

Be Filled with the Spirit

Ephesians

By Dr. Steve Hereford

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Changed By Grace

49 N. Bowlan Street

Jacksonville, FL 32211

Website: www.changedbygrace.org

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/changedbygrace

We are going to take a break from our study of the gospel of John for the purpose of spending some time in completing the book of Ephesians. As you know, on Wednesday night we are in a study of the book of Ephesians, but for this month and next month we are going to spend Wednesday and Sunday studying though the book of Ephesians and one of the purposes is so that in January we can do some things a little differently on Wednesday night in terms of our studies. Many of you know we have a college here and on Monday night we offer classes for that college. And beginning in January we are going to discontinue the Monday night and we are just going to make it a part of our Wednesday night. Basically, you won't see really any difference in what is going on. We will still do our services the way that we do, just those who are taking the classes for credit there will be some differences for them. And the other thing maybe that you will notice, of course, is that we will be offering something different every 12 weeks.

So in order to do that I need to finish the book of Ephesians. That is the book that I am closer to finishing. It will probably take me a couple of years to finish the gospel of John and I don't say that to discourage you. It is just that there are 21 chapters there. And there are only six chapters in Ephesians and we are already halfway through chapter five.

So with all of that in mind I want to encourage you to turn this morning to the book of Ephesians and let's pick up where we left off Wednesday night where we are looking at chapter five and verse 18, Ephesians chapter five and verse 18.

It says, "And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit."¹

In our last study together we looked at the contrast that Paul makes of drunkenness with Spirit control and we saw that the point that he was making had to do with their former pagan practice of becoming drunk in order to commune with the gods. He is basically saying to them that if you want to commune with the living God you don't do that through drunkenness, you do that through being filled with the Holy Spirit.

¹ Ephesians 5:18.

So this morning we are going to look at the second half of this verse that speaks to the filling of the Holy Spirit and we are going to address four areas that we must understand in terms of what he is saying here.

But before we do that, let me tell you what it is not. Being filled with the Spirit is not some dramatic esoteric experience of suddenly being energized and spiritualized into some permanent state of advanced spirituality by a second act of blessing subsequent to salvation. Nor is it some temporary zap that result in ecstatic speech or in earthly visions. Nor is it the notion that you are stoically trying to do God's will with the Holy Spirit's blessing, but basically in your own power.

Being filled with the Spirit is not an act of the flesh which has God's approval, or is it the same as possessing or being indwelt by the Holy Spirit because he indwells every believer at the moment of salvation, nor does it describe a process of progressively receiving him by degrees or in doses.

See, every Christian not only possesses the Holy Spirit, but possesses him in his fullness. God does not parcel out the Spirit. And if he could somehow be divided into various segment or parts he doesn't do that. You get all of the Spirit. It says in John 3:34 that, "He gives the Spirit without measure."²

Last, it is clear from 1 Corinthians 12:13 that the filling of the Holy Spirit is not the same as the baptism of the Holy Spirit because every believer has been baptized with and received the Holy Spirit. As we said last time, Romans 8:9, that if you do not have the Holy Spirit you are not his.

So what is it? What does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit? Well, let me answer that question, first, by having you look at verse 18 and notice the command. There are actually two commands that are in verse 18. The first command we looked at Wednesday night which says, "And be not get drunk with wine."³ That is the first command.

The second command here is to be filled with the Spirit. To be Spirit filled is not a suggestion. Paul is not writing here and just pleading with the believers and say, "Oh, I beg you. I plead with you. Be filled with the Spirit." He is commanding them to be filled with the Spirit.

Those two words, "be filled" that is *pl hrow* (play-ro'-o) in the Greek. It is in the imperative mood. And an imperative is a command. To live the Christian life we must understand the importance of this command because no Christian can fulfill God's will for his life apart from being filled with the Holy Spirit.

Now, understand this. If we do not obey this command, we cannot obey any other simply because we cannot do any of God's will apart from God's Spirit. So then to not be filled with the Spirit it means that you are disobedient and you are, therefore, carnal.

² John 3:34.

³ Ephesians 5:18.

Now carnality, just as being filled with the Spirit is an absolute, let me have you to turn to 1 Corinthians chapter three because Paul uses those words in chapter three when he is addressing the Corinthians. If you want to see a church that was exhibiting vast carnality then read 1 Corinthians. This church was plagued with so many problems. And Paul tells us the root of this. In fact, he tells them in chapter one and verse 10 he says, "I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment,"⁴ which tells me that that was not going on. They were not having the same mind. They were not being made complete in the same judgments. They had divisions existing among them.

And like it says in Proverbs six about the six things that the Lord hates and seven of them are an abomination. What is the last one? The one who sows discord among the brethren. God hates that. And here was a church that was plagued with one division after another division after another division. In fact, chapter six tells us they were taking one another to court and that was an extreme problem.

So if you look there in chapter three Paul says in verse one, "And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men."⁵

He is not saying that they were not spiritual. He just says, "I couldn't speak to you that way. But I had to speak to you as men of flesh, as to babes in Christ."

I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men? For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not mere men?

What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one. I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth.⁶

Notice verse seven. "So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth."⁷

Notice the things he identifies here chapter one verse 10 he identified the division, but he speaks of it specifically here in verse three by saying that "There is jealousy and strife among you."⁸

⁴ 1 Corinthians 1:10.

⁵ 1 Corinthians 3:1.

⁶ 1 Corinthians 3:2-6.

⁷ 1 Corinthians 3:7.

⁸ 1 Corinthians 3:3.

Now, beloved, that is the opposite of being filled with the Spirit. And when you are not filled with the Spirit then you have the opportunity to carry out the deeds of the flesh. In fact, you are in the flesh when you are not in the Spirit. It is that absolute. Carnality is not some state that you entered into and you stay there for a long time and then you get this category of carnal Christian.

Folks, you are either carnal right now or you are spiritual right now. You are either filled with the Spirit right now or you are not. And if you are not filled with the Spirit then you have yielded yourself to the flesh. It is that absolute.

And, again, he notes here that this is what plagued the church, their carnality. See, if we are not filled with the Spirit, we cannot do God's will. We cannot love as he loved. We cannot be the kind of people that he want us to be. In fact, if you go back to Ephesians chapter five and verse one we cannot be imitators of God or imitators of Christ unless we are filled with the Spirit. Our entire Christian life depends on our response to this command. To be Spirit filled is a privilege. That is a privilege that has been granted to God's children in becoming like Christ. It is one of those blessings that we find here in the book of Ephesians.

If you will remember in chapter one, he tells them in verse three... actually he is eulogizing God here and he says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ."⁹

And then from that point on he lists what those blessings are, what those spiritual blessings are like election and predestination. And he talks about our inheritance.

But do you know what, folks? Being able to be filled with the Spirit and becoming like Christ, that is also a blessing because he mentions in chapter one and verse 13 about being sealed with the Holy Spirit. This is a blessing.

In fact, look over in chapter one. What Paul prayed in verse 15 through 23 that the Ephesians to have a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, verse 17. He is praying that they would be Spirit filled.

When he prays in verse 18 that the eyes of their heart may be enlightened he is praying that they be Spirit filled. When he prays over in chapter three—if you remember there is a second prayer in chapter three verses 14 to 21—when he prays that they be strengthened with power through his spirit in the inner man, he is praying that they be Spirit filled.

All of the exhortations of the book of Ephesians is a call to be Spirit filled because no command and no exhortation can be carried out in a manner that pleases God apart from his Spirit. And so since that is the case we need to understand the meaning of being Spirit filled, right? If nothing we do can please God apart from his Spirit then we need to

⁹ Ephesians 1:3.

understand what it means. What does it mean to be filled with the Spirit? Again, it is not a suggestion, it is a command and it is a privilege that we have in becoming like Christ.

But let's notice the meaning now. If you will notice again in verse 18 he says, "Be filled." Again, that word πληρω (play-ro'-o), it is not only an imperative which is a command, but it is also used in the present tense. Now the present tense is a continuous action and it could be translated this way. "Be being kept filled with the Holy Spirit."

Now a verse that would parallel that would be Galatians 5:16. In Galatians 5:16 he gives us an idea of what that means. He says, "But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh."¹⁰

And, again, as I mentioned Wednesday night, it is a walking. It is one step at a time. In fact, it involves a day by day, a moment by moment submission. Being filled is not just a command. It is not just used in the present tense, but it is also used here in the passive voice. And what it means to be in the passive voice is just simply this, to be filled. It indicates that you are the recipient of the action. You can't fill yourself. The Holy Spirit has to fill you. But what you have to do is get out of the way so that he can fill you. You have to deal with those issues in your life that prevent him from filling you, that prevent him from controlling you. You have to do what is necessary not to hinder the process.

What hinders being controlled by the Spirit is sin. That is what hinders you. So this is a command that can only be obeyed when we die to self.

You might ask: What does it mean to die to self?

I think you know the meaning of that, especially if you are married. You know the meaning of that, don't you? But what it means when you die to self.

You say, "Well, maybe I don't really know the exact definition."

Well, let me say it another way. You know when you are not dying to self because your spouse will tell you. When there is conflict in your home or where there is conflict with relationships you think it is more on a physical level, but in chapter six when we get there Paul says we do not wrestle with flesh and blood. This is not some kind of physical conflict. This is a spiritual conflict. And if Satan wants to do anything to your home, it is destroy your relationships and to get you to think that, no, this is only a physical issue. This is an issue between my spouse or my children or this is an issue between my friends.

No, the issue is that you are fleshly and you have yielded to the flesh and Satan is taking advantage of you. So you need to understand that very quickly.

Someone once said—and I will give you this as a definition for dying to self—someone once said that when you are forgotten or neglected or purposely set at naught and you don't sting or hurt with the insult or the oversight, but your heart is happy being counted

¹⁰ Galatians 5:16.

worthy to suffer for Christ, this is dying to self. When your good is evil spoken of, when your wishes are crossed, your advice disregarded, your opinions ridiculed and you refuse to let anger rise within your heart or even defend yourself, but you take it in all patient loving silence, that is dying to self. When you lovingly and patiently bear any disorder or any irregularity or any unpunctuality or any annoyance, when you stand face to face with waste and folly and extravagance, spiritual insensibility and endure it as Jesus endured, that is dying to self. When you are content with any food, any offering, any climate, any society, any raiment, any interruption by the will of God, that is dying to self. When you never care to refer to yourself in conversation or to record your own good works or itch after commendations, when you can truly love to be unknown, that is dying to self. When you can see your brother prosper and have his needs met and can honestly rejoice with him in spirit and feel no envy, no question, nor question God while your own needs are far greater and in desperate circumstances. That is dying to self. When you can receive correction and reproof from one of less stature than yourself and can humbly submit inwardly as well as outwardly, finding no rebellion or resentment rising within your heart, that is dying to self.

I think we have covered that from every angle. This is what it means to die. And you have to do this in order for the Spirit of God to fill you. You have to get out of the way. You have to deal with your sin.

Go back to chapter five and Paul says there in verse two that we are to walk in love. And then in verse three we are not to let immorality or any “impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.”¹¹

If you look down at verse six. He says not to let anyone:

...deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them; for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light.¹²

In verse 11 he further says not to, “participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them.”¹³

All of this has to be either affirmed or denied in order to carry out what he says in verse 18. Do you see how this is connected? Over and over he has talked about the walk of the new man. In chapter four and verse one he says, “Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called.”¹⁴ This is a worthy walk that we have been called to, but the power that you need

¹¹ Ephesians 5:3-4.

¹² Ephesians 5:6-8.

¹³ Ephesians 5:11.

¹⁴ Ephesians 4:1.

in order to work, to carry out that worthy walk is to be filled with the Spirit. It is to be controlled and dominated by him.

See, being filled with the Spirit is more than just filling something up. It carries the idea of permeation and the idea of total control. Again, that word πληρωω (play-ro'-o) many times it is used of a wind filling a sail and thereby carrying the ship along. In other words, to be filled with the Spirit is to be moved along in our Christian life by God himself. It also carries the idea of permeation and that was used of salts permeating meat in order to flavor and preserve it. God wants his Holy Spirit to so permeate the lives of his children and everything they think and say and do so that it will reflect his divine presence.

We want everything to be controlled by him. We want to be yielded to him so that he has total control. You know, people are said to be filled with wine when they are completely under its influence. So they are to be filled with the Spirit. When you are filled with the Spirit you are totally dominated by him. He permeates your life. He flavors your life, if you will. He totally controls you so that he fills you. He dominates you. And when he does that he controls all your thoughts. He controls all your emotions. He controls all your words and all of your actions, total control.

You know, it is interesting. We seem to want to give God just so much control that we want to hold on to things in our lives. And we have what many have termed those closet sins that we don't want to let go of. Well, let me say this. If you have closet sins that you don't want to let go of I can tell you right now that your life is pretty much a disaster because you cannot compartmentalize sin in your life. It is going to affect every single area of your life. If you are having trouble in the thought life, guess what? You are going to be having trouble in other areas as well. If you are struggling with some kind of sinful habit, don't think that that is just isolated to that one situation. What it means is that you have given up control to that also in other areas.

It is like Song of Solomon says, it is the little foxes that spoil the vine. It is the little, little things that you give yourself to until after a while you give yourself to something even greater. Again, you want total control by God, total control by the Spirit, total permeation.

I think of it like this as well. When you are happy... what is happening when you are happy? You are filled with happiness, right? It is controlling you. When you are sad what is happening? You are filled with sadness and that, too, is controlling you. Again, to be filled with the Spirit is to be under his control, under his domination and that will involve the surrender of our will, the surrender of our intellect, the surrender of our bodies, of our time, of our talents and of our treasures. Every area of our life must be thrown open to his dominion.

And, folks, that is what we see in Scripture. In fact, when it says in Luke 4:28 that they were filled with wrath, it means that they were controlled by wrath and it was for that reason that they tried to kill Jesus. They were πληρωω (play-ro'-o) with wrath. When it says that the Jews in Acts 13:45 were πληρωω (play-ro'-o) or filled or controlled with

envy, it means that the Jews were controlled by envy and they opposed the ministry of Paul and Barnabas. It is domination.

What is dominating your life?

You know, we ask this question many times. What is the number one priority of your life? And we get spiritual about it, don't we? Jesus, of course. But then we spend a few days with you and find out it is not Jesus. It is something else. Maybe it is your job. Maybe it is relationships with people. You spend a lot of time hanging out with people and you spend less time hanging out with Jesus.

You say, "Well, how do I hang out with Jesus? I like to do that?"

Well, it is called sitting at home by yourself, turning the TV off, the radio off, the internet off and opening up the Bible that you are holding in your hands and spend time reading it. That is spending time with Jesus. That is spending time with Paul, spending time with Luke or Matthew or spending time with one of the prophets. Overarching it is spending time with the Holy Spirit and it is allowing your mind to be fed, your heart to be fed with the truth of Scripture.

Folks, that is what is so hard about memorizing Scripture. It takes time to sit there and to put that in. It takes a spiritual discipline to do that just like it takes a spiritual discipline to say, "This time, this day I am going to spend time reading the Scripture."

All of us have to do this. All of us have to put it at the first priority and don't think that just because today you have it there, tomorrow it is going to be there as well. You are going to have to work on it again tomorrow and the next day and the next day and the next day to where it does become more of a habit. But even after that, don't think that something else is not going to come in and rob it.

You give yourself in your life to those things that are the most important to you. If it is Scripture then you will spend time in Scripture. But if it is not it will be something else.

Now I know in your mind you are not purposely trying to do that. You are not saying, "Well, you know, I really don't want to have time to read the Word."

In fact, you would be backed to a corner and say, "Listen, I do want to have this time."

But you are just not willing to survey your life to find out why you are not. Maybe you blame it on business. Maybe you say, "Well, I am just so busy. I just have so many things to do. Every day I am doing this, this, this and this."

Well, maybe you need to back up and realize that maybe some of those things could be better organized. Maybe you are not one who works with a schedule. You work running after the pressures and the deadlines upon you. It is so easy to make the time and it is

also so hard because in order to do that you have to die, right? You have to die to yourself.

I tell you. I am being re reminded of this right now with having a little baby in our home. I mean it has been 15 years since we have had a little baby and we are fixing to have another one. And so I am being re reminded of what that time was like, of how many times my time was very interrupted. You know, prior to this it was more structured, but now, you know, it is like I walk through the house and, you know, I am just going to the bathroom that I have to stop because I see my wife trying to take care of Cody and I want to help and I want to play with him, too. I want to talk in tongues to him, you know?

But that doesn't help, does it, when you have got something to do and it is called Scripture that time in it.

But I am being re reminded of what it means to die to self in three o'clock in the morning when he cries and your wife is laying there, you know, almost six months pregnant and you hear her move and every move she makes is followed by a moan or a groan. And I am thinking to myself, "Do I act like I don't hear this? Or do I die to self and get up and..."

I say all that. She helped me out this morning. He has one of those unusual schedules. Whenever he moves over and he is ready to have a bottle in his mouth he lets the whole world know it. He doesn't care what time it is. But, again, that is just learning how to die to yourself. And I can't think of any other practical ways than that. You know, this little child is dependent on somebody else to take care of him and we have, you know, five people in our home that can help out, right?

Right, where's my kids?

So, again, you know, you are learning how to do these things. But at the same time there is a way that God's Word can still be a priority. It can still be number one. And it takes godly conversation. It takes talking about Scripture. It takes listening to Scripture. I love walking through the house and hearing preaching playing and it is not just coming from my study. It is coming from the kitchen because my wife is listening to Scripture while she is doing things or listening to the Word being taught while she is taking care of this little one here.

And it takes things like that even though the cries and the demands interrupt those opportunities. You just keep going at it.

John MacArthur, he writes, "Being filled with the Spirit is living in the conscious presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, letting his mind through the Word dominate everything that is thought and done." You say that last part again. It is letting his mind through the Word dominate everything that is thought and done.

You want it to dominate you. When something dominates you it controls you. And that is the point.

Well, Scripture gives us illustrations of this and let me have you to turn to Acts chapter two and we can learn best by looking at others and see how they were filled with the Spirit. We see in Acts chapter two in the first four verses that what happened on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came, if you remember, they were told to wait there for the promise of the Father. And you will find out in chapter two that the promise of the Father was given.

Jesus said, “It was to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away the Holy Spirit will not come.”

And we have example of Scripture where the Father sends the Holy Spirit and where Jesus sends the Holy Spirit. And it says there in verse one, chapter two of Acts:

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.¹⁵

Now, as you continue to read the chapter you learn that this was not some gibberish like I do with Cody. He does not understand when I am doing that. He just laughs and probably thinks, what an idiot. And we laugh together.

It is not gibberish. It is not pagan ecstasy. See, again, that was the problem with their drunkenness they were participating not only in drunken orgies, but also this ecstatic language whereby they were thinking that they were communing with God. And we have examples in Scripture where God does not want us to come to him in that way. He wants us to not use vain repetition battol ogew (bat-tol-og-eh'-o). He doesn't want us to come with batto, batto, batto. He doesn't want us coming to him speaking in gibberish. He wants us to come to him speaking clearly.

And you can read that in Matthew six.

And this gift that evidenced itself in speaking these languages was a known language and we know that because it says in verse seven:

They were amazed and astonished, saying, “Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we each hear them in our own...”¹⁶

What? Language. And then he mentions those nationalities in verses nine through 11.

¹⁵ Acts 2:1-4.

¹⁶ Acts 2:7-8

And so here we see the coming of the Holy Spirit. We see the promise of the Father.

Now what is the evidence that occurred from this point that we can see one being filled with the Spirit? Look down at verse 14.

But Peter, taking his stand with the eleven, raised his voice and declared to them: "Men of Judea and all you who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you and give heed to my words. For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only the third hour of the day; but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel: 'AND IT SHALL BE IN THE LAST DAYS,' God says, 'THAT I WILL POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT ON ALL MANKIND; AND YOUR SONS AND YOUR DAUGHTERS SHALL PROPHECY, AND YOUR YOUNG MEN SHALL SEE VISIONS, AND YOUR OLD MEN SHALL DREAM DREAMS; EVEN ON MY BONDSLAVES, BOTH MEN AND WOMEN, I WILL IN THOSE DAYS POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT And they shall prophesy. AND I WILL GRANT WONDERS IN THE SKY ABOVE AND SIGNS ON THE EARTH BELOW, BLOOD, AND FIRE, AND VAPOR OF SMOKE. THE SUN WILL BE TURNED INTO DARKNESS AND THE MOON INTO BLOOD, BEFORE THE GREAT AND GLORIOUS DAY OF THE LORD SHALL COME. AND IT SHALL BE THAT EVERYONE WHO CALLS ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.'

"Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know—this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power. For David says of Him, 'I SAW THE LORD ALWAYS IN MY PRESENCE; FOR HE IS AT MY RIGHT HAND, SO THAT I WILL NOT BE SHAKEN. THEREFORE MY HEART WAS GLAD AND MY TONGUE EXULTED; MOREOVER MY FLESH ALSO WILL LIVE IN HOPE; BECAUSE YOU WILL NOT ABANDON MY SOUL TO HADES, NOR ALLOW YOUR HOLY ONE TO UNDERGO DECAY. YOU HAVE MADE KNOWN TO ME THE WAYS OF LIFE; YOU WILL MAKE ME FULL OF GLADNESS WITH YOUR PRESENCE.'

"Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. And so, because he was a prophet and knew that GOD HAD SWORN TO HIM WITH AN OATH TO SEAT one OF HIS DESCENDANTS ON HIS THRONE, he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ,

that HE WAS NEITHER ABANDONED TO HADES, NOR DID His flesh SUFFER DECAY.

“This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear. For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says: ‘THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, “SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES A FOOTSTOOL FOR YOUR FEET.”’

“Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified.”¹⁷

Now what did I just do?

Well, I read to you a sermon. And when I was reading that sermon I wanted you to notice that Peter when he preached it was filled with the Holy Spirit. How do we know he was dominated by the Holy Spirit? Because Scripture was dominating him.

Everything he said was Scripture. He preached to them about their murdering their Messiah. The Holy Spirit when he came and the noise that he created drew the crowds together and in drawing the crowds together Peter stands up with the 11 and he preaches Christ to them.

Now what is so interesting about this is the last scene that we have of Peter is Peter had denied the Lord. And you think, wow, he is crushed. He went out and wept bitterly.

You think, well, the Lord was finished with him.

And yet when the Holy Spirit comes who is the one standing up and speaking? Peter. Something happened.

You notice that when you study the life of Peter in terms of seeing him with Jesus, do you hear him saying the miraculous, doing the miraculous? At one point Jesus asks, “Who do you say that I am?”

Peter says, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

“Peter, flesh and blood didn’t reveal that to you, but my Father in heaven did.”

Or Jesus is coming to them walking on the water. What does Peter do?

“Lord, can I come out?”

¹⁷ Acts 2:14-36.

Every time he was with Jesus he was doing the miraculous and saying the miraculous. But when he was away from Jesus he fell apart. He denied the Lord three times. And he, as the rest of them, they were saying that they would die with him. They would not forsake him. But the prophesy said, "Smite the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered."¹⁸ And that is what happened.

But now you read in Acts chapter two and you hear him preaching on the day of Pentecost and you hear him doing the miraculous, saying the miraculous as if he is right there with Jesus. And, folks, that is what it means to be filled with the Spirit. It is as if you are right there with Jesus. And he is using you. He is using your mouth. He is using your lips. You say the miraculous. You do the miraculous. And that is what we see him doing right here. In fact, it wasn't him alone.

Sure, the apostles... chapter four, Peter and John were arrested. You remember in chapter three there was the healing of the lame man that was lying there in the temple and he was begging for alms. Peter and John said to him, "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk," and he did.

They are doing the miraculous. They are healing just like Jesus healed. They were given that authority if you remember in Matthew chapter 10. They were to heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers. Freely you have received, freely you have been given, freely give it to others. And they were doing the miraculous and now they are at this point to where they are in jail and they are basically told in chapter four and verse seven, "By what power or in what name have you done this?" referring back to the healing of the lame man.

What does it say in verse eight?

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers and elders of the people, if we are on trial today for a benefit done to a sick man, as to how this man has been made well, let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by this name this man stands here before you in good health. He is the **STONE WHICH WAS REJECTED** by you, **THE BUILDERS**, but **WHICH BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER** stone. And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."¹⁹

Now how do you think the people responde dot that? Well, it tells us verse 13. "Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and began to recognize them as having been..."²⁰ with who?

¹⁸ Zechariah 13:7.

¹⁹ Acts 4:8-12.

²⁰ Acts 4:13.

Peter now was acting as if Jesus was right there with him.

And what does it say in the text, verse 13? "They observed the confidence."²¹

Do you struggle with sharing the gospel with someone? You don't feel confident? The answer is be filled with the Spirit and you will.

If you will notice it tells us later on in chapter four that they were basically put out and they were told not to speak in that name anymore. It says in verse 21:

When they had threatened them further, they let them go (finding no basis on which to punish them) on account of the people, because they were all glorifying God for what had happened; for the man was more than forty years old on whom this miracle of healing had been performed.

When they had been released, they went to their own companions and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. And when they heard this, they lifted their voices to God with one accord.²²

Now I want you to notice their prayer. They pray this.

O Lord, it is You who MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA, AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM, who by the Holy Spirit, through the mouth of our father David Your servant, said, 'WHY DID THE GENTILES RAGE, AND THE PEOPLES DEVISE FUTILE THINGS? THE KINGS OF THE EARTH TOOK THEIR STAND, AND THE RULERS WERE GATHERED TOGETHER AGAINST THE LORD AND AGAINST HIS CHRIST.'

For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur. And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Your bond-servants may speak Your word with all confidence, while You extend Your hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Your holy servant Jesus."

And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness.²³

²¹ Ibid.

²² Acts 4:21-24.

²³ Acts 4:25-31.

Beloved, you want boldness? It comes by being filled with the Holy Spirit. It doesn't say that they spoke in tongues, does it? It says that they spoke the Word of God, the Word of God with boldness.

See the profit of your time of putting Jesus first and the Word of God first and spending that time in that Word on a daily basis. Listen, God is going to use that. Not only will that purify your mind and wash away that trash and that garbage that I was talking about Wednesday night, but God will use you in a very miraculous way.

And so we see here an illustration of the apostles. We see the illustration of Peter. I want you to notice over in chapter nine of Acts, chapter nine records the conversion of Saul, Saul who later became known as Paul. And if you remember how he was heading to Damascus and he saw a great light from heaven. He fell off his horse. A light blinded him. He heard a voice saying to him:

“Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?”

And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" And He said, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting, but get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do."²⁴

And it says in chapter nine verse seven:

The men who traveled with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; and leading him by the hand, they brought him into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.²⁵

And then the story shifts to Ananias. Ananias is told to go to Paul and to lay his hands on him so that he would recover with his sight. And, of course, Ananias said, “I have heard about this man, how he has been persecuting others. I have heard about the harm that he did to your saints,” verse 13, “how that he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call upon your name.”

But God tells him:

Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake.²⁶

So verse 17 says, “Ananias departed.”

²⁴ Acts 9:4-6.

²⁵ Acts 9:7-9.

²⁶ Acts 9:15-16.

In other words, Ananias obeyed the Lord, right? And he departed and he went to the house. He entered the house and after laying his hands on him he said this.

“Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.”

And immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he regained his sight, and he got up and was baptized; and he took food and was strengthened. Now for several days he was with the disciples who were at Damascus, and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God."²⁷

So what happened?

After he received the Holy Spirit, after he was filled with the Holy Spirit what did he do? He began to proclaim that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and they were amazed.

It says there in verse 21:

All those hearing him continued to be amazed, and were saying, "Is this not he who in Jerusalem destroyed those who called on this name, and who had come here for the purpose of bringing them bound before the chief priests?"

But Saul kept increasing in strength and confounding the Jews who lived at Damascus by proving that this Jesus is the Christ.²⁸

Or the Messiah.

And so you see there in that illustration of Paul that how when he was filled with the Holy Spirit he preached that Jesus was the Christ. He proved that Jesus was the Christ. He confounded the Jews who were resisting the Messiah. He confounded them with the Word of God.

You go on to chapter 17 you find out when he went down into Berea, the Bereans were more noble minded than the Thessalonians because they searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so, the very things that Paul was preaching to them. He reasoned with them in Thessalonica from the Scriptures.

Paul was schooled in the Scriptures. He knew the Scriptures and it wasn't until he was born again did he fully understand what they meant.

²⁷ Acts 9:17-20.

²⁸ Acts 9:21-22.

We need to ask a question at this point. We see the command to be filled with the Spirit. We see what it means to be filled with the Spirit, it being a continuous action, it involving a day by day, moment by moment submission, carrying the ideas of permeation and total control. We see the illustration of the apostles, the illustration of Peter, the illustration of Paul. So how are we doing? What are the means by which we are filled with the Spirit?

Well, I think have already been hitting on that, haven't I? Understand this. God commands nothing for which he does not provide the means to obey. And if God command something of us, we do not need to pray for it because it is obviously his will and his intent for us to do it. It is God's deepest desire that each of his children be filled with his Spirit. We only need to discover the resources that he provides in order for us to carry out our obedience.

What are the resources? That is what I want to hit on now. What are the resources that he provides for us to obey this command? I will give them to you very simply: confession and repentance, death to self, prayer and submission.

Let's take them one at a time, confession and repentance. You go to chapter four of Ephesians and in chapter four as he is telling them the differences, the changes, now, he tells them about affirming Christ and walking in him and not walking as the Gentiles walk because you didn't learn Christ in this way. But you are renewed in the spirit of your mind and you are putting on the new self which is in the likeness of God that has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

And so therefore in verse 25 you are going to lay aside falsehood and now you are going to speak the truth. So you are going to change from lying to speaking truth.

Verse 26, you are going to change from unrighteous anger to righteous anger.

Verse 28, you are going to change from stealing to now sharing.

Verse 29, you are going to change from unwholesome words to now having edifying words.

And what does he tell you in verse 30? "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption."²⁹

Beloved, if you are not filled with the Spirit or let's say it in this way in terms of the context, if you are walking like the Gentiles walk in the futility of your mind, you are grieving the Holy Spirit. If you are not being renewed in the Spirit of your mind and you are not putting on the new self, you are grieving the Holy Spirit. If you are lying and not speaking truth you are grieving the Holy Spirit. If you have unrighteous anger that dominates and controls you, you are not being filled with the Spirit, you are grieving the Holy Spirit. If you are stealing and not sharing you are grieving the Holy Spirit. If you

²⁹ Ephesians 4:30.

have unwholesome words that come out of your mouth instead of edifying words then you are grieving the Holy Spirit.

And so Paul summarizes in verse 31.

Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.³⁰

In other words, “be imitators of God as beloved children and walk in love.”³¹

You see, beloved, if you are sinning you are grieving the Holy Spirit.

What does it say in 1 John 1:9? “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”³²

Beloved, that is the habit of your life now.

You say, “Well, I don’t have to confess my sin because all my sin has been laid at the cross and it is all forgiven and so therefore I don’t need to confess it.”

Well, let me ask you this. Is that your view? Then why do you confess it?

You go, “Well, I... yeah, I guess I do.”

When you sin you know that grieves your heavenly Father. What is your first response?

“Father, forgive me for what I have done.”

And your heart is smitten with conviction and you are like David, “Have mercy upon me, oh Lord for I have sinned against you and what I have done has been wickedness in your sight.”

Isn’t that what you do?

And as I said last time, confession also has to be coupled with repentance. You confess the heinousness of that sin, you also have to repent. Repent means to turn. You have to turn from it. It is not just that you are promising not to do it anymore. You don’t do it anymore. And you rise up in the strength of the Scripture, in obedience to the Scripture so that you do not do that again, right?

³⁰ Ephesians 4:31-32.

³¹ Ephesians 5:1-2.

³² 1 John 1:9.

So it is through the confession and the repentance of sin is the first means by which allows us to be filled with the Spirit. The second one is through the death itself, due to death itself.

Romans 8:13 says, “For if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.”³³

It is by the Spirit that you overcome sin. It is by the Spirit that you die to self. You can't do this on your own. You can't obey what is in the Word of God on your own. It is just going to be carried out in the flesh and that is not going to please God. You have to do it by his Spirit.

Look at Colossians three and look at verse five. Paul tells the Colossians that since:

...you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.³⁴

Because of this... here is the therefore...

...consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience, and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them.

But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him.³⁵

See, beloved, you have a different life, totally different, totally transformed. In order to be filled with the Spirit you have to be confessing, repenting from sin. I have to die to self so that the Spirit of God can control me.

One writer said this. “Just as you left or have left the whole burden of your sin and have rested on the finished work of Christ, so leave the whole burden of your life and service and rest upon the present in working of the Holy Spirit. Give yourself up morning by morning to be led by the Holy Spirit and go forth praising and at rest, leaving him to manage you and your day. Cultivate the habit, all through the day of joyful depending on

³³ Romans 8:13.

³⁴ Colossians 3:1-4.

³⁵ Colossians 3:5-10.

and obeying him, expecting him to guide, to enlighten, to reprove, to teach, to use and to do in and with you what he wills. Count upon his working as a fact, altogether apart from sight or feeling. Only let us believe in and obey the Holy Spirit as the ruler of our lives and cease from the burden of trying to manage ourselves. Then shall the fruit of the Spirit appear in us as he wills to the glory of God.”

And how are you going to do that? That is the third prayer. How do you surrender yourself to prayer?

We just read this, Acts 4:31. “And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness.”³⁶

Confession, repentance, death of self, prayer. The last one is submission.

You are still in Colossians three. He tells them in verse 12:

So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful.³⁷

Very interesting where it says “the peace of Christ rule in your hearts,”³⁸ the word there refers to an umpire. You know what an umpire is, the guy that stands behind the catcher in a baseball game, “Strike, ball.” You know, he is the guy calling all the... he is doing all the calls right there. That is one sport I played.

So he is there umpiring. He is calling the shots. He is the one guy calling the rules. He says here, “Let the peace of God control everything. Let it rule you.”

But he doesn’t stop there. He says, “Be thankful.”

And he doesn’t stop there. Verse 16:

Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.³⁹

³⁶ Acts 4:31.

³⁷ Colossians 3:12-15.

³⁸ Colossians 3:15.

³⁹ Colossians 3:16.

And go back to chapter five. Look at verse 19. He has just told them to be filled with the Spirit and he says:

...speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.⁴⁰

What are you hearing? You are hearing the same thing. Because this is a parallel. What Paul writes to the Ephesians here in chapter five and beginning at verse 19 on into chapter six of verse four is paralleled in Colossians three beginning at verse 16 on into chapter four.

The commands are different, though. That is, they are stated differently. It says in Ephesians 5:18 to be filled with the Spirit. It says in Colossians 3:16, "Let the Word of Christ richly dwell within you."⁴¹

What does it mean to be filled with the Spirit? It means to be controlled by the Word.

How do we know that? The results are the same. To be filled with the Spirit I will speak to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. I will sing and make a melody in my heart to the Lord. I will give thanks in all things in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. I will be submissive to one another in the fear of Christ. Wives will be subject to their own husbands. Husbands will love their wives as Christ loved the Church. Children will be obedient to their parents. Slaves will be obedient to those who are their masters and masters will do the same. They will give up threatening knowing that their master and yours is in heaven and there is no partiality with him.

And if you go to chapter three of Colossians you are going to read the same thing. He says, "Let the Word of Christ dwell in your richly."⁴² And when that happens then whatever you do it is going to cause you to give thanks. Wives are going to be subject to their husbands. Husbands are going to love their wives. Children are going to be obedient to their parents. Fathers are not going to exasperate their children. Slaves are going to obey those who are their masters and masters are going to do the same.

So do you see that? It is read differently to both churches, but it is the same results. So if it is the same results, being filled with the Spirit means letting the Word of Christ richly dwell within you. So that goes all the way back to the priorities I was talking about. You have got to let the Word of Christ dwell in your richly. In order to do that you have got to put it first and when you put it first it means you are going to get in it and you are going to allow it to get into you. And when the Word of God gets into you, guess what it is going to do. It is going to umpire you. It is going to call the shots. It is going to control

⁴⁰ Ephesians 5:19-21.

⁴¹ Colossians 3:16.

⁴² Ibid.

you. You are not going to be one running around with all these emotional feelings and being driven by your emotions. You are going to be one driven by the Word. You are going to make decisions.

You are going to say, “Wow, first time in my whole life I have got a Scripture for that decision now.”

Why? Because you have been in the Word. And the Holy Spirit is bringing that Word back to your mind.

Folks, don't think that when I stand up here that I am able to write everything down I say. God the Holy Spirit brings verses to my mind as I stand up here that I do not plan to share. He brings illustrations to my mind that I do not plan to share, just as I am speaking it comes to my mind and I go, that makes sense. That goes right here. That goes there and so I just share it. Everything that we just did in the book of Acts was not in my notes. That was the Holy Spirit doing that.

We think this is something mystical and ethereal. It is not any of that. Letting the Word of Christ control you, being filled with the Spirit meaning that the Word of God dominates you, it involves several things, real simple. It involves reading the Word, studying the Word and obeying the Word.

If you could focus just on those three things I think it will revolutionize your life.

I like what Ray Comfort and Kirk Cameron say. Read your Bible and obey what you read. I love that. That is simply put. Read your Bible and obey what you read.

We are to be controlled by the Holy Spirit. This is a continual process whereby we surrender full control of our lives on a daily, moment by moment basis and when that occurs guess what? The fruit of the Spirit will be produced.

Galatians 5:22, “Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control...”⁴³ All that will be produced in your life when you are filled with the Spirit. But listen, in order to be filled with the Spirit you have got to have him.

And what did he say in Romans 8:9? If you do not have the Holy Spirit you are not his. So if you are a Christian you have the Holy Spirit. If you are in here this morning and you are not a Christian, you don't have the Holy Spirit. You get the Holy Spirit the moment you believe. And so if you are in here this morning and up to this moment you haven't believed, I want to call you to believe. I want to call you to believe what the Scripture says. I want to call you to believe that Jesus is who he claims to be, that he is Lord, he is God, he is Messiah, he is Christos, he is the anointed one. He is the one who is to come. He is the one who took yours and my sin in his own body on the cross. He resurrected on the third day and death did not hold him.

⁴³ Galatians 5:22-23.

Beloved, I want to call you to repent and turn to Christ. And once that happens, once you do that, the Bible says that you will be given his Holy Spirit and that all this will make sense.

So, beloved, this is something that we are to focus on every day. And listen. As I said Wednesday, this is the key to fulfilling chapters four, five and six in the book of Ephesians. Remember the first half of Ephesians? There is six chapters. The first three chapters, position. This is who you are in Christ. The last three chapters, practice. Because this is who you are in Christ, this is how you are to live. And you... just pick it up. Pick up in chapter four and start reading and you will see all these different things that he is calling you to do. And then in chapter five and verse 18 he gives you the key. And the key is the filling of the Holy Spirit.

The only way that we can be unified as a church is that we all be filled with the Spirit. So, beloved, that is what we desire. We desire that personally in our life. We desire that in your life.

Father, we thank you for this morning and the study of your Word. I pray that you would grant us the wisdom, the understanding from this passage this morning as we look at this. And cause us to see, Father, the priority and purpose. Cause us to have the passion that comes from your Spirit and cause us to obey these things that we have learned today. We pray, Father, [?] there is some that are unsaved in our midst, I pray right now that you would save them, that you would show them their sin, their need of Christ, that they would turn to you believing. And we pray these things in your name. Amen.

INTRODUCTION

1. We are taking a break from our study of the gospel of John so that we can spend our time completing our study in the book of Ephesians.
2. This month and next we will look at this letter on both Sunday and Wednesday so that in January we can devote our attention to areas of study that will also benefit our college.
3. Currently our college classes are on Monday nights but beginning in January that will end and the teaching in our Wednesday services will reflect the type of studies we have been doing in our college.
4. For many of you, you will not notice a difference. It just means every 12 weeks we will be in a new study.
5. So with that in mind, take your Bibles and turn to Ephesians chapter 5 as we consider again verse 18.
6. Paul says in **Ephesians 5:18 (NASB77)** ¹⁸ And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit.
7. In our last study we looked at *the contrast* that Paul makes of drunkenness with Spirit control.

8. And we saw that the point he was making had to do with their former pagan practice of becoming drunk in order to commune with the gods.
9. He is saying, “If you want to commune with the living God, you don’t do that through drunkenness, you do that through the filling of the Holy Spirit.”
10. So this morning, we are going to look at the second half of this verse that speaks to *the filling of the Holy Spirit* and address 4 areas that must be understood for being filled with the Spirit.
11. But before we look at these 4 areas, let me suffice it to say that being filled with the Spirit is not some “dramatic, esoteric experience of suddenly being energized and spiritualized into a permanent state of advanced spirituality by a second act of blessing subsequent to salvation. Nor is it some temporary “zap” that results in ecstatic speech or unearthly visions.
12. Nor is it “the notion at the other extreme—simply stoically trying to do what God wants us to do, with the Holy Spirit’s blessing but basically in our own power.
13. It is not an act of the flesh which has God’s approval” or is it “the same as possessing, or being indwelt by, the Holy Spirit, because He indwells every believer at the moment of salvation.

14. Nor does it “describe a process of progressively receiving Him by degrees or in doses.
15. Every Christian not only possesses the Holy Spirit but possesses Him in His fullness. God does not parcel out the Spirit, as if He could somehow be divided into various segments or parts. “He gives the Spirit without measure,” Jesus said (John 3:34).
16. Last, it is clear from 1 Corinthians 12:13 that the filling with the Spirit is not the same as the baptism of the Spirit, because every believer has been baptized with and received the Spirit.¹
17. So what is it?
18. Let’s answer that question first by noticing *the command* Paul gives in verse 18 to be filled with the Spirit.

¹John MacArthur, *Ephesians* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1996, c1986). 247.

I. The Command to Being Spirit-Filled

“But be filled with the Spirit.”

A. To Be Spirit-Filled is Not a Suggestion, It’s a Command

The words “be filled” (pleroo) are in the imperative mood.

1. An imperative is a command
2. To live the Christian life we must understand the importance of this command

No Christian can fulfill God’s will for his life apart from being filled with His Spirit. If we do not obey this command, we cannot obey any other—simply because we cannot do any of God’s will apart from God’s Spirit.²

3. To not be filled with the Spirit means:
 - a) You are disobedient and therefore carnal

²John MacArthur, *Ephesians* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1996, c1986). 248.

1 Corinthians 3:1-5 (NASB77) ¹ And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to babes in Christ. ² I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able *to receive it*. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, ³ for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men? ⁴ For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not *mere* men? ⁵ What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave *opportunity* to each one.

b) If we're not filled with the Spirit we cannot do God's will, love as He loved or be the kind of people He wants us to be

4. Our entire Christian life depends on our response to this command

B. To Be Spirit-Filled is the Privilege We Have in Becoming Like Christ

It is one of the blessings found in the book of Ephesians.

1. When Paul prayed in chapter 1:15-23 for the Ephesians to have “a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him” (v.17), he is praying that they be Spirit-filled.
2. When he prays that “the eyes of their heart may be enlightened” (v.18), he is praying that they be Spirit-filled.
3. When he prays in chapter 3:14-21 that they “be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man” (v.16), he is praying that they be Spirit-filled.
4. All the exhortations in the book of Ephesians is a call to be Spirit-filled because no command or exhortation can be carried out in a manner that pleases God apart from His Spirit.

Let’s talk about what it means to be Spirit-Filled.

II. The Meaning of Being Spirit-Filled

A. It is a Continuous Action

Be filled is used in the present tense to indicate a continuous action. It is literally “be being kept filled.”

Galatians 5:16 (NASB77) ¹⁶ But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.

B. It Involves a Day-By-Day, Moment-By-Moment Submission

“Be filled” is used in the passive voice which means “to be filled.

This indicates that you are the recipient of the action, which means you don’t fill yourself; the Spirit fills or controls you. You have to do what is necessary to not hinder the process. What hinders being controlled by the Spirit is sin.

This then is a command that can only be obeyed when you die to self.

What does it mean to “die to self?”

Someone once said, “When you are forgotten, or neglected, or purposely set at naught, and you don’t sting and hurt with the insult or the oversight, but your heart is happy, being counted worthy to suffer for Christ, that is dying to self.

When your good is evil spoken of, when your wishes are crossed, your advice disregarded, your opinions ridiculed, and you refuse to let anger rise in your heart, or even defend yourself, but take it all in patient, loving silence, that is dying to self.

When you lovingly and patiently bear any disorder, any irregularity, any unpunctuality, or any annoyance; when you stand face-to-face with waste, folly, extravagance, spiritual insensibility and endure it as Jesus endured, that is dying to self.

When you are content with any food, any offering, any climate, any society, any raiment, any interruption by the will of God, that is dying to self.

When you never care to refer to yourself in conversation, or to record your own good works, or itch after commendations, when you can truly love to be unknown, that is dying to self.

When you can see your brother prosper and have his needs met and can honestly rejoice with him in spirit and feel no envy, nor question God, while your own needs are far greater and in desperate circumstances, that is dying to self.

When you can receive correction and reproof from one of less stature than yourself and can humbly submit inwardly as well as outwardly, finding no rebellion or

resentment rising up within your heart, that is dying to self.”

1. Paul says in verse 2 of chapter 5 of Ephesians that we are to “walk in love” and not let “immorality or any impurity or greed even be named among you, as is proper among saints; and there must be no filthiness, and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks” (vv.3-4).
 2. In verse 6-8 he says not to “let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes on the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them. For you were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.”
 3. In verse 11 he further says not to “participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them.”
 4. All of this has to be either affirmed or denied in order to carry out verse 18.
- C. It Means More than Filling Something Up. It Carries the Idea of Permeation and Total Control

1. The Greek word for “filling” is pleroo and many times it was used of the wind filling a sail and thereby carrying the ship along.

“To be filled with the Spirit is to be moved along in our Christian life by God Himself”
(MacArthur).

2. It also carries the idea of permeation, and was used of salt’s permeating meat in order to flavor and preserve it.

“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”
(MacArthur).

3. Pleroo also has the connotation of total control

People are said to be filled with wine when they are completely under its influence; so they are said to be **filled with the Spirit** when he controls all their thoughts, feelings, words, and actions.³

In other words, when you’re happy you’re totally controlled by happiness at that moment. When you’re filled with sadness, you’re totally

³Charles Hodge, *Ephesians*, The Crossway classic commentaries (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1994). Eph 5:18.

controlled by sadness. When you're filled with the Spirit, you're totally controlled by the Spirit. To be Spirit-filled is to "be under His total domination and control" (MacArthur) which "involves the surrender of our will, our intellect, our body, our time, our talents, and our treasures. Every area of life must be thrown open to His dominion."⁴

This is what we see in Scripture. "They... were filled with wrath" (Luke 4:28) means "they were controlled by wrath" and for that reason tried to kill Jesus. "The Jews were filled with envy" (Acts 13:45) means that the Jews were controlled by envy and opposed the ministry of Paul and Barnabas.⁵

John MacArthur says, "Being filled with the Spirit is living in the conscious presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, letting His mind, through the

⁴William MacDonald and Arthur Farstad, *Believer's Bible Commentary : Old and New Testaments* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1995). Eph 5:18.

⁵Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1996, c1989). Eph 5:19.

Word, dominate everything that is thought and done.”⁶

III. The Illustration of Being Spirit-Filled

A. The Apostles

1. **Acts 2:1-4 (NASB77)** ¹ And when the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. ² And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent, rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. ⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.
2. **Acts 4:31 (NASB77)** ³¹ And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and *began* to speak the word of God with boldness.

B. Peter

⁶John Jr MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, electronic ed. (Nashville: Word Pub., 1997, c1997). Eph 5:18.

1. Acts 2:14-36
2. Acts 4:1-12

C. Paul

1. **Acts 9:17 (NASB77)** ¹⁷ And Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit."
2. **Acts 13:9 (NASB77)** ⁹ But Saul, who was also *known as* Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, fixed his gaze upon him.

IV. The Means of Being Spirit-Filled

God commands nothing for which He does not provide the means to obey. And if God commands something of us, we do not need to pray for it, because it is obviously His will and intent for us to do it. It is God's deepest desire that each of His children be filled with His Spirit. We only need to discover the resources He has provided to carry out that obedience.⁷

⁷John MacArthur, *Ephesians* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1996, c1986). 251.

What are those resources? Confession and repentance, death to self, prayer, and submission.

A. Through the Confession and Repentance of Sin

Ephesians 4:30 (NASB77) ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

B. Through the Death of Self

Romans 8:13 (NASB77) ¹³ for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

Colossians 3:5 (NASB77) ⁵ Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.

An unknown author writes: Just as you have left the whole burden of your sin, and have rested on the finished work of Christ, so leave the whole burden of your life and service, and rest upon the present inworking of the Holy Spirit. Give yourself up, morning by morning, to be led by the Holy Spirit and go forth praising and at rest, leaving Him to manage you and your day. Cultivate the habit all through the day, of joyfully depending upon and obeying Him, expecting Him to guide, to enlighten, to reprove, to teach, to use, and to do in and with you what He

wills. Count upon His working as a fact, altogether apart from sight or feeling. Only let us believe in and obey the Holy Spirit as the Ruler of our lives, and cease from the burden of trying to manage ourselves; then shall the fruit of the Spirit appear in us as He wills to the glory of God.⁸

C. Through Prayer

Acts 4:31 (NASB77) ³¹ And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and *began* to speak the word of God with boldness.

D. Through Submission

Colossians 3:16 (NASB77) ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

Letting “the word of Christ richly dwell within you” is synonymous with being filled with the Spirit. Being filled with the Spirit is to be controlled by the

⁸William MacDonald and Arthur Farstad, *Believer's Bible Commentary : Old and New Testaments* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1995). Eph 5:18.

Word. This involves reading the word, studying it, and obeying it.⁹

CONCLUSION

1. We are to be controlled by the Holy Spirit.
2. This is to be a continual process whereby we surrender full control of our lives on a daily, moment-by-moment basis.
3. When that occurs then spiritual fruit will be produced.
4. **Galatians 5:22-23 (NASB77)** ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.
5. In order to be filled with the Spirit, you must have the Holy Spirit.
6. You get the Holy Spirit the moment you believe.
7. Have you believed in Jesus Christ?
8. Let's pray.

⁹William MacDonald and Arthur Farstad, *Believer's Bible Commentary : Old and New Testaments* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1995). Eph 5:18.