## Opening Words

Paul gives us four descriptions of what it means to be filled with the Spirit of God. Today we will learn what they are to practice them!

## 181 Eph Live Obediently by the Spirit 3

If God is for us, who can be against us? If the Spirit of God dwells in us, then we have the incentive and the power to overcome sin in our lives, to live as obedient children, and to be a bright light to the darkness of the pagan world.

The text we have been looking at is Ephesians 5:18-21 where Paul commands us to be filled, or to fill ourselves with the Spirit of God. We have seen that the coming of the Spirit to dwell in his people was the great goal for which God longed, was to be the work of the Messiah, and is now the experience of all God's people.

Paul tells the believers in Ephesus, "don't get drunk with wine. That will dissipate and unravel your life. But do be filled with the Spirit of God." Then, Paul gives four practical ways we can be filled up with God's Spirit which then become four evidences that God really has first place in our lives.

I must say again that as I look at these four practical ways, I must smile. We want to see something spectacular or we think the filling of the Spirit must look a certain way. Usually, these are nothing but spiritual fantasies and often they are about us and our self-glory rather than being about Christ. Today, let's take a close look at how Paul describes a Spirit-filled Christian. I will read the text, then I will comment on Paul's statement.

> 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.

Paul gives us four descriptions. A Spirit filled Christian will speak a certain way to others, will sing and make melody in the heart, will have a thankful spirit, and will practice submission to his proper authorities.

The first evidence of a man or woman filled with God's Spirit can be seen in the way he speaks to his fellow Christians. Paul says, "speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." Paul has had a lot to say, already, about our speech. Remember some of his statements: 1) in 4:25 we are to lay aside the lie and speak truth to one another, 2) in 4:29 we are to keep unwholesome speech far from us but learn to speak in an edifying way, 3) in 4:31 we are to put away clamor and slander, 4) and in 5:3 we are to put away coarse jesting and instead be thankful. Paul, here, tells us that our speech, our proper edifying speech is a mark of being Spirit-filled.

I had a lot of growing up years as a young man in my association of churches where we place a high quality on sharing what we were learning in God's word. It was common to talk to one another

about what we had read or were reading in our daily devotions. And so, to have someone come up and say, "What did you get out of the Word this morning?" was a frequent question we heard. We did this because we believed that if we spoke to another, explaining what we were learning, we would edify the other person and would reinforce it in our lives. And we also did it because of this passage where Paul tells us to talk to one another in a spiritual way.

Paul also has in mind that when we gather in worship, we gather to speak to one another as well as to worship the Lord. Have you noticed how some Christian songs are words to one another? Think of the great hymn, "We're Marching to Zion," by Isaac Watts. That hymn is an exhortation to our fellow believers to come to the throne of God and worship. "Come, we that love the Lord and let our joys be known. Join in a song of sweet accord, join in a song of sweet accord and thus surround the throne." And so, while some songs are directly to God, many are to one another to urge us to live for the Lord. When we sing such songs, we are doing just that. Many times, in church when we are singing those kinds of songs I have purposely, if I was sitting up front, turned around and looked at the audience as I was singing because I knew I was exhorting them through my singing.

Let me also try to make a distinction among the words psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. A psalm of course would be a song from the Book of Psalms using the wording there for our text in singing. A hymn takes the great theology of the Christian faith and creates songs about the mighty works of God for us. Rather than using the words of Scripture, it uses the words of man but in a proper way as it celebrates the mighty deeds of God. A spiritual song is a simpler work, maybe like a modern chorus where we focus on one aspect of God's glory or His works.

There are a variety of ways of singing to the Lord and to one another. But the important truth behind all this is that our music is to be an indication that we are filled with the Spirit. How sad that in our day we have experienced what many call, "Worship Wars," where people squabble about the style of music. Yes, a lot of modern music can be shallow and the style unedifying, but not all of it. Let's let God's Spirit use the music to speak to one another and be open to fresh ways the Spirit wants to work today through our music.

Second, we are to sing and make melody in our hearts to the Lord. The great thing about this phrase is that there is no requirement that we must have a good voice. If we are doing it from the heart for the Lord, it is acceptable to him. And so, let's sing to the Lord. Let's make melody in our hearts to him. Our God is the God of music. Our God himself is a singer. Hebrews 2:12 tells us that Jesus is among the congregation singing praises to his Father. Let's join him in worshipping the Father. And let this be a reminder that when we gather for worship, we are gathering primarily for God.

I told you in a previous message that in my most recent church there was a debate. Some wanted church to be for the lost. They were the evangelists of course. Some wanted our Sunday church service to be for the believer. They were the pastor-teachers of course! But as we talked it through, one of the things that came out very clearly is that church, is, first, for the Lord! We are there first for him to honor him, to sing his praise, and to glorify him.

As we think of putting Paul's exhortation into practice, let's remember that worship is not something we do only for an hour a week with others. Worship is something we can do, should do,

every day wherever we are. Remember what Jesus said to the woman at the well? She asked a religious question – "Where should people worship? Here in Mt. Gerizim or there in Mt. Zion?" Jesus told her that her question was irrelevant because worship was not confined to one location or time. Worship was to be unlimited in time and space. Worship could take place anytime, anywhere if it was done from the heart and in the truth. And so, a mark that a man is filled with the Spirit of God is that whether alone, with a few, or with the great congregation, he is singing and making melody with his heart to the Lord.

Here is the third mark of the Spirit. Paul said, "always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father." Now, should we give thanks for all things, literally? I know some would say yes, but that is hard to accept. I just went to the funeral of the wife of a very good friend. Should I give thanks that his wife died? How could I go up to him and say, "I'm so thankful your wife died!" That would be rude and insensitive. I can be glad she is with the Lord. I can be thankful that God is comforting the family. But I must weep with those who weep.

What about someone who has been abused? Can we say, "I am so thankful you have been abused!" That would be a turn off. I think what Paul has in mind here is that we need to be alert to all the things for which we should be grateful. We are grateful for some things, but we miss many things for which we should be grateful, and Paul is telling us in this phrase that the mark of a Spirit filled man is that he is a grateful person and he is always thankful to God and others for the many benefits he receives in life. A self-centered person is usually not thankful but is a complainer or has an entitlement attitude. God wants us to remember that everything we have is because it has first come from him. Even if we work hard to attain to certain privileges in life and to gain certain possessions, God is the one who gave us the strength to do that and others have helped us in life to get to the place where we can receive such benefits. The Spirit of God fills us to recognize this and to be thankful for all these things in life.

Finally, Paul gives one more mark of the Spirit, and this is such a key one. He says, "submitting to one another in the fear of Christ." Wow! A mark of the Spirit of God having control over us is that we know how to submit to others with a good attitude. That is such a key area because a lot of us don't want to submit. A lot of us want to be in charge. A lot of us want to be the leader. A lot of us don't want to listen to counsel. We want to do things our way. But that is not the way of Christ. Christ said the greatest is the one who serves, the one who is the least, the one who is the youngest. This was the Spirit of Christ. He submitted himself fully and faithfully to his Father. He wishes us to follow him in this area. We can know a man is a man of God, when we see a spirit of humility in him.

These are the marks of a Spirit filled Christian – speaking to one another in a spiritual way to urge one another on, singing to the Lord, being thankful for all things, and submitting to one another. Brothers and sisters, let's fill ourselves up with this kind of Spirit. Let's fill ourselves up with the Holy Spirit of God.