

Children of Light – Being Filled with the Spirit

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As we start to celebrate the 250-year anniversary of the United States of America, we'll be thinking about what we'll be eating. We may think about going to fireworks. A friend of mine wants to go to Washington DC to see the huge firework invent that is to be displayed – suppose to be the biggest firework show ever. If we have time, we may watch a history program that remains us about the history of this great country of ours. You have to be careful today on what history you watch because there is some who do not love this country and they distort history to fit their negative narrative. One of the negative narratives is that Christianity didn't have anything to do with the beginning of this nation. For those who love history, must know that the northern part of the Colonies before the Revolutionary War, was populated by many people who had left Europe to find freedom in worship of their Lord and Savior. The south part of the Colonies was filled with those who wanted to make money, which explains the birth of the plantations in the south and the dependence on the slave trade for cheap labor. The Pilgrims came to have freedom of worship, which they couldn't find in Europe. When the Pilgrims came in 1620, they formed their first settlement. Before they made landfall, the Pilgrims made a compact aboard ship, which they called The Mayflower Compact. Here is part of that compact:

In the name of God, Amen. We, whose names are underwritten, the loyal subjects of our dread Sovereign Lord King James, by the grace of God, of Great Britain, France, and Ireland Ling, Defender of the Faith, etc..having undertaken for the glory of God, and advancement of the Christian Faith, and honor of our King and Country, a voyage to plant the first colony in the northern parts of Virgina, do by these presents solemnly and mutually, in the presence of God, and one another, covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil body politick, for our better ordering and preservation, and furtherance of the ends afore said, and by virtue hereof do enact, constitute, and frame such just and equal laws, ordinances, acts, constitutions, and offices, from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and

convenient for the general good of the Colony, unto which we promise all due submission and obedience.....(Pilgrim Hall Museum)

This document and how the Pilgrims formed their towns became a model for other towns as well. They did advance the Christian Faith wherever they went for the glory of God. They did all this under the presence of God. However, over the years, something happened to the Church in Colonial America. It didn't take long for the Church to become lukewarm. In 1740, it is estimated that only 17% of the Colonists were members of a church. The Church in America had followed the footsteps of the Church in England that had grown cold and heartless. False teaching came from across the ocean and really watered down the faith the Church first had in America. The Church of England had grown cold and dead, but there were those who were led by Jesus Christ who would not stand by and let this happen to the Church. They made a stand, not just in England, but in America as well. One preacher who preached in England and America was a man by the name of Rev. George Whitefield. Rev. George Whitefield would come to America on several trips and preach anywhere he could for Jesus. He became so popular that he would get crowds of 20,000 to 30,000 people which in today's numbers would look like 2 to 3 million. A spiritual awakening took place here in America and in England. John and Charles Wesley were part of this Great Awakening and other men and women played a part as well. However, let's narrow our focus down to Rev. George Whitefield. Whitefield saw something that had become terribly wrong within the Church in England, which had spread to America and he preached on it in 1739 in a sermon titled "The Indwelling of the Spirit, the Common Privilege of all Believers." He begins in this sermon to shine light on the fact that many were looking upon the Bible and the Cross of Jesus Christ in the same manner as they would look upon any other type of book or object of their time. In his sermon, he then states this, "As this is true of the doctrines of the gospel in general, so it is of the operation of God's Spirit upon the hearts of believers in particular; for we no sooner mention the necessity of our receiving the Holy Ghost in these last days, as well as formerly, but we are looked upon by some, as enthusiasts and madmen; and by others, represented as willfully deceiving the people, and undermining the established constitution of the church." In 1960, A. W. Tozer had spoke about the

same issue that was happening in the Church of America during his day. It seems like when the Church is not doing well in history, part of the problem is the lack of faith and trust in the Holy Spirit. This is when people start to rely on their own human skill to study Scripture instead of depending on the Holy Spirit. This is when the people's prayers become lifeless because they no longer believe they need help from the Holy Spirit. This is when people start to allow human false teaching and thought to water down Scripture based theology because we no longer trust or believe in the Holy Spirit to be able to guide our own thought and thinking. Rev. George Whitefield's sermon is good and can be read for today because we too are suffering from the Holy Spirit Syndrome. We almost treat the Spirit of God as a disease and we try to stay away from it. Many Christians don't want to hear about it. It was the Holy Spirit that guided the Pilgrim's to America and it was the working of the Spirit of God through Jesus Christ that helped this nation to last these 250 years. The only way this nation can survive another 250 years, unless Jesus comes back before that, is with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit within the Church.

Let's look at some Scripture that will help us to see how the Church should view the Spirit today. Let's turn to Ephesians 5: 1-3 and then we'll read verses 8 – 21. God's Word states this, "5 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; ²and walk in love, just as Christ also loved ^[a]you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God ^[b]as a fragrant aroma.

³ But sexual immorality ^[c]or any impurity or greed must not even be mentioned among you, as is proper among ^[d]saints; (NASB – www.biblegateway.com)"

Now, let's turn to verses 8 – 21, "⁸ for you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light ⁹ (for the fruit of the light *consists* in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), ¹⁰ ^[a]as you try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. ¹¹ Do not participate in the useless deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; ¹² for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret. ¹³ But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light. ¹⁴ For this reason ^[b]it says,

“Awake, sleeper,
And arise from the dead,
And Christ will shine on you.”

¹⁵ So then, ^[c]be careful how you walk, not as unwise people but as wise, ¹⁶ ^[d]making the most of your time, because the days are evil. ¹⁷ Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord *is*. ¹⁸ And do not get drunk with wine, ^[e]in which there is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹ speaking to ^[f]one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your hearts to the Lord; ²⁰ always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to *our* God and Father; ²¹ ^[g]and subject yourselves to one another in the ^[h]fear of Christ. (NASB – www.biblegateway.com)”

Paul tells the church in verse 18 to be “filled with the Spirit”. The Greek term used here for “filled” means to make full or complete (Strong’s Concordance). There can be no argument here. This can’t be watered down. Men like George Whitefield and A. W. Tozer knew that the only way one can have a holy relationship with Jesus Christ is with the filling of the Holy Spirit in one’s life. How can one understand Scripture when one is not filled with the Holy Spirit since Scripture is inspired by the Holy Spirit? Do you call a plumber to fix a circuit breaker or do you call an electrician to do woodwork at your house? Of course not. So, why do we do exegesis of Scripture through human methods only? We no longer trust the working of the Holy Spirit. Then that seeps into everything else. Paul talks about relationships in verses 19 – 21 where we are to sing and speak together in song, hymns, psalms from the Spirit. Did we sing this morning through the Spirit? Did you make music from your heart this morning? We may say we like to sing the hymns because this is what we have always sung. If you are singing these songs for that reason, then you are not singing correctly. We sing these songs through the Spirit of God because the Spirit helps us to worship God during our singing. Without the Spirit through Jesus, we can’t worship God correctly because we will be relying on human skill only. Did we pray through the Spirit this morning? Paul continues by saying we are to give thanks always to God and submit to one another out of reverence for Jesus. You see, we need to get

into the habit to ask Jesus our Lord that we need the Spirit to help us to sing, to pray, to study Scripture, to love people correctly, and the list can go on and on.

Let's go back to verse 1. We are to follow God's example and walk in love just as Jesus loved us and gave Himself up for us. We can only do that with the help of the Holy Spirit. We can't do Godly things on our own. Our human nature can't do that. Our human nature can do it when we allow the Holy Spirit to direct us. Paul states this in Galatians 5: 5, "But we who live by the Spirit eagerly wait to receive everything promised to us who are right with God through faith. (NLT)" Then we read this in verse 16-18, "So I advise you to live according to your new life in the Holy Spirit. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves. The old sinful nature loves to do evil, which is just the opposite from what the Holy Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are opposite from what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other and your choices are never free from this conflict. But when you are directed by the Holy Spirit, you are no longer subject to the law. (NLT)" Let's finish with verse 25, "If we are living now by the Holy Spirit, let us follow the Holy Spirit's leading in every part of our lives. (NLT)" When has been the last time you have followed the leading of the Holy Spirit or have you been following your own way? The Church has a hard time in worship, in prayer, in studying Scripture, and in loving people in the Christ way and that is because we no longer depend on the Holy Spirit. So, I want us to start doing something today. I want us to start praying this week to Jesus and ask Jesus to allow the Spirit to help us in our prayers. Then next week, we'll start asking Jesus to allow the Holy Spirit to help us to sing the songs and worship Him in the Holy Spirit way. The follow week, we'll pray to Jesus to allow the Holy Spirit to guide us in the study of Scripture. Finally, we'll pray to Jesus to allow the Holy Spirit to help us to love people as Jesus did on the Cross which means we must allow the Spirit to help us to love God as we should. For this nation to survive, it needs the Church to have the filling of the Holy Spirit. How depended are you on the Spirit?

NLT Life Application Study Bible. Tyndale House Publishers: Wheaton, 1996

The Strongest Strong's Concordance. Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 2001