

SPIRITUAL DYNAMICS

Session #1

WHAT IS THE FILLING WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT?

Presented To
The Church of the Servant King
Dallas, Texas

Purpose

- ✓ To clarify the Biblical concept of the “**filling**” of the Holy Spirit as it relates to the believer of the Church Age
- ✓ To contribute to a Biblical understanding the spiritual life of the believer
- ✓ To expose erroneous pneumatology

Summary Statement

There are two different types of “filling” with the Holy Spirit in Scripture and only one of the two types is required of and normative for the Church Age believer.

Why is this Study Important?

See the points under the **Conclusions** section below.

Analysis

1. The concept of believers being “filled with the Holy Spirit” is mentioned in some fashion in the following passages which are divided into two different types:

Type #1

Luke 1.15 Acts 6.3
Luke 1.41 Acts 6.5
Luke 1.67 Acts 7.55
Luke 4.1 Acts 9.17
Acts 2.4 Acts 11.24
Acts 4.8 Acts 13.9
Acts 4.31 Acts 13.52

Type #2

Ephesians 5.18

2. These passages are divided into two Types due to some very different Greek syntactical construction.
3. The Type #1 passages are characterized by three different construction patterns:
 - a. Construction Pattern #1 - *pimplemi* (verb) + *pneuma* (**genitive** case noun)
Luke 1.15, 41, 67; Acts 2.4; 4.8, 31; 9.17; 13.9
 - b. Construction Pattern #2 - *pleres* (adjective) + *pneuma* (**genitive** case noun)
Luke 4.1; Acts 6.3, 5; 7.55; 11.24
 - c. Construction Pattern #3 - *pleroo* (verb) + *pneuma* (**genitive** case noun)

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Acts 13.52

d. Note: the genitive case is the case of “possession”.

4. The Type #2 passage has the following construction pattern:

pleroo + pneuma (**dative** case noun)
Ephesians 5.18

5. On the surface, the English translation does not reveal a significant difference between these various constructions and translates each passage using some variation of “...filled with the Spirit...”

6. The context of each of the Type #1 passages discloses the following common circumstances attending the believers who were “...filled with the Spirit...”:

Things it was:

- Associated with **SERVICE**. (Even though some of these passages associate a miraculous circumstance with the “filling of the Holy Spirit”, the Type #1 filling is associated with service of some type).
- It was **absolute** (complete filling; not partial filling)
- It was received **instantaneously** (not progressively)
- It was evidently **temporary** (could be lost)
- It was experienced only by a relatively select **few**

Things it evidently was not:

- It is not commanded
- It was not received by praying for it
- It was not experienced by every believer
- It had nothing to do with one’s positional, experiential or ultimate sanctification (either the means to or the result of) – contrast this with the context of Eph 5.18
- It did not require a volitional choice to receive it
- It had nothing to do with making better decisions
- It had nothing to do with discerning God’s will

7. The Greek construction of Ephesians 5.18 indicates the following things which are true about the Type #2 filling:

Things it was:

- It is associated with Christian **CHARACTER**
- It is associated with experiential sanctification, therefore partial and progressive
- It is commanded. (This makes it normative for the Church Age believer).
- The present tense means that it should be our habit to be filled.
- The passive voice means that Christians receive the filling when they meet certain conditions.
- The believer’s volition is required to receive this type of “filling with the Spirit”

Things it evidently was not:

- It is not received by prayer
- Absolute

- Associated with feeling or the emotions
- “Control” by the HS

8. Points regarding “progressive revelation”:

- Until the apostle Paul revealed the second type of “filling with the Spirit” in Ephesians 5.18 (circa AD 60) as normative for Christian living, the “filling with the Spirit” was accomplished in the believer by God the Father as needed.
- When we examine these passages, we see three distinct categories based upon dispensation:

Passage	Type	Dispensation	Service Event
Luke 1.15	1	Age of Israel	A characterization of John’s call to ministry as having been chosen and empowered of God
Luke 1.41	1	Age of Israel	Empowers Elizabeth to pronounce blessing upon Mary which prompts Mary’s prophesy in response
Luke 1.67	1	Age of Israel	Zacharias, father of John, prophesies
Lu 4.1	1	Age of Israel	Jesus is led and sustained in the wilderness during His temptations by Satan
Acts 2.4	1	Transitional	Believers on the day of Pentecost speak in other languages (tongues)
Acts 4.8	1	Transitional	Peter preaches in the face of opposition from the religious leaders after healing a man who had been lame from birth (3.2ff)
Acts 4.31	1	Transitional	Disciples (companions of Peter – v. 23) receive boldness to preach the Truth about Jesus in the midst of strong opposition from the religious leaders
Acts 6.3	1	Transitional	The twelve apostles direct the congregation of believers to select seven men who are “full” of the Holy Spirit to be in charge of the task of caring for widows of Hellenistic and native Hebrews.
Acts 7.55	1	Transitional	Stephen sees Jesus standing at the right hand of the Father
Acts 9.17	1	Transitional	Ananias, a disciple, lays hands on Saul (Paul) to restore Saul’s sight and so that Saul might be filled with the Holy Spirit
Acts 11.24	1	Transitional	Barnabas, from the Jerusalem church and sent to meet with Paul is said to be full of the Holy Spirit. “Considerable numbers” were brought to faith as a result of Barnabas’ ministry. After finding Saul in Tarsus (v. 25-26), Barnabas takes Saul to Antioch
Acts 13.9	1	Transitional	Paul is filled with the Holy Spirit and pronounces a curse of blindness upon a magician who was opposing Paul and Barnabas on the island of Cyprus (v. 4) resulting in the conversion of the proconsul (v.12)
Acts 13.52	1	Transitional	The disciples (believers as a result of the ministry of Paul and Barnabas) in Pisidian Antioch (modern Turkey) are filled with joy in the midst of opposition from the Judaizers
Ephesians 5.18	2	Church Age	NO SERVICE – CHARACTER IS EMPHASIZED

- There is a great similarity between the Type #1 filling of the Holy Spirit and the enduement of the Holy Spirit found in the Age of Israel.
- During the elapsed period between Acts 2 (circa AD 30) and Ephesians 5:18 (circa AD 60), the “filling with the Spirit” was not commanded, and therefore, not normative, thus indicating a distinction between the “filling” of Luke/Acts and Ephesians 5:18.
- The fullest revelation about the nature of the Christian way of life is given to the apostle Paul, therefore we can expect function to be somewhat different until Paul’s revelation is penned for us.

9. The unique nature of the Greek construction in Ephesians 5.18 is explained in the following points:

a. “Normally, a verb of filling takes a genitive of content. However, there are possibly three instances in the NT when *pleroo* takes a dative of content. **It must be noted, however, that there are no clear examples in biblical Greek in which *en* + the dative indicates content. (Thus the popular interpretation of *plerousthe en pneumati* in Ephesians 5:18 as ‘be filled with the Spirit’ in the sense that the Spirit is the content with which one is filled is most likely incorrect.)”¹**

b. Regarding Ephesians 5:18:

To see *en pneumati* here as indicating content is grammatically suspect (even though it is, in many circles, the predominant view). Only if the flow of argument and/or the lack of other good possibilities strongly point in the direction of content would we be compelled to take it as such. There are no other examples in biblical Greek in which *en* + the dative after *pleroo* indicates content. Further, the parallel with *oino* [wine] as well as the common grammatical category of *means* suggest that the idea intended is that believers are to be filled *by means of* the Spirit. If so, there seems to be an unnamed agent.²

c. In other words, there is a parallel between “wine” and “Spirit” in Ephesians 5.18 – “be not drunk *by means of* wine, but be filled *by means of* the Spirit” – whereby there is an unnamed agent [Christ] involved in the filling process.

d. Character – Jesus is the agent with which believers are commanded to be filled

The meaning of this text can only be fully appreciated in light of the *pleroo* language in Ephesians. Always the term is used in connection with a member of the Trinity. Three considerations seem to be the key: (1) In Ephesians 3:19 the “hinge” prayer introducing the last half of the letter makes a request that the believers “be filled with all the fullness of God” (*plerothete eis pan to pleroma tou theou*.) The explicit *content* of *pleroo* is thus God’s fullness (probably a reference to his moral attributes). (2) In [Ephesians] 4:10 Christ is said to be the agent of filling (with v. 11 adding the specifics of his giving spiritual gifts). (3) The author then brings his argument to a crescendo in [Ephesians] 5:18: Believers

¹ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 170-171. Wallace makes similar observations - Footnote #85, on page 171 reads “Abbot notes that ‘the use of *en* + *pleroo* to express the content with which a thing is filled would be quite unexampled.’ The three instances in which *pleroo* takes a dative of content are: 1) Rom. 1:29 (“being filled with all wickedness”); 2) 2 Cor. 7:4 (“I am filled with comfort”); 3) Luke 2:40 (“being filled with wisdom”). In none of these instances do we find the preposition *en* associated with *pleroo*.”

² Ibid., 375.

are to be filled by Christ *by means of* the Spirit *with* the content of the fullness of God.³

- e. Some points from the above quotes:
- In Ephesians 4:10, *Christ* is said to be the AGENT of filling.
 - In Ephesians 5:18, the *Holy Spirit* is said to be the MEANS or INSTRUMENT by which the filling occurs.
 - In Ephesians 3:19, the *fullness of God* is said to be the CONTENT with which we are to be filled.
 - So, Jesus is the personal agent Who fills the yielded Christian with the content of the fullness of God by means of the Holy Spirit who is the instrument used by Christ to fill the believer.
- a. Ephesians 5:18 “And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit” (KJV)
- 1) Ephesians 5:18 is distinct from every other syntactical representation because of the use of *en* + the dative
 - 2) “With wine” translates the Greek word *oino* as a dative of means indicating that wine is the instrument used to produce drunkenness.
 - 3) “With the Spirit” translates *en + pneumatī* with a dative of means indicating that the **Holy Spirit** is the **instrument** being used to produce “filling” in the Christian. Point: the Holy Spirit is not that with which the Christian is filled. The Holy Spirit is the instrument being used to “fill” the Christian.
 - 4) This verse establishes a parallel between the wine and the Holy Spirit. As wine is the instrument that produces drunkenness, so the Holy Spirit is the instrument that produces “filling”.
 - 5) This should raise the question “If the Holy Spirit is used to produce the “filling”, with what does He “fill” the Christian?” Note that the Holy Spirit is **NOT** that with which the Christian is being filled.
 - 6) Since the phrase “be filled” in Ephesians 5:18 is a present, passive, imperative, the present tense should be viewed as progressive and relative, and not instantaneous and not absolute.
10. Why should anyone even be concerned that there might be two different kinds of “filling with the Spirit” found in Luke, Acts, and Ephesians? Answer: a failure to recognize the difference between the two different types of “filling” with the Spirit may result in the commingling of both types, which commingling so perverts the normative “filling” commanded in Ephesians that the Christian may never understand and never enter the “yieldedness to the Holy Spirit” which is so essential to living the Christian way of life. It’s the difference between operating in the energy of the flesh and operating in the energy of the Spirit.

Conclusions

1. Type #1 experience is no longer valid today, therefore, don’t associate the “filling of the Holy Spirit” with it.
2. The failure to distinguish Type #1 from Type #2 “filling” is the cause for much confusion in Christendom today.
3. Type #1 “filling” does not produce Christian character.
4. Type #1 is instantaneous, whereas Type #2 is a process.
5. Type #2 is to be normative in every Christian life.
6. The Type #1 experience sought today by some is always associated with a feeling, e.g. a feeling is experienced, therefore I must be “filled”.

³ Ibid.

7. Those who are considered fundamental Christians have often made the mistake of failing to distinguish between the two types of “filling” and have drawn some erroneous conclusions about the subject, i.e. the “filling” with the Holy Spirit today is instantaneous.
8. The valid Type #2 filling is associated with the mentality and accompanies the development of Christian character.
9. Instead of using the phrase “filled with the Spirit”, we should use the phrase “filled by means of the Spirit” to describe that which is normative for the Christian today.