

Be Filled with the Spirit, Part 1

Scripture: Ephesians 5:18

Code: 1939

INTRODUCTION

A. The Core

Paul says in Ephesians 5:18, "Be not drunk with wine, in which is excess, but be filled with the Spirit." The key to rightly living the Christian life is being controlled by the Holy Spirit. It provides energy for walking "worthy of the vocation to which ye are called" (Eph. 4:1). Unless a believer is controlled by the Spirit of God, he can never walk in humility, love, unity, light, and wisdom. The life of God in the soul of man is the only way a person can live a righteous life. To walk without the spirit is to walk without wisdom (cf. Eph. 5:15-17).

B. The Confusion

Many people are confused about what it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Some people think you must have some kind of ecstatic experience and speak in tongues, while others approach it very stoically. They simply recognize that the Holy Spirit is present, but think He makes little or no impact. Both are wrong. The filling or controlling of the Holy Spirit is a profound reality in the believer's life and understanding it can change your life.

REVIEW

I. THE CONTRAST (v. 18a)

LESSON

II. THE COMMAND (v. 18b)

"Be filled with the Spirit."

Within the Greek language is an indicative mode, which is the statement of fact, and an imperative mode, which states a command. Ephesians 5:18 is an emphatic imperative, and is literally translated, "Be being kept filled with the Spirit." It is a command that includes the idea of conscious continuation. Being continually filled with the Spirit is not an option for the believer but a biblical mandate. No Christian can fulfill God's will for his life apart from being filled with the Spirit.

A. The Misconceptions of Being Filled with the Spirit

Much material is in print today that states you can be a Christian but you don't necessarily have to be obedient to God. Some teach that simply getting into the kingdom is all that really matters. They consider one might do in obedience to the Lord through the power of the Spirit is merely some sort of spiritual "extra credit."

However to resist the filling and control of the Holy Spirit is flagrant disobedience, and to deny or minimize its importance is to stand rebelliously against the clear teaching of God's own Word. Every Christian falls short of God's standards and will sometimes fall into sin and indifference but those who continually exist in such a state are obviously not Christians. The Holy Spirit has given us a new nature!

What About "Carnal" Christians? Many people divide humanity into three categories: one is called the "natural man" who is unsaved and on his way to hell (1 Cor. 2:14); one is the "spiritual man" who is a Christian walking in the truth (1 Cor. 2:15-16); the last is the "carnal man," who says he's a Christian, but is not obedient to God (1 Cor. 3:1-4). But that interpretation is totally out of harmony with the

balance of Scripture. God has commanded every true believer to be obedient to His commands and be controlled by His Spirit (e.g. John 14:15-26). Anything less than that is flagrant disobedience! In Scripture, the words carnal and fleshly most often refer to unsaved people and not Christians. The carnal mind as referred to in Romans 8:5-8 is in direct defiance toward God, which is not at all characteristic of a true believer: "They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither, indeed, can be. So, then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God." The word carnal in this passage can be understood only as referring to the unsaved. So a "carnal Christian" is a contradiction in terms.

Paul chided the Corinthians saying, "I brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with solid food; for to this time ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able" (1 Cor. 3:1-2). For one and a half years, the apostle Paul had taught the Corinthians. Now he was writing them as much as five years later, so they had been believers for approximately six years. The problem of the Corinthian church was not their infancy but their disobedience, which included divisions, envying, and strife. Paul was saying they were acting like unbelievers. Therefore he gave them this warning: "Examine yourselves, whether you are in the faith; prove yourselves. Know ye not yourselves how Jesus Christ is in you, unless you are discredited?" (2 Cor. 13:5).

There may be Christians who fall into sin and act carnally, but carnality is predominately characterized by unbelievers because they are totally unable to please God (cf. Heb. 11:6). Hebrews 12:14 declares that no man will see the Lord without holiness.

If a person's life is not characterized by righteousness, the entire book of 1 John declares that he is not truly saved! The person with a disobedient nature is not walking in the Spirit and therefore does not possess the Spirit--in which case he is not a Christian (Rom. 8:9). Submission to the will of God, to Christ's lordship, and to the guiding of the Spirit is an essential--not optional--part of true saving faith. True Christians--those with genuine faith--will not be content with being in a "carnal" category. They will not be satisfied with remaining in a state of habitual disobedience. A person who has no desire for obedience has no legitimate claim on salvation. If you are truly saved, the only thing to do with a command like "be filled with the Spirit" is to obey it!

1. The possession of the Holy Spirit

Every Christian possesses the Holy Spirit in all His fullness from the moment he believes. As was mentioned above, there is no such thing as a Christian without the Holy Spirit. Romans 8:9 says, "If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him" (NASB). I heard a person say, "I have been a Christian for a long time but I just found out that I didn't really have the Holy Spirit. Since then, I asked God and He gave me the Holy Spirit and now my entire life has changed." I understood what he was trying to say--that he now realized what obedience to God was all about--but there is simply no such thing as a Christian without the Holy Spirit. When you become a child of God, He takes up residence by putting His Spirit within you, and as a result, you will be obedient to Him. Every Christian possesses the Holy Spirit in all His fullness. A Christian does not receive the Holy Spirit in bits and pieces. You do not even have to ask for more of the Spirit because He is there totally at salvation.

2. The baptism of the Holy Spirit

Even to the immature, worldly Corinthian believers, Paul said, "For by one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Greeks, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:13). All believers have received the Holy Spirit and been baptized into the body of Christ.

There are seven references to the baptism of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament and not one of them is a command. The believer is never commanded to be baptized by the Spirit because that

occurs at salvation. The baptism of the Spirit is not an experience; it is an act whereby the Holy Spirit puts you into the body of Christ when you believe. It is a theological reality. You do not feel it physically, nor do you see or hear it. Christ--the baptizer--who through the agency of the Holy Spirit, places you in His body. You are saved and given the blessed Holy Spirit at the exact same time.

3. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit

Paul did not accuse the Corinthians of being immature and sinful because they did not yet have the Holy Spirit. He didn't exhort them to seek the Spirit to remedy the situation. Rather he reminded them that each one of them already possessed the Holy Spirit: "What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you?" (1 Cor. 6:19). Even when a Christian falls into sin, the Holy Spirit is there convicting him, and it is that very fact that makes his sin even worse. The Corinthians were not sinning because of the Holy Spirit's absence but in spite of the Holy Spirit's presence.

a) Ephesians 4:30--Paul said, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit, by whom ye were sealed." b) 1

Thessalonians 5:19--Paul said, "Quench not the Spirit." c) Galatians 2:20--Paul said, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." It is the Spirit of Christ that lives in all believers. d) John 7:37-39--John said, "Jesus stood and cried out, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water. But this spoke he of the Spirit, whom they that believe on him should receive." All who believe in Christ receive the Holy Spirit. The New Testament is unlike the Old in that David cried out, "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me" (Ps. 51:11). Ever since the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit comes as a permanent resident to every believer.

Just as the believer is never commanded to be baptized by the Holy Spirit, neither is he commanded to be indwelt by the Spirit. Both are guaranteed for the person who places his faith in Christ for salvation. We are sealed by the Spirit (cf. Eph. 1:13). The command to be obeyed is to be filled or controlled by the Holy Spirit.

B. The Meaning of Being Filled with the Spirit

1. A continuous action

The Greek verb (a present passive imperative) for "be filled" in Ephesians 5:18 is literally translated, "be being kept filled" with the Spirit. The command is for continuous filling or controlling of the Spirit of God in the believer's life. Because the Greek verb is passive, it denotes that the believer is filled with the Spirit, not that he fills himself. The present active imperative would denote that. At salvation the believer is baptized by the Spirit into the body of Christ, indwelt by the Spirit, and sealed by the Spirit unto the day of redemption. But a Christian can live a life of defeat if does not enjoy the moment-by-moment experience of being continually filled by the Spirit of God.

2. A comparative analysis

The word brings to mind a glass filled with liquid or a box filled with some substance. But that is not the idea behind the word translated "filled" (Gk., pleroo) in the New Testament.

a) Pressure Pleroo, was used often of the wind filling a sail to move a ship along. To be filled with the Holy Spirit is to be moved along in our Christian life by God Himself, the same dynamic by which the writers of Scripture were "moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:21). You don't move in your own energy or with your own ideas, but are generated by the agency of the Spirit. To be filled with the Spirit is to be carried along on a moment-by-moment enterprise bent on accomplishing the will of God. b)

Permeation Pleroo also carries the idea of permeation. (1) The salt principle The word was sometimes used of salt's permeating meat in order to flavor and preserve it. In the same way the Holy Spirit both preserves and flavors the Christian life. God wants His Holy Spirit to so permeate the lives of His children that everything they think, say, and do will reflect His divine presence. (2) The Fizzie principle Fizzies were popular in the early 1970's. They resembled Alka-Seltzer tablets and were used to make different flavored soft drinks. Dropped in a glass of water, the tablets permeated the water and transformed it into a drink with the same flavor as the Fizzie. A grape Fizzie produced grape soda. The Spirit of God wants to so flavor the believer's life that he tastes exactly like the Spirit

of God. When someone gets around you they should feel as though they've been with Jesus because He permeates your life (cf. Acts 4:13). (3) The control principle However plero was mainly used to get across the idea of total control. Whenever a gospel writer wanted to speak of someone who was dominated by his emotions, he used pleroo. (a) In general (i) John 16:6--Jesus said, "Because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart." (ii) Luke 5:26--Luke said the people "were all amazed, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear." (iii) Luke 6:11--Luke said the Jewish leaders "were filled with fury, and discussed one with another what they might do to Jesus." A person who is filled in this sense is no longer under his own control but under the control of that which dominates him. The same thing is true in living the Christian life. To be filled with the Holy Spirit is not to have Him progressively added to our life, but dominated by Him. (b) In specific (i) Jesus Matthew records that Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tested by the devil (Matt. 4:1). Luke clarifies that further by saying, "Jesus, being full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness" (Luke 4:1). Mark makes it even stronger: "The Spirit driveth [Gk., ekballo] him into the wilderness" (Mark 1:12). It's not that Jesus resisted or had to be coerced, because His greatest joy was to do His Father's will (cf. John 4:34). He submitted Himself entirely to the Spirit's control. Because He was full of the Holy Spirit, He was controlled by the Spirit. Likewise, if the Christian is not controlled and empowered by the Holy Spirit, he is of no use to God. A Christian can accomplish no more without being filled with the Holy Spirit than a glove can accomplish without being filled with a hand. Anything he manages to do is but wood, hay, and straw that amounts to nothing and will eventually be burned up (1 Cor. 3:12-15). Functioning in the flesh (apart from the Spirit) produces nothing of spiritual value. When the Lord wants a task accomplished, He will always use someone who is full of the Spirit. (ii) Stephen When the church at Jerusalem wanted to free up the apostles for the more important work of prayer and ministering the Word, they chose men such as Stephen, who was "full of faith and of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 6:5). They chose Stephen because he was obviously controlled by the Holy Spirit. Acts 7:55 says that "he being full of the Holy Spirit, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God." That was when he was being stoned. As he lay on the ground beneath the Jewish leaders' feet, he had a view of God that was unlike anything he had ever seen. Being filled with the Spirit is transcendent reality because it takes you out of the human realm and fixes your eyes on the right perspective--God's glory and not your own! Being filled with the Spirit makes everything else of secondary importance, and often of no importance at all. (iii) Paul When God needed a man to share His message of salvation to the Gentiles, he chose the apostle Paul, but not before he had Ananias lay hands on him and say, "The Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 9:17). Before Paul's ministry could begin, he had to be filled with the Spirit or his work would have been done in the flesh. Being filled with the Spirit is simply living one moment at a time under the complete control of the Holy Spirit. When God wants someone to minister in His church, or to do pioneer missionary work, He always finds someone filled with the Spirit.

C. The Means of Being Filled with the Spirit

Being filled with the Holy Spirit is not a prayer request. It is a command to be obeyed. And if God gives a command, the believer must have the resources to obey it.

1. Surrendering your life to Christ

Being filled with the Spirit involves surrendering one's will, intellect, emotions, as well as one's time, talent, and treasure to God's complete control. It is the death of self-will. When you are right with God and are filled with His Spirit, you will be right with everyone else. You will speak to others in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (Eph. 5:19); be thankful for all things (v. 20); and submit yourself to fellow believers (v. 22). Wives will submit to their husbands (vv. 22-24), husbands will love their wives as Christ loved the church (vv. 25-33), children will obey their parents (6:1-3), parents will not provoke their children to wrath (v. 4), servants will be obedient to their masters (vv. 5-8), and masters

will treat their servants correctly (v. 9). Being filled with the Spirit results not in ecstatic experiences, but in right relationships with God and man.

2. Studying the Word of Christ

Colossians 3:16-25 is the parallel passage to Ephesians 5:18-- 6:9. The Ephesians passage states that right relationships occur only when a believer is filled with the Spirit while the Colossians passage states, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another, in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him" (vv. 16-17). Being filled with the Spirit then is simply letting the Word of Christ (Scripture) infuse every part of your being. To be filled with the Spirit is to be filled with God's Word. The two are synonymous.

If you want to be Spirit filled, then feed yourself a steady diet of the Word of God. When you do, you will find yourself coming under the Spirit's control because the author of the Word of God is the Spirit of God. When the Word of God is received into the believer's life, the Spirit takes that truth and gives guidance and direction.

3. Standing in the presence of Christ

Peter always wanted to be near Jesus. When Jesus walked down the road, Peter was with Him. If the Lord went up on a mountain, Peter was there. When the Lord said, "Will ye also go away?" Peter responded, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life" (John 6:67-68). Peter got into trouble only when he got away from His Lord. When he stayed close to Christ, he did many amazing things.

a) Peter before Pentecost(1) Miraculous worksWhen Peter saw Jesus standing on the water, he wanted to be with Him. Matthew records that Peter said, "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the boat, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus" (Matt. 14:28-29). Peter was successful in his attempt to walk on water until his attention turned from Jesus to his circumstances.(2) Miraculous wordsJesus asked His disciples, "Who do men say that I, the son of man, am?" (Matt. 16:13). Peter responded, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father, who is in heaven" (vv. 16-17).

Peter's mouth was available and God used it to revealed divine truth. A short while later however, Peter pitted his own understanding against the Lord's, and discovered that he then spoke for Satan (Matt. 16:22-23).(3) Miraculous courageWhen the soldiers came to arrest Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, they fell to the ground when Jesus identified Himself as the One they were seeking. Taking courage in the presence of Jesus, Peter took out his sword and cut off the right ear of Malchus, a slave of the high priest. He probably would have fought to the death had not Jesus restrained him. While standing next to Jesus, Peter was ready to take on the Roman army-- possibly as many as five hundred soldiers--single handedly! Peter was able to do the miraculous because he was in the presence of Jesus Christ. No wonder he always wanted to be near Him. When Peter was near the Lord, he feared no one. But a short while later, when Christ was taken from him, he didn't have the courage to admit even knowing Him.

b) Peter after PentecostHowever, Peter's boldness was not limited to the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ. After the Lord ascended to heaven, He sent the Holy Spirit to indwell his disciples as He had promised (John 14:15-26; 16:12-15).(1) Miraculous wordsPeter stood before the enemies of Christ on the day of Pentecost and said, "Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words.... Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart.... the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls" (Acts 2:14, 37, 41). Peter preached a masterful sermon as God used his mouth to bring thousands to Himself. Peter had the courage to fearlessly proclaim his risen Lord in the city where, a few months earlier, Jesus had been arrested, beaten, and crucified.(2) Miraculous worksPeter and John, on their way to the Temple to worship, encountered a beggar who had been

lame for forty years. The beggar asked Peter and John for money but Peter replied, "Silver and gold have I none, but, such as I have, give I thee. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk. And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up; and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. And he, leaping up, stood and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God" (Acts 3:6-8). (3) Miraculous courage Because of their continued preaching, Peter and John were taken before the Sanhedrin--the Jewish court--and told to stop. They responded, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:19-20). The key to Peter's boldness was that he was "filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:4). To be filled with the Spirit is to be in conscious of the Lord's presence. For Peter, being filled with the Spirit was like walking next to Jesus!

CONCLUSION

When you surrender to the control of God's Spirit, you will find that God produces amazing things in your life too. Paul calls those marvelous blessings "the fruit of the Spirit," and they are: "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Gal. 5:22-23, NASB). He continues, "If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit" (Gal. 5:24-25, NASB). To walk in the Spirit is to fulfill our ultimate potential and capacity of our life on earth as God's children.

Focusing on the Facts

1. The key to rightly living the Christian life is being _____ by the Holy Spirit.
2. What are two opposite interpretations of being filled with the Spirit?
3. True or False: No Christian can fulfill God's will for his life apart from being filled with His Spirit.
4. Can you be a Christian and not be habitually obedient to God? Explain your answer.
5. What do the words carnal and fleshly predominately refer to?
6. What was Paul saying in 1 Corinthians 3 about "carnal" Christians?
7. Does every Christian possess the Holy Spirit in all His fullness? Explain your answer.
8. What does it mean to be baptized with the Holy Spirit?
9. Are all Christians indwelt by the Holy Spirit at all times? If so, why do they need to be filled with the Holy Spirit?
10. What are the different ways the word translated "filled" is used in Scripture? What is the dominant thought in the different usages?
11. Give specific examples of people in the Bible who were filled with the Spirit.
12. Being filled with the Holy Spirit is not a _____. It is a _____.
13. What are the means for being filled with the Spirit?
14. True or False: Being filled with the Spirit means the death of self- will.
15. What is the result of being filled with the Spirit? What happens to your relationship with others?
16. How does Colossians 3:16-25, a parallel passage to Ephesians 5:18; 6:9, help us to understand what being filled with the Spirit means?
17. If you want to be Spirit-filled, then feed yourself a steady diet of the _____ of _____.
18. To be filled with the Spirit is to be _____ of the Lord's _____.
19. What can we conclude being filled with the Spirit is like by examining the life of Peter?
20. How is being filled with the Spirit related to the fruit of the Spirit?

Pondering the Principles

1. There is much confusion today concerning those who claim to be Christian and yet are not obedient to God on a continuing basis. First John cuts through the confusion by declaring that if a person's life is not characterized by righteous living, he is not a Christian. Are you truly saved? Is the

pattern of your life one of continual obedience? Read the book of First John one chapter a day for the next five days and ask God to confirm in your heart whether you are truly saved.

2. As believers are called to be filled with the Spirit in Ephesians 5:18, they are also called to exhibit the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23. Do you exhibit the fruit of the Spirit in your life? Is it apparent to others around you that you are a Christian and controlled by the Spirit of God? After your study of First John, take each aspect of the fruit of the Spirit and examine your own heart over the next two weeks to determine if you are truly living in the Spirit.

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