

WHAT DOES THE SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE LOOK LIKE?

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Let's Begin

The great 20th century Christian author, A.W. Tozer, once said, "The Spirit-filled life is not a special, deluxe edition of Christianity. It is part and parcel of the total plan of God for His people." Too often today's Christians appear to think life in the Holy Spirit is some sort of gift for either the Apostles or a few select people. Nothing could be further from the New Testament reality. God wants us to walk in His Spirit, live in His Spirit, and grow in His Spirit. In short, God wants us to be filled with His Spirit.

But what does the filling of the Spirit look like? In chapter 5, Paul explains the meaning of being filled with God's Spirit. And, while the heart of Paul's meaning is found in verses 18-21, the entire chapter lends itself to a fuller expression of being filled with God's Spirit.

Hence, in this chapter there are three principles which describe being filled with the Holy Spirit. As we begin our study, let's follow the outline below:

- I. We Compliment Our Father's Image (vv. 1-16)**
- II. We are Controlled by the Spirit's Influence (vv. 18-21)**
- III. We are Committed to our Family's Integrity (vv. 22-33)**

I. We Compliment Our Father's Image (vv. 1-16)

Children are great imitators. They start very early in life imitating their mom or dad. Paul commands us—the children of God—to be imitators of our heavenly Father. He writes, "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children" (v. 1). The Greek term translated "followers" is *mimetes*, which literally means "imitators," or "one who imitates." Often it is translated as "followers" (1 Cor. 4:16; 1 Thess. 1:6; 2:14; Heb. 6:12). We imitate our heavenly Father as we follow Jesus. Indeed, we compliment God's image in us as we live as disciples of His Son and our Savior. Simply put, as we walk with God, we are demonstrating the infilling of the Holy Spirit.

First, we have a *compassionate* walk (v. 2). Through love's *example*—which is our Lord Jesus Himself—we follow God in love. Any person who wants to know how the Father would walk needs to look no farther than Jesus Christ (cp. 1 Pet. 2:21). In addition,

we not only have love's *example* in Jesus Christ, we have love's *expression*. Christ "loved" as He "hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour" (v. 2). The greatest expression of God's love ever revealed is Calvary. Even when we were wicked sinners, Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8; Gal. 2:20).

Second, we have a *clean* walk (vv. 3-14). Living morally clean lives is key to demonstrating the Spirit-filled life. Paul writes, "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now *are ye light* in the Lord: walk as children of light" (v. 8). We were in darkness. Indeed, we partook of the very nature of darkness (cp. Col. 1:3). Now in Jesus Christ, we are light, living in light.

Note Paul's focus on the *gloom of the darkness*, "But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them" (vv. 3-7). The litany of actions Paul lists has no place in the Christian's life.

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Reflection Connection

Reflect upon your own life. Is your life impure? Are your thoughts impure? Seek the forgiving, loving Savior in a personal time of confession to Him.

On the one hand, Paul condemns the *impure life*. The words he uses are “fornication,” “uncleanness,” and “covetousness.” All three terms are related to sexual sins, demonstrating an impure life. On the other hand, he condemns *impure lips*. Here are listed sins of speech like “foolish talking,” and “jesting.” Dirty jokes, coarse, vulgar language, and hate speech do not demonstrate the Spirit-filled life. Instead, the opposite is revealed—the carnal mind (cp. 1 Cor. 3:1-3).

Paul’s focus also includes the *glow of the light* (vv. 8-14). Light produces fruit. In science it is called photosynthesis. Plants grow in light’s presence. According to the Apostle, three particular kinds of fruit grow in our lives: goodness, which is love acting; righteousness, which is doing right; and truth, which reveals authenticity. Furthermore, since light facilitates growth, we are to have “no fellowship” with the “unfruitful works of darkness;” instead we are to “reprove” them (v. 11; cp. 2 Cor. 6:14).

How do we “reprove” darkness? The term “reprove” means to turn on the light! Wherever Jesus walked, men saw themselves as they were (John 3:20-21). In addition, we are to “awake” from death (v. 14). Quit sleeping in the graveyard of darkness!” Paul was, in effect, saying. When we come to Christ and walk with Him, His light will shine through us.

Finally, we have a *circumspect* walk. Paul writes, “See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (vv. 15-16). To walk circumspectly means to walk looking around on all sides. We are careful where we place our feet. Moreover, we “redeem” the time, making the most out of every day light moment since the night comes and no man can work. In fact, Paul says the “days are evil.” By this he means the opportunity will be snatched away from us.

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II. We are Controlled by the Spirit’s Influence (vv. 18-21)

This section is the heart of what it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit. God’s will for every believer is to be filled with His precious Holy Spirit. Paul writes, “And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God” (vv. 18-21).

First, note the *powerful contrast* Paul makes in speaking about the filling of the Holy Spirit—drunken with wine contrasted with being filled with the Spirit. The drunken man is completely controlled by an intoxicating substance. He is



under the sway, the influence of the liquor. Something else is controlling him. In fact, he is so controlled he is in “excess.” The drunken man is to the point of abandonment.

Observe as well the positive command Paul gives, “be filled with the Spirit.” No option exists to be filled with God’s Spirit. We cannot think about it, vote on it, or consider it. The verb form Paul uses is a direct command—you be filled with the Spirit! In addition, it is a continuous action to seek. In other words, we are commanded to continually be filled with the Spirit. Hence, the filling of the Holy Spirit is not some end-all experience. Rather, being filled is an everyday affair.

Interestingly, while we are commanded to be filled with the Spirit, we cannot be filled by ourselves. God fills us; we cannot fill ourselves! Nor is the filling of the Spirit something reserved for a select few. Every believer is commanded to be filled with the Holy Spirit. The comparison is clear. To be filled with the Spirit is to be under the influence of the Spirit, controlled by the Spirit, abandoned to the Spirit, and intoxicated by the Spirit.

How can we know we are filled with the Spirit? Are there any visible, practical results? There are. As we saw above, being filled with the Spirit plainly results in one walking with the Father, imitating the Lord. More specifically, however, the Apostle uses three action verbs in this section to demonstrate the results of being filled with the Spirit—speaking, thanksgiving, and submitting.

First, speaking is the inward result of the filling of the Spirit. Paul refers to “psalms,” which are Old Testament songs based from the book of Psalms. He also mentions not only “hymns” to exalt the name of Christ, but also “spiritual songs,” which are Gospel songs, Gospel choruses. The songs of believers reflect the heart of believers.

Next, thanksgiving is the upward result of being filled with the Holy Spirit. Believers have reason to thank God for all blessings bestowed upon them. Thanksgiving is an amazing medicine (cp. 1 Thess. 5:18; Col. 2:7).

Third, submitting is the outward result of being filled with the Spirit. The term “submitting” was used as a military term, mostly pertaining to arranging affairs and being under control. The submission is reciprocal; that is, being mutually in subjection. Submission is the spirit of a servant, a godly inclination to serve other people. Hence, being filled with the Spirit is not only about submitting to the Lord Jesus, it is also about serving the Lord’s people.

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Reflection Connection

Do you seek the filling of the Holy Spirit every day? How do you know when God answers your prayer?



III. We are Committed to Our Family's Integrity (vv. 22-33)

Being filled with God's Spirit affects every sphere of our lives. Thus far, we have noted how being under the control of God's Spirit has meant not only imitating the Father's ways, but also being intoxicated by the Father's Spirit. In addition, we now see that being filled with God's Spirit affects our family relationships, keeping the integrity of the family intact. In short, Paul informs us how to have a Spirit-filled marriage!

With great interest we note Paul's beginning this section with the theme of submission in marriage. He writes, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing" (vv. 22-24).

First, Paul speaks of a willing subjection. In the specific application, wives are to willingly submit to their husbands. Easily enough, the flesh desires to rebel. Immediately images surface of doormats, taskmasters, and servitude, hardly positive images upon which to reflect. However, once the fog of those negative images dissipates, we may be able to see clearly what Paul meant by his statements.

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We may begin with the *spirituality* of submission. Paul emphatically says, "as unto the Lord." Marriage relationships are lifted to the highest possible plane. Submission is an act of obedience, not to one's husband but to one's Lord! Submitting to one's husband is submitting to one's Lord. By contrast, if submission is absent, trouble with one's husband as well as children should be expected.

Furthermore, we observe the *practicality* of submission (v. 23). Paul speaks about the wife's "head" as being her "husband." Headship is not an admission of inferiority, but an acknowledgement of God's order of things. Nor is headship the same as dictatorship. Any husband who attempts to be his wife's dictator is disobeying the command to love his wife as himself (see below). Nonetheless, a home without a head is incomplete in God's Kingdom.

Finally we observe the *desirability* of submission (v. 24). Wives submit the very same way the church submits. Is it drudgery for the church to submit to Christ? Why, then would it be drudgery for the wife to submit to her husband?

Second, Paul speaks of a loving adoration (vv. 25-33). Hear well the Apostle, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (vv. 25-27). While submission may sound harsh, what is unfolded is a picture of obedience to God. Now we find that the husband's role appears much harder than wives!

Reflection Connection

What do you think of when you think of wives submitting to their husbands? Explain. How is submission a beautiful thing rather than a bad thing?



Golden Greek Nugget

Twice the Apostle exhorted both believers in general and wives in particular to “submit” (vv. 21-22). The Greek term translated “submit, submitting” is *hypotassō*. It literally means “to place,” “to rank under,” “to subject.” Primarily it was a term used in the military for the ranking of soldiers who obeyed orders and submitted to higher ranking officers. In the church, submission must include an element of familial love and mutuality. In the home, submission is not about obeying husbands’ orders but obeying God. Indeed humbly submitting to one’s husband who loves his wife as himself is submitting to the Lord Jesus.

Husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church. How did He love the church? He gave Himself in death for the church! Hence, it was a *sacrificial* love. Husbands must love their wives sacrificially. Sacrificial love demonstrates the filling of the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, selfish love demonstrates carnal desires.

The husband’s love is also *sanctifying* love (vv. 26-27). Just as Christ “cleanses” the church, making the church “spotless,” so is the husband who is filled with God’s Spirit. Real love uplifts relationships, sanctifying and purifying the marriage before God. In this way, husbands contribute to their wives’ spiritual growth.

Finally, the husband’s love is a *satisfying* love (vv. 28-33). Just as a husband would love his own body, so he cherishes his wife, keeping her, nourishing her (v. 33). The man who loves his wife is taking care of himself as an added bonus! Happy marriages are satisfying experiences. Happy marriages are Spirit-filled marriages.

Wrap Up

How can we know if we are filled with God’s Spirit? Paul gives us three things to expect. Our walk with the Lord is the primary expectation. When we are filled with the Spirit, our walk with God will be evident. We will imitate the Lord. Next, our hearts will be intoxicated by God’s Spirit. We will be Spirit-controlled. Finally, since every sphere of our life is affected by the infilling of the Holy Spirit, our family’s integrity will stay healthy and intact.

