

**THE HOLY SPIRIT WANTS TO FILL YOU. (Part 1)****EPHESIANS 5:15-21**

There's a scientific debate over who should get the credit for discovering oxygen. Joseph Priestley, an English scientist and clergyman, is often given that honor because he was the first to publish his findings in 1774. Interestingly, Priestley originally called the gas we know as oxygen, "dephlogisticated air." However, in 1772, two years prior to Priestley's publication, a Swedish chemist named Carl Scheele independently discovered the gas that's so vital to human existence. Oddly enough, the term or word "oxygen" didn't actually come into use until 1775, when yet another chemist, Frenchman Antoine Lavoisier, discovered and named the gas we breathe. He was the first to recognize oxygen as one of our natural elements. Regardless of who gets the credit, it's odd to think of anyone "discovering" oxygen. Does a fish discover water? The truth is that oxygen literally surrounds us and is in us every day, and whatever you call it – even "dephlogisticated air" - we can't live without it. The same is true of the Holy Spirit. Without Him you and I can't live the Christian life. He surrounds us and is in us.

We're in the midst of a series of messages on the Holy Spirit: "Invasion From Above: Why The Holy Spirit Matters." Last week we reflected on what it means to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. When you baptize a person, you submerge him or her with water. When you are baptized in the Holy Spirit, He begins to live inside of you – in your spirit and expresses Himself through your actions, words, and attitudes. When does that happen? At conversion. The moment you put your trust in Jesus as your Savior and Lord, you're baptized in the Holy Spirit. He comes to live within us today and forever.

Today, I want us to think about it means to be filled with or to be full of the Holy Spirit. What's the difference between being baptized in the Holy Spirit and being filled with Him? They're related, to be sure, but different. How so? Every follower of Jesus is baptized in the Holy Spirit. Not every Christian is filled with the Spirit, however. When you're baptized in the Holy Spirit, He becomes resident in you. But when you're filled with the Spirit, He become president of you. You can only be baptized in the Holy Spirit once – when you're converted, born again, saved, become a Christian – whatever term you prefer. The filling of the Spirit, by way of contrast, happens after your conversion and it can be both lost and regained numerous times throughout your life. One passage will help us understand what it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit. What does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit? Let's drill down on two key truths:

**I'M UNDER THE HOLY SPIRIT'S INFLUENCE COMPLETELY.**

Look with me again at v. 18. "Don't be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit." (Eph. 5:18 NLT) Does it seem a little odd to you that Paul, this great Christian leader, mentions being drunk in the same context with being filled with the Holy Spirit? Whatever Paul's rationale, there are some interesting parallels between being drunk and being filled with the Holy Spirit. For example, we sometimes refer to someone who is drunk as being "under the influence" of alcohol. In other words, that person is controlled or dominated by alcohol. It has affected the mind, the body, the speech, the attitudes, and the behavior of that person. Well, when a

person is “under the influence” of the Holy Spirit, he or she is controlled and dominated by the Holy Spirit. Now the Holy Spirit completely affects your mind, your body, your words, your attitudes, and your behavior. We’ve all heard about DUIs. Don’t get a DUI – driving under the influence of alcohol – on your record. Instead, I strongly encourage you to get an LUI on your record – living under the influence of the Holy Spirit!

Please notice with me at least four important facts about being filled with the Holy Spirit from v. 18. First, it’s a command, not a suggestion. God doesn’t say, “May I suggest that you get filled with the My Spirit?” No, it’s a command. Be filled with the Spirit. Secondly, the object of the verb – “be filled” - is plural, meaning that every Christian is expected to be filled with the Holy Spirit. It’s a command given to every Christian; therefore, it’s something that every follower of Jesus should experience. If you’re not filled with the Holy Spirit, there’s clearly something deficient about your relationship with God. This is not an experience reserved for pastors, or missionaries, or Christian leaders. Being filled with the Holy Spirit is available to every follower of Jesus.

Third, the verb is in the passive voice – “be filled with the Spirit.” This isn’t something you work up or produce on your own. This is something the Holy Spirit does to you and in you. But, that’s not to suggest that it’s totally passive. After all, in order to get drunk, you have to drink. Likewise, in order to be filled with the Spirit, you have to open yourself to His influence. Fourth, the verb is in the present tense which in the Greek language – the language the New Testament was written in originally – means continuous, ongoing action. It’s entirely correct to translate that verse as, “...keep on being filled with the Holy Spirit.” It’s not a once and done experience. Being filled with the Holy Spirit should keep on happening to you over and over again with increasing frequency the longer you follow Jesus.

Being filled with the Holy Spirit isn’t about how much of the Holy Spirit you have, but rather how much the Holy Spirit has of you. When you first start to follow Jesus, your spiritual capacity is rather small. There are many areas of your life and mine that need to get cleaned out, corrected, and pointed in a new, positive direction. As you grow and develop in your knowledge and experience of God, your spiritual capacity grows and the Holy Spirit is always seeking to fill you to your current capacity level.

So, how does a person get filled with the Holy Spirit? I wish I could recommend that you just go and seek some ecstatic experience with God. It would also be nice to offer six easy “how to” steps that would automatically result in you being filled with God’s Spirit. The real answer to that question, however, is rather simple, straightforward and not very sensational. How are you filled with the Holy Spirit? Personal, daily surrender or submission to Jesus as your Lord. I know the word “Lord” is not one we use much outside of the church. Perhaps the closest role in our culture to the meaning of “Lord” is the role of a boss. But Jesus is a 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and 365 days a year Boss. Yes, Jesus is your Savior because He died on the cross and rose again for you. But He is also your Boss – the most loving, generous Boss you will ever have, but your Boss, nonetheless. He has every right to tell you how to live every aspect of your life. I find many Christians never quite understand that very important fact. If you like the fact

Jesus is your Savior, but you reject His Lordship of your life, you don't really understand Jesus or what He came to do. In fact, if you fail to recognize Jesus' Lordship over your life personally, I question if He has ever truly become your Savior. Jesus didn't die on the cross so you could just escape the fires of Hell, but instead to allow the Holy Spirit to fully and lovingly influence your life in every way possible.

Experiencing Jesus as the Lord or the Boss of your life means constantly giving Him the most control of your life that you're capable of giving Him at that point in time. You offer as much as you know about yourself today to as much as you know about God today. That's not static. It's not once and done. As you surrender to the Holy Spirit daily, He will keep on showing you areas of your life that need to be submitted to Him, turned over to Him, and surrendered to Him. A person who gets drunk surrenders himself and his will to alcohol. As a follower of Jesus, you surrender yourself and your will to the Holy Spirit. Now, people don't just fill their lives up with alcohol or drugs. Some people fill up their lives with loving money or the things money can buy. Others fill up their lives with ambitions for success in some other area of life: a certain career, for example. As a follower of Jesus, you're called and expected to make Jesus the Boss of your life. When you do that, you will be filled with the Holy Spirit. One is the same as the other.

Can you be filled with the Holy Spirit all the time? Sure! Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit continually. The first Christian to die for his faith, a man called Stephen, was described as a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit. Barnabas, an associate of Paul in ministry, was described as a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith. Being continuously filled with the Holy Spirit ought to be a personal goal for you and me. Is it even possible to be controlled by the Holy Spirit all the time? Yes. First, confess any personal sin the moment the Holy Spirit convicts you about it and turn away from it then and there. Don't excuse or rationalize it away. The Bible makes it clear the Holy Spirit can't fill you if you're tolerating known sin in your life. But as you confess your sin, you're forgiven and the Holy Spirit assumes His rightful place in your life.

Second, trust God in every area of your life and live by that faith every day. That's a whole lot easier said than done! Yes, we begin to follow Jesus by faith. We put our trust in Him for everything. But it's much harder to live by faith day in and day out and entrust every area of your life to Him – your job, your marriage, your kids, your finances, your health. Not easy at all! But when you do – and as you do – you get filled with the Spirit and you stay filled with the Spirit. What does it mean to be filled with the Spirit? It means to be under the Holy Spirit's influence all of the time.

Thirty-three Bible verses mention eagles! Eagles get off the ground or off a branch by flapping their wings like crazy. Once they're in the air, though, their wings don't have to work very hard. Why not? Thermals. Thermals are columns of air formed as heat rises from the ground. Because heat rises, these air columns push up and up, displacing the cold air around them. By staying in the warmth of these thermals, eagles continue to soar. Eagles become experts in this. Gravity isn't deactivated—it's still at work—but a higher principle overcomes gravity. Eagles just learn to ride the thermals. They're almost at rest with wings outstretched and can just enjoy the pleasure of flight.

When we first begin following Jesus, we're a bit like eagles flapping our wings like crazy. And God helps us to lift up. Yes, we might hit the ground now and again. In the original Greek language of the New Testament, the Holy Spirit is called "pneuma", which means "a current of air, wind." Think about what this means for us. We flap and flap, but eventually we learn how to catch the current of air or the wind who is the Spirit. We begin to soar. That's how the Holy Spirit works in us. He's the power behind everything we do. Speaking of power, here's second truth about being filled with the Spirit.

### **I'M ENABLED AND EMPOWERED TO DO GOD'S WILL.**

Sometimes the Holy Spirit will enable and empower you to do something specific for God. Back in the Old Testament, God filled people with His Spirit for different tasks: like prophesying to His people, or leading His people into battle against their enemies, or even making the furniture for the Tabernacle – the place where His people worshipped Him. In the New Testament, God filled people with His Spirit to be able to preach with great power and effectiveness, or to perform miraculous healings on occasion. If you've been a follower of Jesus for a while, you've probably experienced this kind of Holy Spirit filling. Maybe you were sharing the message of Jesus with someone. Maybe it was when you were facing some great life crisis. Maybe you were involved in some ministry opportunity inside or outside the church. You're just suddenly aware that you're operating on a different, higher, better and more powerful level spiritually. You know what is happening through you is beyond your own abilities. When the Holy Spirit fills you, you're completely under His influence. And that means you're enabled and empowered to accomplish God's plan and purpose in some way.

Think about that analogy to being drunk again. When a person is drunk, can you see the effects of the alcohol even though she doesn't have a drink in her hand right then? Of course. By the same token, when you're full of the Holy Spirit, other people can see the effect He is having on you and in you even though they can't see Him literally. In the passage we read today, Paul mentioned some of those effects. I don't think he meant to be exhaustive, but there's enough here that you get the idea clearly enough. What does being filled with the Holy Spirit look like? Here's a few examples.

When you're filled with the Spirit, you demonstrate godly behavior and attitudes. Earlier in his letter to the Ephesians, Paul used the metaphor of taking off filthy, smelly clothes – your life before Jesus – and putting on clean, fresh clothes – your new life in Jesus. He changed the image or metaphor to darkness and light in 5:8-9, but the message is the same. "For once you were full of darkness, but now you have light from the Lord. So live as people of light! For this light within you produces only what is good and right and true." (Eph. 5:8-9 NLT) If you're going to be full of the Holy Spirit, you have to get rid of dark things like stealing, lying, an uncontrolled temper, an abusive tongue, greed, holding grudges, and sexual immorality. You have to live into the light by telling the truth, being financially responsible, controlling your anger, using your mouth to encourage, being generous, practicing forgiveness and handling sex God's way.

When you're filled with the Holy Spirit, you live wisely. "So be careful how you live. Don't live like fools, but like those who are wise." (Eph. 5:15 NLT) You scrutinize how you live. You constantly examine your behavior, your attitudes, your values and your priorities to make sure they line up with God. When you're filled with the Holy Spirit, you make the most of every opportunity God gives you. "Make the most of every opportunity in these evil days." (Eph. 5:16 NLT). When God gives you the opportunity to touch someone's life in His name, you do it. When God gives you the opportunity to serve Him in some way, you do it. You are constantly available to Jesus for His purposes. What will honor Him? What will promote Him? What will draw attention to Him?

When you're filled with the Spirit, you have God's joy in your life. "...Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, and making music to the Lord in your hearts." (Eph. 5:18-19 NLT) In fact, Spirit-filled Christians have a tendency to sing with joy even if they can't carry a tune in a bucket! When you're filled with the Spirit, you're thankful. "And give thanks for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Eph. 5:20 NLT) Spirit-filled followers of Jesus have setbacks, disappointments, and heartaches like everyone else. Nevertheless, they have the ability to keep on being grateful to God under all conditions and in all circumstances. I don't mean having a sort of artificially bubbly attitude all the time. Spirit-filled gratitude is just able to keep on praising God even when hard times come. When you're filled with the Holy Spirit, you have a submissive spirit. "And further, submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." (Eph. 5:21 NLT) You're easy to get along with. You aren't defensive, prickly, argumentative, or insisting on your rights all the time. You display a basic humility that makes it easy to be around you. You know how to listen. You build up and encourage those around you.

Do you really want to be filled with the Holy Spirit? Don't answer that question too quickly. It's a question that deserves more than an emotional, sentimental, or hasty answer. Why? Because there's often a cost involved in being filled with the Holy Spirit. There's often a price to pay to be filled with the Holy Spirit of God.

Jackie Hill-Perry is a writer, speaker, and a hip-hop artist. She's also a Christian who left a homosexual lifestyle because she wanted Jesus more. I want you to watch a video she made and listen to what she says. For me, Jackie provides a powerful example of what it really means to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

That's what it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit. You realize God wants you to do more than just believe in Jesus so you can go to Heaven when you die. He wants you to be His man or His woman in this world all day every day. It might mean turning your back on being culturally relevant. It might mean forsaking being politically correct. It will always mean making obeying Jesus more important than meeting my own strong sinful desires or rationalizing them away. To be filled with the Holy Spirit and to stay filled with the Holy Spirit means being who God wants you to be and doing what God wants you to do all the time. It means saying "Yes" to the Holy Spirit – even when it costs you something and there's a price to pay.