

## ***EPHESIANS: GROWING UP INTO CHRIST***

### ***“Be Filled With the Spirit” – Part Seven***

*“Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.”  
Ephesians 5:18*

None of the commands in Scripture, especially those that call us to action, will be effective unless we know what it is to “be filled with the Spirit”. Being filled with the Spirit is, in itself, a command, and not a suggestion. That makes it vitally important we understand both the necessity of the Holy Spirit’s presence in us and working in us. In this week’s message, Author and Bible teacher, Charles Price, explains three categories of our relationship with the Holy Spirit, which will aid us in determining to what potential we are allowing Him to work in our lives.

The Holy Spirit is the member of the Godhead who operates in our everyday lives and experience. It is He who regenerates us, which means He imparts new life, and that life is His presence within us. But before the Holy Spirit works in us, He works on us first; that is, He works in drawing us to God, in opening our hearts up to Himself, and creating an appetite within us for the things of God. In submitting our lives to Christ, He then indwells us, seals us in Christ, empowers us, equips and guides us, and is the ongoing source of our strength and enabling.

The Bible speaks of three primary relationships that people have with the Holy Spirit. The first are those who live without the Holy Spirit; that is our natural state in which we were born. Paul speaks about this in 1 Corinthians 2:14 where he says, “The man without the Spirit does not understand the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them because they are spiritually discerned.” Christianity doesn’t make sense to the person without the presence of the Holy Spirit, because it is the Holy Spirit who illuminates and gives understanding. It is not a question of intellectual ability, though we need intellect, but of spiritual capacity. Neither is it a natural process, but a supernatural one, which only the Spirit reveals in our desire to receive and understand the things that come from God.

Secondly, there are those who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, sealed by Him in Christ, but are grieving and quenching Him by not allowing Him to do in them the work for which He was given. They have suppressed, limited, subdued, or closed Him down. When Paul wrote to the church in Corinth, which was a deeply divided church with members arguing and quarrelling, he said, “Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly” (*1 Corinthians 3:1*). Other translations use the word ‘carnal’, or ‘fleshly’. These were people indwelt by the Spirit, but living for their own agendas, and grieving the Spirit of God.

Thirdly, the Bible speaks of Christians who are ‘filled with the Spirit’ and ‘full of the Spirit’. Scripture doesn’t give a definition of these terms, so we work out what is meant by observation of what is happening at the time. There are four different contexts in which these terms are used in the New Testament. On the day of Pentecost, when God poured out His Holy Spirit, 120 of Christ’s disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit, and the number of converts increased to 3,000 that day. After Saul’s encounter with Christ on the Road to Damascus, he was filled with the Holy Spirit when Ananias came to lay hands on him and scales fell from his eyes. On both occasions, being filled with the Spirit is used within the context of a certain event.

Secondly, it is used as an ongoing condition. In Acts 6:3, it says, “Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit.” Stephen, the first martyr, was full of the Spirit. Barnabas is also described as being full of the Spirit. Throughout the week; at home, at work, at church, wherever they were and whoever they were with, these men were full of the Spirit. As Christians, we are not meant to bounce from experience to experience, but intended to live in a continuous relationship with God that is characterized by being full of the Spirit.

Thirdly, being filled with the Spirit is an equipping. There are those already full of the Spirit, but are brought into certain situations where it calls for a particular empowering for a certain task. When Peter stood before the Sanhedrin Council, he was filled with the Spirit, allowing him to speak boldly and courageously for Christ. Saul of Tarsus was filled with the Spirit, enabling him to cast out demons from a sorcerer. After Paul and Barnabas were expelled from a town called Pisidian Antioch, they met with the other disciples, and they were all filled with the Spirit, re-equipping them for the next stage in their missionary journey.

All these incidents occurred in the Book of Acts, but fourthly, in Ephesians, Paul speaks of being filled with the Spirit as a command. However, there are certain tasks that are the work of the Holy Spirit which are an expression of the sovereignty of God. Jesus said to Nicodemus, “The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit” (*John 3:8*). There is something inexplicable about why the Holy Spirit works in such a way that one person comes to Christ and another doesn't. It is the Holy Spirit's task to work in people's hearts in many different circumstances we don't anticipate, but which suddenly brings us face to face with the work of God. There is a tugging, a drawing. The wind is blowing and we hear its sound. We don't know where it's coming from, but we know the Spirit of God is doing something. He is drawing us to Himself.

Paul says, “Do not get drunk on wine but instead be filled with the Spirit.” That isn't like filling a gas tank or a cup of coffee. The Spirit cannot be ‘topped up’. He is a personal being and we either have Him or we don't, so what does it mean to be filled with the Spirit? Scripture speaks of people being filled with wonder and amazement; people filled with joy like the Philippian jailor who had been converted. It speaks of the Pharisees and Sadducees filled with jealousy and envy. These are all emotions that have dominated their personalities and determined their behaviour. We know what is going on inside a person by what they are showing on the outside, and in the same way, being filled with the Spirit will dominate our personalities and determine our behaviour.

It is interesting that Paul contrasts getting drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery, to being filled with the Spirit. We can tell someone is inebriated by the way they walk, talk and smell, just as we can when someone is filled with the Holy Spirit. Scripture tells us, “Walk in love, walk in the Spirit, walk in the light.” The way we move through life will give evidence to the Holy Spirit in our lives. Do we walk in love, kindness, compassion, honesty? The way we talk also gives evidence. Our mouths are the barometers of our hearts. One of the first things that happen when the Spirit of God fills a person's heart is that the things they talk about are impacted by the things of God. Jesus said, “Out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks” (*Matthew 24:34*).

Being filled with the Spirit also affects the way we smell to others; to some it will be the smell of life, to others the smell of death. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 2:14-16 that the work of God in us is such that we spread everywhere the fragrance of Christ. Some will hate it because it exposes them in their sinful natural state, but for those who believe, it will be the smell of life. “For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing” (*2 Corinthians 2:15*). To put it frankly, we will smell of Jesus, and the atmosphere of our lives will give evidence of the Holy Spirit at work within us.

The fullness of the Holy Spirit keeps our feet on the ground, and makes us incredibly useful in relationships where, by the Spirit, we bring life and energy. Paul says, “Speak to one another with songs, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your hearts to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (*Ephesians 5:19-20*). There is no formula for being filled with the Spirit, because it is a day-to-day relationship of love, dependence and obedience. “As you receive Christ, so live in Him,” and we receive Christ on the basis of repentance, turning from ourselves to faith in Christ, and asking Him and trusting Him for the blessing of being filled with His Holy Spirit.

*“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!”*

*Luke 11:13*