

Over the last few weeks we have been looking at different aspects of church and we've thought of it not, just as a place but as people. People who are

- designed for worship,
- encouraged to be disciples,
- passionate about prayer

Today we're going to see that we should be a Spirit-filled people and next week we're going to see that we need to value family life.

Eph 5:18 do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the spirit

In Ephesus there was a very mixed religious landscape and one of the most prominent was the cult of Dionysius - followers of Dionysius regarded intoxication as a means of inspiration and Paul is giving a specific warning that true inspiration only comes from the Holy Spirit as well as the general warning about drunkenness.

I wonder if the reason that many of us lack passion and enthusiasm and fearful about speaking up for God is because we are not experiencing the power and fullness of the Holy Spirit. The reason that we suffer spiritual defeat is the absence of the fullness and power of the spirit in our lives. So I want to think a little about what it means to be filled with the spirit.

I have four headings to help us:

First, "I Must Have The Filling."

Second, "I May Have The Filling."

Third, "I Will Have The Filling."

Fourth, "I Shall Have The Filling."

First, "I Must Have The Filling."

This is the command of God. We are told to be filled with the spirit - it is obligatory, not optional. We believe that when a person asks for forgiveness and gives their life to God in faith, a number of things happen: they are forgiven (becoming a Christian — not through baptism but by personal choice), they become a child of God, they begin a process through which they are expected to become more like God, and the Holy Spirit enters them to help them in their lives as disciples. In church we call that indwelling and it is a one-off experience. Sometimes it is very dramatic and other times there is no obvious difference. Paul was talking about something different here and what we have translated as be filled with the spirit in Greek actually means, go on being filled.

You can have as much of God's power as you are willing to pay the price to get. Sometimes we think that it's only for some super spiritual people, but that is not the case - we are all commanded to go on being filled with the Spirit.

It is a command of God, and it is also the great need of the church. To attempt the work of God in our own strength is foolishness and we must be very careful in how we try to serve God. Whether we are serving the tea and coffee, delivering with the food bank, teaching at young church or leading worship we need to pursue the power of God — to the best of our ability and in a way that honours God.

First, "I Must Have The Filling."

Second, "I May Have The Filling."

The first point has to do with command and duty, this one has to do with privilege. For too many of us the reality is that we have become accustomed to not being so very different to everyone else. We talk about new life, we sing about the power of God, we preach about transformation but very often that's not our experience. And we get used to it and imagine that our experience is all there is. And we believe that it's not for us, that we cannot be filled.

We grow accustomed to mediocrity in Christian life, and as long as we are faithful in church and give regularly, we overlook the occasional loss of temper, or gossiping or whatever, but attending church is not the criteria for fullness of the spirit, living a holy life is. God longs to give us the fullness of the spirit so that we can live in victory every day.

Eph 5:2.... walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us.....

Eph 5:8 Live as children of light

We can only do that if we are filled to overflowing with the spirit of God - and that is available for every believer.

First, "I Must Have The Filling."

Second, "I May Have The Filling."

Third, "I Will Have The Filling."

"Will" is the motivation. The drive. The desire. Without these we will never be filled. "I will" involves deciding to give up our old habits and lifestyle, and taking on the habits and lifestyle of Jesus. It involves becoming less enamoured with the things of the world and more enthralled by Jesus.

It means making the decision to deal with temper, pride, lust, drunkenness, or whatever other thing keeps us from God.

"I will" means giving up our own ambitions and plans, and giving them to God. It's not that God never agrees with our hopes and plans, but they are always better when he is in them.

"I will" is the active decision to remove anything from our lives which may prevent us being filled, and actively seeking God and pleading with him to fill us. Satan often tempts by saying, "Would you really give that up? That is an awful price to pay." He makes us afraid, but once you say to the Lord, "Anything and Everything", the fear turns to joy and filling.

Maybe you're here today and you're thinking, "I can't give everything." Let me remind you of the rest of verse 2: walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. Jesus gave everything for us so picture him on the cross, bleeding and dying between two robbers. Even there he was willing to forgive. The innocent sacrificed for the guilty. When we consider the cost of our freedom from sin how can we say, "I can't do it"?

I Must Have The Filling.

I May Have The Filling.

I Will Have The Filling.

"I Shall Have The Filling."

When a believer gets so hungry for the power of God that they will pay any price for it, then they shall have it.

When we give ourselves to God to be filled and used by him, he will honour our act of obedience and surrender. We come to him, believing that he is faithful and will do what he says. How do I know that because in Luke 11:13 Jesus says, If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

"I shall be filled" is the faith side of the filling - believing that God will deliver his promise of the fullness of his spirit to any believer who prepares themselves and asks for it. This is not about feelings or emotions - it's about faith.

It is about obeying the command of God to be filled; believing that every believer can be filled; having the desire and passion to go after a deeper experience with God; and, believing that God rejoices in responding to that kind of prayer from his people.

Are you filled with the Spirit of God? If you have never asked God to forgive you and offered him your life then the answer has to be no. Today you have an opportunity to put that right — do it now — an honest prayer along the lines of, "God, please forgive me, I want to follow you and I need to be filled by your Spirit." If you are a believer already only you can answer that question — but if your answer is no then take this opportunity to put that right.

Let's pray.