

“How to Be Filled With the Spirit”

Ephesians 5:18-21

Have you ever experienced a surge of adrenaline that felt almost super-human?

It's called an adrenaline rush, and it usually happens in stressful situations.

Adrenaline is a hormone that is released into your bloodstream in times of danger or stress. It prepares your body for a fight-or-flight response.

Adrenaline's power comes from the changes it makes to your heart, lungs, brain, and muscles.

Years ago when Anita and I were first married, I attempted to load a riding lawn mower into the back of a pickup truck I had at the time. The truck had a three inch lift kit on it, so I had to back it down into a ditch by the road so I could get the tailgate low enough to the ground. I then made up the difference with a sheet of plywood that I had and came up with a makeshift ramp. My plan was to ride the mower up into the back of the pickup. Needless to say, that is not at all what happened. Things were going good when I got the mower up the sheet of plywood, but for whatever reason I let up off the clutch and pressed the brake. The front end of the mower came up, and from that point on everything was in slow motion as I recall. My life flashed before my eyes. The mower rolled on top of me, and to this day I do not know how it happened, but I somehow managed to muster the strength to throw it off me. The only problem was that the gear was still engaged, so when it was right side up, it took off across the yard and I had to chase it down. The whole time, Anita was standing at the front door watching the scene unfold. Have you ever found yourself in a situation where you were running on pure adrenaline? I had discovered a strength I never knew I possessed. I've read where mothers filled with fear have been known to lift heavy objects to save their children.

This morning, I want to talk to you about what it means to be filled, not with adrenaline, but with the Spirit. Turn with me in your Bibles to Ephesians chapter 5, and we will read in just a minute from verse 18. Thus far in our study of the person and ministry of the Holy Spirit, we've seen how the Holy Spirit is a very real person, the third person of the Trinity. He has a very real purpose that involves explaining the truth of God, exalting the Son of God, and empowering the people of God. He is a very real presence in the life of believers, for every Christian is baptized or immersed in the Spirit at the moment of conversion. This morning, I want to look at the practical impact that the Helper makes in our lives as we learn to yield more and more to His influence and control. For this is what it means to be filled with the Spirit, something which Paul is going to explain in the fifth chapter of Ephesians. (Read)

I love Paul's letter to the Ephesians, and it may in fact be my favorite book of the Bible. Ephesians is all about the believer's wealth in Christ. The phrase 'in Christ' or 'in the Lord' is used nearly 30 times to remind you and me of our secure position. Christianity is to be 'in Christ,' which is the result of the Spirit's work in the believer's life. It is the Holy Spirit who places me in Christ, and through His indwelling presence places Christ in me. Over and over again, Paul explains how the Spirit takes what is Christ's and makes it ours, for we have been:

- Sealed with the Spirit (1:13)
- Enlightened by the Spirit (1:17)
- Indwelt by the Spirit (2:21)
- Instructed by the Spirit (3:5)
- Strengthened by the Spirit (3:16)

- Unified by the Spirit (4:3)
- Gifted by the Spirit (4:11)
- Yielded to the Spirit (4:30)
- Filled with the Spirit (5:18)
- Equipped by the Spirit (6:18)

While it is one thing to grasp the truth that the Holy Spirit is in you as a believer, it is another thing to understand that He desires to live through you. That's the real secret to a victorious Christian life. The Spirit has been given to me, and as a Christian I am now to be given to Him. When you consciously allow the Holy Spirit to live through you, your life becomes a powerful witness to those around you. The Lord Jesus said that He would put a 'well' or reservoir of eternal life into the one who trusts in Him. It would be a well of water within us that would flow like rivers of living water through us:

John 4:14—“But whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

John 7:38—“Whoever believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’”

A well is a hole that is dug deep enough that it penetrates the water table and fills up with water. But to retrieve that water, you need a pump. Those of you who grew up living with well water know what it means to 'prime the pump.' If the power goes off, or air gets into the pump, it will lose its suction. The pump pulls water out of the well and raises it into the supply pipe that brings water into your house. If air gets into the pump, the water won't be suctioned upwards, so to

prime the pump means you're manually removing air and filling the pump with water so it can continue to draw water upwards. That's how a well works.

But there is another kind of well, though. And it is called an artesian well. It goes much deeper into the ground until it hits an underground river or stream. You don't ever have to pump an artesian well. That's because an artesian well uses natural pressure to bring water to the surface, while a regular well relies on mechanical pumping. You simply tap into an artesian well, and the water flows. Years ago, there was a widespread news story about an unlicensed well driller in Vancouver, British Columbia, who tapped into a pressurized aquifer and triggered an uncontrolled flood of water in a residential neighborhood. For more than six months, nearly 600,000 gallons of water a day flowed out of the ground, down the street, and through the property of dozens of homes. To give you an idea, that much water is the equivalent of an olympic sized swimming pool flowing every day for six months. That's a lot of water! But that's the difference between a regular well and an artesian well that hits a main underground artery.

Far too many Christians in the church are like that regular pump well. There're a bit superficial, too wrapped up in themselves, and to get them to serve the Lord, you always have to prime the pump. As long as you keep pumping, or encouraging, or motivating, they remain in service. But the moment you quit, they retreat right back into themselves or their own little world. Then, on the other hand, are the men and women who've tapped deep into the underground river of living water and are 'filled' with the Spirit. Spirit-filled Christians lead to Spirit-filled churches.

Do you know the reaction of a lot of Christians when you talk to them about being filled with the Spirit? They say, "That's great for others, but I'm not good enough. I don't qualify. If I were more dedicated, or if I spent more time in Bible reading

and prayer, I might eventually be worthy to walk in the Spirit.” But they’ve got it backwards. The Holy Spirit isn’t given to those who have it all together spiritually; He is given to enable us to get it together spiritually!

Galatians 5:16—“But I say, walk by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.”

Pay attention to the order. Paul doesn’t say that if we stop carrying out the desires of the flesh we will walk in the Spirit. Rather, if we walk in the Spirit, we will not fulfill the desires of the flesh! The order makes a major difference. Christians often ignore any thought of walking by the Spirit because they think they’re not good enough. Their life is too filled with fleshly struggles. But that’s like refusing to accept the medicine until you get well and feel worthy of it. The whole purpose of medicine is to enable you to get well. It is given to the sick, not the healthy. In the same way, the Spirit is given to enable you to break sin’s power. You don’t have to do that on your own before you receive the Spirit’s power. Friend, the Holy Spirit is not just some decorative window dressing in your life. No, the Spirit indwells us so that He might control us. He moves in so that He might take over. He’s not looking for peaceful negotiation—its unconditional surrender that He wants. Let’s look at what this passage has to say about how you and I can be filled with the Spirit as believers.

1—The EXPLANATION of a Spirit-filled life (5:18a)

“And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit.”

The New Testament never commands the Christian to be indwelt, gifted, baptized, or sealed with the Holy Spirit. All of these are true for every believer, and is positional truth. That is, it automatically comes with salvation. When you

were saved, God's Spirit came to reside within you and He made you His temple. So now that we've come to possess the Spirit, we are commanded to 'be filled' with the Spirit.

What does it even mean to be filled with the Spirit? It really is important that we understand what this means. Because we've already established the fact that Christians are given the Holy Spirit at salvation. So that all of Him has come to live in all of me. The person who is 'filled' with the Spirit is living under His influence. To illustrate this, notice:

The contrast

In verse 18, Paul makes a contrast between being drunk with wine and being filled with the Spirit. For two chapters, he has been showing the difference between the old and new life. We're to put off the old self and put on the new self. We're to be imitators of God, as beloved children, and walk in love and walk as children of light. We're be careful in how we walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time because the days are evil. We're not to be foolish, but must understand what the will of the Lord is. It is a distinction between the old and new life, and in verse 19 the distinction is between drunkenness and a Spirit-filled life. Debauchery had been a way of life for the Ephesians, but now their lives had been changed. They have become new, they are now Christians, and they are now living in the Spirit. So he says, "Don't be drunk with wine."

"Get Drunk" —*translates a Greek verb which means to be intoxicated; word used to describe the process of soaking*

To be soaked with wine is 'debauchery' or excess, or some translations might say 'dissipation.' The word is wasteful or prodigality, the word used to describe the

‘prodigal’ son in the parable Jesus told in Luke 15. The son squandered his inheritance with ‘reckless’ living. It is the same word as the one used here. Drunkenness always leads to wastefulness and destruction. It squanders a person’s time, their energy, and their resources. It exhausts a man and strips him of all control. His judgment is impaired. His balance is off. His speech is slurred. Why? Because he has come under the influence of alcohol. And it leads to complete disarray.

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones — *“Excess of wine leads to a condition which is characterized above everything by the loss of understanding, the loss of refinement, the loss of judgment, the loss of balance. This is what [alcohol] does. [Alcohol] is not a stimulus, it is a depressant. It depresses first and foremost the highest centers of the brain. They are the very first to be influenced and affected by [it]. They control everything that gives a man self-control, wisdom, understanding, discrimination, judgment, balance, the power to assess everything; in other words everything that makes a man behave at his very best and highest.”*

When alcohol fills a man, it results in a loss of control and leads to chaos in his life. He says hurtful words, he does hurtful things, he isn’t productive. He ends up exhausted.

The comparison

Verse 18 says, “And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit.” Don’t be filled with spirits (alcohol), but be filled with the Spirit. And it is not insignificant that upon being filled with the Holy Spirit, the disciples in Acts 2 were mocked by the crowd who said, “They are filled with new wine!” It was evident that they are now under the influence of the Spirit. That’s

what it means to be filled with the Spirit. It means I am yielded to the Holy Spirit's presence and control.

Filled with alcohol, a man loses control. But filled with the Spirit, he now has self-control.

Filled with alcohol, a man squanders away everything that he has. But filled with the Spirit, he makes eternal impact.

Filled with alcohol, a man's life descends into chaos and disarray. But filled with the Spirit, he has purpose and his life and loves are ordered.

Filled with alcohol, a man loses his wife and family. But filled with the Spirit, he makes the most of life's precious and most treasured relationships.

A.B. Simpson — *"The power which the Holy Spirit brings to us is first of all power to be, and then power to do."*

2—The OBLIGATION of a Spirit-filled life (5:18b)

"...but be filled with the Spirit."

There is only one command in all the Bible that is related to our relationship with the Holy Spirit. Is it to be sealed with the Spirit? No, for the Bible says in Ephesians 1:13 that as we trusted in Christ, "after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise." That's not a command, it is a fact. Being sealed with the Spirit is God's gift to you as a believer, so that's not it. Is the command to be indwelt by the Spirit? 1 Corinthians 6:19 says "your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you." And in Romans 8:9, we read, "If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His." So being indwelt by the Spirit is not a command, but also a fact. Neither is the command to be baptized, for that too is

a fact. 1 Corinthians 12:13 says “in one Spirit we are all baptized into one body —Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.” You say, “Ok. So what then is the command?” The only command in the New Testament involving mine and your relationship with the Holy Spirit is to ‘be filled’ with the Spirit, or to ‘walk’ in the Spirit.

“Be Filled” —*translates the Greek verb ‘pleroo’ meaning to fill up to the full, or to fill to the brim*

If you remember from basic grammar, verbs have what is known as a person, number, tense, voice, and mood. The same applies to Greek grammar. Take the verb used here, ‘pleroo’ or be filled. It is second person. That means the reader is being addressed. That’s me and you. And so verse 18 is clear in that you and I are the ones who are being spoken to now. It is plural in number. That means more than one is being addressed, but rather all of us. It means ‘you all’ be filled. It is the present tense. The verb is in the present tense, which means it is to be a continual and ongoing action, not a one-time event. It can even be translated ‘be continually being filled.’ It isn’t that I was filled, but that I am being filled even now. It is passive in voice. For the verb to be passive in voice means that the subject does not act in and of itself, rather it is being acted upon by another. I am to ‘be filled’ with the Spirit or by the Spirit, for it is He who is doing the filling. It is in the imperative mood. The instruction in verse 18 isn’t a suggestion, but rather is a command. It is imperative for Christian living. It is not an option to consider, or a potential to ponder. Instead, it is a command to obey and an instruction to follow.

And so if we put this together, Ephesians 5:18 is saying, “All of us must always be actively being filled with the Spirit.” A Spirit-filled life isn’t optional or intended for a select few. It is expected of every Christian. And yet at the same time, it

seems that we seldom give it any thought. We'd shudder at the notion of a Christian getting drunk with alcohol, yet it is equally as serious for Christians to go through life without being filled with the Spirit. We've made much of not drinking alcohol, and perhaps too little of being Spirit-filled in life.

O.S. Hawkins — *“God commands us to be filled with His Spirit. When we awaken to the reality that the Holy Spirit is alive today in us, then it should make sense that we allow Him to fill us with His fullness so that the overflow of His life in us might flow through us to all around.”*

And this is to be the norm—not the exception! So there is the explanation and obligation of a Spirit-filled life, and then notice:

3—The DEMONSTRATION of a Spirit-filled life (5:19-21)

“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.”

This is a description of the Spirit-filled man or woman and their attitude. So there is evidence that we are being filled with the Spirit. I find it interesting that the evidence is not in our giftedness, as important as spiritual gifts are. Spiritual maturity isn't a matter of one's giftedness. A Spirit-filled life is demonstrated in our character and our attitude and in our relationships. It is not so much in a spectacular experience as much as it is the normal, everyday relationships of life. I need to be Spirit-filled to tackle life's daily challenges. Why should I rush out to face them in my own strength when the Lord has promised me His own? But if you are Spirit-filled, let me show you a few things that God's Word says will be true of you, things that will be different about your life.

In your worship life

Look at the participles in these verses. Participles are the words ending with ‘-ing.’ Addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual psalms. Spirit-filled people have a different way of speaking. Singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart. Spirit-filled people have a song in their heart. Singing characterizes the Spirit-filled worship of the Christian. When you are truly filled with the Spirit, it will make you a person of joyful worship. Christianity is unique among all the world’s religions in that it is a singing faith. We sing when we gather. Muslims don’t sing when they gather at the mosque on Friday. Orthodox Jews don’t sing when they go to synagogue on Saturday. But the church of the living God sings when we gather on Sunday because we serve a Savior who conquered death, hell, and the grave!

Psalm 92:1-2—“It is good to give thanks to the Lord, and to sing praises to Your name, O Most High; to declare Your lovingkindness in the morning, and Your faithfulness every night.”

Psalm 100:1-2—“Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth! Serve the Lord with gladness! Come into His presence with singing!”

John MacArthur — *“The first consequence of the Spirit-filled life that Paul mentioned was not mountain-moving faith, an ecstatic spiritual experience, dynamic speaking ability, or any other such thing. It was simply a heart that sings.”*

We’re to sing psalms—that’s the words of Scripture put to music. We’re to sing hymns—that’s instruction that comes through music. We’re to sing spiritual songs—that’s songs we sing directly to the Lord in worship. We are to sing the songs about God, and we are to sing the songs to God as Spirit-filled worshipers.

Giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Spirit-filled people are marked by gratitude instead of a critical or complaining attitude. Submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. Spirit-filled people don't have to be the first in line, but accommodates others.

In your wedded life

The rest of Ephesians deals with relationships and how the filling of the Holy Spirit is to make a difference in them. For example, look at the instruction given to wives and to husbands. The wife is to submit to her husband as to the Lord, and the husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. Friend, you can't do that apart from the filling work of the Spirit in your life. The same thing will apply to the relationship between children and their parents. Spirit-filled living will transform the foundational relationships of the home.

In your work life

On into chapter 6, we read about the relationship that the bondservants were to have with their masters and vice versa, which nowadays applies to the employer/employee relationship. Spirit-filled Christians will be the best workers and the best bosses. They'll be the most honest, the most faithful, and the most hard-working.

In your war life

In Ephesians 6:10, Paul writes, "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might." He then instructs the believer to put on the whole armor of God in order to stand against those spiritual powers which oppose us and come at us every single day. The devil never takes a day off. Hell never stops its opposition and attack. Satan will look for an opportunity in your life where he can take an

advantage. For that very reason we need to be Spirit-filled, armored up, and battle ready!

In your witness life

The last thing Paul mentions in chapter 6 involves praying for words to be given that he might boldly proclaim the truth of the gospel. Spirit-filled people are witnesses for Christ, and there is nothing that presents a lost a world any better picture of what God can do in a man or in a woman than a Spirit-filled life.

Do you want to be Spirit-filled? It's not that complicated. Then let me offer you these simple steps. Here they are:

- First, **desire** to be filled with Spirit
- Second, **renounce** all sin in your life
- Third, **surrender** yourself fully to Christ
- Fourth, **yield** to the Holy Spirit

Boyd Hunt — *“Most importantly, the Holy Spirit, who is personal, acts personally, not impersonally or magically. Those who view the Holy Spirit as an impersonal power are concerned about how to control or use Him. By viewing the Spirit personally, as the Spirit of the God we know in Christ, our concern should be to let the Spirit control our lives.”*

Are you filled with the Spirit? Right now, are you consciously filled with the Holy Spirit, living in submission to Him and under His total influence? Friend, when you are so filled, you will discover that God has placed an artesian well within you that will never, ever run dry. If you're not sure whether you are a Christian, then in simple faith, come to Jesus today if you are thirsty!