



MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

## Examining the text & our hearts:

*Bible Reading: Ephesians 5:15-21 (Col. 3:16-17)*

### 1. The Spirit's filling in Ephesians (Eph. 5:18)

"...Be filled by the Spirit: 19 speaking to one another in psalms, hymns, & spiritual songs, singing & making music... 20 giving thanks...to God the Father...21 submitting to one another..." (Eph. 5:18-21 CSB)

#### a. Only Occurrence in Paul's Letters

- "Eph. 5:18 is the only reference to being filled with the Spirit in the entire [NT writings of Paul]...This fact alone should caution one against making this aspect the focus of one's [teaching on the Spirit] or even one's entire approach to the Christian life." [A. Kostenberger, "What Does it Mean to be Filled with the Spirit?" JETS, V. 40/2, p. 231]
- In "Acts the 'filling of the Spirit' [6x] seems to be the sovereign work of the Spirit to achieve specific results. But in Paul's epistles the 'filling of the Spirit' is mentioned only in Eph. 5:18, where Paul attaches the command that the believer 'allow' the Spirit to work." [M. Couch, Bible handbook of the Acts of the Apostles, p. 11]

#### b. Ask: What does 'Spirit-filled' mean in Ephesians?

- "If you are working on a word [or phrase, e.g. 'Spirit-filled']...in Paul[']s writings]...Does it have similar or different nuances when used by one or more other NT writers [e.g. Luke/Acts]?" [Gordon D. Fee, NT Exegesis, p. 82]
- "The same author may well use a word differently in two quite different books...[E.g.,] terms in [Romans/Galatians] are often used somewhat differently than in, say, Ephesians or Colossians." [C. Blomberg, Handbook of NT Exegesis, p. 135]

#### c. "Be Filled by the Spirit"—"The Culmination of Ephesians"

- "This imperative command of Eph. 5:18 is not just another in a long string; rather it is the key to all the others. Indeed, this command can be seen as the culmination of the entire book [of Ephesians]." [Stephen R. Guthrie, Creator Spirit, p. 79]

### 2. Spirit-Filled — What it is Not...

#### a. Not filled in your 'human spirit'

- "Some commentators think that the 'spirit' here refers not to the Holy Spirit, but the human spirit...However, this is unlikely." [Harold W. Hoehner, Ephesians, p. 702]

- b. While reference to the human spirit “is a grammatical possibility, it is not the proper rendering according to the context. The Greek phrase in Eph. 5:18 does refer to the Holy Spirit because Paul uses this phrase only in reference to the... Spirit ... There are no other NT references to the filling of the human spirit.” [M. Couch, *Issues* 2000: *Evangelical Faith* p. 67]
- c. “Some deny that Eph. 5:18 speaks of the Holy Spirit... Westcott, for e.g., takes *en pneumati* as a contrast to ‘in the flesh’; thus we have the marginal reading of the RV, ‘be filled in spirit’ [i.e., the (human) spirit]. The obvious weakness of this is that the ‘spirit-flesh’ contrast does not appear in Ephesians. Further, as F. F. Bruce notes, the phrase *en pneumati* appears elsewhere in Ephesians (Eph. 2:22; 3:5; 6:18), each time referring to the Holy Spirit. F. F. Bruce concludes, ‘In those three [other] places the Holy Spirit is certainly intended, and equally certainly it is he [the Holy Spirit] that is intended here (in Eph. 5:18).’” [C. J. Collins, “Eph. 5:18: What Does *plerousthe en pneumati* Mean?” *Presbyterion*, Vol. 33/1, p. 20]
- d. Note that the contrast is not concerning where one is being filled— in the (physical) body vs. being filled in the (human) spirit. (In Eph. ‘body’ (Gk. *soma*, 9 times) is used almost exclusively for Christ’s Body.) Rather, in Eph. 5:18, the contrast is in terms of content/substance—i.e., with what (or with/by whom) one is filled—with wine or with the Holy Spirit.
- b. Not ‘getting drunk in the Spirit’
- a. Some scholars find “parallels between the [Eph. 5] passage & the wine-drinking festivals of the cult of Dionysus (also called Bacchus), the Greek god of wine... [They] suggested that Paul was contrasting the wild excesses of the cult with... being filled with the Holy Spirit.” [A. Asumang, “Filled with the Spirit in Eph. 5:18,” *Conspectus* (2008) p. ]
- b. “Some people have too readily deduced... that drunkenness & the fullness of the Spirit are comparable. The fullness of the Spirit, they say is spiritual [drunkenness] & the Apostle is [contrasting] 2 intoxicated states—physical through wine & spiritual through the Spirit’s fullness. This is not so... It is true that on... Pentecost the 120 [were accused of being] ‘filled with new wine’ (Acts 2:13) [But,] it is a great mistake to suppose these first Spirit-filled believers were in a kind of drunken stupor or that is a pattern for all future experiences of the Spirit’s fullness. The opposite is the case. In Eph. 5:18 drunkenness & the Spirit’s fullness are not comparable in this respect... The fullness of the Spirit involves no loss of selfcontrol” [John Stott, *Baptism & Fullness*, pp. 72-73]
- c. Not ‘overwhelmed by the Spirit,’ losing self-control
- a. “Being filled with the Spirit is not the same as the ‘baptism of the Spirit.’ It is not being ‘slain in the Spirit.’ It is not being overwhelmed by a spiritual influence... It is not losing control of one’s senses. It is not speaking in tongues. It is not an ecstatic, sensual, emotional experience...” [B. R. Stockton, *Five Pillars of the... Gospel*, p. 475]
- d. Not receiving the Holy Spirit
- a. “Being ‘filled with the Spirit’ is not the same as possessing or being indwelt by the Holy Spirit because he indwells every believer at the moment of salvation (Rom. 8:9)... All Christians are indwelt permanently by the Holy Spirit... Being ‘filled with the Spirit’ does not describe a process of progressively receiving him by degrees.” [John MacArthur, R. Mayhue, *Bible Doctrine: Systematic Summary of Bible Truth*, pp. ]
- e. Not the ‘Baptism of the Holy Spirit’
- a. “In Christian thought, ‘being filled’ with the Spirit is equivalent [to] being controlled by the character of the Spirit—operating under the power of... the new creation... Being filled with the Spirit is not the same as the ‘baptism of the Spirit.’ ... The filling of the Spirit is... being filled with the Word of God in Col. 3:14-16.” [B. R. Stockton, *Five Pillars...*, p. 475]
- b. “The ‘filling of the Spirit’ is not the same as the ‘baptism of the Spirit.’” [J. MacArthur, R. Mayhue, *Bible Doctrine*, pp. ]
- f. Not the ‘Second Blessing’
- a. “Eph. 5:18 is often interpreted with reference to the private piety of individual Christians. Wayne Grudem, for e.g., reads the command in Eph. 5:18 in this way, stating that the ‘filling of the Spirit’ is a good way to describe ‘second experiences’ [‘Second blessing’] in a Christian’s life, which result in increased sanctification & increased power for ministry. He claims that ‘it is appropriate to understand filling with the Holy Spirit not as a one-time event but as an event that can occur over & over again in a Christian’s life’. He also lists... steps Christians can take to experience greater filling of the Holy Spirit ... However... such a reading illegitimately imposes an individualistic conception on a clearly corporate discussion... The filling of the Spirit in Eph. has to do with the abiding presence of God with his corporate people mediated by the Spirit.” [Tim Gombis “Eph. 5:18 in its... Setting,” *Tyndale Bulletin*, V. 53.2 (2002) pp. 262-3]
- b. “Being ‘filled with the Holy Spirit’ [in Eph. 5:18] is not a dramatic, esoteric experience of suddenly being energized & spiritualized into a permanent state of advanced godliness by a second... blessing subsequent to salvation. Nor is it some temporary effect that results in ecstatic speech [‘speaking in tongues’] or visions.” [John MacArthur, R. Mayhue, *Bible Doctrine: Systematic Summary of Bible Truth*, pp. ]
- g. Not ‘tongue-speaking’
- a. “Being filled with [the Spirit] is not the same thing as being ‘baptized’ by the Spirit. Some, having confused the two, have taught the need for a ‘second work of grace,’ usually accompanied by... speaking in tongues... Being ‘filled’ with

the Spirit ...does not concern any special miraculous gifts such as speaking in tongues." [James M. Boice, Ephesians, p. 164]

- b. "We are filled both by & with the Spirit...'Praying in the Spirit' [Eph. 6:18] does not refer to speaking in tongues. Rather, it should be...connect[ed] with other passages on the Spirit in Ephesians...3:16 & 5:18." [K. Snodgrass, Ephesians, p. ]

#### h. Not being 'slain in the Spirit'

- a. "The author is aware of the use of alcohol in some religions to 'get into the spirit,' just as he is aware of the dangers of charismatic excesses, being carried away with exuberant feelings mistaken as the work of the Spirit..." [M. E. Boring, F. B. Craddock, People's NT Commentary, p. 609]

#### i. Not an ecstatic, emotional experience

- a. Being filled with the Spirit is... not being 'slain in the Spirit.' It is not being overwhelmed by a spiritual influence... It is not losing control of one's senses. It is not speaking in tongues. It is not an ecstatic, sensual, emotional experience... The filling of the Spirit is...being filled with the Word of God in Col. 3:14-16." [B. R. Stockton, Five Pillars of the... Gospel, p. 475]

#### j. Not limited to a select few, elite, Christians

- a. "The verb is in the plural form. So is the preceding verb 'do not get drunk...' Both imperatives in Eph. 5:18...are written to the whole Christian community. They are universal...We are none of us to get drunk; we are all of us to be Spirit-filled. The fullness of the Holy Spirit is emphatically not a privilege reserved for some..." [John Stott, Baptism & Fullness, p. 78]

#### k. Not an individualistic, private pursuit of personal piety

- a. RE: "...Be filled with the Spirit in Eph. 5:18. There are substantial critiques...of those who have interpreted this command in terms of individual filling with the Spirit and the personal piety that results from it. To understand and apply this command individualistically is again to read against the context." [A. Mark Stirling, TRANSFORMATION & GROWTH, p. 142]
- b. "Eph. 5:18...is often interpreted as an exhortation to individuals—rather than being filled with wine & losing self-control, Paul wants Christians to be controlled by the Spirit. But this passage is not directed at individuals, & it does not have to do with being controlled by the Spirit. Paul has the entire church in mind here & he is contrasting 2 sorts of community ...They are not to act like their surrounding communities...Getting drunk & behaving foolishly. In contrast... the church is to be filled by the Spirit with the presence of God, a reality that will become manifest through community habits...They are to be a praising community as they worship together, giving thanks to God the Father for all things (Eph. 5:19-20)." [Tim Gombis, Drama of Ephesians, pp. 174-5]
- c. "The exhortation is not to the cultivation of individual private 'spiritual experiences,' but to participation in the life of the [Jesus'] community, especially its worship..." [M. E. Boring, F. B. Craddock, People's NT Commentary, p. 609]

#### l. Not an 'optional extra,' a suggestion—an imperative/command: "Be filled"

- a. "The phrase...'be filled' is...the present passive imperative tense of the Greek word pleroo...A more literal rendering... is 'be being kept filled,' which indicates a conscious continuation. The imperative aspect indicates that this is a mandate, not an option, or merely a suggestion...The continuous aspect requires a day-to-day, moment-by-moment submission to the Spirit..." [J. L. Whittington, Biblical Perspectives on Leadership..., pp. ]

#### m. Not a one-time or occasional event—present tense: "Be being filled..."

- a. "Being filled with the Spirit is presented both as an admonition for all believers and as a continual rather than a once-for-all experience." [Michael J. Gorman, Apostle of the Crucified Lord, p. 602]

#### n. Not reliant on our own initiative—It's "Be filled" (passive), not "fill yourself"

- a. "The Lord's command [is] 'be filled with the Spirit'. Paul doesn't say, 'Fill yourselves with the Spirit'. He says, 'let the Holy Spirit fill you' (NEB). God is calling us to 'the life-long walk in the Spirit'. He is calling us to 'keep on being filled with the Spirit.'" [Charles Cameron, "Holy Spirit in the Life of Faith," EVANGEL, 24.3, (2006) p. 89]

#### o. Not God's reluctant response to our persistent pleading, repentance, penance, etc. (cf. Jn. 15:26; Rev. 22:1)

- a. "the Spirit...who proceeds (pres.) from the Father" (Jn. 15:26)
- b. "the river of the water of life...flowing (proceeding out—pres.) from the throne of God & of the Lamb" (Rev. 22:1)
- c. "We...conclude that there is not a single reference in the NT that enjoins believers to ask to be filled with the Spirit. While this fact does not speak conclusively against such a practice, it would caution against placing an undue emphasis on asking to be filled with the Spirit as part of a set procedure for individual believers." [A. Kostenberger, "What Does it Mean to be Filled with the Spirit?" JETS, Vol. 40/2, p. 232]

### 3. Spirit-Filled —What it is

- a. The Holy Spirit is the Agent/Mean &/or Substance/Content of the 'filling'

- a. "The Spirit is both the agent [means] & the substance [content] of the filling...Christians should allow themselves to be filled by the Spirit & simultaneously with the Spirit...In other words, Christians are filled by the agency of the Spirit into relationship with the Spirit, and in the sphere of the Spirit's realm...Theologically Paul could have accepted multiple roles of the Spirit in the act of filling the Christian." [Erik Consmo, *Pauline Metaphors of the Holy Spirit*, p. 126]
  - b. "In Eph. 5:18 [it] is more probable that the Spirit is the means or instrument of the filling. [In] the context of Ephesians... the 'what' of the filling has already been explained in Eph. 3:19 as ['the fullness of God'], the 'how' &... 'who' of the filling is explained in Eph. 5:18 as the Spirit." [J. Johnston, "Grammatical Analysis," in D. Bock (ed.) *Interpreting the NT...*, p. 71]
  - c. Greek: Pleroo to be filled; present, passive, imperative – 'be being filled,' or 'allow yourselves to be filled' [Reinecker]
- b. An Imperative—a command; Present tense—continuous—"Be being filled," or "be being kept filled," passive
- a. "The filling of the Spirit...commanded in Eph. 5:18...is the essence of biblical spirituality (Chafer), &... 'the focal point of the NT for believers' (MacArthur)...The phrase translated as 'be filled' is based on the present passive imperative tense of the Greek word pleroo...A more literal rendering...is 'be being kept filled,' which indicates a conscious continuation [1.] The imperative aspect indicates that this is a mandate, not an option, or merely a suggestion for Christians. [2.] The continuous aspect requires a day-to-day, moment-by-moment submission to the Spirit... [3.] Yet the passive component ...indicates that this is not something to be done by the believers but something that is allowed to be done...[by] yielding to the indwelling Spirit." [J. L. Whittington, *Biblical Perspectives on Leadership...*, pp. ]
- c. Corporate—a plural verb.
- a. "The...command in Eph. 5:18, 'be filled by the Spirit', is often understood in terms of the empowerment of individual believers for discipleship & ministry. Such an interpretation leads to difficulties in relating the command to the five participles which follow, & to...the epistle as a whole. Reading the command as directed to the community as a corporate body...solves a number of problems..." [T. Gombis "Eph. 5:18 in its...Setting," *Tyndale Bull.*, V. 53.2 p. 259]
  - b. "The thrust of the passage is corporate, not merely individualistic...The experiences of lives full of the Spirit [Eph. 5:19- 20] are in relationships...among Christians at worship, in the home or workplace...[Yet much teaching] of the Spirit-filled life deals primarily with an individual's personal—even private—experience." [A. Kostenberger, "What Does it Mean to be Filled with the Spirit?" *JETS*, Vol. 40/2, p. 233]
- d. Passive—How Do We Obey a Passive Verb—'Be filled with the Spirit' (Eph. 5:18)?
- a. Andrew Wilson asks "How can we obey a passive verb?" 'Be filled with the Spirit' (Eph. 5:18). That is like saying, 'Be phoned by your mother.' He...comments that the Spirit is the dynamic that energizes the Christian life...He helpfully points out that since the word for Spirit is breath or wind, thinking in terms of a sailboat is helpful...Without the wind, the sailboat goes nowhere. But by raising the sail, turning the boat in the direction to catch the wind, & then...it moves ahead. So, we should develop the habits that [allow] the Holy Spirit, who already dwells within us as believers, to propel us onward in the faith. Lift the sail..." [Andrew Wilson, *God of All Things*, p. ]
  - b. Eph. 5:19-21 describe "activities that characterize Spirit-filled people...By doing [these] we invite the Spirit—like someone who raises a sail to catch the wind." [Peter S. Williamson, *Ephesians*, p. 153]
- e. By 'speaking, singing, making melody, thanking, submitting' (5:19-20), 'allowing Christ's Word to indwell' (Col. 3:16)
- a. "...Be filled by the Spirit: 19 speaking to one another in psalms, hymns, & spiritual songs, singing & making music with your heart to the Lord, 20 giving thanks always for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, 21 submitting to one another in the fear of Christ." (Eph. 5:15-21 CSB)
  - b. "Let the word of Christ dwell richly among you, in all wisdom teaching & admonishing one another through psalms, hymns, & spiritual songs, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. And whatever you do, in word or in deed do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." (Col. 3:16-17 CSB)
  - c. "The truths of Scripture should permeate every aspect of the believer's life & govern every thought, word & deed. The Word dwells in us as we hear it, handle it, hide it, & hold it fast. To do those things, the Christian must read, study, & live the Word. To 'let the word of Christ richly dwell' [Col. 3:16] is identical to being 'filled with the Spirit' (Eph. 5:18). The Word in the heart & mind is the handle by which the Spirit turns the will. It's clear that these two concepts are identical because the passages that follow each [imperative] are so similar." [John MacArthur, *Colossians & Philemon*, p. 159]
4. The Church Filled as God's New Creation Temple (Eph. 2:19-22; 5:18-21)
- a. "You are...fellow citizens with the saints, & members of God's household, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles & prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. 21 In him the whole building, being put together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. 22 In him you are also being built together for God's dwelling in the Spirit." (Eph. 2:19-22)
  - b. "The command to be filled with the Spirit in Eph. 5:18...In the context of the overall...letter, it makes more sense to see this as the filling of the new temple with the presence of God. There are several other reasons..."

First, there is a verbal parallel with Eph. 2:22 where the dwelling place for God is [in Spirit]. Here in Eph. 5:18, the command is to be filled [in Spirit]." [A. Mark Stirling, TRANSFORMATION & GROWTH, p. 142]

- c. "In exhorting the Ephesians to be filled with Spirit rather than be drunk [Eph. 5:18], Paul is essentially commanding them to become corporately, the unique temple of God, the dwelling place of God in Christ, by the Spirit, and to exhibit the Spirit's control. Corresponding to the pleroma [fullness/filled] language of the OT that depicted the glory of God in the temple, in Ephesians, the church is the new temple of God serving his presence where the fullness of God dwells (Eph. 1:23), 'a dwelling place of God in the Spirit' (Eph. 2:19-22). Remaining filled...the Christian community is to engage in spiritual worship." [Abraham Kuruvilla, Text to Praxis, p. 186]
- d. "What does Paul mean by the command to 'be filled by the Spirit'?...Paul has argued that the church is the new temple of God, the dwelling of God 'by the Spirit' in Eph. 2:21-22...In this light, when Paul directs his readers to 'be filled by the Spirit'...Paul is commanding his readers to 'be the temple of God,' or, to 'be the dwelling place of God by the Spirit'. They are to carry out their identity as the church & to fully realize what God has made the church to be—...his new temple, his dwelling place by the Holy Spirit." [T. G. Gombis "Eph. 5:18 in its...Setting," Tyndale Bulletin, V. 53.2 (2002) pp. 267-8]
- e. "The emphasis on being filled with the Spirit in Eph. 5:18 fits the...temple text in Eph. 2:11-22, where the Spirit's work creates the...community constituting the temple of God...The church is now...a 'holy temple' (Eph. 2:21) built on a prophetic & apostolic foundation, with Christ as the cornerstone (Eph. 2:20)." [John A. Dunne, "Filled with the Spirit: Wine & Worship in Levitical Light (Eph. 5:18-21)," *Biblica et Patristica Thoruniensia*, V. 11.4 (2018) pp. 424-5]
5. The Believers—a Corporate Priesthood, worship in/as God's Temple
- a. "Temple themes pervade Ephesians...Eph. 5:18 is about 'the filling of the new temple with the presence of God' (Stirling) ... Temple themes...help us interpret...Eph 5:18ff...Priestly & Levitical injunctions...suggest that the church filled with the Spirit is a group comprised of priests & Levites serving in sacred space." [John A. Dunne, "Filled with the Spirit: Wine & Worship in Levitical Light (Eph. 5:18-21)," *BPT*, V. 11.4 (2018) pp. 429-430]
- b. "A temple interpretation of Spirit-filling in Eph. 5:18 [relates]...the prohibition of drunkenness [to] regulations against consuming alcohol while ministering in the temple...Lev. 10.8-9 [&]...Ezek. 44:21...Priests...were not...to drink while serving in the temple...in Ephesians we have a similar prohibition against drunkenness when the church is gathered together as the temple in-dwelt with the Spirit" [John A. Dunne, "Filled with the Spirit...", *BPT*, V. 11.4 (2018) pp. 430-1]
- c. Ephesians' "references to corporate singing [Eph. 5:19] are rooted in priestly...responsibilities [which] pertain to singing & playing musical instruments in the temple [worship]...The early Christian house churches were... sacred spaces in which those filled with the Spirit were like Levites offering their worship to God [inspired by]...God's Spirit in the church... The...singing in Eph. 5:19-20 is best interpreted as...priestly...connotations of being filled with the Spirit in Eph. 5:18... The early house churches gathered together, filled with the Spirit of God, [saw themselves] as priests...worshiping in God's temple." [John A. Dunne, "Filled with the Spirit...(Eph. 5:18-21)," *BPT*, V. 11.4, pp. 434-7]
- d. "Priestly & temple theology informs Eph. 5:18-21 & helps...explain the prohibition of drunkenness, the command to be [Spirit-]filled [&] the praise & worship that ensues...This is...rooted in the nature of early Christian household gatherings [as]...the temple of God." [John A. Dunne, "Filled with the Spirit...(Eph. 5:18-21)," *BPT*, V. 11.4 (2018) p. 438]