

THE FILLING OF THE SPIRIT

Part 5

Ephesians 5:15-21

Intro: It was about a year ago last summer that I began with you the study of Ephesians. And when I completed that study, I began right away this series on the Holy Spirit. And much of our study of the Holy Spirit has been in Ephesians. I have gone to other NT epistles to get some important information about the Spirit. But basically we have been in Ephesians because it is there, in Ephesians 5:18, that we are specifically told to be filled with the Spirit. And from our Scripture reading you see that we are in Ephesians again. Today I want us to think primarily about *evidences* of a Spirit-filled life. I went back over my notes on Ephesians 5 when we were going through this epistle verse by verse, and I saw that I had emphasized some of the evidences, but I want to enlarge on that today, and add to it from what we find primarily in Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus. The possibility that this letter may have been a circular letter which Paul intended to go from Ephesus to several of the churches close to Ephesus, only adds to its importance.

Now let me remind you of some of the basis truths that I have stressed in dealing with this important subject.

I want you to know and to remember that when Paul spoke about being filled with the Spirit, he was speaking, not of some ecstatic experience which would put you in a special class of Christians, *but he was speaking of a way of life*. In fact, the Spirit-filled life is the normal Christian life. In the early days of the Church, the body of Christ, people did speak in other languages to facilitate the spread of the Gospel, but here in Ephesians Paul said nothing about tongues. To be filled with the Spirit speaks of a day by day relationship with the Holy Spirit in which we are enabled by the Holy Spirit to live lives of daily fellowship with God, and with the Lord Jesus Christ.

There is nothing in Paul's teaching that would indicate that this is a relationship which is permanent. We have all known Christians, and perhaps have experienced something of this ourselves, where they, or we, have neglected the Word, have neglected to be faithful in attending church, have drifted into the ways of the world, so that our fellowship with the Lord is not what it once was. We can never lose our salvation, but we can certainly get out of fellowship with the Lord. And that is not a good place

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to be. The Christian life is a supernatural life. We don't have the ability in ourselves to live it. We need to do as Paul said in Galatians 5:16, to "walk in the Spirit," *to walk in dependence upon the Holy Spirit, if we are to be able to live lives of fellowship with God.*

To be filled with the Spirit is not a substitute for growing in grace; it is how we grow in grace. It does not make me some kind of a super Christian; it means that I am becoming more and more like my dear Savior.

Now this morning I intend to get to verses 19, 20, and 21 of Ephesians 5, but I want to point out some characteristics of a Spirit-filled life in what Paul wrote as he led up to the exhortation to be filled with the Spirit. In fact, all that Paul said about our walk, about the way we live, led up to his command that we be filled with the Spirit as the only way we could possibly walk the walk of a Christian.

Going back to the beginning of chapter 4, let me point out that a Spirit-filled Christian is going to be a humble person. He is not a person who attracts attention to himself, or herself, or acts like he is better than anyone else. "The vocation herewith ye are called," as He said in Ephesians 4:1 reminds us that we are saved, not basically because we were seeking the Lord, but we were saved because the Lord called us to Himself. And He called us not for what we could do for Him, but for what He could do for us. He saved us that we might be holy. He saved us that we might become like Christ. That is not something for us to be proud of, but it to humble us. We are to walk "with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love" (Eph. 4:2). None of us deserves what we have in Christ. So we shouldn't live like we do deserve it. In fact, as we grow in the Lord, we are going to be more amazed all the time that God would have anything to do with us. Pride is in all of us. Pride is taking a lot of people to hell because their pride keeps them from seeing how sinful they are and how overwhelming great is their need of a Savior. A Spirit-filled Christian will be growing in humility.

Do you remember what John the Baptist said about himself? We read in John 1:27 that he said, speaking of the Lord, "He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose." And remember what the Apostle Paul said about himself in 1 Corinthians 15:9-10:

9 For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

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10 But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

But there is another point that Paul made about himself and all other true Christians. You will see this in Ephesians 4:14-15. Notice that Paul said “we” here at the beginning of verse 14. A Spirit-filled Christian does not feel that he “has arrived,” so to speak; he is a growing Christian. This is what Paul said:

14 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;
15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:

But before we go to the verses in our Scripture reading, let me make one more point. But I think that when I do, you will see that it really occupies the rest of chapter 4 and all of chapter 5 up to our Scripture reading.

I am thinking about Ephesians 4; 17 and 18:

17 This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind,
18 Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:

To be filled with the Spirit does not mean that we can no longer sin! But you will find that some people who think they are filled with the Spirit, believe that this makes them sinless. Nothing could be farther from the truth. In fact, the more you seek to walk in the Spirit, the more the Devil will try to draw you into sin.

Everybody in the world is a sinner. The difference is that some are saved sinners; others are lost sinners. But saved sinners can still sin. Our old nature is still with us and is responsive to temptation and to sin. But sin is not in charge in a Christian’s life like it used to be. That is why Paul could write, saying, “That ye walk not as other Gentiles walk.” How do they walk? What is their lifestyle?

- 1) “In the vanity of their mind,
- 2) “Having their understanding darkened,

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3) “being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart” (Eph. 4:17b-18).

The Bible draws a clear line between the lifestyle of a Christian as compared with the lifestyle of one who is not a Christian. They are of the world; we are not! We are called to be separate from the world, not to love the world, not to be conformed to the world.

Do you remember how the Lord prayed for the Apostles according to John 17? He prays for us the same way. He ever lives to make intercession for us. Here are His actual words from John 17:13-19:

13 And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.

14 I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

15 I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.

16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

18 As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.

19 And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.

Did you notice in these words of our Lord’s prayer how He spoke of the truth? “The truth” is the Word. It is by the Word that we are sanctified, set apart from the world, made holy. In the midst of these verses in Ephesians 4, we have our text for last Sunday: verse 30 - “And grieve not the Spirit of God, whereby we are sealed unto the day of redemption.” A Spirit-filled Christian lives a different life from Gentiles, or Jews, who do not know the Lord. I hope that perhaps this afternoon you will get your Bible out and read from Ephesians 4:17 down through 5:14. Think about it as it applies to your life. We are all engaged in spiritual warfare, and the main thing that the Devil wants to do is to get us to compromise. Start compromising and you will soon wonder how you ever got so far from the Lord. It doesn’t happen all at once; just a little bit at a time. But those little bits soon add up to a lot.

But now for the rest of the time this morning, let’s look at the command we have been studying in verse 18 of chapter 5, and then verses 19, 20, and 21. They really tell us three great ways to know when we are filled with the Spirit. Notice that these four verses 18 through 21, are one

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sentence. They all go together.

In a Spirit-filled life we are not isolated from each other, but the Spirit draws us together as believers in a wonderful fellowship with each other.

One special thing about Christian fellowship is the way we sing together, and what we sing. When we sing we are to sing from our hearts, and so we benefit from it. But we are also ministering to each other when we sing. And then we are also singing “to the Lord.”

And what are we to sing? Psalms - right out of our Bibles. You will find in our Trinity Hymnal lots of the Psalms that have been put to music. I have been told that in Scotland, Scottish Christians felt that it was a sin to sing anything but the Psalms. Hymns are music directed to God. You will never find in the Word that we are to sing for the unsaved, and to use their music so they will feel comfortable with us. Those “other Gentiles” that Paul was speaking about don’t know anything about truly worshiping God. “Spiritual songs” are songs that are in harmony with what the Spirit of God has given us in the Word.

One thing is certain. When a person becomes a Christian, the kind of songs he enjoys will under godly teaching undergo a great change. Changing church music to make unsaved people comfortable, is one of the first steps of compromise that churches take. One of the great tragedies that is taking place in our churches today is that our young people are not learning the great hymns of the church. When I was at Dallas Seminary back in the 40's, our President and Founder of the Seminary would take a chapel at least every two weeks to teach us the great hymns of the church. And our own Dr. Lockwood is doing the same thing for us.

But what is the second evidence that Paul mentioned concerning how to identify a Spirit-filled Christian? You have it in Ephesians 5:20:

Giving thanks always for all things unto God and Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

To be Spirit-filled is to be Spirit-enabled. There never has been a Christian who could do this on his own. We do fairly well when things are going well with us. But what about when they go in the opposite direction? How thankful we can be that we know the Lord, but what about when things go wrong and it appears that either God doesn’t know what is going on, or that He doesn’t care? Do we find that the Spirit of God leads

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us to the Word where we can see that God does know, and that He does care, and that He is working all things together for good as those trials touch our lives. It was all to God's glory when he really suffered the loss of everything to be able to say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." Nobody can say that from the heart except by the enabling power of the Holy Spirit.

But another thing about thanksgiving – what place does the giving of thanks to God have in our lives day by day? Do we thank Him that He has made Himself known to us, and that He has shown us our need of the Lord Jesus Christ? Do we thank Him as the One from Whom all of our blessings come? How much do we really thank the Lord? A thankful heart is evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit.

But then notice the third evidence. It doesn't seem to fit with the other two: "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God." One of the outstanding characteristics of all of us, is that we don't want others to tell us what to do, or to have a position of authority over us. Am I the kind of a person who has to have everything going my way? Do people find it easy to get along with us? This exhortation really takes us back to the beginning of chapter 4, doesn't it. We need to be characterized by a humility that shows how much we want to please the Lord, which is a major part of what it means to fear the Lord. It is very hard for us to say, "Not my will, but thine be done" when we are talking to the Lord. But how much harder it is to say that to people.

But, you see, there is a connection between everything in verses 18 through 21. If I am filled with the Spirit, seeking to do His will and to please Him in all things as expressed in the Word, it will be a joy to worship Him in His way, to thank Him for the working out of His will, knowing He is working in our hearts especially through the hard things in life. And that brings us to submit ourselves to each other since we have learned about the love of God, the wisdom of God, the greatness of God, and His sufficiency in all of the circumstances of life.

So what is our conclusion. We must be "filled with the Spirit" Who alone can enable us to do all things through Christ Who strengthens us. Our part is to fill our hearts with the Word day after day; the Holy Spirit will then use the Word to give us the grace and power which we so desperately need.