

## **Ephesians 5:18-21 – Being filled with the Spirit**

The world needs serious Christians. The world is a dark place, and Christians are the light of the world (Matthew 5:14). But how are we to live as Christians? What now should our lives look like? God is answering these questions in these verses.

### **1. Filled with the Spirit, not with wine (v18)**

Paul was teaching us about a life of self-control. In evil days (v16), we must be serious in serving, using our hours for God's glory. Paul then condemns one example of losing self-control: drunkenness (v18). This ruins lives and leads into many sins. It is a sin condemned throughout the Bible, e.g. Proverbs 23:20, 26:20. But even if we do not drink, we must remember that it is *anything* that leads us to lose self-control that Paul wants to condemn. Galatians 5:22-23 says that the fruit of the Spirit is self-control. So, Paul says, we are not to be controlled by drink, but by the Spirit. We are to be filled. His words mean that it is something we must seek again and again. The Bible teaches that we are all once baptised in the Spirit when we experience conversion (1 Corinthians 12:13), but we can be filled again and again (Acts 4:8-12, 31, 13:9). The Spirit leads us to confidently walk in the truth. In the next verses Paul will show us what a life in the Spirit looks like. But for now, we can remember that it is a life of order and discipline, not noise and chaos – those are evil works.

### **2. Filled with the Spirit: singing from the heart to the Lord (v19)**

Spirit-filled people sing. We have much to sing about! We have received the great victory through Christ, over sin, death and hell forever. We are to sing all kinds of songs (v19), but with spiritual content. In singing we teach each other – there must be real content, not just noise. “Melody” means tune – proper music. But, it must come from the heart, not just with the lips. It must be to the Lord, out of love to him, not just because we enjoy singing. Often we find it hard to pray; but it is easier to sing, and the Lord wants to hear our singing.

### **3. Filled with the Spirit: giving thanks always in all things (v20)**

Christians must be thankful people. This is a very simple duty; it costs nothing. It is simply an attitude of heart, that moves our lips to say “thank you, Lord” again and again. The non-Christian will be moaning, grumbling and complaining. But for the Christian, every step is a step nearer to heaven and glory. Paul says to be thankful at *all* times, for *all* things – even hard and difficult ones. Even those stones are also on the path to heaven! Our thankfulness should be Trinitarian: being filled with the Spirit, we give thanks to the Father in the name of the Son. In thankfulness, we have fellowship with the whole Godhead – what an amazing privilege!

### **4. Filled with the Spirit: submitting to each other (v21)**

The Holy Spirit is a Spirit of order and humility, not of pride and disorder. He teaches us, in all things, to take our proper place, and to be content there. In the next verses, Paul will give examples of this, in the family and in our work. But here he just names the duty – to submit to each other. We are not to be competing to take the first place. Even Jesus, when he found himself as a boy, submitted to his parents (Luke 2:51). We should submit out of reverence to Christ (v21), who sees all and judges all. He came as a servant; how much more should we be ready to humble ourselves and serve? This is all the work of the Holy Spirit – do you pray for his help each day? (Luke 11:10-13).