

THE FILLING OF THE SPIRIT

Part 1

Ephesians 5:1-21

Intro: The subject of the Holy Spirit in the Bible is one of the most important of all the teachings of Scripture. The Holy Spirit is One of the Three Persons in the Godhead. He is equal in Deity with the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, and He is to be worshiped as we worship God the Father and as we worship the Lord Jesus Christ. The Greek word for spirit is neuter, and that is the reason you find verses in the KJV which seem to indicate that the Holy Spirit is not a Person. E.g., we read in Romans 8:26,

26 Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

But we know from Scripture that the Holy Spirit is a Person just like the Father is a Person, and as the Lord Jesus is a Person. So that verse should read, “the Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us.” It takes a Person to help us in our infirmities, and it takes a Person to make intercession for us. The works that are spoken of in Scripture as belonging to the Spirit indicate that He is a Person, and not just some kind of an impersonal influence.

We have learned from the Bible that we are regenerated, we experience salvation through the work of the Holy Spirit. We are “born of the Spirit” as our Lord told Nicodemus.

We have also learned that all who are born of the Spirit, are indwelt by the Spirit. All of us also have been sealed by the Spirit, and we have been baptized by the Spirit. These are works that the Spirit of God does in all believers, all who are truly saved.

Today I want to discuss with you the filling of the Spirit. The only place we are told to be filled with the Spirit, is in the Scripture reading we have had this morning. But, as you probably know, it is not the only place that we read about people who were filled with the Holy Spirit. It obviously does not mean that we get more of the Holy Spirit, but as Dr. Chafer used to say, it means that the Holy Spirit gets more of us. The filling of the Spirit is a matter of practical importance for all of us who know the Lord.

The Holy Spirit - #6 (2)

It is not something that, if we meet certain conditions, it will guarantee that we will be filled with the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is sovereign in the work that He does *in* us and *with* us, so we don't obligate Him to fill us anymore than we obligate God to answer our prayers. The Holy Spirit fills and blesses us according to the sovereign will of the Godhead.

The verb that the Apostle Paul used in verse 18 of Ephesians 5, "be filled," in Greek is a command. It is in the second person plural which means that he was speaking to all of his readers, assuming that they were Christians. And it is in the passive voice which means that they do not do the filling themselves. Someone else will do the filling. And it is in the present tense which means that this is something that is to be going on all of the time.

Now think with me about this before we go any farther. "Be filled with the Spirit" is a command, so there is something that I am to do, and the same thing which you are supposed to do. Paul was not writing just for apostles, or prophets, or evangelists, or pastor-teachers. Often when we think of being filled with the Spirit we think that it belongs to leaders in the church, or at least to the adults, possibly to men only. But Paul made no such distinction. He was writing to all of the Lord's people, of all ages, even to children who know the Lord. It was to all of the people of God.

But the passive voice might throw us a little because this means that Paul was telling the people of God to do something which they did not really do for themselves. This was something that they were to be responsible for, knowing that they were not going to do the filling, but that someone else would actually do it for them. Perhaps you remember you English classes that the passive means not that you are doing what is required, but you are going to be acted upon. And, finally, this filling is something that is to be going on all of the time.

Does this make sense to you? We are commanded to seek for something which we do not actually attain for ourselves, but in our seeking someone else is the one who does the filling. And this is to be our objective all of our lives as long as we live. What does this mean?

Well, when you come to something like this in the Word, the place to look for the meaning is in the verses which lead up to it, and possibly in the words that follow. Verse 18 in this case is our text. The words which

The Holy Spirit - #6 (3)

lead up to it, and the verses which follow, are the context. Context means *with the text*. Now having gone through Ephesians very recently in our morning services, when we get to the practical section of Ephesians, which I will remind you are the last three chapters: 4, 5, and 6 (the first three chapters are mainly doctrinal), *what is it that Paul was emphasizing that the people should do?* If you answer that he was exhorting them *to walk as Christians*. And to walk in the Bible means to live. Paul was commanding the people of God to live the way the Lord wanted them to live. In 4:1 that was to “walk worthy” of their calling. In 4:17 it was not to walk the way unsaved Gentiles live, the way they themselves used to live. In chapter 5:2 they were to “walk in love.” In 5:8 they were to “walk as children of light.” And then in 5:15 and 16 they were to “walk circumspectly,” which means, “not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.” They were to watch their steps, to be careful because the world, the Devil, and even their own sinful natures were ready to trip them up.

Paul addressed them as though everything depended upon them. These were just some of the do’s and don’t’s of the Christian life. But we all face a very real problem. Do you know what it is? You do if you are serious about living for the Lord. The problem is that we are constantly trying to please God as Christians, but if all we have is our own strength we are going to fail constantly. But the other side of this problem is that the Lord doesn’t expect us to do what He wants us to do in our own strength. *That is why He has given us the Holy Spirit to dwell in us. As we give ourselves to live the way the Bible says that we as Christians should live, God has sent the Holy Spirit to be our strength so that we can do what He wants us to do. This is what the Bible calls being “filled with the Spirit.” When by God’s grace we give ourselves to Him to do His will, the Holy Spirit gives us the needed help so that what we are trying to do, He enables us to do.*

So going back to our definition of “being filled,” you and I respond to God’s Word by seeking to do what He wants us to do (that is where our obedience comes in), but it is God the Holy Spirit Who fills us, give us the strength to live like the Lord wants us to live. And this is the way we are to live our lives every day until the Lord comes, or until He calls us home.

Look back from verse 18 to verse 8 and follow in your Bibles as I re-read what Phil Livesley read earlier for us. I will read verses 8 through 10.

The Holy Spirit - #6 (4)

(Read Eph. 5:8-10.) You see it is “the fruit of the Spirit” which enables us to prove “what is acceptable to the Lord.” Only by the Spirit’s power will we be “good” in God’s sight. Only by the fullness of the Spirit will we be “righteous.” Only through the Holy Spirit will “truth” (sometimes meaning faithfulness) be demonstrated in my life.

You know, don’t you, that it was the Holy Spirit Who has given us the Bible. Peter wrote in 2 Peter 1: 20 and 21,

20 Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.

21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

From Moses writing in Genesis on down to John’s writing of The Book of the Revelation, every book was given to us by the Holy Spirit. There were some forty writers of Scripture, *but just one Author: the Holy Spirit. And to talk about being filled with the Spirit means that you are going to full of a love for the Word of God, full of faith in the Word of God, and full of a desire to obey the Word of God.*

In the early days of the church the gift of the Holy Spirit, being filled with the Holy Spirit, was accompanied by the gift of tongues. But that is not the case anymore. Do you read anything about tongues here when Paul exhorted the Ephesian believers to be filled with the Spirit? Absolutely not! Things went on in the book of Acts that did not even continue until the NT was finished. God was doing a lot of new things and they were accompanied by spectacular signs. But it is not that way today. A Spirit-filled Christian is a Word-filled Christian. A Spirit-filled Christian is an obedient Christian. A Spirit-filled Christian is a Christian who is full of love for Christ. Do you remember what the Lord said about the ministry of the Holy Spirit when He was with His disciples in the Upper Room the night before His death? Let me read His words to you, word found in John 16:12-15:

12 I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.

13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.

14 He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.

15 All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he

The Holy Spirit - #6 (5)

shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you.

With some people their experience is more authoritative to them than the Bible. We had a lady in the church I was pastor of before we started Trinity. She had a young boy who had a brain tumor, but she refused to take him to a doctor to see what medical help might be given to him. He continued to get worse, and I pled with her to take him to a doctor. I believed, too, that the Lord could have healed her boy if that had been His will, but as she waited on God, supposedly, I felt that she needed to get help in case the Lord might see fit to work through a doctor. But she refused. In the meantime her son got worse, and finally died. When I was going through all of this with her, she said to me one day words like this. I am not quoting her verbatim, but I am giving you the gist of what she said to me. She said,

“Pastor, if you had talked to me before I had this experience of speaking in tongues, perhaps you could have convinced me. But since I have spoken in tongues, now you couldn’t even convince me from the Bible that I am wrong.”

I repeat what I said earlier. This is the only passage in the Bible that commands us to be filled with the Spirit. If tongues were evidence that you are filled with the Spirit, the Apostle Paul would surely have said so here.

But let us see what he did say. I have been dealing with the latter part of Ephesians 5:18. Let’s look at the first part before I close. What did Paul say in the first part of our text? You can read it for yourself. He said, “And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess,” and then he went on to say, “but be filled with the Holy Spirit.”

There are three times in Scripture where the work of the Spirit is compared, or contrasted, with each other. In Luke 1 when the angel of the Lord appeared to Zacharias, the priest, as he was going about his duties, we read this beginning with verse 11:

11 And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense.

12 And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.

13 But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.

14 And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at

The Holy Spirit - #6 (6)

his birth.

15 For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb.

16 And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God (Luke 1:11-16).

The other passage is in Acts 2 on that memorable Day of Pentecost. A very unusual thing took place. There was the sound of a mighty wind, and tongues of fire appeared and sat upon each of them. And then we read in verse 4 that the disciples “were all filled with the Holy Spirit; and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” In verses 12 and 13, after the Jews who were present from all over the Empire heard them speak in their languages, some of them mocking said, “These men are full of new wine.” But Peter explain to them beginning with verse 15,

15 For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day.

16 But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel;

17 And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:

18 And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy:

19 And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke:

20 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come:

21 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved (Acts 2:15-21).

What is connection between drunkenness and being filled with the Spirit? Dr. Chafer explained it this way:

As strong drink stimulates the physical forces and men are prone to turn to it for help over the difficult places, so the child of God, facing an impossible responsibility of a heavenly walk and service, is directed to the Spirit as the source of all sufficiency. Every moment in a spiritual life is one of unmeasured need and superhuman demands, and the supply of enabling power must be constantly received and employed (*He That Is Spiritual*, p. 44).

The lesson is very clear. People in the world have their problems with

The Holy Spirit - #6 (7)

their lives, and often try to handle their problems with drink. We would probably be amazed to know how many people turn to drink to deal with their problems. Christians struggle, too, with the impossibility of living the life that is ordained for us in the Word of God. The answer for us is not to deal with the problems as the world would, but in recognizing before God that we cannot live the Christian life in our own strength, but only by the fulness of the Holy Spirit Who dwells within us as the key to a holy Christian life.

Concl: When Paul wrote to the Galatians about the Christian life, and the battle that we all face in being obedience to God, he said this which is very similar to being filled with the Spirit: “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh” (Gal. 5:16). To walk in the Spirit is to walk in dependence upon the Spirit. There is no other way to live the Christian life. Then and only then will we trust the Holy Spirit to bear the fruit in our lives which enables us to show in daily living that it is possible to please God.