

**Notes: *Be Filled with the Holy Spirit* (Eph. 5:18-20)**

**Intro:** We are privileged to live in the age of Holy Spirit, that age foreseen by the prophets (ex. Isa. 43:3) and inaugurated by our Lord Jesus on Pentecost (Acts 2) following his ascension into heaven (Acts 1:9) and exaltation with all authority in heaven and earth. Paul has told us that we have been “sealed” with the H.S. (1:13). Indwelt by the H.S. as a down payment and promise of receiving our eternal inheritance. And that we must not “grieve” the H.S. (4:30) or live indifferently to his presence in us. Now we are told to be “filled with the H.S.” No matter is more urgent so that we may be “imitators of God” (5:1) and “walk as children of light” (5:8).

**#1: What is the *fullness of the Spirit*? (18) Why must we be filled? Paul begins his exhortation to be filled with a prohibition against drunkenness. No doubt this problem, so prominent in the Gentile world, remained a temptation for some in the Christian community. Becoming a Christian, in a basic sense, is obeying God’s command to grow up. Drunkenness is childishly heightening happiness by a self-induced stupor. But God tells his children grow to maturity and face difficulties squarely and constructively with his help. Another reason for beginning with the prohibition is that Paul is continuing the effective pattern he has used in the verses before. What better way to amplify the life that is worthy of God’s children than by contrasting it with the life that isn’t? Yet another reason is because of the contrast between drunkenness with alcohol and fullness by God’s Spirit. An obvious sign of being “filled” with alcohol is an inability to “walk” in a straight line. Spiritually this remains a struggle for every Christian! Not the temptation to become intoxicated but the struggle to walk in a straight and obedient way before the Lord! At conversion we may experience immediate liberation from particular habits of the old life and never look back. But in other areas we may continue to struggle to walk a straight path before God. Yes, we have been delivered from darkness into light (2:6) but we may still experience “withdrawal symptoms” from the old life because of the ongoing presence of sin and remaining influences of the “addictive” old ways of thinking and behaving. The Spirit must fill us with spiritual sobriety and self-control! What does it mean to be filled? The Greek verb “be filled” provides a starting place. Note three things: *present tense*. Being filled must be a continual experience. It is not just a once and for all event (such as the “sealing” of 1:13). *Imperative mood*: A command we must obey. *Passive voice*: We cannot fill ourselves. We must receive fullness from the Lord as a gift. To these observations note also the use of “fullness” and “fill” in Ephesians. Being filled with Spirit means being filled with *the presence of Christ* (1:22-23; 4:10) and *the presence of God* (3:19). Being filled with the Spirit means that the church is the community which Jesus Christ, in whom God’s fullness dwells, now indwells. The Spirit of Christ indwells us to fill us with the grace and power of God so that we may increasingly reflect his image (4:24)! How can one be filled? The parallel passage in Colossians 3:16ff. sheds light. We are filled by the Spirit of God by responding with faith and obedience to the Word of God. Our ability to do so must grow too.**

**#2: What is the *fruit of the Spirit’s fullness*?** As we walk no longer under the control of worldly intoxicants but under the control of the Spirit, we exhibit two marks of special note (vs. 21 will be discussed later). The fruit of singing. The mention of “psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs” means this is a reference to public worship. Because these terms are used interchangeably in the Greek OT and NT (ex. 1 Cor. 14:26 where “Psalm” may be translated “hymn”) we should avoid making hard distinctions between them. The person who is filled will be filled with praise to our glorious and gracious God in worship. Also that praise should involve a full range of

singing. That much is obvious. What may not be is how we not only sing to God but to “one another.” Worship has not only a vertical dimension (Godward) but also a horizontal one (manward). It’s not hard to understand why. We are branches joined to the trunk of Christ (Jn. 15), bricks in the Temple of God joined to the foundation of Christ (2:21). We are saved individually but not solitarily. The praise sung in worship not only ascends to God by his Spirit but descends deep into my heart by the same Spirit. Corporate singing and praise strengthens me in believing that my God really is great and gracious. The fruit of thanksgiving. How do we thank God *always* and *for everything*? Some insist on thanking God for things he expressly condemns (murder, abuse, etc.) but this may border on blasphemy. Chapell’s wisdom: “To the extent that tragedy makes us dependent on the Lord, and enables us to see his comfort and seek his eternal promises, we can give thanks. As a diamond is more beautiful on black velvet, so the name of our Savior—his glory, honor, and redemption—shines more brightly in the darkness of the world. We give thanks for the darkness that makes Christ’s name more evident...not for the horrors of a fallen world but for the Savior who can answer and redeem those horrors.” We rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead (1Cor. 1:9).