

Be Filled With the Spirit

Ephesians 5:18

“And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit.”

In our last study of this epistle we looked at the stages of God’s gifts to mankind. His gift to the world was Christ, His gifts to the church were God-called, God-ordained, and God-sent men. His gifts to empower the church and exalt Christ are the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

This week we are going to continue our study in the direction of the Christian life as it related to the infilling of the Holy Spirit.

In verse 18 we have the command, “Don’t be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit,” Through my years of ministry, I have found that there are some major misunderstandings about the filling of the Holy Spirit.

Before we can go much further in our study, I have to stop and remind you that the “baptism of the Holy Spirit” and the “filling of the Holy Spirit” are two totally different things. And it is because people are not able to distinguish between the two the confusion has developed.

There is never a command in the Word of God that we be “baptized with the Spirit;” there is never a command for us to be “sealed with the Spirit;” and there is never a command for us to be “indwelt with the Spirit.” Why? **These are things that God does for us the moment we invite Jesus Christ to come into our lives, forgive us of our sins, and make us a Christian.**

This truth is very clearly taught in scripture. Ephesians 1:12-14 says, “That we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the

gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were *sealed with the Holy Spirit* of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.” Look at 1 Corinthians 12:13, “For by one Spirit we were all *baptized* into one body - whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free - and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.”

I am convinced the problem is that we have never really realized what happened that day at Pentecost. Two things happened on that fiftieth day: (1) **The Church was born of the Holy Spirit, creating a new and living institution.** (2) **The disciples were “filled” with the Holy Spirit.** A careful reading of the Book of Acts will reveal that the word “baptize” is never used at Pentecost; not in Acts 2:4, not in Acts 4:8 and 31, not in Acts 7:55, not in Acts 8:17, not in Acts 9:17, not in Acts 10:44, not in Acts 11:15, and not in Acts 19:6. In fact, in every instance the word used is “filled.”

People, please understand, the infilling of the Holy Spirit is not that we possess Him, but that He possess us. It is not that He is *present* in our lives, but that He is *President* of our lives.

One of the greatest truths in all the word of God is that when I became a Christian the Spirit of God came to permanently indwell me to make His home in me. Now being filled with the spirit of God is **NOT having more of the Holy Spirit than you have now.** You see, when you invited Jesus Christ to come into your heart and make you a Christian, He came in the Person of the Holy Spirit. **And because God the Father is God the Son, and God the Son is God the Holy Spirit, when you were saved you got the whole package.** There is not just a little bit of God in me and a little bit of God in you and a little bit of God in you ... like God kind of spread Himself thin and passed Himself out to all of us. I have all of God in me and you have all of God in you. **When the spirit of God came to indwell you, the whole spirit of God came to indwell you and it takes that to save you.** Therefore, being filled with the Holy Spirit is *not* having *more* of the Holy Spirit than you had before.

Paul commands us in Eph. 5:18, "And be not drunk with wine wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit." So what is the filling of the Holy Spirit?

1. The filling of the Holy Spirit is a command of God. The verb, "be filled" is in the imperative mood. It is a command, not a suggestion. It is not a wish, but an undeniable and unalterable command of God – "be filled with the Spirit." And it is in the plural. He is not talking to super-saints. The filling of the Holy Spirit isn't for the hierarchy of Heaven. It is not for the elite of the elect. It is not just for preachers and evangelists. It is for everyone, and God commands every person who is saved to be filled with the Holy Spirit. The first thing we need to understand is that this filling is not an optional item. It is not luxury equipment in the Christian life. It is standard equipment in every Christian's life if he is to be effective and to bring honor and glory to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

If it is a command for me to be filled with the spirit, then if I am not filled with the spirit, I am living in disobedience. We need to be convinced of this and we need to be convicted of it. I think a great many people in our churches think that it would be nice if they *could* be filled with the spirit and they would *love* to be filled with the Spirit, but it is not absolutely necessary and I doubt if very many people are *convinced* and *convicted* that not to be filled with the Spirit is a sin against God. But it is. It is just as much a sin to be disobedient in this matter of the Holy Spirit as it is in any other area of biblical teaching.

Why is God so emphatic when it comes to being filled with the Spirit? We are going to look at some verses and we are going to see that there are many reasons but primarily there are two reasons why God commands us to be filled with the spirit.

First of all, it is necessary for purity of life. Galatians 5:16 says, "This I say then, walk in the spirit and ye shall not the fulfill the lusts of the flesh." Now he goes on to point out that every Christian is living

in a body that is referred to in the bible as the "**flesh**" and living in that body is Someone called the "**Holy Spirit**" and these two are opposed one to the other. The Holy Spirit is there to lead us, to teach us, to convict us, and to reveal biblical truth to us. But I wasn't saved very long until I realized that I still had all of the old *flesh* desires that I had always had before I was saved. And I fell into the trap that many new Christian fall into, I kept trying to control and improve and sophisticate and to Christianize the old flesh. But the more I tried, the more I failed.

This truth is brought home very clearly in Galatians 5:17-21, "For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God." You will notice that these are not just these big gross sins that God calls "the works of the flesh," but they have to do with attitude, bitterness, and an unforgiving spirit ... all of these are there.

But Paul does not stop there and leave us with no options. He continues in Galatians 5:22-26, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another."

Paul is painting a word picture that pictures the Holy Spirit as a tree planted within the Christian. The Holy Spirit, who is planted deep within the innermost recesses of every believer, will produce fruit. So, the picture is a tree planted within the Christian and this tree

wants to produce fruit of love, joy, etc. **But I have a problem, and the problem is that I have another tree planted in my life called the "flesh," and that tree wants to produce a totally different kind of crop.** Therefore, in order for me to have any kind of victory over the works of the flesh, God has commanded me to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Second, the filling of the Holy Spirit is a choice that God wants each of us to make. Look again at our text, "And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit." The construction of the Greek here is that of a passive verb and the New English Bible translates it properly, "Let the Holy Spirit fill you." You see that puts the reluctance on our part, not on His part. **Some of you have never been filled with the Holy Spirit because you think God is reluctant to fill you and you beg Him and plead with Him and you hope that someday you will grow up into the filling of the Holy Spirit.** But that is not what the Bible teaches. Listen, you do not **grow up into** the filling of the spirit, you **grow from** the filling of the Holy Spirit. **There is no spiritual growth until you are filled with the spirit.** You may **grow in knowledge** and may **grow in church activity**, but **spiritual growth** comes only after the filling of the Holy Spirit. Remember, it is the Holy Spirit that reveals spiritual truth.

Therefore, I must choose to allow Christ to control my life. I was saved when I was nine years old, but I just thought I had gotten saved to keep from going to hell. As far as I can tell, no one ever told me that God had a purpose for me life. **And before long I drifted further and further from that sweet fellowship that Jesus and I had when I was first saved.** But through those years of rebellion and uncaring my mom and dad never stopped praying. One circumstance led to another until I found myself right back where I started from – Greenville, Alabama. **To make a long story short, I met Linda, got married, had two children, she got saved, God turned my life around, and called me to preach.** I went to Bible College and very soon was pasturing my very first church. But time passed and about five years into the ministry there was something missing and I had no

idea what it was. Because I would preach victory and live defeat. I would preach *peace* and know *anxiety*. I would preach *love* and yet was aware of a *critical spirit* and *bitterness* and *jealousy* and *envy*. And after preaching for a few years, I ran out of gas, went stale and stagnant. I had to push myself to get in the pulpit. I would drive to church on Sunday night and see other people out barbequing, charcoaling and I wished I could do that. There is nothing worse than making yourself go to church. And there is no feeling to compare with that horrible feeling of making yourself preach because you get paid to do it and you wish you didn't have to. I tried to get out of the ministry two or three times and just couldn't do it. I never doubted my call to preach. I've doubted my salvation in times past. I've never doubted that God called me to preach. I didn't know what was wrong. And I remember kneeling in my office one day and praying, "Lord, I don't know what it is, but something is wrong in my life. I don't know what's wrong but I know there has to be more to it than this." I said, "Lord, would you just do something *for* me, do something *in* me."

And I really can't explain it other than God himself, but I suddenly felt this desire to study about the Holy Spirit. And the more I read, the more I wanted to read; and the more I learned, the more I wanted to learn. And suddenly, the Holy Spirit seemed to say to me, "Jesus isn't Lord in your life. Since the day you were saved and the day you surrendered to preach, Jesus has never been absolute, total Lord in your life." And in that moment, I knew that it was true. I wanted Jesus to be in control of my life, but I guess I wanted Him to *take* control. No one ever told me it was a choice that I had to make. And somewhere in that moment I asked Jesus to take control of my life and lead me in the way that I should go.

And I can't explain what happened in my life, but I can tell you that a *peace* came over my life. There was a love. I was just happy and full of joy. And there was peace. I had never known such peace. Sure, I still had some issues in my life, but suddenly I understood that I was "more than a conqueror" through Christ who loved me.

But God didn't stop there, He taught me how to love my wife, and how to love my family. He taught me that, in spite of its circumstances, life was fun and ministry was fulfilling.

But there was a problem with people. The Charismatics thought I had finally gotten the “baptism,” the Baptist thought I had gone “overboard,” and the world just thought I was crazy. But none of that mattered because I knew God has given me what I so desperately needed in my life.

Third, there is one last thing that I learned about being filled with the Spirit and that is - we leak. The construction of the Greek here is that this is a continual process. In other words, we are to be filled with the Spirit on a daily basis. Why? Because we have an enemy that does not want us to be all that God has called us to be. He does not want us to be filled with joy, peace and love. He wants us to be selfish, and ornery, and negative. So he uses people and circumstances, he uses feelings and self to poke holes in our spiritual reservoir.

So every day we have to make the choice to be filled with the Spirit. Every day we have to allow Jesus to be in control of our life and choices. Every day we have to make a new and fresh commitment to be Christ-like in our attitude, in our reactions, and in our discussions. And I promise you it is well worth the efforts.