



Doctrine: The Holy Spirit

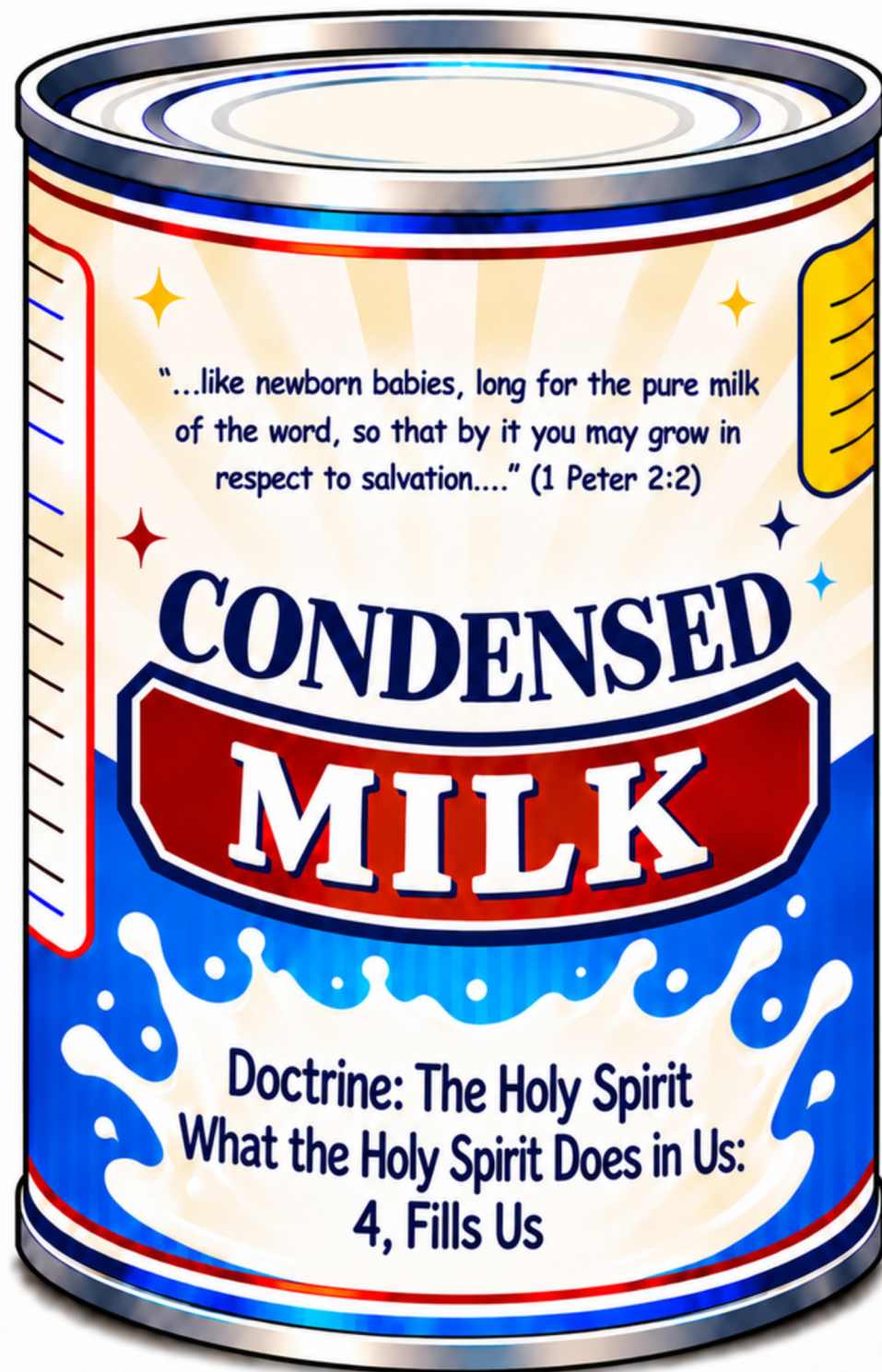
What the Holy Spirit Does in Us: 4, Fills Us

The filling of the Spirit, in Scripture, is always presented as God's power given to accomplish his purposes. It is meant to be our repeated experience. **Under the old covenant** the Holy Spirit filled particular *people*, at particular *times*, for particular *tasks*. Bezalel, for example, was filled with the Holy Spirit "to make artistic designs..." for the construction of the temple (Exodus 31:3-5). Gideon was filled with the Spirit, enabling him to go from crippling insecurity and fear to courageous leadership in Israel (Judges 6:34). Samson was filled with the Spirit, giving him physical strength to break free of his bindings and take revenge on the enemies of Israel (Judges 15:14).

Under the new covenant Jesus taught that *all* who come to him, in faith, are regenerated (John 3:1-16) and would experience the indwelling Spirit as a life-giving river welling up from within (John 7:37-39). Before his ascension he again promised, "You will receive power (particularly to witness) when the Holy Spirit comes on you" (Acts 1:8). After this, Acts and two other places in Scripture describe what happens when people are filled with the Spirit. From those descriptions we discover what to expect for ourselves. Not every Christian is equally filled with the Spirit. Even our own experience of spiritual vitality ebbs and flows. The reason for this is that we are involved in whether to be influenced by the Spirit or not. This is the implication of the command in Ephesians, "Be filled with the Spirit" (5:18). These words are in the imperative *mood* making it a command for all of us. It is in the passive *voice*, meaning we do not generate, but receive, the filling. And it is in the present *tense*, meaning we are to "keep on being filled" rather than having a one-time experience. Paul's comparison and contrast with being drunk with wine indicates that the filling of the Spirit refers to "being under the influence" of the Spirit. His influence powerfully affects and empowers us. The affects that follow Spirit-filling in the Bible are never described as falling over, barking like a dog, holy laughter, or many other things people claim to be their experience. What does happen? In Acts 2, believers speak in tongues, the languages of at least 12 people groups visiting Jerusalem for Pentecost (9-11). Peter makes it clear that the point of tongues was not for personal euphoria. In fulfillment of Joel's promise it was to enable them to "prophesy," that is, to tell the people "...the wonders of God" in their own languages (11). In Acts 4:8 Peter and John are standing trial before the high

court of the Jews, the very people who had orchestrated the crucifixion of Jesus. Full of the Spirit Peter, who at other times was quite cowardly, speaks the truth about Jesus anyway, boldly and articulately. Despite the imbalance of power, he, in fact, puts the court on trial and accuses them. In Acts 4:31 Peter and John have returned to their church family, under threat if they speak about Jesus. The church prays for boldness, signs, and wonders and immediately they are "filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the Word of God boldly." In Acts 13:9-11, a Jewish sorcerer seeks to prevent Paul and Barnabas from sharing the gospel with a Roman leader. The filling of the Spirit causes Paul to be righteously indignant. He is given discernment about the wickedness of the sorcerer and confronts him boldly, publicly, and emphatically. With prophetic insight he tells this man that he would be made blind, which immediately happens. In Acts 13:52, a severe persecution breaks out against the believers. Under the filling of the Holy Spirit these Christians are filled with joy rather than fear or discouragement. These are all the descriptions of Spirit-filling in Acts. Two references remain.

In Ephesians 5:18-21 we read the command to be filled with the Spirit. Five participles follow and are connected, syntactically, to that command. They indicate that the filling of the Spirit is associated with speaking to one another in songs of praise, singing and making music in their hearts to the Lord, giving thanks to God for everything, and submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. Galatians 5:22-23 describes the "fruit of the Spirit" as "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control." It would be reasonable to conclude that if we are filled with the Spirit, we would also exhibit, and experience, those characteristics. We must conclude that the result of Spirit-filling is *a heightened spirituality*, especially for proclaiming the "wonders of God" with boldness and joy, with our tongues and also with the fruit of our lives. How, then, can we obey the command to keep under the influence of the Spirit? As we think of things that cause us to be "under the influence" of the Spirit we think of things like hearing, reading and obeying God's word, turning from sin, worshiping, fellowshiping with believers, serving God, sharing the gospel, obeying his promptings, and so on. This is our part in yielding to the influence of the Spirit. He will choose what powers he will grant us and for what purpose.



"...like newborn babies, long for the pure milk
of the word, so that by it you may grow in
respect to salvation...." (1 Peter 2:2)

CONDENSED MILK

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