

Series: Unsearchable Riches in Christ (Ephesians)

Text: Ephesians 5:18-21

Message #25 (March 11, 2007)

IN AND OUT OF CONTROL

Introduction

1. Most of us have seen someone who was intoxicated. Although it is pathetic to watch and often tragic to that person and that person's family, it can, at the moment, be amusing to watch. The first time I ever remember seeing someone who was drunk, I was 11 or 12. My Dad took me to a stock car race at the county fairgrounds. The guy was sitting about two rows ahead of us and I was fascinated by his strange behavior. With slurred speech he would stand up and scream, "Go get 'em Parnelli." The more people laughed, the more animated he became. As he staggered around, he would lay his cigarette on the bleachers, take another drink and stand up and shout again. At one point he sat on his cigarette, after a little while he felt the heat and then began to holler, "Medic! Medic!" This guy may have been a wonderful, well-mannered gentleman for all I know, but when the alcohol took over, his actions and speech were altered.
2. It is interesting that the Spirit of God would prompt Paul to use this illustration to describe the filling of the Holy Spirit. We are told not to get drunk or be filled with wine – because that leads to debauchery (excessive, outrageous conduct), but rather we are to be filled with the Holy Spirit. When we are filled with the Spirit, we are in control and when we are not filled with the Spirit, we are out of control. Having stated that, what does it all mean?
3. Remember that we have been learning about the worthy walk. The worthy walk is a walk in unity, a walk in purity, a walk in love and light, a walk in wisdom. Today we learn that the worthy walk is a controlled walk – a walk controlled by the Holy Spirit of God. What does it mean to be controlled (filled) by the Holy Spirit and if I am filled with the Spirit, what can I expect my life to look like? Let's see if we can understand.

I. THE COMMAND – BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT

A. The contrast with wine

1. There was nothing quite as common in Paul's day as drunkenness. There was actually

the belief that wine could raise the level of consciousness. Drunkenness was intentionally used in the worship of the god Dionysius.

2. When a person becomes intoxicated, often the speech is affected, balance and thus one's walk is affected, inhibitions are often lessened, outlook and perception are impacted.
3. Drunkenness will often lead to riotous living. The word Paul picked carries the idea of excessive, unrestrained living. It is the same word used to describe the prodigal son in Jesus' parable in Luke 15. The son wasted all of his inheritance on "riotous living." (The word is actually "save" with a negative prefix. Rather than saving, protecting, it is a life that is squandered). When a person gets drunk it will often lead to prodigality. So Paul says, don't get drunk on wine, which leads to a life out of control. Rather be filled with the Spirit, which leads to a life that is under God's control! And what does it mean to be filled with the Spirit?

B. The command itself

1. What the command does not mean
 - a. Being filled is not the same as being "indwelt by the Spirit." When we trust Christ as Savior, the Holy Spirit takes up residence in us. Paul indicated that not to have the Holy Spirit is to be outside of Christ – an unbeliever (Romans 8:). It is possible (and happens all the time) that a person is indwelt with the Holy Spirit but is not at any given moment controlled by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit's indwelling is a one-time occurrence. The filling of the Holy Spirit is a repeatable condition. In other words, a believer is always indwelt by the Holy Spirit, but may not be under the control of the Holy Spirit.
 - b. Being filled is not the same as being "baptized in the Spirit." Although there is some controversy here, I believe that baptism in (with or by) the Holy Spirit, like indwelling, is a one-time occurrence that happens at the time of conversion. Believers are placed into the Body of Christ. Never are we commanded to be baptized in (with or by) the Holy Spirit. That makes sense, because it is not something we do. Baptism by the Holy Spirit is automatic for the one who trusts Christ.

2. What the command does mean

- a. The term is plural, referring to all believers – All believers ought to be filled with the Holy Spirit.
- b. The term is present tense implying a need to continue being filled with the Spirit. We are commanded to keep on being filled with the Holy Spirit.
- c. The term is in the passive voice suggesting that this is something that the Spirit does to us, not something we do.
- d. How the term was used in secular Greek (determining meaning by usage) Being filled does not speak of content or quantity (“I was filled with the Spirit yesterday, but today I am slightly low and need a refill”). The term was used in three ways: as in the wind filling the sails on a boat, moving it along; as salt permeating meat in terms of preservation and flavoring; in terms of control as in “he was filled with sorrow, anger, grief, etc.” If we were to put these three concepts together, we would have a reasonable definition of what it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit. **To be filled with the Holy Spirit is to be moved by, permeated and controlled by the Spirit of God.**

3. How we can be filled with the Holy Spirit

- a. Being filled with the Holy Spirit was not intended to be an optional consideration for the believer. It is a command.
- b. Since the command involves control, there needs to be a surrender of our wills, our bodies, etc., to Him. I don't really need to ask Him to fill me. I just need to surrender to Him so that He controls my life.
- c. Being controlled by the Holy Spirit is remarkably similar to being obedient to the Word of God. Compare Colossians 3:16. Paul wrote Ephesians and Colossians at the same general time period (while he was in a Roman prison). The two letters have similar themes, covering similar ground. The consequences that result from being filled with the Spirit are the same as the consequences that result from being indwelt by the Word. If one does not spend time in the Word of God, that one will not be controlled by the Spirit of God.
- d. Being controlled by the Holy Spirit is being aware of His presence. (Suppose you

have a guest in your home. You remind your family that there is a guest present so you take care how you live, what you leave lying around, how loud you talk, etc. Remembering who is present affects our behavior. So it is with the Holy Spirit). John MacArthur illustrated this truth with the life of Peter. When Peter was in Jesus' presence, he did the miraculous (walked on water), he said the miraculous ("You are the Christ...") and had miraculous courage (as in the garden when he drew the sword on the mob). When Peter was separated from Christ (at His trials) he said the wrong things, did the wrong things and was a coward. However, after Jesus' ascension, when Peter was filled with the Spirit, he once again said the miraculous (sermon at Pentecost), did the miraculous (healed the lame beggar) and had miraculous courage ("We must obey God rather than men"). In other words, if we live as if we were in the very presence of Jesus, we are controlled by the Holy Spirit.

- e. Being controlled by the Holy Spirit is probably not an all or nothing proposition. Years ago Campus Crusade for Christ (Bill Bright) wrote a pamphlet called "The Four Spiritual Laws." 2.5 billion pamphlets have been printed. It was a tool for witnessing to unbelievers. If you were already a believer you would be given the pamphlet, "Have You Made the Wonderful Discovery of the Spirit-filled Life?" I remember looking that over years ago and I went on line this week and checked it out again to be sure.. There was a circle that represented our lives. Inside the circle was a throne. There was a cross representing Christ and S representing self. Several various size dots were inside the circle representing the various activities and involvements of our lives. When the Holy Spirit was in control, the picture showed Christ on the throne and self at the foot of the throne and everything in life (all of the dots) was in perfect order. When the Holy Spirit was not in control, the picture showed self on the throne and Christ at the foot of the throne and everything in life was in chaos. Both pictures would be shown with the question, "Which picture best represents your life?" I think the right answer for most believers is neither! If I get frustrated at someone and speak harshly at them, I am at that moment not being controlled by the Holy Spirit, but my entire life does not

crumble into chaos! On the other hand if I am frustrated with someone and I am tempted to speak harshly at them but I check my tongue and respond in a way that pleases God, I am at that moment controlled by His Spirit – but that does not suggest that every other area of my life is in perfect order! Being filled with the Holy Spirit is to be controlled by Him at any given moment in any given situation. It is doing, saying and thinking what pleases God as revealed to us in His Word. That is the way God wants us to respond! How do I know if I am filled (controlled by) with the Spirit?

II. THE CONSEQUENCES OF BEING FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT

A. One who is Spirit-filled has a song in his heart

1. Speaking (addressing one another)... This is a general word for sound – its earliest meaning was “chirp” and it included both noises made with voice and instrument. The sounds that will come from us are psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. It is difficult to make a certain distinction as to what Paul meant. Some would say that psalms are the Psalms in the OT, and hymns are NT songs of praise, and spiritual songs are songs with spiritual lyrics dwelling on various themes about God. When the Spirit is in control, we have a song, even in the dark of night. Remember the account of Paul and Silas in prison in Philippi? They had been severely beaten and were bound in stocks, and yet at midnight they were singing praises to God! They were filled with the Spirit.
2. Singing ... this would be with the voice
3. Making melody in one’s heart ... This may be reference to a musical instrument since the root word means to pluck. All of these (“addressing, singing, making melody”) originate from the heart. Presumably the song represents reflection on the work of Christ on our behalf! If you are filled with the Spirit, somewhere in your soul is a song. If you are not singing (quality does not matter – or volume) you are probably not controlled by the Spirit! Consider this for a moment. In Hebrews 2:12, Jesus is speaking, quoting Psalm 22:22 “I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise.” Could it be that Christ sings praises to the Father through His people as they sing with Spirit-filled lives? It is something to think

about and just might affect how we sing. If this is so, our singing is not only an expression of our worship, but it is used by the Lord Jesus to praise the Father! Half-hearted singing will not do! (Isn't it interesting that the first consequence of being filled with the Holy Spirit is not some mountain moving faith or some spectacular spiritual experience, but a heart that is full of song)!

B. One who is Spirit-filled has thanksgiving on his lips

1. Giving thanks all the time – We are all thankful sometimes for some things, but all the time for all things? I submit that we will not be able to give thanks all the time unless we are controlled by the Holy Spirit. When I find myself being thankful there is a good indication that at that point I am under the Holy Spirit's control.
2. Giving thanks in all things – Regardless of what happens, good or bad, I can be thankful that the events of my life are in the hands of a sovereign God. The key to thankfulness is humility. Pride keeps us from being thankful to God. (In pride, if we thank anyone, we thank ourselves! “Thank you God that I am not like that sinner over there...”). Anything we receive from the hand of God ought to be cause for joyful thanksgiving.
3. Giving thanks to the Father in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ – Never far from our hearts and minds should be our awareness of what Jesus Christ has done on our behalf. Just behind everything we do ought to be this awareness of His grace to us. John MacArthur tells the story of a city missionary in London who was called to an old tenement building where an elderly woman lay dying in the last stages of a terrible disease. The room was cold and basically empty. The woman lay on the floor. When the missionary asked her if there was anything he could do, she replied, “I have all I really need; I have Jesus Christ.” Deeply moved, the missionary went home and penned these words: *In the heart of London City, Mid the dwellings of the poor, These bright and golden words were uttered, “I have Christ. What want I more?” Spoken by a lonely woman dying on a garret floor, Having not one earthly comfort, “I have Christ. What want I more?”* Could we be so thankful? I think only if we are filled by the Spirit.

C. One who is Spirit-filled has submission in his attitude

1. Mutual submission – Mutual submission (submitting to one another) is controlled by the quality of humility. The word, submit, means to rank under. It is a military term. While it is true that God has placed some in various positions of authority, submission is still to be present. For we are all under the Master and thus should be submissive to Him. Husbands are to be head over their wives and wives are to submit to their own husbands but the husband is called upon to give himself to his wife, and to love her as Christ loved the church. That's submission. Parents are to be in authority over their children, but they are not to provoke them to anger – that involves the issue of submission. Submission is mutual. We submit to one another.
2. Measured submission – Our submission to one another is to be measured, “out of reverence for Christ.” In other words, because of my reverence to Christ, I will submit to others in humility, regarding them as more important than myself. That opens the way for me to serve them. I will not serve those whom I look down upon. I will expect them to serve me. But if I humble myself before others, I have opened the door to service. And such service pleases God. How can I be able to regard others this way? I can do this when the Holy Spirit is in control. For when He is in control, submission is a consequence.

Conclusion

1. I think we all want to be used by God. We desire that God would do His work through us. When something significant was accomplished for the glory of God in the pages of Bible, God used people who were controlled by His Spirit. If I am not controlled by His Spirit then I am being disobedient, and He will not use me for much of anything significant.
2. So, are we under the Spirit's control? Do the marks of His control show up in my life? Is there singing in my heart and thanksgiving on my lips and submission in my attitude? If these marks are absent, I am not under His control. It is time to yield to Him. May we submit our lives to God that He might fill us with His Spirit so that we might live for His glory.