

Be filled with the Holy Spirit – part 2

Message for Sunday, June 18, 2017
by Bruce Fraser

Scripture: John 14:16-17, 26; Ephesians 5:18

Children's Message: from John 7:37-39

Jesus talked about “living water” inside a person. I think he is talking about the Holy Spirit alive inside of us. Jesus promised that God’s Spirit would live inside the people who trust in him.

God works in three different ways:

- i) God the Father, who created us and everything else.
- ii) God the Son, Jesus, who lived here on earth to show us God’s love.
- iii) God the Holy Spirit, who lives in us.

How can one God be three different people? We don’t know. The ways of God are not our ways; the thoughts of God are not our thoughts.

But we can see with our own eyes how something can be found in three different ways. Show a jug of water. Now show a boiling kettle, and ask what is coming out the spout: steam, which is water! Finally bring out an ice cube tray—water again! The three things look different, but all are water.

Message: “Be filled with the Holy Spirit – part 2”

1) What Holy Spirit?

Last Sunday I spoke on a couple of passages in the Bible which talk about being filled with the Holy Spirit. Today we’ll continue our study of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

There was once a boy’s school where, each morning before classes began, the students were required to recite the Apostles’ Creed. Each boy was given one phrase in the creed to recite. For example, “I believe in God, the Father Almighty,” and so on. One morning, all was going along as usual until, all at once, there was complete silence. “What’s wrong?” the teacher asked. One of the boys answered, “Sir, the Holy Spirit is not here today.”

Friends, I assure you: the Holy Spirit *is* here today! In fact, we have promises from Jesus that he is indeed here. We’ll come to them a bit later.

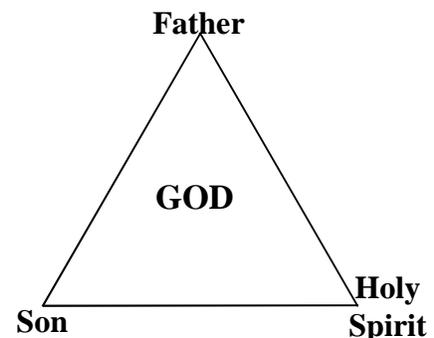
Last Sunday I overlooked one important item: some of you may be asking yourselves, “Who or what is the Holy Spirit?”

In the Bible, the book of Acts tells of the spread of the Christian faith. Some new believers were asked about the Holy Spirit, and they answered, “We have never even heard of a Holy Spirit” [Acts 19:2]. Some of you may be like that. Or you may have been part of the church for many years, have heard people mention the Holy Spirit from time to time, yet never understood what they were talking about.

Here’s my attempt at making things clear.

First, we have God. God acts in various ways. For instance, when God created the universe, we call that God the Father. When God became human, known as Jesus, we call that God the Son. When God lives in people, we call that God the Holy Spirit. There are these three distinct forms, yet all three are the one and the same God. This is what we call “the Trinity” – one God, yet three forms. This drawing may help us to visualize this concept:

A diagram of the Trinity



OK?

No, *no NO!* This is not OK!

Don’t ever let someone sell you their pretty little package of God, where they’ve got God all figured out. This is absurd!

This is what God says through the prophet Isaiah:

Isaiah 55:8, New International Version:

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways.”

In other words, “You will never even come close to understanding me.”

The problem with this type of thinking is that people begin to think that their theories of God are so helpful and so rational, that they start believing in their theory, rather than believing in God. So many churches and denominations have split because people loved their theories more than they loved God. We need to always remember that all our doctrines are only our feeble attempts to describe the indescribable. We can no more define who God is than we can put a handle on the wind. Whenever we talk about God, we must do it with humility.

2) Where does the “Trinity” idea come from?

Am I saying there is no such thing as the Trinity, God in three forms? Not at all. What I’d like to do is to show where the idea of the Trinity comes from. Some people think it was cooked up by a bunch of clergy huddled in a back room four centuries after Jesus. That’s just not true.

So where did this belief about God as three in one come from?

From the beginning when God revealed himself to the people of Israel, the Lord was known as one God:

Deuteronomy 6:4, New Revised Standard Version:
“Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone.”

Throughout the centuries, as the people of Israel were tossed about among other nations, like clothes in a washing machine, and they came into contact with all kinds of other religions and their gods, this fundamental belief never wavered.

Then about two thousand years ago, something amazing happened in Israel. A man came along, saying things and doing things which astonished everyone who met this man. He talked and behaved as if he had the same authority as the Lord God.

God had given the people commandments to follow; they are written in the Old Testament. Jesus comes along and says that he is updating those commandments. Here’s an example:

Matthew 5:21–22, New Living Translation:
“You have heard that our ancestors were told, ‘You must not murder. If you commit murder, you are

subject to judgment.’ But I say, if you are even angry with someone, you are subject to judgment!”

This is outrageous! Who does he think he is?

Then he says to someone who is crippled,

Matthew 9:2, New Living Translation:
“Your sins are forgiven”

This is blasphemy! — only God can do that!

There were only two possible conclusions about him: either he was a devil impersonating God, or he really was God. Then, when Jesus rose from the dead, that nailed it.

The Jews for thousands of years had followed the commandment of keeping the Sabbath holy. Saturday was the day for worshipping God. Yet after the resurrection, within weeks the Jews who believed in Jesus had were worshipping Jesus, and they were doing it on Sundays, the day Jesus rose from death. You don’t break traditions which have been followed for a hundred generations just like that. Something incredibly powerful had to happen. It was their experience of Jesus that caused the change.

Like I said, this did not happen centuries later. It happened within a few weeks. The Bible contains passages which are thought to be some of the earliest creeds of the church.

Philippians 2:5-7, New International Version:
Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:
Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,
but made himself nothing,
taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

When Jesus was anticipating returning to heaven after his resurrection, he promised his followers that he would not leave them alone.

John 14:16-17, New Living Translation:
“I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, who will never leave you. He is the Holy Spirit.”

This spirit is not an “it;” this is a person. Jesus gives this person a name: the Holy Spirit. He comes from God, and is God, in the same way that Jesus came from God and is God.

Jesus goes on to describe how the Holy Spirit will help them:

John 14:26, New International Version:

“The Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”

So that’s where we get our idea of the Trinity. When the church councils a century or two later wrote down the creeds, they weren’t making up something new. They were simply putting on paper what the church had been believing and practising from the earliest days.

3) Be filled with the Holy Spirit... again and again

There’s a curious thing about the Greek language in which the New Testament was written. Just like the English language, the Greek language has past, present and future tenses: *I saw, I see, I will see*. But Greek has another variation unknown in the English language: something could simply happen, or it could happen on a continuing basis.

For example, when Jesus was preparing to enter Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, he sent two of his disciples ahead to fetch the donkey on which he would ride:

Matthew 21:2, Today’s English Version:

“Go to the village there ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied up with her colt beside her. Untie them and bring them to me.”

He’s not telling them to do it over and over again; they just need to do it once. But in the verse we’re looking at, it is written in the form of something which is to happen on an ongoing basis:

Ephesians 5:18, Today’s English Version:

Do not get drunk with wine, which will only ruin you; instead, be filled with the Spirit.

You don’t become filled with the Holy Spirit just once and that’s it; you’re set for life. Rather, this is something which we need to do on an ongoing basis. Being filled with the Holy Spirit is like

eating. We don’t eat a big Sunday dinner, and expect to stay full until next Sunday. Committing our lives to Jesus Christ as Lord, and asking him to fill us with the Holy Spirit is something which we need to do every day.

Next Steps:

- Acknowledge your doubts, questions, confusion about what God is like. That’s OK. In fact, that’s good!
- Even so, surrender your life to God.
- Open yourself to receive all that God has for you, and for you to follow wherever he may lead you.

I invite you to join me in the prayer now:

Lord Jesus,

I give you this day.

Help me to follow you and obey you.

Fill me with your Holy Spirit, and help me to be the kind of person you want me to be.

Amen.