

Sermon: How Can You Tell If You Are Spirit-Filled?

Text: [1 Corinthians 13:1-3](#); [Galatians 5:22-23](#) ESV

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Introduction: [1 Corinthians 13:1-3](#) ESV **1** If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. **2** And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. **3** If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned,[a] but have not love, I gain nothing.

Footnotes:

[a] [1 Corinthians 13:3](#) Some mss. deliver up my body [to death] that I may boast

There is a narrative with a parable found in [Luke 11](#) and [Matthew 12](#) tells us about an evil spirit that is driven out of a man and then returns. (The beginning of [Luke 11](#) is *The Lord's Prayer*.)

[Luke 11:14-26](#) ESV **14** Now he was casting out a demon that was mute. When the demon had gone out, the mute man spoke, and the people marveled. **15** But some of them said, "He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the prince of demons," **16** while others, to test him, kept seeking from him a sign from heaven. **17** But he, knowing their thoughts, said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and a divided household falls. **18** And if Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? For you say that I cast out demons by Beelzebul. **19** And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. **20** But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. **21** When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are safe; **22** but when one stronger than he attacks him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted and divides his spoil. **23** Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters. **24** "When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and finding none it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' **25** And when it comes, it finds the house swept and put in order. **26** Then it goes and brings seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there. And the last state of that person is worse than the first."

We have all seen people who change (we thought because of Jesus) and later see them revert back to their old sinful lifestyle. Receiving God's Spirit is a requirement for eternal life as well as the life we live here and now. Conversion is more than reforming; it must be transforming and then there will be conforming to the very model of Christ himself. The power of that process comes from God working in us.

Illus. Water in Pitcher, Glass – Q. Empty or full? A. Full of at least air, but empty visually. As the glass is filled with water, air (emptiness) is displaced. Our lives and the Holy Spirit act along those lines. We are to allow more and more room for the Holy Spirit to fill us. And as we do, more and more of our emptiness and meaningless will disappear.

How do you know if you are Spirit-filled?

Every church seems to have its own ideas. The Holiness groups seem to emphasize it is what you don't do anymore. Some churches, both Catholic and Protestant, indicate that Confirmation is what determines whether you have God's Spirit. Not too many years ago being "born again" was a similar term for conservative Republican. God's Spirit is not limited to any one group of religious or political people.

God spoke through the prophet Joel – and on Pentecost the Apostle Peter brings back into memory the old prophecy:

**“And in the last days, it shall be, God declares,
that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh.”**

(Acts 2:17a ESV quoting Joel 2:28ff)

Peter in the same sermon given on Pentecost, and recorded in [Acts 2](#), tells us how to be Spirit-filled:

Acts 2:38 ESV 38 And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Most would agree that if a person has the gift of the Holy Spirit, there will be evidence. There will be fruit!

So, how can you tell if you are Spirit-filled?

I. There Will Be Fruit.

The Apostle Paul says there is specific fruit that will be shown in a Christian's life. He tells us: **Galatians 5:22-23 ESV** 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

Many people today (even Satan) are claiming great power as a manifestation of the Holy Spirit, but the Bible makes it clear the first fruit of God's indwelling presence is not just power, but love.

Some think that it is truth that identifies those who are Spirit-filled. It is orthodoxy, correct belief; some even insist on a certain creed. I am not here today to promote bad theology, but I am here to tell you as Paul did the church:

I Corinthians 13:2a ESV 2a And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, ... but have not love, I am nothing.

Some people, not the least of which were reformers like Martin Luther, said it is "by faith alone." Paul still reminds us though,

I Corinthians 13:2b ESV 2b ...and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

A third group of people emphasize religious experience. Nevertheless, the Scripture tells us (**I Cor. 13:1**): "If I speak in the tongues of men and angels" and "if I have the gift of prophecy" – even claiming a direct communication with God, but have not love, I am nothing." So clearly, love is greater than our experiences.

A fourth and final category of people, being practical in their faith, emphasizes service or ministry as the distinguishing mark of a Christian.

Illus. There was a certain church in which the youth group asked a very misery elder to play Santa Claus at the Christmas program. The man who was known for his lack of generosity, in a casual moment of weakness said he would do it. But as the time grew nearer, he became very nervous and disturbed that he had consented to do it.

And so it came to pass that the evening before the program, he asked his wife and children: “Would you please pray for me tonight? I have this job to do and I am not the one to do it. Everybody knows how I am, but I said I would and I must do a good job for the young people. Would you pray for me that I will be a good Santa Claus?”

And so the mother, the sons and daughters prayed for the husband and father that he would be a good Santa Claus. And he went to the church and during the program he gave away everything he had – and his family had him committed.

And ministry – especially work with the poor and sick (Mother Teresa) is thought of as a distinguishing characteristic of being filled with God’s Spirit. After all, faith without works is dead the Bible says. Nevertheless, **I Corinthians 13:3 ESV**
3 If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

No one here is bad-mouthing knowledge. That is vital. And certainly faith is indispensable. Even religious experience has its place and value. The expression of all of this is expected in service, but the Apostle Paul tells us, for God, that love is the greatest thing. For God is love to the very core. Love costs you everything.

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II. It Is Not an Elite Group Within the Church.

Never in the New Testament Church is there a group of people honored over another for the type of spiritual gifts they may have. In fact, Paul went out of his way to make sure everyone knows that everyone is equally important in the Body of Christ.

Whenever in today’s world people say: “If you don’t speak in tongues you aren’t really a born-again Christian,” then we have a new legalism – a modern Pharisee. I think Jesus was opposed to many rules and qualifications just for the sake of less minutia.

Illus. Sometimes we tend to be amazed (and even snicker) at all the details of Pharisaical legalism. We tend to forget, however, that sandwiched among our country’s sound and workable statutes, there are hundreds of very odd ordinances that remain to clutter up our law books because the powers-that-be from state legislators to town fathers – have not gotten around to repealing them.

For instance, in Amarillo, Texas, it is still against the law to take a bath on the main street during banking hours. In Portland, Oregon, it is illegal to wear roller skates in public restrooms. In Halethorpe, Maryland, a kiss lasting more than one second is an illegal act. (**Who times that?**)

No matter who you are. No matter how long you have been a Christian, you are not immune to temptation. The desires of the flesh and the spirit are active in everyone. The reason for bringing this to your attention is critical.

Illus. “I don’t sin anymore.” (preacher, West Lansing) – result months later, he became at least emotionally involved with another woman, lost his church, his wife for a time, and certainly his good name.

Down through Church history there have been groups who have taught that after the new birth our fallen nature becomes inactive and even dead. Nothing could be further from the truth. Scripture tells Christians in [Galatians 5:16 ESV](#) ¹⁶ But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. So it must have been a problem in the early church, too.

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III. If You Are Making Room for God.

A lot of people have room for religion, spiritualism, and the para-normal. The question is: “Do you have any room for Jesus?”

He is not the “higher power.” Jesus is the Highest Power. The only Power worth following.

We must make room in our schedules for God.

We must make room in our families for God.

We must make room in our workplaces for God.

We must make room for God in our prayers – less me, more Him! More praise, less petition (explain).

Too many people have the wrong idea about who God is in relationship to His creation.

Illus. There was a certain young man who pondered indecisively whether he would enter the seminary to become a minister. There were days when he was thoroughly convinced that he should enter the ministry. There were other days when other vocations called with a louder voice. He wrote to seminaries and received the applications. He didn't mail the applications. He said "yes;" he said "no." He was in anguish. His heart and his mind could not get together. I don't want to do it unless I am thoroughly sure. I don't want to refrain if God is really calling me. I need to know. I must know!

He was like Gideon. Make the fleece wet and the ground dry. Make the fleece dry and the ground wet. I just have to know.

In this terrible state of mind, before retiring one night the young man knelt by his bed and said, "O, God, I must know if you are calling me to the ministry. And therefore I pray You, if I am to be a minister, let thunder roll across the sky by daybreak."

He got in bed. He lay in bed wide-awake waiting, listening. Midnight – no thunder, 2:00 am, no thunder; 3:00 am, no thunder; 4:30 am, no thunder; and then just before daybreak, no thunder. The sun came streaking through his window. He got out of bed, put on his clothes, and walked down the street to where his pastor lived.

He knocked on the door and the pastor soon came to the door. And he said, "Come in. Come in." And the young man said: "I must talk with you." And he told the pastor of his indecision and his struggle and his agony. He told the pastor of his prayer and of his waiting all night. And there was no thunder. The pastor listened with concern. And when the young man finished the story, the pastor said, "then what are you going to do?" Quite surprised, the young man said, "Well, I'm going into the ministry! The pastor even more surprised said: "But I thought you said there was no thunder?" And the young man said: "But he is not God who does what I tell Him."

In our attitudes there need to be more God and less us. We need to be more concerned about what God wants from us and less with what we want from Him.

Conclusion: Being filled with the Holy Spirit has always been connected with witnessing and sharing the gospel. When we take the realm of the Spirit to the ME LEVEL, it degenerates into selfishness which is displayed many times in man-honoring rather than God-honoring ministry and service. But in everything-LOVE! That's the standard.

Whenever you can pour God into your life, you will not be sorry. The more you make room for God, the more you will be truly Spirit-filled.

Feed your spiritual self. Feed on God's word. And in the words of the Apostle Paul: [Philippians 4:8-9 ESV](#) 8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. 9 What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

Brothers and sisters: Put good things in your life, and more and more you will crowd out the bad and make room for God's Spirit to fill you up.