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**“BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT”**  
Scripture Reading – Ephesians 5:15-  
21. Ephesians 5:18.

**Introduction**

If ever there are words to which the modern Christian should give attention, they are those found in verse 18 of the 5th chapter of Ephesians. Paul says “Be filled with the Spirit.” It is not a mild suggestion or a tentative proposal. It is a clear directive to the Christian. The Apostles and the early church recognized the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit in her life and ministry. They considered the place and the presence of the Holy Spirit to be central and indispensable in the Body of Christ. They did not entertain any other option in the life of the church. They were dependent on and surrendered to the sovereignty and the will of the Spirit. They operated in all things by the principle “...it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us.” The order of the words in that statement are significant, “It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us.” The early Christian church would have never thought of eliminating or neglecting the power, presence and passion of the Spirit of God from its thinking, commitment, its decision making, its evangelistic outreach and its missionary enterprises. This mindset

began in Acts 2:4. Luke tells us that the disciples were all filled with Holy Spirit. One has suggested that the word filled means imbued, supplied and furnished. Those early disciples were “caught up in the Spirit, they were penetrated by the Spirit they were under the power of the Spirit.” From that moment on their dependence on the Holy Spirit was singular and complete.” The result was that this commitment gave birth to an impact indescribable, a power indefinable and a passion irresistible. They seemed to find it a little difficult to describe what they saw and experienced except to say “they turned the world upside down.” The Holy Spirit was the motivating power behind her and the driving force in her passion to reach the lost. The early church was more Spirit driven rather than purpose driven. They lived, worked and witnessed in the power of the Spirit. He was at the heart of their lives. He was the anointing upon their preaching. I realize that in some corners of the modern church there are weird and strange phenomena taking place which are attributed to the movement of Spirit. Sincere people are being deceived and get caught up in the high emotion of it all, but any understanding of the scriptures will reveal that some of these signs are totally incompatible and completely out of step with who the Holy Spirit is. John Stott commented that the “Holy Spirit must be embarrassed by what is attributed to Him by some in the church.” Anything that does not line up with the teaching of God’s word is suspect and must be discarded as false. Regardless of what many may attribute to the Holy Spirit, there is a glorious verifiable experience and dynamic relationship with the Holy Spirit which is scriptural, practical and experiential.

A word of caution needs to be added at this point. It is vital not throw out the truth because of the untruth which is added to it. The scriptures make plain that the fullness of the Holy Spirit and His continual infilling is essential to holy victorious living and an effective witness in our world. Paul writes “do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead be filled with the Spirit.” It is important to understand what Paul is saying in these verses. He makes clear that this is,

### **1. AN EXPLICIT COMMAND.**

**Ephesians 5:18. “.....Be filled with the Spirit.”**

This statement is in the imperative mood. It is a command and when a command is given in God’s word, the only response that a Christian should give is obedience John Stott rightly pointed out that it is not a tentative suggestion, a mild recommendation or a polite piece of advice. There is note of authority here which indicates that the requirement is not optional but a necessity. This command finds its basis in the Lord’s will. Understanding this and positively responding to this knowledge is an evidence of discernment and wisdom, for Paul says in verse 17, “Do not be foolish, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.....be filled with the Spirit.” The infilling of the Holy Spirit is clearly down set as the will of the Lord is for His people. The Lord Himself was concerned about this, for he told His disciples that when He left them, He would send another Comforter who was the Holy Spirit. One of His final commands to them was to wait for the gift the Father promised. “Which you have heard me speak about .....you

will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” And when the day of Pentecost came they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. And Paul says to the Ephesian Christians “Be filled with the Spirit.” Notice,

### **a. To Whom This Command is given? Ephesians 5:18.**

**The command is given in the plural form.** It is addressed to all of the Christian church. Not just to an elite few. Not simply for the spiritual aristocracy. The scriptures tell us that it is for “as to many as the Lord our God shall call.” And then the word uses all inclusive terms such as all flesh..sons...daughters.. young men handmaidens.....old men, your children and to them that are afar off.” The availability of the Fullness of the Holy Spirit is to all believers who will receive Him. This is always true in the New Testament. This letter was written to the church. The command to be born again is always directed to the unbeliever, but in every instant in the New Testament the command to be baptized with the Holy Spirit is always addressed to the believer. Paul writes this letter to the Saints who are Ephesus and the faithful in Christ Jesus. Ephesians 1:1. He is concerned with those who WERE dead in sin and Were made alive in Christ. Ephesians 2:5. This fullness is for those who are saved by God’s grace. The glorious relationship with the Holy Spirit is for those who have been reconciled to God through the Cross, by which He put to death their hostility. Ephesians 2:16. So it is clear that it is to faithful saints, made alive in Christ, saved by God’s grace and reconciled to God who are to receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit. It is one thing to be born again of the Spirit, and another thing to be baptized

in the Holy Spirit. Let us be clear that the born again Christian has Holy the Spirit, but in the Spirit baptized Christian the Spirit has all of the Christian. When the New Testament speaks about being filled with the Holy Spirit, it is always to Christians. Jesus indicated why this is so in John 14:16-17, "I will ask the Father and he will give another counselor to be with you forever. Verse 17, **the world cannot accept Him because it neither sees Him nor knows Him.....**" The command of Paul to be filled with the Spirit is directed to Christians. The second question we ask in relation to this command is,

**b. When does this infilling take place? Ephesians 5:18.**

To answer this question we need to ask another. Is the infilling of the Spirit, immediate and instantaneous or progressive and continuing? The scriptural answer is that it is both instantaneous and continuing. The Spirit in His fullness is received in,

**i. A Crisis Experience. Ephesians 5:18.**

This crisis we call the Baptism with the Spirit. When John the Baptist spoke of the coming of Jesus, he said, **"I baptize you with water for repentance, but after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with Fire, and Baptism is an instantaneous act.** Gradual or progressive water baptism by immersion in water could end up in tragedy. This command is an imperative implying an instantaneous experience of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. On the

Day of Pentecost recorded in the second chapter of Acts we are told that "when the day of Pentecost was come.....suddenly a sound of a violent wind came from heaven....all of them were filled with filled with Holy Spirit. In a moment of time...in an instant...suddenly they were all filled with the Holy Spirit." If we are to receive the Baptism with the Spirit there must be a moment of decision and a full surrender. There must be a moment when we willingly and responsively open our selves without reluctance or reserve to the fullness of the Holy Spirit. It is in that moment that, when in a full surrender to His Will, we allow the Holy Spirit to possess us completely. Having said this there is much more than just a crisis moment for it is also,

**b. A Continuing Experience. Ephesians 5:18.**

When Paul tells us to be filled with the Spirit "he uses what is called the present imperative, implying that we are going on being filled. There is no once and for all experience which we can never lose, it is a privilege to be reviewed continuously by continuous believing" and receiving Him in total obedience. (John Stott).

A study of the Acts of the Apostles will reveal that there were a number of occasions after Pentecost in which they were filled with the Holy Spirit. This infilling is a continuing blessing for the child of God. Each child of God needs to be filled with Holy Spirit and go on being filled with the Spirit. Paul says if we live in the Spirit let us also walk in the Spirit. Galatians 5:25. This fullness is a continuing lifestyle. This fullness about which the scriptures talks means,

## **2. A COMPLETE OCCUPATION of the child of God by the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 5:18.**

“Be filled with the Spirit.” The operative word here is the word **“FILLED.”** **This word filled is the key word in the whole letter.** Some of the words Paul uses in this letter to the Christians is fullness, filled up or fills, and he uses these words at least six times. In his second prayer in chapter 3 v. 19 of this letter, he prays that these Christians may “filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.” This is the ultimate goal of the Christian. Your immediate re-action might be impossible; no one can be “filled to the measure of ALL the fullness of God.” It is true that we cannot contain all that God is. He is immeasurable! He is infinite and in this way we cannot contain Him. But God Himself can contain all that we are completely. Dr. A.B. Simpson wrote that “being filled with the fullness of God is like a bottle in the ocean. You can take the cork out of the bottle and sink it in the ocean and will have a bottle full of the ocean. The bottle is in the ocean and the ocean is in the bottle. The ocean contains the bottle, but the bottle also contains the ocean. So it is with the Christians relationship with the Holy Spirit. When we are filled with the fullness of God we cannot contain all of God; but we can have all of God that we can contain. But there is no finality here, because as we grow spiritually, He will enlarge our capacity for Himself, so that, to be filled today, means something more and something greater than it did yesterday. As we grow and enlarge our spiritual capacity, so He continues to fill our lives with Himself. The life of the Fullness of the Spirit is also a constantly enlarging life. Our capacity for His

fullness increases. We have already said that “to be filled with the Spirit,” is in the present progressive tense. This means that there is a constant in flow and out flow. It is not the fullness of a cup or a barrel. It is the fullness of river overflowing its banks. Jesus said that those who know the Spirit’s supply will have rivers of living water flowing out of their lives. John 7:38. A little old lady who was a real saint of God put it simply, “I can’t hold much but I can overflow lots.” There is no limit to increase of God’s blessing on the life when it is fully in the hands of God. The continual inflow ensures the constant out flow. “Be filled with the Spirit.” Underline the word “filled.” This word is descriptive of the extent, scope and measure by which the Holy Spirit will fill our lives. His occupation of our hearts will be total or complete. What does it mean when the Holy Spirit fills or completely occupies our lives? First note,

### **a. What it excludes! Ephesians 5:18.**

The words filled with Holy Spirit means the exclusion of all that is contrary to the nature and will of the Holy Spirit. It means the exclusion of the presence and power of sin. It is the expulsion of the spirit of unrighteousness and the stain of sin and the expunging of all that is contrary to the character and nature of the Spirit of God. He will not co-habit with that which is sinful or evil! He is incompatible with anything that is unholy in the heart. He will not entertain sin, not reside in the heart that clutches on to hidden sin. The Apostle Peter said that the Holy Spirit which was given to disciples on the day of Pentecost “purified their hearts by faith.” The essential work of the Holy Spirit on

the day of Pentecost was the He purified the Apostles hearts by faith. Acts 15:8-9. To be filled with the Holy Spirit means the exclusion of the presence and power of sin. This is what the Fullness of the Spirit excludes. But note,

**b. What it includes. Ephesians 5:18.**

To be filled with the Spirit means to exclude sin and then to include the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. It means the infusion of the presence of the Spirit. It has been said by one Bible scholar that the word filled in the original language of the Scripture is used in three ways. We have already said that it meant more than the filling up of a container. The Holy Spirit is not to be thought of as a Divine fluid with which our hearts may be filled. The word filled was often used of the wind filling the sail and thereby carrying the ship along. To be filled with the Holy Spirit is to be moved along by the power and inspiration of the Holy Spirit just as the writers of the scriptures were moved by the Holy Spirit. The filled was also used of salt which permeated the meat in order that it might keep its flavor as well preserve it. To be filled with the Spirit of God is to have His glorious presence saturate, penetrate and pervade our lives so that they reflect the beauty of a Christlike character. But thirdly the word filled also has the connotation of total control or complete authority. The Apostle Paul in Ephesians 5:18 describes two contrasting conditions of control in his discussion of the infilling of the Holy Spirit. He mentions the,

**i. The Control of Alcohol. Ephesians 5:18.**

“Do not get drunk on which leads to debauchery.....” The thrust of this idea is that drunkenness leads to wasteful licentious living. The control of alcohol on a person is such the he has no control over himself. The inebriated man behaves irrationally, incoherently and like a fool. There is a sense in which alcohol dehumanizes and destroys the dignity of the individual. Excessive drinking results in the uncontrolled action of a drunkard. Such is the influence of alcohol. Paul says it leads to debauchery. It has been suggested that the Apostle had in mind the worship of the wine god Bacchus, where the priests under the influence of drink were supposed to be under the control of the gods. But this is not the control, of which the Apostle speaks, for to be filled with the Holy Spirit is to be under,

**ii. The Control of the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 5:18.**

**But this is not the control that renders a person uncontrollable and irrational.**

The Holy Spirit does not dehumanize an individual, but cleanses, empowers, develops and uses his personality. Under the influence of the Holy Spirit man's personality is not lost. Furthermore this control is NOT an unqualified and unconditional power which He has over us. In other words we do not become robots under His control. God has always respected our individuality and the freedom to exercise our wills. The Spirit filled person still has the power of choice. It is by the daily constant obedient moment by moment choices we accept His control over our lives, and follow His leadership in our walk with Him. We, by deliberate choices, subject ourselves to His control.

A continuing disobedience to Him grieves Him and He will relinquish His control over us. To be filled with the Spirit means complete occupation of our lives. There is more to this truth for to be filled with the by Holy Spirit means that we are filled by,

### **3. THE DIVINE PRESENCE. Ephesians 5:18.**

**Paul's directive is unmistakable. He commands us to be filled with Spirit of God.**

Such a possibility seems beyond the reach of our hearts and lives. Is it possible that we have heard so much about this directive that its challenge has lost its wonder, vitality and its importance? It is an awesome and humbling truth to consider that the great God of the universe who fills its' vast expanses, would condescend to fill and live in the spirit of man. But this command makes it clear that it is the purpose of God to fill our hearts and lives. It

It is important to remind ourselves that the Spirit of God is

#### **a. A Person to Receive. Ephesians 5:18. "Be filled with the Spirit"**

The command is clear and simple. It is well to remember that He is not a mere influence. He exercises influence, but He is not merely an influence. Neither is He abstract energy; he reveals energy but He is not energy. We must not regard Him as impersonal power. There is power in the person of the Spirit but He is not just impersonal power. Jesus said you "will receive power AFTER the Holy Spirit has come upon you." These qualities may be considered to be some of His attributes but they are not who is.

You cannot have fellowship with energy, power or an influence, but you can have a relationship with a person. The Holy Spirit is God Himself. He is the third person of the Trinity. He is perfect in His personhood revealing all of the traits of a person. And because He is, He is one with whom we can have a relationship and enjoy fellowship. When the Holy Spirit fills us we are filled with a presence of a Divine Person. He responds to us as we respond to Him. To receive Him is to respond to Him in complete obedience to His will. To receive Him is to surrender to His Sovereignty. There is no system to learn, no technique to know, no formula to rehearse, no ritual through which to pass in receiving the Holy Spirit into our lives. The scriptural injunction is to **"let the Holy Spirit fill us."** It is a personal response with no coercion, and a personal decision with no compulsion. For Him to come to us there must be an openhearted, willing surrender to Him – to all that He is and wants us to be. Allow Him to fill you without reservation and He will come into our lives. He is a person to receive. Secondly the Spirit filled life is

#### **b. A Life to be lived. Ephesians 5:15-18.**

**Paul has already said in verse 15 "be careful how you live."**

The Holy Spirit lives in the Christian. Romans 8:9, 11. 1 Corinthians 3:16-17. The Christian is filled with the Spirit. Ephesians 5:18. The Christian is the Temple of the Holy Spirit. 1 Corinthians 6:19. This means nothing less than that the Christian is Himself the Holy of Holies in which the Spirit of God dwells.

**If the connection between man and the Spirit of God is as close as this, then**

**certain things follow.** As William Barkley writes has it “All that lives is Holy.” Barclay P.79 The Promise of the Spirit.) This life is Spirit motivated and Spirit driven. He is the HOLY Spirit. To live in the Spirit whose nature, name and character are holy is the open secret to living the life of holiness. The Holy Spirit enables the child of God to bear the fruit of holiness. In Galatians 5:16 Paul urges the Christian to walk in the Spirit, the Greek word literally means to “walk about in the Spirit.” or to “walk around in the Spirit.” It “became a word for a man’s life and conduct in everyday life.” (Barclay P.81.The Promise of the Spirit.) In verse one of this chapter, Paul exhorts the Children of God to be “imitators of God....and goes on to write in verse 3, “there must not even be a hint of sexual immorality, or any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people.” In verse 8 he describes what the Spirit filled life should exemplify. “For you were once darkness, BUT now you are light in the Lord and so live as children of light, for the fruit of light or the fruit of the Spirit (It can be translated either way) the fruit of the Spirit consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth and finds out what pleases the Lord. Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness.....” The driving force and the inward power to live this life is the presence of the Spirit living within. And then Paul lists what some of the evidences of the Spirit filled life are. First we are told in verse 19 “to speak to one another with Psalms and spiritual songs. The main thought here is the spirit of fellowship one with another in the context of worship. Again in verse 19 he writes “sing and make music to the Lord.” This is the expression of Joy which is one of the fruits of the Spirit.

But note that the music we make should not be to man or the pleasing of ourselves, but to the Lord. This is combined with the spirit of gratitude for in verse 20 he says, “We must always give thanks to God the Father for everything in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ.” Surrounding and pervading all of this is the attitude of humility; it is important to note what the Apostle says in verse 21, “submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.” The spirit of pride and the indwelling Spirit are incompatible. The word tells us the “God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.” Pride is the exaltation of self but in the Spirit filled Christian only the Holy Spirit is exalted. The scripture with one voice declare the Spirit filled life is life to be lived.

### **Conclusion**

The teaching of the New Testament assumes being filled with the Spirit is imperative. It leaves no room for an option. Indeed the Christian life cannot be lived victoriously and in true holiness without the fullness of the Spirit. Each child of God needs the Presence of the Holy Spirit in this way. Jesus said “without me you can nothing. “ There are so many who are living between Easter and Pentecost. They have received the living Christ into their lives, but have yet to surrender to the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. The fullness which the Baptism of the Spirit brings to soul is being ignored by many and the result is ineffective witnesses and defeated living and a powerless church. For the shooting of the film Ben Hur, Charlton Heston was training to drive a chariot. Charlton was having trouble with his equipment and so he confided in his director, William Wyler; He said “I can

barely stay on this thing. I can't win the race." Wyler told Heston, "Your job is stay on it. It is my job to make sure you win." That is the function of the Holy Spirit in your life and mine. The power of His presence ensures that we will win. In a few weeks we will be celebrating Pentecost Sunday. As we do so, let us think on the words of this devotional, and make sure that we are appropriating all that God has for us in the "Fullness of the Spirit."

