

BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT

Ephesians 5:18-21

Int: This key passage on the filling of the Spirit contains two commands (“Do not get drunk..but be filled”) on which hang five participles (“speaking..singing and psalming..giving thanks...and submitting”) that show the results of “filling.”

WHAT “FILLING” MEANS

The filling of the Spirit is not the same as the baptism in the Spirit. The two may happen simultaneously but they are not synonymous. 1) All believers have been baptized in the Spirit (1 Cor 12:13) but not all are filled with the Spirit (Acts 6:3; 1 Cor 3:1). 2) The New Testament reports repeated fillings (Acts 2:4; 4:8, 31; 13:52) but no repeated baptisms in the Spirit. 3) The New Testament nowhere commands believers to be baptized in the Spirit but clearly commands them to be filled with the Spirit. The two are separate and distinct experiences.

“Filled” (5:18) means ruled, governed, controlled, dominated or possessed. A man who gets filled does not get more of the Spirit than he got when he was saved, but the Spirit he got when he was saved now gets all of him!

Verbs have number, voice, tense and mood. All are important here.

“Be filled” is PLURAL in number. Filling is for all, not just a few.

“Be filled” is PASSIVE in voice. Filling is not something a man does for himself but something he must let the Spirit do. The Spirit naturally fills Christians who neither *grieve* him (Eph 4:30) by doing what he tells them not to do nor *quench* him by not doing what he tells them to do! An offender needs only to confess and surrender to rebound to Spirit-filled living.

“Be filled is PRESENT in tense. Filling is not a once-for-all event but a continuing experience.

“Be filled is PEREMPTORY (imperative) in mood. Being filled with the Spirit is not an option but an obligation. Not to be filled with the Spirit is as great a sin as to be drunk with wine!

WHAT “FILLING” DOES

Paul identified three signs of the Spirit’s control.

Fellowshipping (5:19). “Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs” indicates a setting of public worship. The Spirit-filled not only “speak to one another” but participate whole-heartedly in worship.

Thanksgiving (5:20). The Spirit-filled neither mumble or grumble but give thanks for all things at all times.

Submitting (5:21). In every area of life the Spirit-filled are submissive, not stubborn and demanding.

Con: Spirit-filled life is normal Christian life. Are you a Christian? Are you a Spirit-filled Christian? Who is in charge of your life?

THE BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

1 Corinthians 12:13

Int. What is “the baptism in (with, or by) the Holy Spirit?” Two guidelines govern the search. 1) The issue must be settled not by experience but by the Bible. Experience is not self-validating. That someone had an experience does not prove it was from God. Only Scripture can validate an experience as God-given. 2) The aim must be to experience the teaching of the apostles rather than to teach the experience of the apostles. What Scripture describes as happening to some may not be intended for all. What it promises and commands is for all.

Neither the Gospels (Mk 1:8; Mt 3:11; Lu 3:16; Jn 1:26,33) nor Acts (1:5; 11:16) explains the baptism in of the Spirit. 1 Corinthians 12:13 is the only teaching passage on this experience in the whole New Testament. From it four facts emerge. The baptism

APPLIED TO EVERY BELIEVER

In 1 Corinthians Paul distinguished between Corinthian Christians who were filled with the Spirit and those not filled, i.e. carnal or fleshly. But never did he differentiate between those who had and had not been baptized in the Spirit. Whatever it was, every believer in that city had experienced it. “We (they and Paul) were all baptized by one Spirit.”

This means the baptism cannot be a second blessing that brings new power over sin or for service. In Paul’s day there was no more immature and unspiritual church than Corinth but all in it had been baptized in the Spirit.

BELONGED TO PAST EXPERIENCE

The verb tense (aorist) indicates an action completed at a point in the past. The New Testament never suggests that baptism in the Spirit is yet future in the experience of any believer. Nor does it command any believer to seek this experience. All believers had already been baptized in the Spirit in the past.

REFERRED TO BEING ADDED TO THE BODY OF CHRIST

The text highlights the unity of the church by showing the same Spirit put each and every member into a single body. “We all into one body were baptized.” Spirit baptism is the point of entry into the body of Christ.

The baptism in, with or by the Holy Spirit is then that initial activity of the Spirit by which he takes someone who is outside the body of Christ and places him within it. It is just another way of describing salvation.

ERASED ALL SECONDARY DISTINCTIONS AMONG BELIEVERS

In the first century sharp lines separated Jew from Gentile and slave from free. Baptism in the Holy Spirit broke down those old barriers and made the many into one. Joined to Christ, a believer was joined to all others joined to Christ. Race no longer mattered. Social class no longer mattered. People from every background and of all kinds became equal members of Christ’s body through this work of the Spirit.

Baptism in the Spirit points away from rivalries and factions and cliques to the oneness of those who confess Jesus as Lord and Savior. Where the Spirit baptizes, people entirely different from each other come together as one.

Con. “The baptism with the Spirit is the act of the Holy Spirit joining together into a spiritual unity people of diverse racial extractions and of diverse social backgrounds so that they form the body of Christ” (George E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* 347).