

WHAT IS THE "FULL GOSPEL"?

Church History and the Bible
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0. INTRODUCTION:

[DUNN] Within more **radical** and **pietistic** Protestantism there has grown up a tradition which holds that salvation, so far as it may be known in this life, is experienced in two stages: first, the experience of becoming a Christian; then, as a later and distinct event, a second experience of the Holy Spirit. For many **Puritans** the second experience was one of assurance. For **Wesley** the first stage was justification and partial sanctification, the second the divine gift of entire sanctification or Christian perfection. A direct line can be drawn from Puritan teaching on the Spirit through early Methodism to the nineteenth-century **Holiness Movement** with its 'Higher Life' message, in which justification by faith (deliverance from the penalty of sin) was distinguished from the second divine work of sanctification, also received by faith (deliverance from the power of sin). One of the Holiness Movement's most vigorous offspring, the Keswick Convention, used to be notable for its 'second blessing' teaching', and such metaphors as the one which characterizes some Christians as living between Calvary and Pentecost still have currency at the Convention.¹

0.1. "FULL GOSPEL" – THE NOTION

- against "cessationism"; "Dispensationalism";
- the Pentecostal movement

[FRODSHAM] In the year **1879**, a young man in Arkansas, W. Jethro Walthall, received a mighty endowment from on high. He testified: "At the time I was filled with the Spirit, I could not say what I did, but I was

¹ DUNN, J. G. *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, Philadelphia : Westminster Press, 1970, p. 1.

carried out of myself for the time being. Sometimes in the services and sometimes when alone in prayer, I would fall prostrate under God's mighty power. Once, under a great spiritual agitation, I spoke in tongues. I knew nothing of the Bible teaching about the Baptism or speaking in tongues, and thought nothing of what had happened in my experience." He became a Baptist minister but says, "I knew the light I had received was not countenanced by the Baptist ministry, and it finally led to my being expelled from the church for heresy. The charges specified against me were my belief in the Holy Spirit Baptism, Bible Holiness, and Divine Healing." Brother Walthall became a member of a movement known as "Holiness Baptists." He testifies: "We continued to press our way into a full gospel ministry, looking for the restoration of the supernatural, when the Spirit's downpour came in 1906. Almost simultaneously with the great spiritual outpour, speaking in tongues began among us. With it came wonderful healings, among them two advanced cases of cancer, consumption, paralysis, etc., etc."²

- [Wiki] "This term ["full gospel"] has origins in the Holiness movement. A. B. SIMPSON, the founder of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, framed his core beliefs around the "Fourfold Gospel" (štbornásobné evanjelium), that Christ is (1) Savior, (2) Sanctifier, (3) Healer, and (4) Soon Coming King."
- **Rom 15:18-19** For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience – by word and deed, ¹⁹ by the **power** of signs and wonders, by the **power** of the Spirit of God – so that from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ (ὥστε με ἀπὸ Ἱερουσαλὴμ καὶ κύκλω μέχρι τοῦ Ἰλλυρικοῦ πεπληρωκέμαι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ Χριστοῦ,)

[BRUNER] ...the Pentecostal finds his distinct *raison d'être* in what for him is crucial: his faith in the **supernatural, extraordinary, and visible** work of the Holy Spirit **in the post-conversion experience** of the believer today as, he would insist, in the days of the apostles.³

- [LLOYD-JONES] "Something that happens to us"⁴
- TOZER *When He Is Come*,
- CHAMBERS "...after regeneration and entire consecration, when we have passed the mighty crisis of the Baptism of the Holy Ghost and begin our walk and work and worship under a supreme sanctification..."⁵

0.2. "FULL GOSEL" – THE OPPOSITION

- Oswald J. SMITH *The Spirit at Work*; John STOTT *Baptism and Fullness*, Billy GRAHAM *The Holy Spirit*, John F. MACARTHUR *Charismatics; Charismatic Chaos*;

0.3. "FULL GOSPEL" – DEFORMATIONS

- "Jesus only" → Branhamism
- faith movement (Kenneth HAGIN)
- prosperity gospel

1. ORIGINS IN HISTORY

1.1. CRITICISM OF APOSTASY IN THE CHURCH HISTORY

- in the Bible – differences among Christians
 - **1John 2:13-14** I am writing to you, fathers, (πατέρες) because you know him who is from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, (νεανίσκοι) because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, children, (παιδιά) because you know the Father.¹⁴ I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

² FRODSHAM, S. H. *With Signs Following*, Springfield : Gospel Publishing House, 1941, pp. 11-12

³ BRUNER, F. D. *A Theology of the Holy Spirit*, Grand Rapids : Eerdmans, 1982, p. 20.

⁴ LLOYD-JONES, D. M. *Joy Unspeakable*, Eastbourne : Kingsway, 1986, p. 49.

⁵ CHAMBERS, O. *Christian disciplines*,

- **1Cor 3:3-4** for you are still fleshly (ἔτι γὰρ σαρκικοί ἐστε). For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly (σαρκικοί), and are you not walking like mere men? ⁴ For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not *mere* men? (οὐκ ἄνθρωποι ἐστε;)
- **Jude 1:19** It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit (πνεῦμα μὴ ἔχοντες).
- **1Cor 11:19** for there must be factions (δεῖ γὰρ καὶ αἰρέσεις ἐν ὑμῖν εἶναι) among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized.
- church history = history of apostasy and revivals;
 - problems: dead orthodoxy; formalism; ritualism; sacramentalism; traditionalism;
 - reforms/heresies → the Reformation: monasticism; sectarianism (Montanists; Novatians; Donatists; Priscillians; Bogomils; Cathars; Paulikians; Waldenses; Lollards; Hussites; Moravian Brethren; Anabaptists; Puritans; Huguenots; Baptists; Pietists; Methodists; Pentecostals; Charismatics...)

[LLOYD-JONES] The people who believed in the idea of the 'ecclesiola' were not out to change the whole church, but to form a church within a church which would form a nucleus of true believers inside the general church. Their object in the formation of this nucleus was that it might act as a leaven and influence the life of the whole church for the better. That is the definition. It was thought of in terms of the local church and local churches. It was not a movement, but something that was to happen in individual local churches.⁶

- FOWLER *Stages of Faith*: STAGE 4: This is the tough stage, often begun in young adulthood, when people start seeing outside the box and realizing that there are other "boxes". They begin to critically examine their beliefs on their own and often become disillusioned with their former faith. Ironically, the Stage 3 people usually think that Stage 4 people have become "backsliders" when in reality they have actually moved forward.

1.2. "PARTIAL" GOSPEL PROBLEM

- focusing on one aspect of the Gospel
 - prophetic targeting (reform) → change for the better
 - OR "choosing" some favourite doctrine → HERESY (ἄρεσις) → causing divisions

1.3. CHRISTIAN PERFECTION

- "second blessing"; "second work of grace"...
- John Wesley: sanctification; John Fletcher: baptism of the Holy Spirit

Beware of tempting others to separate from you. Give no offence which can possibly be avoided; see that your practice be in all things suitable to your profession, adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour. Be particularly careful in speaking of yourself : you may not, indeed, deny the work of God; but speak of it, when you are called thereto, in the most inoffensive manner possible. Avoid all magnificent, pompous words : indeed, you need give it no general name; neither perfection, sanctification, the second blessing, nor the having attained. Rather speak of the particulars which God has wrought for you.⁷

1.4. THE "FULL GOSPEL" IN THE 19TH CENTURY

- FINNEY: The Oberlin Evangelist, September 28, 1842:

THE OBERLIN EVANGELIST.

SUSTAINED BY AN ASSOCIATION. R. E. GILLETT, PUBLISHER.
BY WE MAKE THIS THE LAW THROUGH FAITH... GOD FORBID! YEA, WE ESTABLISH THE LAW... ROMANS 3: 21.
Vol. IV...No. 20. Oberlin, Ohio, Wednesday, September 28, 1842. Whole No. 98.

[FINNEY] "See that you preach a **FULL GOSPEL**. Do not satisfy yourselves, my brethren, with the mere conversion of sinners. Aim at the entire and universal sanctification of saints. Preach a gospel suited to this end. Show what is 'the length, and breadth, and height, and depth of the love of God,' and that he 'is able and

⁶ LLOYD-JONES, D. M. *Ecclesiola in Ecclesia*. In: *The Puritans*, Edinburgh : The Banner of Truth Trust, 1987, p. 130.

⁷ WESLEY, J. *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, London : Charles H. Kelly, 1898, p. 116-117.

willing to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we can ask or think.' Preach not justification merely, but sanctification, in all its length and breadth."

- BOARDMAN *The Higher Christian Life*, (1858) the Lord Jesus Christ must be, and was their sanctification, as already they had before received him as their justification. They [MAHAN; FINNEY] began then to preach the **full gospel** as they then for the first apprehended it.⁸

1.5. THE FOURFOLD GOSPEL

- Albert Benjamin SIMPSON – 1881 Dr. CULLIS meetings → experienced personal **healing**

In His own body He has borne all our bodily liabilities for sin, and our bodies are set free. That one cruel "stripe" of His-for the word is singular-summed up in it all the aches and pains of a suffering world; and there is no longer need that we should suffer what He has sufficiently borne. Thus our healing becomes a great redemption right, which we simply claim as our purchased inheritance through the blood of His Cross.⁹

- "The blending of the themes of Christ as (1) Savior, (2) Baptizer (Sanctifier), (3) Healer, and (4) Coming King, described as the "full gospel" or the "fourfold gospel," reflected the desire to restore New Testament Christianity in the last days."¹⁰

1.6. ALL IN ONE EXPERIENCE

- the baptism in the Spirit → all inclusive(?)

[KERR] During the past few years God has enabled us to discover and recover this wonderful truth concerning the Baptism in the Spirit as it was given at the beginning. Thus we have all that the others got [i.e., Luther, Wesley, Blumhardt, Trudel, and A. B. Simpson], and we got this too. We see all they see, but they don't see what we see.¹¹

1.7. CONTEMPORARY PENTECOSTALISM

- "An emerging scholarly consensus holds that at the heart of Pentecostal spirituality lies the "Full Gospel," the idea of Jesus Christ in his fivefold role as (1) Savior, (2) Sanctifier, (3) Baptizer with the Spirit, (4) Healer, and (5) Soon-Coming King."¹²
- The full-gospel message proclaims the centrality of the work of the Holy Spirit as the active agent of the Trinity in God's self-revelation to His creation. The full-gospel message says that God continues to speak and act today, just as He did in Old and New Testament times.¹³

2. THE BIBLICAL USAGE

- πλήρωμα
 - **Rom 15:29** I know that when I come to you I will come in the fullness of the blessing (ἐν πληρώματι εὐλογίας Χριστοῦ) of Christ
 - **Eph 4:13** until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (εἰς μέτρον ἡλικίας τοῦ πληρώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ),
 - **Col 1:19** For in him all the **fullness** of God (ἐν αὐτῷ εὐδόκησεν πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα κατοικῆσαι) was pleased to dwell

2.1. THE FULLNESS OF GOD

- **Eph 3:14 - 4:1** For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, ¹⁶ that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be

⁸ BOARDMAN *The Higher Christian Life*, Boston : Henry Hoyt, 1858, p. 66

⁹ SIMPSON, A. B. *The Gospel of Healing*, New York : Christian Alliance, 1890,

¹⁰ HORTON, S. M. *Systematic Theology*, Springfield : Logion, 1994, p. 14.

¹¹ HORTON, S. M. *Systematic Theology*, p. 16.

¹² ANDERSON, A. – BERGUNDER, M. et al. *Studying Global Pentecostalism*, Berkeley : University of California Press, 2010, s. 224

¹³ HORTON, S. M. *Systematic Theology*, p. 375.

strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith- that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. ²⁰ Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

- **Col 2:9-10** For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, ¹⁰ and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority

2.2. THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD

- **Acts 20:27** ...I did not shrink from declaring to you the **whole counsel of God** (ἀναγγεῖλαι πᾶσαν τὴν βουλὴν τοῦ θεοῦ)
- **2Tim 2:15** ...a worker who does not need to be ashamed, **rightly dividing** (ὀρθοτομέω) the word of truth.

[BARTLEMAN "Christless Pentecost"] "We may not hold a doctrine, or seek an **experience**, except in Christ. Many are willing to seek power in order to perform **miracles**, draw attention and adoration of the people to themselves, thus robbing Christ of His glory, and making a fair showing in the flesh. The greatest need would seem to be for true followers of the meek and lowly Jesus. Religious enthusiasm easily goes to seed. The human spirit so predominates the show-off, religious spirit. But we must stick to our text - Christ. "Any work that exalts the Holy Ghost or 'gifts' above Jesus will finally end up in fanaticism. Whatever causes us to exalt and love Jesus is well and safe. The reverse will ruin all. The Holy Ghost is a great light, but focused on Jesus always for His revealing.

3. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1. THE GOSPEL IS JESUS

- your personal relationship with Him → He decides the "gospel for you"

3.2. ALWAYS AIM AT PERFECTION

- perfectionism – a discredited doctrine?
- unimportant what you call it – press for more! (1Cor 14:1; Phil 3:)
- Greg HAWKINS & Cally PARKINSON *Reveal*: (the church and the personal spiritual growth)
 - [spiritually mature] "...the church isn't the driving force behind the later stages of spiritual growth ... → **personal spiritual practices** – prayer, journaling, solitude, studying Scripture..." (p. 43)
 - [spiritually stalled] "...(1) addictions (spending, gambling, alcohol, pornography, overeating); (2) Inappropriate relationships (emotional/physical affair, other relationship away from God); (3) Emotional issues (depression, anger, stuffing emotions); (4) Not prioritizing one's spiritual life (spending more time on other things – TV, Internet, e-mails, movies, shopping) (p. 49)

4. TO REMEMBER

- The expression "full gospel" is originally a critical assessment of a lukewarm or backslidden church preaching just "partial gospel".
- Theology of "full gospel" is deeply connected with Christian supernatural experience. There are good orthodox theologians both *pro* and *contra* the "second experience" to be looked for and expected by Christians (however defined).
- The most safe position is to expect Jesus to do always *more* in my life than I currently experienced. My expectations should be guided by the best understanding I can form from the Bible.