

Be Being Filled with the Holy Spirit

Ephesians 5:1-21

In this fifth chapter of Ephesians, Paul clearly tackles the question of living out the very life of God 24/7. When we seek to follow Jesus and be Church we have to be sharing and demonstrating His Life or else we are building spiritual castles in the sand. So Paul encourages us to look at the conditions of our life - spiritual living conditions, which can influence us just as much as our physical living conditions. He paints a picture of two houses:

Within the first house there is falsehood (4:25), Anger (4:26), Theft (4:28), Evil Talk (4:29), Bitterness (4:31), Impurity (5:3), Fornication (5:3), Covetousness (5:3), Silly Talk (5:4), Filthiness (5:4), Unwise (5:15), Foolish (5:17), Drunk (5:18).

Within the second house there is Truth (4:25), Kind (4:32), Tender-hearted (4:32), Forgiving (4:32), Love (5:2), Wise (5:15), Filled with the Spirit (5:18), Singing (5:19), & Giving Thanks (5:20).

The question for you and me this morning is: where would you choose to live and more importantly where are you living?

When the Empire Exhibition was held in Johannesburg many years ago, the people present on the first night had a great disappointment. It had been announced that a 3000-foot beam of light, lit by a 14m candlepower beacon, would be thrown into the sky. The beam was intended to be visible for a hundred miles. No one saw it. The engineers who erected the tower of light had forgotten to calculate one thing - the pure Johannesburg climate. The beam of light was invisible because there was no humidity, no dust, and no cloud for it to be reflected against, and light if it strikes no object, is always invisible. Jesus is the most powerful light that has ever shone on this Planet; the beams of His light are capable of reaching the ends of the earth. Yet even this Light of the World is

invisible unless it strikes an object - unless it is caught and reflected in consecrated lives.

This amazing New Man Jesus (Paul is describing) has only one way of testimony and that is through every dearly loved child of God imitating Him: His life, His Voice, His Actions, His Gracious Presence for that's what it means for you and I to be witnesses to Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit. (For Imitators/Role Models are important and that's why Hebrews 13:7 tells us to imitate Christian Leaders and 6:12 to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.)

So as Christians we are called to walk in the sacrificial love of Jesus (Grace!), the complete opposite to the corrupt life and self-centredness of the world. The Old Man says Paul - Mr Disobedience and his sons, have no spiritual inheritance in Christ. Don't be fooled; such behaviour leads to hell, says Paul. Remember what you were and what you now are (Once Darkness, Now Light v 8). The New Man says Paul is full of moral and spiritual light (1 John 1:5-7) and such life enables the fruit of the spirit to grow, producing a church of convincing goodness. Such a church exposes evil for what it is and points towards the redemption of society. So is St Andrews known for its oddness or its goodness? If the life of a church is readable it should read Jesus. A Donut (Do Not) church has a hole in the middle: called good works (prepared in advance for them to do).

So what can we do?

Paul exalts us in three areas:

1. Find out what Pleases the Lord (v10-14) Greek: Dokimazo = Test. Discern, approve (Test Everything 1 Thess. 5:21). Living in the Light: openness and transparency, living joyfully in the presence of Christ, with nothing to hide or fear. What pleases Him? **Unity** (John 17:20f so Canterbury may believe), **Faith** (Luke 18:8 will Son of Man find faith in Canterbury?), **Fruitfulness** (Matthew 7:20 by their fruits you shall know them

in Canterbury). What displeases Him? Unfruitful works of darkness (unproductive, barren). & What is the loving thing to do? Expose them! 'Show them up for what they are' (NEB). Light will always expose darkness. Indeed there is a double value of a Christian exposing evil: **Firstly**, anything exposed to the light becomes visible! This is always good! For darkness hides the ugly realities of evil; the light makes them visible. Then evil is seen for what it is without any possibility of concealment or subterfuge & **secondly**, anything that becomes visible becomes light! It actually transforms what it illuminates into light. In other words, Christians who live a righteous life thereby restrain and reform evildoers, yes and even contribute to their conversion (v8 over again!). JBP "It is possible (after all it happened to you) for light to turn the thing it shines upon into light." Now exposure sounds 'negative', showing people up for what they are, judgemental, condemning and it is that. But the Light which exposes has positive evangelistic power (light of one soul making another light) which brings the person to see the ugliness of evil, convicts them of sin, and gifts them a penitent faith in Jesus.

2. Redeem the Time! (v15-17) Assumption here is that Christians are wise (Greek: Siphoi) not fools! Christian wisdom is practical wisdom: it teaches us how to behave! We are no, longer governed by world, flesh and devil (2:1-3) nor are we Pagans (4:17), instead we are worthy of God's Call (4:1), in love with Christ (5:1), and living as children of light (5:8). So we need be careful how we walk/live: "Be most careful then how you conduct yourselves: like sensible men, not like simpletons'. (NEB) So what are the marks of wise people who take discipleship seriously? (a) **Wise people make the most of their time** (GK Exagorazo = redeem or buy back / GK Kairos = time = every passing opportunity. 60 mins/ 24 hours we all have the same! (b) **Wise people discern the will of God**. Wilfulness is folly, wisdom is to be found in God's will: not my will but

yours be done. (General will in scripture/ particular will thro word/ prayer/ submission).

3. Be Filled with the Spirit (v18-21) what has Paul told us thus far? We are to be: Sealed with the Holy Spirit (1:13), Must not grieve the Holy Spirit (4:30), Keep in step with the Spirit (Gal.5: 25). There is no greater secret of holiness than being filled with Him whose very nature and name is holy! So don't get drunk says Paul, be filled with Spirit (imperatives: Christian Duty): result (four present participles) speaking, thanking, singing, submitting (consequence of spiritual condition). It's all a question of being under the influence of what: Drunk = Alcohol, Spirit-filled Christian = Power of the Holy Spirit. There the comparison ends and the contrast starts! Being filled with the Spirit is not a kind of spiritual inebriation in which we lose control of ourselves. Self-control is the final quality in the list of fruit in Galatians 5: we do not lose control we gain it! Wine-Alcohol = depressant not a stimulant: it depresses highest centres of all in the brain. Holy Spirit = Stimulant. He stimulates our every faculty (mind/intellect/heart/will). Drunkenness leads to debauchery (wild, dissolute uncontrolled actions, behave like animals) whereas being filled with the Spirit makes us more human for He makes us like Christ! This results in (a) **Fellowship**: singing to one another in p,h, & ss (v19a) leading to mutual exhortation. (b) **Worship**: singing and making music (vocal and instrumental) to the Lord with all your heart (v19b)! It's to the Lord! **(Enlarge)** JBP "Making Music in your hearts for the ears of the Lord": an instruction from which unmusical people unable to sing in tune have always derived much comfort: silent worship (inwardly joyful and melodious). (c) **Gratitude**: always and for everything give thanks in the name of our LJC to God the Father. A Call to thanksgiving (Colossians 3:15-17 1 Thess. 5:18). A Grumbling spirit is not compatible with the Holy Spirit (besetting sin of Israel). The Spirit Filled believer is full of thanksgiving not complaining. The Trinity informs and directs

our devotion: Filled with the Spirit, giving thanks to God the Father, in the name of Jesus. (d) **Submission**: Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ (v21). This is entirely dependent on the command to go on being filled with the Spirit: so are we filled? (Aggressive, brash, self-assertive v displaying the meekness & gentleness of Christ and submitting).

So Spirit-filled believers will love God and love each other, which is hardly surprising since the first fruit of the Spirit is love. All 4 (**Fellowship, Worship, Gratitude & Submission**) depend on command to "be filled with the Spirit".

It's not a tentative proposal but an authoritative command: obligatory not optional. It's addressed to the whole Christian community. None of us is to get drunk: all of us are to be spirit-filled, not an elitist privilege but available to all God's people. NEB "Let the Spirit fill you": no technique to learn, no formula to recite. Its essential that penitent turns from what grieves the Holy Spirit and open themselves to Him. A parallel passage in Col.3:16 reads "let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly" Never separate word and spirit. Obey Word/Surrender to Spirit are virtually identical. Go on being filled with the Spirit (John 2:7 Aorist: fill the jars with water: once but here it present imperative!!) not a once for all experience which we can never lose but a privilege to be renewed continuously by continuous believing and obedient appropriation. Sealed once and for all: we need to be filled and go on being filled...

So to the Defeated: Paul would say! Be filled with the Spirit, and He will give you a new love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness and self-control.

And to the Complacent: Go on being filled with the Spirit. Thank God for what He has given you thus far. But do not say you have arrived. For there is much much much more yet to come!!

As Christians we choose the Light of the World: because of that we can see where we are going, avoid obstacles, and see

who we are journeying towards: the Darkness disperser: even
Jesus our Lord.

Pastor David

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