

Ephesians God's New Community
A New Power!
Ephesians 5:1-30, (18-20)
30th January 2022
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A Question about the Holy Spirit

When someone mentions the Third Person of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit, what thoughts run through your mind, what feelings spring up in your heart? For some Christians, tragically, the Holy Spirit triggers memories of excess, because they remember some Charismatic or Pentecostal meeting where false prophecies were made, fake healings were proclaimed, and worship consisted of endless chorus singing, all, they were told, in the name of the Holy Spirit.

Other Christians, are just unsure what to think or feel when the Holy Spirit is mentioned: they know that they were transformed by his Power when they were born again, and they know that he lives in their hearts, but their understanding and experience of Him ends there.

Happily there is a third group of Christians, who sing and pray words like these:

*Holy Spirit, living breath of God,
Breathe new life into my willing soul.
Let the presence of the risen Lord,
Come renew my heart and make me whole.
Cause Your Word to come alive in me;
Give me faith for what I cannot see,
Give me passion for Your purity;
Holy Spirit, breathe new life in me.*

This third group—who realise that they need the Holy Spirit's power every moment of every day and earnestly seek him—are where we all ought to be, according to the verses before us today, *"Do not be drunk with wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, **be filled with the Spirit.**" Ephesians 5:18-19.*

In our travels through Paul's letter to the Ephesian Christians, we're at another one of those critical junctions. The *first half* of the letter was doctrine—what blessings God has poured out upon us through Jesus Christ. The *second half*, which we are now deep into, is practical—how we should respond in love and faith to what God has done. Chapters 4 and 5 have been filled with so many practical instructions: put off falsehood, speak truthfully, do not steal, but work, get rid of bitterness, forgive each other, and so on and so forth. Paul is just about to give instructions about family life and work life—perhaps the two most demanding areas of our lives, perhaps more exacting and difficult than everything Paul has urged so far! But someone is bound to be thinking, if not asking, "Paul, where does *the power* come from to live out this radically new life you are urging upon us? Paul tells us in these verses, *"Do not be drunk with wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, **be filled with the Spirit.**" Ephesians 5:18-19.* The power to live out this new transformed life comes from the Holy Spirit, comes from being filled with the Spirit of God.

So if I may return to our question, let's pray that through God's Word this morning, we might all see our need to be filled with the Holy Spirit every day.

(1) Who is the Holy Spirit?

Let's remind ourselves who the Holy Spirit is. We need to remind ourselves of some doctrine. The Holy Spirit is the Third Person of the Godhead. There is only one God, "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one." (Deuteronomy 6:4). But almost right away in the Bible, we are given clues that there is more than one Person in the Godhead. For example in Genesis chapter 1:26, God says "Let **us** make man in **our** image." And as the Bible unfolds, and especially in the New Testament, it becomes clearer and clearer that Three Divine Persons dwell within the Godhead. At the baptism of Jesus, for example, we find, **God the Father** speaks from heaven "This is my Son whom I love, with him I am well pleased." (Luke chapter 3), **Jesus Christ** the Son of God the one who is being baptised and **the Spirit of God** who descends in the form of a dove. All three divine Persons present and acting together! At the end of Jesus' ministry he commands his disciples to make disciples of all nations, "...Baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." (Matthew 28). Baptism must take place in the name of Three Divine Persons.

In a nutshell the Bible teaches that

*"There is One God
And yet there are Three who are God
But there are not three Gods, for the Three are One."*

We can *state* this wonderful truth, but we can't *understand* it, can we? The Holy Spirit is fully divine, fully God, co-equal in glory and being to God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

What does the Holy Spirit do? Well, he was very much involved *Creating* the universe, hovering above the waters, we read in Genesis 1:2, and he is very much involved in God's work of *Salvation*. God **the Father**, planned our salvation and sent his Son to save us; God **the Son** came into the world and paid the penalty for our sins so that we can be forgiven, and **God the Holy Spirit** brings the salvation of God into our hearts and lives: He convicts us of our sin (John 16:8) so that we can repent of it! He gives us a new heart and makes us born again (John 3:5-8). He reveals Jesus to us (John 16:14). He lives within our hearts to comfort us, to assure us that we are God's children, to lead us into truth, to counsel us, (John 14:16). And He give us the power we need to live the Christian life (Ephesians 5:18).

Last Sunday morning I arrived at Emmanuel Church in Handsworth, Birmingham at around 10:20 to preach. I was greeted at the door by a Christian lady who had lost her son in a car crash just a few months ago. Her husband was among the musicians playing the Indian harmonium. Why haven't those parents thrown in the towel and walked out on God? Who has comforted them? How have they kept on going, kept on serving, in the face of such deep suffering? Not in their own strength, that's for sure, but by the mighty power of the Holy Spirit who lives within them!

(2) How can I be filled with the Holy Spirit?

How can you and I experience that same mighty life-giving, joy-giving power of the Holy Spirit in our lives? How can we live with joy and power in our marriages and families and places of work? Paul says:

*"Do not get drunk on wine which leads to debauchery. Instead **be filled with the Spirit** (and then, this is all one sentence in the Greek) speaking to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs singing and making music in your hearts to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

When we were converted, the Holy Spirit came to live in our hearts. Every believer has become a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19), that is a wonderful and mysterious thing! But Paul says, **we need to go**

one step further, and actively seek to be filled with Holy Spirit. “Be filled with the Spirit” is a command, it’s actually a continuous present command, “keep on being filled with the Spirit, be filled every day, keep on being filled every day.”

Electricity is wired into every house. When we walk round our houses we are surrounded by electricity surging through the wires hidden behind the walls. But electricity becomes effective only when we act and plug in a phone charger here, a hair drier there, a stereo system over there! Until you act, until you plug something in, the power of the electricity remains potential, not actual.

And it is something like that with the Spirit of God. Yes, he is always living in our hearts, but, says Paul, we need to actively seek his influence, his power, “Be filled with the Spirit.”

To help us understand what he means, Paul both compares and contrasts being filled with the Holy Spirit with being drunk.

Someone who is drunk is under the influence of drink. They are not themselves. People say “it’s the drink talking” or “it’s the drink acting.” “That’s not how they normally speak or act, they’re under the influence of demon drink.” In the same way, a believer who is filled with the Spirit is clearly under the control of the Spirit of God, they are able to do something that otherwise they could not do in their own strength. This is what it means to be filled with the Spirit, to be under the influence, the control of the Holy Spirit.

But that’s where the positive comparison with drink ends! Paul is more concerned with the contrast between drunkenness and being filled with the Spirit, hear him again: *“Do not get drunk on wine **which leads to debauchery**. Instead **be filled with the Spirit** (which leads to) speaking to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs singing and making music in your hearts to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.”*

Drunkenness, Paul says, leads to negative stuff: debauchery, to a lack of control, to dissipation, to wastefulness. Saying things that are unhelpful, doing things that are foolish or sinful. But being filled with the Spirit leads to positive things, such as edifying speech, uplifting worship, a thankful heart and a submissive spirit.

Martin Lloyd Jones was a great preacher from the last century. He was a medical doctor before he was called to be a preacher and he pointed out that alcohol is a depressant, it slows down transmission of signals in the brain. And he went on to suggest that if the Holy Spirit could be listed in a pharmacology book, He would be placed under the category of stimulants! Drunkenness slows you down, dims your mind, depresses you, but the Holy Spirit empowers you, enlightens you, enhances you!

I remember the changes that happened in a labourer at the Yale Locks factory in Willenhall, back in the late 1970s. When this labourer became a Christian his mind virtually exploded, he began reading the Bible for hours and thirsting for a greater and deeper understanding of Christian doctrine. He began reading deep books of Christian doctrine. The Holy Spirit enhanced his thinking, enlarged his capacity to reason and comprehend! That’s what the Holy Spirit does!

Alcohol dims the mind, the Holy Spirit, enlivens it! So how can we be filled with the Spirit, then?

Negatively, we must not grieve the Spirit, we must not make him sad, Ephesians 4:30. Someone has called the Holy Spirit “The Gentleman of the Trinity”, he is the quiet and sensitive power at work within us, who is easily grieved. So we must constantly put to death our sins (Romans 8:13), constantly repent of our sins. And positively we must want to be influenced by the Holy Spirit, we must listen to his voice, obey his promptings, read his Word, the Sword of the Spirit, and ask for him, Luke 11:13, *“If you then, though you are evil, know*

*how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven **give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!***"

Being filled with God is an active thing. It's purposefully plugging into the power that is already running around the house. *Holy Spirit, living breath of God, Breathe new life into my willing soul.* All Christians have the Holy Spirit dwelling within them, but not all Christians plug into the power! How can we be filled with the Spirit? Realise that the Holy Spirit lives within us, actively seek his gracious influence, put away the sins and attitudes that grieve him, listen to his voice and ask him to influence us.

3. What happens when we are filled with the Holy Spirit?

What happens when we are filled with the Holy Spirit? In our English translation, a new sentence begins at verse 19, but in the Greek, it's all one sentence all the way to the end of verse 21. *"Be filled with the Spirit (which leads to) **speaking** to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs singing and **making music** in your hearts to the Lord, always **giving thanks** to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, **submitting** to one another out of reverence for Christ."*

When we are filled with the Holy Spirit..

1.Our SPEECH will be edifying: "speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" did you know that when we sing songs together, we are often talking to each other? "Be still for the presence of the Lord, the Holy One is here..." "Onward Christian soldiers marching as to war." "Turn your eyes upon Jesus.." We're encouraging one another!

2.Our WORSHIP will come from the heart: "singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart"

3.Our lives will pour out THANKSGIVING: "giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" Rather than criticism or grumbling, our speech will be filled with thanks for all that god has and is doing for us!

4. And we will be able to SUBMIT to one another: "submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ." Instead of stubbornness and always wanting our own way, we'll be submissive in our marriages, families and places of work

What happy and blessed outcomes when we are filled with the Holy Spirit!

Final Words

Brothers and sisters, do we sense our great need, do we long for, do we want happy and joyful and satisfying and God-honouring homes and places of work? Well, it starts with the confession that we can't do it on our own! But electricity is flowing all round the house; the Holy Spirit lives in every believer! We just need to plug into that immense power, we need to be daily filled with the Spirit. Let's include in our daily prayers something like this:

"Thank you for the precious gift of your Spirit. Help me not to grieve him today, help me to repent daily of my sins. May your Spirit empower me and control me today so that my words will be gracious, my worship heartfelt, my thanksgiving continual and my will submissive."