

□ 8. BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT

“And do not be drunk¹ with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18).



Introduction

I have met some people that read this verse as if it were saying, “*You shall* be filled with the Spirit”. But read it again and you will see it is actually a command to “*be filled* with the Spirit”. In other words, it is not a promise of something that will happen; it is a command to do something.

So, in this lesson, we shall consider what this verse is commanding and then look at three things this command implies.

1. This is a command.

- This is a command to “be filled with the Spirit” and, therefore, it is not a promise of being miraculously filled with the Spirit – it is a command we can obey.
- By comparing this passage (Ephesians 5:18-6:9) with the parallel passage in Colossians (Colossians 3:16-4:1), we can see that being “filled with the Spirit” is equivalent to “let the word of Christ dwell in you richly” (Colossians 3:16).
- So Paul is telling us to be filled with God’s word (cp. Hebrews 8:10) and allow it to govern our thoughts, speech, and behavior (James 1:22; Galatians 5:16-25).

2. Being filled with the Spirit implies *completeness*.

- Indeed, there are several passages that reveal that God’s word is complete and provides us with everything we need to live a godly life (Jude 1:3; 2 Peter 1:1-4).
- The word of God equips us with all that we need to walk in those good works that He prepared for us (Ephesians 2:10).
- God has provided all we need to live a life that is pleasing to Him, but this is only possible when we are filled with the Spirit. The more we read and study, the more we are being filled (1 Peter 2:1-12).

3. Being filled with the Spirit implies *purity*.

- The word of God has been revealed by the “holy” Spirit, which means the word is holy (cp. Jeremiah 23:9). Indeed, every word of God is pure (Proverbs 30:5; Psalms 12:6; 19:8; 119:140).
- To be filled with the Spirit is to be filled with God’s holy and pure words (Ephesians 5:18; Colossians 3:16). His word has the power to cleanse us (Psalms 119:9, 11).
- God’s word is pure and it will make us pure. The evidence of this purifying will be manifested in our lives (2 Corinthians 7:1; 1 Corinthians 6:20).

4. Being filled with the Spirit implies *contentment*.

- God has not revealed everything, but He has revealed what we need to know (Deuteronomy 29:29) to live a godly life (2 Peter 1:1-4).
- Since God’s word is all we need (2 Timothy 3:16-17), we ought to be content. However, it has always been the case that men are not content and seek after more than what has been revealed (1 Corinthians 1:22; Galatians 1:6-8).

¹ The word “drunk” is from the Greek word *methusko*; it is “an inceptive verb, marking the process or state expressed... ‘to become intoxicated’” (Vine). A better rendering is: “And do not begin the process of getting drunk with wine [by taking the first drink], in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit”.

- It is when one becomes discontent with God's complete revelation or refuses to believe it is complete that one goes astray (2 John 1:9). Indeed, the Mormon Church was established on Joseph Smith's testimony of receiving *further revelations!*

Summary

- ☞ To be "filled with the Spirit" is equivalent to saying "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly". It is a command that we must obey, which can only be done by devoting ourselves to reading and studying.
- ☞ Being filled with the Spirit implies *completeness*. The word of God is complete and provides all we need to live a godly life. Being filled with the Spirit is not a one time instantaneous event; it is progressive, and to the degree we are filled will be equal to the time we devote to studying.
- ☞ Being filled with the Spirit implies *purity*. The One who revealed the word is holy and so the word is holy. Several scriptures state that God's word is holy. Those who study the word and apply it will themselves become holy.
- ☞ Being filled with the Spirit implies *contentment* with what God has revealed. Seeking anything more will lead one into error. Those who do not abide in the doctrine of Christ are not in fellowship with God.

Applications

- ☞ Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 are parallel passages - they say the same thing in a different way. In the former verse it says "Be filled with the Spirit" and in the latter verse it says, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly". The latter explains the former. A well known hermeneutical principle: "Let scripture interpret scripture". Those who follow this principle are on safe waters, but those who stray from it head out into uncharted waters.
- ☞ There are times when we refuse to do something because we can't see the point. We are told to "be filled with the Spirit", but what's the point? What benefit is there in letting the word of Christ dwell in us richly? Seeing the benefits will also help us to earnestly crave the word of God (1 Peter 2:2). The word of God: (i) is able to make you wise unto salvation (2 Timothy 3:15), (ii) it can powerfully work in you (1 Thessalonians 2:13), (iii) it is able to nourish you and help you to grow (1 Peter 2:2), (iv) it is able to build you up (Acts 20:32), (v) it is able to keep you on God's path (2 Timothy 3:16), (vi) it can make you strong (1 John 2:14), (vii) it can give you assurance (1 John 5:13), (viii) it can keep you from sin (Psalms 119:11, 133), (ix) it can keep you from error (Matthew 22:29), (x) it is able to warn you (1 Corinthians 10:11-12), (xi), it is able to protect you (Ephesians 6:17; cp. Matthew 4:1-12), (xii), it is able to pierce your soul (Hebrews 4:12), (xiii) it can keep you from fearing the future (Matthew 24:6, 35), (xiv) it is able to give you a song in your heart (Colossians 3:16), (xv) it is able to give you joy (Psalms 19:8; cp. 119:111), (xvi) it can encourage you and cause you to persevere (Romans 15:4), (xvii) it can set you free (John 8:31-32), (xviii) it can make you holy (John 17:17), (xix), it can save (deliver) your soul (James 1:21), (xx) it can point out Jesus Christ, the object of saving faith (John 20:31).
- ☞ Your thoughts, words, and actions are being governed either by the principles of this world or the word of God. We might like to believe that God's word governs our life, but the fact of the matter is this: if we are not reading and studying, then we are still being governed by the principles of this world. Are you devoted to reading and studying? If not, you can start today.