

#59 “The Filling of the Spirit”

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Ephesians 5:18 says, “And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit.” Paul is purposefully setting up a comparison here between drunkenness and the filling of the Spirit. Drunkenness, of course, is wrong, whereas the filling of the Spirit is desirable and commanded of us. Drunkenness and the filling of the Spirit do have some things in common, which is why Paul would attempt to compare them. When a person is drunk, he is controlled by alcohol and totally under the influence of it. When a person is filled with the Spirit, the same principles apply in that he is controlled by the Spirit and totally under the Spirit’s influence and direction. However, there are obvious differences between the influence of alcohol and the filling of the Spirit. For example, alcohol brings out the bad desires of the heart by lowering inhibitions and restricting good judgment. The filling of the Spirit brings out that which is good and full of life, increasing good judgment and sharpening our relationship with God. When a believer is filled with the Spirit, he is fully surrendered and submitted to the rule and will of God in his heart. Self-seeking is abandoned and exchanged for seeking the pleasure and purposes of God. This is not a bitter obedience or an obedience which looks to exalt self, but this is an obedience that is consumed totally and exclusively with the glory of God. The filling of the Spirit moves a person to obey with joy as he is consumed with the awe, majesty, and perfection of God. This is a state of utmost freedom and usefulness to God, and it is a state where believers are commanded to be regularly, continually, and on an ongoing basis.

The filling of the Spirit is available to all believers from day one as a follower of Christ. If we walk in humility and abide with Christ, we can expect to be filled. If we quench the Spirit or grieve Him with sin or pride, we can expect not to be filled. *All believers have the Spirit within their hearts; the issue is whether or not they are letting the Spirit have all of their hearts.* The filling of the Spirit is not some advanced state of being, some higher plane of thinking, or some mystical out of body experience. Rather, it is a yielding to the Spirit’s leading and guiding as we depend upon Him for strength rather than upon ourselves. Those who are filled with the Spirit are able, ready, and willing to receive the truth of God’s Word. The result of the Spirit’s filling is great faithfulness and fruitfulness as God accomplishes great things through us.

How the command to “be filled” is stated is also important. It implies a yielding to the work of God because it commands us to let God do something to us and in us. It doesn’t say “fill yourself” but rather “be filled.” We do have a choice in the matter, but it is a choice to let God do what God wants to do. Such is the submissive nature of the filling of the Spirit. The command also implies that we continue to be filled. We are not to live sometimes filled, but we should be filled all the time. Going from filled to empty and back and forth over and over again speaks of a spiritual instability problem stemming

from pride and sin. God's call is to be continually filled as we continually walk in humility and obedience. As we come before God empty, humble, and in faith, we can trust that His Spirit will fill us and empower us to do His will.

Acts 4:31 says, "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." In verse 28, prior to God's answer of the disciples' prayer, we see their heart in the matter when they say, "Do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur." This is the key in being filled with the Spirit. There was no question about the humility of the disciples or of their desire to obey. They were fully open and surrendered to what God would have them to be and do. They didn't hold on to sin in their hearts, and they were ready and willing to be obedient. As a result, God answered their prayer, filled them with the Spirit, and empowered them to speak forth the Word of God with boldness. The filling of the Spirit takes weak people and makes them spiritually strong. It takes the timid and makes them bold, and it takes the fearful and makes them courageous. When we are filled with the Spirit, there is a distinct difference from when we are not in terms of how God works in and through us to build His kingdom. There is a power, wisdom, and strength there that we just know is not our own. What God accomplishes with those who are filled with the Spirit is plain and simply above and beyond what we as humans could do. It is truly a supernatural event, and it is to be this way all the time.