

THE SPIRIT FILLED LIFE

In Ephesians 5:18, God says through the inspired Paul, "Be not drunk with wine but be filled with the Spirit". In this short text we have:--

- I. A Positive Command to be Obeyed
- II. A Precious Privilege to be Enjoyed
- III. A Plenteous Power to be Utilized

In our consideration of this text let us note----

I. A Positive Command To Be Obeyed

It is an imperative to every believer to be filled with the Spirit. This command necessitates our knowing what is meant by being filled with the Spirit. God is one true and living God revealing Himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We become children of God the Father by faith in God the Son and by the regeneration of God the Spirit. There are three things that the Holy Spirit seeks to do with every unbeliever----

- 1. To convince him of sin--John 16:7
- 2. To convince him of righteousness, that is, his need of a righteousness which he himself does not have and cannot provide. John 16:8
- 3. To convince him of judgment--John 16:9

The Holy Spirit regenerates lost people by leading them to Christ and then He abides with them as believers. There are likewise three things at least that He seeks to do for every believer----

- 1. To cleanse him from sin
- 2. To guide him in service
- 3. To empower him for spiritual tasks

He wants to fill and endow all believers with special privileges and powers if they will only permit Him. So being filled with the Spirit means that every nook and corner of one's being is occupied by the Holy Spirit. It means that every faculty and power is brought into loving subjection to the Holy Spirit. It means that appetite and ambition are controlled by the Holy Spirit. It means that the Christian is completely filled, possessed, dominated, mastered, controlled, directed, and guided by the Holy Spirit. Let it be clearly understood that this kind of a Christian life is a positive command of Almighty God. They who fail to live it are falling short of God's expectations of them.

There is both a negative and positive command in this text. The negative part says, "Be not drunk with wine". Is God just and right in expecting His children to obey this command? Is it a sin to disobey this command? Is it a good command or not? It is necessary that every Christian beware of this insidious vice and tremendous sin of intemperance. The enormity of this sin can be readily seen when we enumerate a few of the things that drunkenness does----

- 1. It dishonours the law of God
- 2. It is an ungrateful abuse of God's bounty
- 3. It distrubs the reason of man
- 4. It injures the health of the body
- 5. It endangers the soul--corrupting and debauching all its faculties.
- 6. It divests man of his native dignity and sinks him below the brutes.
- 7. It consumes men's substance
- 8. It destroys conscience

9. It generates other vices such as impure lustings, angry passions, profane language, and insolent manners.
10. It has most lamentable effects on families
 - (1) Subverts order and government
 - (2) Discourages devotion
 - (3) Destroys domestic peace and tranquillity
 - (4) Brings family distress
11. It is in open violation of the Scripture commands
12. It keeps souls out of the kingdom of God.

But the question may be asked, why it is that the writer here places the positive part of this command alongside the negative part which says, "Be not drunk with wine". The answer to this question is found in this. Men say they drink because they have and appetite for drink and it exhilarates them, and stimulates their physical activities at least temporarily.

Now this text says to those seeking such results, "You do not need to go on in drinking for exhilaration or to be brightened and quickened. Just be filled with the Holy Spirit and you will get all these good results which you seek with none of the bad which comes with drunkenness." So far as inward conditions, final results and godward attitudes are concerned, being drunk and being filled with the Holy Spirit are as far apart as heaven and hell. This command means that we are to seek to be filled in our understandings, in our memories, in our consciences, in our wills, and in our affections with the Holy Spirit. We should be filled with Him because that is our spiritual birthright; that is the way whereby we overcome our temptations; and that is the means whereby we are endued with power for service. Our need as followers of Christ at this present moment is power and not pep or spirituality and not spizzerinktum. Being filled with the Spirit is not only a positive command to be obeyed but also----

II. A Precious Privilege to be Enjoyed

It is a great privilege and blessing to any Christian to be filled with the Spirit. It means victory in the daily life, victory over temptations, victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil, and victory in Christian service to be filled with the Spirit. If every Christian who is not filled with the Spirit only knew the joy and blessing and power which he is missing, he would go across the country if needs be, to get it. If he only knew what heavenly exhilaration, what sublime delights, what holy reveries, there are in being filled with the Spirit, he would seek it on his knees until it is found. What a tragedy that so many believers are content to live in the dark valleys when they might live on the glorious mountains. What a pity that thousands are content to crawl when they might fly.

The expression "filled with the Spirit" shows there to be a sufficiency in the blessed Spirit, and His influence, to fill our souls, to supply all our wants, to satisfy our desires, and help our infirmities. We are in darkness and need illumination, instruction and direction; He is the Spirit of light, truth and wisdom.

The personal fruits or blessings accruing from being filled with the Spirit are many and varied. Among them are:---

1. Thankfulness for all things

"Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ." Eph. 5:20

The heart which is filled with the Spirit brims over with thankfulness. Giving thanks for our many mercies both re-

ceived and expected. The manner in which this thankfulness is shown is by--

- (1) Humble confession of our unworthiness
- (2) Humble acknowledgement of His mercies
- (3) Improving everything to His glory
- (4) Walking in a well-pleasing manner before Him

2. Love

"The fruit of the Spirit is love." Gal. 5:22

On every branch and twig of the Christian life there is found this red and luscious fruit of love. It is the most delicate and tender and the sweetest of all fruits. It cannot be imitated or duplicated. It grows to its full only on one tree, the Spirit filled life. If your heart is cold, unaffectionate, and unsympathetic, then the flood tide of God's Spirit needs to come in. Every phase of life should be a phase of love. Peace is love resting, Bible study is love reading its love letters. Prayer is love keeping tryst. Conflict with sin is love jealously fighting for its lover. Sympathy is love tenderly feeling. Enthusiasm is love conquering. Hope is love expecting. Faithfulness is love sticking fast. Humility is love taking its true place. Modesty is love keeping out of sight. Soul winning is love pleading.

3. Joy

God wants His children to be happy. If they are filled with His Spirit they will be full of joy. No circumstance or condition of life can mar that joy then. It is dependent upon the inward state and not upon the outward circumstance. There are those unhappy souls who will continue so, as long as they are what they are. Give them everything that earth can furnish for physical comfort and intellectual gratification, and they will be unhappy still. On the other hand there are those souls that refuse absolutely to be unhappy, no matter what circumstance press upon them because they are filled with God and satisfied with Christ. The Lord is their Shepherd so they do not want, not even for joy.

4. Peace

"The peace of God which passeth all understanding, shall guard your heart and thoughts in Christ Jesus."

It is God's peace. No storm can disturb it, no sorrow can sweep it away, no sin can corrode it. It is sweet peace, the gift of God's love. What a depth of sweetness, what serene gladness, what a variety of inspiration there must be in that One Spirit, whence all our innocent and noble excitements spring.

The difference between a Spirit filled Christian and the ordinary one is the difference between a bubbling spring and a dry pump. Some Christians have to be primed and pumped and pleaded with and begged to get any service out of them. Even then it is cold and heartless and indifferent. Others are just bubbling over with loving, joyful, devoted service. They just must do something for their Master and they will find something to do for Him, whether put on a prominent committee or not. The spirit filled Christian can be counted on always. His work may be obscure and unnoticed of the world, but that matters not to him, so long as he is conscious of doing Christ's will and of receiving the Divine approval.

Here is a little story worth telling and remembering: Sir Michael Costa was having a rehearsal of a great number of performer's and hundreds of splendid voices. As the might chorus rang out, with the

thunder of organ, the roll of drums, the clashing of cymbals, and the blast of horn, some young man played the piccolo far away up in some obscure corner, said to himself, "In all this din the sound of my piccolo cannot be heard. It matters not if I cease to play", and he laid aside his instrument. Suddenly the great conductor stopped, flung up his hands for silence and when all was still he cried, "Where is the piccolo?" His quick ear had missed the piccolo and all was spoiled.

The lesson my friend is do thy part with all thy might. Little thou mayest be, insignificant and hidden, and yet God seeks thy praise. He listens for it and all the music of this great universe is made richer and sweeter because thou givest him what thou canst and art faithful and laborious. To be filled with the Spirit is not only desirable and attainable through faith in Christ, prayer and obedience, but is also:---

III. A Plenteous Power To be Utilized

When we surrender our sins and believe we receive the Holy Spirit. When we surrender our sins and believe we are filled with the Holy Spirit. At conversion the Spirit enters; at surrender the Spirit, already entered, takes full possession. All the work of filling, teaching, leading, guiding, endowing, empowering, of the believer by the Spirit is intended to enable the believer to witness for Christ. Many church members plod wearily along at their irksome and sometimes irritating tasks. This is because they are working in the energy of the flesh instead of in the power of the Spirit's Divine provision, abundant, plenteous, and sufficient, has been made all that they require for the doing of God's work. This story somewhat illustrates God's attitude toward the believer.

"Is God Waiting"---McConkey

If we would only tap the resources of that inexhaustible reservoir we would find powers released to us of which we have never dreamed,-- and then we could accomplish superhuman exploits of faith. With our lives spirit filled we can keep our souls holy, and our bodies chaste, and we would be rendered fit for the service of God on earth and meet for the fruition and enjoyment of God in heaven. To be filled with the spirit is:---

1. A positive command to be obeyed
2. A precious privilege to be enjoyed
3. A plenteous power to be utilized

Holy Father; fill us with the Holy Spirit.