

Filled Fully to Live Wisely

Ephesians 5:18

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

Introduction: There have been times where tension has filled the Bakker house in the past, and undoubtedly it will return in the future. The maximum force of this tension comes when something breaks around the house OR we have the opportunity to buy a new piece of bedroom furniture, like a dresser or desk. The item will arrive at the house or be picked up in a heavy box, stay in the garage until courage and iron will meet, and then dad asked to be let alone in a bedroom as he seeks to assemble 24,000 little pieces of metal screws, wood dowels, tiny nails, and some weird corkscrews that are supposed to interlock. Everything is spread out on the floor, a cry of angst from the pit of my being bellow out, and any interruption will be met with a terse look and words that are inaudible. It's overwhelming. Several hours later I will emerge, sweaty, frustrated, with extra pieces somehow, and ready to come back to the land of the living. (The only thing worse is assembling IKEA furniture by pictures alone).

When things break in the house or projects need to be done, there is a better way. I call Rick Hampton. When I look at the project, I have no idea where to start, what tools are needed, and how to accomplish the task in a timely manner. Instead of trial and error that cost more time and money that are in limited supply, Rick is able to assess, have a plan, and help get the project done, not only doing the work but teaching how to do for the next time. It's comforting to have a Rick in life, since he takes what is overwhelming and helps move through it, and comes alongside to help when I don't know how to proceed.

Living a life to the glory of God in Jesus Christ can often feel overwhelming. We look at all the commands given, the sins to be avoided, the righteous way to live, the responsibilities in home, church, and society, and the command to make disciples, and it can feel like staring at a million little pieces to put together a piece of furniture with directions written by an engineer. We can move forward and try on our own but we find that we fail far too easily or obey out of sheer will without joy. The reality is, trying to keep all God's commands, including the ones we've looked at in Ephesians 4 and 5 WOULD be impossible without the **truth of the verse we'll look at this morning**. God has provided a helper, a personal presence and influence to enable us to walk in wisdom, to know and play out God's will, and the instrument by which we are filled with Christ. That person and work is sourced in **the Holy Spirit**, the One given to every believer, God Himself dwelling with and in us, the One who Jesus said was the best reason for Jesus leaving the earth.

The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit has been largely misunderstood or neglected in the church. Over the last 100+ years there has been a growing number who believe that having the Holy Spirit is somehow a **secondary blessing** for certain believers, allows for ecstatic or supernatural abilities such as healing or speaking in tongues, or is linked with emotional, external worship practices¹. This is often

¹ There have been **3 identified movements of Pentecostalism**: First in the early 1900's with the teachings of Charles Parham followed by the Azusa Street Revival. Second in the 1960's marked by teachings such as "Word of Faith" or "Name it and claim it" propositions, and a Third wave in the 1980's to present, a "movement of the Holy Spirit" beginning in the Vineyard Church where "power" evangelism was marked by claims of signs and wonders, including new prophecy from modern Prophets. The downside of this practice is a de-emphasis on the power of the gospel alone (Rom. 1:16-17) and the authority and sufficiency of Scripture.

referred to as “Pentecostalism”. Experience is often emphasized and valued more than doctrine and “new prophecy” over the canon of Scripture. We will see that this is NOT a Biblical teaching and thus should be avoided.

On the other end of the spectrum, those that have a high view of the sufficiency and authority of Scripture (which I believe we are!) can often neglect the emphasis of the work of the Holy Spirit, either by misunderstanding or trying to distance ourselves from Charismatic teaching. This is also detrimental to our daily walk and experience with Christ, since God has given the Spirit to us for an express purpose. Just as we want to love in the truth, we want to worship in Spirit and truth, engaging our mind, heart, emotions and affections in worshipping Christ. The more we understand the Bible’s teaching about the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit the greater we are equipped to glorify Him in all things. So we come to a short verse that packs a huge punch:

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

If you remember back to last week, the emphasis was **walking in wisdom** which meant we wanted to redeem or make the best use of our time and to understand what the will of God was for us. *Wisdom demands that we think carefully to live precisely, navigating all of life proactively to honor and please the Lord.* Being **filled with the Spirit** is imperative for us to walk wisely in general and also specifically in daily life. In other words, how does a wife submit to Christ and a sinful husband? She must be filled with the Spirit. How does an imperfect husband love a sinful wife the way Christ loves him? He must be filled with the Spirit. Far from being a one off teaching, Ephesians 5:18 makes the previous commands understandable and the overwhelming commands to come possible.

The NEGATIVE FILLING to be AVOIDED (18a)

“And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery...”

At first glance, the command to avoid drunkenness seems a bit out of place, since it is not recorded that the church at Ephesus struggled with this sin. *Why would Paul bring up drunkenness here?* First, drinking alcohol is something every culture engages in and understands, and the city of Ephesus certainly had its share of drunkenness in it. But second, it creates a compare and contrast to the work of the Spirit in a believers life. Too much alcohol can intoxicate and unhinge one from self-control, and can lead to *debauchery* or a senseless, excessive squandering of life. In the culture of the day, pagan worshippers would get drunk to worship Dionysius, the god of wine, as they would seek to be controlled and united with that deity while uninhibited sexually and frenzied in conduct. At its core, what is the problem with drunkenness?

- **It offers pleasure but delivers pain, and cannot satisfy** (Proverbs 23:31-35) -

*“Do not look at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup and goes down smoothly. In the end it bites like a serpent and stings like an adder. **Your eyes will see strange things, and your heart utter perverse things.** You will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea, like one who lies on the top of a mast. “They struck me,” you will say, “but I was not hurt; they beat me, but I did not feel it. When shall I awake? **I must have another drink.**”*

- **It negates our sobriety and readiness for Christ’s return** (1 Thess. 5:6-8) –

*“For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. 6 So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us **keep awake and be sober.** 7 For those who sleep, sleep at night,*

and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. 8 But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation”

- **It’s associated with the work of darkness** (Romans 13:12-13) -

*“The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the **works of darkness** and put on the armor of light. 13 Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and **drunkenness**, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy”*

Clearly, getting drunk is to be avoided, put off, and not reflect the life of a follower of Christ. But it’s good to take a few minutes and make sure we understand how to think through this whole issue. The Bible does not *prohibit drinking*, but *drunkenness*, so the question must be asked: **How does a believer determine whether or not they should drink alcohol?** The answer is actually the same as many areas of the Christian life where the Bible is not explicit: *we exercise WISDOM*. Here are some Biblical principles to consider as we exercise any activity, particularly as it pertains to alcohol:

1. **Is this simply gratifying my flesh and moving me toward the line of sin** (Rom. 13:14)
2. **Is this replacing something that only Christ can fill?**
3. **If this is not explicitly sinful, is it helpful?**
4. **Is this a right expression of freedom in Christ? Have I considered others, including my brother or sister in Christ who would stumble as a result** (1 cor. 8:12)? **Is this ruling me, or am I willing to give it up** (1 Cor. 8:13)?
5. **Is this causing me to be out of control and undisciplined** (1 Cor. 9:27)

The greatest expression of freedom is NOT pressing our freedom for the sake of other and the gospel (1 Cor. 9:12). Food or drink does not commend us to God (1 Cor. 8:8), meaning we are NOT more righteous in NOT drinking. But we have to understand that the freedom we have in all things is to glorify God and not please ourselves, willingly making ourselves a servant to all that we might win the more (1 Cor. 9:19). This is what exercising wisdom looks like, not in legalistic denial but in wisely using our freedom.

The POSITIVE FILLING to be PRACTICED (18b)

“But be filled with the Spirit”

Now Paul addresses the positive command for all believers to “be filled” with the Spirit. This is akin to “walking by the Spirit” (Gal. 5:16-18; Rom. 8:4-6; 13-16), but is unique here in Ephesians. Before unpacking the idea of filling, we should get our minds around the work of the Spirit Himself.

The Work of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament:

The Spirit has always existed and equal to but different than God the Father and God the Son (Gen. 1:2; Matt. 29:19; Acts 5:3-4; 1 Pet. 1:2; Jude 20-21). He was **active** in the Old Testament, but the key word for His work was **TEMPORARY**. He came on and filled up Bezalel, for example, who helped Moses in building and beautifying the Tabernacle (Exodus 31:3; 35:31). He entered into Samson to strengthen him as a Judge of Israel (Judges 13:25), but ultimately left him when he allowed Delilah to have his head shaved (Judges 16:20). The Spirit came upon Saul when he became king of Israel, but left him as well after God judged him, being replaced with a harmful spirit (1 Sam. 16:14). This is the reason that David pled with God after he sinned with Bathsheba to “*take not your Holy Spirit from me*” (Psalm 51:11), since he saw that exact thing happen to Saul. The Spirit came on people for a designated time and purpose, but could leave as well. However, He was promised to come differently in the New Testament (Joel 2:28-32).

The Promised Work of the Holy Spirit:

Jesus made a dramatic statement to His disciples as He marched to the cross: ***“I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send Him to you.”*** (John 16:7) It would be BETTER if Jesus went away so the Helper, the Paraclete (meaning helper, encourager, and one who comes alongside) would come. We know that in **Acts 1:8** Jesus told the disciples that they would receive POWER when the Holy Spirit came, to be witnesses in Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. When He was poured out in Acts 2 as fire resting on each one, they were **FILLED** and able to speak in real languages, reaching all who were at Pentecost to hear the gospel in their native/heart language (2:4). It was so amazing that those who were there thought the apostles were drunk (Acts 2:13).

The Holy Spirit is a **HELPER**, one who would dwell with us and be in us (John 14:17). He would teach us all things and help us remember all that Christ commanded (14:26). He would bear witness of Christ (15:26), and convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (16:8-9). He would be a guide into all truth (16:13), glorifying Christ and declaring things to come and Christ Himself (16:14). He would take up residence in each believer, each body becoming His Temple of dwelling (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19). He produces fruit in those that walk in Him (Gal. 5:22-23).

These promises are typically not disputed among all believers regardless of background or doctrinal bent, but perhaps the work that is most misunderstood is that which takes place for **every believer at the point/moment of salvation.**

- **INDWELLS** – A verse that everyone should highlight and know for quick reference when talking about the Holy Spirit is **Romans 8:9**: ***“You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.”*** The Holy Spirit takes up residence at the point of salvation in all fullness. This is for “whoever believes” (John 7:37-39), and even if a believer temporarily walks down a path of sin (1 Cor. 6:17-19) or grieves the Spirit (Eph. 4:30) or quenches His leading (1 Thess. 5:19), He will not leave.
- **BAPTISES** – **1 Corinthians 12:13**: ***“For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit”*** The baptism of the Holy Spirit is NOT a secondary act nor does it help us reach a secondary level of spirituality. When we come to faith in Jesus we are baptized into the **body of Christ, so that every believer is identified with the ONE BODY OF BELIEVERS.**
- **SEALS** – The Holy Spirit seals us, assuring us and guaranteeing our salvation (Eph. 1:13). ***“and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee”*** (2 Cor. 1:22; 2 Cor. 5:5). The idea of a guarantee is a “down payment” of an inheritance, the best engagement ring one can receive in anticipation of a wedding to come.

Each of these is given, not commanded or exhorted to pray for or “do”. We are given the Helper who dwells in us, brings us into the body of Christ and seals us in Christ. That is why the command in Ephesians 5:18 is distinct. It is given to all believers who ALREADY possess the Spirit, and what we’ll be compelled to consider is how much the Spirit possesses us!

What does it mean to “Be filled”:

There are some important distinctions in the way this command is given:

- **Present Command** – The present means that it is an ongoing command, meaning a habitual, day in and day out occurrence rather than a once for all reality. *“Be being kept filled”* This means that we have an opportunity to be more or less filled with the Spirit, even as we have the promise that He will never leave us.
- **Passive Voice** – We are responsible to be filled, but it is something that is done to us. The Spirit fills, but we must make sure that we are.
- **“PLEROW”** - The simple definition of this word is “fill”, but it carries three kinds of filling:
 - 1) **Carried along** – This has the picture of a sail being filled with wind and moving along the water. In 2 Peter 1:21 the language is men speaking or writing by being “carried along” by the Spirit.
 - 2) **Permeated throughout** – Filling is like a house that is filled with a certain smell, like Mary anointing Jesus’ feet and having the whole house smell of perfume (John 12:3). If you’ve ever cooked fish in your house, you know how that smell can dominate the entirety of the house.
 - 3) **Total Control** – But the main use of “plerow” is that of control. When we say someone was **“filled with anger” or “filled with fear”**, that person is controlled or shaped by that dominating characteristic inside of them. This is the essence of being **filled with the Spirit**. It is to be completely controlled and stamped by His presence, which will affect our thinking, desires, actions, motives, and re-directed affections.

God could have simply called us to wisdom in an impersonal way, but instead He filled us with His personal presence to influence and enable us to walk wisely. He did not leave us alone. He gave us a Helper who guides, directs, and convicts. People ask me for help with **accountability** from time to time, which is a good and reasonable, ask, since what they are asking for is **help** in temptation or commitment. We play a pivotal role in each other’s lives to lovingly speak the truth to each other, but we also need to remember that we have **God with us and in us, who points us to Christ, who leads us in truth**. Often the solution we need is to be filled with the Spirit, not necessarily more accountability from people.

How are we supposed to be filled?

- 1) **We are filled by yielding** – Since the issue is not “indwelling” but rather filling, the pathway to being filled WITH the Spirit is to be filled with LESS of something else. Filling requires us to **yield or surrender** our sin through confession, our own self-will, and our desires and uses of time. There can never be **2 masters in our life**, since we are either leading our own lives or are being led by the Christ through the Spirit.
- 2) **We are filled by dying** – “Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit” (John 12:24); *“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me”* (Gal. 2:20). **“He must increase, but I must decrease”** (John 3:30). There is no way to be filled without **dying to self**. Death is painful. It may mean a total redirect of life, a cessation of defending yourself or preserving your rights, and a complete humbling of yourself before God and others. But, what springs OUT of death is life, fruit, and the pleasures of the Lord.
- 3) **We are filled by the Word** – There is one other clear way to be filled, and it comes in another epistle written by Paul. Look at **Colossians 3:16**. You’ll notice that 3:16-4:1 covers the same content as in Ephesians, but the power source is not cited as the Spirit alone here, but also the Word: **“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another....”** How are we supposed to respond in all of life in worship, thankfulness, submission, etc.” We

must be filled with the Spirit and let the word dwell **extravagantly** in us! Daily resetting our minds and hearts on Christ through the Word, reshaping our desires to yield to Christ, and giving the Spirit the fuel to guide and convict us.

Again, here is why this is so important: The only way for our marriages to exemplify Christ and find joy is if we are filled with the Spirit. The only way parents interact with children in wisdom is to be filled with the Spirit. The only way to navigate work spaces as employees or bosses well is by being filled with the Spirit. This is not a secondary or nominal command, but essential to a life of joy, pleasing God, and effective obedience.

The issue truly this morning is NOT whether or not a believer has the Holy Spirit, since that is exactly what is promised. No, the real question this morning is whether the Holy Spirit has all of us! That is what we are called to and responsible for, to empty ourselves of us so the Spirit will fill us full!