

Be Filled with the Holy Spirit

Pentecost Sunday

Ephesians 5:18-21

David Sunday

May 27, 2012

May the Lord open our eyes to behold wonderful things in His Word as we study Ephesians 5:18-21.

This is God's Word:

“And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.”

God, we thank You for Your Word which abides forever and pray that You would open our eyes. We pray that You would illuminate our minds. We ask that You would empower me to preach Your Word and that You would give all of us ears to hear, hearts that are eager to receive and wills that are transformed to obey—all for the greater glory of Your Son, our Savior Jesus Who lives and reigns with You and with the Holy Spirit. One God forever and ever. Amen.

Be filled with the Holy Spirit. That’s our topic as we look at this passage on Pentecost Sunday. Maybe you’ve been asked, “Do you belong to a Spirit-filled church?” Or “Are you a Spirit-filled Christian?” You might have found it difficult to answer these questions. Maybe you think that being Spirit-filled is only for a special class of Christians. Or maybe you get suspicious when you hear someone talk about being filled with the Holy Spirit. Our text can clear up a lot of confusion and should expand our vision and fill us with a desire to live continuously in the reality that Paul speaks of here.

Paul is literally commanding Christians to go on continually being filled with the Holy Spirit. This is God’s will for all Christians, not just a few. It’s His will for us always, not just at special times. Every Christian can and should be a Spirit-filled

Christian and every Christian church can and should be a Spirit-filled church. If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, it is God's will for you to be continuously filled with the Spirit.

We're going to look at this subject from three different angles. First of all the meaning—what does it mean to be filled with the Spirit? Secondly, the means—how are we to be filled with the Spirit? Then finally the Marks—what does it look like when we are filled with the Spirit? So the meaning, the means and the marks.

The Meaning of Being Filled with the Holy Spirit

Let's look first of all at what it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit. I need to tell you first what it does **not** mean. It does not mean that we're just a spirited group of people. It's not like school spirit. It's not looking at the church up the street and shouting out as we drive by, "We've got spirit; yes we do. We've got spirit; how 'bout you?"

That's not what Paul's talking about when he talks about being filled with the Holy Spirit. He's talking about God the Holy Spirit here. God the Holy Spirit—One of the blessed three. As Christians we confess this great mystery—we believe in one God Who eternally exists in three Persons: The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, each of Whom is fully and equally God, worthy of adoration and worship. These three are One—the Trinity. The Holy Spirit is eternal God. He's not a force. He's not a fluid. He's not a power. He's not an idea. He is the divine personality. That's why we need to train our minds and speech never to speak of the Holy Spirit as an "it." Don't speak of being filled with "it;" don't call the Holy Spirit "it." He is a Person so we speak of Him with personal pronouns.

The Holy Spirit was there actively involved in the creation of the universe. When the morning stars sang together, rejoicing in the creativity and wisdom of their Maker, He was hovering over the primeval chaos, bringing order, life and light through God's life-giving Word. The Holy Spirit empowered the prophets to preach and guided them as they wrote the Scriptures to ensure every word they wrote was the very Word of God which is eternal and cannot be broken. The Holy Spirit anointed our Lord Jesus Christ in His humanity to preach, teach, heal and perform signs and wonders. He strengthened our Savior during His temptation in the wilderness. He sustained Jesus as He gave up

His life for our sins. He empowered our Lord and Savior to take it up again and to rise from the dead.

On the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit made Himself known to in the world in a way that He had not been known before. He came upon Christ's church in remarkable power and transformed a small band of weak-kneed disciples into a mighty army who turned the world upside down through the preaching of the gospel of the crucified and risen Savior.

This same Holy Spirit is here with us today. He is in us if we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. He dwells in us. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 6:19 to Christians, *"Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God?"* He dwells in us. The Ruler of heaven and earth, the Creator of all things, the infinite and blessed God is not far removed from us. He is near; he is actively present in our lives. A.W. Tozer said that the Holy Spirit is nearer to us than our own bodies and our own breath. God desires to be near and accessible to His people and He indwells us—He lives in us.

So when we talk about being filled with the Holy Spirit of God, God is not asking us to acquire something we don't already have. We have the Holy Spirit dwelling in us if we are in Jesus Christ. Romans 8:9-10 makes this very clear:

"You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness."

So if you have Christ, you have the Holy Spirit. Yet Paul says to us in Ephesians 5:18 that we are to be filled with the Holy Spirit. So what does he mean?

Let's consider a few analogies that help us understand this command.

1. **Direction.** First we might use the analogy of wind filling the sails of a ship. You put up the sails of a ship and as the wind comes and fills those sails, it moves the ship along its course. Likewise, to be filled with the Holy Spirit of God is to be moved or to walk in the path of God's commandments. It is the fullness of the Spirit that enables us to walk in obedience to God and our own desires; our own will power will not suffice to walk in the path that Jesus has

set forth for us. We need to be moved along by the divine energy of God, by the Person of the Holy Spirit. He moves us on the path of God's commandments according to God's will. So to be filled with Him is to gladly submit our lives to the Holy Spirit's direction and to delight in having Him move us along the path of obedience. It's to lift up the sails of our hearts and say, "O breath of God, fill me and direct me in the way You would have me go." Those who belong to Jesus are led by the Spirit and filled by Him to walk in obedience to God.

2. The second analogy we might use is that of **permeation**. If you take a pack of Crystal Light iced tea and pour it into a pitcher of water, those crystals permeate the water. They change the color and taste of the whole liquid. Likewise, it is God's desire for the Holy Spirit to permeate the entirety of our lives so that the very color—the hue—of our lives is the loveliness of Christ, the fragrance of our lives is the fragrance of Christ, the character of our lives is the character of Christ, and we bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit in our lives. So to be filled with the Holy Spirit is to have Him permeating every aspect of our being so our lives increasingly reflect His character.
3. A third analogy is provided for us right here in our text in verse 18. It's an analogy that speaks of **influence, control or domination**. So the first involved direction or motivation moving us in a certain direction, the second involved permeation and now the third describes influence, control or domination.

We see this in verse 18 with the contrast that Paul gives us. *"Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit."* Now if there was ever any doubt whether or not the abuse of alcohol is sinful, this passage makes it very clear. To come under the influence or control of alcohol—to become intoxicated—is not God's will for His people.

What do drunkenness and being filled with the Holy Spirit have in common? Just one thing—they both involve control and influence. Paul is saying don't let yourself live under the controlling influence of alcohol, instead live under the controlling influence of

the Holy Spirit. So that's his analogy here—it's one of control and influence. And that's where the similarities break down because living under the excessive control of alcohol has a very different effect than living under the control of the Holy Spirit. For the one who abuses alcohol, it leads to reckless and excessive living. For the one who is controlled by the Holy Spirit, it leads to self-control. When you're under the control of alcohol, it leads to wastefulness and dissipation, like the prodigal son who threw everything away and was impoverished; he squandered his property in reckless living. But the Holy Spirit makes us productive and wise servants of God. Notice the context here in Ephesians 5:15-17: *"Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is."*

How do you walk in this wisdom? How do you make the most of every opportunity? Well, you must be filled with the Holy Spirit. So alcohol leads to wastefulness but the Holy Spirit leads to productivity and wise stewardship. The abuse of alcohol tends to depress us; it disables the high faculties of our brains so we cannot discern or judge properly or understand. That's why so many terrible accidents and so many harmful things take place when there is drunkenness. But the Holy Spirit actually is a stimulant—He stimulates our joy. He stimulates our understanding of God's Word. He fills our minds with light and truth. The abuse of alcohol exhausts but the fullness of the Spirit puts power into our lives as the Apostle Paul said to Timothy, *"God did not give us a spirit of fear but of power and of love and of self-control"* (2 Timothy 1:7).

So, what is the meaning of being filled with the Holy Spirit? It means to:

- submit yourself to His direction, His leading in your life; to be moved by Him.
- be permeated by His gracious character in every aspect of your being.
- be continually under His influence and His control.

The Means to Be Filled with the Holy Spirit

Now let's look at the means of being filled. How does this happen? Is there anything practical that we need to do in order to be filled with the Spirit? Look at the text carefully. Notice that the command is found in verse 18 and we're not given any specific instructions on how to be filled. I think it's instructive for us that Paul doesn't

give a list of techniques or strategies. We always need to be careful not to add anything to God's Word that is not there. I think there's a reason why Paul doesn't give us a lot of instruction on how to be filled with the Holy Spirit because it's not a technique. It's not something that you've got to do and master.

At the same time, we've got to be wary of doing nothing. We shouldn't respond to a command like this with passivity and just think, "Well, I don't have a clue what that means. I don't know how that happens so I'm just going to move on and forget about this." No, this text of Scripture ought to engage our minds, hearts and wills in a certain direction. So how do we learn the means? How do we know what to do with a commandment like this?

In the book of Ephesians and in this specific verse, there are two very helpful pointers in the right direction: the grammar of verse 18 and also the context of the book of Ephesians. For the means, I'm going to rely on grammar and context to give us four practical instructions on how to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

1. **Be convinced that it is God's will for you** to be filled with the Holy Spirit. God desires this for you as His child. Again, the indwelling of the Spirit is a reality that takes place when you are united with Christ. The fullness of the Spirit is something for you to experience but I think this refers more to the relational aspect of your communion with the Holy Spirit. You need to be convinced that it is God's will for you. The way you know this is because Paul speaks of it in the imperative mood—it is a command: "Be filled." It's not a suggestion. It's not optional. You're not at liberty to ignore it. This is a command to believers—be filled with the Spirit.

So you need to desire this. You need to realize you need this. You need to be under His influence. You need to be moved along by Him. You need to have Him permeating your life. You need to realize that when Jesus died on the cross and said, "It is finished," He accomplished your redemption and the possibility of being filled with the Holy Spirit. That's part of what Jesus purchased when He died on the cross for you. The fullness of the Spirit in your life is part of the accomplishment of redemption. So be convinced this is God's will—it's a command.

2. **Be convinced that this is God's will for us**—in our life together as a church. The verb “be filled” is in the imperative mood and is also plural. In other words, Paul is not just saying individuals should be filled with the Spirit, he's saying to God's people as a body, “be filled with the Spirit together.” As we look at the context of Ephesians 4, what's Paul's talking about in that chapter? Unity in the body of Christ. Then in chapter five, he discusses walking in love in our relationships with one another. It's in that context of the body life that Paul says to the church, “be filled with the Holy Spirit.”

We see the same thing in Paul's prayers in the book of Ephesians. He's not just praying for individual Christians; he's praying for the whole church. Look at the beautiful prayer in 3:14-19. I love to read this wonderful prayer. There is a phrase that we could easily skip over here so let's read it beginning at verse 14:

“For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you [God's people] to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend [and here's the phrase:] with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”

So Paul's desire for the church is that the church together would be filled with all the fullness of God. As we've been reading through the Bible together, recently we read in 1 Kings 8 the dedication of Solomon's temple and how the glory of the Lord—the shekinah glory—filled the temple and so permeated that structure of worship where God dwelt with His people that the priests fell to the ground. They could not stand to minister there because God's glory was so pervasively present. The Holy Spirit manifested the presence of God in such a powerful way.

What we see in Ephesians is that it's God's will for that to be taking place in the church—in our church. We see that specifically at the end of chapter two where Paul talks about how Jesus is the Cornerstone and the whole body is being joined together. Look at what he says in Ephesians 3:21-22: We are growing *“into a holy*

temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.”

It's impossible to really do justice to what Paul is commanding in Ephesians 5:18 in a merely individualistic way. Paul is talking about something that is to be experienced corporately—as a body all together we are to manifest that God dwells in our midst through His Spirit. It's God's desire that when people encounter the church, the presence of God the Holy Spirit would be so palpable in our midst that people would actually fall on their faces and say, “Surely God is in their midst. God is dwelling in them.”

So the fullness of the Spirit is not just individual—it's also corporate. Of course for a church to be filled with the Spirit, the individuals in the church need to be filled with the Spirit. You can't separate the two. But as a church, we need to value this.

I think one practical application of this is that we probably shouldn't be seeking the fullness of the Holy Spirit on our own (like on some personal spiritual retreat) as much as we should be seeking the fullness of the Spirit in our lives together, our relationships with one another and in praying together just like the disciples were doing before the Day of Pentecost. They were all together in one place, praying in one accord. It was in that context that God poured forth His Holy Spirit upon His church. So be convinced this is God's will for us because it's plural.

3. **Be humble and open to God filling you with the Holy Spirit.** The verb is an imperative—a command. It's plural to God's people. It's also in the passive voice which means when God says be filled with the Holy Spirit, He's not saying, “You go out and do something. You go fill yourself with the Spirit.” He's saying, “This is something that needs to be done for you—in you. You need God the Spirit to fill you with Himself.”

That's encouraging because the fact that He's commanding us to experience something that only God can do tells me that He's eager to do it. He's eager to fill

His people with His Spirit. Don't think you have to persuade God to fill you with His Spirit as if this is something He is reluctant to do. No, He's willing and eager to do so. Jesus' blood was shed to take away your sins, to atone for your guilt, to turn away God's wrath so that now you are under God's favor when you trust in Jesus Christ and He is eager to fill your life. He is eager to manifest His presence in your life but you need to open yourself to that. You need to cultivate a humble, eager posture of desire and willingness for the Holy Spirit to be filling you.

How do you do that? Well you put your sails up and you set your mind on the things of the Spirit. You say daily, "I want to be moved in the direction that You want me to be moving in, God. I want to run in the path of Your command so fill me with the strength to follow You."

Another thing you do is drink in the Spirit. First Corinthians 12:13 talks about drinking the Spirit. How do we drink the Spirit? We drink in the breathings of the Word that He has inspired. I think there's a difference between just reading the Word and drinking the Word. The difference is thirst. When we come to God's Word thirsty for Him and we say, "God, I need to hear from You. I need to have my mind illuminated with the truth of Your Word. I'm hungry and thirsty for righteousness." He fills us with His Spirit through His Word.

Another way we cultivate this humble, eager orientation is by yielding the control of our lives to the Holy Spirit and presenting the members of our bodies as instruments of righteousness. To quench the Spirit is to say "no" to Him. To be eager, humble and desirous of Him is to say "yes" to all His will as it's revealed in His Word and to remove that which grieves Him. Look at Ephesians 4:30—in the context of our speech it says these words: *"And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption."* Guard your mouth. Don't let any corrupting talk come out of your mouths (verse 29). Why? Because it grieves the Spirit to hear that kind of speech. Verse 31: *"Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice."* Get rid of these things. Why? Because they grieve the Spirit.

The very fact that God can be grieved is the sign of His love for you. The only people who can grieve you are the ones whom you really love. The ones your heart is deeply knit together with are the ones who can grieve you. Other people can irritate you or make you mad but only those whom you love can grieve you. The Holy Spirit loves you with an undying love—He will never leave you because He is committed to you. He knows that without Him, you are lost. So don't grieve Him.

4. **Be asking, seeking and knocking.** Be cultivating an on-going communion with the Holy Spirit. It was Jesus Who said these words in Matthew 7:7, "Keep asking. Keep seeking. Keep knocking." And then in Luke 11:37, He said, *"If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"*

We see in Ephesians 5:18—in the verb—that this experience of being filled with the Holy Spirit is not just an event that happens at some time in your life. It's to be a continuous reality in the believer's life because the verb is...

- an imperative—it's a command.
- plural—it's for all of God's people.
- passive—it's something we need God to do in us.
- in the present tense—it's continuous, it's on-going.

What Paul is saying here is, "Be being filled with the Spirit. Keep yourself continually filled with the Spirit. You need to keep asking; you need to keep relying and depending on the Holy Spirit." Don't think about the Holy Spirit as something you just get when you're converted and then never think about Him again. No, He's a Person with Whom you are to cultivate an on-going, dynamic relationship and communion with—just as you do with the Lord Jesus Christ and God the Father.

The Marks of Being Filled with the Holy Spirit

We've looked at the meaning and the means of being filled with the Holy Spirit. Now let's look at the marks. How do you know if you're filled? How can you test yourself? Very simply in Ephesians 5:19-21, Paul gives us some very specific marks of

the Spirit-filled life. There are five participles here in the original language, each of them expressing something of what it means to be filled with the Spirit.

1. Being filled with the Spirit will affect your speaking or the way you address one another (19).
2. It will affect your singing (19).
3. It will cause you to make music in your heart (19).
4. It will make you a person who is giving thanks (20).
5. It will make you a person who is submitting to one another in your relationships (21).

Speaking, singing, making music, giving things and submitting. These are ways you see the fullness of the Spirit.

Notice there is nothing weird here. There's nothing unusual. Being filled with the Holy Spirit doesn't necessarily make you bark like a dog, fall down or experience something really outlandish. It will make you a person whose life is beautiful and whose life is centered on edifying others. It will not make you a person who is boastful about how spiritual you are. Rather it will make you a person who is eager to pour yourself into the lives of others and serve them and minister to them.

So the fullness of the Spirit shows up in the way we gather together for worship. When we come on Sundays, a Spirit-filled church is a church where each believer is looking at how can I speak truth into my fellow brothers' and sisters' lives today? How can I address them in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs? It doesn't mean that I walk up to every believer and start singing in their face, "All hail the power of Jesus' name." What it means is I'm conscious of others as I worship with them.

Some songs that we sing are actually addressed to one another, like "How firm a foundation you saints of the Lord, it is laid for your faith in His excellent Word!" Maybe we should look at one another when we sing that, to encourage one another. Or "Come, let us worship and bow down... Let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker..." I think what that means, too, is when we come together, some songs are going to be favorites and other songs you might not like so much. But when you're Spirit-filled, you're eager to bless your brothers and sisters so you sing just as loudly and excitedly on the songs you don't like so much as on the songs you do. The song you don't like so much might be one of the favorite, most meaningful songs to the person right in front of you and hearing your singing will encourage them in the Lord.

So a desire to edify one another and a whole-hearted passion to praise the Lord is marking our lives because this is a mark of the Holy Spirit. Paul says in verse 19 we are to sing and make melody to the Lord with our hearts. Christianity is a singing faith. If you were to visit a mosque, you would not hear Muslims singing with all their hearts, “Praise to God.” But Christians sing because there are affections that we have cultivated by the grace of God and the gospel that cannot be adequately expressed with mere words. God puts a song in our hearts. He causes melodies of joy to rise in our hearts to the Lord and they can only be expressed through singing to the One Who created all music. We do this with all our hearts—passionately, whole-heartedly unto the Lord. That’s a mark of the Spirit’s fullness.

Another mark is uncommon gratitude (verse 20). When you’re filled with the Spirit, you’re a thankful person—grateful for all you receive from God in Christ. You cannot keep silent. You must give Him thanks. “Thank You, Lord, that we’re breathing today. Thank You that we have air-conditioning today. Thank You that we can gather with the body today; that we can hear Your living Word today. Thank You that we’re a new creation in Christ Jesus Who is coming again to make all things new. Thank You that we have an inheritance in a new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness dwells and we’re going to be saved to sin no more. Thank You that this all flows to us through the blood of the worthy Lamb Who was slain to receive glory and honor and praise.”

We are to give thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ because we know that in all things, He is working for our good and for His glory (Romans 8:28). We are to demonstrate an uncommon gratitude.

Then finally, you are to be humble servants. When you’re filled with the Spirit, verse 21 says you will submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. You’re not intent on proving your own point or advancing your own agenda. Instead, in humility you prefer others more than yourself. You esteem others more highly than yourself. You look for ways to serve one another, to defer to one another.

There is humble love that marks a Spirit-filled community. All of these things are beautiful. All these things can only be cultivated through God the Holy Spirit in us. We can’t fake this. We can’t make this happen. We can’t imitate this through our own efforts—we need God to do this in us.

Let's lift up the sails of our hearts to God the Holy Spirit and ask Him to continuously fill us so that we will reflect the beautiful character of our Lord and Savior.

New Covenant Bible Church

4N780 Randall Road, St. Charles, IL 60175

(630) 584-2611 ♦ www.newcbc.org

All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

Text provided by sermontranscribers.net ♦ emily@sermontranscribers.net