

**Live Out Loud: The Spirit-Filled Life**  
**Ephesians 5:15-21**  
**Pastor Jon Haakana**

A question for you as we begin: What is the two most significant influence in your life? Paul says to us today, “Do not get drunk on wine...but be filled with the Spirit.”

At the heart of this contrast is a life lived under the influence of ... those influences, which become something that we rely on to make it through the day. They may be destructive like alcohol which slows the mind, and dulls the senses ... or it may be considered benign, like the hyper-caffeinating by today’s teens who are chugging between 800 and 1000 milligrams of caffeine a day (3 times the adult recommended maximum dosage), relying on it to provide the energy to get them through the day (The result has been a sharp rise in teen instances of hyper-tension, and heart palpitations). Or consider that we are living in a culture that “gets drunk” on other forms of self-indulgence, like sex or risk-taking or hunger for power because it activates the same dopamine centers in the brain that taking drugs achieve.

In contrast to relinquishing of our lives to destructive influences, Paul tells us to “be filled with the Spirit.” Possession of the Spirit is the mark of being a Christian. But if the Spirit is given to a believer at conversion and, indeed, is the agent of conversion, what does this command involve? Paul’s point is that the Holy Spirit is the controlling influence motivating and directing the lives of believers. Paul commands us to live a life consumed, even dominated by the Holy Spirit’s influence.

Attention is here placed on the believers’ responsibility to be receptive to the Spirit. While human beings do not manipulate the movement of God’s Spirit, human responsibility is involved. We have choice in this matter, for the Spirit’s transforming work in us is not done apart from human consent. God does not force the Holy Spirit upon us to change us in ways that we refuse.

And Paul emphasizes that Christians are to be continually filled with God’s Spirit. This is the force of the Greek verb. To ask us to be filled with the Spirit does not point to repeated charismatic experiences, as some claim. It is to ask us to focus our attention on Christ and his presence in us, to open ourselves to the continual transforming work of the Spirit so that the presence of Christ empowers and shapes our lives. The Spirit is to be the dominant influence for all Christians.

And a life dominated by the influence of the Holy Spirit will result in a number of common characteristics. Paul uses five-participles to explain the results of being filled with the Spirit. The five participles do not call for trappings of piety that can be faked. Such a religious front is offensive to anyone seeking integrity. Though most of our Bibles translate these phrases as commands, it is not an accurate translation. Paul is not commanding these actions. He is stating that they are the natural consequences of a life driven and influenced by the Holy Spirit.

What are those participles? They are:

Addressing one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs  
Singing  
Making melody to the Lord  
Giving Thanks  
Submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

As we sort through these participles, we can identify at least three results of the Holy Spirit's influence.

### **1. Spirit-filled people authentically share in joyous worship.**

I know that none of us would consider that the singing and music are superficial elements of our worship service that we need to suffer through so we can get on to the real worship. And it is a good thing that none of us would consider singing and music a worship add-on because Paul wouldn't agree with us.

I can say that with confidence because of the five participles describing life in the Spirit, three have to do with singing. Just notice that priority that Paul gives to singing in these verses. "Speak to one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make melody to the Lord with your heart."

Singing is the natural expression of joy that God brings into a person's life. Singing is not an add-on to worship. It is not the warm up to what is really important in worship. Singing is the heart crying out in such inexpressibly sweet joy that it cannot be confined to the spoken word. Singing is worship through words that are given wings.

Obviously, one time when we express joyous celebration is in our corporate worship.

"Sing with your heart" or 'Sing with your whole being' – expression – song in my heart...

Spirit-filled people authentically share in joyous worship. Yet, the Spirit influence effects one other result in worship.

### **2. Spirit-filled people continually express Christ-centered thanksgiving.** Verse 20 – "...giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ..."

Yet, many Christians lack appreciation of the importance of thanksgiving in the New Testament. Romans 1:21 views the failure to give thanks as the root cause of sin. With such a theology, it is not surprising that thanksgiving is associated with life in the Spirit. Thanksgiving is the believing appreciation of God and his purposes for good in Christ. Obviously such giving of thanks points to a lifestyle not just to spoken words.

Christians are to give thanks to God always for everything "in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." John Stott comments on this passage: "we are asked to live out our awareness that all of life, even the 'bad,' is lived out with a keen awareness of what Christ has done for us." Jesus came...

Spirit-filled people authentically share in joy-filled worship. Spirit-filled people continuously express Christ-centered thanksgiving. Lastly, ...

### **3. Spirit-filled people respectfully honor Christ through mutual surrender.**

The last participle describing the results of life in the Spirit is perhaps the most surprising. People led by the Spirit “submit to one another.” Many are offended by the word “submission,” as if it points to a passive, weak life dominated by a negative self-image, giving up of control and free will. This is not Paul’s intent, except for the fact that control for Christians has already been given over to Christ.

The Greek word submit literally means ‘to arrange under.’ It is important to note that this text does not ask some Christians to submit to other Christians. It asks all Christians to submit to each other. No privileged group is in view.

Christians are called to live in mutual submission, and without mutual submission they cannot fulfill their destiny. Such submission is a strong and free act of the will based on real love of the other person. In the end, submission is nothing more than a decision about the relative worth of another person, a manner of dying and rising with Christ, and a way to respect and love other people.

Mutual submission will not allow us to promote ourselves and our own interests, but neither does it make us doormats to be used by others. Legitimate submission cannot be coerced. We simply need to be reminded here that the only way we can surrender our own self-centeredness and serve one another’s best interests is by being renewed by the Holy Spirit’s influence.