
Spirit-filled Thanksgiving

As Paul continues his teaching on how to live the Christian life, we come to the third of three contrasts discussed in Ephesians 5:15-21.

Ephesians 5:18-21

18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, **19** addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, **20** giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, **21** submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Here Paul reminds us that in order to follow Christ we must be filled with God's Spirit. He contrasts this infilling with the practice of drunkenness: when drunk we are out of control, dulled in our moral inhibitions, intensely selfish, and more inclined to immoral behavior; on the other hand, when we are filled with the Spirit, we are under God's control, thinking more clearly, and more inclined to good deeds and usefulness. This is why God commands all of us continually to be filled with the Spirit.

How are we filled with the Spirit? By asking in humble acknowledgement of our need and faith in His willingness to bless. See Luke 11:13. We receive the infilling of the Spirit just like we receive the work of Jesus on our behalf—simply by asking in faith.

What are the evidences of our being filled with the Spirit? Paul gives us five participles that describe the Spirit-filled life: addressing (speaking), singing, making melody, giving thanks, and submitting. We can consider these in three categories:

I. We speak to one another (v.19a)

When filled with the Spirit, we become spokespersons for God's grace. There is even a lyrical quality to our lives and our conversations. We are told by Luke in the Book of Acts 10 times that various individuals are empowered by the Spirit, and in every case they become witnesses of Christ. See Acts 1:8. When we come to worship in the sanctuary, many of our hymns are actually sung to one another to encourage us to praise and serve the Lord.

II. We sing to the Lord (vv.19b, 20)

The Spirit's purpose is to conform us to Christ and to enable us to exalt Him; therefore, when we are filled with God's Spirit we sing to the Lord. Notice three important observations:

- a. **We sing with our hearts**
- b. **We sing with continual, unconditional thanksgiving**
- c. **We sing in the name of Jesus**

III. We submit to proper human authority (v.21)

In 5:22-6:4, Paul describes the relationships where submission is necessary, but here he focuses on the grand motive for our submission: our reverence ("fear," literally) for Jesus Christ. We submit to one another in various relationships in order to honor Him.

Discussion Questions

1. What does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit? Why does Paul raise this topic at this point in his letter?
2. Why are we commanded not to be drunk with wine?
3. What are some ways in which we can faithfully apply the instruction to address one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs? Why is this important?
4. What does Paul mean by singing to the Lord with your heart?
5. Why can we be thankful when difficult things happen in our lives?
6. Why is Ephesians 5:21 so difficult for us to obey?

Going Deeper

1. Why are you not experiencing the fullness of the Spirit in your life?
2. How does your worship life need to change in order to conform to 5:19, 20?