

PASSING THE BATON

I recently attended a funeral of a brother in Christ whereupon I again came to a conclusion that we all have made: Life is short and time is swiftly passing. At this funeral were many people with whom I had not spoken to in many years. My family had moved from the locations where I first came to know these people, but I still remembered them well. Somewhere in the mix of conversations, I had to ask myself, "Where did the years go?" Children I remembered playing with after services were now grown with families of their own. Others looked like completely different people, due to the passing of time and declining health. During the funeral service, I looked at the brothers sitting on the benches ahead of me. I remember looking up to many of these men when I was younger and even on to this day. I realized their time would come to leave this world before too long, although I disliked the thought. These elder men were devoted members and leaders of the Church. Most congregations have elder members who carry much of the load for that congregation. What's to become of the congregations when these elder members leave?

In Hebrews 12:1-2, our life on this earth is compared to a race:

"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

As Christians it is our duty to run this race. In the Church this race is like a relay race. In a relay race, one runner carrying a baton completes a portion of the race and then hands the baton to the next runner. After the first runner has finished his portion of the relay, his race is completed. The elder members are the ones carrying the batons right now. Soon their race will be done, and they will pass the baton to the next runner. However, the elder members must complete their races, running with patience as stated in Hebrews 12:1.

To the elder members in the Church today, your race is not done. You have to continue leading by examples, preparing those young

members who will one day receive the baton. Prepare young members of the Church as parents are told to in Ephesians 6:4, *"And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."* Remember, it is in the last stages of a race that a runner runs fastest. Provide an example much like Paul did: *"Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ."* (1 Cor. 11:1)

The elder members must continue to study:

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (2 Ti. 2:15).

As much as elder members have learned from the Bible, there is always knowledge to gain. While at the funeral, I received news of a brother in Christ who even my own father before me had greatly admired. At ninety-seven years of age, this brother in Christ continues to study the Bible every day. I had the pleasure of visiting him and his wife recently, and during the visit he quoted Colossians 3:2: *"Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth."* It is with this attitude that elder members and younger members must run their race, *"looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith."* At the end of our race, we want to be able to look back on our run and feel as Paul did in 2 Timothy 4:6-7:

"For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:"

To the young members in the Church who will one day run with the baton passed on to them, learn all you can from our elder members. A relay race is won or lost in the exchange of the baton from one runner to the next. Young members of the Church, don't wait on the baton. Reach out and eagerly grab the baton. For a brief moment the runner passing the baton and the runner receiving are running together. This is so that the runner to receive the baton can be up to speed with the runner passing the baton. In a similar manner, the young members in Christ must strive to follow the examples the older members set.

We do not know when our race will be called to an end:

"For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night." (1 The. 5:2)

The elder members of the Church must be ready to pass on the baton at all times. Likewise, the young members of the Church must always be ready to take that baton and run with it themselves. We never know when God will call on us to pass that baton.

Yes, life is short. Time is passing, and we nearly lose count of the years. The race we run is quickly coming to an end. Whatever you do, don't drop the baton.

BEN

APOLOGIA

In our last article we dealt with a question concerning Ephesians 5:18. The question asked about the meaning of the phrase being "filled with the Spirit." In this month's Apologia we would like to continue to address this issue. We will entitle the article "Be filled with the Spirit" part 2.

In our article last month we pointed out that the passage under consideration is extremely important to living the Christian life. In fact it is the key to living the life that God expects of His people. Being filled with the Spirit is really about being controlled by the Spirit. It is this control that provides the means by which we walk worthy of the vocation of which we are called.

In that article we pointed out that the phrase is not a statement of fact but rather is an imperative. This means that it is a command that requires our obedience. Thus to be filled with the Spirit depends upon our action. It is something that we do and not something that God does for us.

The application presented in the last paragraph has been greatly misunderstood by Bible students over the years. Most view the phrase "be filled with the Spirit" as something we ask for rather than something that we do. In fact not only is it something that we do but something we do continuously. As God's people we are to be continually filled with His Spirit.

It was noted that God has provided the resources to be filled with the Spirit. We are filled with the Spirit when we choose to surrender ourselves to Christ and become a Christian. We are filled with the Spirit when we spend time studying the word and allowing the word of Christ to dwell in us richly with all wisdom. We are filled with the Spirit when we stand in the

presence of Christ in prayer. Living in the Spirit means that we will live every moment in humble submission to His will and every moment for His glory. It is all about Christ consciousness and Christ-likeness. We must not only live in the Spirit positionally (one who is born again) but also practically (how we live our life).

In addition to the meaning of the phrase, it is also necessary to examine the consequences of being filled with the Spirit. What are the indicators that my life is under the Spirit's control?

The first indicator is given in verse 19. Note what Paul says.

"And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Eph. 5:18-19)

It is interesting that the first indicator that Paul mentions is that of singing. Singing is for the most part a neglected topic in many of our lessons. We know we must do it and we spend a great deal of time ensuring that people understand that it is to be done without the use of mechanical instruments. But it is my personal opinion that we are sometimes remiss in understanding that singing is an expression of the emotion of a soul that is controlled by the Spirit. When we are filled with the Spirit we sing!

"Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms." (Jam. 5:13)

Our singing originates in our hearts where the Spirit dwells. If the heart is not right then the song is lacking! When we are under the Spirit's control we sing to ourselves and to fellow believers. It profits us mentally, physically, as well as spiritually. It includes Psalms (generally the songs written by David), hymns (songs of praise) and spiritual songs (testimonies to the truth of God).

Now that we have seen the inward result of being filled with the Spirit we look now at the upward result.

"And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for

all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another in the fear of God."
(Eph. 5:18-21)

In addition to singing we find that when the Spirit controls us we will see evidence of gratitude. We will be thankful, and note not just thankful for good things but for all things. We will continually in prayer give thanks to Him who has redeemed us and in whose hand our lives are secure.

We live in a day and age of grumblers. We hear a lot of whining and complaining. But such should not be from those of us who are God's people. There is nothing more disgusting and despicable than a complaining child of God. What a poor testimony we give to the world when we fail to be thankful.

The Spirit filled believer gives thanks to the Lord for everything. David writes,

" Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, And into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name. For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting, and His truth endures to all generations." (Psa. 100: 4-5)

A thankful heart sees beyond the difficult circumstances of life in a fallen world and views even the difficulties that we face from the perspective of God's sovereignty. Note the following:

"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." (Rom. 8:28)

We can be at rest with the fact that no matter what circumstances we might be facing in life, if we love the Lord, He will work it for good. Give thanks for all things!

As we look at Ephesians 5:18-21 we can see a theology of thanksgiving. Paul tells us to be always thankful. This means after a trial, during a trial, and before a trial. We are to give thanks for all things. We are to be thankful in the name of the Lord. This indicates that we know that Christ is always working out His perfect will in our life.

In addition to the inward evidence of the Spirit's control (singing), the upward evidence (thanksgiving), there is also an outward result, submitting to one another. This involves

esteeming others better than us and being willing to serve and love one another.

We hope that this study has adequately covered the topic. Let us all seek to be filled with the Spirit of God to His glory!

SAM DICK
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GOSPEL MEETINGS

DATES

Feb. 1--3, 2008
Friday and Saturday 7 P.M.
Sunday at 10:00 A.M. and 2 P.M.

LOCATION

Taylor's Cross Roads Congregation
Roanoke, AL

SPEAKER

David Burnham
(Ragland, AL)

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. In Deuteronomy what analogy did Moses use to describe the current population of Israel ?
2. What was the last group of Israelites to receive their inheritance in the new land?
3. God compared the power of Job to that of what animal?
4. According to Galatians how much time passed between the covenant with Abraham and the Law of Moses?
5. John said who has seen God?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH . . .

and remember last month's questions?

1. Which two men were counted by Moses and Aaron in the first census and remained alive for the second census?
CALEB AND JOSHUA (Num. 26:65)
2. According to Proverbs, what turns away wrath? A SOFT ANSWER (Pro. 15:1)

3. What did Ezekiel suffer the loss of after the parable of the boiling pot? HIS WIFE (Eze. 24:18)
4. In 2 Corinthians, what image did Paul use to illustrate the difference between the Old Testament of Moses and the new covenant of Jesus Christ? A VEIL (2 Cor. 3:13-18)
5. Who did Jude say God has reserved in chains for the judgment day? THE DISOBEDIENT ANGELS (Jude 1:6)