state before God. We have a perfect standing, but often we are in an imperfect state.

The Gift has to do with our union with Christ (I Cor. xii. 13); being filled, with our communion with Him.

The Gift is constantly the same (John xiv. 16); being filled is continually varying with most of us (I Thess. v. 19).

The Gift of the Spirit comes on repentance and faith (Acts xx. 21); being filled with the Spirit comes on submission and faith (Rom. vi. 13, 19; xii. 1). Neither comes by feelings and faith, nor by experience and faith.

The first commits my soul to God; the second commits my life, myself to God.

Have you done this? I do not want to seem harsh, but there is a lack of sincerity, is there not? about committing the eternal soul to God, and holding back the mortal life.

Supposing a man tells you that he has deposited £10,000 in the Bank of England, and a little later you see him with £50 in notes, and you say, "That seems to be a lot of money to carry about in one's pocket?" "Well", he replies, "I am afraid to put this £50 in the Bank, because I think the Bank is not to be trusted."

You would certainly believe he was insincere. He could not possibly convince you that while he was afraid to trust the Bank with his £50, he really had trusted it with his £10,000; yet this is what many of us claim-- that we have committed our immortal souls to His keeping, but we are afraid to trust Him with our mortal lives.

Our verse says, "Be not drunk with wine . . . but be filled with the Spirit". This is not a comparison of drunkenness with sobriety, but of two kinds of drunkenness---Divine intoxication and devil intoxication. As the drunkard hands himself over, body and soul, and becomes the slave of strong drink, so let us hand our lives over to the Holy Spirit, abandon ourselves to Him and become His bondslaves. Quietly and reverently in His presence will you make this your dedication vow ?

Take my life, and let it be consecrated,
Lord, to Thee;

Take my will, and make it Thine : it
shall be no longer mine;

Take my heart; it is Thine own; it shall
be Thy royal throne;

Take myself, and I will be ever, only,
all for Thee.

This is not a once-for-all act that in itself remains permanent, but it is the beginning of a new attitude that must be maintained at the price of unending vigilance.

Crossing the Jordan and entering the Promised Land were not the end but the beginning of real conflict for Israel; and so it is with the Spirit-filled believer. Ephesians vi. tells us that it is those who live in "heavenly places" who need "the whole armour of God", for they have become the special targets of the enemy, for the very reason that they have become effective for God. So in verse 14 we are told that we need "truth" and "righteousness"; verse 15, "the Gospel of peace"; verse 16, "faith"; verse 17, "the word of God"; verse 18, prayer.

Romans vi. 4 and Galatians v. 16, tell us that it is a *walk* in the Spirit and so it is a process; but, thank God, it is also a *progress*, because it is a Spirit-directed walk.

Galatians v. 22, 23 tell us that it is fruit-bearing, and therefore a *growth* in the things of the Spirit, and this requires watering with the Word, and cultivation in an atmosphere of prayer. The saint who neglects either of these two things does so at his peril, for no person can be filled with the Spirit who is not obedient to the Word which the Spirit has written, and in close prayer-communion with the One Whom the Spirit has come to glorify.

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