

The Holy Spirit in the Book of Acts: Indwelling vs. Filling

Acts 8:5-17

Unlocking Acts: A Spirit-Filled Journey Through Indwelling and Power

We're going to be looking closely within the Book of Acts. We're going to walk verse by verse through every major account where the Holy Ghost came upon individuals or groups, and we will answer two questions every time: Did they receive the **indwelling** of the Holy Ghost?

Or were they **filled** with the Holy Spirit for power and service? Understanding the difference between these two is vital for sound doctrine, especially in this transitional time period after the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Indwelling vs. Filling

Let's define the terms:

- **Indwelling** – This is the permanent presence of the Holy Ghost in a believer. It happens at the moment of faith in Jesus Christ.

""Ephesians 1:13

In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.""

- **Filling** – This is a repeated empowering by the Holy Ghost for preaching, boldness, discernment, and service.

""Ephesians 5:18

And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.""

So you will clearly see within the New Testament, after the resurrection of Jesus Christ, that there is an indwelling of the Holy Ghost and then a filling of the Holy Ghost. He can come upon you with power and fill you with the Spirit of God. The indwelling is what you receive when you're saved. And it's powerful too, but there is a different.

We're going to look at six different cases within the Book of Acts. In these cases, we're going to see if the people are receiving the indwelling or the filling of the Holy Spirit.

CASE #1

The Spirit Falls at Pentecost: Indwelling vs. Filling in Acts 2

Let's begin with the 120 believers on the Day of Pentecost. We went over Acts Chapter 2 in detail not too long ago.

""Acts 2:1-4

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.""

They were already saved. They had walked with Jesus. They had already put their trust in the Lord. In fact,

""John 20:22

And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.""

That's where we believe and know the **indwelling** of the Holy Ghost began. That's one of the most important events in all of history. It is. But here in Acts 2, they are **filled**—not indwelt anew, but empowered to speak in tongues and boldly preach.

They already had the indwelling and now they are filled with the Holy Spirit. In my opinion, this is one of the most powerful things that can happen to any human in existence: have the indwelling and be filled with the Spirit of God.

That's power. The Holy Spirit is God and is pure power. That's when boldness happens. Understand that. B-O-L-D-N-E-S-S. Boldness. No fear of anything but God. And what happens?

Peter preaches a Spirit-filled message and says:

""Acts 2:38

Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.""

Then:

""Acts 2:41

Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.""

These new believers received the **indwelling** when they believed. The entire Bible teaches that. Don't you dare attempt to say getting baptized in water saves you. No, Jesus saves you.

Their water baptism followed their salvation. They first received the word gladly. Then they got baptized. The filling is not mentioned for them yet—but they now have the Spirit living inside. They heard the word of truth, the Gospel of JESUS CHRIST, they believed, and they were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise.

Acts Chapter 2 is after John Chapter 20 so these new believers are receiving the indwelling of the Holy Spirit the moment they change their mind, repent, and believe the Gospel.

CASE #2

Samaritan Converts Receive the Holy Ghost: Apostolic Laying on of Hands in Acts 8

Philip preaches the Gospel:

""Acts 8:12-13

But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done. ""

""Acts 8:14-15

Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost:""

But then we're told:

""Acts 8:16

(For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.)""

The apostles come:

""Acts 8:17

Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.""

Were they saved before the apostles laid their hands on them? Yes. They had believed the Gospel.

So they were **indwelt** at faith—but not **filled** with the Holy Ghost until the apostles laid hands. They didn't have the power of the Holy Ghost upon them. He was in them but they were not filled with the Spirit of God YET—not until they laid hands on them.

This was a unique transitional moment where God used the apostles to validate the inclusion of the Samaritans in the body of Christ. Make sure you see these things and who this is happening to throughout the Book of Acts. God is proving facts to the disciples and to the apostles.

CASE #3

Saul's Conversion: When Was Paul Indwelt and Filled? (Acts 9)

On the road to Damascus:

""Acts 9:3–5

And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.""

""Acts 9:6

And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.""

That's the moment Saul believes. He acknowledges Jesus as Lord.

Three days later:

""Acts 9:17

And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.""

Then:

""Acts 9:18

And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.""

So Paul is **indwelt** when he believes on the road, and **filled** later by Ananias for bold service. And when I say "BOLD SERVICE" that's what I mean. Paul sets "THE EXAMPLE" for you and for I. He sets it. And we are to follow Paul as he follows Christ. And he did. And we will.

CASE #4
Cornelius and the Gentiles: Spirit Falls During Preaching (Acts 10)

Peter preaches:

""**Acts 10:43–44**

To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins. While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.""

This is one of the clearest cases: they heard, they believed, and **both the indwelling and filling** came at that moment—**before** baptism. They then spoke with tongues and magnified God. Again, I believe the indwelling and the filling of the Holy Spirit happened at once.

And the Bible tells us this can happen.

""**Acts 10:46–47**

For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?""

And again, notice the indwelling and the filling of the Holy Spirit happened before baptism in water. So, the people who falsely teach Acts 2:38 are proven wrong again and again in the Bible.

And this is the Gentiles being saved and the power of the Holy Spirit comes upon them. God is showing these facts to the disciples and the apostles.

CASE #5
Peter Repeats the Testimony: Spirit Fell Just Like at Pentecost (Acts 11)

""**Acts 11:15–16**

And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning. Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost.""

""**Acts 11:17–18**

Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus

Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God? 18 When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.""

Peter affirms the Gentiles were **indwelt** and **filled** just like the Jews had been in Acts Chapter 2. The indwelling never goes away. Being filled and the Holy Spirit coming upon you to fill you can come and go and come and go. This isn't affecting salvation. A saved person has the indwelling and is sealed forever.

CASE #6

Ephesus Disciples of John Receive the Holy Ghost: Corrected Doctrine and Power (Acts 19)

Paul meets some disciples:

""Acts 19:1-3

And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism.""

There are many arguments over this. Were these "certain disciples" already saved? Paul says, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" Paul is saying they have already believed. Is he correct? I believe he's correct. They heard the preaching of John the Baptist. That was great preaching.

Paul preaches Jesus:

""Acts 19:4-5

Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. 5 When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.""

Personally, I think they were already saved but they didn't fully understand the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. They didn't understand the baptism in water and what it meant. A great understanding of things is not required for salvation. It's just the simple understanding that Jesus is the Savior and you believe in Jesus Christ for salvation.

After this, after they were baptized, what happens?

""**Acts 19:6**

And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.""

We know the Holy Ghost came upon them with power.

When were they indwelt with the Holy Spirit? John preached to them before the indwelling of the Holy Spirit was given. I don't know for sure, but I would guess they may have been indwelt and filled at the same time here. But that's just a guess. Maybe they already had the indwelling of the Holy Spirit at some point after Jesus arose from the dead.

But, we know for sure that they were **filled with the Holy Ghost** when Paul laid hands on them. This is a transitional period of time. That's what the Book of Acts is about.

This is why God is giving us all of these examples. Remember, we just looked at six different cases.

Final Lessons from Acts on the Holy Spirit: Clear Patterns for Indwelling and Filling

The Book of Acts shows us that:

- The **indwelling** of the Holy Ghost comes at the moment of true faith in the Gospel.
- The **filling** of the Holy Ghost is for power and boldness, and it comes after faith—and can come again and again.
- Water baptism never gives the Spirit of God.
- This was a transitional time—so not every detail is a permanent pattern.

When you read through the Book of Acts next time, slow down and pay attention. You'll learn more and more. Keep all these things in mind that you're learning right now. This is a time of transition in the Book of Acts.

But one thing has never changed:

""**Romans 8:9**

But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.""

""Ephesians 1:13

In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.""

The moment you believed—you were sealed. And now, you can be filled.

Be filled with the Spirit. It's an amazing thing that can and will happen to you IF you do what God asks you to do.

For example, I know that I have been filled with the Holy Spirit when out preaching the Gospel. I have boldness that I would have never had. I will say things that I would have never said. You'll know when you're filled with the Spirit of God.

Last Thursday, I remember the Spirit of God leading me around another block straight to a house where a woman got saved. And it was the 4th house or so down. I was led there. I didn't go to any other house on that street. He sent me there.

Be filled with the Spirit. Be led by the Spirit. WALK IN THE SPIRIT.

Let's pray.