

# Our Spiritual Journey: Filled with the Spirit

Scripture Reference: Ephesians 5:18-21

*“Be filled with the Spirit”* is a command. It is not something in which you sit around, waiting to see if God’s Spirit is going to do for you. If a person gets drunk, it is something that they did to themselves. Normally, if a person has been filled with the Spirit, there are things they have done for this to happen. A person that has become drunk has taken alcohol into their body. A person, filled with the Spirit has taken spiritual elements and actively participated in them. Before those elements are explained, let’s not confuse the filling of the Holy Spirit with some of the workings of God’s Spirit in the Old Testament. Then, God’s Spirit would sometimes suddenly come upon a person and cause them to do things. Extreme examples like Balaam and King Saul indicate that someone did not have to be a faithful person for God’s Spirit to work through them (Balaam – Numbers 24:2 cp. 31:15-16; II Peter 2:15; Revelation 2:14. Saul – I Samuel 9:27 – 10:11; 11:16; 19:1-24). Without a doubt, in these New Testament times, the Lord can move us by His Spirit unexpectedly. However, because we have a unique relationship with His indwelling Spirit, we can have a steadiness of spiritual communion with God that is more constant than in the lives of Old Testament saints. It would be wonderful to say that we are filled with the Spirit all the time. However, we battle with consistency. Being filled with the Spirit is not automatic (does not passively happen). We need to obey God and cooperate with Him. We are always indwelt by His Spirit, but we are not always filled with His Spirit.

To be filled with the Spirit, is to be under the control of His Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not a commodity which we can measure, like filling a car with gasoline. When a person is filled with wine and becomes drunk, we say that they are “under the influence.” When a person is filled with the Spirit, we are under His influence and control. When we are filled with the Spirit, we are able to have a greater enjoyment of our relationship with God and we are able to represent Him to others in a greater way.

Now we consider how to be filled with the Spirit. Here are the spiritual elements, with which we must be operating, to be filled. Ephesians 5:18-21 offers us three things:

- **Meditation and worship** using the Scriptures (Ephesians 5:19 cp. Colossians 3:16; Psalm 1:1-3; 19:14; 34:1-3; 103:33-34)
- **Thanksgiving** – Deliberately and specifically thanking God for everything (Ephesians 5:20 cp. Colossians 3:15, I Thessalonians 5:18; Psalm 92:1; 100:1-5)
- **Godly Submission** – Submission, one to another in the fear of God (love, honor, respect, and cooperation for Jesus’ sake – Ephesians 5:21 (Paul elaborates in Ephesians 5:22 – 6:9) cp. Colossians 3:12-15; Philippians 2:1-4; I Peter 5:5; Psalm 133:1).

These things create an environment that invokes (invites) the Holy Spirit to take control of us. A person can do opposite to that which fills us with the Spirit. One can resist, quench, or grieve the Spirit of God (Ephesians 4:30-32; I Thessalonians 5:19). The word “*grieve*” means “*to cause pain*.” The word “*quench*” means “*to put out a fire; to smother*.” Let us then deliberately seek to be filled with His Spirit by conscious acts of worship, giving thanks, and humble cooperation with others. This will yield to us love, joy, peace, patience, and the many other benefits of the fruit of the Spirit. This also will render us more useful in the work of the Lord.

Let’s notice in the book of Acts that the Lord’s people were filled with the Spirit many times and that it produced many different results.

#### **Testimony and Evangelism – Acts 2:1-4**

Note they were with one accord in one place. This sets the environment that is described in Ephesians 5:18-21. Do not limit this to tongues-speaking. We all may be a testimony and witness to others without speaking in tongues.

#### **Preaching, Teaching, Testifying, and Edifying – Acts 4:8 ff**

This was done in plain language. Scripture came to Peter’s mind, and he knew exactly what to say. He spoke with clarity and boldness in the face of persecution. Note in **Acts 4:31** that in an atmosphere of prayer they were filled with God’s Spirit and had the courage to speak boldly.

#### **Standing strong when the gospel is resisted by others – Acts 13:6-12**

Paul specifically showed one of the “signs of an Apostle” when he caused the blindness of the sorcerer (II Corinthians 12:12). The focus is not on making a person blind. It is that we can stand up to opposition when we are filled with the Spirit.

#### **Joy, peace, and perseverance through suffering – Acts 13:49-52**

We are upheld by the Spirit of the Lord and can persevere in spiritual warfare. See John 16:33; Philippians 4:13; II Timothy 2:1.