

## Are You Full?

Ephesians 5:15-21

By [Mr. Bruce Stallings](#)

*July 21, 2013 – Evening Sermon*

We will be in Ephesians 5 for this study and we'll try to gain a deeper, more accurate understanding of one truth. I'm going to do a spoiler alert here. I get this from watching TV with my kids. A show will come on and one of my kids will say "Oh I love this show. This is where that guy gets killed at the end." Now why would you tell me that when that's the reason for watching the whole show? So here is my spoiler alert. Our time together in this study has one point and that is to gain an understanding, practically and specifically of what it means to be filled with the Spirit. If I were to say "be filled with the Spirit" would you know what to do? God says as a command to be filled with the Spirit.

The actual verse says (Ephesians 5:18) *[18] And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit...* As a little Baptist boy growing up we focused a lot more on the first half of that verse and I still don't know what debauchery means but I know it's bad. I've never actually used in a full complete sentence other than quoting this verse but debauchery can't be a good thing. So, it's don't do the bad thing but instead be filled with the Spirit and I said "Amen." I'll pray that you're filled with the Spirit and you'll pray I'm filled with the Spirit. We'll acknowledge when we're not filled with the Spirit by saying "I wasn't walking in the Spirit when I did that" or "I wasn't in the Spirit at that particular time" but if God has told us to be filled with the Spirit, would we know what to do? That perplexed me for years and so that is what we'll build our way up to in this study. What does it practically mean to be filled with the Spirit?

The way to understand any one verse is to keep it in context. There are two ways that I know of to effectively keep a passage of Scripture in appropriate context. One is to ask Harry Reeder. He lives in context so I can always ask him anything and he'll give me the historically context, the Biblical context, and every context that will keep it understood. He's not here so we'll do the next best thing which is the better thing (smile). We'll do a quick overview of the book of Ephesians. This is a letter written by Paul and I'm going to pull out some verses for you to think about as we walk our way through to build up to chapter 5 in this letter. Remember if I were to write you a letter I wouldn't put chapters and verses in it. I would just keep writing to you.

So this is what Paul actually did but we have added numbers, and divisions by chapter and verse to add structure to the Bible so that it could be taught and referred to. Paul writes in Ephesians 1:3–5, [3] *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, [4] even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love [5] he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will.* So if you're a child of God you have been chosen by God before the foundation of the world so there is nothing you could have possibly done to gain this and He has chosen you not simply to become a Christian but to be holy and blameless before Him. This is kind of an obvious statement of fact because you can't be before Him if you're not holy and blameless. So He has said that He has chosen you to be holy and blameless literally for you to be in My presence.

Ephesians 1:13–14 says [13] *In him (Christ) you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, [14] who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.* In others words when God caused you to understand the Gospel you were sealed with the Holy Spirit. Now what does that mean? God didn't just look around heaven and say "I'm making a covenant with them. I need to give them something that signifies the covenant like a banner or certificate so when they get to heaven they can present the certificate to Me and I'll know they're a Christian." This is not a gift that He gives to us that we redeem once we get to heaven. He is sealing us with the Holy Spirit because we need to be holy and blameless. So the only way we're going to be holy and blameless is if He gives us His Spirit. The reason there is a guarantee in this passage is because of the Spirit and not because of us. He is guaranteeing that we will end up holy and blameless before Him and He is guaranteeing that practically by putting His Holy Spirit inside of us and He will do that work in us.

Then in Ephesians 2 He shows us what God is doing and how it unfolds. Ephesians 2:1–2 says [1] And you were dead in the trespasses and sins [2] in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— So prior to knowing Christ we were dead in our trespasses. He goes on to say in Ephesians 2:4–5, [4] But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, [5] even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— In other words, you didn't do this. This is a work that God has done. God in Christ has made you alive in Christ. Ephesians 2:8–10 says [8] For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, [9] not a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Here He is explaining grace.) [10] For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Before the foundation of the world you were chosen in Him to be holy and blameless. In Christ He has prepared good works for you that you would walk in those and you are His workmanship. You are His work of art where He is the Potter and you are His clay, making for specific purposes. We are His holiness project and it's a holiness project by grace. He is not making us into children of God or Christians. He is making us into holy and blameless beings. We are confident in this that He who began a good work in us will carry it out to completion. When God defines a work as good, then that's holy. It's not just better than bad. So God who has done a good work in you will carry it out to completion.

Now in Ephesians 2:22 it says [22] In him (Christ) you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. Part of that workmanship is that you are being built so that God might reside with you. Paul is talking with them about a personal relationship with God. The only way we can have that personal relationship with God is for us to be holy and blameless.

In Ephesians 3 Paul begins to talk about how the Gospel is unveiled. Ephesians 3:14–19 says [14] For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, [15] from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, [16] that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, [17] so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith— (So the presence of His Spirit in you allows for Christ to dwell in your hearts through faith) that you, being rooted and grounded in love, [18] may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, [19] and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

It is God in you. It's not just God with us—Emmanuel—but God in us. It is the presence of the Holy Spirit that is in us. He goes on to say in Ephesians 3:20–21, [20] Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power (the Holy Spirit) at work within us, [21] to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen. He has called us to this walk of holiness, this position of blamelessness and has given us His Spirit who can do immeasurably more than you could possibly ask or imagine. In other words, He can make you that holiness project.

As Paul begins Ephesians 4 he says in Ephesians 4:1, [1] I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called. What calling is he referring to? It is the call to be holy and blameless. You have been called by God to holiness, to blamelessness and he urges us to walk in a manner worthy of that calling. As Paul puts that before us we would quickly say “I can't do that.” Certainly I can't do that in and of myself and Paul would absolutely agree with us.

Ephesians 4:15–16 says [15] Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, [16] from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. So we are to grow up in every way into Him. In other words, we are to give over every area of our life. Every aspect of our life is to be holy, blameless and is to be led/controlled by the Spirit which is to be like Christ and that is to imitate God.

Ephesians 4:17 says [17] Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do... As a believer you have the Holy Spirit living inside of you and you should not do any longer what you used to do when you were dead in your trespasses and then Paul begins to list some of the things we did before we were saved. Then Paul tells us what we should do. Ephesians 4:22–24 says [22] to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, [23] and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, [24] and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

How is the new self described? The new self is created after the likeness of God. It resembles God. Adam was created in the image of God and he was placed in the garden to have fellowship with God. God is putting back together that which we have broken by our sin. So we put on the new self which is created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness (blamelessness). Then he gives us some examples. He told them to put off that which doesn't belong and put on that which does belong. He told them to put off falsehood and put on telling the truth. Put off stealing and put on giving. We are to put on the exact opposite of that which is to be put off. So he uses the example of not lying but telling the truth and not stealing but giving.

Ephesians 4:30 says [30] And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. He has given us His Spirit to do this holiness project in you and now don't grieve what the Spirit is doing in your life. The only one thing that grieves the Holy Spirit is sin. Now he gets to Ephesians 5 and he begins with a statement that he has already said numerous times. He just says it more succinctly now.

Ephesians 5:1 says [1] Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. He has said to us numerous times in this letter to be holy and blameless, as Christ is holy and blameless. How do we imitate God? Ephesians 5:2 says [2] And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. Then he lists these types of behavior that are contradictory to the Spirit in one's life. He is saying that this type of defining habitual behavior couldn't possibly coexist with the Holy Spirit that is within someone's life.

Ephesians 5:3–4 says [3] But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. [4] Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. The fruit of the Spirit isn't sexual immorality, covetousness or foolish talk and so if the Spirit is truly in someone that's not what it produces. It produces thanksgiving and His love. Ephesians 5:5 says [5] For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let's be careful to see what He didn't say. He didn't say if you do a sexually immoral act then you will lose that which you have gained. He is saying that if you can habitually practice and define yourself by this then the Holy Spirit can't possibly be inside of you.

When someone wants to take a stand on some immoral behavior and say "but I'm a Christian too" we would have to shake our heads and say "That can't be true." They probably would say "How are you judging me?" I would say "I'm not, He is. He says that can't be true." A believer, a child of God, referred to from I John cannot go on sinning, cannot habitually practice sin. It's not a judgment to say if you can do that then you can't go to heaven. No it's a common sense statement. If you can do that, embrace and official practice sin, then you must not have the Holy Spirit and therefore you're not a child of God. Ephesians 5:6–21 says

[6] Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. [7] Therefore do not become partners with them; [8] for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light [9] (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), [10] and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. [11] Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. [12] For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. [13] But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, [14] for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you." [15] Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, [16] making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. [17] Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. [18] And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, [19] addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, [20] giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, [21] submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

So what is Paul trying to say to them at this point? Here is what he is saying to all believers. God is saying "I chose you before the foundation of the world. I didn't choose you just to escape hell or to survive or to make your life better. I chose

you to be holy and blameless. Now, you're a sinful mess so I have sent My Son when you were dead in your trespasses to make you alive, give you Hope, so My Son came and paid the penalty for your sins. Having believed in that which is a gift I give to you, not your works so you could boast, I have sealed you with My Holy Spirit. Why? It is because you're prone to wander. The very first thing you would do after becoming a Christian is to become prideful and covet. You are prone to wander away from Me therefore I am giving you My Spirit that is a seal for you. If My Spirit is an inheritance of Me that My Spirit will finish out that work which I have started in you, those good works, then here is what you ought to do. You need to be very, very careful how you walk. You need to be intentional about your walk. You need to understand the steps you're going to take, not as unwise but as wise. You need to be engaged in the putting off of what doesn't belong in your life. My Spirit will be the One that I use to show you what doesn't belong and you need to be engaged in putting on what does belong in your life. My Spirit is the One I will use to show you what to put on and focus upon in your particular life. Therefore walk with Me. Imitate Me. Keep in step with Me. Do the very things that I do."

As long as we're on the face of this earth God has called us to make every effort possible to imitate Him, a holy God. He has given us a human example in Jesus being all Man and all God who experienced many things in life so that we could follow in His steps. He has given us His Spirit to guide and direct us and to use His Word to show us how to imitate God on this earth. How are we going on our pursuit to imitate God and how do we deal with our continual failure to be holy and blameless?

He commands us to live a very careful life. Do not drink of what the world has to offer which will lead you astray but instead be filled with the Spirit. Ephesians 5:15–18 says [15] Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, [16] making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. [17] Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. [18] And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit.

Here is the problem that we have. We have a mental finite mind dilemma. He says we are to be filled with the Spirit yet we perceive ourselves to be bigger than the Spirit. You wouldn't actually say that but if you think that you can empty yourself somehow of the Spirit and the Spirit has to get born back in then you must think that somehow you need to be filled with the Spirit. I have tap water sitting next to me and I only do this as an illustration. It's not Holy Spirit water. If this is you and this cup has some amount of water in it (the water is the Spirit) and God says to be filled with the Spirit then in our mind we have to do something to refill that. Perhaps it's to go back to church or take another dip and do the best we can trying to get it filled as much as we possibly can. We conclude that if now we're filled with the Spirit and He tells us to keep on being filled with the Spirit then we must be doing something that is pouring out the Spirit.

So what do we need now? It is more Spirit. That's illogical. The Spirit is a Person. You can't get more of me. I'm it. Praise the Lord. So you can't say "I have to go get more of the Spirit." There is no more of the Spirit. The Spirit is an entity so you can't conclude when He says to be filled with Spirit, I've done something to remove some of the Spirit from my life so now I have to go back and refill in like go back to church and by doing that, that somehow you get more Spirit. No, you don't for you have the full Spirit because you're a believer and therefore this is what I think it means. The Spirit is clearly much bigger than we are. We know that theologically but practically it's a challenge. The cup I have is full of water and I'm going to challenge some physics you may have learned. That cup is full of water because it is engulfed by the Spirit. If I were to put something in the water (a bolt) is the cup still full of water? No, because the cup now has water and a bolt in it. The bolt displaced the water so now I say "Cup be filled with the Spirit?" How does the cup be filled with the Spirit? There is only one way and that is to take the bolt out. That is the only way the cup can be filled with the Spirit.

The cup is you. You become a Christian and you are filled with the Spirit of God. The bolt represents sin. When you put the sin in your life and He says be filled with the Spirit, what is He telling you to do? He is telling you to confess your sins. As you acknowledge, confess and repent of your sin you are filled with the Spirit. Every analogy breaks down, right? So this is a bad analogy but this is more accurate. God has called us to confess our sin. What happened when you came to worship? There is a meditation and confession in your worship bulletin that I encouraged you to spend a few moments before the Lord confessing your sins in preparation of worship. We want to worship being filled with the Spirit and the only way we can do that is for us to literally deal with the sin that is in our life.

So as He is calling us to be filled with the Spirit, we keep confessing. The cup analogy is that we are continually putting things in the cup that we have to confess to be filled with the Spirit. That is the process we do as believers for the rest of our life. We acknowledge, confess, repent, then put something in, acknowledge, confess, repent and then put something in etc. Sometimes we put more in at once than other times and some less but we're going along and we're not filled with the Spirit. We are grieving the Spirit. We are displacing the Spirit in our life. God says to you by command to be filled with the Spirit.

When we focus on worship we're to experience life worship where all of life is worship. So how do you life worship? You are to be filled with the Spirit. When you're filled with the Spirit there is not another conscious decision to make in order to then worship God. If you are filled with the Spirit you are worshipping God. What does he say is the result of being filled with the Spirit? Ephesians 5:19–21 says *[19] addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, (What is the most worshipful thing you can do in your life? Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. You do that by being filled with the Spirit for the*

Spirit loves God with all its entity. Therefore as we are filled with the Spirit we love the Lord.) [20] *giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, [21] submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.* Why? It is because we're filled with the Spirit.

For this lesson there is only one takeaway. It is to be filled with the Spirit. Stop and ask the Lord by the power of the Holy Spirit to show you what's in your life. Ask Him to show you the bolts in your life and confess them specifically, categorically and the ones you resist so that you might be filled with the Spirit. I want you to take time now doing that. So that now when God commands us to be filled with the Spirit it only means one thing. That is to ask the Spirit to show you the bolts (sin) in your life. Then acknowledge and agree with Him and it does not belong in fellowship with God. Claim the forgiveness that extends to you in Christ. Spend some time now confessing to the Lord. Let's pray.

Prayer:

O Lord, create in me a clean heart. Create in each of us a clean heart for against You we have sinned. Lord, thank You for Your Spirit. Do not remove Your Spirit from us but guide us by Your Spirit. Use Your Spirit to show us sin to teach us what sin is, to teach us what pleases You, to help us to understand Your will that we might be in a constant pursuit of what honors and pleases You, being built into a holiness project that we might be able to stand before You holy and blameless by the power of Your Spirit, a work of Your Son. Lord, thank You for the promise that You will carry out that work that You have begun in us, for Lord You know that we're prone to wander and failure can overwhelm us. So Lord, we thank You for forgiveness. We pray that You would do that work of repentance in our life that we would spiritually, emotionally, mentally and physically turn away from that sin and we would seek to keep in step with Your Spirit that You would be glorified. I pray that in Jesus' Name, Amen.

This article is provided as a ministry of [Third Millennium Ministries](#) (Thirdmill). If you have a question about this article, please [email](#) our *Theological Editor*.

#### **Subscribe to *Biblical Perspectives Magazine***

BPM subscribers receive an email notification each time a new issue is published. Notifications include the title, author, and description of each article in the issue, as well as links directly to the articles. Like BPM itself, *subscriptions are free*. To subscribe to [BPM](#), please select this [link](#).