

Discussion and reflection material on Being Filled with the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 5:8-21 (plus other texts)

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INTRO:

The following questions are intended to stimulate your own reflections on experience and biblical understanding.

- Do you agree that the Holy Spirit is actively at work in a person at their conversion?
- Do you agree we ought regularly experience a Spirit filled life?
- Do you agree that we ought walk in the Spirit and be open to the leading of the Holy Spirit in our daily lives?
- Do you agree that we ought to depend on the Holy Spirit's power to transform our lives so that we grow more and more Christ-like?
- Do you agree that we ought be open to fresh experiences of the Holy Spirit convicting us of sin and empowering us for living as disciples of Jesus Christ.
- AND do you agree that all of this work of the Spirit can and does happen during and post conversion?

Some answers to the above may be YES while some may be NO or UNSURE –

- 1. If you are discussing this material in a life group or gathering of other people, you may like to share together what your responses have been*
- 2. Specifically, are you able to recall specific events or circumstances in your own experience or biblical study that help explain your responses – share one of these with those in your group.*

What we know about Paul's experience of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 9:4ff – Paul (Saul) encounters Jesus on the road to Damascus

- Jesus challenges him (vs 6)
- He is converted and commissioned (Acts 26:15 ff)
- The Holy Spirit is given at conversion so he is filled or receives Spirit at this time
- Saul faithfully responds, blind though he is.

Acts 9:11 – Ananias talks with the Lord and responds – he goes to pray for Saul

- Ananias places his hands on Ananias and tells him why he has come (vs 17)
- That Saul might regain his sight
- That Saul would be filled with the Spirit (presumably again – it's a one off infilling for his new commission as opposed to the infilling Paul himself speaks of in Eph 5)

Acts 13:1-2 – the Holy Spirit calls Saul into service

- and they go on their way by the Holy Spirit (vs 4)
- Paul is filled afresh by the Holy Spirit – Aorist passive participle meaning this is a new or fresh 'state of inspiration'.

Acts 16:6-7 – the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus 'would not allow them to preach in Asia'.

Acts 18:9 – the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision –

- remember the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus so it is reasonable to interpret this as the Holy Spirit being the means of this vision.

Acts 20:22 – Paul is compelled by the Holy Spirit to go to Jerusalem.

- And in vs 23 Paul declares that in each city the Holy Spirit warns him about persecution.

The above are examples of the infilling work of the Holy Spirit in the life of Paul from the time of his conversion (his being 'born again') and throughout his missionary service. Mostly what is described is the one off infilling work of the Holy Spirit which Paul writes about in Ephesians 5 when he issues the command that believers ought not get drunk on wine but be filled (over and over again) so they grow into the disciple that God has called them to be and serve God in the mission of the Kingdom.

Digging deeper into Ephesians 5:8-21

- There is general encouragement to be light (8)
 - Note that we are no longer darkness; rather we are light.
 - We are not in the light but rather, because we are in Christ we are light.
 - We are therefore to live as children of the Light which means we are to display the 'fruit of the light consists of all goodness, righteousness and truth'
 - Look at Galatians 5:22 – what is being said here about being filled with the Spirit?

- Paul instructs us to look carefully at how you walk (15)
 - Not as unwise but as wise (15)
 - Don't be foolish but understand the Lord's will (17)
 - Discuss together what, in practical terms, the implications of the exhortation of verses 15-17 might mean for YOU – individually and as a church.

- There are two commands given by Paul to the Church
 - Don't get drunk on wine
 - Reflect on why Paul is giving this command –
 - Paul gives a strong command – don't walk life under the influence of wine.

 - Do be filled with and by the Spirit
 - Reflect on what this looks like and why Paul is giving this command.
 - A command – not a suggestion
 - Plural – for the whole church community
 - What are the implications of us seeing this command as something given to the whole church and not simply to individuals (obviously as individuals we d need to be filled)
 - Passive – Let Him (the Spirit) do the filling. It is always a work of God.
 - Present tense – WITH ongoing expectations. The impact of this way of writing the verb is to indicate that this 'being filled' is something that should happen over and over again.

Considerations:

Take some time to read over the following and then individually (or if in a group, together) consider what the Spirit of God is saying to you about the way you are walking as the light

1. Paul is commanding the believers to drink lots of the Spirit – be filled to overflowing with the Spirit.
 - a. Paul writes in 1 Cor 12:13 that we were all baptized by one Spirit and all were made to drink of one Spirit.
 - b. Jesus said, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’” Then John writes, “Now this he said about the *Spirit*.” (John 7:37-39)
 - c. And in Luke 11:13, Jesus said to his disciples, “If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, *how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!*”
2. God’s fullness becomes ours in Christ at the moment of our conversion.
 - a. We are instructed to actualise that fullness in our daily lives as we welcome the Spirits infilling in order that we might powerfully bear witness to Jesus and his Kingdom.
3. There are the four descriptors (descriptors that are dependent on the initial imperative.)
 - Speaking to yourselves – not yourself (that happens when you are filled with wine) – psalms, hymns spiritual songs. *Encourage one another with spoken words*
 - Singing to the Lord – *with all your heart/with all of you*
 - Giving thanks for *all we have in Christ Jesus*
 - Submitting to one another – *in reverence to the Lord*

Concluding reflections:

- Being filled with the Spirit and walking in and by the Spirit fosters the ongoing growth that is expected of us as disciples. (compare Gal 5:16-25)
- ALL this comes about as the Spirit of Jesus empowers us and transforms us into His likeness.

Do you want to be filled with the Spirit?

- Drink long, deep and constantly
- Pray and ask regularly
- Be open to the Spirit’s prompting
- Welcoming of the Spirit’s empowering.