

Are We Ready to Overflow with God's Spirit? by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

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Richard T. Ritenbaugh

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Someday I would love to visit Niagara Falls. It is a spectacle to see all that water. I have seen pictures and video of it. Even in a static photograph, seeing the water coming down over the edge there—the might, the mass, the sheer energy of all that water pouring down—is simply amazing. You stand in awe of it. Even in a still picture, you can almost hear the roar of all that cascading water as it plunges down over the precipice, and down the river.

I have had the opportunity to travel a little bit; I have been over to a few parts of Africa, and Europe, as well as the Caribbean. I have been able to see several oceans in my travels. Obviously, having lived on the West Coast, I have seen the North Pacific. I have been to Hawaii, and have seen it there too. I have been able to see both the North, and South Atlantic oceans. I have also been able to see the Indian Ocean and the Caribbean Sea. They are all forever restless, surging bodies of water.

Oceans never stand still. We would be totally floored if they did. Probably the earth would stop, or something. The oceans never stop. The waves are constantly crashing upon the shore. The tides flow in and out as they follow the moon's gravity around the earth.

The ocean's immense power causes the great currents to flow, like the Gulf Stream and its Mid-Atlantic Drift, which warms England and Western Europe. There is also another current (I do not remember what it is) that warms up Victoria, BC, and makes that island warmer than it should be.

Some of the other ocean phenomena like El Niño, and La Niña affect weather patterns far away around the globe. From the oceans' heat reservoir emerges vast powerful hurricanes that many of us have had to endure. And from their depths rises the occasional tsunami that might smash onto some shore (as recent as December 2006 near Thailand) with major devastation and the deaths of many people in its wake.

Even here in Columbia, Missouri, we are only a stone's throw from one of America's great rivers, the Missouri River. The world's great rivers give us a sense of the awesome power of water as it flows past us. The Missouri River is a big river for sure. But, it flows into an even bigger river, the Mississippi River, which is huge, carrying a massive volume of water right down the center of America, gathering water from the Ohio,

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Missouri, Tennessee, and Arkansas River systems, and others as they drain into it. But, when it finally reaches the Gulf of Mexico, the amount of water being discharged is almost unfathomable to us—seven hundred thousand cubic feet of water per second. And, the water does not become salty for several miles out into the Gulf, the flow is so swift and strong.

America also has the Colorado River, which carved the Grand Canyon in Arizona—maybe in a very short time after the Flood. Maybe the Flood did a great deal of it. Regardless, the Grand Canyon gives testament to the power of water.

There is the mighty Columbia River that runs beside Portland, Oregon, and Vancouver, Washington, flowing into the Pacific. And then, there is the Hudson River, and many other great rivers, flowing through this very well-watered land of ours.

There are the great rivers of the world—the Nile, the Rhine, the Seine, the Thames, the Congo, the Tigris and the Euphrates, and the Amazon (to name a few).

The Amazon River—remember I told you that the Mississippi River discharges over 700,000 cubic feet per second into the Gulf— is so big and voluminous, that it discharges about ten times more than the Mississippi—seven million cubic feet of water per second!

All of these things are testaments to the power and energy of water (not to mention that we cannot live without it)!

Water, of course, is a crucial symbol in our understanding of this Last Great Day. It stands for the flowing of the Holy Spirit into, and out from, God's children.

My question today is, and what I am leading toward is, are we preparing to overflow with God's Spirit just like those great rivers when they are in flood stage? Are we preparing to make use of this great gift as God uses it? We have been promised that when we see Him, we will be like Him! And, that includes the use of His Holy Spirit. It will flow out from us (as we will see in a moment) like a river.

How prepared would we be if Christ were to come tomorrow? Could we handle the power? We know that Christ will not come tomorrow. The prophetic timeframe, as we know it, is not quite there yet. But that does not matter, because we could die tomorrow! And Christ, for all intents and purposes, would be coming tomorrow for us. In our next waking moment, we would see Christ coming in the clouds.

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Are you prepared to handle the power? I dare say that we probably are not. But, we are working toward the direction—and should be too.

The Church of the Great God has been criticized (accused would actually be more accurate) of being selfish in the way that we (as they look at it) only feed the flock, and do not [appear to] proclaim the gospel of the Kingdom of God around the world. That is not true. We do both. We have just emphasized the feeding of the flock.

The people who make these accusations and criticisms do not see the big picture very well. They are missing something. God has only called a few people now, and they must be made ready for the Kingdom of God. There is another side to being made ready. It is not just all focused on us, because the making ready and preparation is designed from the very beginning to be out-flowing to other people. It is not selfish at all. One must be prepared to give. One must learn to give, and to love. Those who are not preparing the Bride might have to play catch-up later on.

That is a sad thing to say.

We have seen it before, when too much emphasis had been placed on proclaiming the gospel to the world, and the church members withered on the vine. We do not want that to happen with you.

Back to the sermon—that was a little aside—but you will see what I mean by the time we reach the end of the sermon how that all fits in.

My first passage touches base with today's particular holy day—the Last Great Day. This section begins with the Feast of Tabernacles.

Leviticus 23:33-39 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the children of Israel, saying: 'The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days to the LORD. On the first day there shall be a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work on it. For seven days you shall offer an offering made by fire to the LORD. On the eighth day you shall have a holy convocation, and you shall offer an offering made by fire to the LORD. It is a sacred assembly, and you shall do no customary work on it. These are the feasts of the LORD which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, to offer an offering made by fire to the LORD, a burnt offering and a grain offering, a sacrifice and drink offerings, everything on its day—besides the Sabbaths of the LORD, besides your gifts, besides all your vows, and besides all your freewill offerings which you give to the LORD. Also

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on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the fruit of the land, you shall keep the feast of the LORD for seven days; on the first day there shall be a sabbath-rest, and on the eighth day a sabbath-rest.

We went through all this to see how the Feast of Tabernacles includes seven days, and then on the eighth day, there is a separate holy convocation.

In the next passage in Numbers 29, in going through the various offerings that are given on the holy days from verses 12 to 34, are all the offerings for the Feast of Tabernacles. It is a long list. A lot of animals lost their lives during the Feast of Tabernacles.

But then in verse 35, there is a section on the Last Great Day.

Numbers 29:35-38 'On the eighth day you shall have a sacred assembly. You shall do no customary work. You shall present a burnt offering, an offering made by fire as a sweet aroma to the LORD: one bull, one ram, seven lambs in their first year without blemish, and their grain offering and their drink offerings for the bull, for the ram, and for the lambs, by their number, according to the ordinance; also one goat as a sin offering, besides the regular burnt offering, its grain offering, and its drink offering.

Please turn forward to the book of Nehemiah.

Nehemiah 8:18 Also day by day, from the first day until the last day, he [Ezra] read from the Book of the Law of God. And they kept the feast seven days; and on the eighth day there was a sacred assembly, according to the prescribed manner.

They had gone back and read Leviticus and Numbers, and they kept the days as they were supposed to be kept.

We have just read all of the references in the Old Testament to the Last Great Day—the eighth day. These are the only direct Old Testament references to the Last Great Day.

Did you notice as we went through those verses that there were not any mentions of water, or an abundance of water? There was a mention of a drink offering, but that is about as close as we got. As a matter of fact, there was scarce little to tell us what this

Are We Ready to Overflow with God's Spirit? by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

day is all about. It told us that we are to make offerings, and hold a sacred assembly. But, after all that, there is not much there in the Old Testament to tell us what this day is all about. It seems to be tacked onto the end of the Feast of Tabernacles as some kind of last hurrah of feasting and worship to God, the last of the holy days of the year.

We need to go to the New Testament to give us some understanding.

Revelation 20:11-15 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

We find the way that things are arranged here in chapter 20—the binding of Satan—the saints being made into spirit beings in the first resurrection—then the thousand years of their reign—followed by this period of the Great White Throne Judgment—we can figure out where the Last Great Day comes into the picture. It is not really tacked onto the end of the Feast of Tabernacles.

Even though the Great White Throne Judgment comes after the end of the Millennium, and also has conditions like the Millennium, it has a whole separate meaning from the Millennium. It is a time of resurrection from the dead. It is a time that many billions of people, who have not had the opportunity for salvation, to be raised and given a new lifetime under God's way of life, and to be judged just like we are being judged now in our lives. They will have to learn, and grow, and make a decision whether or not they will follow God.

And then finally, by the end of that time period of about 100 years, it seems everyone who has ever lived on the face of this earth will have made his choice and will have been judged. And then comes, just as in the special music this afternoon, the New Heavens, and the New Earth.

This is how we come to our understanding of the Last Great Day. This section provides us with the time setting of the period when it occurs in its fulfillment, and an outline of its

Are We Ready to Overflow with God's Spirit? by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

main activities. But there is not much there about water, is there? The only thing there that had any water in it was the sea, which gave up its dead that were in it. And that does not seem to make much sense regarding the power of flowing water. We must go someplace else for that.

John 7:37-39 On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

We have no problem identifying this occurring on the Last Great Day. Some commentators confuse this day with day seven of the Feast of Tabernacles. But it is very clear that this is occurring on the eighth day, the Last Great Day, because from what we understand about the Great White Throne Judgment, the Last Great Day is when His Spirit will be freely offered to everyone. And that is what Jesus is proclaiming here.

"Anyone who thirsts, come to Me and drink"—this seems a bit strange that He would do that, right in the middle of the feast day, that He would give an open invitation for salvation.

However, the apostle John left out some background material that he and his original audience already knew. It was the Last Great Day, the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles season, and he knew, as any good Jew would, what happened on the Last Great Day at the Temple in Jerusalem. But he failed to tell us. But this background material, once we know it, gives us a great deal of understanding.

What happened was the priest conducted a water ceremony on the Last Great Day. At the Temple, there was a gathering of priests and other folk who wanted to join this procession, and to the sounds of trumpets, a great procession of people, like a big parade, would wind down from the Temple through the city of David to the Pool of Siloam at its southern end. It was a walk of about 700 or 800 yards; maybe a half-mile or so. They brought with them golden pitchers with which to draw the water from the pool there with a big ceremony.

By the way, the Pool of Siloam was not this rinky-dink little pool, but rather a nicely decorated, huge Roman pool. Because of Herod's beautification of the Temple area,

Are We Ready to Overflow with God's Spirit? by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

and Jerusalem, it had colonnades and steps where many hundreds of people could watch this ceremony.

They would go down with many pitchers they brought and draw water from the Pool of Siloam, and then with great fanfare, they would walk back up through the city of David back to the Temple, and on to the altar. Then they would pour the water on the altar as an offering to God. As this was happening, as they were pouring the water and the people were watching, there would be a priestly choir set up on the steps of the Temple singing Isaiah 12:3,

Isaiah 12:3 Therefore with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.

This was the ceremony that Jesus was watching with many thousands of other Jews on the Last Great Day of the Feast. And perhaps there was a lull in the music, or the trumpets had died down—who knows when it occurred—it does not say, but perhaps it was in the period between the trumpet and the time of the singing, and Jesus stands up in the midst of the whole crowd, and He says (paraphrased by me), "If anyone desires true spiritual salvation, you can have it abundantly through Me. You will not have these measly pitchers of water to pour out, but rivers of living, flowing, running water coming directly from your innermost being."

He knew the reality of things. The Jews there, still caught up in the ritual, were all excited about little golden pitchers pouring maybe a gallon of water on the altar. But He, knowing what was truly going to happen, knowing about the great volumes (a physical term to describe), knowing how much God's Spirit was available, stood up and said, "It is available to all through Me. Come to Me and believe, and you will have access to that water—a water, that if you drink of it, you will never thirst again! And, it will flow from you."

The apostle John immediately provides an interpretation, in verse 39, of what He meant. The water was, of course, the Holy Spirit that a person can receive upon belief, repentance, and baptism by immersion in water, and the laying on of hands. And at this particular point, when He stood up to say these things, that water—figuratively the Spirit of God—had not been given except to those very few whom God had called to preach and warn, and a few others, like a couple of the kings.

We have heard a lot about Caleb during this feast. He was probably one of those. I do not think he was much of a preacher, however he was sure a leader of God's people. He knew what was right. But, it was only the very few like him—the prophets, some of

Are We Ready to Overflow with God's Spirit? by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

the kings, and some of the leaders of Israel.

Once Jesus died, and rose, and ascended to heaven, then the Spirit could be given more generally to people—those who were specifically called, and who believed, and who had hands laid on them. God would give them His Holy Spirit.

Later, as we see in the fulfillment of these verses, it will be given to all who seek it—open to everyone. The calling will be general then.

Perhaps Jesus was thinking of something else, too, when He said this. Some of His phraseology may have come from the Old Testament. In Exodus 17 is the great situation at Meribah. Massah and Meribah is where the people rebelled, and tested God.

At this point, the people were about to kill Moses (again),

Exodus 17:4-6 So Moses cried out to the LORD, saying, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me!" And the LORD said to Moses, "Go on before the people, and take with you some of the elders of Israel. Also take in your hand your rod with which you struck the river, and go. Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock in Horeb [the pillar of cloud would go and stand on the rock]; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink." And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. So he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah,...

Can you imagine the amount of water that came out of that rock? It must have gushed out to be able to water 2.5 million people. It could not have been a little trickle, because no one would have gotten water that way for days and days. It must have been a torrent coming out of there.

Jesus may have been thinking there in John 7 about Exodus 17:6, especially the phrase that says, "and water will come out of it." Do you know what the Hebrew literally says there? "There shall come water from within him." And what is the phrase there in John 7? "Out of His heart will flow rivers of living water." Other translations have it as, "From His innermost being."

We know from I Corinthians 10:4 that Paul tells us about the wanderings of the Israelites, and he reminds us that the Rock went with them through the wilderness. He

Are We Ready to Overflow with God's Spirit? by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>) is talking about this rock in Exodus 17:6 out from whom the water came. And then he explained that this Rock was Jesus Christ.

That is interesting. That Rock was Christ, and Christ in the presence of the cloud went on top of that rock and therefore showed that He was that Rock to Israel. And that water came from within Him—the pre-Incarnate Christ—out to the people to give them water. It came from within Him.

The Christ is the First Fruit. And those who follow Him, His brothers and sisters "in the Lord," are to follow Him in everything. He was the One—the Captain of our Salvation, The *Archegos*—He is the One who blazed the trail. And so, what do we do? We play "follow the leader." What He did, we do.

In this case, where the water flows from Him like a river to quench the thirst of many, it is a picture and illustration of what is supposed to occur with us. We are supposed to have rivers of living water flow from our innermost being, just like He did.

This is the action of the Spirit in John 7—"water will flow out of His heart," as it says in the New King James Version, while in other translations it says, "from His innermost Being."

It flows out. Did you notice that? He does not mention it flowing in! "Out of His belly," it says in the King James Version, out of right here, where His emotions are, where His "guts" are, out of the center of His Being, flows this great river of living water out to others.

What does this tell you about the use of the Holy Spirit? What does this tell you in terms of people accusing the Church of the Great God about being selfish in the way that we teach? That supposedly it is just for us?

I say that they are not looking at it properly. What this says is that the Holy Spirit flows out of the converted person's heart, out of the person's innermost being. We are not a reservoir of the Holy Spirit, but rather we are a conduit for the Holy Spirit. A reservoir holds still, quiet water. It gets poured in, and then it just sits there. It might get used some, but its main use is to sit there and wait for a time.

But that is not the imagery that the Bible gives us. The Bible gives us the imagery of a river flowing out of us.

Of course, this river has a source, so it does flow in, but it does not get bottled up. It

Are We Ready to Overflow with God's Spirit? by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

comes back out to others. Along the way, we receive some of its benefits obviously, but Jesus Christ's phraseology implies that we are supposed to use the Holy Spirit externally. We are not supposed to keep it locked up inside just for our own benefit. In fact, the nature of God's Holy Spirit is such that, as the very essence of God, the essence of His mind, the essence of His power, it cannot be bottled up and used selfishly. When did God ever do anything selfishly?

He is our Model of outgoing love—*agape* love. He does everything for the benefit of all. And His prime vehicle for doing all those things, is His Holy Spirit.

And so in us, it is not supposed to be used selfishly. In us, it is supposed to be used for good—to show love, to show concern, to show kindness. It must by its very nature work in an outgoing manner, because it is God's Holy Spirit, and God is love.

We are the vessels of this, and we do not always work in an outgoing manner, but we must have that as our goal, to be able to use God's Holy Spirit in the same manner as Jesus Christ did—to help, to teach, to heal, and all those things mentioned in Luke 4 that Christ said He came to do—to free, to redeem. That is our goal. That is why God gives us His Holy Spirit. It is to change us so that we are not only changed, but also so that we can go on and affect others for good, and encourage change for the better in them as well.

You know that it says in Isaiah,

Isaiah 55:11 So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.

God sends forth His Word, and how does He do that? By His Holy Spirit. And you know what? That Word goes forth, and like it says, it does not return to Him empty. It goes out, and it does the thing that it was supposed to do for the good of whoever He sent it out for. And that is how it is supposed to work for us too. It is supposed to come into us, and we get some use from it, but it also is to flow out in good works.

Is that not what it says in Ephesians 2?

Ephesians 2:8-10 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which

Are We Ready to Overflow with God's Spirit? by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Everything that God does with us is designed—yes to benefit us—but then to go on from there and flow out of us in good works for others. God's Holy Spirit is not static. It is not still. He calls it, "living."

I want to show you that God pouring out His Holy Spirit is an Old Testament concept.

Isaiah 44:2-5 Thus says the LOORD who made you and formed you from the womb, who will help you: 'Fear not, O Jacob My servant; and you, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen. For I will pour water on him who is thirsty, and floods on the dry ground; I will pour My Spirit on your descendants, and My blessing on your offspring; they will spring up among the grass like willows by the watercourses.' One will say, 'I am the LOORD's'; another will call himself by the name of Jacob; another will write with his hand, 'The LOORD's,' and name himself by the name of Israel.

Here we have, very clearly, the pouring out of God's Holy Spirit onto the descendants of Jacob. This is obviously a millennial context, when they will finally be able to understand and do the work that He intended for them to do from the beginning.

I want you to notice three points from this scripture:

1. God's Holy Spirit is an antidote to fear and the feeling of being forsaken. The reason is because it establishes a relationship with God. If you have God on your side, you have the ultimate in loving care, and protection, and providence. So God says here, "Do not fear, Jacob! Do not fear, Jeshurun! I'm going to pour my Holy Spirit on you, and that is going to make all the difference!" It also says in II Timothy 1:7 that God has not given us a spirit of fear, but rather, He has given us the Spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. There is no fear in those things.
2. God's Holy Spirit stimulates rapid and verdant growth. It says that they will spring up like grass among the willows by the water courses. They spring up! It is not that they only grow incrementally, little by little. Once they are given the Holy Spirit, it is like, "Ta Dah! Here we are!" And there they are, a big willow tree, almost as if overnight. Whereas before, they had been among the grasses. But now, they spring up because they have God's Holy Spirit. Why? Because the Holy Spirit is the essence of His mind and power. You cannot help but grow once you have and use God's Holy Spirit. That is the way that God's Holy Spirit works. It causes growth. It is powerful.

Are We Ready to Overflow with God's Spirit? by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

3. God's Holy Spirit unites a person with both God and the covenant people. The reason why is because the Holy Spirit provides the common element among all those parties. Romans 8:14 says that those who have the Spirit of God are the sons of God. That is the thing that makes the difference. In this case, you have some of the people saying that they are the Lord's, and others saying that they are Jacob's. It goes both ways toward God, and God's people.

There you have the conduit. It runs from God to the individual, and out to the covenant people. And beyond too!

Does not this all sound familiar? Do you remember that I said that this is a millennial situation in Isaiah 44? The way it says it is that the Holy Spirit of God will work in the Millennium with the Israelites the very same way that it works for us now. God's Holy Spirit is the means by which God convicts and comforts us—and we come out of a scary world, do we not? When we finally have God's Spirit, we have an ability to do so much, and we get great blessings with every benefit we need.

By God's Holy Spirit, we are inspired and educated. We are given power, and the ability to grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Lastly, the Holy Spirit is the glue that binds us together, because we come from such disparate places and backgrounds. We would not all be together if it had been left just up to us. It is the Spirit given to us—a bonding with God and us. It works the same way with us now, as it will work in the future with the Israelites in the Millennium.

Our next passage we are going to go to is a place that maybe you would not think would apply here. It is found in Isaiah 58. Normally, Isaiah 58 is the Atonement chapter because it is mostly about fasting. But the reason I am going to us this chapter is because I am interested in the underlying principles behind it. The principle behind fasting—true godly fasting—is the same principle that is supposed to underlie our use of God's Holy Spirit.

Isaiah 58:6-12 "Is this not the fast that I have chosen: To loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; when you see the naked, that you cover him, and not hide yourself from your own flesh? Then your light shall break forth like the morning, your healing shall spring forth speedily, and your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; you shall cry, and He will say, 'Here I am.' If you take away the yoke from your

Are We Ready to Overflow with God's Spirit? by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

midst, the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness, if you extend your soul to the hungry and satisfy the afflicted soul, then your light shall dawn in the darkness, and your darkness shall be as the noonday. The LORD will guide you continually, and satisfy your soul in drought, and strengthen your bones; you shall be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail. Those from among you shall build the old waste places; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; and you shall be called the Repairer of the Breach, The Restorer of Streets to Dwell In."

Like I said, we think of this passage mainly in terms of fasting and the Day of Atonement. But, it takes only a little different perspective to see this in terms of the use of God's Holy Spirit.

The first five verses, which we did not read, show the wrong way to fast. That was the way that the Israelites were doing it, and God really criticizes them severely. They had the wrong attitudes when they fasted.

First of all, they fasted in order to get something. They wanted to get God's attention, and they wanted God to take notice of them, and then to hear what they wanted. They wanted something from Him, and they were trying to force Him to do something for them. "Look God! Look at how much I've fasted, and how dejected I look, and how my breath stinks. I've done this all for You! And now, You owe me something!" That was their attitude.

Secondly, they fasted to cause conflict. It says very specifically that they fasted for strife and debate. They actually were trying to cause some sort of conflict and argument. I do not know quite how they did that, but it says very plainly that God said that is what they did. They did it to get their way, obviously, and they were just going to run over anybody else to get it, but they covered over it with fasting, evidently.

Thirdly, they fasted hypocritically, like the Pharisees later on did. It says, "...a day for a man to afflict his soul, to bow down his head like a bulrush, and to spread out sackcloth and ashes." They seemed to have gone some place public to be seen in some big show, "Oh look at me! I'm fasting! Surely God will give me what I want. Surely the public will notice, and see how righteous I am. And, then I will get the chief seat in the synagogue. And then the people will think that I know something, and that I'm close to God." And then, they will get some sort of acclaim from this.

Are We Ready to Overflow with God's Spirit? by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

All these reasons have selfish motives to them. They were fasting to get something for themselves, whether attention from God or man, or advantage, or acclaim, it was all me, me, me.

Can you not see that it could be the same with us in our wanting to do good works through the Spirit? We could think along these same lines, or with these same attitudes. But we cannot use God's Holy Spirit in that way. It is not going to work, because God's Holy Spirit is a pure Spirit, an upright Spirit, a Holy Spirit—it is God's Spirit.

These six or seven verses we read reveal God's perspective on fasting or any other righteous work we might delve into. If you would notice that the things He mentions are all outgoing acts of kindness and relief. "Loose the bonds of wickedness," is talking about helping people get out of their slavery to sin. That is something that preachers do a lot.

We preach a lot about sin. And we try to get people to turn, and repent. We are using God's Spirit in an outgoing manner, to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke. These are all the same sort of things.

People are under great bondage today, to their way of life, and their culture. And there are ways, if we think about them, that we can be of help. How can we use God's Spirit to break those bonds? I will get to those in a moment.

Many of these same acts that are mentioned here in Isaiah 58 are the same sorts of things that Jesus mentions in the parable of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25. "I was thirsty, you gave me a drink. I was hungry, and you fed me. I was naked, and you clothed me. I was in prison, and you visited me. I was sick, and you comforted me." Many of those are mentioned here in Isaiah 58. His message does not change! These were things that the sheep did! What happened to the sheep? He rewarded them, and they came upon His right hand, and they ruled with Him in the Kingdom of God. These are the things that He is still teaching us to do, today, making use of His Spirit.

Unlike the sinful Israelites who fasted for personal gain, we have access to the selfless Spirit of God. This selfless Spirit of God gives us the power, the ability, the motivation, and the wisdom to do truly helpful and godly acts of goodness and righteousness. Otherwise, we could not do those things.

When we embark on this outward approach and attitude toward the use of God's Spirit—we have finally decided to do this—we say, "I'm going to make the most of what

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God has given me, and I'm going to do what He says, and I'm going to overflow with God's Spirit"—things begin to change dramatically.

Notice what happens. We stop submitting to the yoke of sin. "(verse 9) If you take away the yoke from your midst (the same yoke of wickedness referred to in verse 6)...."

If we take away the yoke, we stop submitting to the yoke of sin. And he also said, if we stop pointing the finger—blaming others. And if we stop speaking wickedness—boy, does that mouth get us into trouble, with gossiping, slandering, and undermining others in our speech in one form or another.

We take away the yoke, and we repent of our sins. We stop pointing our finger at other people, claiming that they are holding us back, that they are doing us wrong. It is not anybody else's fault. And we get control of our mouths and all the fires that our tongue ignites. (This is the negative side of it. Get rid of sin, basically.)

There is another thing we have to do. It cannot stop there. It says we have to extend our souls by doing acts of kindness toward others. It says to feed the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul. We could go on in Matthew 25 with those others.

If we do these things, particularly helping the needy and the afflicted (not necessarily our friends, although they are probably needy and afflicted too) by searching out those who are really needy and afflicted, these changes start happening. A lot of times we can get into our small groups and help each other, but that leaves somebody out, usually many people out, who really need it, so we have to go out and search.

These changes start happening once we do two things—we take care of ourselves in getting rid of the sins, and then we start going outward and helping other people. (I will get to the results in a moment.)

I am not just talking only physical needs. A lot of times we get stuck on the fact whether somebody has enough money, or whether they have cable TV, or something else that we have that they do not. Maybe they do not have money for high-speed internet access, or some such thing.

We look at the physical things all too often, but I am not talking of only those physical needs. There are programs that this nation has in place to fill some of those physical needs. We do not have to necessarily give money to people to help them. Maybe it is just because America is such a mercantile, money-oriented place that we always think of giving money to people in order to help them. We know that we throw money at

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problems, like our educational system, by the millions of dollars in all our towns and such, but what does it do? Money merely papers over problems. Money (we all love it and love to have the things that money can buy) is just a short-term fix for problems. It is certainly not going to fix the problems that are more cultural, or mental, or attitudinal, or whatever. It might even make those worse.

What I am talking about here are things like emotional needs. People can be a mess in their emotions. All that they may really need is two ears to hear them talk, or two arms to give them a hug, or just to sit and be there with them. Many emotional needs are not met. But the Holy Spirit flowing out of us can meet them.

What about educational needs? There are people within our midst who have great skills at certain things. They can share those with others. Even though they may not be skills you think are all that important, but somebody else may really need to know them, and be able to use them.

What about occupational help? You can help somebody who does not have a job with work, or help in finding some work for them. Or maybe you cannot find them work, but you are good at making up a resume, so you can share that with them.

What about social problems? Many people do not get out much. Invite them over for dinner, or take them to a movie, or a ride or walk in the park. Fulfill their needs for recreation.

There are a lot of ways in which we can help people, but we normally do not do it because we are not thinking about it. We are not putting our minds to it. We are not looking for ways to help other people.

Use your imagination. There are many creative ways to help people. They may never know that you helped them. But you have to think about it, and extend your soul. You have to let that river of living water flow through you. Use your imagination and creativity. Use the gifts that God has given you so abundantly.

I am not necessarily talking about the gift of public speaking, or writing, like those things God has given me. I use them all the time. In a way, if I only just do those things, then I am missing out on using all those other gifts that God has given me.

He has given me many gifts. He has given you those same gifts. Just look at those gifts. In Galatians 5, they are called the fruits of the Spirit. They are gifts that have been given to all of us. If we would only make use of them!

Are We Ready to Overflow with God's Spirit? by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, against such there is no law.

God is not going to tell you to not use those gifts at any time.

You can all extend love. You can all extend joy. You can all extend peace, and longsuffering, and all of those others in the list.

You know what? One of the biggest areas on which we need to work in order to show love for one another is the very last one in the list—self-control. We need to extend self-control. For instance, if we exercise self-control over our mouths—our tongues—we would probably knock out about 75% or more of our problems right there. Sometimes not saying something to someone is far more effective and helpful than blurting out something that is going to ruin their day, or week, or year, or life.

Just read the book of James, and all those things he says about taming the tongue. What a huge fire it will kindle.

We can all use the gifts of God's Spirit. That is how we can let it flow right through us—if only we would use these gifts.

It says in I Timothy 6:18 that we ought to be doing good. He says, "Look you rich people. Be rich in good works!" And we are rich! We are among the richest people who have ever lived on the earth, because of the amount of the truth given to us. It is up to us, as the rich, to do good, and to share, and do all those good works. And if we do not, what will the Great Judge say? Which side will we be on? The sheep's side? Or the goat's side?

Galatians 6:10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.

This is where we start! God has given us a lab amongst ourselves in order to help us use the gifts of the Holy Spirit, to use the power of the Holy Spirit, to extend our soul just a short ways for now amongst our family and friends, and the churches of God. And someday, as you have opportunity, and you learn to control it, you can extend this further out into the world, and make a witness. God has given us a lab, here, to practice among ourselves.

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Notice the results in Isaiah 58.

Isaiah 58:10 If you extend your soul to the hungry and satisfy the afflicted soul, then your light shall dawn in the darkness, and your darkness shall be as the noonday.

Some of this is also in verse 8, but after you take away the yoke (that is the sin), and if you extend your soul (that is the second thing)—now it gets to the "then" statement—your light dawning in the darkness. Your light will dawn, and it will wax—grow—until even your darkness is as bright as high-noon. You see the results of using this formula, and extending our souls through the Holy Spirit.

Isaiah 58:11 The LORD will guide you continually, and satisfy your soul in drought, and strengthen your bones; you shall be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail.

That means that at every turn, in every trial, in good times and bad, He will be there! He will be our constant companion and guide. He is in us, directing our works.

We do not have to fear. What great comfort there is in that!

Then he goes on about drought, a scarcity of the Holy Spirit, a dramatic drought of the Holy Spirit in this world! Just like there is a famine of the Word. Think about it. How many truly converted people are there in the world, compared to all the billions alive right now? Only a very few have the water of God's Holy Spirit flowing through them. But it says here that this is a result of doing these good things, stopping the sins, and extending our souls.

Not only do we have this water, but we will be satisfied to the point of having absolutely spectacular growth. You shall be like a watered garden, it says, and like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail.

Not only will you be satisfied and growing, but you will be an ever-flowing spring, a fountain of God's Spirit pouring a good witness of good works to the glory of God.

Then notice what happens. It does not end, because those who do this, those who have this water flowing from them, they shall build the old waste places. It says they shall

Are We Ready to Overflow with God's Spirit? by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

raise the foundations of many generations. Notice how far it goes.

If we do these things, we are on the bottom floor of the greatest enterprise that has ever hit this earth. Our works, and the witness of them, and the goodness of those works, will go on for generation after generation, through the Millennium, through the Great White Throne Judgment, and ongoing until God says, "It is done."

You shall be called the repairer of the breach—what is He talking about? A hole in the wall? There is a huge breach between God and mankind. We have the opportunity by being conduits of God's Holy Spirit to be called, "The ones who repaired the breach"! The ones who restored safe streets to dwell in.

Are we prepared to overflow with God's Holy Spirit?

Let us conclude in John 4 where Jesus came upon the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well. I will not need to read it all. You know it very well.

Jesus came up to her, and asked her for a drink at Jacob's well. We need to know something about Jacob's well. Jacob's well is a seep-well. It is a well where water slowly collects by trickling or percolation through the underlying rock. It is really a reservoir.

But what does Jesus say?

John 4:13-14 Jesus answered and said to her, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life."

The living water that Jesus offers to us, and has given to us, comes from a spring. It is moving water, living water, flowing water like a fountain. It is not water that just sits there and does nothing, just waiting. It is kinetic, active, working, fresh, vigorous, dynamic, and energetic. It is water—Spirit—that gets things done. On top of that, it is inexhaustible. The source will never run dry!

As we leave here, at the end of the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day, let us resolve to be springs and fountains of God's Spirit, rather than reservoirs, because that water, that Spirit is abundantly available to us through our relationship with God the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. I trust that if we do these things, we will soon be ready and willing to overflow with God's Spirit.