

The Filling of the Holy Spirit

Ephesians 5:18

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I described someone recently and said, "The more you get to know him, the more you like him." Isn't it great when relationships can develop that way? I feel similarly about what God is doing in our church as we learn about the Holy Spirit and the gifts He has given through us to the Church. The more we get to know Him, the more we love Him. We are teaching through 1 Corinthians and allowing chapter 12 to be an opportunity to learn about the person and work of the Holy Spirit. The chapter is specifically about spiritual gifts the Spirit gives to His Church. These gifts are divine enablements given to each Christian to serve and bless the Church.

Last week we looked at 1 Corinthians 12:13 and learned about baptism in the Holy Spirit. *For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body.* **Baptism in the Holy Spirit is a summary term for the dramatic work of the Spirit at conversion which all Christians experience and which unites and locates all of us in the one body of Christ.** This work of the Spirit overwhelms the shattering disunities of human history: racism, class warfare, prejudice of all kinds. The gospel does what governments and presidents and ideologies and philosophers and education and the Olympics and the World Cup cannot ultimately do – unite people and make us one. In Christ, we are one by the Spirit in one body. Remarkable! That's the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The challenge is to do relationally what is true spiritually. Chapter 13's teaching on love will help get us there.

So if Spirit-baptism is true of all Christians at conversion, what is the ongoing role of the Spirit in our lives? Here is the summary of His role from last week:

- Conviction of sin (John 16:8-11)
- Testifies about and glorifies Christ in the world (John 15:26)
- Makes us spiritually alive/born again (John 3:7-8)
- Permanently indwells every believer (John 14:17)
- Actively works to make each believer's life increasingly righteous (Romans 15:16)
- Empowers believers with gifts for service (1 Corinthians 12)
- Nourishes believers with truth, comfort, intercession, and guidance (John 14:26; John 16:13; Acts 9:31; Romans 8:26)

These are all works the Spirit does to us and in us. The last category gets at another reality:

- *For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.* (Romans 8:14)
- *But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.* (Galatians 5:16)
- *If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.* (Galatians 5:25)

The Spirit not only works on our behalf, the Christian life is the life of the Spirit as He energizes, empowers, and animates spiritual vitality in us each day. The Christian life is the ongoing life of the Spirit in us; heaven's life shed abroad in our hearts. It's personal. It's dynamic. It's corporate and communal. Like all meaningful relationships, this relationship with the Spirit can become deeper and more significant. What should we call the ongoing life and growth experience of the Holy Spirit in us? That's what I want to speak to today and maybe next week too.

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. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit. (Ephesians 5:15-18)

Verse 18 is our focus, *Do not get drunk with wine...but be filled with the Spirit.* Paul is clearly saying something not to do and something to do. There is a comparison and a contrast here. We are not to get drunk with wine (or any other alcoholic beverage for that matter). Contrasted with that is being filled with the Spirit. Why does Paul put these two side by side? Is it a coincidence?

We may not know what it means to be filled with the Spirit but we all know what happens when someone is filled with wine. What is true of a drunk? Drunkenness affects the whole being. It affects how we think. Alcohol is a depressant and it slows the drunk down. It affects his speech. He doesn't talk the same. It affects his body. The roadside test for a drunk is to have him touch his nose or walk a straight line. It affects the way he feels. Ever see those Bears fans at the game with their shirt off in the dead of winter? What's going on there? Granted, most of them seem to have a thick layer of fat to keep them warm, especially around their bellies. Still, how can they stand it? The alcohol has altered their sense of things. They act different too. It's not hard to identify the drunk. He's the loudest. He's ready to fight anyone. What is going on? The alcohol is in control, not the man. The alcohol has affected the entirety of his being, body and mind, desires and speech. When you are filled with alcohol you are no longer in control; the alcohol is in control and its effect permeates the whole person.

This is why Paul puts them in the same sentence; to compare their effect. Drunkenness leads to debauchery (The NLT says it *will ruin your life*), but being filled with the Spirit has its powerful effect as well, which is in verses 19-20. There is much to contrast as well since drunkenness is clearly a vice and the filling of the Spirit is a virtue. But they are together to compare. The verb tense is important as well. It is not a one-time "filling." It literally means, "be continually being filled." The filling of the Spirit is an ongoing process.

So the question remains, what does it mean to be filled with the Spirit? If all we had was Ephesians 5:18, we would know that it means control and it has a permeating affect on life and personhood. There is much more in the New Testament about this:

- John the Baptist was filled with the Spirit from birth. (Luke 1:15)
- Elizabeth was filled with the Spirit when Mary greeted her. (Luke 1:41)
- Zechariah was filled with the Spirit and prophesied. (Luke 1:67-79)
- The disciples were filled with the Spirit at Pentecost. (Acts 2:4)
- Peter was filled with the Spirit in his response to the Jewish leaders. (Acts 4:8)
- After prayer, the disciples were filled and emboldened in their witness. (Acts 4:31)
 - *And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.*
- Paul was filled with the Spirit prior to speaking against Sergius. (Acts 13:9)
- Stephen and Barnabas were men "full of the Spirit." (Acts 6:5, 11:24)
- The disciples were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit. (Acts 13:9)
- Jesus was filled with the Spirit. (Luke 4:1, 10:21)
 - *And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness.* (Luke 4:1)
 - *In that same hour he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children.* (Luke 10:21)

What does filling do? It *empowers* for ministry. Paul and Peter were filled and preached. It *emboldens* for ministry. They were filled with the Spirit and spoke the Word boldly (Acts 4:31). The Spirit will exercise control and power in us to provide us with the power and courage the ministry moment needs. Stephen was full of the Spirit moments before he was martyred (Acts 7:55). What did he need? Boldness and courage. He got it.

We also see "full of the Spirit" as a character quality in someone. John the Baptist was full of the Spirit his whole life. The first deacons were to be men "full of the Spirit." Stephen and Barnabas were men "full of the Spirit." (Acts 6:5, 11:24). I take this to mean they lived their lives under the obvious control of the Spirit and the fruits of the Spirit were more observable in their lives and in their character.

So what does all this mean? Remember, baptism in the Spirit happens once. At conversion, we are baptized; engulfed into the new life in the Spirit. The Holy Spirit now dwells within us. The filling of the Spirit, like the effect of alcohol, permeates the Christian to shape and control the entirety of our personhood. The more control the Spirit has, the more filled we are. The more filled we are, the more our lives are empowered and directed by the Holy Spirit. How does the Spirit take more and more control? Simply speaking, we let Him. That's very simplistic and there are more factors and ways that His control permeates, but at the core of it is that we surrender control to Him.

This is where the English word "fill" is unhelpful. The idea of the word is completeness (πληρουσθε). "To be full with nothing left; to have something entirely." "Fill" would seem to indicate that when we are filled that we have more of the Holy Spirit than when we are not filled. Or that we can be half full or three quarters full. The Holy Spirit is not a liquid; He is a person. We are in a dynamic relationship with Him. It's like suggesting a man can be partially married. You are either married or you are not. She is either entirely your wife or not at all. When we receive Christ as our Savior, we have all of the Holy Spirit. The question filling asks is, *Does He have us?* Please don't think of it as a filling like liquid or this important doctrine will be forever confusing to you.

Here's a helpful way to think of it. Some of you know that growing up I was a reluctant participant in my family's hobby of showing horses. This was a small time operation and we only had a couple horses at a time. I say reluctant because my role was doing the dirty jobs – feeding the horses in the winter, pitching the manure out of the stall, driving all over the state for shows, and worst of all, watching my sister not do any of those things, yet riding the horses in the shows, winning the trophies, and getting her picture in the paper. Was it ever noted in all the press the key role I played? No. Hence, I was reluctant.

Being around horse shows, the real show is the event called "reining." This event is the culmination of a long and difficult process between the horse and the rider. It begins by breaking in the horse. Really, it's breaking the horse. They begin by building trust – feeding the animal, petting and rubbing it. This builds trust. Eventually they get the horse to accept a bridle. Once the bridle is on, they start to walk the horse, put it on a rope and have it run in circles. The day finally comes when the trainer gets on the horse for the first time. This is the decisive moment as it is a battle of wills. The horse versus the trainer/rider. Really, it is a battle for control. Who is going to be in control? Who is leading? Who is submitting? Typically there's some kicking and jumping, but if it goes well, the horse surrenders to the will of the rider. Now he is broken. Now he can be ridden. Now he is useful. Now this is a horse that a talented rider can do amazing things with. If you have ever seen "reining," you know what I am talking about. Left. Right. Nudge of the reins, slight kick, off and galloping. Stop on a dime. Slow. Back up. There are even contests that go one step further. No saddle. No bridle. Just horse and rider. The surrender of the horse allows the rider to guide and direct and the two of them can do amazing things together. When there is confusion

between horse and rider that is not a horse show, that's a rodeo. The more the horse trusts and surrenders to the rider, the more the horse and rider can do together.

In the metaphor, we are the horse. The Spirit is the rider. The analogy is not perfect, but at conversion, we are broken and the Spirit is now with us, like a rider. To be filled with the Spirit is to daily surrender my flesh's desire to control and allow the Spirit's active presence and power to rule. Like a horse to its rider, should be a Christian to the Spirit.

But wait, didn't I do that when I was saved? Didn't I surrender? Yes. But just like every time the rider gets on the horse, every day I wake up I must yield to His right to lead. Galatians 5:16 says, *Walk by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.* To be full of the Spirit is the ongoing experience of the Holy Spirit in which His will and His Word have permeated the entirety of our personhood and He is controlling and empowering our lives.

Filling is not a feeling, although the fruit of filling can be and often is. The Spirit's control creates wonderful and very desirable fruit in our lives. *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.* (Galatians 5:22-23) Here's the fruit of filling in the rest of the Ephesians passage, *...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.* (Ephesians 5:19-21)

Here we see praise, thanksgiving, and respect toward one another. How do you know if you are filled with the Spirit? An esoteric experience is not the measure, although filling can be very powerful and intense. The real measure is that it produces in us moral obedience, empowerment for ministry, and thankfulness. It might be easier to ascertain when I am not filled with the Spirit; it's the opposites – thanklessness, praiselessness, disrespect, doing ministry in the weakness of my own power, absence of love, joy, peace, patience, lack of kindness, goodness, faithfulness, not gentle, out of control. What does that look like? That's the bucking bronco at the rodeo.

This is our challenge – the daily surrender of control and the yielding of me to the Rider, to the Spirit, and yielding to Him throughout the day. I don't know about you, but I can go from being a champion spiritual show horse to a bucking bronco in one second, like when the old lady in front of me is going too slow. Patience goes right out the window! I am like a bucking bronco when there is some disrespect hurled my way by a family member or when something dumb happens that costs me financially. These and many other things get me bucking.

Can you relate? Are you a show horse during morning devotions, and a bucking bronco an hour later? Are you a show horse at church, and a bucking bronco by lunch time? Spirit-filling is the ongoing experience of the Spirit in the Christian's life which will largely determine our effectiveness in life and ministry and the extent of His good fruit produced in our lives.

How do we get there? One fruit of the Spirit is patience and you'll need to be patient until next week's message.

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