

Ghost Life in the Spirit

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This is the second in a series of messages on the Holy Spirit. Last week's message was entitled "Who is the Spirit?" The Holy Spirit is a person. He is not an "it"—an impersonal energy force. He is fully God. The Bible teaches us that there is one God in three Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Where is the Holy Spirit? If you have received Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior and invited him into your heart, then the Holy Spirit is already dwelling in you. If you missed last week's message I encourage you to go online and read or listen to it. Or you can order a CD or DVD at the media ministry booth in the foyer. If the Spirit is already dwelling in us, how do we experience more of his power in our lives? The key is being filled with the Spirit. Let's see what Paul says about being filled with the Spirit.

¹⁵ Be very careful, then, how you live--not as unwise but as wise,

¹⁶ making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.

¹⁷ Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.

¹⁸ Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.

¹⁹ Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord,

²⁰ always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 5:15-20

The scripture commands us to be filled with the Spirit. It is not optional!

What does it mean to be filled? How do we know if we are living in the fullness of the Spirit? How are we filled?

Paul tells us a contrast and a comparison to describe what it means to be filled with the Spirit. At first glance, it appears to be a very strange comparison. He says: "Do not be drunk with wine." Where did that come from? What does that have to do with being filled with Spirit? Did he just feel like he

needed to throw in a little point about temperance before he forgot it? Paul draws a comparison and contrast between drunkenness and being filled with the Spirit.

There are some ways in which being filled with the Spirit is like being drunk and some ways in which it is not! How is being filled with the Spirit like being drunk? Acts 2 describes the filling of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the disciples. We call that day “Pentecost.” All the believers gathered in Jerusalem were filled with the Spirit and began to proclaim the wonders of God with boldness and joy. The Holy Spirit gave them the ability to speak in other languages so that all the nationalities gathered in Jerusalem heard the Good News in their native tongue. Some in the crowd who observed their behavior said, “They must be drunk.” Why would they accuse them of having too much to drink? They seemed so bold and happy! To be that bold and happy they must be drunk! Alcohol lowers your inhibitions—the things you are afraid of sort of melt away when you are drunk. Therefore you may seem much happier and bolder than when you are sober.

I’m sure no one here has ever been drunk! So let’s just say, you have observed people who have been drunk! When they are fortified with alcohol have you noticed that they say things they would not ordinarily say? They have no fear. While drunk they seem to feel better about life, because alcohol numbs the pain. This is how being filled with the Spirit is like being drunk. In both conditions you feel braver and happier.

However, being filled with the Spirit and being drunk are unlike each other in significant ways. When we are filled with the Spirit we are brave, we speak the

truth in love, and we have courage to do things we would not ordinarily do. Many of our members ordinarily would not risk going to a disease infested, dangerous area full of many inconveniences. But by the power of the Holy Spirit they sign up to get out their comfort zone and go with a mission team to Africa or Guatemala or Bangladesh. Persons who are drunk say and do things they would not ordinarily do. When they sober up, many times they have regrets for the things they have said and done. They spoke words that harmed people they love. They wish they could take them back. They get in a car and bravely drive while intoxicated. When they wind up in jail or cause a fatal collision, they wish they had not gotten behind the wheel.

Those filled with the Spirit experience a deep abiding joy. Those who are drunk experience a temporary numbness of the pain which makes them seem happier for the moment. When the alcohol induced high wears off, the pain comes back with a vengeance. There is no abiding joy from a hangover. Alcohol is a depressant. It depresses brain function. When we are drunk we see less of reality—the way things really are. A drunk feels braver and happier because of reduced mental function.

In contrast, those filled with the Spirit are more intensely aware of reality. Ephesians 5:17 says: “Do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is.” Being filled with the Spirit heightens our understanding and awareness of reality—God’s will. The Spirit enables us to function at a higher mental and spiritual level. We see this illustrated in II Kings 6. Elisha is surrounded by his enemies, but he is very calm. He is brave in the face of his enemies. His servant

sees the enemies and is filled with fear. He says to Elisha, “How can you be so calm? Don’t you see what I see? We are surrounded with horses and chariots.” Elisha could have said, “Here have a drink of moonshine and you won’t feel a thing when we die.” But instead Elisha said, “Don’t be afraid. Those who are with us are more than those who are with them.” Then he prayed, “On Lord, open his eyes so he may see.” Then Lord opened the servant’s eyes, and he saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. When we are filled with the Spirit we see more of reality. We see into the spiritual realm. We see the resources of God to deal with our problems and challenges. The Spirit enables us to bravely face those things which seek to destroy us. True joy and boldness come not from seeing less of reality but more—seeing the presence and power of God at work in the world.

The work of the Holy Spirit is to take who God is and what he is doing and reveal it to you. The Holy Spirit enables us to experience a power that is greater than ourselves to face the enemies of life. He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. The things that used to deflate you don’t have power over you. The things that used to create fear no longer paralyze you. You see all of reality. Not just your own resources to deal with life, but the power of God living inside of you. The fullness of the Spirit is not a fleeting happiness that helps you forget your problems for a moment. C.S. Lewis said, “I did not go to Christianity to make me happy. A bottle of port would do that. If you want to make yourself happy and comfortable, I don’t recommend Christianity.” The Christian faith enables us to see reality, and it is not always happy! But the Holy Spirit gives us

boldness and deep joy even in the midst of suffering and challenges. He gives us power to triumph over our troubles but not to escape them. We saw people filled with the Holy Spirit in the Congo. There in the midst of incredible suffering and the crushing oppression of poverty, people had a deep abiding joy. They were not blind to the realities around them, but the Spirit enabled them to see beyond the suffering. They fixed their eyes on Jesus instead of the problems. They had hope that God's power would enable them to overcome any obstacles that life threw their way.

How can we be filled with the Holy Spirit? If you experience God, it is not because you found him. It is not because you made yourself acceptable to him. If you experience God, it is because he revealed himself to you. God found you.

Jesus told us an amazing counterintuitive truth: "Unless you become like children, you cannot enter the kingdom of God." Human reason would tell us just the opposite. In order to find God you have to study and work hard and do many good things to please him. You have to grow and mature so that you can have some ability to comprehend the deep things of God. Then maybe before you die you will find him. Jesus said the opposite is reality. God reveals himself to persons who are childlike. What are children like? They are helpless, weak and know they have nothing of their own. Jesus is describing people who know they are spiritually bankrupt. God does not divide the world between the good people and the bad people. He divides the world between the proud people and the helpless people. Proud people are those who think they may be good enough to make it into heaven. Helpless people are those who know they cannot possibly

reach God by their own effort or intellect. We are saved by grace—God’s work for us.

Are you aware that you are empty? Are you aware that you are powerless over the evil in your life? Are you aware that you are far from God and cannot possibly find him on your own? Like a child you are aware that you are helpless. Then you are ready to be filled with his Spirit.

How are you filled with Spirit? By faith--the same way you receive Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord. To receive Christ we admit that we are sinners; that we have gone our own way. We have been in control of our lives. And as a result we have separated ourselves from God. We cannot possibly find God on our own. We cannot make ourselves acceptable to him. We need a Savior. We accept that Jesus Christ has done for us what we could not do for ourselves. He paid the price in our place on the cross for our forgiveness. He offers us forgiveness, a relationship with God and eternal life as gifts. We receive those gifts by faith. Jesus said, “I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come into him and fellowship with him and he with me.” If you invite Jesus to come into your heart, he promised to come. He always keeps his promises. If you asked him to come in, he is there. You trust in his word to be true. You may or may not feel anything emotionally. Your relationship with Christ is based on the authority of his promises, not on your feelings.

If you have asked Jesus into your heart, the Holy Spirit has come to live in your heart. You do not have to ask him to come in. He is already there. But in

order to experience his fullness you have to ask him to fill you—you have to let him out of the back room. We are aware that we not experiencing power. We are overcome with the enemies of life. We are not seeing the fullness of reality—we are focused only on our problems. You ask the Holy Spirit to fill you with his presence and power. The Bible says that if we ask anything according to God's will he hears us, and if he hears us we have the requests made known to him. We know it is God's will to be filled with the Spirit. It is a command: "Be filled with the Spirit." If we ask the Spirit to fill us, he will fill us, by faith. We trust that God will keep his promise to anything we ask according to his will. Again, it may or may not be an emotional experience. It does not matter. What matters is your trust in God to keep his promise. And you claim the fullness by faith. You thank him for filling you with his Spirit. You begin to ask the Holy Spirit to guide you, heal you, transform you, use you, witness through you and give you boldness to do things for God you ordinarily would not do. You ask him to help you see the fullness of reality in the spiritual realm. When you encounter challenges, by his power you don't focus on the problem. Instead you focus on the resources of God to deal with them.

As we close our worship time this morning, persons from our prayer ministry are going to be at the front. If you would like them to pray with you they are available. They will pray with you to experience the fullness of the Spirit. They will pray with you to see the fullness of the Spirit's reality in the midst of your struggles. They will pray with you to receive Christ or for the assurance that Christ is in your life. You may be facing a health challenge, a relational challenge,

a job challenge. You may just want to come and thank the Holy Spirit for his presence in your life. We invite you to come forward for prayer. You may pray alone or you can motion to one of the persons at the altar to pray with you.

The fullness of the Spirit is available to you right now. All that is required is your awareness that you need the Spirit. Will you come and let him fill you now?