

Lesson 10--How to be Filled With the Spirit

God's wonderful purpose is to transform the believer into the image of His Son (Rom. 8:28-29; 2 Cor. 3:18). God desires to form the character of His Son in the believer by producing the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). What is it that prevents this from happening? If the Spirit of God is in the believer, and if God desires the believer to be fruitful, then why is the believer sometimes carnal and fruitless?

If the fruit of the Spirit is love, then why are we often unloving and selfish? Why do we lack the joy that God wants us to have? Instead of being longsuffering with others, why do we often fly off the handle? Why do believers often lack self control? Why is it that often our lives are not under God's control?

In Galatians 2:20 we read, "Christ L_____ in me." Christ is in me and He wants to live out His life in me, but why are there times when it seems as though the Lord Jesus is not living His life in me? The Lord Jesus truly wants to manifest His life in and through us. The problem is that often we get in the way. Often we do not allow the Lord to do His work in us. God delights in producing the fruit of the Spirit in the believer, but God will only do this if certain conditions are met.

How can we be filled with the Spirit? Christian living is not some complicated procedure that is beyond our grasp. There is not some difficult, secret formula that we must discover before we can be a spiritual and Spirit-filled person. God gives very simple instructions on what we must do in order to be Spirit-filled. This chapter considers these instructions.

The Key Command (Ephesians 5:18)

It is impossible to live the Christian life, to live a life that is pleasing to the Lord. The harder we try, the more we fail. "How to perform that which is good, I _____ not" (Romans 7:18). Even though we want to please the Lord, we do not have the power or the ability to do so. The good news, however, is that God is able to make the impossible possible! "With _____ nothing shall be _____" (Luke 1:37).

Consider Ephesians 5:17. Does God want believers to be unwise? _____ He wants us to _____ what the _____ of the Lord is! God's will is found in verse 18. This is what God desires for every believer.

"And be not _____ with wine, wherein (in which there) is excess, but be _____ with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18). We could paraphrase this verse as follows: "Do not be under the influence of alcohol, but be under the blessed influence and control of the God who indwells you." A drunk is controlled by alcohol; the believer is to be under the control and influence of the Spirit of God. A drunk does not control the alcohol, but the alcohol controls him.

Let us look at two examples of this word "filled." In Luke 5:26 these people were "filled with _____." This means that they were controlled by fear. This emotion was controlling them and making them act in a certain way. Luke 6:11 (in the KJV) says, "They were filled with _____." The word "madness" means "fury." The Lord's enemies were controlled by this emotion of fury and it made them act in a certain way. They determined to do whatever they could to get rid of Jesus. Compare also John 16:6. Sorrow had F_____ their hearts. They were controlled or dominated by sorrow.

So the term "filled" often carries with it the idea of being controlled by something, being under the influence of something.

A person intoxicated with wine acts in an unnatural manner. He does not act like his normal self, but he has a changed personality for the worse. Drunk people act in certain ways, and they would never act this way when sober. Likewise, a person filled with the Spirit acts in an unnatural manner. He does not act like his normal self. He acts like his new self. He is a "N_____ C _____" in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17).

The verb "be filled" in Ephesians 5:18 is in the present tense. It means that the believer is to be constantly filled with the Spirit. He is to be continuously filled. It is God's will that he always be controlled by the Spirit. We are to be filled with the Spirit always.

The verb "be filled" in Ephesians 5:18 is in the passive voice. This means that we do not fill ourselves, but we must permit the Spirit to fill us. He is the One who does the filling and we must allow Him to do so. He wants to control our lives and He wants us to be under His blessed influence.

The verb "be filled" in Ephesians 5:18 is a command that every believer must obey. Failure to obey this command is sin. Not being filled with the Spirit is disobedience even as going out and getting drunk is disobedience. If a person goes out and gets drunk, he is disobeying the first part of verse 18; if he fails to be filled with the Spirit, then he is disobeying the second part of verse 18. Being filled with the Spirit is not an option; it is required and it is essential. It involves being in a right relationship with our God, and not hindering His working in our lives.

It is God's desire for every believer to be filled with the Spirit. This is God's will for the child of God (compare Ephesians 5:17--"understanding what the _____ of the Lord is").

How much of the Spirit do you have? Do you have 5% of the Spirit? Do you have 50% of the Spirit? Do you have 80% of the Spirit? If you are a believer in Christ, you have all of the Spirit! He dwells in you fully and completely (2 Timothy 1:14). He does not partially indwell you; He completely indwells you. So the real question is not, "How much of the Spirit do you have?" but "How much of you does the Spirit have?" Have you given yourself totally to God or only partially?

For a person to be filled with the Holy Spirit, there are three conditions that must be met, and these three conditions are found in three New Testament passages, each passage being a command that relates to the Holy Spirit:

1) Grieve not the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30).

"And _____ not the _____ Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption" (Eph. 4:30).

There are two key words in this verse. First, we have the word "holy." May we never forget that the One who indwells us is the **HOLY** Spirit. The Holy God lives within us, and He is completely set apart from all that is sinful or defiled. And remember, the Holy God within us hates sin! Just as a surgeon will not use a glove that is filthy and dirty and contaminated, so also the Holy Spirit will not fill a person who is defiled by sin.

The second key word in this verse is the word "grieve." This word is both a love word and a hate word. As an example of this, consider a policeman who works in the narcotics division of his department. He has seen the great harm that illegal drugs have done to countless people and he hates the way these drugs have ruined so many lives. As a result he has devoted his life to educating young people and seeking to prevent them from going down this harmful road. But one day he discovers that his own son is hooked on drugs. His reaction is that of grief. He hates the drugs but he is grieved when his own beloved son is found to be involved with them. When someone you love does something you hate, you are grieved (pained, made sorrowful).

So it is with God the Holy Spirit. He dearly loves the believer, but when the believer does that which He hates (because of His holiness), He is grieved. Sin grieves the Holy Spirit and He refuses to fill an unclean vessel. See John 13:8 (the word "part" means "partnership" or "fellowship"). Christ refuses to have anything to do with a disciple who has dirty feet. For further study, see our notes on John 13.

In the context of Ephesians chapter 4, what are some of the sins that grieve the Holy Spirit?

Verse 25

Verse 28

Verse 29

Verse 31

Verse 32--an unforgiving spirit

See 1 John 1:5, "This then is the message which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, that _____ is _____ and in Him is no _____ at all."

God is absolute LIGHT (purity, holiness). God refuses to fill a believer who is contaminated with sin. If your toothbrush were to fall on a pile of dirt, I'm sure you would clean it before using it. When you have a nice dinner, do you bring out dirty plates and dirty utensils? When you go out to eat at a buffet, what would happen if you go to the stack of plates and the one you pick up has gravy on it and ketchup? Would you use that plate? You might like gravy and ketchup, but you do not want these from another person's meal! Wouldn't you find that disgusting? Most people at a restaurant would only use a clean plate.

We generally refuse to use dirty things, and so does God. The good news is that God has a way for His believers to be clean: "If we _____ our sins, He is faithful and just to _____ us our sins, and to _____ us from _____ unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). If we do the confessing, God will do the forgiving and the cleansing. [Note: The forgiveness spoken of here is not salvation forgiveness, but it is the kind of forgiveness whereby the sinning believer is restored to fellowship with the Father. See our paper on "Two Aspects of Forgiveness."]]

Often believers do not take sin seriously. We tend to put up with sin and tolerate sin. We play with sin and cover it up. We refuse to acknowledge and face up to sin. God takes sin very seriously, so much so that He sent His Son to the cross to remedy the problem! Confessing sin involves being honest before God and acknowledging sin for what it is. We need to see sin as God sees it and hate sin as God hates it.

Confessing sins means the believer comes before God and says, "Yes, Lord, I have sinned and this is what I have done. Thank You that You have promised in 1 John 1:9 to cleanse me of all sin and restore me to fellowship. I want to be a clean vessel for You to use."

Summary of the first condition: Do not allow sin to go unconfessed. Do not be grieving the Holy One who indwells you. He refuses to fill an unclean vessel, just as a surgeon refuses to use a dirty glove.

2) Quench not the Spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:19).

Think of a campfire. A campfire can do many things. It can warm the campers, boil water, cook hotdogs and marshmallows. If someone comes along and throws a bucket of water on the fire, then it can no longer do its work. The fire has been quenched.

The Spirit of God is like a mighty flame and He is able to help the believer burn brightly for the Lord. He wants to get us on fire for the Lord. He wants to work in us to produce the wonderful fruit of the Spirit in our lives. He wants to do a mighty work in us, conforming us to the image of God's Son. He desires to live out the life of the Lord Jesus Christ in us.

We quench the Holy Spirit whenever we do not allow Him to do His wonderful work in us. How do we quench the Spirit? How do we put out His fire and hinder His working in us? We do this whenever we say "NO" to God, whenever we are unwilling to yield to Him and do His will.

Think of a stubborn mule who insists on going his own way. How can God control us if we insist on having our own way and resisting what God wants us to do?

Thus we are quenching God's Spirit whenever we are resisting His will and opposing His Word and refusing to yield to Him.

Find the key word in Romans 6:13 (it begins with a "Y"): _____ The believer with a yielding heart says, "Yes Lord, I'll do what You want me to do; I'll go wherever You want me to go; I'll say whatever You want me to say and I'll be whatever You want me to be." When you see a "Yield" sign on the road, you are to give the other vehicle the right of way. Yielding to God involves giving God the right of way, and being completely willing to do God's will--whatever, however, whenever, wherever.

If we are going to say YES to God, then we must say NO to self: "If any man will come after Me, let him _____ himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke 9:23). Saying NO to self, I gladly say YES to God and let God have His way and His sway over my life.

Using the surgeon's glove illustration: Quenching the Spirit would be like the surgeon's glove clinging to a chair or some other object, refusing to allow the surgeon access to the glove (refusing to be used). The surgeon says, "Just let me put my hand into you so that I can do a marvelous work!" But the glove refuses!

Am I willing to do God's will no matter what it is, or do I insist on having my own way and doing what pleases me?

Examples of Being Yielded:

Paul: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to _____?" (Acts 9:6).

Isaiah: "Here am I, Lord, _____ me" (Isaiah 6:8).

Samuel: "Speak Lord, for thy servant _____" (1 Samuel 3:10).

The Lord: "Not _____ will, but _____ be done" (Luke 22:42).

3) Walk in the Spirit (Galatians 5:16).

"This I say then, _____ in the _____, and ye shall not fulfill the _____ (strong desire) of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16). To walk in the Spirit means to walk in dependence upon the Spirit, to walk by the Spirit or by means of the Spirit. We are constantly to be walking or living in the power of God the Holy Spirit who indwells us.

Walking in the Spirit means that I am **depending** on the Spirit to help me to walk in God's way. I cannot do it by myself. Jesus said, "Without _____, ye can do _____" (John 15:5, end of the verse). If I try to live the Christian life in my own strength, independent of the Spirit's help, I will surely fall and fail.

Think of a person waterskiing. What if this person says, "I do not need to hold onto this rope. I'll do fine without it." As soon as he lets go of the rope he begins sinking into the water.

A person walking on a tightrope needs the rope every step of the way. If he stops depending on the rope and steps off the rope, then he will surely fall. When a circus performer is first learning how to use the tightrope, he needs the rope every step of the way. Years later when he has become an expert at walking on a tightrope, does he still need the rope just as much?

Often we depend on God for difficult things, but there are other things that we feel quite comfortable with and we think we can handle quite well ourselves. A lady might say, "Who needs the Lord for washing dishes or doing the laundry. I'm quite comfortable doing these chores on my own. But Lord, if I run into a problem, I'll let You know." Men also have areas of responsibility that they think they can handle quite well, whether it be repairing things, yard work or driving the car. There is a great

danger here. Most of our hours are spent doing things that are in our comfort zone and are not very difficult, and we can very easily lose that attitude of God-dependence and God-consciousness that we so desperately need all the time.

Object lesson: If teaching this lesson in a class (or even from the pulpit), have a hand puppet. Go through some routines such as "Look at me, I can jump; Look at me, I can fly; Look at me, I can wave my arms. Look at all thing things I can do." Then remove your hand from the puppet and lay the puppet down. Wait a few moments as the students see the puppet motionless and doing nothing. The lesson is obvious. The puppet without the hand can do nothing, even as the believer, without the Lord, can do nothing (John 15:5).

The surgeon's glove illustration is similar. Not walking by the Spirit is like the glove saying to the surgeon, "I don't need you at all. I'll do this operation all by myself." How foolish. What the glove should say is this: "I can do nothing apart from the hand of the surgeon which can fill me and use me!"

Am I depending on the Lord for help and strength moment by moment, or am I struggling in my own strength and trying to accomplish things by myself in the energy of the flesh? Am I God-conscious and God-dependent?

Conclusion

We have looked at three conditions which must be met if we are to be filled with the Spirit and controlled by God:

Grieve not the Holy Spirit.

Quench not the Spirit.

Walk in (by means of) the Spirit.

Each of these verse may be summed up by a key word which points to the believer's responsibility:

Grieve not the Holy Spirit (Confess).

Quench not the Spirit (Yield).

Walk in (by means of) the Spirit (Depend).

May we not allow any unconfessed sin to rob us of fellowship with God. May we not rebel against God by refusing to do His will. May we not seek to serve God in our own strength, but instead may we constantly rely on God to do that which only He can do in us!