

“Walk in the Spirit”

September 8, 2024

Ephesians 5:17-21

I. Introduction

In the first 3 chapters of Ephesians, Paul taught about the spiritual blessings, honors, and privileges that Christians have. When a person makes Jesus Christ his Savior and Lord, he becomes a citizen of God’s kingdom and a member of God’s family and, as Paul wrote in [Ephesians 1:3](#), he receives **“every spiritual blessing in Christ.”** But along with the blessings and privileges, there are also responsibilities and obligations. As His children, the Lord expects each one of us to act like the new person we have become in Jesus Christ. He expects His standards to become our standards, His purposes our purposes, His desires our desires.

Beginning with chapter 4, Paul began teaching his Christian readers how these blessings should affect how they live. [Turn to Ephesians 4:1-3](#). Christians are part of one body and need to walk in unity. Later, in [verses 22 & 24](#), he wrote **“to put off your old self ... and to put on the new self.”** In the 1st half of chapter 5 Paul wrote to Walk in Love, to Walk in Wisdom and to Walk in Light. But no one can maintain this walk on their own; even Paul wrote in [Romans 7:18](#), **“For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.”** There is only one way that a person can walk the way he should—through the power of the Holy Spirit. **“Therefore,”** that is “for this reason,” Paul wrote that each Christian needs to **“be filled with the Holy Spirit.”** Christians need to “Walk in the Spirit.”

Unlike the earlier statements, this statement is a command, and it’s addressed to all Christians—this is God’s will for every believer. It applies to every Christian not just the *“spiritual”* ones—whatever that means. It’s not optional. As we mentioned last week, this verse really should read **“keep on being filled with the Spirit.”** **“Being filled with the Spirit”**—walking in the Spirit—is an experience every Christian should experience continually and not just on special occasions. Notice, too, a person doesn’t fill himself, but he permits the Spirit to do the filling.

Every Christian has the Holy Spirit. When a person trusts Christ as his Lord and Savior, he is immediately baptized by the Spirit into the body of Christ—1 Corinthians 12:13 says, “For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body-- whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free-- and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.” When one is saved, the Holy Spirit comes to live in each Christian—Romans 8:9 says, “And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.” But being “filled with the Spirit” or rather “*being continually filled with the Spirit*” is more than having the Spirit or having the baptism of the Spirit both of which signify belonging to Christ’s body. The filling of the Spirit means that one gives himself completely to Christ. Every Christian has the Holy Spirit, but the command is that every Christian walk in the Spirit or be filled by the Spirit and not in the old nature.

When someone is filled with anger, his mind, his emotions, and his body are controlled by anger. If someone is filled with joy, she is like Natalia—bubbling over in everything she says and does. Similarly, when one is filled with the Holy Spirit, he is controlled by the Holy Spirit in everything he says and does. Such a person is continually controlled by the Spirit in his mind, his emotions, his will, and his actions. He is a new creation in Christ. In today’s Scripture, Paul gave 3 results or proofs of the fullness of the Spirit in the life of a believer.

II. Results or Proofs of Being Spirit-Filled

A. The “filled” believer is joyful. First, if a believer is filled with the Spirit, he is joyful. In Gal. 5:22 joy is one of the fruits of the Spirit. Christian joy is not a shallow emotion that rises or falls depending on the circumstances. Christian joy is a deep feeling of confidence and peace in good times and in bad. A Christian can be joyful even in the midst of pain and suffering. As Paul put it in Philippians 4:11, “I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.” This contentment and joy accompany “the peace of God, which passeth all understanding,” from Philippians 4:7.

Paul wrote that when a believer walks in the Spirit, he has an inner joy—a deep-down joy—that shows itself in his “speaking psalms, hymns and spiritual songs and in singing.” God puts music in the souls and then on the lips of His children who walk in obedience to Him. The Spirit’s music isn’t

hindered by a monotone or enhanced by a magnificent voice. [Psalm 66:1](#) says, “**Make a joyful noise unto God.**” Spiritual joy will shine through any and every song sung from a heart filled with joy.

When a person is drunk on wine, he is under the control of the alcohol. He feels a sense of release; it seems that all his troubles are gone. He isn’t ashamed to express himself and doesn’t hide what is going on in his life. Since the alcohol controls his brain, he is out of control. He makes a fool of himself and calls attention to himself. He may sing, but his songs reveal the corruption in his heart.

On the other hand, the person who is filled with the Spirit is under the control of God. He experiences an inner joy; he is not afraid to express the glory of God. While the drunk is out of control, the believer experiences a total self-control that is really God in control—another fruit of the Spirit from [Galatians 5:23](#) is self-control. As compared to the drunk who glorifies himself, the Spirit-filled Christian glorifies God and, like Paul in [1 Corinthians 4:10](#), is willing to be a “**fool for Christ.**” Instead of calling attention to himself, the Spirit-filled believer is a witness for Christ. The Spirit-filled Christian’s song comes from God. [Turn to Psalm 40:1-3.](#) For a New Testament example, turn to the story of Paul and Silas in a Philippian jail; [turn to Acts 16:22-25.](#) In spite of pain and shame, Paul and Silas were able to sing praises to God in the Philippian jail. The result was the conversion of the jailor and his family. What a happy time they all had that midnight hour—and they didn’t need to get drunk to enjoy it.

Christians who are filled with the Holy Spirit enjoy being together and experience a oneness in the Lord. They do not need the false stimulants of the world. They have the Spirit of God—He is all they need. We ought to have a good time, and we ought to have fun in church—the joy of the Lord should be here; joy that comes through the continual filling of the Spirit.

B. The “filled” believer is thankful. Paul wrote that a 2nd proof of being filled with the Spirit is one is “**always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.**” Spirit-filled believers are thankful. There are different attitudes about thanksgiving. Some people aren’t thankful simply because they think they deserve every good thing they have—and more! Jesus told a parable about a rich fool who wasn’t thankful. [Turn to Luke 12:16-21.](#) The rich man arrogantly

assumed that he was in charge of his life and his destiny. He gave God no credit for his blessings and therefore saw no reason to thank Him. He quickly found out though, that he had no power to protect his possessions or his life.

A second attitude about thanksgiving is that of the hypocrite. This was the attitude of the self-righteous Pharisees. Jesus described them in “The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector” in [Luke 18:11-12](#): “The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men-- robbers, evildoers, adulterers-- or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’” As Jesus made clear in the words “praying about himself,” although the man used God’s name, his thankfulness was to himself and for himself. He used God’s name only to call attention to his false piety; his false holiness. God had no part in that prayer, it was totally worthless. The person who thinks the world owes him everything is never thankful for anything.

A third attitude about thanksgiving is that of the truly thankful person. [Turn to Luke 17:11-19.](#) The Samaritan was truly thankful, “He threw himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked him.” As [James 1:17](#) says, he acknowledged that “every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights.”

Everyone is grateful or thankful for things at special occasions (like birthdays and Christmas); but Paul commanded his readers—Christians—to “always give thanks to God.” [1 Thessalonians 5:18](#) says, “Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” In our own strength, we could never obey this command; only through the filling of the Spirit can one be successful. We all know verses like [Romans 8:28](#) which says, “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purposes.” But in the midst of suffering or trouble or testing or disappointment, it is difficult if not impossible to be give thanks in our own strength.

After Peter and the other apostles had been flogged and ordered not to speak again in the name of Jesus, [Acts 5:41](#) says that “the apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name.” Paul wrote about being thankful to the Ephesians while he

was imprisoned in Rome awaiting trial and possible execution. These are examples of being thankful for everything—the bad and the good. This is the result of being continually filled with the Spirit.

Being thankful in all things is not a Christian option, a high order of living that one is free to choose or disregard. As Joni Eareckson Tada, a quadriplegic author, has said, *“Giving thanks is not a matter of feeling thankful, it is a matter of obedience.”* We can give thanks for everything because even though we may not understand, we know that, as [1 Corinthians 4:17](#) says, *“Our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.”*

C. Third, a “filled” believer is submissive. Paul wrote, *“Submit to one another for Christ.”* Submission doesn’t mean to cringe and *“obey.”* It has nothing to do with the order of authority, i.e., who is in charge, but rather submission involves the operation of authority, i.e., how it is given and how it is received. Christians are to reject self-centeredness and work for the good of others. Submission is nothing more than a decision about the relative worth of others.

Several times Jesus tried to teach His disciples not to throw their weight around or seek to become great at somebody else’s expense. Unfortunately, they failed to learn the lesson, and even at the Last Supper they were arguing over who was the greatest ([Luke 22:24-27](#)). When Jesus washed their feet, He taught them that the greatest person is the one who uses his authority to build up people and not, like the Pharisees, to build up his own authority and make himself important at another’s expense. In [Matthew 22:39](#), Jesus said *“Love your neighbor as yourself.”* Submission declares that we are of infinite worth and so is everyone else—[Galatians 3:28](#) says, *“There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”* [Romans 12:3](#) says, *“Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you.”*

Submission is a strong and free act of one’s will based on agape love for the other person. [Turn to Philippians 2:1-4.](#) Submission is a way by which we realize that our happiness and fulfillment are not dependent upon having our own way or getting what we want. Submission is the willingness to consider

the needs of others above our own self-interest. It is a commitment to live in relationships where the worth of all persons is valued and where “*getting my own way*” gives way to considering the concerns, needs, and interests of others. It is a way to respect and love other people. Submission is actually agape love in action. This is why Paul says that Christians are to submit one to another. Christians are to respect and love other people.

Believers are commanded to live a life of submission not because of their station in life, but because Jesus lived a life of submission and showed that this is the only way to “*find life*.” [Matt. 10:39](#) says, “**Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.**” All of us are to submit ourselves one to another in the fear or “**out of reverence of Christ.**” It cannot be a “*my way*” proposition. No one can say, “*I want you to know that I’ll do as I please. If I want to do it this way, I will do it this way.*” Such an attitude is not a mark of a Spirit-filled believer or the Lordship of Christ.

III. Conclusion

Walk in sacrificial love, walk in light, walk in wisdom, and now walk in the Spirit. It is above the ability of mortal man to “**imitate God**” and walk in this way. One might walk a step or two, but then he will fall. Paul’s challenge and command to “**be continually filled with the Holy Spirit**” is addressed to Christians. So, the first step, the first question to ask is is Jesus your Lord and Savior? If He is, how does your walk measure up to His yardstick—the Bible? Are you allowing the Holy Spirit to fill you continually? Are the characteristics of joy, thankfulness, and submission evident in your life?

The choice is up to you—as [Joshua 24:15](#) says, “**Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve.**” If you let the Holy Spirit fill you, like the jailor in Acts 16, you will be “**filled with joy**” and you “**will praise God’s name in song and glorify him with thanksgiving.**” ([Psalm 69:30](#)). Unlike salvation and the baptism of the Holy Spirit, being filled with the Spirit is a lifelong activity. Daily ask the Holy Spirit to fill you and use you and then watch what He can do! As Paul said in [Philippians 4:13](#), “**I can do everything through him who gives me strength.**” Keep on being filled with the Spirit! and walk in Jesus’ steps.