

Sermon Title: Be Filled With The Spirit, Part 1
Scripture Text: Eph. 5:18 (Ephesians #36)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 5-8-22

It's time to turn to God's Word, so let's open our Bibles to Ephesians Chapter 5, where our target is one whole verse today. We'll see if we can actually accomplish that.

You've heard me say, many times in our study in the Book of Ephesians, that the theme of this book is "in Christ"—that occurs 27 times in these six chapter. Another theme here is the word "walk"; "walk" has to do with how you live, or, your lifestyle (e.g., Ps. 15:2; 26:1, 119:3; Prov. 2:7, 13, 20; 6:12; Rom. 6:4; 8:4; Phil. 3:17-18; Col. 1:10; 2:6; 3:7). And I have said that you could follow through the Book of Ephesians and get your own little "Walking Theology."

Well, last week, we ran across the final use of the word "walk" in the Book of Ephesians, so I thought we would take just a moment and, if you will—pun intended—let's "run" through the "Walking Theology" of the Book of Ephesians; and it paints the picture of the whole book.

The first appearance is in Chapter 2, Verses 1 and 2; it says: "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly *walked* according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience" (NASB-1995; and throughout, unless otherwise noted). Before you came to Christ, you had a lifestyle, you had a "walk"—but, spiritually speaking, you were a walking *dead person* (cf. 1 Tim. 5:6). "You were *dead* in your trespasses and sins."

Ah, but there is *great* news! Ephesians Chapter 2, Verses 8 and 9 leads to Verse 10, the next occurrence of "walk": "For we are His workmanship, created"—here it is: "in Christ"—"in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would *walk* in them." God has designed now that you are *no longer* a walking dead person; you have been "made alive" in "Christ" (vs. 5)—now, "walk" through this life in obedience to Him, and see the good things that He will do through you.

The next occurrence is in Chapter 4, Verse 1, also very thematic: "Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to *walk* in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called." Well, that "calling with which you have been called" is Chapters 1, 2, and 3—how to be "in Christ"; now, "walk worthy" of that (Col. 1:10; 1 Thess. 2:12), live up to it, *walk* like who you *are* "in Christ" (2 Cor. 5:17; cf. Eph. 4:24).

Then we saw Chapter 4, Verse 17—"So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you *walk* no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind." There's a transformation (Rom. 6:4, 12-13; 1 Pet. 4:1-3); there's a *new* walk, a *new* way of living when you come to Christ (cf. Acts 26:20; Titus 2:14).

Then, Ephesians Chapter 5, Verse 2: an aspect of that is that you "*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."

And then, Verse 8 of Chapter 5—"For you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; *walk* as children of Light."

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And the one we saw last time: Verses 15 and 16 of Chapter 5—"Therefore be careful how you *walk*, not as *unwise* men but as *wise*, making the most of your time, because the days are evil."

There's the Ephesians "Walking Theology"! Go ahead, I dare you: take the rest of the epistles and put your whole "Walking Theology" of the New Testament together; it would be wonderfully edifying for you.

You see, you started out as a walking spiritually-dead person, then you were made alive. Now, you can walk in good works that He designs for you. As a matter of fact, He calls you walk in a manner worthy of this *glorious* position that you have in Christ (cf. 1 Thess. 2:12; 2 Thess. 2:14). Your new life is part of the bigger picture of the life of the Church, which is the Body of Christ (Col. 1:24); and together, we show to the world what He is like (Phil. 2:15; cf. Eph. 3:10).

You should walk in a manner that sharply contrasts with the way unsaved people walk; you are no longer to "blend in" with the world like you used to try to; now, you are *profoundly different* (e.g., Titus 3:3-5; 1 Pet. 4:3-4).

Part of this walk is a "walk in love"; people who encounter you should encounter a dose of God's love (Matt. 5:44-45)—and "*especially*" other Christians (Gal. 6:10); see, they will know that we are His disciples by our "love for one another," says Jesus in John 13:35.

You must walk as a "child of Light" (cf. Jn. 8:12 1 Jn. 1:7); this new life that you have, just by the contrast, *exposes* the darkness of those who are still dead in their sins.

And you should "walk" as a "wise" person, which we saw means you "buy up" the opportunities, you "redeem the time," you *seize* those opportunities for those "good works" which God designed for you. That's "making the most of your time."

Now, we come to the next command: to "be filled with the Spirit." Like a battery, it has two poles: negative and positive. Like a good grilling fork, it has two tines to grip you tightly. Like road signs, it tells you: "Do Not Enter" and "Go This Way." This is what this famous command says; Ephesians 5:18—"And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit."

We started last week with the "Do not get drunk with wine" part, and we didn't quite finish that; so we are going to probably leave in the middle of something again today, and then maybe next week we will get back on sync where our sermons line up with a sentence or a paragraph. But bear with me—this is all worth our time. We are going to finish the negative command, and then next Lord's Day we will start to explore the marvelous concept of being filled with the Holy Spirit; actually we're going to start that today.

Remember, the word "drunk" means "influenced to the point of losing control of one's faculties." This word for "drunk" here was the word that was used by Homer in classical Greek. He described the process of stretching a bull's hide, and in order to do that, to

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make it more elastic, it would be soaked with fat; and he used this word for "soaking so that it was made pliable"—that's this word translated "drunk." In the context of wine, it means that your mind is influenced by alcohol so that it is made more pliable—which is exactly the *opposite* of what you want to do as you walk soberly in Christ. Look up the word "sober" and trace that, especially in the Book of Titus ("sober"—NKJV, KJV, ASV; "sensible"—NASB-1995; cf. 1 Cor. 15:34; 1 Thess. 5:6; 1 Pet. 4:7; 5:8).

So he says: "And do not get drunk with wine, for that is *dissipation*." I told you "dissipation" is that word for "save" or "saved" or "salvation," but with a negative prefix. What he is saying is: There is *nothing* "saving" or "redeeming" about being drunk; it is wasteful, it is destructive. So, drink all the wine you want, if your goal is to have your brain "soaked in fat so as to be as pliable as possible."

Now, I showed you last time that when we come across this verse, there is a cultural nuance to it that is very important. Understand that when you see a Bible passage, or you see a word in the Bible, the word means what the original author—under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit—understood that word to mean, and what that author expected his readers to understand it to mean.

So when he says, "Do not get drunk with wine," what would they have understood? Well, in the Bible—which is addressed to cultures quite different from ours—the assumption was that wine drinking is normal (e.g., Deut. 14:26; Lk. 7:33-34; Jn. 2:1-11; 4:46). The crucial *difference* is that what is meant by "wine" in the Bible is just what we would call wine today, except that before it was consumed as a beverage, it was mixed with three to ten times as much water as wine. Drinking wine undiluted with water was considered barbaric; people began to lose the control of their faculties (Prov. 23:33-34).

What you find over and over in the Bible is that God doesn't say, "Don't ever consume anything alcoholic"; He prohibits "drunkenness" (Lk. 21:34; Rom. 13:13; 1 Cor. 5:11; 6:10; Gal. 5:19-21; 1 Pet. 4:3), not wine drinking. And it's just that wine drinking was not at all what we ascribe to that term. Hence, you read things like Proverbs Chapter 20, Verse 1—"Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, and whoever is intoxicated by it is not wise." Wine not diluted was called "strong drink." Distilled spirits are even *stronger* than that. This assumes that wine drinking was normal, but moderation and wisdom is required in its use. Its misuse is "not wise." And we are "not" to "walk...as unwise men, but as wise" (Eph. 5:15).

Look at this one in Proverbs Chapter 31, Verses 4 through 7—"It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine, or for rulers to desire strong drink, for they will drink and forget what is decreed, and pervert the rights of all the afflicted." So he's saying: "If you are a king, if you are a leader, if you are a judge, anything like that—*don't consume alcohol, or you might just mess up* and fail to apply the laws appropriately!" He says: "Give strong drink to him who is perishing, and wine to him whose life is bitter. Let him drink and forget his poverty and remember his trouble no more." If I can enculturize that—if I can make that relationship to our culture—if someone is in hospice care, let them have their morphine so that the pain is relieved.

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But notice the contrast: Lest judgment be impaired in crucial circumstances, kings should be *extremely careful* about "wine" and "strong drink." Only give it to those in need of sedation.

The general counsel from Scripture, regarding the consumption of anything alcoholic, is pratty clear. Let me read you two verses from Isaiah Chapter 5: Verse 11, and then Verse 22—"Woe to those who rise early in the morning that they may pursue strong drink, who stay up late in the evening that wine may inflame them!" And down to Verse 22—"Woe to those who are heroes in drinking wine and valiant men in mixing strong drink." That's not even ambiguous! I mean, you *can't find* a loophole in that!

Now, in a few special circumstances in the Bible, we have those *total* prohibitions of *all* alcoholic beverages *for certain people*. We already read Proverbs 31: Kings should *never consume alcohol*. Now, *that's not practiced very much* by royalty and people in positions of high political power, but that's God's wisdom.

Leviticus Chapter 10, Verse 9 prohibits all wine for priests during the time that they were serving in the Tabernacle or the Temple; and remember, they served on a rotating schedule, so they were to forego *all* wine during the time of their service.

Numbers Chapter 6, Verse 3 says the same thing for the duration of a Nazirite vow; that doesn't happen these days, but that was a principle: While you are doing these things especially dedicated to the Lord, *no alcohol*—not even the diluted stuff.

There is only one relevant reference in the New Testament. It does not support the viewpoint that many people *want it* to support; some people like to read this verse and say, "See, it's *perfectly fine* for Christians to consume alcohol!" That verse is First Timothy 5:23. Paul wrote to Timothy, his protégé, and he said: "No longer drink water exclusively, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments."

That fits *perfectly* with the idea of way more water than wine; the "wine" was essentially a way to *purify* the water; alcohol kills nasty little things. So he says, Do it "for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments." Remember also: wine was used as a medium into which medicine was dissolved, so it was a vehicle for delivering medicine at times. So, First Timothy 5:23 fits that *perfectly*; it *does not* fit: "Okay, go ahead, drink all the wine that you want to!" And remember: the early Christian writings specify, like the writings of the culture of those days, that normal beverage wine—like you would drink with a meal—was mixed with water, at least three parts water to one part wine; some up to ten parts water with one part wine.

So, here's a comparison: To consume the amount of alcohol in two martinis by drinking wine that contains three parts water to one part wine, you would have to drink about 22 *full glasses* to get the same amount of alcohol. In other words: it is *possible* to become intoxicated by wine mixed with three parts water, but it would affect your bladder *long before* it affects your mind! Understand: We are *not* talking about the kind of thing that we call "wine" today.

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The question, then, is: Well, *Jesus* turned "water" into "wine" (Jn. 2:9; 4:46)! Yeah, He did. "And remember that the steward of the feast was amazed; this was the *best* wine! And that means he probably tasted it. So, are you saying to me that then he took that awesome wine and he *diluted it* with three parts water before he served it to people at the wedding feast?" No, I'm not saying that. But I *am* saying that anybody at *that* wedding feast, or *anyplace*, that consumes enough alcohol to affect their thinking *is in sin*!

You just can't get around that! "Do...not...get...drunk"! You can add the "with wine" if you want to, but that's the mildest stuff; "with wine," or, "with beer," which I suppose is a little milder than wine; or, "strong drink"—"Do not get drunk." That is the line that the Bible draws: intoxication—or, "drunkenness."

So, given the fact that the standard wine drinking that was done in New Testament times is *nonexistent* in our society, I think it's wise to be *extremely* conservative about what we practice or condone in the matter of the use of alcohol or any other drug that affects a person's mind. Now, can you have a couple of ounces of wine with a meal? I don't mind; but I'm telling you: if it's enough to affect your judgment *a little bit*, you've gone too far! So, you're better off, I think, if you just avoid it. And if you live in a culture where you *don't* have to purify the water that comes out of the tap, and you have *so many* other choices, I think: better to just stay away.

I'm not going to do this, but I think it would be really cool if you're sitting in a restaurant somewhere, and you overheard at the next table: somebody is ordering their meal, and they say, "And I would like a glass of wine, please, and a pitcher of water to dilute it." We just don't relate to the way that it was in New Testament times.

Remember, in this context we are talking about the wise walk—the wisest things to do as a "new man" in Christ. And the wisest thing for you to do to not be "drunk with wine"—that's the negative illustration: to not be under the control of that substance, but to be under the control of the Spirit of wisdom.

And that brings us to the rest of Ephesians Chapter 5, Verse 18. Now, here's my plan for this little portion of Ephesians. This touches very much on the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit. It is a *command*, that we be "filled with" the Holy Spirit. But in our age, there is so much confusion about this whole subject of everything to do with the Holy Spirit that I want to employ a teaching technique that is very good when you are dealing with controversial issues.

If you teach by *contrast*, it helps clarify things. So, I want to categorize some of the *wrong* concepts about the Holy Spirit and the filling of the Holy Spirit, and then *biblical* statements about the filling of the Holy Spirit. So, that's going to be our approach as we look at the half of this verse which is: "Be filled with the Spirit."

Here's a *brilliant* outline: Number 1—Inaccurate Statements. Number 2—Biblical Statements. And we are going to get partway through Number 1 this morning.

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But first, I want to read the passage. I already read to you Chapter 5, Verse 18; but it's the beginning of a sentence, and I want you to see the whole sentence; and then we will start looking at the top of the sentence again: "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."

So understand: We are just talking about the "be filled with the Spirit" part. There are a *lot* of implications to that; and a lot of them are *not merely* personal, they are also corporate—"speaking to *one another*" in this way, being "subject to *one another*" in this way. So we will get to all of those things.

But let me start my list: Inaccurate Statements. I want to give you eight inaccurate proclamations that you may have heard concerning the Holy Spirit, the filling of the Holy Spirit, and His ministry to believers in general. It's going to be helpful to think this things through, because if you don't see what's *wrong* with these ideas, it leaves you open to confusion. So, bear with me—I think you'll see some order come out of this.

Number 1—"You must ask in order to receive the Holy Spirit." This is a corollary of the teaching of certain branches of Christianity who say that the Holy Spirit comes to you in a *separate event* that happens *after* salvation. That is completely contrary to what the Bible says, but that is taught by many people who say: "Okay, yeah, you need to hear the Gospel; you need to believe; you need to declare your faith in Christ; and *then* later, you have to submit your application in triplicate for review by the committee; and *then*, perhaps, you will be given the promotion whereby you receive the Holy Spirit." I'm being facetious, but I want you to catch on to the point. There is *no* such thing *anywhere* as a Christian without the Holy Spirit! He indwells every child of God from the instant that that person receives Christ and "the free gift" of "eternal life" (Rom. 6:23). Let me show you a few Scriptures to support that. You probably know these, but I want to reinforce them.

Romans Chapter 8, Verse 9—"However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit..." Now, notice: two categories of people. In Romans Chapter 8, you are either "in the flesh" or you are "in the Spirit"—that's the difference between Non-Christian, Christian; lost, saved; dead, alive. That's the contrast between "in the flesh" or "in the Spirit." "However, 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." So, a person who "does not have" the Holy Spirit "does not belong" to Christ. That should be *the absolute end* of the discussion! How can *anyone* read that and think: "It's possible to be a Christian, and not have the Holy Spirit"? It doesn't happen.

Another one: First Corinthians 12:13—"For by one Spirit we were *all* baptized into one body"—"we...all": *all* believers—"we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit." You receive the Spirit as a work of God. It is not something you *ask* for later; it is part of the package which is salvation (Acts 2:38).

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Then there's First Corinthians Chapter 6, Verse 19—"Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit *who is in you*, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?" Now, the interesting thing there is that *that verse* is in a context addressed to Christians *who were sinning*, and Paul says clearly that they possess the Holy Spirit! He doesn't say: "Go out and *get* the Holy Spirit"; "You *have* the Holy Spirit within you, so *why* would you want to *drag* the Holy Spirit through your sin?"

One more. We saw this one in Verses 13 and 14 of Chapter 1 of Ephesians: "In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were *sealed* in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is *given* as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory." So: You heard, you "believed," you "were sealed...with the Holy Spirit"; that is the end of your *gaining* the Holy Spirit. You will have the Holy Spirit every moment until your redemption is completed by the glorification of your body.

Inaccurate Statement Number 1—"You must ask in order to receive the Holy Spirit."

Number 2—"You must regularly ask the Spirit to fall afresh upon you." Like on our Internet browser: you have to refresh the screen to get the data to update; kind of that idea.

If you have been a Christian for a while, you may have sung a beautiful chorus. I like it—I like the pathos of it, I like the sentiment of part of it. But it goes like this: "Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me. Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me. Melt me, mold me, fill me, use me. Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me." Like I said: I like the sound of that chorus; it's very singable. I like the sentiment—"Melt me, mold me, fill me, use me"; I think that should be the cry of the heart of *any* child of God: to mold me, as He alone knows best. But the problem is: the rest of the prayer that is in that chorus *contradicts* what the Bible says! To pray "fall afresh on me" denies: *He is already there!* It denies the reality that the Spirit is in your life! So, to pray that prayer would be like sitting next to your best friend and begging your friend to visit you. *He's there! She's there!* To teach a believer to ask for the Spirit to "fall afresh" or to "descend upon the heart" *ignores* all the teaching about: "You *have* the Holy Spirit"! He lives within you! "You are not your own...you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body" (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

Now, a prayer like that might have been prayed by an Old Testament prophet, where the Holy Spirit *would* "come upon" them in different ways (e.g., Num. 11:25; 1 Sam. 16:13). But we have a whole different relationship with the Holy Spirit (cf. Jn. 14:17). You know, in our daily e-mails: John 13, 14, 15, 16—"I will send...the Spirit" (15:26) when "I go to the Father" (16:7, 10). He *sent* the Spirit (Acts 1:4-5; 2:1-4), and He sends the Spirit to *every* child of God—everyone who believes in Him.

Number 3—Here is a third Inaccurate Statement about the ministry of the Holy Spirit: "You must empty yourself of sin and of self, and live a separated life, in order for the Holy Spirit to come and fill your heart."

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Now, don't misunderstand: It is *good* to confess and repudiate and mortify sin. It is *right* to consider everyone else as "more important" than yourself (Phil. 2:3). It is *godly* to separate yourself from the sinful things of this world. But *this* concept is based on a faulty idea that your heart is like a receptacle, and the Holy Spirit is like a substance that fills a space which is otherwise unoccupied. You might call this wrong idea "Gas Tank Theology"; the idea is: you have to empty it to make room before you can fill it up—and that's just not right. If anything, it's the *opposite* of what is true. You don't *empty* yourself in order to get filled with the Holy Spirit. *Fill* yourself *with* something—which is God's Word. I'm going to show you that the parallel is between Ephesians 5:18 and Colossians 3:16, where one says: "Be filled with the Spirit" and the other one says: "Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you." You turn and fill your heart with the things of God's Word (cf. Ps. 119:11), and *then* you come under the control of the Holy Spirit.

The idea that you have to do something in order to "be filled with the Holy Spirit" puts the proverbial "cart before the horse"! You *can't* clean up, all by yourself! And remember: the Holy Spirit's first name is "Holy"; He is "the Spirit of holiness" (Rom. 1:4). You need the Spirit in order for you to make those decisions to do the holy thing, the right thing, the good thing (cf. Rom. 8:13; Gal. 5:16). That would be just as silly as saying: "Well, you have to get rid of all your sin before you can receive Christ as your Savior." *No!* That's not the case! You received the Holy Spirit *just* as you came to God.

Now, I know I torpedoed a song you might like. Let me give an "Atta boy!" to another one: You receive the Holy Spirit "Just as I am, without one plea, but that Thy blood was shed for me" ("Just As I Am, Without One Plea"; 1850, Charlotte Elliott). It is the Holy Spirit who will clean up your life, if you will but cooperate with Him (cf. Ezek. 36:27; Rom. 8:13; Phil. 2:12-13). He is the *Holy* Spirit.

Let me read you some words from a famous lexicographer, New Testament scholar. He was one of the translators of the original American Standard Version of the Bible, 1901. Kenneth Wuest is his name. You may have heard of him; a good guy, long-time faculty member at Moody Bible Institute, in their greatest days. He wrote this: "We must not think of the Holy Spirit filling our hearts as water fills a bottle, or air fills a vacuum, or a bushel of oats fills a basket. The heart of a Christian is not a receptacle to be emptied in order that the Holy Spirit might fill it. The Holy Spirit is not a substance to fill an empty receptacle; He is a *Person* to control another person: the believer. He does not fill a Christian's life with Himself; He *controls* that person." You are going to learn that the essence of being "filled" with something is being *controlled* by it, just like we say: "That person is controlled by anger, controlled by grief (e.g., Est. 3:5; Lk. 4:28; 5:26; Acts 5:17; Rom. 1:29). To be controlled by the Holy Spirit is the idea of being "filled."

Number 4—Here is another Inaccurate Statement: "The Holy Spirit is an 'it'." The Holy Spirit is a *Person*. The Holy Spirit is not merely a force without personality. There is an advertisement that plays on the radio right before our program, often; and it just *grates* on me every single time I hear it. It says: "Faith and fear are like opposite forces in the world!" *No, they are not!* "Faith" isn't a *force*! You don't aim the "phaser" of your faith at something and fire! No, you put your faith in the One who can control you.

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The Holy Spirit is a Person, just as much as Jesus is a Person (e.g., Jn. 14:26). We could fill a sermon *series* with the Personhood of Christ and the Father and the Holy Spirit; but for now, let me just point out to you: The Holy Spirit is *not* spoken of as an impersonal force; He has personhood. Mind (Acts 15:28), will (Acts 13:2), emotions (Is. 63:10)—they are consistently attributed to the Holy Spirit.

To put it in our recent context: Ephesians Chapter 4, Verse 30 commands you: "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God." You have to be a *person* to be susceptible to being *grieved*. I can't do anything to "grieve" that chair there. If *you* were *sitting* in that chair, I could do something to *you* to cause *you* grief. You see, you have to be a *person*, not an "it," in order to have that kind of response.

There is a remarkable evidence for the personhood of the Holy Spirit in the grammar of the New Testament, because in the Greek language, pronouns and adjectives have to agree in gender with the noun, and nouns have gender—masculine, feminine, or neuter. The word for "spirit" is neuter, and every time that it refers to the Holy Spirit with a pronoun, it's always "Him," "He," or "His"—personal pronouns, not the impersonal pronouns "it" or "its." The Holy Spirit is *not* like "the Force" of Star Wars!

I saw a Gospel tract one time—I *really* hope it's out of print. It was based on relating "the Force" from Star Wars—I mean, people understand "the Force": "Use the Force, Luke!"—they thought, "Well, let's be cool, and let's relate that to the Holy Spirit." And the implication of that tract is that the theology of those movies is essentially Christian allegory—and *it's not!* "The Force" has a good side and a bad side, and they are in balance and in stasis—*that's not true* of the Holy Spirit! The Holy Spirit is God Almighty, one of the three Persons of the Godhead (Matthew 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14; cf. Acts 5:3-4).

Now, mind you, there *is* a theology behind the worldview of the Star Wars movies and books, but it's basically Eastern Mysticism; it's kind of a hybrid Hindu/Buddhist sort of view of the world. Now, I think the Star Wars movies are fun; I confess to enjoying them for the science fiction...but their *theology* is absolutely terrible!

The Holy Spirit is a *Person* who comes to control believers who are willing to cooperate with Him (Gal. 5:16). He is *not* an impersonal "force" that you harness; you *submit* to His control (Rom. 8:4).

Number 5 (and this will be our last one for today)—"You must pray for the filling of the Holy Spirit." I don't know what your experience has been. When I was a young Christian, I was told this, and there was a very unfortunate little booklet that was circulated that taught this; and many times, years ago, I prayed for the Holy Spirit to fill me. I would discover that, since the last time I had prayed for the Holy Spirit to fill me, I messed up somewhere and I sinned somehow, so I must have lost the filling, so I better pray again. It was kind of a shock to my system to discover: there is not one shred of biblical evidence *anywhere* to support telling people: "You need to *pray*, or you can't be filled with the Holy Spirit."

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Scripture Text: Eph. 5:18 (Ephesians #36)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 5-8-22

Now, I'm all for praying; that's a good thing! I'm all for desiring to be filled with the Holy Spirit; that's a good thing. But here is how the faulty logic goes: Ephesians 5:18 is a command; we are told: "Be filled with the Holy Spirit." Therefore (goes the logic), being filled with the Spirit is obviously God's will for us. First John Chapter 5, Verses 14 and 15, says that we are to pray "according to" God's "will" in order to have our prayers answered; therefore, we must pray for the filling of the Holy Spirit. That's the logic—*but it's not logical*. The non-logic in that reasoning is tragic.

And we are going to spend plenty of time learning about what 5:18 *means* when we get to the Biblical Statements, but I assure you: this passage *does not tell you* that He fills you if and when you pray for it. It's a command to "Be filled with the Holy Spirit." *You don't do anything to get* the filling of the Holy Spirit! The command is in the "passive" form: you *allow* the Spirit to fill you. Might prayer be involved? Well, yes. Might confession be involved? Well, yes. But it's not *conditioned* upon you praying for the filling of the Holy Spirit.

And the reason I wanted to include this in my list is the tragic implication of this false teaching. Because if you believe that, you tell somebody that, you must believe that if you have sinned, you've *completely lost* the filling of the Holy Spirit—*unless* and *until* you again stop and consciously go through the ritual of a specific prayer to be filled; and that puts the burden on *you*. That puts a *tremendous* load of guilt on somebody if you say, "When was the last time you prayed to be filled with the Holy Spirit?" "Uh...2007, I think."

Do you understand? If it is conditioned upon you having to pray and ask for it, you're pushing people into an impossible kind of teaching. It leads to a great load of guilt—a whole lot of insecurity about your relationship with God. It's the kind of teaching that drives people into legalism, because it makes you want to be sure you have a rule against everything that might jeopardize your "filling." It's not a negative thing, it's a positive thing: you *choose* to submit to His leadership, to His control—which comes through the Word of God.

And we'll get to all that; we are not finished. We're not even finished with the first half of the outline—the negative part. But these are worth our time to think about, and we are going to return and pick it up here next time.

But I want to ask you to just prayerfully process the things that we have seen already from Ephesians 5:18.

First of all: Don't miss the negative part of this. To yield control of your faculties to the use of alcohol—or *anything else* that you choose to ingest or inject into your body, other than medicine that you might need—to do that is the *antithesis* of God's will for your life! The walk of the wise one in Christ seeks to be clear-headed, sober, and seizing the opportunities for ministry that God gives to you. And we *do not have* anything that would be called "drinking wine" in the meaning and the sense of Ephesians 5:18 in our world. You have to be *extremely* careful if you choose to imbibe at all.

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The second thing we have learned: At the moment that you put your trust in Jesus Christ, and you received the "free gift" of "eternal life" that is in Him (Rom. 6:23), you received, simultaneously with that, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:32; Rom. 5:5; 1 Cor. 2:12; 2 Cor. 1:22; 1 Jn. 3:24; 4:13). *Trust that truth!*

You may have *feelings* to the contrary, and your feelings are real, and your feelings can be very powerful—and your feelings *lie to you every day* (cf. Prov. 28:26; Jer. 17:9). They *do not* accurately—most of the time—reflect reality. They're just *how you feel* about something. *Trust the truth!* Learn about it. *Live* in light of it. Don't let anyone trick you into thinking that even though you have Christ, you don't have the Holy Spirit. *You do!* You need to do what He asks of you to do, and it is all revealed in the Word of God.

And finally, understand: Every time you choose to do the will of God—remember last week, we talked about "proving what the will of God is," the moral will of God that is one hundred percent revealed in Scripture—every time you choose to do what God wants you to do, every time you choose to act the way God wants you to act, every time you choose to practice the fruit of His Spirit, you are thereby under His control, which is the essence of what it means to "be filled with" the Holy Spirit (Jas. 4:7a).

And we are going to study more of all that that means as we work through the rest of this *fantastic* sentence, which is Ephesians 5:18-21.

My friends, do you have Christ? Is he your Lord and Savior? (Rom. 10:9) I hope so! As I look at your faces, and those of you that I know your story, I'm so thrilled that we share this common faith in Jesus Christ—that we are brothers and sisters in Christ. And if we *are* "in Christ," we have the Holy Spirit! He chooses—He *wants* to control us. The choice is ours. Let Him, or don't let Him. Let's *let Him*.

And let's pray:

Our Father, thank You for all of Your truth. Thank You for the Holy Spirit, who lives in us. May we be wise in the seizing of the opportunities that You give us to glorify You here on Earth. As people look at us, may they see the "walk" of the "new ones" in Christ. May we "walk as children of Light." May we walk in those "good deeds" that You have "designed that we would walk in them." Father, wherever any of us might be holding back some aspect of the obedience that we could be giving to You, the full commitment to doing Your will for Your glory, deal with us as You need to, that You might receive the glory. Please don't let anyone leave this place apart from knowing You through Your Son, Jesus Christ. Have Your way with us to that end, we pray, in Jesus' name. Amen.