

## Life in the Spirit, Ephesians 5:18-20, The Filling of the Spirit, 8/4/24

**Ephesians 5:** <sup>18</sup> *Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit,* <sup>19</sup> *speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit.*

*Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord,*<sup>20</sup> *always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Each Tuesday at 9am we have a staff worship hour. A highlight of my week, we get to sing together, take communion together, pray for one another and our church, and we also have a discussion on the sermon text coming up that Sunday. So Pastor Todd led the discussion on Tuesday...Todd loves icebreakers- it's really a hidden talent of his to come up with the best icebreaker questions. And his icebreaker was: **Name something that people generally love that you just don't get.** That's a great icebreaker, because we all immediately have something- ask congregation...Todd's answer- the Beatles...what?? Now there are some things we just don't get until we are in the right context and we experience it and suddenly...we get it! Sushi- cold, raw fish wrapped in seaweed...that just doesn't seem right, until I had good sushi and I was suddenly like- I get it.

Our topic today, **[Title Slide]** being filled with the Holy Spirit is something many people, even many Christians just don't get. It sounds mystical, it sounds a little out there, and even something you might be a bit intimidated or skeptical of, or maybe you've been to a worship service and someone was trying to fill you with the Spirit and you were just like, I don't get this...but I am going to argue today is that being filled with the Spirit is not just for a handful of specially gifted Christians, but it is supposed to be the normal Christian experience. And it's essential to live the kind of victorious life that Jesus has called you to. If you feel like you are missing something in your Christian faith, lacking power to overcome temptation, lacking joy, lacking courage...it has everything to do with the filling of the Holy Spirit. And so my prayer for us today is that the Holy Spirit would fill our church and fill our lives so that if we walked into this place today maybe not getting it we would like this place wanting it and experiencing it. Let's pray...

Today we want to anchor our time in Ephesians 5:18-20 and we are going to discover three things about the filling of the Holy Spirit: **the Meaning, the Marks, The Methods.**

### **The Meaning: What does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit?**

<sup>18</sup> *Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit,* Paul is using a surprising illustration of something that many people in Paul's day (and many people in our day) experienced in order to help them understand something they maybe haven't experienced. The experience of getting drunk is both similar and very dissimilar to being filled with the Spirit. The word "drunk" means to be soaked, saturated. Being drunk means that we are under the influence of alcohol. Neurologically, soaks the receptors in your brain, your control board and influences your mood, your speech, your body movements, your decision-making. **To be filled with the Holy Spirit:** means that he has soaked and saturated us- he has the

influence on our mood, our speech, what we do with our body, our decision-making is influenced by and directed by the Spirit.

**The Marks. What are the marks of a being filled with the Holy Spirit?** There are some flavors of Christianity who would say that being filled with the Spirit means becoming rolling around on the floor, barking, or rambling uncontrollably, jumping around...are these the marks of being filled with the Spirit? Well, you won't find those marks in the Bible.

Here's how drunkenness is very dissimilar to being filled with the Spirit. Paul says- <sup>18</sup> *Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery.* Debauchery is a word that means to be spilled out, to squander, to waste energy. The problem with being drunk is you are out of control, for some people that's rambling on and on about all kinds of ideas and things that you are going to do, all nonsense- you wake up the next day and you aren't going to do any of those things. Wasted energy and time, your emotions spilling out all over the place. Maybe wasting money- wake up the next day to a bar tab...and you remember you bought the whole bar a round of shots on you.

Paul contrasts this kind wasted time, energy and actions that leads nowhere good with the influence of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Christian- when he filled us, we should expect focused, effective use of time, energy, and actions. 2 Timothy 1 Paul is encouraging Timothy to continue in the service of God and people through Gospel ministry. And he reminds him that he has the Holy Spirit who empowers him. <sup>7</sup> *For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.*

**Serving-Focused Power:** One of the reasons some people are drawn to alcohol is because they feel weak, timid, reserved when they are sober...but when they are drinking they feel emboldened...beer muscles, liquid courage. Confront people, uninhibited, might attempt daring physical feats and then post them to YouTube. But being filled with the Spirit isn't self-seeking power, it's serving-focused power. Let me show you a few examples:

**Exodus 31-** God filled some of the builders and craftsmen with the Holy Spirit to have the wisdom and creative artistry to build the tabernacle so the people could worship God together. Or **Numbers 11** the Holy Spirit filled the 70 Elders in or to assist Moses in prophesying, preaching and pastoral counseling. In the Book of **Judges**, the Spirit filled the judges to lead the people. At Pentecost at the birth of the church in **Acts 2**, the apostles were filled with the Spirit and began proclaiming the gospel in various languages of those who were present. In **Acts 4** the Holy Spirit filled the church and gave them boldness and courage to share the gospel with their community in the face of persecution and rejection (Acts 4:31). What do all of these have in common- the filling of the Spirit results not in self-seeking power, but in power to serve others. The Spirit does not give us power to control other people, to take advantage of others, to put on a show all about us, to use power to elevate our status or our bank account...this is not from the Spirit. *Is your life marked by a desire for self-seeking power or serving-focused power?* Serving-focused power of the Spirit will result in creative ways to lead people to worship, effective

sharing of the gospel, helping people who are struggling in counseling, clarity in leadership, boldness even in the face of resistance. That's the kind of power we long to be filled with.

**Joy-filled Love:** Look at what Paul says are the results of being filled with the Spirit <sup>19</sup> *speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord,* <sup>20</sup> *always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.* What do we see? People who are filled with love, joy, and gratitude to God and a sense of love for others and it can't be contained- it breaks out in song. Now alcohol has a tendency to mimic this love and merriment. Alcohol can fill you with songs...you put your arms around each other swaying, singing...I've got friends in low places where the whiskeys dry and the beer chases my blues away...But when it wears off, or the next morning, you may have found that you aren't in love, or made a big mistake,...and now you have a splitting headache and don't want to see any of those people you were just with...it's fleeting. It's a counterfeit to the joy-filled continuous love that the Spirit fills us with.

**Slide** The Spirit fills us with love for God, and his goodness and character, the beauty of the Gospel and the experience of his grace and the fellowship with our brothers and sisters in Christ is so overwhelming to us and we want to sing. And not just to ourselves but to each other- we need to sing to encourage and fill our hearts with the Spirit. We all have friends in low places here...We come in sometimes discouraged, doubting, distracted. Worship draws us out of ourselves and into communion with the Spirit. Some of us don't sing...especially sometimes guys...Can I challenge you- real men sing. Singing is one of the ways we are filled with the Spirit. Is your life marked by joy-filled love? Is it evident in your singing?

### **Self-Discipline**

Unlike being filled with alcohol which leads to undisciplined behavior and an undisciplined life, being filled with the Spirit results in a disciplined life. In Acts 6 there was a challenge in the church. They experienced explosive growth in numbers and suddenly they realized there were tasks falling through the cracks- one of those was distributing food and resources to hundreds of widows. And so the apostles told the church- choose people who were filled with the Spirit to oversee this administrative process. Why? Because they would need people who could be counted on, who were self-disciplined, organized, consistent, able to show up on time and be responsible, in a routine. The Spirit isn't some wild, frenzy that wears us out. The Spirit fills us with discipline, with the ability to organize our lives wake up early, and go to bed on time, to keep our house in order, to spend quiet time reading the Word, in prayer, to resist doom scrolling on our phones, to eat better and exercise. The Spirit helps us resist that 3<sup>rd</sup> glass of wine that you probably shouldn't have, or raiding the refrigerator at 10pm. The Holy Spirit helps us fight temptation of lust of the eyes and flesh, and to discipline our tongue from saying or posting that snarky, mean comment.

There was a young man in my church in VA who talked about how filled with the Holy Spirit He was and that we aren't filled enough with the Spirit and so I said I'd like to visit you and learn more about what you mean by that. Well the place he was living was a complete mess, trash everywhere, he clothes weren't washed and in piles, he was eating terrible fast food all the

time. And he wasn't able to hold down a job because he missed too many days at work. Friends...this isn't being filled with the Spirit. The Spirit will help you get your life together. Is your life marked with self-discipline? OK so we've looked at the meaning, the marks, now let's look at the methods.

**The Methods. How do get the filling of the Holy Spirit?** V.18 be filled with the Spirit. This is a command that we participate in... but it's passive. We aren't doing the filling- the Spirit is. And it's in the present continuous tense...not a one-time thing, it is something that is to be ongoing in our lives. So how are we commanded to do something that is done to us? My family leaves for OCNJ vacation today- one of the things the Keeler boys love to do is body surf...it's a lost art. When I taught me kids how to body surf, I tell them that the key to body surfing is to make yourself into a surfboard, you have to be in the right posture to allow the wave to do the hard work. You have to be postured ready to yield to the momentum and power of the wave to carry you. That's a good way to think of being filled with the Holy Spirit. The key to being filled with the Holy Spirit is being in the right heart posture for the Holy Spirit to do the hard work, to yield to the power and moment of the Spirit. Let me briefly share with you four heart postures to be filled with the Spirit.

**A Heart posture of Surrender:** You will never learn to body surf if you are resisting the waves, if you are trying to fight against where they want to take you. Ephesians 4:30 Paul tells us that we can grieve the Holy Spirit when we resist obedience to the Word of God or the conviction of the Holy Spirit. The kind of heart that the Spirit loves to fill is one that is soft like a sponge, not hard like a rock. This is a heart of humility. When I'm not filled with the Spirit, it's often because I'm resisting something he wants me to do. If you aren't experiencing the filling of the Spirit- it may be because you are resisting. Resisting to forgive someone, or you want to keep control of your life, maybe you aren't accepting a hardship that God has in your life for a reason. Pray- Lord, show me, Lord whatever you tell me to do, I'm committed to doing. You want me to surrender more of my time? More of my financial resources that I'm holding back? Surrender that habit that's holding me back?

**A Heart Posture of Mission:** If you want to body surf, you have to want to go where the wave takes you, all the way in to the sand. You can't pull back. It's the same with the Spirit. In Acts 1:8- Jesus says the Spirit is going to empower you, and take you all the way in with the gospel...all the way into the culture, to our community, to the hardest to reach places of your office, your neighbors, to the hardest to reach places in the world. The Spirit fills us as we are on mission, about His work, when we get out on edge of adventure and ministry and risk-taking with God. If you ask the Students when they sense the filling of the Spirit the most, I think they would tell you on missions trips. As they are out there being uncomfortable, on the edge with God, serving others, being dependent on the Spirit. Don't sit around waiting to be filled with the Spirit- the Spirit loves to steer a moving ship! Some of us don't encounter the power of the Spirit because we're not engaged in the mission with the Spirit. Start opening up your mouth about your faith with your co-workers or at the pool, by inviting people in your neighborhood to dinner, get out of your comfort zone by serving in a ministry with people that aren't like you.

So, the normal Christian life is a life filled by, influenced by the Holy Spirit who gives us service-focused power, joy-filled love and self-discipline. And we put ourselves in the posture to be filled with the Spirit through surrender and following him on mission. Now, none of us will or can sustain being filled with the Spirit all the time. We will fail, and fall back on old patterns, and get grumpy... me too. But then we can repent and humble ourselves and surrender again and ask him to fill us. Do you want to be filled with the Spirit?

*Prayer: Holy Spirit I'm calling on you; come and fill us, leave no space at all. Open our hearts to receive, we want to be consumed and controlled and filled with you. Replace our timidity, our self-centeredness, our self-reliance with your power, joy-filled love and self-discipline. You're invited to come and have your way. Father, I believe that you have poured out your Spirit, that you have gladly given him as a gift to your sons and daughters. May my greatest ambition each day, be to always be full of your Spirit and know and experience the fullness of this gift as much as is possible in this life. Amen.*

Communion: Paul ends this section by saying all of this is only possible "in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Did you know that the Gospels tell us that Jesus' entire ministry was done in the power of the Holy Spirit? Jesus was fully surrendered to the filling of the Spirit...