

A SPIRIT-FILLED PEOPLE

JOSELO MERCADO

"The filling of the Spirit brings to God's people a deeper knowledge of Christ, an increased desire for holiness, a stronger commitment to unity and love, a greater fruitfulness in ministry, and a deeper gratitude for our salvation."

(The Sovereign Grace Statement of Faith, "The Empowering Ministry of the Spirit")

Over the past 18 months, the term "misinformation" has grown in popularity. This term has been applied to political and social issues to form certain societal narratives. However, no matter how we view the cultural issues, it is important that, as believers, we are not misinformed about the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives and what the effect of being filled with the Spirit should be.

The Apostle Paul desired that the Corinthian church not proceed based on ignorance regarding the use of spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:1). So, likewise, we can be sure that God does not want us to be ignorant about the ministry of the Holy Spirit as he fills us.

Unfortunately, misinformation abounds regarding the work of the Spirit. In recent decades, extreme views, unbiblical emphases, and bizarre practices regarding the Spirit and his gifts have affected many Christians.

I thank God that Sovereign Grace's *Statement of Faith* presents the person of the Holy Spirit with such clarity and certainty. It faithfully presents the broad work of the third person of the Trinity, and it shows us the effect that being filled with the Spirit should have on believers.

"The filling of the Spirit brings to God's people a deeper knowledge of Christ, an increased desire for holiness, a stronger commitment to unity and love, a greater fruitfulness in ministry, and a deeper gratitude for our salvation." (*Statement of Faith*, "The Empowering Ministry of the Spirit") These five fruits provide a powerful incentive to seek the Spirit's filling and eagerly invite his work among us.

"A deeper knowledge of Christ"

The main role of the Holy Spirit is to show us Christ. Jesus says that when the Spirit comes, "he will bear witness about me" (John 15:26) and "He will glorify me" (John 16:14).

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God's glorious plan of redemption is initiated by the Father, executed by the Son, and revealed by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit's great work is that we discover the crucified and resurrected Son of God as Savior of the world. We are strengthened with power through the Spirit to know and experience the love Christ has for us (Eph. 3:16-19).

If we believe that all the Scriptures are about Christ (Luke 24:44-47; Rom. 1:1-3) and that the human authors of Scripture were carried along by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:21), then a large part of the ministry of the Spirit must be to show us Christ. Jesus declared himself to be the truth and taught that the Holy Spirit would be sent to lead people into the truth or the knowledge of himself.

There is nothing more important that the Holy Spirit can do. We can affirm with certainty that all the other functions and activities of the Holy Spirit are

subordinated to deepening our knowledge of Christ. I would not want to reduce the ministry of the Holy Spirit exclusively to that of a beacon pointing to Christ since the Holy Spirit performs many other functions in addition to revealing Christ. But this is his greatest work. An alleged ministry of the Holy Spirit that does not exalt Christ and reveal him to be glorious is not a work of the Spirit.

"An increased desire for holiness"

When the Spirit fills us, we are given a greater passion for spiritual growth. He is not an impersonal force that exists to give us pleasant mystical experiences. Instead, he is a personal and divine protagonist in the work of redemption, which includes our sanctification. The goal of the Spirit's filling is not primarily emotional; it is transformational.

By the Spirit, we see Christ and are changed into His image (2 Cor. 3:18), and by the Spirit, we put to death the deeds of the body (Rom. 8:13). His fullness in our lives is seen in our love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22-23).

The power of the Holy Spirit that raised Christ from the grave is the immense power that raised us from our spiritual death. It is incredible to think that in order to get out of our state of spiritual death, we need the same power that raised Christ from the dead. This supernatural power is not merely a thing of the past because the Giver of that power now dwells in us.

Wherever there is a desire for increased holiness in our lives or a grace-tinged sorrow that we are not further along, we can be sure it is the Spirit's work. He gives us the desire for holiness, giving us the power to be changed.

"A stronger commitment to unity and love"

The book of Acts shows the unstoppable gospel of Christ being preached and saving multitudes of people throughout the Roman Empire through the work of the Holy Spirit. By saving people of different nationalities, backgrounds, and social positions, the Holy Spirit brings them into the unity of the Body of Christ.

It is glorious to see in the book of Acts the power of the Spirit to save and his power to keep such diverse and different people in the same body. We often overlook the demonstration of power in the early church's unity. It is as men

and women were filled with the Spirit that they generously met each other's needs, prayed and broke bread together, and were of one heart and soul.

Those who are filled with the Spirit are always those who are committed to walking "with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:2-3). The Spirit's work is never isolated in individual experience but always overflows in uniting God's people in the love of Christ.

"A greater fruitfulness in ministry"

It was beneficial for Christ to depart and for the age of the Spirit to begin. One of the main reasons is that the Spirit of Christ indwells us, causing us to bear fruit and making us fruitful in ministry. No longer is the center of God's activity in Jerusalem because believers throughout the whole world are filled with the presence of God through the Spirit dwelling in us.

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In the Old Testament, we see moments where the Spirit fills certain people for specific tasks. But now, we can all be filled with the Spirit to serve the church effectively. To each, a gift has been given, empowered by the Spirit for the edification of others. As continuationists, we believe that God has given gifts to all believers that are empowered by the Spirit and used for the edification of the church.

A Spirit-filled people experience great fruitfulness in ministry and mission. When the Spirit is at work, we can expect to see joyful service, powerful preaching, bold evangelism, wise leadership, generous giving, and more.

"A deeper gratitude for our salvation"

The presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives is a guarantee in us that we belong to God. Ephesians 1:13-14 says that when we received the gospel and believed in Christ, we "were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory."

This statement is packed with gratitude-inducing richness. The Spirit not only opens our hearts to respond to the gospel, but he becomes in us a seal, the very mark of God's ownership. Furthermore, God gives us the Spirit as a guarantee, the first installment of all that the Spirit will do in and for us. The application of Christ's glorious work to our lives is the work of the Spirit from first to last.

The presence of the Spirit in us should therefore give us overwhelming gratitude for the gift of salvation. A Spirit-filled people are those "giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (Col. 1:13-14).

A Spirit-Filled People

We who are sinners have been forgiven of our many sins and purchased with the precious blood of Jesus Christ. We now belong to God and the kingdom of his Son. We share in the heavenly inheritance and will one day see our Savior face to face. It is the Holy Spirit who works all of this in our lives, leading us ever more deeply into a life of gratitude and assurance.

What glorious things the Spirit does in the lives of God's people! May this awareness compel us all to seek continually to be filled with the Spirit, that Christ might be more glorious in our eyes and his character more richly displayed in our lives.

JOSELO MERCADO

Joselo Mercado is senior pastor at [Iglesia Gracia Soberana de Gaithersburg](#) (Gaithersburg, MD).