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Series: People In Step With The Spirit
Message: Filled With The Spirit, Part 1

Transcribed Message
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Ephesians 5:18

I'd like to begin this morning with a series of questions. You can just answer them quietly personally in your own heart. You don't have to write anything down. It's simply yes or no. First question. Could you explain to someone the essentials of the gospel? We talk a lot about the gospel at Covenant. We talk about the fact that we want to know God, we want to love others, and we want to live out the gospel. What are we talking about when we talk about living out the gospel? What is it that we want to share with somebody that could be transformative in their life? We believe it is the gospel. Can you share that with somebody simply and clearly and give them the essentials of the faith?

Secondly, are you certain that if you were to die today you'd go to heaven? Very straightforward question. Do you have that sense of confidence and assurance that if you were to die today that you know for sure you'd go to heaven?

Question number three. If you are a Christian, are you confident that the Holy Spirit of God lives within you? you have come to faith in Christ. You have believed this gospel. Are you confident that right now this morning the Holy Spirit of God is living within you?

Question number four. Are you right now in this moment filled with the spirit? Are you right now in this moment filled with the spirit? If you've been a Christian for very long, you likely answered questions one through three with a certain sense of confidence. Maybe you even said, yeah, I've got this. I know the answers to those questions. I've reviewed those things and are very confident about them. Question number four - are you right now this very moment filled with the Spirit? - may give you a sense of pause. You may have that pause because on the one hand you just want to have an appropriate humility and not just boastfully say of course I know I'm filled with the Spirit and then quench the Spirit out of a sense of pride, right? Or you may have a sense of hesitancy as I have found many Christians do because of a lack of

understanding about what the filling of the Holy Spirit is. Or maybe even a question as to whether they can answer that question with the same certainty that they did questions one through three.

So this morning we'd like to look at this matter of the filling of the Holy Spirit. And did you notice our sermon is labeled, part one? We want to leave ample time for baptism at the end and so we're going to divide this study up into two parts so that we can give attention adequately to this is very important subject. One of my theology professors in seminary, Dr. Ryrie said: "From the standpoint of practice and experience, the filling of the Holy Spirit is the most important aspect of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit." So all the things that we've looked at and the things that we will look at, Dr. Ryrie's opinion is from practice and experience from that vantage point. He doesn't think there's any other aspect of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit that would be considered more important than this one. With that in mind let's look at our big idea. Nothing is more important to your spiritual life than this matter of the filling of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit indeed wants to dominate your life.

Let's look at this work of the Spirit, the ministry of the Spirit. Let's start off by just drawing a general overview. When we think of the Holy Spirit's ministry, I think we can put it into two larger categories. First of all, the Spirit's work in the world. The Spirit's work in the world at large. If you look at what the Scriptures say about the Holy Spirit's work with just the world in mind, I think you can quickly see that there are three things that the Spirit does.

First of all, the Spirit is involved in bringing God's common grace to people. We know that God is good and gracious, kind and generous to everyone irrespective of their view of Him. The rain falls on the just and the unjust. There are many ways that God the Spirit and the Son and the Father in common grace just pour out their kindness on the world at large.

Secondly, there's a matter of conviction. We've noted before that Jesus said in John 16 that He would send the Holy Spirit and that Spirit would come and He would bring conviction to the world of sin and righteousness and judgment. That is the ministry of the Spirit to the world. To those who have not yet come to Christ, there is the ministry of the Spirit in bringing conviction of sin, righteousness and judgment.

Then the final piece of that ministry to the world that introduces us literally to the second part is regeneration. In regeneration, God the Spirit brings life and He takes us from unbelief to belief, from death to life. He brings about within us this wonderful new creation that we've sung about and the Scriptures speak about. Then we begin the journey.

We move into the second category and that is the ministry of the Holy Spirit to the believer. We have this broad and expansive ministry by which the Spirit of God ministers in the lives of God's people. I've just listed 10 of them for you. We'll look at the first four here. There's the matter of indwelling, of being baptized by the Spirit, of being sealed and being filled. You look at those first four and at the moment we put our faith and trust in Christ, the Scriptures would indicate, I believe, that God's grace flows into our life by means of the Spirit of God. We are indwelt by that Spirit. There is the baptism of God's Spirit. We're sealed as we looked at last Sunday. And then there's this matter of the filling of the Spirit. Then the next six that we could note and some of these we'll look at, the Lord willing, on future Sundays. There's the sanctifying work of the Spirit. How the Spirit moves in our life to transform and to change us into the image of Christ. We know the Spirit of God gives guidance to us as we seek. The teaching ministry of the spirit. We touched on that briefly in a previous lesson. The gifting of the Spirit. The Spirit's giving to every believe varieties of gifts and abilities and skills. He prays for us. Romans 8. The ministry of the Holy Spirit in interceding for us. It's an incredible ministry that the Spirit undertakes on behalf of God's people. Then the anointing of the Spirit. So you look at those 10 things. We're going to zero in this morning on number four. Be filled with the Spirit.

Let's look at that second major point - the filling of the Spirit. Let's start off by simply asking the question what is it. It is very possible that you're here this morning and you're not sure. What does it mean to be filled with the Spirit? Let's start off by saying some things that I think it is not. Some of these obviously take us right back to where we just were. I would say first of all the filling of the Spirit is not the indwelling of the Spirit. There's a difference between the indwelling ministry of the Spirit and the filling of the Spirit. I personally think that a lot of the confusion that exists in this particular area of doctrine and study on the Holy Spirit is because there is a rather loose usage of

terminology. I'm interested as I read various books for this study and by people that I appreciate and love and respect how freely sometimes these terms are interchanged. I don't know that there's justification for that fully because I think when we think of this particular matter of the indwelling of the Spirit as compared to the filling of the Spirit, we know that in the Old Testament believers were not indwelt by the Spirit in the way they are under the New Covenant. That was the whole point of what Jesus said in John 14:17. He is with you right now. Yes, He is with you just as He was with the Old Testament believer. Jesus said something incredible is going to happen and He's going to be in you. He is going to take up residence. That is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. From Pentecost on, every believer is indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God. Paul says in Romans 8:9 if you don't have the Holy Spirit you don't even belong to Christ. It answers the question as to whether you can be a Christian and not have the Holy Spirit. At the moment of faith, we're indwelt by that Spirit.

Secondly, I would say the filling of the Spirit is not the baptism of the Spirit. The filling of the Spirit is not the baptism of the Spirit. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12:13 for by one Spirit we were all baptized into the body of Christ. We looked at that and we said at the moment of faith, this amazing work of Christ in baptizing us by means of the Holy Spirit and bringing us into the spiritual body, connecting us to this vital union with Christ so that we are forever His, is a part of the baptizing work of God's Spirit and that's different as we'll see from the filling of the Spirit. We're never commanded to be baptized with the Spirit. We're never commanded to go and seek after the baptism of the Spirit, nor are we told that for instance with regard to the indwelling.

Then thirdly, I would say that it is not the anointing of the Spirit. The filling of the Spirit is not the same as the anointing. It's interesting to me. There's one verse in all of the New Testament to talk about the anointing of the Spirit. In 1 John chapter 2, John talks about the anointing of the Spirit and there's one passage in the New Testament that speaks of this. As you read that, it looks to me in the context like there's something going on there that has to do with the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit in our life. There are various ideas but certainly when we talk about the filling of the Spirit it is not the same as what John is referencing in 1 John 2 about the anointing of the Spirit. In the indwelling of the Spirit, the presence of God Himself comes into our life. In the baptism

of the Spirit, we're placed into the body of Christ. In the sealing ministry of the Holy Spirit, we are permanently secured in our relationship to Christ. In the anointing, something in relation to the teaching perhaps.

We're still at the point of asking the question what then is the filling of the Spirit. I would ask you to turn if you would to Ephesians chapter 5 verse 18, probably the best-known, clearest passage in the New Testament with regard to this matter of be filled with the Spirit. Ephesians 5:18 says this: "And do not get drunk with wine for that is debauchery, but be filled with the spirit." I want to suggest to you the first thing that the filling of the Holy Spirit is based on what Paul says here is that it is to be controlled by the Holy Spirit. It has to have something to do with control. It has to have something to do with the Holy Spirit dominating our life.

I want you to notice and you can just listen as I read these verses how this word *pleroo* is used. The word "filling" or *pleroo* is used in other passages in the New Testament. In Luke chapter 4 and in verse 28 it says: "When they heard these things all of the synagogue were filled with wrath." They were all filled with wrath. Turn over a page or two to Luke 5:26 and it says this: "And amazement seized them all and they glorified God and were filled with awe." They were filled with fear saying we had seen extraordinary things today. In John 16:6 this is in the Upper Room. The disciples are interacting realizing that this is Jesus's last night with them before the cross. It says in John 16:6 they were filled (*pleroo*) with sorrow. Just think about that for a minute. They're filled with rage. They're filled with wrath. They're filled with fear. They're filled with sorrow. We've all experienced those emotions. We've all been angry. I mean in a righteous kind of way, you know. We've all been angry, right? We've all been afraid. We've all been filled with sorrow. And you know what I've noticed in my experience? Those emotions are not emotions that I share with other emotions at that time. When you're angry, generally speaking you're angry. You're not angry and filled with love unless it's a righteous anger, right? When you're filled with sorrow and sadness, it's an overwhelming emotion most of the time. When you're really afraid, it's an emotion that fills you. It controls you. It dominates you. If you look at these words in these other contexts and then you come back Ephesians 5:18, if there's one word that captures all of these different uses it seems to be this idea of being dominated. Be filled. Be

controlled. Be consumed by the Holy Spirit. All of those would fit. It is something about control.

The second thing I want you to see there's a command to be obeyed. There's a command to be obeyed. In Ephesians 5:18 this is a command: "And do not get drunk with wine for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit." This is what we call an imperative. An imperative in the Bible is not a suggestion. An imperative in the Bible is not a list of options where you pick and choose the ones that you want. When God speaks to us by His Spirit through His Word and He speaks to us in what we call the imperative voice, that means we have a command before us. It means we're required as His children to do that.

When you look at that command I want you to notice three things about that command. First of all, it is very specific. It's very specific. What is the first word of verse 18? My translation says "and". The first word in verse 18 is "and". What is that word "and" there for? It's a connective. What do you suppose it's connecting us to? I would say maybe we should look at verse 17. So look at verse 17: "Therefore do not be foolish but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit." So verse 17 is a general statement or a general command. Verse 18 zeros in on something very specific. It's a very specific command. It is giving to us God's will. Verse 17: "Therefore do not be foolish but understand what the will of the Lord is." What is the will of the Lord? Verse 18. Be filled with the Spirit. If you as a parent say to one of your children be good and go clean up your room. The general command is be good. The specific command is go clean up your room. Now it's been so long since I have said that to any child, do you still say that parents? Do you still have to say that? Some of you say yes. Be good = general statement. General command. Clean up your room = specific. Verse 17 = general command. Walk in the will of God. What is the specific command? Verse 18. I want you to see that it is something that we are to do. We are to obey. Two things in light of that. If you're not controlled by the Holy Spirit, you're not in the will of God. What is the will of God for your life? That you be filled with the Spirit. If you're not filled with the Spirit, you're not in the will of God. Verse 17. This is the will of God. Verse 18. What is it? Be filled with the Spirit.

The second observation I would make is very simple. It's possible then for us not to be filled with the Spirit. If you're a child of God by faith in Christ, you are indwelt by the Spirit. Period. You have been baptized by the Spirit into the body of Christ. Period. You've been sealed by the Spirit forever. Period. Be filled with the Spirit. Maybe. Maybe you are. Maybe you're not. It's a command. We're to walk in that aspect of God's will.

The second thing we need to see is the key to this. What I just said. The second thing is it's continuous. The whole idea of this is continuous. In other words, it is in the present tense. It says keep on being filled. It is something that is to be constantly true, continuously true, daily it is to be true. It is a moment by moment walk. Verse 17. In the will of God. This is not a once and for all experience. Indwelling is. Baptism is. Being sealed is. Those aren't repeated experiences. To be filled with the Spirit is clearly something that is to be undertaken and experienced and realized repeatedly. Not once and for all. Be filled continuously.

Thirdly, I want you to see this. You'll appreciate and know this. It is in the passive voice. What's the passive voice? The passive voice is the voice of what? The passive voice is the voice of grace. Yes, remember we've seen this. We saw this last week with the matter of being sealed. It is in the passive voice. The passive voice is an indicator to us of the grace of God. In the passive voice the subject receives the action. So we are the recipients of this. This is not something that we are told to work out or manufacture on our own. This is not something that we can pull off apart from. That's the indicator of the passive. Think of it this way. You can translate this freely in this form. Be allowing yourself to be continuously filled with the Spirit. Be allowing yourself. Voice of grace. You're receiving. Be allowing yourself to be continuously, repeatedly, daily, moment by moment filled with the Spirit, controlled by the Spirit, dominated by the Spirit. That is the instruction of Ephesians 5:18.

Now what is the contrast here in this verse? It is rather startling in some ways. He says don't be drunk with wine for that's debauchery, but instead be filled with the Spirit. There are three other places in the New Testament where we have something of this contrast. In Luke 1, when it's talking about John the Baptist and his coming ministry, his coming birth, Luke talks about the fact that John is going to be filled with the Spirit from his conception. He is going to walk with God in a way that demonstrates this very

truth. It says he is not to ever be involved with alcohol. So God puts those two things about John the Baptist before us. You see it again in Acts 2 at the day of Pentecost. People were watching these new believers. Of course there were all kinds of things happening. People observed them and said these people were drunk. They were speaking a language that they had not learned and people were hearing in all of these different languages the gospel in their own language. As an outside observer, the only thing that they could think of is these guys have been drinking this morning already. Remember Peter stood up and said no, it's too early in the morning. These people aren't drunk. They're filled with the Spirit. We have it again in Ephesians 5:18.

Let's look at these two things. The Holy Spirit clearly wants us to contrast something about the matter of drunkenness and something about this issue being filled with the Spirit. What are the possible commonalities of these two? I'd like to suggest there are five. In both of these, being drunk with wine or being filled with the Spirit, somebody is under the influence. Somebody is under the influence. Somebody is under the control. Somebody is under the domination of something, right? We talk about DUI driving under the influence. We talk about DWI driving while intoxicated. Clearly there's an influence that alcohol can have on people. There is in this matter of drunkenness you're under the influence. In the matter of being filled with the Spirit, guess what? you're under the influence.

Second. There's something outside of oneself. There is something outside of oneself. It's not something manufactured. It is not something from within. It's not something internal. It's something outside that has been introduced. It is something external that is exerting this influence if you will. In one case it's alcohol; in the other case it is the Holy Spirit.

Thirdly, there is some level of submission. There's a level of submission. Many people willingly submit themselves to alcohol. Many people do it rather joyfully. They do it with a great expectation. But there's a sense of submission. It is something they bring into their body and they do so willingly. They submit themselves. It's the same picture. The Holy Spirit. Willingly submit yourself to the filling of the Holy Spirit.

Fourth. It's temporary. It's temporary. We've said that it is the present tense. We said this is to be continuous. The same thing is true. This is not one and done. People

who get inebriated, people who get drunk, if they don't continue to imbibe alcohol, they're going to realize that it's going to run its course. It's temporary. The filling of the Holy Spirit is not a one-time, once for all experience. It is something that is repeated. It is something that has to be maintained.

Then lastly, both are easily identified. Both are easily identified. There are many indicators that we can point to in this regard. One of them is just unnatural behavior. Unnatural behavior. In the case of drunkenness, you might have somebody who is otherwise a very reserved, very quiet person. They get intoxicated and they become obnoxious, boisterous, loud and all of the things that go with certain people and how they react to alcohol. The Christian who is filled with the Spirit. Guess what? There is an indicator there to those people who are seeing that person and around that person that in some respects there's an unnatural behavior here. If you want to know what that unnatural behavior looks like, look at Galatians chapter 5. The fruit of the Spirit. Just talking about the fact that the Holy Spirit when He is in control of your life. There's love and there's joy and there's peace and there's kindness and there's gratitude. All of these things that are a part of the life of the person who's filled with, dominated and controlled by the Holy Spirit. Their interactions with other people are unnatural in the sense that somebody may wrong them, somebody may say something unkind to them. Instead of striking out and saying something unkind right back, because they're under the control of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit puts a check on their spirit and over their mouth, and instead of firing back something that would be just as inappropriate, they may say either nothing or a word of blessing.

What is that? He is saying that when you're controlled by, dominated, filled with the spirit, you're acting in an unnatural way. We all recognize the flesh for what it is. We know the behaviors of the flesh. Paul gives them to us in Galatians 5 right before he gives to us that works of the Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit. He shows us what it is that the flesh looks like. We've all seen ourselves unfortunately in these pages of Scripture in both of these pictures. One being quite different from the other. So to be filled with the Spirit I would say to you this morning is to be controlled influenced by the Holy Spirit of God. Who wouldn't want that? Who wouldn't want to have the Holy Spirit of God so working in their life that all of these things that Paul has just laid out before us in terms

of the contrast between those who give themselves over to an outside influence like alcohol or those who give themselves over to the gracious work of the Holy Spirit are clearly set in contrast before us. I don't know about you but I would long for that for myself.

And you know what I would want to know? I would want to know how is it that I am filled with the spirit? And you know what? You've got to come back next week to find out. That's part two. But here's a clue. To be filled with the Spirit in essence requires what verse 17 said in Ephesians 5. It requires that you're in the will of God. You can't be filled with the Spirit and not be walking in the will of God. Obedience is going to be a key in this matter of being filled with the Spirit.

What can we take away with us this morning? I think this statement is one that will characterize much of our study going forward and that is this. The question for the believer is not do you have the Holy Spirit. You have the Holy Spirit. If you have put your faith and trust in Christ, the Bible tells us unequivocally you have been indwelt by the Spirit of God. You have been baptized into the body of Christ. You have been sealed by that Spirit forever. The Holy Spirit is in the work of anointing you as you come to the Word and read it and seek to understand it. You are in some measure at least at that early point filled with the Spirit and so many of the other things that we listed at the very beginning are at work in your life. But here's the question that is part of this. Does the Holy Spirit have you? I don't offer this as a cliché this morning. You have the Holy Spirit. Does the Holy Spirit have you? I hope you see that as far more than just a cliché. It's New Testament truth. As I read the New Testament, you have all the Holy Spirit that there is to get. I don't see anything in the New Testament Scriptures that suggests that we get the Holy Spirit incrementally or partially. It's not that there are somehow some super saints among us and they've got that much more of the Holy Spirit than the rest of us. I don't know where you would go in the text of Scripture to support that position because the Holy Spirit indwells and baptizes us and seals us in full measure. So we receive all the Holy Spirit that there is to receive. and the question that presses upon us is how much does the Holy Spirit have of us.

Another way to ask that question is simply to ask what does the Lordship of Christ look like in your life? What areas of your life are you preserving for yourself and

what areas of your life have you opened if you will every closet of your heart and said God, it is all Yours. I don't want to reserve any of this for myself. And so we come back to Ephesians 5:17 - Do not be foolish but understand what the will of the Lord is. It is God's will for your life to be filled with the Spirit.

If you're here this morning and this is all new to you and you're not even sure if you have a relationship to God through Christ, I can say with great confidence it is God's heart and it is God's desire to have a relationship with you. It is God's heart and His desire that you would become one of His children and to do that even this morning, to do that in this moment of time. This gospel that we started off talking about is the good news. But it's got an element of bad news. The element of bad news is that it is said in the Bible that all of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Sin brings death into our lives. It brings separation from God. People try to fill this gap between us and God in all kinds of ways. One of those ways is to come to church and be as good as they can during the week and think somehow or other that God is going to put on the scales of life all of their good deeds. They hope and pray that when they stand before God, the scale will tip a little bit in their direction.

My friends, the good news of the gospel is you don't have to worry about that scale. What God requires is 100% perfection. I don't know about you but I fall far, far, far short of that ever happening in my life. But Jesus Christ, the perfect son of God, lived a perfect life and His perfect righteousness was given to me by means of His death on the cross. What God asked me to do is to believe that. Lay down all the stuff I'm doing to try to please Him and just lay hold by faith of what He has done for me through Christ alone. That, my friends, is the best news you're ever going to hear.

Let's pray. Father God, thank You for Your heart for us. Thank You for Your heart for us which is always for good. You always desire that we come to a knowledge of the truth. Lord, we pray that our hearts would be touched by Your Spirit this morning, that we will be filled with Your Spirit. Lord, I pray in this moment that Your Holy Spirit would speak powerfully in the heart of anyone who does not yet know for sure that if they were to die today they would go to heaven. Lord, I thank You that You want them to know that and You want them to know that with certainty. We pray that Your Holy Spirit would give them understanding and they would enter into conversation with someone here at

Covenant or a friend that they may know and that they could have that understanding of what it means to trust in You for salvation. We ask these things in Jesus's name, Amen.