

Norm Schwab
Yacolt EVFree
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Spirit Filled Living
Ephesians 5:18-21

Several years ago, Grandpa gave the kids a really cool toy...that I kind of thought was pretty neat too. It was a remote control airplane. There was a battery pack that powered an electric motor and it would fly hundreds of feet up and maybe up to a 1/4 mile away. We would launch it off our deck and fly it out in the field around and above the big fir tree and over the McCormicks house. It flew great as long as you stayed in the range of the radio control signal. It flew great as long as it had electric power in its batteries. It flew great as long as the operator didn't smash it into that big fir tree in the field. A successful flight meant we didn't have to climb a tree to get it down and we didn't have to repair a broken wing, but it would land nicely in our backyard ready to have its batteries recharged for another soaring flight.

I thought of that airplane as I studied Ephesians 5:18-21 this week. The passage of Scripture talks about how we as believers are to be filled with the Spirit, meaning we are to be continually controlled and replenished by the Spirit. The believer is designed to soar and glide and live as God would want us to live. That is Spirit filled living, but when we get out of the Spirit's control, bad things happen. Our lives may totally lose power and direction. We may spiral downward into a bad crash. And even in the best of times we are still in much need continual replenishment, filling and spiritual nourishment. We need to be filled with the Spirit and when we are, we will be controlled by the Spirit. So the question is What does that look like? What are some of the things that we should be seeing in our life if we are filled with the Spirit? And then how can I place myself in a position where I will be controlled by the Spirit. Not spiraling out of control. Not under my own direction...in my

own way, but under the spirits control and doing what God desires. So if you have had times like me when I have said things, done things where I was pretty sure I wasn't under the control by the Spirit. This morning we are going to see what it looks like when someone is filled/controlled by the Spirit. What will it look like? and how am I going to get myself in a place where I can receive this filling.

Turn with me in your Bibles to Ephesians chapter 5. We are on the final leg of our study through the book of Ephesians. The book can be neatly outlined with the first three chapters 1-3 describing all the believer has because they are in Christ. In Christ we have been chosen. In Christ we are adopted into the family of God. In Christ we are forgiven. In Christ we are sealed and redeemed and His grace has been lavished upon us. Even when we were sitting dead in our stink of sin, God because he is so full of mercy and grace saved us through faith by His grace...a totally free gift that we could never work hard to earn even if we could. Christ was all about breaking down wall and he created something he loves so much, he calls it the church. And its amazing how he brought together two cultures that hated each other Jews and Gentiles and made then one in Christ. Unity is what Jesus wants our church to be noted for. That is the place, the position God has called us into.

Chapters 4-6. He wants us to live it out. Because of who we are in Christ, he wants us to live like it. He wants our church to work together, each one exercising the spiritual gifts given to them to build up the body. Just like an arm and fingers and eyeballs and brains and muscles all work together he wants those who are gifted in service and those gifted in teaching and those gifted in evangelism and those gifted in administration not to fight with each other or say, hey I'm a whole lot better then you. I don't need you. No. he wants us to walk together in unity and humility of mind. He wants us to "walk" or live our lives keeping in step with the spirit not living as we once did in the world. We are challenged to put off the old way of doing things. Put of the old life

and put on the new. Stop believing the lies that the evil one whispers in our ears and start applying the truth. Instead of lying, tell the truth. Instead of stealing, work in order to give to others. Instead of ripping other people to shreds with your words say things that build others up. Forgive other people remembering how much God has forgiven you. Don't mess around with sexual innuendos and coarse jesting and greed or filthiness. Get it all out of your life. None of that garbage going to lead you to a satisfied peaceful life. Get rid of all bitterness in your heart. Be kind to each other. We are no longer to walk in darkness because we have the light of Christ in us. We are to walk in the light just as He himself is in the light. Don't waste the time that God has given you here on earth, make the most of your time because the days are evil. Don't be foolish, be wise. Do God's will not your own.

That sets us up for our passage this morning in Ephesians 5:18-21 (READ) Paul starts with a negative command for us to avoid. Don't get drunk with wine. Why does he put that in there? Because getting drunk on alcohol or drugs or whatever substance that controls us rather than the Holy Spirit is sin. Paul uses the word picture of getting drunk to compare and contrast what its supposed to look like to be filled with the Spirit. Just as when one is drunk with alcohol they are completely under its control and influence we are to be under the control and complete influence of the Holy Spirit. Whereas getting drunk is in keeping with the old life. It is dissipation, a waste. Physics uses the term dissipation to refer to mechanical energy that is lost without accomplishing any work. And not only is it a waste, it is a destructive waste. This Greek Word for dissipation is asotia and refers to a person who by his actions in life destroys himself and others around him. It is a wasteful and particularly undisciplined life. That is the fruit of the drunk. No goals. No savings. No purpose. No satisfaction.

Paul contrasts and says, "Don't be like that old life controller that took over and destroyed some of the best things in life." Instead, be filled

with the Spirit, not the spirits. That verb “be filled” is a present tense, plural, passive command. The present tense carries the idea of keep on being filled. This is the idea that every believer should be able to be filled everyday and not just on special occasions. It’s plural that means the Spirit filling is not just for the few spiritual elite, but its for everyone. The verb is passive means that there are no special techniques that we have to do to fill ourselves. We don’t do the filling ourselves, the Spirit does. We simply need to be open and available and put ourselves in a place where we can be filled with the Spirit fountain. It’s a command so that means we ought not to take it lightly. Even if it doesn’t seem to come easily we need to take serious our getting filled with the Spirit because it’s important to God. The idea is that we are to be continually replenished or controlled by the Spirit.

When you came to faith in Christ the Bible says that you will baptized by the Spirit. The Holy Spirit came inside to live in you, to guide and convict you when you sin and to tune your heart to worship God. If you are a believer you have all of the Spirit inside you. But there are times we will be more filled or more controlled by the Spirit. There will be times we are less controlled by the spirit then we would like to be. We don’t do the filling, but we place ourselves in a position to be filled, or controlled. We can do things that will diminish our capacity to be filled or controlled by the Spirit. We can do things or be places that will deflect the Spirits filling or control. We can walk away from the waterfall of the Spirits control and we will not experience the continual replenishment that God wants us to experience.

Its important to note that filling had nothing to do with the contents or amount or quality. Spirit filling is not as though we need to go get a certain amount of Spirit gas to keep us going through the rest of the week. As if we have to stop at the Sunday morning gas station each week or else we will need to call a tow truck on Wednesday. To be filled here means to be controlled by. That has been the whole point of the

previous verses. Putting off the old man putting on the new. Walk in the light not in the darkness. Be under the control of the Spirit not the influence of wine.

So if I am a believer and I've just read that I'm commanded to be filled with the Spirit. If I'm going to be able to be in a place where I'm filled. I'm going to need to know "what it looks like to be filled and how I can get myself in a place where I am filled with the Spirit, in control of the Spirit."

So what does it look like? What is happening in the life of someone who is filled with the Spirit? V.19 "Speaking to one another..." Spirit filled people are able to communicate. They talk to each other. Being filled has a group part to it, a corporate element. One who is filled is sharing with each other. In a parallel passage Colossians 3:16 it says "Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. Spirit filled people will have words of truth, insights from the Bible, things they have learned from God that they will be often sharing with other people. They will be speaking and even singing encouragement and truth into peoples lives. It doesn't say anything about the quality of ones voice. V.19 says "in your heart" It doesn't mean all our communication will be like an opera. "Brother bill. God has taught me a great deal about his lovingkindness this week. O taste and see that He is good (la, la, la)

But it is interesting that a mark of being filled, controlled by the spirit is the presence of singing. Singing to one another about God and to the Lord, that's Jesus and to God the Father all empowered by the Spirit. Some of you may think you don't have a lovely voice. This says nothing about the quality of voice but the integrity of the heart. Sing away and do it from your heart. Singing has always been a part of the Christian faith and is even necessary for faith and worship for the simply reason that God is so amazing, His qualities and attributes and what He has done for

us in Jesus is so astounding that just talking about it, just discussing or analyzing it or describing it is not enough. The qualities of God are so great they demand us to use song and music to be able to express the deep feeling and truth of God. Singing is to be from the heart. That means when you sing you listen to the words and mean it and feel the impact of its truth on your own life. Singing is to be “to the Lord”. It is to be God centered. The Lord is referring to Jesus. It is to be Christ centered. This would encourage us to sing to God using the second person “you” in our singing. Our singing ought to cause us to want to bask in the presence of the Almighty God and think about who He is and what he has done for us. Worship is fundamentally God focused, not man focused. That is why we are emphasizing worship songs that are theocentric in content, or Godward in their direction. (Piper)

However, there are really two audiences for our singing, not only are we to sing to God, it also says in v.19 that we are to be speaking or singing to each other about God and God’s truth. This is a clear call for corporate worship, coming together and singing together. This means we need to be singing songs that are directed to challenge each other and encourage each other to worship God. “Majesty, worship his majesty” is a song that is talking to each other. Where Holy, Holy, Holy is a song directed straight to God.

We also see that singing ought to have variety. The spirit filled/controlled believer is going to be noted by singing Psalms, Hymns and spiritual songs. There is much debate in theological circles as to what these were referring to in Paul’s day but most agree they were mentioned to cover the various forms of musical compositions available during Paul’s day. The Psalms might refer to the Old Testaments Psalter songs. The hymns might be longer compositions. There is some evidence that portions of early church hymns found their way into the writings of the New Testament. The spiritual songs may refer to snatches of spontaneous praise that the Spirit inspired someone to speak or sing.

The reason for different kinds of music is that God is filled with variety and relates to each of us in very beautiful and different ways. One who has lost four daughters and a wife at sea and has experienced the incredible presence of God in the midst of crisis, might be prompted to write a song like, "It is well with my soul". During the Christmas season one might be inspired to write a song like "Joy to the world". When you are amazed at the depths of sin you have been saved from you might write a song like "Amazing Grace". If you are wanting to explain some simple truths to children you might write a song like "Jesus Loves me" If you want to challenge believers to stand up for what they believe when all those around you are mocking you, you might write a song like "Jesus Freak". I'm glad God meets us in a variety of ways. Worship that is marked by one filled or controlled by the Spirit is God centered and from the heart. So this singing is not intended to lead us to becoming spirit-filled. Worship singing is a result of those who have become filled by the spirit and are living under His control.

Lets look at v.20 for yet another indicator of one who is filled with the Spirit. "always giving thanks for all things.." You will know you are filled with the spirit, under His influence and control if you hear yourself saying the words of thanksgiving, gratitude, If you find yourself thanking God and others in your sentences you are probably more filled by the Spirit then you realize. One the flip side if you find your words are not peppered with thankful or grateful or appreciative of what God and others have done for you then perhaps you are not as spirit filled as you would like to think. It is of little surprise that thankfulness is connected with spirit filled living because in Romans 1:21 it notes the failure to give thanks as a root cause of sin. Certainly thanklessness is close friends to rebellion and pride. So if you are filled with the spirit there will be no grumbling, complaining or negative shots. We struggle with this in America. We have so much but we want more and whine about what

others have; better house, car, job, vacation, husband, family. We are not thankful for what God has given us.

It says that the one filled or controlled by the Spirit is able to always give thanks for all things. Does that mean that we are to give thanks for things that God hates? Does that mean we are to give thanks to God for a daughters rape, a childs death, a spouses cheating? No I don't think that we are to give thanks FOR things God hates. But we can give thanks and praise God for things in the midst of those difficult events. God calls us to give radical thanks to God for what we will be learning in the pain. Thank Him for His presence in the difficulty. It will be the Lords will to put us into difficult circumstances that are simply not fun so that we might have the opportunity to demonstrate the grace and life of Christ. "II Cor 4:17 "This light affliction which is but for a moment is working for us a far exceeding eternal weight of glory." God has a purpose in all things. God will never waste a pain. So when we can thank God in all things, especially when times are tough. That is a mark of one filled by the spirit of God.

v.21 there is one more indicator of a Spirit filled/controlled Christian and I'm just going to touch on this today, but expand on it next week as the Bible expands on how it applies to marriage relationships, family and employee relationships. V.21 says "be subject to one another in the fear of the Christ." Be submissive, be mutually submissive to one another. Many people are offended by that word 'submission'. They think its referring to a passive weak life that is overwhelmed by a low negative self-image giving up all ability to think and control and have a free will. That wasn't Paul's intention except for the fact that control for the Christian has already been given over to Christ. That word submission, "hypotasso" literally means to arrange under. Everything is to be under Christ. Pastors are servants of a church and should submit to the people they lead as they model the character of Christ. People in church are to submit to the pastor but not so that the Pastor becomes a dictator. Each

is responsible to seek the benefit and good of the other as they live out the self giving sacrificial life of Christ's example. Husbands and wives are called to mutually submit to each other. This submission requires humility to listen, to be teachable, to tolerate. This doesn't mean all Christians have to agree. Interesting this mutual submission mark of one who is filled with the spirit is placed in the context of singing worship. Just as Paul and Barnabus in Acts 15 had differing ideas of who they should bring along on their mission trip. We might have some of those same disagreements. I'm glad they were able to eventually come together and be of great help and friends with each other. But if the issue is not biblical error, or heresy. God calls us for valuing other people in the humility and self giving love of Christ. Phil. 2:3 "In humility consider others better than yourselves." That is a mark of being filled with the Spirit.

So. Do you want to know how filled with the Spirit you are right now? Why don't we take a little test based on our study of the indicator of the spirit filled life. Ready? Here goes the am I spirit filled test.

1. Am I able to freely communicate with other believers. (that includes all believers even the ones that are tough to love)
2. Has there been songs of praise running through my mind and even at times spill out my lips and mouth? Have you been have a God-focused song that you simply can't get out of your head?
3. Have I shared with at least one person in the last two of days what God has been teaching me?
4. Do I delight in singing a variety of worship songs with fellow believers?
5. Have I included in my conversations in the last two days specific things that I have been thankful to God for? (you get 2 extra points if this has been an especially challenging week)
6. Has there been a time that you can think of this past week where you have voluntarily (not forced) placed another persons

agenda/desires/wants/needs ahead of your own...and done so in the love Christ. (that would be almost a gimmee for most mom's here except of the (not forced) part to the question.

7. Have I done a good job of submitting to the God given authorities in my life? i.e. Children to parents, wives to husbands, husband to wives, workers to boss, believers to Elders, Citizen to government leaders, student to teacher

If the filling of Spirit is essentially not a substance that I can go drink a gallon of, but essentially a controlling influence. How then do I get myself to a place where I am constantly continually controlled by the Spirit? Let me quickly give us a couple of ideas. First. Take out the rocks. If there are idols, anything we worship and place as a higher priority than God then it will block the Spirit's filling and control. Busyness. Entertainment? Laziness? Take out those things that are taking up the space reserved for the Spirit. Take out those things that are controlling you, influencing you when you know the Spirit ought to be. Second. Remove the barriers. Have you confessed all known sin in your life and made your best effort to make it right with the one you have wronged? Have you confessed your unthankfulness? Your critical spirit? Have you confessed your pride? Pumping your own agenda? Have you cut and undermined and stepped out from under the umbrella of protection of the authorities God has placed in your life? Are you as submissive and serving to others as Jesus was when he came to this earth and humbled himself even to the point of death on the cross? Are the barriers removed that might hamper the Spirit's filling? Third. Do the right stuff. Ask God to open your eyes to where He is working, because if you can't see it you will never be able to thank him for it. Get in the word. Read the Bible and know the truth so that you can apply it in your life and share what you've learned with others (maybe even in opera style). Sing together with God's people. Make a commitment to be here on Sunday to sing with

God's people. Make it a commitment to join a small group this September to share truth with God's people.