

Filled With The Very Life of God

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[0 : 00] Be filled. Be filled. Be filled with the Spirit. Be filled with the Spirit of God. Be filled with the Holy Spirit, with the breath of God, with the wind of God, with the river of God, with the source of living water.

Be filled. Be filled with the Spirit. It is the last therefore in a series of therefore in the letter the Apostle Paul wrote to the believers in the first century city of Ephesus. It is not the last exhortation. That distinction belongs to be strong in the Lord, put on the full armor of God. Be filled is the last therefore in this series.

It is the therefore that makes all the other therefore possible. To help us understand, to help us feel what Paul is going at in this text, let me read all the other therefore in the letter and immediately after each one, read the final therefore.

Chapter 4, verse 1. I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you've been called. Be filled with the Spirit.

[1 : 36] Chapter 4, verse 17. Therefore, walk no longer as the unbelievers do in the futility of their mind. Be filled with the Spirit. Chapter 4, verse 25.

Therefore, laying aside all falsehoods, speak truth to one another. Be angry but do not sin. Be filled with the Spirit. Chapter 5, verse 1.

Therefore, be imitators of God. Walk in love. Be filled with the Spirit. Chapter 5, verse 7. Therefore, you were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of the light. Be filled with the Spirit.

Chapter 5, verse 15. Therefore, be careful how you walk. Not as unwise, but wise. Be filled with the Spirit. Chapter 5, verse 17. Therefore, do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. Be filled with the Spirit.

Chapter 5, verse 18. Therefore, do not get drunk with wine. That is dissipation. It's emptiness. Be filled with the Spirit. It is being filled with the Spirit. It is being filled with the Spirit that makes us possible to live all the other life-enriching exhortation Paul gives in his letter.

[2 : 52] Including the last one. Be strong in the Lord. Do not get drunk with wine. But be filled with the Spirit.

Paul speaks this way not because he's a teetotaler. Paul speaks this way because he does not think that drinking wine is evil. The days are evil, he says.

And therefore, fraught with all kinds of potential pitfalls over drinking wine and other spirits being only one of them. He speaks this way not because he's an uptight moralist.

He speaks this way because the people in Ephesus were abusing wine. And, as in our day, abusing food and work and entertainment and religion.

You see, life in Ephesus revolved around the goddess Artemis, as the Greeks called her, or Diana, as the Romans called her.

[3 : 56] The temple of Diana in Ephesus was one of the seven wonders of the world. Much greater and bigger than the new BC place. Diana Artemis was the goddess of the hunt and of the moon.

And of fertility and of pleasure. She's depicted in the statues as a woman with many breasts. Many breasts all over her.

And by the time Paul writes his letter, her temple was famous for worship events that involved ritual drunkenness and frenzied behavior.

Worshippers thought they would come under the control of Diana by coming under the control of wine. The days are evil, says Paul.

I think he would also say the days are good because Jesus Christ has come. He would have echoed Charles Dickens' famous opening to the tale of two cities. It was the best of time.

[4 : 59] It was the worst of times. It was an age of wisdom. It was an age of foolishness. It was the epic of belief. It was the epic of incredulity. It was the season of light. It was the season of darkness. Paul speaks of the days being evil because people around him were being so incredibly foolish.

They thought they could find the fullness of life in unrestrained sexual activity. And by being caught up in euphoria induced by drunkenness. Dissipation, Paul calls it.

Wasted is the way we put it. Wasted with nothing to show for it afterwards except a lot of brokenness and greater gnawing emptiness.

Paul speaks this way. Do not get drunk with wine. Because something very fundamental to our wholeness is at stake. What we seek to fill us controls us.

What we seek to fill us controls us. Clearly so with alcohol. What we seek to fill us. What we seek to fill the emptiness gets a hold on us and begins to drive us.

[6 : 14] What we seek to ease emotional pain. What we look to for a little boost to keep us going slowly but surely begins to master us.

Too much over drinking is but one example. Too much over eating is another. Too much over working is yet another. Too much television.

Too much internet. Too much texting. Too much caffeine. Too much anything other than the spirit of the living God. Eventually leads to dissipation.

To waste. But be filled with the spirit. The only filling that finally fills. You have heard me say in other sermons that the question is never will I be a disciple.

The question is never will I be a disciple. Every human being is a disciple of someone or some ideology. Every person walking on the sidewalks around this building right now is a disciple of someone.

[7 : 21] Every world leader is a disciple of someone or some ideology. So the question is never will I be a disciple. The question is always whose disciple will I be.

If not a disciple of Jesus then a disciple of whom. The question is never will I be impacted by a spirit.

Everyone alive is impacted by a spirit of some sort. The question always is of all the spirits at work in the world.

Of all the spirits around me to which will I respond. To which will I yield. The question is never will I be under the influence of a spirit.

The question is never will I be directed and controlled by a spirit. The question is always of all the spirits active in our city.

[8 : 21] Which spirit? Whose spirit? Will I allow to influence me to direct and control me?

Therefore. Therefore. The last therefore of his letter.

Therefore. Be careful how you walk. Not as unwise but as wise. Making the most of your time for the days are evil. So then do not be foolish but understand what the will of the Lord is.

And do not get drunk with wine or food or work or toys. For that is dissipation but be filled with the spirit. The therefore making it possible to live all the other therefore of the Christian life.

Be filled. Be filled. Be filled with the very life of God.

Now just for a moment. Step back and look at the specific context in which Paul gives this exhortation. The context is Ephesians chapter 5 verse 15 through chapter 6 verse 9.

[9 : 25] It is a very crafted context that holds together. 5 verse 15 to 6 verse 9. And here is how it goes together. There is first a series of not but.

Not this. But this. Then there is a series of manifestations of living the not but. Thus this. And this. And this.

And this. And then the last this. Is worked out in three spheres of life. This sphere. And this sphere. And this sphere. Now to be more concrete.

There are three not buts. Not walk as unwise but wise. Not be foolish but understand what the will of the Lord is. Not get drunk with wine but be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Then there are four manifestations or results of being filled. They are all in the participial form.

Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.

[10 : 22] Singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord. Always giving thanks for all things in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. To God even the Father. And being subject to one another in the fear of Christ.

A number of translations render all of those clauses as commands. Speak to one another. Sing. Be subject. They are not commands. They are all in the participial form.

They are not commands. They are results of obeying the one command. Be filled with the Spirit. And then. The last implication or result of being filled with the Spirit.

Being subject to one another in the fear of Christ. Is worked out in three relational spheres. Wife and husband. Child and father. And servant and master.

Wives being subject to their husbands. And husbands being subject to their wives. Children being subject to their fathers and parents.

[11:17] And parents being subject to their children. And servants being subject to their masters. And masters being subject to their servant. Bringing into being a whole new kind of humanity.

God's new society as John Stott put it. Which we will walk into next Sunday. And the one major exhortation. That makes it all happen. Is.

Be filled with the Spirit. Earlier in his letter. Paul spoke of being sealed. With the Holy Spirit. Chapter 1 verses 13 and 14.

In Christ you also. After listening to the message of truth. The gospel of your salvation. Having also believed. You were sealed in Christ. With the Holy Spirit of promise. Who was given as a pledge of your inheritance.

Paul is saying. That when anyone believes in Jesus Christ. As Savior and Lord. We are given a seal. That we are now his. Jesus as it were.

[12:16] Stamps us as his own. With his own seal of ownership. He gives us the Spirit. The same Spirit. That rests upon and lives in him. The same Spirit. Who animates his obedience to the Father.

Jesus gives his seal. As the seal of a Spirit. As the seal of ownership. And then as a pledge. Or a down payment. On all of his other promises. It's wonderful.

Earlier in the letter. Paul speaks of being indwelt by the Spirit. Chapter 2 verse 22. In Christ you are also being built up. Into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

Chapter 3 verse 16. Paul prays that we be strengthened with power. In the inner person. Through the Spirit. In the inner person. He's saying that when anyone believes. In Jesus Christ. As Savior and Lord.

He comes to take up residence. In our lives. In our hearts. In our souls. Through the Spirit. It's what makes a person a Christian. A Christ in one. His life now dwells in us.

[13:15] Wonderful. But although. We are sealed with the Spirit. And although the Spirit. comes to live in us.

He may or may not. Be filling us. A fact. To which. I think. Most of us in this room. Who have walked with Jesus Christ.

Can testify. Think being a house. The Spirit comes. To seal the house. As belonging to Jesus Christ.

And the Spirit comes. To live in the house. But. He may or may not. Actually. Fill the house.

He may not yet. Actually. Fill. All the rooms. That. That is not hard to imagine. Is it? Thus. The exhortation. Be. Filled.

[14:09] With. The Spirit. The verb Paul uses. Means. To be completely. Filled. It means. To bring something. To completion. Paul is saying. You were sealed. With the Spirit. And the Spirit.

Has moved. Into your hearts. And souls. Now be filled. Be completely filled. Let this sealing. And it's indwelling. Have it's full impact. Be filled.

Up. With a person. I want to emphasize this. The Spirit. Is not a force.

Or influence. Which is why. The New Testament. Never refers to the Spirit. As it. The Spirit. The Spirit is always. He. Or him. A person.

As personal. As Jesus. In whose name he comes. As personal. As the Father. From whom he comes. Be. Filled. With a. With a person. A person.

[15:04] Who thinks. A person. Who feels. A person. Who acts. A person. Who has an agenda. For us. Who is. Fully divine.

Fully God. The third person. Of the Trinity. Father. Son. And Holy Spirit. A very creative person. Who in the beginning. Hovered over the chaos.

And darkness. And brought the world. Into being. And who in the fullness. Of time. Overshadowed the womb. Of the Virgin Mary. And brought the God man. Into being. Who then animated. The body of Jesus.

Of Nazareth. Enabling him. To do all that he did. Be filled. With that person. Be filled. With that God. Indeed.

By the way. You see. Again. What great compliment. The apostle Paul. Is paying us. He is saying. That we humans.

[16:01] Are so wonderfully. Made. That the only. Thing. That can finally. Fill us. Is the person. Of the Holy Spirit. No other spirit.

Can. However good. No other spirit. Can finally fill us. We are too grand. A creature. We are so grand. That the only thing. That finally. Fills us up. Is the very life.

Of God. It's in the. It's in the passive voice. Be filled. With the spirit.

Active voice. I fill. Passive voice. I am filled. Why does Paul put it. In the passive voice. Because. He's talking about. Something.

We cannot make happen. Filled with the spirit. We cannot make happen. The most. Essential factor. For living. The Christian life.

[16:56] The most. Essential factor. For living. Human life. And we cannot. Make it happen. We cannot. Fill ourselves. With the spirit. Paul puts it. In the passive. To help us realize.

How utterly dependent. We are on God. We cannot. Fill ourselves. With the life of God. I cannot. Make it happen. For you. I wish I could. And you cannot. Make it happen. For me.

There are no. Religious gimmicks. There are no. Spiritual gymnastics. To make it happen. Only God can do it. Only God can. Fill us with God. Paul puts it.

In the passive. Again. Because. He's telling us. That we cannot. Happen. We cannot. Control. What happens. When he does it. We have no control.

Over the Holy Spirit. Would you agree with me. That much. Religion. Is finally. About trying to control.

[17:52] The divine. Trying to. Control the divine. By our rituals. And by our meetings. And by our strategic. Planning session.

Religion. Which is why. So much religion. Is lifeless. The spirit. Will not cooperate. With all of that. He will not cooperate.

With our attempt. To control it. Be filled. Passive. We have no control. We are.

After all. Talking about. The wind of God. The mighty. Rock. I don't know. I. We are talking about. The fire of God. We are talking about. The river of glory. Yet.

It is a command. Be filled. It is in the imperative. Mood. A command. Meaning. That somehow. We do have a role. To play. We cannot.

[18:47] Manipulate. Or control. The spirit of God. But we do. Have a role. To play. Otherwise. We would not. Be commanded. Right. It is not just. Friendly advice.

It is not just. Encouragement. For the spiritually. We can empty. It is a command. So what is our role? I think it is. To decide.

To choose. To be filled. To desire. To be filled. To open up. To being filled. To ask. To be filled.

The Holy Spirit. Mighty. As he is. Is a gentleman. And ordinarily. He doesn't just. Come busting in. Although I pray.

For that a lot. Ordinarily. He waits. To be. Invited in. Now notice.

[19:44] That it is also. In the present. Tense. In the Greek language. Tense. Doesn't deal. So much. With the time. Of the action. As the kind.

Of action. And the present tense. Emphasizes. Continuous. Action. So the command. Is literally. Keep on being filled. The implication.

Being. Being. That being filled. By and with the spirit. Is an ongoing. Phenomenon. Now why?

Partly. Because as we grow. And as we mature.

As we become. New creations. There is more. To fill. And as we move out. Into ever. Newer. And greater ministries. There's going to need.

To be more. Filling. In the book of Acts. We read of the same persons. And same groups. Being filled. Many times. On the day of Pentecost. One hundred and twenty disciples.

[20:38] Are together in the upper room. And they're filled. With the spirit. Then Peter and John. Meet a crippled man. Outside the temple. And they. They are filled again. Enabling them.

To bring healing. To this man. The infant church. Comes under persecution. They meet for prayer. And they're filled again. Stephen. Stephen. Is chosen to be. One of the first deacons.

Because he's so obviously. Filled with the Holy Spirit. Later. When he's giving. A powerful sermon. Before the Sanhedrin. He's filled again. Peter goes to the house. Of the Roman soldier. Cornelius. And preaches the gospel. To the Gentiles. They are all filled. With the spirit. Peter again. On and on it goes. The filling. Doesn't happen. Just once. The filling. Is too dynamic. A reality. For any once. For allness. We are filled again. And again. And again. And again. As we move forward. In discipleship. And the filling.
[21 : 31] Is continual. Because. We so often. Stymie. The filling. Earlier. In the letter. Paul speaks. Of grieving.

The spirit. Chapter 4. Verse 30. Do not grieve. The Holy Spirit. By whom you were sealed. For the day of redemption. In his first letter. To the believers. In Thessalonica. Chapter 5. Verse 19. Do not quench.

The spirit. The spirit. We. Mere human beings. Can grieve. And quench. The spirit. Apparently. How? By our attitudes. By the way we speak to. And about others. By holding grudges. By refusing to forgive. By hanging on to bitterness. By playing games. With the truth. By trying to. Trying to. Work with the things of darkness. The list goes on. Causing the Holy Spirit.

[22 : 28] So to speak. To back off. Now you have. You who have. Walked with Jesus Christ. For a number of years. You've experienced this. A number of times. Haven't you? The spirit backing off.

I have. We do something offensive. To the spirit. Spirit. And it feels as though. The air has gone out of the room. I. I. I can recall over my years of ministry.

Being in a committee meeting. Or a congregational meeting. And somebody does something. Or says something. And all of a sudden. It's like the air goes out of the room. Well. It did.

Thankfully. Not all the way out of the room. But the wind of God stopped blowing. He stopped breathing. His refreshment upon us. He does not leave the room altogether.

Thank God. But he does back off. He lets us have the implications. Of our anti-kingdom ways. It's painful when it happens. He seems to pull back on his vitality.

[23 : 31] And not that he's touchy. Or that he's an easily wounded narcissist. It says that he takes us that seriously. He takes our attitudes. And speech that seriously.

And if we do not want the way of the holy. Then he backs off. And he lets us experience. The implications. Of those unholy choices. So.

Because we can grieve. And quench him. We need to be continually filled. And in his mercy. He loves to do it. You just come. And again. And again.

He fills. And what is our role. In this continually be filled. I already said it. Decide. Decide that we want to be filled.

Mysterious as it all is. Desire to be filled. Confess anything that you're aware of. That is in the way of that filling. And. Confess our fear. That we might be taken to places.

[24 : 28] We do not want to go. If we're filled. The fact is. We are going to be taken to new places spiritually. When he fills us. So part of our role.

Is to confess the fear we have. And to let go. Of having. To control our destinies. Decide. You want to be filled.

And I think. Drink. Drink. Yeah. Drink. Take a big drink. Could Paul put it that way? I think so.

In light of his talking about getting drunk with wine. Instead of trying to ease the pain. By filling our souls with wine. Drink the water of life. Drink the very life of God.

This is what Jesus tells us to do. At the Jewish feast of tabernacles. Sockoth. Which comes in mid-October. I've described this more fully in the book. Who is Jesus. At the feast of tabernacles.

[25 : 26] People are celebrating the fact. That God is light. And it's at that feast. That Jesus stands up and says. I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me. Will not walk in darkness. But have the light of life. It was at that feast.

That people also celebrated. God as the giver of water. They remembered that. As the people went across the desert. To the promised land. God made water to flow from the rock. And they remember with great anticipation.

God's promise that one day. This living water would come. So on the great day of the feast. While the people are singing. From the prophet Isaiah. With joy you will draw water.

From the wells of salvation. Jesus stands up. And he cries out. If anyone is thirsty. And who is not? Who is not thirsty?

Look at the long lines of people. Who stand outside in the rain. At our city pubs. Waiting hours.
[26 : 25] To go in. To get a drink. Hoping. Somehow. To find. Something. To make life work. Jesus knows. Why we stand in the long lines.

He knows what we are looking for. If you are thirsty. Come to me. And drink. And then he says. And out of your innermost being. Will flow rivers of living water.

This says John. Jesus spoke of the spirit. Which he was to give to his disciples. Drink. When was the last time you had a good drink? When was the last time you drank this living water?

Why not do it today? Take a big long drink. And then tomorrow morning. When you get up.

Do it again. And Tuesday morning. And every morning for the rest of your life. Or breathe. That too. Paul would say to us.

[27 : 27] Breathe. Breathe in. Breathe in the breath of God. With your whole being. Breathe in. When was the last time. That you stopped.

And took a deep. Deep. Breathe. Breathe in the breath of God. Why not do it today? And then. Tomorrow morning.

And Tuesday morning. And every morning. The rest of your life. The word Paul uses for spirit in this text. Is the word pneuma. It means breath. It's from which we get the English word.

Pneumatic. Live pneumatically. Every morning. Every morning. Oh father. I'm breathing the air around me. Help me breathe in.

The breath. Of your spirit. Breathe on me breath of God. Fill me with life anew. That I may love whatever you love.

[28 : 23] And do what you would do. Breathe on me breath of God. Until my heart is pure. Until with you I will. One will. To do and to endure. Breathe on me breath of God.

So that your will is mine. Until this earthly part of me. Glows with your fire divine. And when he does. When he breathes on us.

When he gives us a drink. When he fills us with himself. We find ourselves speaking to one another differently. In songs and hymns and spiritual songs.

We find ourselves singing and making melody. In our heart to the Lord. We find ourselves giving thanks. Even in the crummiest of circumstances. And we find ourselves.

Being subject to one another. In the fear of Christ. Which we'll grapple with. Next week. Around the table. Be filled.

[29 : 22] Be filled. Be filled. Be filled. With what? The very life of God.