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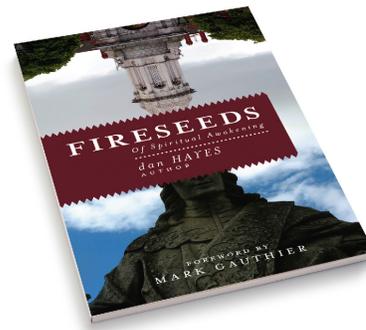
## THE HOLY SPIRIT AND REVIVAL

### FIRESEEDS OF SPIRITUAL AWAKENING CHAPTER EXCERPT

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FIRESEEDS OF SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

# AFTERWORD: SATISFIED?

*“Without the Spirit of God, we can do nothing. We are as ships without wind. We are useless.”*

*– Charles Spurgeon*

*“I believe it is impossible for any Christian to be effective either in his life or in his service unless he is filled with the Holy Spirit who is God’s only provision for power.”*

*– Henrietta C. Mears*

*Revivals and awakenings are times of great outpouring of God’s Spirit. By definition they are excessive. It is like Christmas. And while the idea is appealing, Christmas doesn’t happen every day. In fact, life would be quite bizarre, excessive, and unbalanced if it did.*

If we attempt to make the excessive nature of revivals normative, it can lead to an imbalance in our life, our walk with God, and particularly our understanding of the Holy Spirit’s ministry in us. Historically, it has at times done all of these. So, to gain all of the spiritual blessings of praying for,

anticipating, and experiencing revival, while eliminating the negative side-effects of extremism, we want to review what the Spirit-filled life is.

### **Believers Are All Indwelt by the Spirit**

When you became a Christian, Christ indwelt you through the person of the Holy Spirit. I know neither the how nor the where, but I do know that the Holy Spirit's indwelling presence carries with it the assurance of our salvation. "Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession" (Ephesians 1:13-14).

We are now God's possession, and the Holy Spirit is, in effect, the down payment on His purchased property—that would be you. Like the idea expressed through the marriage ceremony, receiving Christ is a one-time decision. We don't awake each morning to a fresh need to say, "I do"; once was enough. Having received Christ, we became children of God. "To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12).

In theory I could tell my parents that I no longer wished to be in their family, but I can never change the reality that I am their son. It's an established fact on the basis of my birth. I can sever our fellowship but not our relationship. And as there was not one thing we did to earn our salvation, so there is nothing we can ever do to lose it—we are eternally Christ's. But the Holy Spirit is more than simply an assurance of our salvation. It is through the Spirit that God enables and empowers us to live the Christian life.

### **The Spirit Comes to Glorify Christ**

As we experience the blessings of the Spirit, we can lose sight of Jesus—and we never want to do that. We need to remember that the Spirit works in us to glorify Christ.

“When he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you” (John 16:13-14).

The Spirit-filled life is the Christ-centered, Christ-directed, life.

### **Walking with the Spirit**

Walking is a process and not an event.<sup>1</sup> This is how the event of revival can throw off our thinking concerning the Spirit-filled life. Clearly there are events, moments in time, when God empowers us in a special way; that’s what revival is. But the normative Christian life is predominantly a process, a walk. And the Spirit’s influence in our lives is typically not an overwhelming, overpowering presence but a more subtle influence. If we get an overpowering experience—Score! Icing on the cake! Christmas morning! It’s an additive, but not essential, blessing.

The normative Christian life is not an overpowering event but is daily seeking to do those things that increase the Spirit’s influence and decrease the hindrances to that influence. So how, exactly, does the Holy Spirit exert control and influence over our lives, and what is our role in the process? Perhaps the most helpful passage in Scripture for answering these questions is this one in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians:

Be very careful ... how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in

your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 5:15-20)

One is compelled to ask, “What does getting drunk on wine have to do with being filled with the Spirit?” Well, obviously they are opposite alternatives, but they must share some base of similarity, or else why couple them together? The link between them, or the similarity they share, is in the idea of influence. They are both foreign entities that, when internalized, influence our behavior.

In fact, this is not the only time Scripture places them side by side. In the coming of the Holy Spirit, it was suspected that the Spirit-filled believers “had too much wine” (Acts 2:13), because of the similarity of influence.

Of course, there are many important differences between alcohol and the Holy Spirit. Alcohol’s influence leads to greater enslavement, while the Spirit gives great freedom. Alcohol eclipses our personality, while the Spirit reanimates it. And Satan uses alcohol to control us as God controls us through the Spirit. Still, alcohol provides an example of a foreign influence (albeit a bad one) that can affect our will and behavior.

As demonstrated by alcohol, control is always a question of degrees. There are things we can do that hinder the Spirit’s influence and things we can do to increase sensitivity to the Spirit’s leading. This is at the heart of walking in step—or being filled—with the Spirit. (The word “filled” means filled like a sail, not filled like a cup. When we think about the sail metaphor, we rightly think about adjusting ourselves to catch the existing wind of the Spirit. When we think about filling a cup, we wrongly think about increasing the amount of the Spirit like pouring in more of a drink.)

So, what constitutes the Spirit-filled life? What leads to the Spirit having maximum influence over our lives? This is

not comprehensive, but what follow are the primary vehicles affecting the Spirit's influence upon our thoughts, heart, will, and emotions.

*Lordship*

How does one become more drunk? (Or should I say drunker?) One consumes more alcohol. In the case of the Holy Spirit, we have all of Him that we will ever have. So the major determinant of the Spirit's influence is how much of us we let Him consume, meaning how much of our lives we allow Him to control.

The question we must ask ourselves is this: Do we desire to live for Christ in every area of our life (dating, vocation, relationships, and so on)? We sometimes call this a "lordship" decision.

It is often when we relinquish these areas, like a drain coming unclogged, that we experience a special empowerment, or increased influence of the Lord. This frequently happens during revival. While the new degree of influence can create a powerful experience, equilibrium soon follows, and the Spirit's influence becomes normative as we continue to stay yielded to the Lord's direction. Again, following Paul's alcohol analogy, for a consistent drinker or smoker, alcohol and nicotine in the bloodstream at some point normalizes, sans elation.

Lordship is a declaration to follow Christ wherever He leads, to whatever end. This commitment, like any commitment, initiates an ongoing process. Over time we'll discover deeper roots of sin and uncover areas disconnected from His control. In submitting these areas to Christ, we continue in, and affirm, His lordship and our commitment to live under it.

*Confession*

Throughout the day, week, and year there are times when we make choices to sin. Sin is seizure of control. We take

control of the direction of our life and steer it toward our sinful wants and desires. Confession cleanses and removes the barrier of sin, and it places the control of our life back under the Spirit's subtle but determining influence.

*Reliance (Unceasing Prayer)*

Throughout each day we experience neediness, weakness, and lack in the form of anxiety, loneliness, insecurity, trials, unholy desires, negative feelings, and so on. All of us have a natural inclination to meet these needs through reliance on something. Watch cigarette smokers. Every time they sense a need in their life, they light up. If they feel lonely, they light up. If they feel scared or nervous, they light up. If they need confidence, they light up. And while we might not smoke, we can find ourselves doing the same thing with food, lust, shopping, music, coffee, or any number of other things.

Choosing throughout the day to turn to the Lord for wisdom, patience, empowerment, companionship, security, confidence, and every other need is called humble reliance. As the smoker is aided by nicotine's influence, so the believer can experience the Spirit's influence. Instead of turning to whatever it is we turn to, we connect with God: "Oh Lord, I'm nervous. Will You please strengthen me?" "Oh Lord, will You please give me wisdom?" All day long, like smoking a pack of cigarettes, we turn to the Lord. This is the idea of reliance and it is vital to experiencing the Spirit's influence.

(I apologize for all the drinking and smoking analogies, but the Scripture is the foundation for them, and they are helpful in understanding influence.)

*Renewing of Our Minds*

The Spirit's influence is always refreshed, directed, and supported by prayer and time in the Scriptures. Through both of these He leads and renews our thinking.

### *Praise and Thanksgiving*

If you've ever been to a college party or bar, you'll get this concept rather easily. It's the idea of atmosphere: the room is dark; the music is pulsing; clothes and conversation are sexually suggestive; and alcohol sands down inhibitions. An atmosphere has been created that's conducive to sin. Though no one forces you to drink, lust, or gossip, they don't have to. Just bask in the music and the glow of the lava lamp long enough, and you want to.

Going back to our Spirit-filled passage (Ephesians 5:19-20) again, notice what it says: "Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The description Paul gave is of an environment conducive to the empowering influence of the Holy Spirit. As we worship, give thanks, praise God, and sing, our hearts become like that party, only in a very good way. An environment is created where the Lord can freely reign, a channel for Him to affect our thoughts, actions, and emotions.

### *Community*

Last, it is in community with other Christians that we experience a dynamic of the Spirit-filled life that we can never experience alone, because we encounter the indwelling Spirit through the lives of others, and through them we are energized, empowered, and directed.

### **In Summary**

Participating in these activities daily constitutes walking in step with the Spirit, or walking in the Spirit. The degree to which we participate is the degree to which the Spirit has influence upon us. Whether the Spirit's influence is a slow IV drip or a flowing river depends on our participation in the spiritual life.

Revival, an excessive overpowering sense of the Spirit's presence, is not within our hands to control. We seek God in prayer to do such mighty works, especially for those who most desperately need it, such as nominal Christians and unbelievers. But whether we are empowered by the Spirit and renewed daily ... well, that *is* in our control.

We can forget these foundational truths about walking in the Spirit, and in some cases maybe we never learned them. What follows is called the Satisfied Prayer Experience, which provides a prayerful reflection and review of these ideas in the context of group prayer. There is an opportunity to confess barriers to the Spirit's control. And there are opportunities to praise, worship, and present all of ourselves to Christ's lordship, making sure that we are being maximally influenced and are under the Spirit's control. I strongly suggest that you go through it with the others you have called to join you in praying for revival and awakening.

### **The Satisfied Prayer Experience**

NOTE: This prayer experience is intended to be adaptable to your prayer group.<sup>2</sup> It can be as short as forty minutes or as long as two hours, depending on how you use the optional sections. Don't feel constrained to follow this format. Adapt it to your group and environment. May God give you and your group a rich time of celebrating and experiencing the powerful presence of His Spirit!

*[Divide into groups of three or four. You don't want groups to be too large. You want everyone to actively participate and experience all God has for you during this time of prayer.]*

### **The Promise of Satisfaction**

*Satisfaction:* (n.) fulfillment of one's needs, longing, or desires

Begin by thinking back over the last thirty days. What three words would you use to describe your Christian life during the past month? Share these with one another, along with a brief explanation of why you chose those words.

Are you satisfied with your experience? Do you desire more? Usually answers will reflect a broad range from deeply dissatisfied, to somewhat dissatisfied, to feeling generally okay, to very satisfied. But I suspect that almost all of us would admit that we desire more in our relationship with God.

Jesus said, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." John goes on to tell us, "By this he meant the Spirit" (John 7:37-39). The Spirit is the source of the truly satisfying life, quenching our deepest thirsts and longings. It is the gift of the Spirit that will be the focus of our prayer together.

### **The Divine Gift**

*Divine:* (adj) given by God

God has given us His Spirit so that we can experience intimacy with Him and enjoy all He has for us. The Holy Spirit is the source of our deepest satisfaction.

Optional. If time is short, skip to 1 Corinthians 2:12 below.

Five times in the "Farewell Discourse" Jesus spoke of the gift of the Spirit. Work in groups of three or four, and use the promises of these verses as a basis of short conversational sentences of praise and worship. (It can be

helpful to have these passages projected on a screen or printed on a handout.)

I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. (John 14:16-17)

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. (John 14:26)

When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me. And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning. (John 15:26-27)

I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned. (John 16:7-11)

When he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he

will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you. (John 16:13-15)

Paul applied the Spirit's ministry of revealing truth and wisdom in his first letter to the Corinthian believers (1 Corinthians 2:9-3:4). He stated, "We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us" (1 Corinthians 2:12).

*[In your groups of three or four, use short sentence prayers to thank God for many things that God has given us in Christ and that the Spirit has helped you understand and experience. Be specific. For example, "Thank You, Lord, for enabling me to know and experience Your love. I know and understand Your love through Your Spirit." Or "Thank You, Lord, that by Your Spirit I have come to know Your wisdom and knowledge."]*

### **The Present Danger**

*Danger:* (n.) a thing that may cause injury, loss, or pain

We cannot experience intimacy with God and enjoy all He has for us if we fail to depend on His Spirit. Our failures are often rooted in one of two problems. The Christian life is like a road and we can slip into the ditch on either side.

In the one ditch we begin to trust our own efforts and strength to live the Christian life. This is, of course, a source of great frustration. "Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?" (Galatians 3:3).

When we discover the futility of that, we can cross over to the other ditch. We may give up and succumb to our own

selfish desires, seeking to please ourselves rather than God. “The sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want” (Galatians 5:17). Then, as with the Corinthians, our lives begin to manifest symptoms of the flesh and worldliness. “Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly—mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men?” (1 Corinthians 3:1-3).

*[Spend the next segment of time in silent confession. Examine your life for symptoms of self-dependence or self-centered living. Confess them to God and claim His forgiveness according to 1 John 1:9.]*

### **The Intimate Journey**

As we learn to walk in the Spirit, we increasingly experience intimacy with God and enjoy all He has for us. Walking in the Spirit is a moment-by-moment lifestyle, learning to depend upon the Holy Spirit for His abundant resources as a way of life. “Live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. ... Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit” (Galatians 5:16, 25).

*[In your groups, share testimonies of how you first learned to walk in the Spirit.]*

As we walk in the Spirit, we experience intimacy with God and all He has for us. The fruit of the Spirit is one description of what we experience through the Spirit. “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23).

*[Think about the challenges you are currently facing. What do you need to experience most at this time? Remember, it is the role of the Spirit to produce it in your life. Pray in your groups, claiming the fruit you seek (such as love for specific relationships or joy for specific trials). As you become aware of more areas where your attitudes or responses have fallen short (Romans 3:23) and have been displeasing to God, breathe spiritually. That is, exhale by confessing your sins, thanking God for His forgiveness, and then inhale by expressing your dependence upon the Spirit.]*

### **The Empowering Presence**

*Empower:* (v.) to give ability to

We are filled with the Spirit by faith, enabling us to experience intimacy with God and enjoy all He has for us. The essence of the Christian life is what God does in and through us, not what we do for God. Christ's life is reproduced in the believer by the power of the Holy Spirit. By faith we experience God's power through the Spirit.

Paul prayed that his beloved Ephesian believers would experience these realities. "I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith" (Ephesians 3:16-17).

*[In your groups, pray Paul's request for yourself and each other. Pray that you would fully experience the Spirit's strengthening with power in your inner being, so that Christ would be living His life in and through you.]*

**Optional:** In your groups, pray for others you care for or minister to by name. Pray that they would experience the empowering of the Spirit and know the love of God. "I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have

power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God” (Ephesians 3:17-19).

### **The Turning Point**

*Turning point:* time when a decisive change occurs

It is our desire that all of us would know with confidence that we are experiencing the fullness of the Spirit today and throughout the days ahead.

*[As we conclude this segment of prayer, examine your hearts one more time. Ask yourself these three questions.]*

Am I genuinely surrendering control of my life  
◇ to the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 12:1-2)?

Have I confessed my sins, according to 1 John  
◇ 1:9, and genuinely turned from them and back to God?

Am I sincerely desiring to be filled—that is,  
◇ directed and empowered—by the Holy Spirit (John 7:37-39)?

If you confidently answer yes to each question, silently reaffirm your faith in the Spirit’s filling in your life according to His command (Ephesians 5:18) and promise (1 John 5:14-15). Ask God to fill you with His Spirit, enabling you to understand and experience in greater ways your intimacy with Him and your enjoyment of all He has for you.

If, in the integrity of your heart, you are unable to answer yes to the above questions, let us encourage you to take

some additional time alone to be honest with God about the issues that are blocking your experience of His love and provision. Then go to a trusted leader or friend and share with that person what you are struggling with, asking him or her to pray with you and for you.

We need each other! As the letter to the Hebrews says, “Encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness. We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first” (Hebrews 3:13-14).

NOTE: Provide each participant with a copy of the *Satisfied?* booklet. Encourage them to review it, to pray through it as you have today, and to share with others.