

HIS INDWELLING PRESENCE

Intimate Studies in the Things of the Spirit

by Norman B. Harrison, D. D.
Pastor, Bible Teacher and Evangelist

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CHAPTER SIX

HIS INFILLING—OUR OVERFLOWING

“The water that I shall give him shall be IN HIM a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (John 4:14).

“Out OF HIS BELLY [from within him] shall flow rivers of living water” (John 7:38).

These scriptures present two sides of the same experience, an experience of, by, and through the Holy Spirit.

When we believe upon the Lord Jesus Christ we are born of the Spirit and He opens within us a fountain of ceaseless satisfaction, constantly upwelling. The Greek says, *“leaping up,”* the same word as is used of the lame man at the Gate Beautiful when he was healed. So irrepressible is the supply in its inexhaustibleness. It is a personal, inward experience.

When, however, this up-leaping fountain is permitted to come to its fullness, it becomes more than a merely personal experience; it overflows in multiplied blessing to others. Jesus said, **“rivers”**—an overflow both copious and diffuse.

This—a filling to overflowing—is what Jesus expected of every believer. Let us mark His words carefully:

“If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out from within him shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake He of the Spirit . . .” (John 7:37-39).

“As the Scripture hath said” is doubtless a reference to many Old Testament passages prophesying the day when the Temple shall have living waters issuing from beneath it for the blessing of many peoples. Jesus is transferring this promise to His New Covenant people. Indwelt by His Spirit, we are His temple. And He looks to every believer to fulfill the promise by letting the living waters of the Spirit come to such fullness that they cannot be contained but must overflow and issue forth by virtue of their own superabundance.

It is to be feared that the average person, in praying to be **“filled with the Spirit,”** thinks of himself as a more or less empty vessel into which the Lord, in answering the prayer, is to pour His Spirit till he is filled with Him.

How very artificial such a conception is, as compared with our Lord's characterization of it as a fountain springing up to fullness of experience and expression.

But it is not only artificial; it is unscriptural, in that it looks to God to do something He has already done. God always acts in accordance with His Word. Such a statement should be axiomatic. We must therefore interpret our experience in the light of His Word, never the reverse. And if our experience does not square with His Word, we must not count His Word at fault, but our own meeting of its conditions.

As we have already seen, the Holy Spirit's In-coming takes place when we believe. He comes in, as Jesus promised, to stay, to remain, to abide. By His In-coming we are united to Christ and are rendered capable of living the Christian life. Henceforth we have His Indwelling and His Inworking. But—with what degree of freedom? and with what measure of fullness?

- Since He has come in, can we not let Him come further in?
- Since He is dwelling within us, can we not study to make Him more at home?
- Since He is working within us, can we not remove the hindrances to His unhampered working?

This we must do. It is the inescapable responsibility of the Christian life. Until we have done so, we are in a constant state of sinning against the Spirit. Like His Old Testament people we are limiting the Holy One of Israel. We have Him under leash, in the confines of our lives, that He may not do the things that He would. We are robbing Him, and ourselves, of the fruits of His fullness. Therefore the command, addressed to every child of grace, concerning His unhindered Infilling: **"BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT."**

I. His Infilling

Just what do we mean by the Infilling of the Spirit? The command is clear, but how does the Spirit bring it to pass? Perhaps our surest way to a right understanding of this benefit is to visualize it by means of illustration.

Let us take a glass half filled with water. The glass has the water in it and we call it a "glass of water." Yet that is not strictly true. Rather, it is a glass of water and air; it is partially filled with each of the two.

That glass represents the average Christian. He has the Spirit; but he has also the self-life. He is not filled with either one, but exemplifies, in a manner that may be quite unconscious to himself, the condition of Galatians 5:17: **"For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would."**

That each excludes the other from the mastery may be seen by converting the glass into a closed receptacle, connected by intake with a reservoir of water. The air resists the water, holds it in check, forbids its coming to fullness. It resists the entire reservoir. Nay, if the air is heated, it will expand, fill a yet larger part of the receptacle and cause the water to recede.

It is this that actually happens, the reverse of the Spirit's infilling, when we give encouragement to the flesh-life. Thus a Christian may become increasingly "**carnal.**"

But now, when the water from the reservoir is given freedom to expel the air, it rises; it fills; it overflows. It is the Infilling of the Spirit, manifesting itself in the flowing out which Jesus promised. He infills that we may overflow.

Another illustration of this inner experience, exceeding our capacity to contain it, is in the utterance of the Psalmist: "**My cup runneth over**" (Psalm 23:5). All the blessings enumerated in this Psalm come to a climax in the shepherd's benediction at the close of the day: "**Thou anointest my head with oil.**" By the oil the Holy Spirit's healing and restoring ministry is symbolized. The reference is to the shepherd's rodding of the sheep. Standing at the door of the fold, permitting them to enter only by him (see John 10:9), with his rod he halts them, one by one, for personal inspection. One may have torn itself in a bramble; another may be footsore; others may be weary from the day's journey. The shepherd has his horn of oil ready at hand, and the every need is met. It is this sufficiency of our Shepherd's care, refreshing and restoring to body and spirit, that causes the cup of Christian experience to come to the full and overflow.

We may seek a modern illustration in the field of electricity. Take the familiar flashlight. Everything that makes for the light is within. Nothing is to be added or drawn upon from without. Yet the bulb remains dark and lifeless until it is enabled to lay hold of the resources so well within its grasp. When, however, we form the connection—and it is so simply done—the light leaps up into the bulb. It itself is filled, and forthwith it outflows in a radiant flood of light.

How was it filled? By an Infilling—a filling from within. And its outflowing in blessing naturally and necessarily followed the Infilling. The Spirit, already indwelling us, awaits the touch that brings Him to the fullness that overflows.

II. Our Overflowing

The Spirit, when He comes to fullness in our lives, has His chosen and appointed ways of manifesting Himself in the overflowing that results. These ways are manifold—rivers. The Scriptures have much more to say about this matter than we usually detect. Repeatedly it is referred to by a Greek word, variously translated, "**abundant,**" "**abounding,**" "**exceeding.**" For example, in the familiar words of our Lord: "**I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly**" (John 10:10).

The word means "*exceeding some measure or need,*" "*over and above.*" That is, over and above our personal need; over and above the measure of our capacity to contain. Also, in its root meaning it conveys the thought of "*around and beyond.*" That is, it flows over, beyond and around, to the blessing of others.

As a suggestive aside we may note that Salvation, in its origin and nature, is just this: God's grace rising beyond His power to contain it, rising till it overflowed in blessing to men. Thus we read:

“In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace; wherein He hath abounded [overflowed] toward us in all wisdom and prudence” (Ephesians 1:7, 8).

So much for its abundance of supply at the source. Then we are told that it far exceeded, over and above, our need:

“But not as the offence, so also is the free gift: for if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift of grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded [over and above the need] unto many” (Romans 5:15).

“Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound” (Romans 5:20).

Having drunk at such a superabundant fountain, and become partakers of His overflowing nature, how can we fail to reflect the fact? even as our Lord Jesus said we would: **“He that believeth on Me, out from within him shall flow rivers of living water.”**

Some of the channels which these “rivers” make for themselves are as follows:

1. WE WILL OVERFLOW IN PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING.

“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; giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 5:18-20).

This is the classic passage on the Spirit’s Infilling, since it contains the command to Christians to **“Be filled with the Spirit.”** Here, then, we may look for the normal overflow from His fullness. It is contrasted with spirituous intoxication which overflows in shameful, degrading unrestraint. From the Spirit’s Infilling something akin results in the spiritual realm, a welling up and pouring out of the spirit in unrestrained praise and thanksgiving. **“Singing”** is a normal and necessary expression of the Spirit-filled life. In it He overflows. He who commanded His people to **“rejoice before the Lord”**—He it is who begets **“melody in our hearts unto the Lord.”**

“Giving thanks always for all things.” No man can do that: the human mind and spirit are too sensitive to the fluctuations of circumstance. Yet it is His command and will for us: **“In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you”** (I Thessalonians 5:18). And, mark you, only as we do so will we avoid quenching the Spirit (vs. 19). This particular will of God—thanksgiving, always, in every thing—He is striving to maintain as the constant overflow of His Indwelling and Inworking in fullness.

It follows that the Spirit-filled life, the life that permits His fullness in a sustained overflow, is the only life that can please God. Every other life, whatever its attainments, falls short of His expectation of us.

“By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name” (Hebrews 13:15).

He asks for our hearts as the altar where He may place the continual sacrifice of praise. He will have it never to die out. It was so in the Old Testament Tabernacle and Temple, how much more in us under the New Covenant realities. Indwelling this temple, from yielded lips **“giving thanks to His name,”** He has made provision for the continuous praise due unto Himself.

2. WE WILL OVERFLOW IN LOVE.

“And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you” (I Thessalonians 3:12).

“Because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us” (Romans 5:5).

He wants His love, brought to expression in us as **“the fruit of the Spirit,”** to **“increase”** till it **“abounds,”** that is, overflows the limits of our own lives, the limits of every barrier of unloveliness, exceeding all expectation **“in love one toward another.”**

To do this we are not left to draw upon our own supply of love, little better than a cistern, exhaustible and leaky at best, which has so often failed under test, even to turning vitriolic under provocation. Nay, in giving us the Holy Spirit He has poured out His own love in our hearts. This is the supply upon which He asks us to draw. And when the same Spirit is permitted to make of it a fountain leaping up to fullness, it readily **“abounds”** toward others. Being His own love in us and out from us, it is both copious in quantity and unfailing in quality:

“Charity [love] suffereth long, and is kind; charity [love] envieth not, charity [love] vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity [love] never faileth” (I Corinthians 13:4-8).

3. WE WILL OVERFLOW IN JOY.

“These things have I spoken unto you that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full” (John 15:11).

“My joy”—a joy that did not fail Jesus our Lord under the crushing burden of the world’s sin, because its supply was in the eternal hills of His Father through whom, indwelling Him, He spake and wrought. That super-tested joy He gives to remain, dwell, abide in us by imparting to us His Spirit as its indwelling source. And further—**“that your joy may be full.”** When His Spirit of joy is permitted to come to fullness, so that He infills us, then our joy becomes full.

And it abounds. It exceeds what might naturally be expected, unrepressed by circumstances because its source is in the Spirit who is insensitive to circumstances.

“Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness” (Colossians 1:11).

“With joyfulness.” We may succeed, up to a certain point, in being patient and longsuffering—we can school ourselves in it—but never **“with joyfulness.”** It is not in us, only in Him, so to do. It becomes our experience when His inward strengthening mounts to a daily dominance, a satisfying fullness that will not be repressed. The joyfulness, in spite of all, is the mark of the genuine.

4. WE WILL OVERFLOW IN FRUITFULNESS.

“I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing” (John 15:5).

The Abiding Life, our vital union with Christ, set up and sustained by the abiding Indwelling of the Holy Spirit—since what the sap is to vine and branch, He is to our partaking of the life and nature of Christ—this life in Him finds its natural and necessary expression in fruit-bearing. Truly abiding we cannot fail to bear fruit; it is Himself bearing it through us.

But what is fruit? Is it not the overplus of the tree’s life—over and above what it uses upon itself and its own needs? A fruitless Christian is one who has no life to spare in blessing to others, he uses it all upon himself. Fruit is the Spirit infilling us to overflowing. And consider how wondrously wide and varied its usefulness may be. The tree pours its very life and nature into the apple, the pear, or the peach. In that form its life is sent from friend to friend, sustaining other life, conveying love, performing a ministry that may be world-wide. **“From within him shall flow”**—fruit is that overflow, flavored with Himself.

The practical conditions lying back of this process are indicated by such Old Testament Scriptures as these:

“He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season” (Psalm 1:3).

“The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree . . . They shall still bring forth fruit in old age” (Psalm 92:12, 14).

Planted by the unfailling rivers of God’s grace, or sending its taproot down to the waters unaffected by surface circumstances, such as make ordinary life the victim of drought, these waters, drawn up by the roots, infill the tree and its branches, causing it ceaselessly to abound in fruitfulness.

So is the abiding, Spirit-filled believer.

5. WE WILL OVERFLOW IN POWER.

“He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us” (Ephesians 3:20).

Here is the same Greek word, applied to our experiencing, and expressing, His power. The Greek says: **“He is able to do above all things, above the measure of our capacity to ask or think.”** Just so wondrously as that is His inward-working power able to infill us, come to its fullness and overflow the bounds we would set for it by the highest imagination of our asking or thinking.

“He is able”—yes, but under this New Covenant relationship He can express, and we can experience, that ability only **“according to the power that worketh in us.”** Ours is the great responsibility of letting His power find unhindered fullness in and through the channel of our living, thinking and doing. Outside of us, unconditioned by partnership with human personality, what is that power? The heavens answer, uttering knowledge of infinite power displayed in the starry worlds that stud the immeasurable reaches of space, each held to its appointed place with a mathematical precision that amazes. The little flower at our feet answers, disclosing to our gaze a world of microscopic beauty and symmetry, order and design, that staggers belief. But now—within us is this same power, implanted by His personal presence. Untrammelled, free to rise to His purposed heights of power in us, what will the disclosures of His presence be?

6. WE WILL OVERFLOW IN THE GRACE OF GIVING.

“Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; how that in a great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality . . . Therefore, as ye abound in everything, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also” (II Corinthians 8:1, 2, 7).

This is the Scriptures’ classic on Giving. And what a picture it presents. The Macedonian Christians were poor; yet their giving was rich. How? and why? Giving is a grace. That is, God’s grace that gave the Saviour and still gives in spite of undesert, is planted in our hearts by His Spirit. So the grace of God was bestowed until the “abundance” of joy and poverty—what a commingling— **“abounded unto the riches of their liberality.”**

Twice our Greek word, **“over and above,”** is employed to describe an experience of being filled so full that they could not but overflow in blessing to others. Naturally their cup contained only **“depths of poverty.”** But He added His grace and the poverty welled up in a joy that exceeded all bounds. So the Apostle exhorts the Corinthians, who have **“abounded”** in so many ways, to **“abound in this grace also.”**

What a provision for financing the cause of Christ in the world! Not drives—far, far from it. Nor yet dinners that fill the stomach, but grace that fills the heart. Then giving becomes the luxurious outpouring of heaven’s treasure in the heart through the medium of material substance.

Multiplied thousands, through the Christian centuries, have proved that when the Spirit infills the heart with this grace there is an inner experience of joy out of which proceed, not mere charity or benevolence, but the “**rivers of living water**” freighted with tokens of love, His and ours.

7. WE WILL OVERFLOW IN GOOD WORKS.

“God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work” (II Corinthians 9:8).

This remarkable scripture, so boundless in its scope, stands as the grand climax to the teaching on the grace of giving. Its intent is to generalize the grace of God flowing out from us. Giving is just one of the channels it takes. He is able to supply to us every sort of grace, applicable to every conceivable need, so that every requirement of our own is more than met, and we overflow, out of this abundant supply, in every sort of good works for the blessing of others. Rotherham aims at a literal translation, thus: *“God has power to cause every kind of favour to superabound unto you, in order that, in every thing, at every time, having every sort of sufficiency of your own, ye may be superabounding unto every good work.”*

But now, we must not fail to note that this scripture, in its twice using the Greek word, “*over and above,*” which underlies the teaching of this chapter, makes beautifully clear the mutuality of the matter, namely, that He infills us over and above our own need that we in turn may overflow, abound over and beyond ourselves, in blessing to others. These two phases of the Spirit-filled life we must ever keep in mind—His part and ours. Let us, then, paraphrase the passage, so that it reads: *“God is able to make every sort of grace to abound unto you, over and above your own need, that, in every thing, at every time, having every sort of sufficiency of your own, you may superabound [overflow] to others in every good work.”*

He who chose us unto good works and prepared them beforehand, He is able to make us multiplied channels of blessing when we permit Him to infill us and overflow us. Then our manifold good works, adapted to every need, flow out from Him, freighted with Himself—**“rivers of living water.”**

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (I Corinthians 15:58).

III. The Exhortation

How shall we have this experience of His Infilling? How can He fill us till we overflow? The answer is in a simple exhortation of Scripture, so evidently suited to this experience that no one need miss it. It is in the little word: **“YIELD.”** The mutuality of the matter is this: It is ours to yield; it is His to fill. He fills what we yield.

“Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God” (Romans 6:13).

All that precedes must be carefully read, leading to the climax of vs. 11. If God reckons, counts us, with Christ, as dead unto sin and alive unto God, then we must also reckon ourselves just so. If we really do think of ourselves thus, our counting it true will constrain us to present ourselves to God, yield ourselves to Him, as alive from the dead, responsive to Him and Him alone, therefore ready for His service, wholly and completely.

As we do so, He accepts the offering, infills the life thus yielded, claims it as wholly His, occupies it as completely as it was yielded up to Him, uses it to His glory. It becomes a new and wondrous experience of Himself—inwardly, in us; outwardly, in overflow to others.

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God” (Romans 12:1, 2).

“**Present**” is the same Greek word as “*yield*.” Present your bodies—the vehicle for expressing the alive-to-God soul within—as wholly yielded to Him. Show that this is a true offering on your part, and that the resulting relationship is real and commanding, by maintaining a corresponding consistent attitude toward the world (vs. 2), and you will make proof of His will as a practical realization in your life. He is faithful that promised. You will be “**filled unto all the fullness of God.**”

One example from life, representative of the many, may suffice to quicken our yearning and to encourage us to expect that He who is no respecter of persons will do as graciously for us.

For many years Dr. F. B. Meyer, of London, has been overflowing in “rivers of living water,” by his life, by his lips, by his pen. Thousands have been blessed through his Spirit-filled ministry. But it was not always so. This is his story as he tells it.

When he had been preaching some thirteen years he met and heard J. Hudson Taylor. There was something about him of indescribable poise and calm, something so beautiful and satisfying, that Mr. Meyer became intensely dissatisfied with himself. He spent a wakeful night and rose early, impelled to seek the secret from Mr. Taylor. He rapped upon his hotel door at seven in the morning. To his apology for calling so early, Mr. Taylor assured him it was no intrusion, that he had been up with his Bible and his Lord since four-thirty.

This circumstance, and the conversation that followed led Mr. Meyer to see a Christ-centered life unfolding to him, a life so yielded to HIM that He became the center about which it revolved, the source from which all its satisfaction sprang, the supply of its every need, the strength and sufficiency of its every service. He yielded his life to Him. The Spirit infilled him. And the result is the common possession of the Christian world: in ceaseless blessing, in superabounding service, in the outgoings of beauty and strength from a life given up to Him.

From the pen of another, enriched by a like experience, come words that call us to drink at the same fountain of fullness:

Live out Thy life within me,
Oh, Jesus! King of Kings.
Be Thou, Thyself, the answer
To all my questionings.
Live out Thy life within me,
In all things have Thy way;
I, the transparent medium,
Thy glory to display.

The temple has been yielded,
And purified of sin.
Let Thy Shekinah glory
Now flash forth from within.
And all the earth keep silence,
The body henceforth be
Thy silent, docile servant,
Moved only as by Thee.

Its members every moment
Held subject to Thy call,
Ready to have Thee use them.
Or not be used at all,
Held without restless longing,
Or strain, or stress, or fret,
Or chafing at Thy dealings,
Or thoughts of vain regret;

But restful, calm and pliant,
From bend or bias free,
Permitting' Thee to settle
When Thou hast need of me.
Live out Thy life within me.
Oh, Jesus! King of Kings,
Be Thou, Thyself, the answer
To all my questionings.

—F. R. H.

~ end of chapter 6 ~

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