

DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Being Filled with the Holy Spirit

Lesson 13

In this lesson we will explore the “filling of the Spirit.” Being filled by the Spirit is essential doctrine that every Christian must understand. How is a Christian “filled with the Spirit”? Are Christians ever not filled with the Spirit? If so, how are they to be filled again? Every Christian must have a ready answer to questions like these. Unfortunately, many do not. They may have been taught about the filling of the Spirit, but forgot it, not understanding its practical application. It is also true that many have twisted and distorted what it means to be filled with the Spirit. Thus many, believing in the filling of the Spirit, believe what is false and try to practice what is false. The importance of this doctrine cannot be stressed enough, for without being filled with the Spirit we cannot please God, we cannot grow in Christ, and we will not experience the abundant life promised to those who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ. In this study we will not discuss the closely related topics of “walking in the Spirit,” “grieving the Spirit,” and “quenching the Spirit” but will save them for lessons of their own.

I. DEFINITION OF BEING FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

- A. *Great Doctrines of the Bible*: “The filling differs somewhat from the indwelling. We may speak of the baptism of the Spirit as that initial act of the Spirit by which, at the moment of our regeneration, we are baptized by the Spirit into the body of Christ; the Spirit then comes and takes up His dwelling within the believer. The filling with the Spirit, however, is not confined to one experience, or to any one point of time exclusively; it may be repeated times without number.”¹
- B. *A Survey of Bible Doctrine*: “What is the filling of the Spirit? The clue for a proper definition of the filling of the Spirit appears in Ephesians 5:18: “And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.” The comparison between drunkenness and Spirit-filling provides the basic clue: the idea of control. Both drunk and spiritual persons are controlled people, and under the influence of either liquor or the Spirit they do things that are unnatural to them. Looking at the matter another way, we might say that in both cases they lose their self-control and abandon themselves to the influence of either the liquor or the Holy Spirit. This is not to imply that the Spirit-filled life will be erratic or abnormal, but it is to say that it will be a life controlled or governed no longer by self but by the Holy Spirit.

Notice also that the verb “be filled” is a command, not an option. Believers without exception are expected to be filled. This is not something for some select few, but an expected and possible requirement of the normal Christian life.²

116. ¹William Evans and S. Maxwell Coder, *The Great Doctrines of the Bible*, Enl. ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1998, c1974),

²Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *A Survey of Bible Doctrine*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995, c1972).

- C. *The Holy Spirit*: “The work of the Holy Spirit in filling the believer may be simply defined as that ministry which is accomplished in the believer when he is fully yielded to the indwelling Holy Spirit.”³
- D. *All About the Holy Spirit*: “The different actions of the Spirit as He seeks to incorporate Himself within the lives of those who are obedient to His way.”⁴
- E. *The Holy Spirit*: “I believe the New Testament’s teaching of how to be filled with the Holy Spirit can be summarized in three terms: Understanding, Submission, and Walking by faith.”⁵

II. THOUGHTS TO PONDER ABOUT BEING FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

- A. *The Holy Spirit*: “A careful study of the nature of the filling of the Holy Spirit will reveal that it is the source of all vital spiritual experience in the life of the Christian.”⁶
- B. *The Holy Spirit*: “Some Christians who are living on the lower plane of religious experience are not only content to dwell there, but resent the suggestion that there is anything nobler or better; while others go constantly mourning and complaining of the dreary desert way they are treading. In either case the loss is unspeakable, and the harm done to the cause of Christianity by their defective testimony and character is pitiable.”⁷
- C. *The Holy Spirit*: “It is interesting that the Bible nowhere gives us a neat, concise formula for being filled with the Spirit. I believe that may be because most believers in the first century did not need to be told how to be filled. They knew that the Spirit-filled life was the normal Christian life. It is a sad commentary of the low level of our spiritual lives today that we are so confused about the filling of the Spirit.”⁸

³John Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit*, pg. 192.

⁴Herbert Lockyer, *All About the Holy Spirit*, pg 136.

⁵Billy Graham, *The Holy Spirit*, pg. 134.

⁶John Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit*, pg. 189.

⁷J. East Harrison as quoted by John Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit*, pg. 191.

⁸Billy Graham, *The Holy Spirit*, pg. 133.

- D. *A Survey of Bible Doctrine*: “From the perspective of daily living and a vital Christian experience, the filling of the Spirit is undoubtedly the most important aspect of this doctrine. This is the pure essence of true spirituality and the basic requirement for growth and maturity.”⁹

III. SPIRITUAL PROOF OF BEING FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

- A. **Luke 1:13-15, 41, 67** But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your petition has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will give him the name John. 14 “You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. 15 “For he will be great in the sight of the Lord; and he will drink no wine or liquor, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother’s womb. . . . 41 When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. . . . 67 And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying: . . .
- “From the standpoint of practical value to the individual Christian, no field of doctrine relating to the Holy Spirit is more vital than the subject of the filling of the Spirit. It has been greatly neglected in the average theology, along with other practical applications of doctrine. The doctrine of the filling of the Spirit demands in addition to theological knowledge an experimental understanding of the truth.” (John Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit*, pg. 189.)
- B. **Luke 4:1** Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led around by the Spirit in the wilderness
- C. **John 16:7** “But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.
- D. **Acts 2:4** And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.
- E. **Acts 4:8, 31** Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Rulers and elders of the people,. . . 31 And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness.

⁹Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *A Survey of Bible Doctrine* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995, c1972).

- F. **Acts 5:1-11** But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, 2 and kept back some of the price for himself, with his wife's full knowledge, and bringing a portion of it, he laid it at the apostles' feet. 3 But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back some of the price of the land? 4 "While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God." 5 And as he heard these words, Ananias fell down and breathed his last; and great fear came over all who heard of it. 6 The young men got up and covered him up, and after carrying him out, they buried him. 7 Now there elapsed an interval of about three hours, and his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. 8 And Peter responded to her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for such and such a price?" And she said, "Yes, that was the price." 9 Then Peter said to her, "Why is it that you have agreed together to put the Spirit of the Lord to the test? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out as well." 10 And immediately she fell at his feet and breathed her last, and the young men came in and found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. 11 And great fear came over the whole church, and over all who heard of these things.
- G. **Acts 6:3** "Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task.
- H. **Acts 7:55** But being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God;
- I. **Acts 9:17** So Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit."
- J. **Acts 11:22-24** The news about them reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas off to Antioch. 23 Then when he arrived and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and began to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord; 24 for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And considerable numbers were brought to the Lord.
- K. **Acts 13:7-12, 52** who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence. This man summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God. 8 But Elymas the magician (for so his name is translated) was opposing them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. 9 But Saul, who was also known as Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, fixed his gaze on him, 10

and said, “You who are full of all deceit and fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to make crooked the straight ways of the Lord? 11 “Now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and not see the sun for a time.” And immediately a mist and a darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking those who would lead him by the hand. 12 Then the proconsul believed when he saw what had happened, being amazed at the teaching of the Lord. . . 52 And the disciples were continually filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

- L. **Eph. 5:15-21**¹⁰ “Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, 16 making the most of your time, because the days are evil. 17 So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. 18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, 19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; 20 always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; 21 and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.”

Contrast Between Being Drunk and Being Filled With the Spirit	
You choose to get drunk	You choose to be filled with the Spirit
Being drunk is to submit yourself to alcohol's control	Being filled with the Spirit is to submit yourself to the Spirit's control
Being drunk is sin and leads to dissipation and worthlessness	Being filled with the Spirit leads to spiritual growth, eternal rewards, and gives glory to God
You are either drunk or not	You are either Spirit filled or not

- M. Consider what the contrast below teaches you about being filled with the Spirit.

Contrast Between Eph. 5:18-21 and Col. 3:15-17	
18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, 19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; 20 always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father;	15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. 17 Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

¹⁰It should be noted that Eph. 5:18 is the only text which gives specific instruction on the filling of the Holy Spirit. All other references are found in narrative portions of scripture explaining that other people were filled and we can learn from those examples. But Ephesians is special because it gives the church instruction about being filled. We are commanded to be filled which tells us that it is something we must do, that the choice to be filled is an act of our will, that we can choose not to be filled, that we can be filled over and over again, and that if we are not filled everything we do is of no value but worthless.

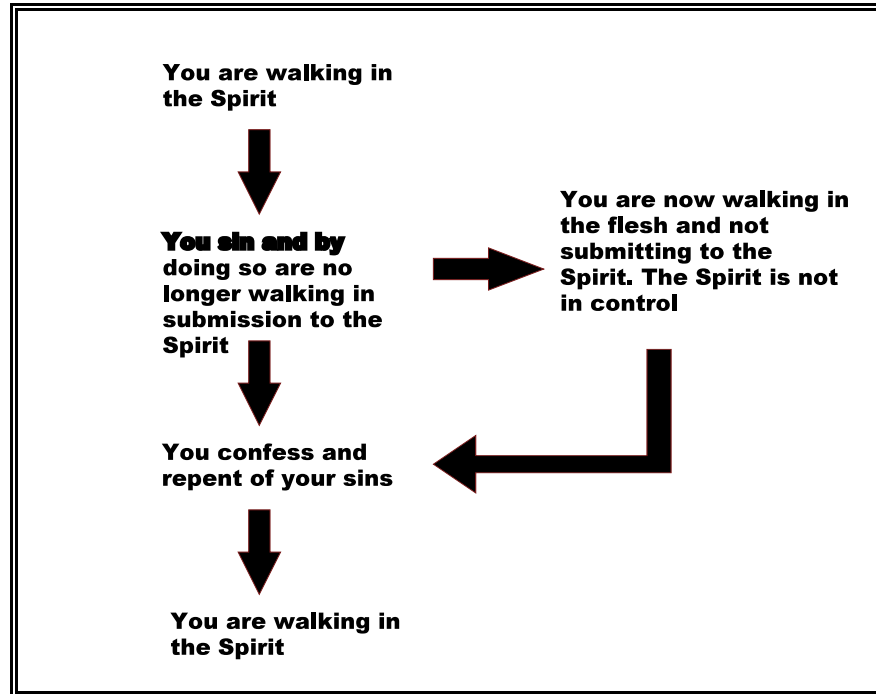
IV. **ERRORS CONCERNING BEING FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT**

- A. Error – We must ask to be filled with the Holy Spirit in prayer.
- B. Error – You need to have someone lay hands on you in order to be filled with the Holy Spirit.
- C. Error – We are filled with the Spirit when the Spirit takes total control of us from within, like demon possession.
- D. Error – Being filled with the Spirit is to tap into an impersonal power source.
- E. Error – Being filled with the Spirit is a one time act that happens at conversion.
- F. Error – Being filled with the Spirit happens when you speak in tongues.
- G. Error – Being filled with the Spirit is to receive the Spirit.
- H. Error – Being filled with the Spirit is to receive a second blessing of the Spirit.
- I. Error – Being filled with the Spirit is an emotional feeling of being right with God.
- J. Error – Being filled with the Spirit is a state of sinless perfection.
- K. Error – If a Christian ever stops being filled with the Holy Spirit they lose their salvation.

V. **APPLICATION OF BEING FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT**

- A. You are commanded and must volitionally act to obey the command to be filled with the Spirit. This means that the filling of the Spirit, as mentioned in **Eph. 5:18**, is the result of our having our sins confessed and walking in obedience to the Word of God.
- B. You cannot be living in sin and be filled with the Spirit at the same time. Sin halts the work of the Spirit in your life.
- C. You must have **all** your sins confessed if you want to be filled with the Spirit.
- D. You must seek to obey God and have a proper heart attitude to be filled with the Spirit.
- E. You must train yourself and cultivate an attitude of continual dependence on the Holy Spirit and learn to confess your sins quickly when you commit them so that you will be filled with the Holy Spirit.
- F. You can know if you are filled with the Spirit if you are:

1. Displaying the fruit of the Spirit or Christ likeness (**Gal. 5:22-25**).
2. And/or speaking to one another in Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.
3. And/or if you are continually giving thanks to God.
4. And/or if you have an attitude of humble submission to others.



When you are right with God, have your sins confessed, and rely on God's strength, the Holy Spirit fills your cup.



When you commit sin, which is contrary to the Spirit, and do not confess and repent of your sin, you are no longer in submission to the Spirit. You are no longer filled with the Spirit.

