

# **THE SOVEREIGN GOD AND THE MYSTERY OF HIS WILL: A STUDY OF EPHESIANS**

## **(LESSON NINETY-SIX)**

### ***“BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT” (PART 7)***

#### **EPHESIANS 5:15-21**

*15 See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,*

*16 Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.*

*17 Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.*

*18 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;*

*19 Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.*

*20 always giving thanks to God the Father for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,*

*21 and submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.*

In verse **18** of our text Paul writes, “*And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.*” Brothers and sisters let me say at the outset that **being filled with the Spirit is the secret of real Christianity.**

The Greek connective **kai**, translated “*and*” at the beginning of verse **18**, clearly links this verse with the preceding verses-verses **15-17**. The

obvious implication is that if believers are to **walk circumspectly**; if they are to **redeem the time**, or take advantage of every opportunity; if they are to **understand what the will of the Lord is**, it is a necessity in the nature of the case that they be *“filled with the Spirit.”*

In **1 Corinthians 6:12** Paul wrote, *“You say, ‘I am allowed to do anything’—but not everything is good for you. And even though ‘I am allowed to do anything,’ I must not become a slave to anything”* (**New Living Translation**). The Apostle Paul was determined that he would only be mastered and controlled by the Lord Jesus Christ, and he knew that the only way to be mastered or controlled by the Lord Jesus Christ was to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

The Greek word translated *“filled”* is **pléroó: (play-ro’-o)**, which means, “to make full, to fill up, to cause to abound, to furnish or supply liberally, to render full, i.e. to complete.” The noted New Testament scholar of the mid-twentieth century, **Kenneth Samuel Wuest**, explained that there are four grammatical rules in the Greek language which lead us to four truths, relative to the command for believers to be filled with the Spirit.

First, **Wuest** explains that the verb is in the **imperative mood**. The **imperative mood** is a verb form that gives a command. Paul is issuing a command to all believers. He is not making a suggestion. He is not giving them an option; he is giving them a mandate. It is imperative that believers be filled with the Spirit, firstly, because God commands it, and secondly, because the fullness of the Spirit is the divine enablement in the life of a Christian which results in a Christ-like life.

Second, the tense of the verb is **present**, and this tense, in the **imperative mood**, always represents action going on. We learn from this that the mechanics of a Spirit-filled life do not provide for an irregular, infrequent filling. Being filled with the Spirit is not supposed to be a one-time, or occasional event! The fact that the command is in the **present tense** indicates that we are not to rely on a past filling, nor are we to rely on a future filling. We are to be **continually** filled with the

Spirit! The believer is not commanded to be filled with the Spirit only when he or she is involved in ministry. **A continual moment by moment fullness of the Spirit is to be the normal experience of every believer.**

Third, the verb is in the **plural number**, which teaches us that this command is addressed, not only to those who are engaged in full-time ministry but to every believer; to the company executive, the physician, the teacher, the student, the gardener, the household, the housewife, and the unemployed. It is the responsibility and privilege of **every** believer to be **always** filled with the Holy Spirit.

Fourth, the verb is in the **passive voice**. This grammatical classification represents the subject of the verb as inactive but being acted upon. This teaches us that the filling with the Spirit is not a work of man but a work of God. We cannot fill ourselves, nor can we work ourselves up to that condition by any amount of tarrying, praying, or agonizing. A simple desire for that fullness and a trust in the Lord Jesus for that fullness, will result in that fullness. Being filled with the Spirit is not so much an event as it is an ongoing process.

It is important for us to understand that Paul is not implying here that believers should get more of the Spirit, because the Holy Spirit takes up His abode in each believer and indwells each believer fully and completely the moment he or she believes in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. According to **1 Corinthians 12:13**, the Holy Spirit **baptizes** believers or **places** them into the Body of Christ only **once**, but we are commanded to be **continually** filled with the Spirit. Being filled with the Holy Spirit does not mean that we have more of the Spirit, but that the Holy Spirit has more of us!

When a believer is filled with the Spirit he or she does not control or lead himself or herself. Rather, he or she is controlled and led by the Holy Spirit. As the believer increasingly submits to the Holy Spirit's influence, he or she is increasingly controlled by Him, and he or she increasingly manifests the fruit of the Spirit. The Spirit's **baptism**,

**indwelling**, and **sealing** occur at the same time-the time of regeneration, and therefore there are no commands for believers to be **baptized**, **indwelt** or **sealed** with the Spirit. However, believers are commanded to be continually **filled** with the Spirit. Every believer has the Holy Spirit, but the command in **Ephesians 5:18** is that the Holy Spirit have the believer!

Brothers and sisters, it is one thing for us to have the Holy Spirit. It is another thing for the Holy Spirit to have us. If we are **not** being controlled by the Spirit continually, constantly, moment by moment, we are living beneath our privilege. According to **Expositor's Bible Commentary**, "The Christian life should be an uninterrupted filling."

Brothers and sisters, we are obligated to give God glory in every area of our lives, and it is a necessity in the nature of the case that we must be filled with the Spirit in order to do so. In the rest of his letter to the **Ephesians**, Paul mentions six specific areas of a believer's life where the Spirit's filling is especially important. The specific areas are:

<b>Worship:</b>	<b>Ephesians 5:19-20</b>
<b>Marriage:</b>	<b>Ephesians 5:22-33</b>
<b>Family:</b>	<b>Ephesians 6:1-4</b>
<b>Work:</b>	<b>Ephesians 6:5-9</b>
<b>Spiritual Warfare:</b>	<b>Ephesians 6:10-18</b>
<b>Witnessing:</b>	<b>Ephesians 6:19-20</b>

**Paul desires for us to understand that being continually filled with the Holy Spirit should radically affect all our relationships as well as our Christian service and witness!**

Brothers and sisters, we must endeavor to be available, sensitive, submissive, and obedient to the urgings of the Holy Spirit in our daily

lives. We must bear in mind that the Holy Spirit is not an “agent” or a “force” of God. The Holy Spirit is a divine person. As such He can be **resisted** (**Acts 7:51**), He can be **quenched** or **stifled** (**1Thessalonians 5:19**), and He can be **grieved** (**Ephesians 4:30**). We certainly cannot fill ourselves with the Spirit, but we do have the responsibility and privilege of cooperating with the Spirit in His work of putting sin out of our lives and bearing His fruit in our lives. We have the responsibility and privilege of allowing Him to exert His influence and control over our thoughts, words, and actions. We do so by heeding Paul’s exhortation in **Romans 12:1-2**:

*1 Therefore I exhort you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a sacrifice—alive, holy, and pleasing to God—which is your reasonable service.*

*2 Do not be conformed to this present world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may test and approve what is the will of God—what is good and well-pleasing and perfect.*

**(New English Translation)**

This presenting of our bodies as living, holy and pleasing sacrifices to God, represents a loving and voluntary yielding or surrendering of our entire beings to the influence and control of the Holy Spirit. As we daily present ourselves to Him as living sacrifices, He will gradually conform us to the image of Jesus Christ, to which we are predestinated according to **Romans 8:29**. This is what it means to be “*filled with the Spirit.*” To be filled with the Holy Spirit, does not necessarily result in an overwhelming emotional experience, but results rather in a state of being controlled and dominated by the Spirit. It results in a state of orderliness and common sense.

In **Colossians** chapter **3** verse **16**, to verse **1** of chapter **4**, Paul presents a very interesting parallel with **Ephesians** chapter **5** verse **18** to chapter **6** verse **9**. The only “difference” between the two passages is in the way in which they begin. In **Ephesians 5:18** Paul commences with, “*And do not get drunk with wine, which is debauchery, but be filled by the*

*Spirit.*” The positive imperative or command in this verse is **“be filled by the Spirit.”** In **Colossians 3:16** he begins with the positive imperative or command **“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.”** This is the only real “variable” in the two passages. In other words, the practical effects in the lives of believers who are *“filled with the Spirit”* are identical to those in the lives of believers who have the Word of God dwelling in them richly! We may say then, that any believer who has the Word of God dwelling in them richly is a believer who is filled with the Spirit and vice versa! One of the ways to ensure that we are constantly filled with God’s Spirit is to be constantly filled with God’s Word.

Being *“filled with the Spirit”* is also synonymous with *“walking in the Spirit,”* or *“living by the Spirit.”* Paul speaks of this in **Galatians 5:16-23**. The **New English Translation** renders the passage as follows:

*16 But I say, live by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desires of the flesh.*

*17 For the flesh has desires that are opposed to the Spirit, and the Spirit has desires that are opposed to the flesh, for these are in opposition to each other, so that you cannot do what you want.*

*18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.*

*19 Now the works of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity, depravity,*

*20 idolatry, sorcery, hostilities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish rivalries, dissensions, factions,*

*21 envying, murder, drunkenness, carousing, and similar things. I am warning you, as I had warned you before: Those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God!*

*22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,*

*23 gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*

Brothers and sisters, the secret of victory over sin is not found in an attempted obedience to the Law, or to a set of rules, regulations or standards. **The secret of victory over sin is only found in surrender to a divine Person, the Holy Spirit**, who at the moment the sinner places his or her faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, takes up His permanent residence in his or her being for the purpose of ministering to his or her spiritual needs.

Paul gives believers a strong assurance that if they depend upon the Holy Spirit to give them both the desire and the power to do the will of God, they will not bring to fulfillment in action, the evil impulses of the fallen nature, but will be able to resist and conquer them. The Holy Spirit will put sin out of the life of the believer who is surrendered to Him and He will produce His fruit in the believer's life.

But how can a person tell whether or not he or she is filled with the Spirit? In verses **19-21**, Paul mentions three practical results of the Spirit's filling of believers: **worship, gratitude, and submission**. The **New English Translation** renders the passage in the following way:

*19 speaking to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making music in your hearts to the Lord,*

*20 always giving thanks to God the Father for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,*

*21 and submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.*

It is to be noted that Paul says nothing in these verses about miracles, speaking in tongues, or any of the other manifestations that we are so hung up on as evidences of a person being filled with the Spirit!

Interestingly, the **first** evidence noted by Paul that identifies a person who is filled with the Spirit, is what comes out of his or her mouth! In

verse **19** he writes, *“Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.”*

Our speech is a good indicator of the extent to which we are under the influence and control of the Spirit. When a believer is filled with the Spirit, his or her heart overflows with thankfulness to God and that overflowing expresses itself in singing. In other words, the first practical result of an individual who is continually filled with the Spirit is a transformation of his or her worship.

In verse **20**, Paul gives us the **second** practical result of the Holy Spirit’s filling of a believer. He writes, *“Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

A continual attitude of gratitude to God for all things is an unmistakable evidence of a believer being Spirit filled. Giving thanks is the quality of being grateful, and it also implies that the person who is continually giving thanks has the appropriate attitude, which is the result of being filled with the Spirit.

In verse **21**, Paul gives us the **third** practical result of the Holy Spirit’s filling of a believer. He writes, *“Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.”*

The **New English Translation** renders the verse as follows: *“and submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.”*

**Ephesians 5:21** is a transition to Paul’s extensive discussion of relationships that continues through to verse **9** of chapter **6**. The **general** principle of mutual submission, *“Submitting yourselves one to another,”* is not only the result of the filling of the Spirit but is also the foundation of the more **specific** principles of authority and submission as it relates to husbands and wives, parents and children, and masters and slaves. It means “submitting to others according to the authority and order established by God.”



**Are we joyful, thankful and submissive? Then we are being controlled by God's Spirit. If we are not joyful, thankful and submissive, then we are not being controlled by God's Spirit. We are not continually being "*filled with the Spirit!*"**

Who is our ultimate example of a "Spirit filled" individual? The Lord Jesus Christ of course! In **Philippians 2:6-7** Paul informs us that in His incarnation our Lord, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped. Instead He emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Our Lord did not empty Himself of His deity. He set aside the outward expression of His deity when expressing Himself as a bond-servant. In other words, He took on the limitations of humanity. In the following passage from Luke's Gospel we see that one aspect of His becoming a Man was that He walked by the Spirit, leaving us an example to follow:

**Luke 4:1-4, 14**

*1 Then Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan River and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness,*

*2 where for forty days he endured temptations from the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and when they were completed he was famished.*

*3 The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread."*

*4 Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Man does not live by bread alone.'"*

*14 Then Jesus, in the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and news about him spread throughout the surrounding countryside.*

**(New English Translation)**

Jesus Christ, “*a man,*” according to **Acts 2:22** “*clearly attested....by God,*” was **1 filled with** the Holy Spirit, **2 led by** the Holy Spirit and **3** conducted Himself in the **power of** the Holy Spirit. As we have stated in our recent Lessons, being filled speaks of control, for whatever fills an individual controls him or her. If wine fills us, it controls us, but if the Spirit fills us, He controls us. Jesus is the perfect example of a Man filled and controlled by the Holy Spirit. In being led by the Spirit, Jesus gives us the example of submitting one’s will to the will of the Holy Spirit. The power that Jesus depended on was not His own, but was the inherent ability of the Holy Spirit, Who enabled Him to carry out His ministry. In **Acts 10:38**, Peter tells Cornelius and his household that “*God anointed [Jesus] with the Holy Spirit and with power.*” And that “*He went around doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, because God was with him*” (**New English Translation**).

Brothers and sisters, our Lord operated during His earthly pilgrimage as a man “*under authority*” (**Luke 7:8**), by allowing Himself to be **controlled** by the Spirit, **led** by the Spirit and **empowered** by the Spirit. This same privilege is available to every believer today!

Earlier, we said that being “*filled with the Spirit*” is also synonymous with “*walking in the Spirit,*” or “*living by the Spirit.*” In order to better understand what the Apostle means by “*walking in the Spirit,*” or “*living by the Spirit,*” let us imagine a person who needs a walking stick to assist him or her to move around. He or she depends on the walking stick, he or she relies on it. In the same way, we are to walk by the Spirit. We are to depend on the Spirit, we are to rely on Him. Without Him it will not be possible for us to walk the spiritual walk successfully.

“*Walking in the Spirit,*” or “*living by the Spirit*” is specifically living a life that is totally dependent upon the Holy Spirit. How do we do this? Brothers and sisters, both “filling” and “walking” result from definite mind sets, or conscious patterns of thought. Both filling and walking entail a turning from something and a turning to something, or rather a turning from someone and a turning to Someone. It involves turning

away from self and turning to the Holy Spirit. Both are absolutely vital. We may say that being filled with the Spirit **establishes** the Spirit's control; walking in the Spirit, or living by the Spirit **maintains** the Spirit's control. In being filled with the Spirit we **yield** to Him; in walking in, or living by the Spirit we **depend** upon Him.

**The only way we can live a supernatural life is by discarding self-effort and surrendering to Spirit dependence!** That was the "Jesus way." From the beginning to the end of His ministry Jesus submitted to the Father to direct His steps and surrendered to the Spirit to empower His steps! We cannot improve on His example. We must learn what it means to be filled with the Spirit so that we might learn what it means to walk in the Spirit. This is the profound and yet simple secret of living an abundant, overcoming life.

**John MacArthur** writes that, "The Christian who is filled with the Holy Spirit can be compared to a glove. Until it is filled by a hand, a glove is powerless and useless. It is designed to do work, but it can do no work by itself. **It works only as the hand controls and uses it. The glove's only work is the hand's work.** It does not ask the hand to give it an assignment and then try to complete the assignment without the hand. Nor does it gloat or brag about what it is used to do, because it knows the hand deserves all the credit. **A Christian can accomplish no more without being filled with the Holy Spirit than a glove can accomplish without being filled with a hand.** Anything he manages to do is but wood, hay, and straw that amounts to nothing and will eventually be burned up (**1Corinthians 3:12-15**). Functioning in the flesh produces absolutely nothing of spiritual value."

There are seven times in the Book of **Acts** when persons are said to be filled with, or full of the Holy Spirit. Let us consider the purposes or the results of these fillings:

**1** For speaking (**Acts 2:41-44; 4:5-12; 4:31**)

**2** For serving (**Acts 6:1-3**)

**3** For shepherding (**Acts 11:22-24**)

**4** For rebuking (**Acts 13:8-11**)

**5** For dying (**Acts 7:54-60**)

In light of the above, let us all ask our Father in heaven to help us to allow the Holy Spirit to continually fill us.