

Sermon 27: Ephesians 5:18: Be filled with the Holy Spirit

OUTLINE

Do not get drunk
Be filled with the Spirit

INTRODUCTION

Christians are very divided today over the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Sadly most Christians do not know the difference between the sealing of the Spirit, the baptism of the Spirit and being filled with the Spirit. Today we come to Paul's command to be filled with the Spirit and to not be drunk with wine. We want to spend some time in deep bible study to understand exactly what it is that required by this. We will be looking at the call to put away drunkenness as a counterfeit spirit, then we will look at the baptism of the Holy Spirit and then finally what it means to be filled with the Spirit.

Do not get drunk with wine

Paul gives us two commands, 'And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery,' and 'be filled with the Spirit.' These are deliberately contrasted with one another. Drunkenness was used by the cult of Dionysus for inspiration. Paul calls upon Christians to be filled with the Holy Spirit as the fountain of a pure spirituality. Wine was the staple drink and drunkenness would have been the atmosphere in which many things would have been done much like our culture today. Today alcohol has an intellectual respectability and is to be savoured by connoisseurs. Advertisers portray the necessity of alcohol as a social lubricant; as vital for joy; the lifeblood of a hardy identity; vital for celebration; the basis for male bonding; the naughty independence of ladies night and many other things. But in truth alcohol is the opposite in its effect to the Holy Spirit. Alcohol is a depressant and not a stimulant. It creates a false reality and not truth. It dulls and does not heighten. And an excess of wine leads to a lack of self-control and debauchery. Through drunkenness we throw away our chastity; our reputations; our money; our health. It creates laughter without joy, courage without character, and all our defences are weakened. Fights, vandalism, sexual promiscuity, car crashes and many other sorrows are the result of drunkenness. Proverbs 23:20-21, 'Be not among drunkards or among gluttonous eaters of meat, for the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty, and slumber will clothe them with rags.' 29-35 describes the self-destructive arrogance and self-deceit of alcoholism, 'Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaining? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who tarry long over wine; those who go to try mixed wine. Do not look at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup and goes down smoothly. In the end it bites like a serpent and stings like an adder. Your eyes will see strange things, and your heart utter perverse things. You will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea, like one who lies on the top of a mast. "They struck me," you will say, "but I was not hurt; they beat me, but I did not feel it. When shall I awake? I must have another drink.'" Drunkenness is a sin not because it wants to ruin all your fun. No it is a sin because it destroys your self-control and your discernment, you become like an animal with no restraint. This is the opposite effect to the Holy Spirit in our lives. The Spirit humanizes us by conforming us to God's image; alcohol erodes the image of God in us. Alcohol amplifies our sins and flaws, the Spirit eradicates them.

Alcohol is said to amplify our sins where the Spirit suppresses them. I think Paul was very insightful putting alcohol and the Spirit side by side as opposites. Think then of the effect of

alcohol and what it amplifies and what the Spirit helps us overcome. ¹Alcohol in marriage for example amplifies the sin of harsh communication, anger, criticisms, contempt, blaming and makes us less agreeable, more anxious and hypersensitive. It amplifies our marital sins of disinterest, self-absorption, neglect of ourselves, our children and our wives. It affects sexual intimacy, making us less conscientious and unable to problem solve. It increases violence and abuse, emotional, verbal and physical. Sadly some Christians don't need to be alcoholics to have these sins amplified in their marriages, but the effect of the Spirit is to dampen and eradicate these sins. Alcohol leads you to abandon yourself to sin in self-destructive behaviour that hurts others as well, just think of drunk driving and the lack of love, thoughtfulness, the recklessness we pursue despite the consequences.

Be filled with the Spirit

Paul turns our thoughts from wine to the Spirit.

Second blessing theology has been around in one form or another for a very long time. Some of the puritans believed in a second blessing of assurance, Wesley promoted a two part approach to the Christian life with his emphasis on perfectionism, some have seen the full gospel including salvation but added to that the ensuing healing for which Christ was wounded. The higher/deeper life movement has been characterised by a second act of total consecration with a new freedom experienced, and more lately we have seen the teaching of the baptism of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in other tongues. These second blessings theologies have claimed to be the fulfilment of what the Bible is speaking about when it talks about being baptised in the Holy Spirit. Is this true?

As we begin talking about being baptised in the Holy Spirit, we need to put all the phrases on the table that have been associated with this idea. 'Filled', 'times of refreshing', 'power from on high', 'anointing', etc. I suggest to you that all these various words have been wrongly used interchangeably with little sensitivity to the way they are used in the Scriptures. We will begin by looking at what the bible says and means by 'baptism in the Spirit' and then look at how it differs with being filled by the Spirit.

Here are all the verses that talk about the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

""I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." (Matt 3:11).

"I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." (Mark 1:8).

"John answered them all, saying, "I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire." (Luke 3:16).

"I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.'" (John 1:33).

"for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."" (Acts 1:5)

"As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them just as on us at the beginning. And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'" (Acts 11:15-16).

¹ www.healthy marriage info.org/download.aspx?id=258

"For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body---Jews or Greeks, slaves or free---and all were made to drink of one Spirit." (1 Cor 12:13).

Firstly, a technical point, our English translations are all being PC when they translate 'with'. The Greek word is 'in'. This would lean the language towards an immersion understanding, so this little word has been left as ambiguous. The last reference pertains to salvation, and the other five to Pentecost. What is the connection to baptism in the Spirit, and how it relates Pentecost and salvation? Let me add another question to the mix, for although the outpouring of the Spirit in Acts 8 in Samaria is not mentioned, nor the receiving of the Spirit by some of John the Baptist's disciples; how do we tie, these other outpourings, Pentecost and personal salvation together?

We will begin with 1 Cor 12:13: The situation in the Corinthian church was one where you had a party of super-Christians exercising authority and gifts with no regard for others in the church. Paul is writing, setting out key theological truths to put stop these abuses of God's people. So he begins reminding them of their ignorance and how easily they can be misled in these issues. "Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed. You know that when you were pagans you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led." Then he reminds them that they are saved, and confess Christ as Lord, because of the Spirit, not because of themselves, (12:3). He then lists the variety of gifts that the Spirit gives, so that they will not fixate on one particular gift, and despise the rest. Encouraging them to view the gifts as being for the purpose of the common good, not self-promotion (v7).

Our verse comes to us in a section where Paul is talking about the church as the body of Christ. A truth he probably learnt on the Damascus road. Verse 13 makes explicit how we are saved into that body, how we become a Christian. By the same Spirit, there is no different Spirit for slaves and free, Jews and Greeks, we were baptised into the one body, not a divided body. Paul uses the language of baptism to describe the moment of our salvation. It is clear from this verse that Paul does not view the baptism as a second experience consequent to salvation, but salvation itself. Paul is seeking to use the theological reality of their oneness in Christ to call them to an external unity as well. This linking of the baptism of the Spirit to the moment of our salvation is not unique to Paul we see this same link in Peter in Acts 11:15-18. Notice there that he equates their experience of the Spirit to Pentecost, and then in v18, it is directly linked to salvation, where God is said to have granted them repentance.

This highlights a difficult question. If we are to see our salvation as the baptism in the Spirit, are we to call Pentecost, Samaria, Cornelius' household, and Eph 19:6 as baptisms in the Spirit? And if the answer is yes, does that not fly in the face of what we have just established?

As you can see the issues are complex, and one of the reasons for this is because when we look at Pentecost, and the mini Pentecosts that follow, we are looking at a unique historical event that happened during the transition period between the OT and the NT. One way to view it would be to see Pentecost is on a large scale what our salvation is on a small scale. When you get saved, you are immersed in the Holy Spirit. Well, Pentecost is that event that was prophesied, the great beginning of the new era of the Spirit, where the realities of Christ's resurrection would begin to dawn in this old age. Pentecost was the grand beginning of that event. Peter interprets the significance for us by telling us it was in fulfilment of Joel 2:28-32. And just as every major change in the plot of God's redemptive history has been marked by an increase in miraculous activity, and unique miracles bound to

that event, we don't expect them to be everyday affairs. Just as, we do not look for another cross, or resurrection, we should not look for another Pentecost.

But what about Acts 8, 10, and 19; don't they prove that we are supposed to expect a repetition of the very thing you have just said we should not expect? No, the various repetitions of Pentecost in Acts 8, 10, and 19 are tied to Acts 2, and are not a pattern that we should expect to be an everyday affair. Here are some of the reasons. Luke has structured the book of Acts to show the progress of the Gospel according to the pattern of 1:8, Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, the ends of the earth; the progress of the Gospel reaching the nations, and a church of one nation becoming the church of many nations. Acts 8 documents the Samaritans becoming one with the church and not relegated to second class citizenship in the church, which Jewish Christians would have tended to do. Acts 10 throws open the doors for Gentiles to be included, without circumcision, and all this by Peter's ministry, with an accompanying vision. Acts 19, with the disciples of John is harder to see the significance of. But let me suggest, that they are the cream of the crop of the dispersion, the truest Israelites since they followed John's teaching, but that was not enough, even they needed to be incorporated into Christ, so that there was only one body. God deliberately staggered the Pentecost effect to help the early church overcome prejudice, tradition, years of isolation, etc. They were slow, as we all are, and God demonstrated their inclusion in the church by these unique, not to be repeated events. God eased their transition period which apart from His working, they never would have been able to negotiate on their own. To make this a model and pattern for what God has promised to do in every church, and every believer's life is to misunderstand the broader concerns of the book of Acts.

Also, if you look at the various outpourings, you will notice that they all experienced tongues (2:4; 10:46; 19:6), we are not told that there were tongues in Samaria, but given Simon's response of wanting to buy the ability to lay his hands on people that they receive the Spirit, we assume that there was something that he saw, some outward effect that grabbed his attention. However, as we look at 1 Cor 12:30, we see that Paul indicates that not everyone gets the gift of tongues. This disparity between everyone speaking in tongues in Acts, and not everyone having the gift of tongues in the early church should highlight the unique nature of the Pentecost events, and that it should not be viewed as normative. As you can see, this points towards the present view of various branches of Charismatic teaching that every Christian can prophesy and speak in tongues being nonsense.

In conclusion then, I reserve the term of Baptism in the Spirit, for two things only; for the unique Pentecost event where Christ fulfilled the promise of giving the Spirit to His people. Secondly, it is a description of our salvation so that every Christian is seen to be baptised in the Holy Spirit. And these two things are linked as one. For Jesus poured out His Spirit on His Church, and when you are saved, you are united to His body. So then, just as the mains in a house are built once, but every new extension is tied into the mains of the house, so also every new believer is plugged into the gift of Pentecost. So you may not experience all the manifestations that heralded the arrival of the Spirit, however, you do experience all the benefits of being baptised in the Spirit.

There is another experience of the Spirit that the NT talks about that we can all experience, and that is the filling of the Spirit. We see various types of filling of the Spirit: firstly, we see momentary fillings of the Spirit, perhaps for a specific task at hand. "Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders" (Acts 4:8). Here we see a fulfilment of Jesus promise that the Father will give us words when we are before men (Matt 10:19-20). "And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together

was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness." (Acts 4:31). Here we see a filling of the Spirit in answer to prayer with the result of boldness to preach the Gospel in a difficult situation of persecution. Some people think that 1 Peter 4:14 speaks about a special filling enable the Christian to face martyrdom and persecution, "If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you." Secondly, there are various people in Scripture, who because of their Godly character are described as being filled with the Spirit, "for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord." (Acts 11:24); "Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty," (Acts 6:3). And then there is an ongoing filling that should be the Christians regular experience. Eph 5:18, "And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit."

Various things can be highlighted from this verse. Firstly, it is in the imperative mood, in other words it is a command not a suggestion. Secondly, it is in the plural, so it is referring to all of us, and not just one or two people. Thirdly, it is in the present tense, and so has the meaning of ongoing filling, 'be being filled.' Fourthly, being in the passive voice it speaks about surrender to a person, namely the Spirit. Please note that in the letter to the Ephesians these are people who received the Spirit when they believed (1:13-14), however, they still have an ongoing need to be filled regularly. This shows itself in v19-21 in worship, fellowship, heart-singing, thankfulness, and mutual submission.

How then are we filled with the Spirit? Do we have to go to the front of a church, and like the flu, 'get it from someone else?' Is it by the laying on of hands, lying on the floor, do we need to feel a special anointing for filling before we can expect it, do we refill ourselves by speaking in tongues every morning, like putting fuel in our cars? Let me read a section from a theologian who I think nails it:

"A few New Testament passages describe being filled with the Spirit as consisting of walking or living by the Spirit (Rom. 8:4; Gal 5:16, 25). What does it mean to live or walk by the Spirit? I would suggest two things: living by the Spirit's guidance and living in the Spirit's strength.

Living by the Spirit's guidance means waiting on the Spirit, asking what the Spirit would have us do, and where the Spirit would have us go. This entails daily study of the Bible, since the Spirit does not lead us apart from the Word. The better we know the Scriptures, the better we shall know how to live by the Spirit. Negatively, living by the Spirit's guidance means to silence the clamour of fleshly voices, to quell the energy of fleshly haste, to restrain every impulse until it has proved to be of God. Positively, it means to be guided by Him, to listen to Him as He reveals Himself in His Word, and to yield to Him continually. Living by the Spirit's strength means leaning on Him for the necessary spiritual power. It means *believing* that the Spirit can give us strength adequate for every need, *asking* for that power in prayer whenever we need it, and *using* that power by faith in meeting our daily problems. The only way we can live by the Spirit's strength is to keep in constant touch with Him. The difference between a battery-operated radio and a plug-in radio is that the latter must always be plugged in to the source of power in order to operate. The Spirit gives us strength, not on the battery principle, but on the plug-in principle: we need Him every hour."² Submitting your will to the will of the Spirit not the flesh is being filled by the Spirit, and using those things that the Spirit uses to bless and save us like the Bible and prayer.

² Anthony A. Hoekema, *Saved By Grace*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub Co: 1994), p53.