

# **THE SOVEREIGN GOD AND THE MYSTERY OF HIS WILL: A STUDY OF EPHESIANS**

## **(LESSON NINETY-FIVE)**

### ***“BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT” (PART 6)***

#### **EPHESIANS 5:18-21**

*18 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;*

*19 Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.*

*20 always giving thanks to God the Father for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,*

*21 and submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.*

In verse **18** of our text Paul writes, “*And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.*” We have stated in previous Lessons that Paul is not making a suggestion here. He is in fact, issuing a command to all believers. “*Be filled with the Spirit*” is God’s command and He expects us to obey the command. The command is plural, so it applies to all believers, not just to a select few. The verb is in the **present tense**. Paul is saying in effect, “keep on being filled with the Spirit.” The Spirit’s filling is an experience that every believer should continually enjoy.

The verb “*fill*” is **passive**. We do not fill ourselves. Rather, we permit the Holy Spirit to fill, or control us. The verb “*fill*” has nothing to do with contents or quantity, as though we are like empty vessels that

require a specific amount of spiritual fuel to keep us going. The idea is “to be controlled by, to be brought under the authority of.” To be filled with the Spirit means to be continually controlled by, or brought under the authority of the Holy Spirit. Every believer is to ensure that he or she is continually filled with, or controlled by, the Holy Spirit.

According to **Colossians 3:16**, being filled with the Spirit is synonymous with allowing the Word of Christ to dwell in us richly. When our minds are saturated with, immersed in, and surrendered to God’s Word, His Spirit will be able to control and dominate us.

According to **Galatians 5:16-23**, being filled with the Spirit is also synonymous with “*walking in the Spirit,*” or “*living by the Spirit.*”

We have said that the secret of victory over sin is **not** to be found in an attempted obedience to the Law, or to any set of rules, regulations and standards. The secret of victory over sin is found in surrender to a **divine Person**, the Holy Spirit, who at the moment the sinner places his or her faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, takes up His permanent residence in his or her life for the purpose of ministering to his or her spiritual needs.

In **Galatians 5:16**, Paul gives believers a very strong assurance that if they depend on the Holy Spirit to give them both the desire and the power to do the will of God, they will not bring to fulfillment in action the evil desires of the fallen nature, but will be able to resist and conquer them. The Holy Spirit will put sin out of the life of the believer who is surrendered to Him and He will produce His fruit in that believer’s life.

But how can a person tell whether or not he or she is filled with the Spirit? In verses **19-21**, Paul mentions three practical results of the Spirit’s filling of believers: **worship, gratitude, and submission**. It is to be noted that Paul says nothing about miracles, tongues, or any of the other manifestations that we are so hung up on!

Interestingly, the **first** evidence noted by Paul that identifies a person who is filled with the Spirit, is what comes out of his or her mouth! In

verse **19** he writes, *“Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.”*

**Our speech is a good indicator of the extent to which we are under the influence and control of the Spirit.** When a believer is filled with the Spirit, his or her heart overflows with thankfulness to God and that overflowing expresses itself in singing. In other words, the first practical result of an individual who is continually filled with the Spirit is a transformation of his or her worship.

In verse **20**, Paul gives us the **second** practical result of the Holy Spirit’s filling of a believer. He writes, *“Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

A continual **attitude of gratitude** to God for all things is an unmistakable evidence of a believer being Spirit filled. Giving thanks is the quality of being grateful, and it also implies that the person who is continually giving thanks has the appropriate attitude, which is the result of being filled with the Spirit.

It is only possible for us to obey the command to give thanks to God the Father for all things when we are *“filled with the Spirit,”* or when the Word of God is dwelling in us richly! It is only then that we will be able lay hold on the precious Scriptural truths that are able to mount a garrison around our hearts and minds in times of trial and temptation. Thanksgiving implies that the grateful person submits to the will of God, however God’s will is manifested in his or her life. Why? Because it is only when we are fully convinced that God is working all things together for our good that we can really give God thanks for all things.

In verse **21**, Paul gives us the **third** practical result of the Holy Spirit’s filling of a believer. He writes, *“Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.”*

The **New English Translation** renders the verse as follows: *“and submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.”*

When a believer is filled with the Holy Spirit, he or she will manifest an attitude of humility and submission. He or she will exemplify

**Philippians 2:1-4:**

*1 Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and compassionate?*

*2 Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose.*

*3 Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves.*

*4 Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too.*

**(New Living Translation)**

**Ephesians 5:21** is a transition to Paul's extensive discussion of relationships that continues through to verse **9** of chapter **6**. The **general** principle of mutual submission, "*Submitting yourselves one to another,*" is not only the result of the filling of the Spirit but is also the foundation of the more **specific** principles of authority and submission as it relates to husbands and wives, parents and children, and masters and slaves. It means "submitting to others according to the authority and order established by God."

Let me allow the late **Ray Stedman** to contextualize our further deliberations this evening in his usual insightful manner:

"There are churches that do not come to grips with life. Many churches of our day are interested only in singing hymns and performing religious ceremonies, or in spouting moral platitudes and reading Scripture, but not really engaging in the current burning issues of our society. Where that is true, however, it is invariably due to a

departure from the wisdom and authority of Scripture, either by setting aside the authority of Scripture, treating it as a collection of myths unworthy of modern man's intelligence, or, equally deadly, mechanically accepting the authority of Scripture without attempting to carry it out into life. In either case, perception of the Bible's relevance to life is lost, despite the fact no book is as relevant as the Bible. The Holy Scriptures take the radical secret of Christianity—that Jesus Christ is alive and can take up residence in a human being, and that he proposes to dress himself in the personality and individuality of that person and express his life through him—and apply it to the very struggles that we experience daily.

In Chapters **4** and **5** of **Ephesians**, we have seen that the Apostle Paul comes to grips with our constant urge to lie, to steal, to gossip, to be hateful and bitter with one another. He deals at length, frankly and forthrightly, with the problem of how to handle our powerful sex drives in a responsible and proper way. In every way, he brings Christian truth right down into life, and shows us how to live in a sick society. This is what these New Testament books are all about. In **Ephesians 5**, we come now to a passage where the apostle takes up the matter of Christian relationships with other human beings. Here we will face squarely the great, burning problems of our own day. In this section we will be dealing with such matters as climbing divorce rates, spreading juvenile delinquency, the squabbles between management and labor, civil rights struggles, and all the pressing issues of our day, for this passage brings us right to grips with these very conflicts.

What does Scripture have to say on these matters? Well, the amazing thing is, and it is truly amazing, that what the inspired apostle has to say as to the solution of all conflicts between individuals can be put into one brief sentence. That is exactly what he does: *'Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ'* (**Ephesians 5:21, Revised Standard Version**). Having said that, he has summarized everything he

says in the next several verses, on through Chapter 6, Verse 9. He will simply apply this sentence again and again to various specific situations which a Christian faces in his relationship with other people. In saying, *'Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ,'* the apostle is dealing with the basic remedy for all the conflicts in our day, or any day."

Commenting on **Ephesians 5:21**, **John Phillips** made the following observations: "This verse summarizes the practical implications of being filled with the Spirit, and it introduces the next major section of the letter. The next section deals with human relationships and reviews our various roles and positions in life. The key to each relationship is submission, the kind of submission the Son yielded to the Father when He lived on earth as a man. **That kind of submission, so often contrary to human nature, is an evidence of the filling of the Spirit.** The Holy Spirit will drill us in submission by the pressure of human relationships. It may take time, but eventually we learn that the path of submission is best; we learn to fall in line with the will of the Holy Spirit."

Submitting one's self to another is the opposite of self-assertion and self-exaltation. It is the opposite of an independent, autocratic spirit, the kind of attitude demonstrated by Diotrephes in **3 John**. The **King James Version** translates verses 9 and 10 in the following way:

*9 I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not.*

*10 Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church.*

In these verse the Apostle John warns the church elder Gaius to be wary of Diotrephes. John describes him as one *"who loveth to have the*

*preeminence.*” The Greek word translated “*preeminence*” is made up of two other Greek words, one meaning, “to be fond of,” and the other meaning, “first.” The complete Greek word therefore means, “Fond of being first.” Does this word describe us accurately brothers and sisters? Do we always desire to have the preeminence? Are we fond of being first? If it does describe us accurately then, sadly, we are enemies of unity and peace, and are promoters of division and bitterness. If we do not repent our judgment is certain!

When we submit to our fellow believers we are indicating our understanding of Paul’s exhortation at the beginning of chapter 4 of this letter, and our appreciation of the implications of the same. The **New Living Translation** renders the passage as follows:

*1 Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God.*

*2 Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other’s faults because of your love.*

*3 Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace.*

*4 For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future.*

Paul says, “*Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.*” The basic principle of believers submitting to one another finds its power and effectiveness only “*in the fear of Christ,*” or “*out of reverence for Christ.*” The family can only be what God has designed it to be when the members of the family are what God has designed them to be. What has God designed them to be? We have the answer in **Romans 8:29**: “*Because those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that his Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters*” (**New English Translation**).

God has designed us, He has predestined us to be conformed to the image of His Son! In the same way that an individual can find fulfillment only in a right relationship with God, so the family can find complete fulfillment only as believing parents and children follow God's design for the family by allowing the Holy Spirit to fill them. The same is true as it relates to employers and employees.

The word "*submitting*" is a translation of the Greek word **hupotassó**: (**hoop-ot-as'-so**) which means, "to arrange under, to subordinate; to subject, put in subjection." The word was originally a military term meaning, "to rank under." Paul is informing us that truly Spirit-filled believers will rank themselves, not only under the Holy Spirit, but also under one another! Again and again during His earthly pilgrimage, our Lord emphasized this very principle.

For example in **Matthew 20:20-28** we read the following:

*20 Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to him with her sons, and kneeling down she asked him for a favor.*

*21 He said to her, "What do you want?" She replied, "Permit these two sons of mine to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom."*

*22 Jesus answered, "You don't know what you are asking! Are you able to drink the cup I am about to drink?" They said to him, "We are able."*

*23 He told them, "You will drink my cup, but to sit at my right and at my left is not mine to give. Rather, it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father."*

*24 Now when the other ten heard this, they were angry with the two brothers.*

*25 But Jesus called them and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those in high positions use their authority over them.*



*26 It must not be this way among you! Instead whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant,*

*27 and whoever wants to be first among you must be your slave—*

*28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”*

**(New English Translation)**

In **John 13**, our Lord, as He always did, practically lived out this principle as He ministered to His disciples. The **New English Translation** renders verses **1-17** as follows:

*1 Just before the Passover Feast, Jesus knew that his time had come to depart from this world to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now loved them to the very end.*

*2 The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, that he should betray Jesus.*

*3 Because Jesus knew that the Father had handed all things over to him, and that he had come from God and was going back to God,*

*4 he got up from the meal, removed his outer clothes, took a towel and tied it around himself.*

*5 He poured water into the washbasin and began to wash the disciples’ feet and to dry them with the towel he had wrapped around himself.*

*6 Then he came to Simon Peter. Peter said to him, “Lord, are you going to wash my feet?”*

*7 Jesus replied, “You do not understand what I am doing now, but you will understand after these things.”*

*8 Peter said to him, “You will never wash my feet!” Jesus replied, “If I do not wash you, you have no share with me.”*

*9 Simon Peter said to him, “Lord, wash not only my feet, but also my hands and my head!”*

*10 Jesus replied, “The one who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean. And you disciples are clean, but not every one of you.”*

*11 (For Jesus knew the one who was going to betray him. For this reason he said, “Not every one of you is clean.”)*

*12 So when Jesus had washed their feet and put his outer clothing back on, he took his place at the table again and said to them, “Do you understand what I have done for you?”*

*13 You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and do so correctly, for that is what I am.*

*14 If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you too ought to wash one another’s feet.*

*15 For I have given you an example—you should do just as I have done for you.*

*16 I tell you the solemn truth, the slave is not greater than his master, nor is the one who is sent as a messenger greater than the one who sent him.*

*17 If you understand these things, you will be blessed if you do them.*

Paul knew by experience what would occur in a Christian assembly when the principle of mutual submission is not practiced. Let us consider what he writes to the believers in Corinth in **1 Corinthians 3:1-9**. The **New English Translation** furnishes the following rendition of the passage:

*1 So, brothers and sisters, I could not speak to you as spiritual people, but instead as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ.*

*2 I fed you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready. In fact, you are still not ready,*

*3 for you are still influenced by the flesh. For since there is still jealousy and dissension among you, are you not influenced by the flesh and behaving like unregenerate people?*

*4 For whenever someone says, “I am with Paul,” or “I am with Apollos,” are you not merely human?*

*5 What is Apollos, really? Or what is Paul? Servants through whom you came to believe, and each of us in the ministry the Lord gave us.*

*6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God caused it to grow.*

*7 So neither the one who plants counts for anything, nor the one who waters, but God who causes the growth.*

*8 The one who plants and the one who waters work as one, but each will receive his reward according to his work.*

*9 We are coworkers belonging to God. You are God’s field, God’s building.*

Brothers and sisters, the truth is that conflicts in the church, in the home, in marriage, at the workplace and anywhere else, always result from hearts and minds that are directed by self rather than by the Spirit of God. When self insists on its own rights, its own opinions, and its own goals, unity and peace become “fleeting illusions to be pursued but never attained.” The self-centered life is always in a battle for the top, and pushes others down as it climbs up in pride. The Spirit-centered life, on the other hand, is directed toward lowliness, toward serving and lifting others up as it descends in humility.

Every member of the Body of Christ, should be willing, “*in the fear of Christ,*” or “*out of reverence for Christ,*” that is, with a conscious regard for God’s clearly revealed will, to recognize the rights, needs, and

wishes of every other member. By so doing, believers will be able to present a united front to the world, demonstrate the blessing of true Christian fellowship, and glorify God in Christ. It is our submission to the Holy Spirit and to each other that provides evidence that we are indeed *“filled with the Spirit.”*

Brothers and sisters, is there any genuine evidence in your life and mine that we are truly *“filled with the Spirit?”*

In 1902, **Adelaide A. Pollard** was hoping to go to Africa as a missionary but found herself unable to raise the needed funds to make the journey. Greatly discouraged, she attended a prayer service one evening and as she sat there, she overheard an elderly woman say “It really doesn’t matter what you do with us, Lord, just have your own way with our lives.” The elderly woman inspired Pollard and she contemplated the story of the potter from **Jeremiah 18:3**. Upon her return home that evening, she wrote all four verses of the hymn *“Have Thine Own Way, Lord,”* before retiring for the night.

*Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!  
Thou art the Potter, I am the clay.  
Mold me and make me after Thy will;  
While I am waiting, yielded and still.*

*Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!  
Search me and try me, Master, today!  
Whiter than snow, Lord, wash me just now,  
As in Thy presence humbly I bow.*

*Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!  
Wounded and weary, help me, I pray!  
Power, all power, surely is Thine!  
Touch me and heal me, Savior divine.*

*Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!  
Hold o’er my being absolute sway!*

*Fill with Thy Spirit 'till all shall see  
Christ only, always, living in me.*

I am praying to God that He will so Fill with His Spirit until all shall see  
Christ only, Christ always, living in me.