

Be Filled with the Spirit

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[0 : 00] Let's turn now to Ephesians chapter 5 and the words we find in verse 18.

Ephesians 5 and verse 18. Be filled with the Spirit. Be filled with the Spirit.

Now so far this Episcopal has been dealing with great doctrines of the Christian faith.

He has sold and sold and reviewed from a very high height the glories of our redemption and the wonders of God's grace.

He has dealt with our election, our redemption, our adoption, our sealing and again above all perhaps with the marvel of Christ dwelling within us.

[1 : 06] But now he goes into a different mode and asks, if all that is true, if God has done so much for us, then how ought we to live?

And he moves from doctrine to our principles to what God has done for us to our response to what God has done for us.

And he does in the chapter itself bring before us several of those key principles that we are told, for example, in verse 1 of chapter 5.

Be a ministry of God, he says, as beloved children. They imitate God. And then he says, walk in love as Christ loved us.

These are momentous principles. And then in verse 8 he says, walk as children of light. So there are three great principles.

[2 : 08] Emitted God. Walk in love. And walk as children of light. I don't want to explore those tonight.

I want to move on to this other principle. Be filled with the Spirit. This great imperative that Paul lays down for each one of us who are believers in his name.

It's important to remember who the Spirit is. The third person of the eternal Trinity. Be filled with this third person.

With this glorious triune person of the Godhead. He's the third person. That is not his honour. There is no order as such in the Godhead.

First, second or third are all equal. None is before, none is after. None is greater and none is lesser. But all share one of the same nature.

[3 : 11] And all are equal in power and in glory. And Paul is saying to us, be filled with this divine person.

With this one from God, with whom God made the universe. By whom Christ became incarnate.

This eternal person of the Godhead.

Be filled with him. This one by his power. The one who came into being. This one by his power.

Christ was born.

Be filled with this person. That the apostle says to us. What can it mean? Remember first of all that in the moment of our conversions.

Each one of us. Each one of you was filled with this spirit. It's not only a few believers who enjoy that privilege. It's true of every single believer.

[4 : 14] And it's true of us from the moment of our conversion. That from that moment onwards. We have this filling of the Holy Spirit of God. Other words in use sometimes.

We are baptized in the spirit. We receive him. But perhaps this one above all. We were filled with his spirit. In the very moment of our conversion. By him we were born again.

By him we had conviction of sin. We were enlightened in the knowledge of Christ. By him we are led. He dwells in us. He endows and empowers us.

For all our Christian service. And that's what I said. Of each and every single one of us. Christ dwells within you. We can't be in Christ.

And lack this tremendous privilege. Of being filled with the spirit of God. In that sense. Every one of you. Is a spiritual person.

[5 : 14] A spirit formed. A spirit informed. A spirit led. A spirit transformed person. A spirit empowered person.

The creator spirit. This eternal person. Lives and dwells. In each one. Which I believe. That's where our power comes from. That's how God expects us to live.

As those empowered. By God's holy spirit. And I want you to realize. That it's true of every single one of you. Look.

At the one beside you. She is filled with a spirit. Look at yourself. You are filled. With a spirit. That is not a demand.

Not even an order. It is in fact. A great. Present reality. And it has been such. Ever since you came to know. The Lord Jesus Christ.

[6 : 13] To be in him. Is to be filled. With his holy spirit. But then remember too. That God has promised. That in any emergency.

This spirit will come. And enable us to perform. Or to endure. What God's will. Is for us. Go back to the book of Acts. Surah chapter 4.

And the apostle Peter. He and John. Are in prison. And before the. The council. Because of that. Preaching the Lord. Name. Of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And they. As we know. They are unlettered. They are unlearned. They are. They are tall. They are skilled. And. They are moving in those. High circles. And yet.

In that moment. We know. That the spirit. Came on Peter. And gave him then. Great wisdom. And great words. He had been filled. Before a Pentecost.

[7 : 08] Not long previously. But here now. This emergency. Comes. The spirit. And empowers Peter. For this new situation.

The Lord himself said. Take no thought. What you shall say. It shall be taught you. In that hour. What you shall say. Now he is speaking to us.

Not of. Ordinary. Dirty. Dirty. Dirty. Dirty. Dirty. But of. Emergencies. If I am. Called to preach. At a certain time. I can't say. Well. I will get words.

When I go to the pulpit. I am going to prepare. What I am going to say. But when some. Emergencies. Comes. Something unforeseen. Unforeseeable. Then God. Promises you.

That in that moment. The spirit will empower. Enlighten. And enable you. It is not confined to apostles. Or to preachers. It is for every single believer.

[8 : 04] And in that confidence. You venture forth to face. All that is unknown. And so much is unknown. In your lives. The imagination says to you. How will I cope with this?

How will I cope with that? And there is no limit. To the questions. Our minds may pose. Along such lines. But God is saying.

Take no thought for it. It shall be taught to you. In that hour. Not before the hour. But in that hour. It shall be taught to you. Isn't that a great promise?

We move into life's uncertainty. We move into. A life full of possibilities. And crushings. And disappointments. And demanding situations. How shall we cope?

God has promised grace. To cope. Grace to help. In every time of need. You know. The known itself. Is terrifying enough.

[9 : 02] But the unknown. The unknown. Is more terrifying still. But the known. With regard to the unknown. Is that God's will come.

And give us grace. To help. In our time of need. And then there was Stephen. This man. Who was full of faith. And of the Holy Spirit.

It wasn't just some experience. Some episode in his life. Some great moment. And which he might. Tell a story. For years afterwards. It was habitual state.

It was the way this man was. He was full. Of the Holy Spirit. His life was fully under. The Holy Spirit's control. It's a whole personality.

The what he thought. And the way he thought. And the way he felt. And the way he loved. And the way he hated. His choices. His priorities. His lifestyle relationships.

[10 : 03] All of these. Under the Holy Spirit's. Control. We see him at the end of his days. One of those seven. Deacons as we call them.

And we see the wisdom. God gave him. God gave him. Great insight into the Old Testament. God gave him graceful graciousness. God gave him power. God gave him great powers. God gave him great power. God gave him great power. God gave him great power. God gave him great power. He was disputing with the synagogue leaders. And they couldn't answer his arguments.

And so they decided to stone him. You find him in those. Closer moments of his life. And he is. They're still full of the peace of the Lord Jesus.

and he's there saying pray to God Father don't hold us against them so he's there full of the spirit not in some episodic way like I got a blessing but there he is consistently and habitually in this state where his whole life is spirit dominant and spirit controlled where in mind spiritual things where he's led by God's spirit that's what we're told about and that's the ideal God proposes for each one of ourselves that we be in this sense full of the Holy Spirit and then the words of our text tonight be filled or more precisely keep on being filled again it's not just one single moment it is an endless sequence of fillings for which in a way we ourselves are responsible keep on it is your duty to keep on being filled with the spirit of God and part of the great purpose of this refurbished building is to help you achieve that objective to help you comply with this great divine requirement to keep on being filled with God's spirit this idea of fullness the whole

[12:31] Holy Spirit we're told in John's gospel that God doesn't give the spirit by measure and some versions add to that to him to Jesus but the words are unqualified God gives you his spirit without measure I know of course that our capacities are not sufficient to contain the whole Holy Spirit it's an overflowing experience but you know it's not bits of him we get or parts of him we get we get him in the totality of his divine person this third person of the Godhead we are being filled with him replenished with and by him constantly the course of Christian lives and if we aren't being filled we will so soon decline and so soon backslide so keep on he says receiving this blessing keep on being filled with the Holy Spirit let's pause over this for a moment how is this to be achieved what can we do to render this a reality our being filled with the Spirit of God on a daily regular repeated constant consistent basis you keep on being filled with the Holy Spirit what it means first of all this take care not to grieve we are dealing with a person not with some electric current not with some source of physical energy that we can just pump into ourselves or wire ourselves into we are speaking of a person and such a person the Holy Spirit the Spirit the Spirit of nobility the Spirit of purity that Spirit so easily offended by our sins this warning comes in Ephesians 4 where we are told that believers were falling into the most commonplace sins and thereby grieving

God's Holy Spirit I remember hearing a discussion long ago of this in a fellowship where a man spoke of the spirit naïf the nobility and the sensitivity that was along that we live don't grieve and the spirit may sometimes say can't stay there can't stay in that heart there are things going on there that I can't be associated with there are things being thought things being said things being done that I cannot be a party to and the spirit says even perhaps they don't want me there she doesn't want me there she wants me to go away she wants me to go away and that's where it all begins this being filled the care not to grieve they're the

Holy Spirit and then there is this too keep in step with the spirit as Paul says in Galatians keep in step with the spirit walk by the spirit keep in step with the spirit and this idea comes from the parade ground with which I suppose many of you are familiar where the company has to arrange itself in a particular way you find a marker probably some tall man he's the marker and then you dress off this man at arm's leg that way arm's leg this way you form your lines you form your columns and you march in step you keep that distance between yourselves and you march in step in accordance with your marker and he's saying here in the church too we have to maintain formation keep in formation keep in step not with each other so much but keep in step with the

Holy Spirit and only as we do so can we hope to be filled with this Holy Spirit of God keep in step with the Spirit now there's a danger here how do we hear the Spirit's orders is he saying to us follow your own inward promptings your own instincts your own impulses is that what he's saying to us we hear the Spirit's voice and orders only in the written word of God God gave us that word by his spirit the Spirit inspired and breathed it out there is the mind of the spirit it's not in my feelings in my inner compulsions in my hunches but in the word of God I can't emphasize that too much so much damage has been done by people simply following their own inner impulses and perhaps their own as they think personal revelations but keep a step with the word of

God that's what he is saying that's why it's so important to know this Bible absolutely inside out God is in so much pains as I said earlier on to teach us that does take pains to learn here is the great general commanding this army and saying keep and step and he's saying keep and step with my word and the focus of that spirit on the glory of the person of Christ and the furtherance of his kingdom keep your eye on this walking step keep and step with the Holy Spirit and then there is this don't grieve him keep in step with him and always be conscious of your dependence upon him in a very important sense we are all charismatics that world has been taken up by one branch of [19:16] God's church but in the most important biblical sense every single one of us is charismatic we are absolutely impotent and useless without the filling of the Holy Spirit without his constant daily ongoing ministry we can't do a thing without him we can't pray without him we can't sing without him we can't preach without him that's for sure we can't perform our daily tasks without him and I want to underline that because our lives are a whole they don't have separate safe and secular compartments one part religious one part temporal our lives are a unit most of us spend a large part of our lives in our professions in our workplace there you glorify

God and there you need God's spirit to enable you to perform your vocation your task to the utmost not of your but of his ability are you teacher are you joiner are you doctor are you nurse are you shop assistant are you secretary in and through these roles we are priests to God there we glorify God there we shine as lights in the world you can't cope with the pain of life without him you can't cope the temptations of life without him you can't do a thing without him every moment every step there is such a dependence and thus the need to ask him constantly Lord give me what I need for this the grace

I need the gift I need for this situation give me the patience I need give me the wisdom I need give me the love that I need give me Lord the skill the knowledge that I need for this you give me you give me can't do thing that dependence is not something that goes away with experience it has enhanced my experience because those of us who are old we have fallen flat on our faces so often it becomes more difficult to venture forth I hope in our own strength into any sphere of human experience and so you're saying Lord I can't do a thing without you I can't do it to your glory I can't do it properly without you and the Lord has said ask and you will receive knock and the door is open to you ask for this good gift ask for the spirit's gifts

I use some role in the church that needs particular gifts ask the Lord for the gift ask him for more of the gift ask for grace to develop the gift ask for grace to fan that gift into flame I'm not speaking to the gifted yes I am in the sense that you're all gifted every single member of this church I hope ever here tonight is a spirit filled spirit gifted spirit empowered spirit enabled person ask God to help you use and deploy that gift and you make sure that it remains in flame for the glory of God and so he said to us you keep on being filled with the spirit be careful not to grieve be careful to keep in step with him be careful to acknowledge in every step your dependence upon and what's the result going to be you have the spirit filled person how can you tell what difference does this make and some people say of course well these spirit filled people they perform miracles they speak in tongues and they heal the sick and so that's how you know they're spirit filled let's leave that aside for the moment let's focus on this text of this passage these these people these people are filled with god spirit what would say what's going to happen if that's the case let's ask ourselves this and he says this first of all to us here it is quite fascinating don't be he says drunk with wine wherein is excess or debauchery do not get drunk with wine for that is debauchery oh that seems very simple but it's being a very important point because so often people have said that when the spirit comes it's as if we were drunk we lose our self control we begin to behave loudly extravagantly perhaps even we lose our consciousness we pass out or we quake or we shake or we scream or we swoon or something because the spirit has come and we forgot where we were we lost our self control and the spirit took over and in that wonderful moment it was sheer ecstasy

I didn't know where I was didn't know what was happening he is saying to us that is exactly the reverse of the truth what does alcohol do to us it destroys our self control it destroys our fine tuning our sense of social propriety we we we begin to speak too loudly we begin to be too familiar to those we don't know or to those who are seniors to us we forget decor we forget courtesy we behave in this extravagant and this unseemly way you must never never say the spirit came and took away my self control the spirit enhances self control gives us more discipline gives us more sobriety gives us more moderation gives us more focus on God's word and the needs of those words go back to 1 corinthians 13 the spiritual person and that great hymn to love in that passage

and there's somebody who's at the very pinnacle of being filled with the spirit and that person we told does not behave himself unsimply that person is so totally aware of other people and of their needs knows what everybody else is knows their sensitivities knows what will hurt them what will offend them and holds back because of this self control that

[26 : 54] God's spirit gives never never never is God's spirit going to show himself in destroying our self control in God there were people who were prophets and they said well the spirit came when somebody else was speaking and we couldn't hold back because the spirit came and so we spoke although somebody else was speaking no Paul said that's rude the prophet spirit Paul said is subject to the prophets you can't control your spirit you can't wait till that other person is finished because you are self controlled because you are a Christian it's about sobriety it's about self control not about extravagance or loss of self control our spirit subject to ourselves so we must never make this experience or this privilege an excuse for unseemly uncontrolled behavior the spirit does not destroy the word here is a word which means simply the loss of her senses which a phrase knocks common to

American Scots when she fell into a mad relationship but he said of her wits are not where they used to be the spirit doesn't do that he doesn't take your wits away those wits those reason that God gave us so it is not like being drunk what is it then what are these people like the whole of the epistle that follows is the out working by Paul of what it means to be filled with the spirit and it's fascinating because first of all it means this these people he says they have melody in their hearts they sing a big melody to the Lord with all their hearts there is melody there is joy in their heart and it's melody to the Lord and so they're singing they may not endow with great voices he's not talking of being part of the church choir or being presenters or singing the congregation at all necessarily but you know there is a constant melody and there is a constant singing singing psalms and singing hymns and singing spiritual songs all which have as their content the

Lord the songs about Jesus they're singing those because the Lord has put the melody there he is the cause of that melody why are they so happy why are they singing these people Christians sing John Wesley's great revival that was one the feature of the people sang so well and the disruption it was said in 1843 that the singing all over the church was enhanced by the joy in people's hearts so there was melody in their hearts and they had those psalms about Jesus those hymns those songs about Jesus and they sang them perhaps as they were slaves and still they sang but they were singing perhaps under their breath perhaps only in their hearts but their melody was there melody to the Lord and in Colossians they were teaching each other in psalms and spiritual songs they were great didactic things those songs had so much teaching in them you've got some of our own great

Gaelic hymns for example those of Dougal Buchanan and these hymns are full of great teaching about Jesus you've got a Peter grant again that great hymn on the glory of the Lamb Zion singing of the glory of the Lamb child in the manger these things so focused on Jesus they were singing singing in their hearts all the time they weren't simply singing they wouldn't they weren't singing the world songs they weren't singing the tavern songs in in Luther's Germany Martin Luther got those tavern songs the tunes of those songs and said his great hymns to those songs that Churchill never had singing before in Germany but Luther got these tunes in the taverns and he put the gospel to these words and he sang these words the melody in their hearts do we have the melody in their hearts the joy simply because

God is because Jesus is because Jesus is who he is and he's where he is because tonight he's in the right hand of God the Father and so the spiritual person has melody in her heart and then there is this too about these people with the spirit they're giving thanks always and for everything that's an amazing thing in fact it's the most difficult thing in the world thankful thankful always for everything there is one mountain in this world I would love to be able to climb it's this thankful always and for everything I want you to hear these words I want myself to hear these words they're so challenging such tremendous potential you people have the same Paul at the same time brought to the church at Philippi and he said

[32 : 55] I have learned in whatever state I am therewith or therein to be content that's awesome you use the word awesome you young people use the word awesome this is awesome this is really and truly awesome I have learned in whatever state I am therewith to be content before me tonight in a gathering of his sighs there are broken hearts and crushed lives and bitter memories can you by God's grace I say by God's grace rise to this each day I rise I will bless you praise your name

time without end it's today it's where I am tonight that this matters giving thanks tonight for everything thank you Lord for everything yes we can thank the Lord for this great new facility thank the Lord for each other thank the Lord for all our fellowship all over the years but for everything for everything

Lord I really say that by your grace I can reach this and I say yes I am saying exactly that that nothing needs silence the melody let your heart sing Paul and Silas I know that from this great elevation this prophet it is we to speak these words down where you are where you are it may be very much more difficult but it's God's will for you let's lay hold of that Lord you meant it to be the case with me that I could be thankful for tonight for my heart is broken and my spirit crushed yet thankful always for everything so they're shivering their hearts and they're thankful for everything and there is this there is submission you see too there is submission we have this great list of relative duties husbands and wives parents and children masters and servants but one great word one great principle for them all and it is this that they are submitting themselves the one to the other in reverence for Christ verse 21 submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ the best better word would be indeed for the paraphrase

I should say subordinating your own interests to those of others out of reverence for Christ subordinating your interests to those of others and that runs through every single one of these relationships the husband must put his wife's health happiness needs comfort developing your gifts before himself that's what it means to love as Christ loved the church putting her first the parents put the children first do they that's what he says yes put them first submit subordinate your interest to theirs we're not in the world of common sense here we're in the world of ethical revolution husbands put your wives before yourselves parents your children before yourselves employers your employees before yourselves managers your employees before yourselves that's what runs through the whole glorious panorama here the spirit filled person puts the interest of others always before himself there is a level at which we are here following

Christ's own mind that canotic mind that emptied himself of self and made himself nothing and in a way if I can put it provocatively he was saying I don't matter he made himself nothing took a servant's form died on the cross because the church mattered to him so so very much your spiritual people does it mean that you speak in tongues or obeyed visions or dream dreams or tell the future may do but if it does these are secondaries what manner says that there's melody in your heart you are thankful always for everything and you always put others interest before you roll and you know there is this too they put on the whole armor of God or you might say but we have a spirit we are filled with the spirit we don't need the armor of God it's to those very people

Paul says put it on put on the belt of the truth put on the shield of faith put on the helmet of salvation and grab that sword of the spirit and fight this warfare as those properly equipped don't go forth and say oh I'm born again I'm spiritual you need the armor and the more spiritual you are the more you see you need for that armor and you'll check every single morning you'll do an equipment test have I got my helmet on have I got my shield have I got my belt have I got my sword have I got my feet properly shod with the gospel of peace have I got all these things on have I got all I need for today we need the armor and a spiritual person knows that more than anybody else and he adds this praying at all times so this is a spiritual person married in her heart thankful always for all things putting others first putting on the armor of faith and praying at all times

[39 : 57] Paul says of course praying because we know our own dependence groaning sigh to God help Lord help Lord help Lord all the time but also for all the saints Paul says and for me and that's so magnificent this man so splendidly endowed as an apostle so richly gifted so greatly blessed and saying to these newborn Ephesian Christians pray for me you know do you know what it is to be aware that other people's prayers for you mean far more than your old your old seems so useless but to think of others praying for you that is sometimes the only thing to stand on that's what Paul is saying well these people pray because they're filled with the spirit let me bring this to a close we meet tonight for the first time in this refurbished seminary and

I have my own memories of it as a young boy coming here in the late 40s and 50s and in those days walking to church almost three miles 45 minutes each way for a little legs back and forth and I can recall the preaching the preach of the students in those days it was English here every second Sunday evening and in the church every other evening turnabout that's how it was in those days and I remember in the summer students came and John Gillis and Jack MacLeod and William MacKay and others came and these men made a great impression upon us as young men and

young women and the late preachers too of that time the late William MacLeod and the late Tom MacKay they often preached and some of you may have memories of these men as well William MacLeod was my teacher in school who taught me Latin which I learned when I learned anything else which would be good stead even to this great age which I've now reached I went to him at the age of 17 to ask if I should stay in school past class five and he must know me well and he said to me no he said because he spoke in a very elevated English it will only inculcate habits of laziness and I'm sure I was correct so I left school I remember in those days that young boys never sang in church there's a very bad habit in this island still that unconverted folk or those who think they're unconverted don't sing in church that is a very bad habit and I remember as a boy when I was in fact quite able to read people beside me often find the passage for me as they thought but they simply opened the

Bible anywhere and thought I wouldn't notice but I did tend to notice very quickly that it was just open at random so not great or any special memories those who have adorned this pulpit in my lifetime Reverend Kenneth Macrae Reverend Murda Macrich and Murda Warrick Macleod Reverend Kenneth Stewart and the present incumbents in the last week or so I've twice heard compliments to my own teaching at the college and I should have responded at the first opportunity by saying that I am very proud of these students and defensive about them as well that accredited to the college and adornment of the church and I believe that we are as well staffed today in the future of ministerial as any branch of the church in Scotland in fact I would suggest perhaps suggest even more so that's not due to me or to us it's due to their own dedication to go back to John Knox again if I may quote him and one of a Spesita American Scots she delayed him trying to keep him talking and he said no madam my people will be wondering why I'm so long away from my books do you know that ministers today feel guilty being at their books I feel guilty because we have the impression that you folk wanted to be visiting all the time or impractical things but knocks you that if you were not good books you were useless as a preacher and that's what we are first and foremost that we cannot preach and don't prioritize it we are useless and it is a 24-7 job sleeping and waking we are preachers don't encourage you men to be often or long away from their books but as

[45 : 35] I thought of this night my mind went back to Solomon's temple and his dedication we read that story in 2 chronicles chapter 6 and 7 part of it anyway and I thought well we might take that and express the hope that God's glory will fill this seminary as once it filled Solomon's temple and that's a glorious thought although a seminary in fact means a place where a seed is sown and may much seed be sown here and much fruit borne as a consequence but I thought there's something more glorious here than Solomon's temple more glorious in fact a couple of hundred things more glorious and I mean by that each one of you because you are all you are each one a temple of the

Holy Spirit and God's glory fills you Christ dwells in your heart by faith I live yet not I but Christ lives in me the life of God is in your soul you are the Shekinah the world became flesh and dwelt among us tonight it dwells in you by his Holy Spirit a greater than Solomon a greater than Solomon's temple I had one great privilege in my life growing up on this island which made me what I am or whatever I am to which I am bound in ways I can't explain and understand but in my early days those that I preached to towered far above me in spirituality in knowledge of God's word in depth of insight and understanding and it taught me a precious lesson always preach up to God's people I could never preach down to them because I was cradled in that matrix where I was sometimes terrified of the elders who sat in front of me I have not quite lost that yet but it's so important you are such such people temples of God's spirit each one of you every Lord's day brings Christ with her into this place and we are speaking and preaching to those who love the Lord and hunger and thirst for his word and who are saying to us are you not saying to us are you not every Lord's day please help me be filled with the spirit may God grant it so let's join in prayer oh

Lord bless your word to us and bless it every time it is uttered in days and years to come in this place may it never cease to be spoken Lord in this island indeed on this very spot and may it never return to your void that is what you have promised by it Lord transform us by it strengthen us by it comfort us and by it above all glorify your own name for Jesus sake Amen