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Series: People In Step With The Spirit
Message: The Results of the Spirit's Filling

Transcribed Message
November 25, 2018
Ephesians 5:18-21

Jim Craddock was a long time member of Covenant Community Church. He was a counselor and friend to many of us. In one of the books that he wrote entitled *Legacies*, which is a daily devotional, he makes this comment: "We live in peculiar times. There was a time when Christians primarily sought God. Now they seem more apt to seek manifestations. There are those who begin to exhibit certain manifestations, some quite bizarre, and it's called revival. Correct me if I'm wrong, but sometimes I feel that many mistake passion for revival and hysteria for a moving of the Spirit, but they aren't. I'm often asked how a person knows if he or she is filled with the Spirit. Being filled with the Spirit is something that happens to you and you know that it's happened, and so do others." Which leads to an interesting question. How is it that we know it? And how is it that other people know it by looking at us that we're filled with the Spirit? Being around us, they sense that we're filled with the Spirit. I think if we had asked Jim a follow-up question, he would've done what we're going to do this morning. He would have gone to Ephesians 5 and in Ephesians 5 the apostle Paul answers that question. He in fact tells us what it is that being filled with the spirit looks like in our life.

This morning, we will see that the Holy Spirit is the one who wants to control everything about us. He wants to control the way we talk, the way we think, the way we act. He wants to work within each one of us and He wants to work in such a way that He refocuses every desire, every area of our life. He wants to do all of that to the praise of His glory and to lift up and honor the name of Jesus Christ.

We're going to begin with a review this morning. It's just very straightforward, very simple. There are five words that you're going to call back to me that are going to basically summarize these last number of weeks that we've been looking at the filling of the Spirit. I know these answers are right there on the tip of your tongue so here we go. What is one word that describes the filling of the Spirit? We've used this word

repeatedly. It begins with a C and it ends with an L. Control. We talked about the filling of the Spirit really is the Spirit controlling us, and as other emotions at times might take over and control our lives, that is the analogy the pictures of the Scriptures give us of how the Holy Spirit wants to dominate. He wants to control our lives.

Second question. What is one word that describes how to be filled with the Spirit? This word begins with an O. it could end with a Y, E or T. obey. It could be obedient. It could be obedience. But primarily when we're talking about how it is that we're filled with the Spirit, we're filled with the Spirit as we obey what God has called us to do and be.

Number three. What is one word that describes when I'm to be filled with the Spirit? there we go. Always. If we're alive or awake, we're to be filled with the Spirit. It's all of the time. It's a present tense command that we are always to be filled with and dominated by the Spirit.

Point D. what is one word that describes the greatest obstacle to being filled with the spirit? Sin. Sin is the single greatest obstacle that is going to prevent us from walking in the Spirit and being filled with the Spirit.

Then point E. what is one word that describes how to stay continually filled with the Spirit? It begins with a C and could end with an S or N. confess. I John 1:9 if we confess our sin, simply agreeing with God when we sense the Spirit is prompting us that there is something in our life that we have done that moves us away from that fellowship and control of the Spirit. Then we confess that, we agree with God and we move on.

So let's look this morning how is it that you know that you are filled with the Spirit. In this Ephesians 5 passage beginning in verse 18 to 21, as we have looked at these verses you notice that there are five present tense participles. Participles in the present tense all end with -ing. So we're just going to pull these participles out of this passage and we're going to see a very specific, straightforward description by Paul that is going to tell you when you are filled with the Spirit, you're going to know it by the things that are happening in your life and other people are going to see it because these things are true about your life. So let's look at this.

The first one that Paul speaks of in verse 19 after he says do not be drunk with wine for that is debauchery but be filled with the Spirit is addressing one another. It's a

word that's translated in other places as speaking. So it's your speech. What is it that distinguishes you as being filled with the Spirit? It's your speech. You can tell someone is filled with the Spirit by the way they talk, by what they say, by what comes out of their mouth. It may even be what doesn't come out of their mouth. So we are addressing. We're speaking to one another in a way that encourages, that lift each other up, that's exhorting and admonishing and building up one another in the faith. He says specifically that it is in songs and hymns and spiritual songs. What is it that characterizes our speech? What is it that gives away whether we are filled with the Spirit? What do our conversations look like in that regard?

Jesus couldn't make it any clearer than He did in Luke chapter 6 and verse 45. Jesus said the good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks. If you want to know what's in your heart, Jesus says, listen to your words. If you want to know what's in your heart, listen to your speech. Listen to how you talk to each other. It is not just limited to words, is it? Listen to the tone of your voice because we communicate an awful lot in our tone. I have to tell you that sometimes I wish the Bible wasn't so specific. I wish the Bible wasn't so clear. I wish the Bible didn't speak with such clarity on some of these issues because here we have Jesus basically saying your words are like an MRI that tells people what's going on in your heart. Your speech, the very first thing He says, if you want to be filled with the Spirit and you want to know what that looks like, then just listen to how it is that you talk. You start off this whole discussion on how to know when you're filled with the Spirit.

To Jim Craddock's point, it's very easy when we talk about things like this and I'm not wanting to discount extraordinary things that the Spirit of God may choose to do in anybody's life, but isn't it interesting that when these kinds of things come up, how easy it is for us simply, quickly to move to some kind of extraordinary manifestation, some extraordinary experience and really think about the experience first. Yet Paul under the direction of the Holy Spirit says the very first thing that you can look at in your life as an indicator being filled with the Spirit is as simple as the way that you talk. The things that you say or the things that you don't say. The Word of God tells us that it is how we

speech that becomes an indicator of whether we're filled with the Spirit or not. so we don't want to miss how it is that we are to talk.

The second point that I want you to see. This whole matter of speech and talk makes a lot of God's lists. It makes a lot of God's lists. If you just go through the Old Testament and the New Testament and you look at all of the different lists that the Scriptures give us, especially those related to behaviors that we are to avoid, it's amazing how many of those lists include speech related items. We all can think of five or six or seven sins that we think are pretty bad. We're sure glad that those aren't things that we're dealing with and grappling with. When we see them in somebody else, we can sure identify them very quickly and very easily. We all have kind of an idea of those kinds of things. Do you know what's good to do occasionally? Take our list and then compare it with the things that God specifically lists like that. Do you know you find on God's list things like gossip, a critical spirit, a divisiveness, putting people down, speaking evil of someone, passing along things that we may or may not even know if they're true or not. Those are the things that God says grieve His heart. That's why James says that the tongue is a very powerful thing. James says the tongue is very hard to control. Really, the only way we get control of the tongue requires the filling of the Holy Spirit because the Holy Spirit is going to come and He's going to bring into our conversation and into our speech and into our words and even into our tone a totally different way of communicating with each other than we might from the heart of our own flesh. So the first mark of the Spirit and the Holy Spirit's control in our life is our conversation. It is our speech with each other.

Notice the second one. The second one is your singing. Yes, that's right. Your singing because he says in that 19th verse you just go on addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart. I don't want to embarrass anybody this morning but I'm just going to call on a couple of people to just have you stand and sing a couple of measures and we're going to try to decide if you're filled with the Spirit. Is that what he was talking about? Probably not. He's talking about something that we just did. He's talking about the value and the importance of singing. Singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart. I look at that expression and that phrase and it just sounds uplifting. It just sounds encouraging.

Singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart. It should be that, shouldn't it? Christ is in us by His Spirit. The hope of glory. So it should be uplifting. It should be encouraging. It should sound like something we would want to be engaged in.

When I look at this expression by Paul, I want you to notice three things. It's joyful. He is talking about making melody in your heart to the Lord. There's something joyful going on here. There's a praise that happening. We're declaring the blessings of God. In Acts 13, Luke says the disciples were filled with joy and they were filled with the Spirit. Those expressions go together. Nehemiah 8. Remember when they completed the building of the walls, they had this incredible celebration. Nehemiah says the joy of the Lord is our strength. They were singing and they were expressing that to the Lord.

Psalm 4 says: you have put gladness in my heart more than grain and new wine. I find that fascinating that he says in Psalm 4 you put gladness and joy in my heart more than grain and new wine. Why is that significant? Because Paul says back in Ephesians 5:16 making the best use of the time because the days are evil. What happens in the lives of many people when the days are evil? When they're stressed out of their mind, when they're feeling tremendous anxiety and pressure, he goes right on to say in the next verse don't get drunk with wine. Don't turn to something outside of yourself. Don't think that you have to find something to deaden the evil days that we live in and the anxieties of your heart. What should you do? You should be filled with the Spirit. The joy of the Lord is what he's pointing us to. It doesn't mean as we said last week that we're joyful all the time. It doesn't mean that we're singing all the time. It means certainly that that's going to be the desire, the focus, the direction that we want to be going. I think the contrast that he draws between the world's answer, which can be the opioids of alcohol or the opioid of drugs or something that deadens this reality that we find ourselves in if we don't focus on the Lord.

Notice secondly, it's not just joyful. It's from the heart. It is real, authentic and can't be contained. Ralph Martin, who wrote this many years ago, said, "The Christian church was born to sing. Singing is natural and it's supernatural." Let me ask you a question and you tell me true or false. Agree or disagree. You can tell the spiritual condition of the church by listening to the singing. Do you think that's true or false? Do you agree with that or do you disagree with it? You can tell the spiritual condition of the

church by listening to the singing. I personally absolutely think that's true. I agree with that wholeheartedly. Spirit-filled people sing. Can you imagine on any given Sunday if hundreds of us came here and we were prepared and we were ready and we were anxious to come together to lift our voices and we were filled with the Spirit collectively. What would that sound like? I hope it would sound similar to what we experience but maybe even greater than what we experience week to week. Because the Word tells us to sing as an expression of the filling of the Spirit.

That's why by the way the attitude that what we do for the first 15, 20, 25 minutes on any given Sunday is not just preliminary stuff until we get to the Word. That is a grievous attitude, I believe, to the Spirit. If we take the attitude, I don't really need to be in there for that part because it's really the Word that I'm here for, that grieves, I believe, the Holy Spirit. If we have the attitude that you know it doesn't matter if we're here on time or not because they're just singing at the front end. Or we can hang in the foyer until 10 till. This is my opinion, but I believe that grieves the Spirit of God because He tells us one of the things that results when we're filled with the Spirit is we want to sing. We want to lift our voices in praise to God. It's an incredibly powerful thing when a church comes together and does that collectively. We minister to each other and to the Lord as we do that. I don't know about you, but it invigorates me when we sing with enthusiasm and with passion the things, the truths that God loves to hear us declare about Him. There's that second part of this matter of singing.

The third one is it's offered to the Lord. It's offered to the Lord. It is God centered. It's Christ centered. It's cross centered. That's why when you get to Revelation and we see this unfolding scene at the throne of God, what is it that they're doing? They're singing. This mass of humanity that is innumerable. It can't be numbered. They're all singing to the Lord. Well there are a couple of exceptions. This first cartoon: "Sir, you've been recommended for remedial singing class that meets in the basement of our annex." Or how about this one? "Since today's service is being taped for commemorative purposes, we ask the following individuals to refrain from singing..." Here's the thing. We would not do that here. There is a little bit of discussion when you look at that 19th verse. Singing and making melody with your heart. There's some discussion about that preposition whether it's to be translated with your heart, from your

heart, or in your heart. We wouldn't want you to sing just in your heart. This is one of those times, guys, when you have permission not to listen to your wife when she says don't sing so loud. Just go for it. Just sing. Make a joyful noise to the Lord. That's what we're to do. We are to be a Spirit filled people who sing and sing with great passion.

Thirdly, we are to be thankful. How do we know when we're filled with the Spirit? We can tell by the way we talk. We can tell by the fact that there's a song in our heart that can't be contained. Thirdly, you're a thankful person. You're thankful. Verse 20. Giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus. A sure sign of the spirit's filling in your life is a heart of gratitude. Show me a grumbler. Or show me a complainer and I'll show you somebody who's not filled with Spirit. I hate to say this, but that's too often in my life where I'm at. It's easy to grumble. It's easy to complain. It's easy to look at something from the negative vantage point. A sure fire indicator to me that I am grieving the Spirit, that I'm resisting the Spirit, that I'm quenching the Spirit is that if my heart is grumbling about things in my life, about events in my life, about circumstances in my life. He tells us as plainly as it can be said that one of the greatest evidences of being controlled by the Spirit, and I believe one of the greatest expressions of worship that we offer to God, is when we have a heart of gratitude and a heart of thankfulness. In that Colossians 3 passage that I read, three different times Paul says be thankful. Be thankful. Be thankful.

You know, it's important when Paul gives us this expression in verse 20 and it is Trinitarian in its focus. You realize that because he's talking about the filling of the Spirit so there's the person of the Spirit. He is telling us that we are to give thanks in everything to God the Father. And how do we do that? In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. So there's this gratitude that is Trinitarian in its focus.

How do we get there? First off, it is based on an understanding of God's sovereignty. How can you possibly give thanks always unless you actually believe in your heart of hearts that the things that happen in our world and in our life are not just random events that nobody has any idea of what's going on, but rather behind all of these things there is a sovereign, loving God who is directing all of the affairs of life? You can't possibly give gratitude and be thankful in the way that we're called on here if you don't have a picture of the fact that there is a good and gracious and sovereign God

who is working all of these things for good. Think of Joseph in the book of Genesis. He stands there before his brothers who hated him with a hatred that brought him this close to being actually killed. Instead they sell him as a slave to Egypt. He can still look at them in that circumstance and say you guys meant this in my life for evil, but God meant it for good. He could give thanks for all that he had gone through because, and only because, he saw behind the evil intentions and actions of his brothers the hand of a sovereign God.

I think secondly it's based on our trust in God. It is based on our trust in God. This is not positive thinking, my friends. This is not wishing and hoping it and naming and claiming. This is an understanding of the fact that God is sovereign over our lives and it is based on a trust in God so that as with Job we can say it is the Lord who gives and it's the Lord who takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord. Whatever that looks like in our life at that moment. Or with Paul in Romans 8. We know all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. The only person who can help me have a heart of thankfulness and a heart of gratitude is the Holy Spirit. He is going to constantly point me to this good and gracious God and to the need that I have to trust in Him with all my heart and lean not to my own understanding, in all my ways acknowledge Him, knowing that He will direct my paths. So we know we're filled with the Spirit by our speech. We know we're filled with the Spirit by our song. We know we are filled with the Spirit by our gratitude.

Notice number four in verse 21. He says submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. Submitting to one another. We are submissive. You're submissive. Your heart is submissive towards others. Just think of human relationships in general. What would you say is a common denominator, a common motivator for many interpersonal relationships? A lot of the time it's what am I going to get out of this? What exactly are you going to do for me? How is this going to benefit me? It's very easy to look at life and relationships in that way. This is a world philosophy that says you make sure you take care of yourself first. Don't you let people treat you that way. Don't let people push you around like that. You make sure that you're getting your due. Here in verse 21, the Holy Spirit speaks God's truth into our experience, into our relationships.

He says the first thing you do is you turn from self-centeredness. You turn from self-centeredness. You have a heart, verse 21, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. He doesn't just leave it there. He launches in verse 22 all the way through the rest of the chapter and in chapter 6 and he launches into this laundry list of relationships – within marriage, within parenting, at work, with all of these different relationships that we find ourselves involved in. It is a picture to us of how it is that we are to be looking at each other. Discord and division and a lack of harmony is all because the Holy Spirit is not in control. If you go back to chapter 4 of Ephesians where Paul begins this section of practical instruction, how does verse one begin? I therefore a prisoner of the Lord urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness and patience, bearing with one another in love. And you're doing all of this, he says, to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. He comes to the 5th chapter and he is starting to wrap up this whole matter of relationships and he says don't forget the number one principle that I put forward is that you learn how it is that you submit yourselves to each other and how it is that you put others first in your life. So secondly our heart is to serve others. Verse 21.

By the way, this is a sidebar. It doesn't mean that there aren't any hierarchical relationships in the list that follows. He is not doing away with all manner of relationships within marriage in which the husband is to lead his family and the wife is to be in submission to her husband. He is not doing away with parents taking the leadership in their home and children submitting to their parents. He is not taking away the call within the rest of Scripture that says submit yourselves to those in authority over you in the workplace. Verse 21 doesn't eliminate the instruction that follows but it tells us this. Even in those relationships, we still act out of a sense of selflessness and we still act in a desire to serve. A husband can beautifully demonstrate leadership in his home by serving his wife and, in that sense, be in submission to her. She in turn shows her heart of selflessness towards her husband and she submits to him. You just follow that all the way down but it is borne out of a selflessness and a desire to serve others.

Now who in the world could we turn to that would be a model for that? Anybody have an idea of somebody that showed us what this looks like? It's Jesus. Here He is – the Son of God, the King of Kings the Lord of Lords. And He comes to this earth and

what does He do? He picked up the towel and the basin and He washes the feet of His disciples. He doesn't lay aside His deity in the sense of diminishing who He is in His person, but He sure had a heart to serve other people. He ministered out of selflessness. So clearly one of the ways that we know that we're filled with the Spirit is we don't have a domineering come-and-serve-me attitude towards each other. It's how can I serve you.

Then lastly, we'll just briefly touch on this one. Galatians 5:22 is the fruit of the Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit. We have this whole chapter and this whole section in which he just lays out in specific detail what this looks like. So you're fruitful. If you're filled with the Spirit, you're fruitful. These characteristics that he listed are things that should be dominating your life. I would offer this first of all. The most popular substitutes for the fruit of the Spirit, for the filling of the Spirit are our natural talents and spiritual gifts. Let me tell you what I mean by that. The most popular substitutes for being filled with the Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit in our life and really putting ourselves under the Spirit's control are the exercise of natural talents and spiritual gifts. My observation would be what this truth has given us in the American church is celebrity Christianity at its height. We take people and we elevate them to some status of being a celebrity based on some two-hour concert, or a 45-minute message, or some brief seminar that we attend and yet we put these people up on some kind of a pedestal based on the gifts and abilities that God has given them. In some cases, those things can be demonstrated by natural talents and spiritual gifts apart from being filled with the Spirit.

Thirty years ago Bonnie and I went to a pastor's conference and there were a couple of very well-known national guys there, men that God has used in significant ways. But here's something that has never left me in 30+ years since this event unfolded. One of these men, who I greatly admire and I still admire and who has done as I said much for the kingdom of God, spoke in that conference from Isaiah 6 on the holiness of God. I would love to do exposition the way this man teaches the Word. He had hundreds of pastors sitting there, just drinking in the teaching from Isaiah 6 about the holiness of God. Holy, holy, holy. He unwrapped that passage for us. It wasn't but about a month later that we learned that in this period of his life, he was involved in a relationship with another woman. The Holy Spirit has never let me forget that that

demonstration, even though I believe God used in spite of that man's circumstance, demonstrated to me in a way that I don't think anything else maybe could have. How easy it is to do things in the energy of the flesh that appear at times to be incredibly spiritual. This is the great guard that we need over our heart. God has given all of us natural gifts and natural abilities and natural talents, and sometimes we wed those even with spiritual giftedness. But we can exercise and do those things in the energy of the flesh quite well. That's the thing that we ought to be constantly guarding our heart against.

The second thing is the fruit of the Spirit. When that fruit of the Spirit and that filling of the Spirit is indeed from the Spirit, it is uncommon, it's extraordinary, and it's supernatural. It's extraordinary and it is uncommon and it is supernatural. Just look at that list in Galatians 5. The fruit of the Spirit is love, so you love those who do not love in return. It is joy in the midst of painful circumstances. It's peace when something you are counting on doesn't happen. It's patience when things aren't going fast enough for you. It's kindness towards those who treat you unkindly. It's goodness towards those who have been intentionally insensitive. It's faithfulness when a friend has proved himself to be unfaithful. It's gentleness towards those who have handled you roughly. It's self-control in the midst of intense temptation. How could you ever do that? The truth of the matter is we can't. The fruit of the Spirit is a result of the filling of the Spirit and the filling of the Spirit is a result of our walking in obedience to the Word of God, allowing the Holy Spirit to control us.

How do we know when we're filled with the Spirit? How do other people know when we're filled with the Spirit? They listen to us talk. They hear the song that God has put within our heart. They see that we are a people filled with thanksgiving, willing to submit and to serve others. And lastly, there's the fruitfulness of God's Spirit in our life.

So what do we take away? In this matter of the Holy Spirit wanting to control all that we say and do and thinking and redirect every area of our life, He wants to refocus us to the praise of His glory. What do we take away? Simply this. The best evidence for the Spirit's work in your life is a long and enduring obedience. I draw that from in part what Jim Craddock said in that opening quote. To desire some manifestation, some expression that is out of the ordinary might be the pull of our heart at times, and it may

be God's will and purpose at times to give evidence of that in our lives, and I certainly understand that and appreciate that. But what is most significant is a long and enduring obedience as we walk with God over the many years that He allows us to live and to serve Him. That to me is a sustaining evidence of the filling of the Spirit of God in our life. Let's be those people who seek and walk with God in that way.

We say every Sunday it begins with the gospel. It always begins with the gospel. That gospel is the good news that Jesus came to this earth. He died on the cross. He did so for my sin and for yours. God's not asking you to be as good a person as you can be to try to please Him because you could never be good enough unless you're 100% perfect all of the time. None of us could ever be or even imagine. But it is because of what Jesus did in His death on the cross that God took care of my sin and yours. All He asks of us is that we put our faith and trust in what Jesus did. That's called the good news. We invite you to put your trust and faith in Christ even as we are here this morning.

Let's pray together before we worship around this table. Gracious Father, we are so very thankful for Your goodness and Your kindness to us. Lord, thank You for the blessing of Your Spirit. Thank You for the desire and the heart of the Holy Spirit to live within us and to fill us, Father, so that we can demonstrate and do the works of God for the glory of God. Lord, cause this body of believers to grow in their passion and their love for You so that we do have a song in our heart, even praise to our God for all that You have done for us. We thank You in Jesus's name, Amen.