

Be Filled with the Holy Spirit (Part I)  
*Be Filled with the Holy Spirit*  
By Scott Lee

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**Bible Text:** Ephesians 5:15-21  
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**Rockport Baptist Church**  
3761 Telegraph Road  
Arnold, MO 63010

**Website:** [www.rockportbaptist.org](http://www.rockportbaptist.org)  
**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/rockportbaptist](http://www.sermonaudio.com/rockportbaptist)

Ephesians five, beginning at verse seven. I want to read the whole passage so we can get the full context here and then go on to look at just one specific thing. Ephesians five, verse seven.

“Therefore do not be partakers with them,” that is with the world that is in disobedience.

For you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret. But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light. For this reason it says, "Awake, sleeper, And arise from the dead, And Christ will shine on you."

Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.

*Father, now open our hearts to your truth and help us to see marvelous things here from your Word in Jesus' name. Amen.*

The heart of my message tonight centers around this one command in verse 18. For the Bible says to all Christians everywhere, “Be filled with the Holy Spirit,” be filled with him.

I think you will agree that there are few commands in Scripture that are so much discussed and so much argued about and yet probably so little practiced as these words.

Controversies have raged. Churches have been split over the meaning of these words. And yet at the same time I am convinced that very few Christians can honestly say that they have set the course of their lives to do what this command says and to experience what it implies. As it says, “Be filled with the Holy Spirit.”

And so to understand this a little bit better I want to answer three questions or deal with three questions beginning this week and then spilling over into next week. Number one, why does it matter whether or not I am filled with the Holy Spirit? Number two, what does it mean to be filled with the Spirit? And, number three, how can I be filled with the Spirit and what are we talking about when we speak about the filling of the Holy Spirit?

Let’s begin, first of all with why it matters to be filled with the Holy Spirit. I mean, I am saved, right? So what more could I possibly require? I know Christ. I have a relationship with him. I know that reality. So, if this idea of the filling of the Holy Spirit is so controversial that genuine, concerned believers have argued over it, maybe it’s not worth worrying about. Maybe we should just move on and think about something else. Go back to something less controversial like the sovereign power of God in election and predestination and all those sort of things.

And we could do that. We could just bypass this and say, “We are reformed. So we don’t talk about the Holy Spirit or anything like that.”

But, of course, we would run the risk of missing out on the vast riches of God that he has in store for us who seek him, for us who are willing to orient our lives consciously in keeping with the commands and the ordinance of his Word. And, of course, not only that, we would be standing opposed to the very clear command of Scripture which is always a very dangerous place to stand.

So let’s just think about this command just for a little bit. First of all, just the fact that it is a command. “Be filled.” It is an imperative. An imperative means what? It means a command. You are being told. It is not a suggestion. He is not saying that this is an option for those who really want to be spiritual in their walk, but everybody else can ignore it. He is not saying, “Well, you know, I would suggest the filling of the Holy Spirit. Now, you might need this from time to time.”

It is something that God expects to be a reality in every Christian. Every Christian is commanded to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Not only is it a command, but it is given as a very urgent command. I have already said it is not an option. Now here is why it is not an option. Because without the filling of the Holy Spirit, you can’t live the Christian life. Plain and simple, without the filling of the Holy Spirit you cannot live the holy life.

Notice, in fact, the context of this command as it is given here. I read the whole passage beginning back in verse seven because I wanted you to hear how this fits in the overall train of Paul’s thought. But I could have gone back even further. I could have gone back

to chapter four, verse one as Paul begins speaking to Christians about what it means to live the Christian life.

Chapter four verse one, he says, “Therefore, I the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling which you have received.” Speaking to Christians about their walk, and about the ongoing progress of their life, and about the ongoing work of sanctification; speaking to those who are called by God out of darkness into light, out of death and into life, he is saying, “Here is that life you are to live.”

Going back further, chapter two, verse one, he says, “What was your condition before? You were dead in trespasses and sins in which you used to live. But,” verse five, “God has done something. God has made you alive. For it is by grace you are saved.”

And this is what a Christian is, right? Let’s get back to basics. A Christian is someone who has new life from God where there was no life before. The miracle of regeneration has taken place. That old heart of stone has been removed and a new responsive heart of flesh has been put in its place. Why? Because God has put his Spirit within us. Something dramatic, something real has happened. We are people who have experienced the grace of God in salvation and have received Christ as Lord by faith.

Ephesians two verse eight, “It is by grace you are saved through faith. This is not of yourselves. It is the gift of God, not by works so that no one can boast. For we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared in advance that we would do.”

Well, Paul’s point, then, just following that whole train of his thought is now that that has happened, now that God has saved you in this way, now that he has given this reality of a new life, here is what you must do. You must go on now to live that new life in a way that is worthy of Christ.

Chapter four verse one, again, “Therefore, in light of what God has done, in light of what has taken place, walk in a manner worthy of the calling which you have received.”

Again, chapter four verse 17. “So I say this and affirm together with the Lord that you walk no longer as the Gentiles also walk in the futility of their minds, being darkened in their understanding.” He says, “ You can’t live the lifestyle you used to live when you were in the world. You can’t continue in the darkness and the deadness of sin that once was a part of who you are.” Why? Because that is the old life you left behind. It is gone and in its place, verse 22, what does he say? “With reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self which is being corrupted in accordance with the lust of deceit, that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, that you put on the new self which is in likeness to God and has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. You have left the old behind and now you are to put on the new. You have walked away from that which defined you when you lived in the deadness and darkness of sin. And now you are constantly in the process of putting on that which is new in Christ, of living

out the reality of the new life which he has planted inside of you by the miracle of regeneration.”

And we see it, again, in chapter five verse one. “Therefore, be imitators of God as beloved children.”

Now we are his children. Now we reflect something of him. People look at us and they ought to see some reflection of our Father’s life and our Father’s light bouncing off of our faces and coming out of our eyes and working out of our living.

“Therefore be imitators of God as beloved children and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave himself up for us an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma. But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you which is not proper for saints.”

Here is this new life. Here is what is supposed to be coming out of you, this new reality of “Christ in you the hope of glory” as he calls it elsewhere. This new life should be evident, should be seen, should be apparent to those who are looking on and who are seeing you.

Then, verse 15, “Therefore, be careful how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise, making the most of your time because the days are evil. So then do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is. And do not get drunk on wine which is dissipation, but be filled with the Holy Spirit. Understand what the Lord’s will is.”

Ok, so what is God’s will? What is God’s will for your life as a Christian? What very clearly does the Scripture say here and again and again? What is the will of God for you as a Christian? You can mark it down and be certain of it.

One of the many places you can find it, 1 Thessalonians 4:3 says, “This is God’s will for you, even your sanctification,” right? Which is what Paul is saying here.

People often say, you know, “What is God’s will for my life?”

This is really easy. He wants you to be holy. He wants to make you like Christ. He wants to continually cause you to be more and more like his Son. That is what his will for you is. And that is what Paul is driving at here. Now how are you going to do that? Here is the big question. How are you going to live a life worthy of the calling you have received in Christ? How are you going to put off the old self with all of its corruptions and desires of its flesh that you are always fighting against and put on the new self made in the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness? How are you going to do that?

The only way you are going to do that is that you must be filled with the Holy Spirit. That reality of his presence must be the controlling influence of your life. He is, after all, as one of my professors said, the Holy Spirit, the *Holy Spirit*, the *Holy Spirit*, the *Holy Spirit*. What does he bring? He brings holiness, sanctification.

So here is the main point. Because it is impossible for you to live the Christian life in your own power and ability, you must seek the power and ability of another who has been given to you. And the one that Jesus has given to you is the “Helper,” the *Paraclete*, the Holy Spirit who comes in order to cause you to live this life he is talking about. That is why this matters, because without the filling of the Holy Spirit we cannot live out the holiness and the change of life that is part and parcel of being a Christian.

Ok, there is the first thing. Then second, what does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit? What is this... what is this puzzling, troubling phrase, “Be filled with the Holy Spirit,” mean?

Well, before we answer that question let’s ask a companion question. What does it *not* mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit? Not what does it mean to not be filled, but what does the filling of the Holy Spirit *not* mean?

See, when we talk about the filling of the Holy Spirit, I want to be very clear. We are not talking about receiving the Holy Spirit for the first time. There are some within the Christian community, maybe you are one, may be you have known some who believe that the Christian experience comes in two stages, kind of like the old Saturn rocket. Well, it had three, but, you get the idea. They believe it comes in a dual kind of stage. First you are saved by trusting Christ as Lord and Savior, and then later you are filled by receiving the Holy Spirit. So that there is two stage Christianity. Go a little ways and then you come up the rest of the way.

The problem with that is that the Bible nowhere teaches that kind of thing. The Bible, in fact, is very, very clear that as far as your engagement with the person of the Holy Spirit goes, from the time of the apostles onward from that initial outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Church in the book of Acts down to today, you receive the Holy Spirit at conversion.

I know we can go in Acts and we can see a couple of little different things happening there at the beginning point, but that was the initial outpouring of the Spirit, Acts chapter two. But from then on what you see is at conversion you and I become inhabited by the Holy Spirit. Chapter eight, verse nine of Romans, I think, is crystal clear on that.

He says, “However,” speaking to believers, “You are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit if, indeed, the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the spirit of Christ, he does not belong to him.”

You become indwelt with the Holy Spirit from the moment of conversion onward. If you don’t have the Holy Spirit dwelling in you it is because you are not a Christian.

Remember the promise of Ezekiel 36? What is the first thing God says he is going to do? He says, “I will give my Spirit to you and you will be careful to walk in my ways.”

That reality of the Holy Spirit, the instant you are born again the Holy Spirit came to dwell within your life. So every Christian is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. But here is the thing. Not every Christian is filled with the Holy Spirit.

We will look at this more next week.

Not every Christian... in fact, not every Christian is who filled with the Holy Spirit stays filled with the Holy Spirit. You will notice as you read through the book of Acts that Peter is filled with the Holy Spirit. And then a little later he is filled with the Holy Spirit. A little later he is filled with the Holy Spirit. There is an ongoing reality, an ongoing repeatable something taking place in Peter's life.

Second thing, when we talk about being filled with the Holy Spirit, we are not talking about a mystical second work of grace that suddenly catapults you into some new higher level of spirituality. Now, this is very important. This is the error of the charismatic movement which says there is a second experience of grace, a second blessing that every Christian ought to seek and every Christian ought to have and something that comes dramatically into your life with tongues and visions and maybe a sense of electrical power coming over you and brings you into a whole new realm of ecstasy and spiritual experience so that now you become a spiritual Christian. You are Spirit filled from then on. You can even buy the "*Spirit-filled Bible*" to go along with that companion experience.

In some circles there is this huge division made. Maybe you have been a part of this, a huge division made between the spiritual Christians and the poor, unspiritual Christians, the 'haves' over here and the 'have nots' over there, those who have been blessed and those who have not been blessed. And they will point to this verse and say, "Well, some have been filled with the Holy Spirit and others, unfortunately, have not."

Well, that is not what Paul is teaching here. He is not saying to the Ephesians, "Hey, guys, you know what your problem is? You haven't been blessed yet. You need this higher experience of the Holy Spirit so you can step out of lower class Christianity down here and come up to this new better level of spirituality up here. You need to have this second work of grace."

This is not what Paul is talking about here at all. Though I, for one, used to believe that quite passionately. Maybe just a little testimony: For about six months in my early Christian life I ran with a bunch of Pentecostal friends. Every one of those friends of mine claimed to have received the baptism of the Holy Spirit and spoken in tongues. All of them had a very dramatic story to tell of how they received this second blessing and all the wonderful things that it did for them, what it brought to their lives. And yet pretty much without exception their lives were anything but Christ-like as I look back at... and well, even then I was aware of it as a brand new Christian. In fact, I am not even sure I was a Christian at that point at all.

But most of them who claimed this experience were living in open immorality, impurity,

lust, hatred between them, strife and division and dissension, manifesting very little love for one another and very little passion for Christ.

Now I am not saying that that is typical of all Pentecostals by any stretch or that that is typical of everyone who holds this particular view. But what I am saying is it was true of them and that their teaching was, in fact, dead wrong. What they had been taught to expect, what they said this experience of theirs would do, it didn't do for them at all. And, worse yet, it simply didn't match up with the clear teaching of the Word of God which has to be our sole guide for all experience.

See, the danger is this - and this is what I want you to think about, especially if you have been in touch with some of this kind of teaching. There is a very real danger in looking for a single dramatic experience to solve your spiritual problems. I used to chase every experience I could. I went to conferences and seminars.

But I used to think that if I could just find that one experience, that one teacher, that one teaching, that one zap, that one thing that would thrust me on to this new stage of super spirituality...

The problem with looking for that kind of thing is this. The moment you start looking for that one thing, that one experience that is supposed to give you the holy 'umph,' you stop looking to Christ. That is the big issue. You stop seeking him for the grace and help you need because you are pursuing this other thing.

Let me say this very clearly. There is no miracle, mystical second blessing that Christians should pursue. There is no big dramatic experience you need to get that is going to suddenly solve all your spiritual problems. There aren't two kinds of Christians, spiritual Christians and carnal Christians. That teaching has probably condemned more souls than any teaching I can imagine. There aren't blessed Christians and unblessed Christians. That is just a fiction to be quite honest that preachers have made up to hide the fact that we have done some really poor evangelism and we have filled the churches with a lot of unregenerate people whom we have called Christians.

The problem is not that our churches are full of unspiritual Christians who need to get a further blessing, the problem is that many of our churches are full of unconverted people who need to be saved. That is the real issue.

But let's just be honest about this. If we are talking about you or the friend that you are thinking of or whoever; if you have no love for Christ, no desire for holiness, no resistance to sin and temptation, no passion for God, your problem isn't that you are unspiritual and you need to get a second blessing. Your problem is that you are lost and you need to be saved. You need to repent and believe the Good News that Jesus saves sinners who look in faith to him alone. That is the critical issue.

You don't need to look for a second blessing. Look for the source of all blessings and put your faith in him. That is the big issue.

Now, that is not to say - now I am going to back up a little bit - that is not to say that once you have been converted there aren't further works of grace that God desires to carry out, indeed, will carry out in your life. One of the reasons I don't believe in the so called second blessing is because I don't think a single additional blessing is enough for me. I think I am such a wretch and I trip and fall and mess up so easily and so badly, my flesh has such power at times that I don't need a second blessing. I need a third, a fourth, a fifth, a sixth, a seventh, a 238<sup>th</sup>, a 590<sup>th</sup> or whatever, you got the idea. I need a whole parade of blessings from God in a continual flow from his throne. And that is really what I see in these words of Paul here. Many of you are aware that Paul is not talking about a one-time dramatic experience here, but a series of ongoing daily experiences of God's Spirit as he continues to draw me out, continues to mold me, continues to shape me over time until I am conformed to the image of Christ.

What Paul is literally saying here is not be filled one time, but be being filled. Be continuously ongoingly filled. His picture is not just this one little outpouring that fills up your little cup and your cup stays full, but a constant flowing like a fountain or a stream or a shower or however you want to imagine that is constantly filling and filling and filling and filling, once again, and third again and 12<sup>th</sup> again, constantly coming into your life. That is what he is talking about, an ongoing reality, not a single further experience.

So let's get back to this question. What does it mean, then? What is the filling of the Holy Spirit?

Well, in the little bit of time we have, let me just sketch it out for you. We will look at it in more detail, Lord willing, next week. In a nutshell being filled with the Holy Spirit means this. It means being brought under the control and influence of the Holy Spirit so that your mind, your will, your emotions are yielded to him for the purposes of God and what he is seeking to accomplish in your life. The filling of the Holy Spirit is being brought into the control and influence of the Holy Spirit so that your whole person, mind, will, emotions, all of you are yielded to him for the purpose of God as he seeks to accomplish it in your life.

Now, you can see that by looking at the comparison Paul makes here in verse 18, between being filled with the Holy Spirit and being drunk with wine.

Think about the image that he is giving here. What happens when a person gets drunk with alcohol? They lose control to what? Well, everything... but ultimately, what are they losing control to? The alcohol has begun to take control. The alcohol begins to take over. Their whole life is given over to its influence. We even say it that way, don't we? We say, "So and so was under the influence."

You go to jail for driving under the influence. The alcohol itself has become the influential thing that is over their lives. So the mind is clouded, for instance, because of the alcohol. The judgment is impaired because of the alcohol. The person is filled with false emotions, false joy. They laugh giddily at nothing whatsoever. There is sadness and



remorse, some drunks will sit there and weep and cry and tell you all their sad tales. Others become angry and filled with rage. Why? These are false emotions that are induced by the control of the alcohol. The wine has taken control of them.

And Paul says, "Rather than being filled with wine, which always leads to emptiness and loss . . ." Instead he says, "Be filled with the Holy Spirit."

Now look at the comparison here. Just as a drunk man has opened his life to and put himself under the influence and control of wine, so the Christian must open his life to and put himself under the control and influence of the Holy Spirit. And there is the picture.

To be filled with the Holy Spirit, then, is to be filled with the presence and power of God so that your whole life is swept up under his influence and control. Do you see that? So the whole of your life is yielded to him.

I mean, think about how that works in the various aspects of your life. Your mind, not clouded as it would be with alcohol under the influence of wine, but what? Your mind made clear and able to think biblically and truthfully because, Romans 12 says your mind is being renewed by him, because the Spirit is bringing a whole new way of thinking to you through that Word.

In Ephesians four, verse 18 which we read just a while ago, he says that the Gentiles are darkened in their understanding and excluded from the life of God. Again, here is this picture, darkened, clouded, unable to think clearly. It is like being lost in a fog. They can't see truth because their eyes and their minds have been clouded. They are lost in a fog. "But we," chapter four verse 23 goes on to say, "have been renewed in the spirit of our minds and put on the new self."

There is a new spirit in our mind. It is the Spirit of God. There is a new way of thinking, a new way of seeing. The Holy Spirit comes in and he lightens and brightens our mind by bringing God's truth to bear, by bringing the Word in and shaping and forming so that as Romans 12:2 says you are no longer conformed to this world, but you are transformed by what? By the renewing of your mind.

The Holy Spirit begins to reshape and reorient your thinking.

Second, your will. The judgment of the drunk is impaired. You have all... many of you who are older, have seen this. He makes a fool of himself. She does stupid and destructive things she would never otherwise have done and regrets them afterwards. That is what wine does. That is what alcohol does when it is drunk in excess. But the Holy Spirit comes in and he doesn't cloud our will so that we do foolish and destructive things. He sharpens them. He overcomes the natural foolishness of the human heart.

Chapter five verse 17 says, "Don't be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is."

Romans 12 says that when we have been renewed in our minds what are we going to do? We are going to know God's will, his good and perfect and pleasing will. The mind reshaped and sharpened by the Holy Spirit taking the Word and reenergizing and re-causing our thinking to be God's thoughts after him according to the Word. He gives us wisdom and we begin to know God. We are pursuing God. And the more we are pursuing him, the more we understand and we do his will. We get to know God's will. We know what he wants of us. We know why he made us. We set our course according to his purposes laid out in his Word.

The mind, the will, the emotions. While a drunk man is a slave to false emotions, our hearts have been freed to express true and godly emotions.

Did you ever think about what the emotional make up of the Holy Spirit is like? What the emotional make up of a Christian under the power and influence of the Holy Spirit must look like? Well, you don't have to really wonder, too much. We have a very clear description, don't we? "Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, meekness, self control."

But what are these? This is the disposition; this is the emotional make that someone filled with the Holy Spirit is filled with. These qualities. That is life in the Spirit - a life given over to and yielded to the indwelling Spirit moment by moment, day by day as you are living under the joy and obedience of Christ, therefore to the praise and the glory of God, filled with God in order to glorify God in the way that you live your life.

Well, how do you get there? Again, we will look at this more next time, but the key to me, again, seems to be this comparison in verse 18. "Don't be drunk with wine, but be filled with the Holy Spirit."

Again, I think about that. What does a person do to get drunk with wine? How do they fill themselves with it? They just drink, right? They just... drink and drink and drink some more. And drink a little bit more and you keep drinking until ultimately the wine takes over and takes control of your life. (I am not recommending this, by the way.)

In the same way we put ourselves under the control of the Holy Spirit if I can say it that way. We make it our habit to come and drink and drink and drink of spiritual things. To drink of those things that savor of the presence of God. We make it our pattern to come and drink in his Word. Getting up first thing in the morning and getting a nip or two of the Word and drinking in his presence and drinking it in through the day and drinking it in through sermons and declarations of other faithful servants who are preaching the Word and reading and meditating and chewing on it and swishing it around in our mouths so we get all the taste of it. We drink and drink and drink. We drink in the place of prayer where we drink in his presence and we drink in his strength. We drink in the place of worship where we gather with other believers or when we are at home alone or in our cars. We drink in the place of fellowship with other believers. We challenge each other and encourage each other.

Wherever we find God we come and we drink and we drink and we keep drinking until our lives are saturated. Our minds are permeated with his presence. Our hearts are full to overflowing with his love and mercy. And we are so permeated with this reality of his presence that we began to see it taking full control of every minute detail of our lives.

You know, for years my real problem was I wanted a big dramatic experience that would just suddenly solve it all for me. And the thing that the Scriptures constantly take me back to are the simple every day plain, ordinary realities; the Word, prayer, worship, fellowship, accountability. Those things done with consistency under the leadership of the Holy Spirit are those things that he uses to exert, expand his influence over our lives as Christians as we are constantly being filled with him.

Now there are also those times that are more dramatic and we will look at some of those next week in the book of Acts. But, nevertheless, this is the steady state.

Just like Bro. Aaron mentioned earlier about revival. What a marvelous thing! You know, if you have ever been a part of a real move of God, this reviving presence of his Spirit and a dramatic move within a church and a body. But do you understand all revival is, is the normal operation of the Spirit of God on a congregation, but in intensity and an excess that is beyond the normal. And the filling of the Holy Spirit is a normal pattern of Christian life that sometimes ebbs and flows and sometimes has its stronger variations and manifestations. But what you and I ought to be seeking is not the occasional larger thing that God graciously and sovereignly gives, but the ongoing drinking and drinking and drinking through the Word, through prayer, through fellowship so that all we are is permeated and brought under the control of the full influence of the Spirit of God and we are filled with him. We are filled with him.

*Father, I pray that you will make this passion to be our passion, to be fully taken under your control. Lord, not just here in this safe place, but when the temptations come upon us, tomorrow morning when trials afflict us, when the enemy who has our weakness in his sights attacks. Lord, help us make this our settled practice in all of our lives to constantly be opening our hearts and our minds to you, to be ruled over by your Word, to be yielded to the living presence of your Spirit as he comes through your body, through the rebuke and encouragement of friends, through times of worship, through the meditating upon and the reading of your Word, through those times that we are before you and in prayer and seeking you. Lord, move upon us. Own us lock, stock and barrel so that in all things, that in every way we might live to the praise of your glory, lives that reflect the worthiness of this calling that you have put upon us.*

*Lord, I know I need that. I ask that you would give that to each believer here as well. In Jesus' mighty name we pray. Amen.*