

**04/14/24      Be Filled with the Spirit  
Ephesians 5:18-21**

Welcome...

**Our text is Ephesians 5:18-21. Let's read it together...**

Only one person has ever lived the Christian life perfectly: the Lord Jesus Christ. All of us have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. As sinners, it is impossible to achieve perfect Christlikeness. Yet this is the purpose for which God has saved us. Romans 8:29 says, "For those whom He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, in order that He might be the firstborn among many brothers." How can sinful people like you and me be like Christ?

Ephesians 5:18 gives the answer, "Be filled with the Spirit." Being filled with the Spirit is not to be confused with being sealed with the Spirit. Look at Ephesians 1:13 with me...

The Holy Spirit is the agent of regeneration, of your salvation. You permanently possess the entire Holy Spirit from the time you repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 8:9b says, "Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Him."

We are never commanded to be baptized in the Spirit or to be sealed with the Spirit. Those are both theological realities from the moment God the Father, through the agency of the Holy Spirit, places you into the body of Christ. The baptism and sealing of the Spirit are facts to be believed. But the filling of the Spirit is a command that we must obey. But what does it mean?

**Main point: Ephesians 5:18-21 describes the demand, the definition, and the display of the Spirit-filled life.**

- I.      The Demand of the Spirit-Filled Life**
- II.     The Definition of the Spirit-Filled Life**
- III.    The Display of the Spirit-Filled Life**

My prayer is that we will all understand how to live a life that is characterized by the Holy Spirit's control. Each Christian has all the Spirit, but the command here is that the Spirit has all of you.

**I.      The Demand of the Spirit-Filled Life**

Verse 18 begins with...

Before Paul gives the command to "be filled with the Spirit" and provides the characteristics of the Spirit-filled life in verses 19–21, he first gives a contrasting and negative command, "And do not get drunk with wine." Getting drunk with wine not only is a hindrance to, but a counterfeit of, being filled with the Spirit.

Proverbs 20:1 says: "Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, and whoever is intoxicated by it is not wise.

Paul's contrast with drunkenness in Ephesians 5:18 is the key here. What do people go to alcohol for? For a happy hour. We all want to be happy, but there is a problem: "The days are evil." Notice the logic of verses 16–18: The days are evil. Therefore, do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine . . . but be filled with the Spirit.

Where do you turn when the days are evil, when you are frightened or discouraged or depressed or anxious? Paul pleads with us: “Don’t turn to alcohol; turn to the Spirit. The Holy Spirit can do much more valuable things in your life than alcohol can.”

There are people who are not joyful, not making melody within their hearts because they are weighed down, overwhelmed and anxious about life. But later in the evening at the local bar with a few drinks under their belt, they can put their arms around each other and sing and laugh.

All of us long to be carefree, uninhibited, happy. And the mounting tragedy of our own day, as in Paul’s day, is that increasing numbers of people (even Christians) believe that the only way they can find this child-like happiness and freedom is by drinking alcohol to the point of intoxication.

Such behavior dishonors God, and so Paul says here in verse 18, there is a better way to deal with the evil days — not just to cope with a bottle of wine, but be filled with hope. The better way is to be filled with the Spirit and stay filled with the Spirit. Then you will know unmatched joy that sings and makes melody with your heart to the Lord.

In Psalm 4:7-8 David wrote, “You have put gladness in my heart, more than when their grain and new wine abound. In peace I will both lie down and sleep, for You alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety.

Now, the drinking of wine is not totally forbidden in Scripture and is, in fact, sometimes even commended. In speaking of God’s gracious invitation to salvation, Isaiah declared in Isaiah 55:1, “Ho! Every one who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.”

Paul advised Timothy in 1 Timothy 5:23, “No longer drink water exclusively, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.” In John 2, Jesus’ first miracle was turning water into wine at the wedding feast at Cana. Wine was a common drink in that day. Paul is not prohibiting the use of wine but rather the abuse of it.

Notice Paul says here in Ephesians 5:18....

Dissipation, to which drunkenness inevitably leads, is from a Greek word that literally means “that which is unable to be saved.” It was used of a person who was hopelessly and incurably sick and also was used of loose, reckless living, as in that of the prodigal son in Luke 15 before he repented. Dissipation is therefore a form of self-destruction.

Dissipation is the opposite of what Paul says in verses 15-17...

God calls us to be under His control, and not under the control of any kind of substance. God demands that we be sober and wise and Spirit-filled and Spirit-led. Verse 18 says that we must be filled with the Spirit. If we are to be filled with the Spirit, we need to define the terms and make sure we understand what Paul means.

## **II. The Definition of the Spirit-Filled Life**

Verse 18...

The contrast is not between the wine and the Spirit but between the two states expressed by the two verbs: being drunk with wine leads to dissipation but being filled by the Spirit leads to verses 19-21...

Ephesians 5:18 commands us to be filled with the Spirit. The Lord has not given the Spirit to merely reside in your life. The Holy Spirit should preside over your life.

What does it mean to be filled with the Spirit? First, we must take note that this is an imperative. It is not a suggestion or recommendation; it is a command. The New Testament never instructs Christians to be baptized, indwelt, sealed, or gifted by the Spirit. We receive these gifts the moment we are saved. They are the standard equipment of the Christian life.

Being filled with the Spirit is not standard equipment. Yet it is necessary for the standard equipment to function properly. So, God commands us to be filled with the Spirit.

A literal translation of the Greek verb would read something like, “be being kept filled.” The idea is one of keeping yourself constantly filled, as you yield moment by moment to the leading of the Spirit. This fits perfectly with the word that Paul uses repeatedly in Ephesians, “to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord.” How can we do that? By walking by the Spirit.

When we use the word “fill” in English we normally think of something being placed into a container such as milk being poured to the brim of a glass, water being run into a bathtub, or gasoline being pumped into a gas tank. But none of those examples precisely conveys the meaning of “to fill” or “be filled” as does the Greek verb used in here in verse 18.

The verb *pleroo* (be filled) has three shades of meaning that are helpful in illustrating the scriptural meaning of Spirit-filled. The first carries the idea of pressure. It is used to describe wind billowing the sails on a ship, providing the impetus to move the vessel across the water. In the spiritual realm, this concept depicts the Holy Spirit providing the thrust to move the believer down the pathway of obedience.

Spirit-filled Christians are not motivated by their own desires or wills to progress. Instead, they allow the Holy Spirit to carry them in the proper directions. Another helpful example of this first meaning is a small stick floating in a stream. Sometime in our lives most of us have tossed a stick into a creek and then run downstream to see the stick come floating by, propelled only by the force of the water. To be filled with the Spirit means to be carried along by the gracious pressure of the Holy Spirit.

The second meaning of *pleroo* conveys the idea of permeation. The well-known pain reliever Alka-Seltzer illustrates this principle quite effectively. Some of us remember the commercial: Plop, plop, fizz, fizz, oh what a relief it is! When one or two Alka-Seltzer tablets are dropped into a glass of water, they instantly begin to fizz and dissolve. Soon the tablets have been transformed into clear bubbles throughout the glass, and the water is permeated with the distinct flavor of the Alka-Seltzer. In a similar sense, God wants the Holy Spirit to permeate and flavor our lives so that when we’re around others, they will know for certain that we possess the pervasive essence of the Spirit.

There is a third meaning of *pleroo*, actually the primary one in the New Testament, which conveys the sense of domination or total control. The gospel writers used the term in various passages to indicate that people were dominated by a certain emotion. In Luke 5:26, after Jesus rebuked the Pharisees and healed the paralytic, the people were astonished and “filled with fear.” In Luke 6:11, when Jesus restored a man’s hand on the Sabbath, the scribes and Pharisees “were filled with rage.” When our Lord told the disciples that He would soon be leaving them, Jesus told of their reaction in John 16:6 when He said, “Sorrow has filled your heart.” Each of those uses reveals an emotion so overwhelming within the people that it dominated their thoughts and excluded every other emotion.

Most people are able to balance their emotions throughout their lives. But there are some occasions when the emotional balance is tipped to one extreme or another. Think about the emotion at your wedding, or the death of a close family member, or a stressful emergency or trial. If you are totally dominated by a particular emotional reaction in those contexts, it can be debilitating and incapacitating. But in our spiritual lives, we are commanded to yield to the total control of the Holy Spirit, so that every emotion, thought, and act of the will is under His direction. This kind of complete spiritual control is for our benefit and totally in line with God's will.

"Be filled with the Spirit" is God's command, and He expects us to obey. The command is plural, so it applies to all Christians and not just to a select few. The verb is in the present tense - "keep on being filled" - so it is an experience we should enjoy constantly and not just on special occasions.

The filling of the Spirit is not a second work of grace that sanctifies you from sin once and for all. Spirit infilling is to be a continual experience in the believer's life. When someone asked D.L. Moody if he was filled with the Spirit, he answered, "Yes, but I leak." That is true of every Christian.

In the Greek text, "be filled with the Spirit" (5:18) is a passive imperative. That is, it's a passive command, meaning we are to allow the Spirit to fill us with all of His blessings, empower us with His enablement, and lead us in His ways.

Our whole lives, yielded to God, are to overflow with the work of the Holy Spirit. New Testament scholar Harold Hoehner sums up Paul's thought this way: "With the indwelling each Christian has all of the Spirit, but the command to be filled by the Spirit enables the Spirit to have all of the believer."

The baptism of the Spirit means that I belong to Christ's body. The filling of the Spirit means that my body belongs to Christ.

Look at Colossians 3:16...

You will notice that there is a striking similarity between these passages. Both Ephesians 5 and Colossians 3 talk about singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs and giving thanks. There is one difference though. Ephesians 5 tells us that we must be filled with the Spirit. And Colossians 3 tells us that we must let the word of Christ dwell in us richly.

If we ask, "What does it really mean to be filled with the Spirit?" I hope you can see that Paul's letter to the Colossians gives us the answer. To be filled with the Spirit is to have the word of Christ dwelling in us richly. When God's word fills you and dwells within you and has power over you, then you are experiencing what it means to be filled with the Spirit.

God's Word, empowered and illuminated by the Spirit, is a convicting and controlling influence. You must fill yourself with God's word. You must be renewed in your minds with the truth of God's Word. You need to keep on going back to the Bible so that you may have discernment and wisdom. As you are convicted by the word of God and led by it in your daily decisions, then you are living the Spirit-filled life. You can be filled with the Spirit only when controlled by the Word, knowing its truth and obeying it.

F.B. Meyer wrote: "God does not fill with His Holy Spirit those who believe in the fullness of the Spirit, or those who desire Him, but those who actually obey Him."

When you are disobedient, you grieve the Spirit's presence and quench the Spirit's work. When you obey, the Holy Spirit will give you strength as strength is needed. Show me a person who loves and lives the word of God, I'll show you a person who is filled with the Spirit.

Someone has said,  
If you have the Spirit without the Word, you will blow up.  
If you have the Word without the Spirit, you will dry up.  
If you have the Word and the Spirit, you will grow up.

We have seen the demand of the Spirit-filled life, and the definition of the Spirit's filling, and third:

### **III. The Display of the Spirit-Filled Life**

But how can a person tell whether or not he is filled with the Spirit? How can I really know if I am walking in step with the Spirit and realizing His fullness?

Verses 19-21 give us the answer with three clear evidences of the Holy Spirit's full operation in our lives. Look at 19-21....

Notice there is no mention of speaking in tongues, emotional experiences, signs and wonders, being slain in the Spirit, or any other ecstatic phenomena.

In John 15:26, Jesus said, "The Holy Spirit will bear witness about me." In John 16:14, Jesus said, "He will glorify me." The ministry of the Holy Spirit is to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ. And Spirit-filled Christians do not show off how spiritual, gifted, or mature they are. To be filled with the Spirit is to be empty of self and exalt the Lord Jesus Christ.

The display of a Spirit-filled believer is outlined in verses 19-21: he is joyful (verse 19), thankful (verse 20), and submissive (verse 21). Let's briefly consider each of these displays of the Spirit-filled life and we will look at them in more detail next week.

First, joy in verse 19...

When the believers at Pentecost were filled with the Spirit in Acts chapter 2, the crowd accused them of being drunk with new wine (Acts 2:13-15). There was such a joyfulness about them that the unbelievers could think of no better comparison. But the drunkard is really out of control, since the alcohol affects his brain, while the believer experiences a beautiful self-control that is really God in control. Self-control is among the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:23). The drunk calls attention to himself, while the Spirit-filled believer is a witness for Christ.

It is certainly not difficult to live or work with someone who is filled with the Spirit and joyful. He has a song in his heart and on his lips. Psalm 42:8 says God even gives us songs in the night. In spite of pain and shame, Paul and Silas were able to sing praises to God in the Philippian jail in Acts 16:25, and the result was the conversion of the jailer and his family. What a happy time they all had that midnight hour - and they did not need to get drunk to enjoy it!

The second display of the Spirit-filled life is in verse 20...

Spirit-filled people are grateful people. Their gratitude is not reserved for good days, favorable circumstances, or special occasions. Spirit-filled people thank God unceasingly: "always." Psalm 34:1 says: "I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth."

Complaining, grumbling, whining, cussing and fussing people are not filled with the Spirit.

Notice in verse 20 Spirit-filled people are always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God.” 1 Thessalonians 5:18 exhorts: “give thanks in all circumstances.”

Ephesians 5:20 says “always giving thanks for all things!” The only way to give thanks for everything is to believe Romans 8:28: “And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.”

The word gratitude comes from the same root word as grace. If we have experienced the grace of God, then we ought to be grateful for what God brings to us.

Verse 21 gives a final characteristic of Spirit-filled Christians: “be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.” Be subject, is the word submission. The word for “submitting” was a military term.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones put the correct connotation and meaning into perspective: “When a man joins the military, he no longer governs and controls himself; he has to do what he is told. He cannot go on a holiday when he likes, he cannot get up at the hour in the morning when he likes. He is a man under authority, and the rules dictate to him; and if he begins to act on his own, and independently of the others, he is guilty of insubordination and will be punished accordingly. Such is the word the Apostle Paul uses; so what he is saying amounts to this - that we who are filled with the Spirit are to behave voluntarily in that way with respect to one another. We are members of the same regiment, we are units in this same great army. We are to do that voluntarily which the soldier is ‘forced’ to do.”

Friends, the only way to voluntarily and joyfully submit to the Lord and to one another in the body of Christ is to be filled with the Spirit.

Notice verse 21 says Spirit-filled Christians practice mutual submission in the fear of Christ – meaning they do it “out of reverence for Christ.” We do not submit to others because any of us are better than one another. We are all on level ground before the cross of Christ. We are subject to one another for Christ’s sake!

Charles Spurgeon said, “When the home is ruled according to God’s Word, angels might be asked to stay with us, and they would not find themselves out of their element.”

The poet William Cowper called the home “the only bliss of Paradise that has survived the Fall,” but the trouble is too many homes are an outpost of hell instead of a parcel of paradise.

What is the solution: being filled with the Spirit! That is what we are going to see in coming weeks. It is only through the power of the Holy Spirit that we can walk in harmony as husbands love their wives like Christ loves His church and wives honor their husbands as they honor the Lord as we will see in Ephesians 5:22–33. A Spirit-filled home in 6:1-4, where parents intentionally train, instruct, and discipline their children and the children honor and obey their parents, and in 6:5-9 where employers and employees treat each other with mutual respect doing God’s will from the heart.

The unity of the people of God that Paul described earlier in Ephesians 4:1–16 must be translated into daily living if we are to enjoy the harmony that is a foretaste of heaven on earth. How can we live out the wise and practical commands of Scripture? Be filled with the Spirit.

So let me close this morning by asking: Are you filled with the Holy Spirit? Would those closest to you agree? If the Holy Spirit pulled out of your life for a week, would you miss Him? Or, would life go on pretty much as usual? God has called us to a supernatural life of daily dependence on His Holy Spirit. You can begin right now!

Let's pray...