

2. In our text it appears that speaking, singing, giving thanks and submitting to one another are the results of being filled “by the Spirit.” In the original they could just as easily be interpreted as the means by which we are filled by the Spirit. In other words, when we are “filled by the Spirit” it will directly impact the way we speak to one another, sing, offer thanks to God, and submit to one another out of reverence for Christ (results). But the way we speak to one another, sing, give thanks to God, and submit to one another can also have a direct impact on being filled by the Spirit (means).

How does viewing our speaking, singing, giving thanks, and submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ, as both the result of being filled by the Spirit and means by which we are filled by the Spirit, challenge your perception of what it means to “be filled by the Spirit?”

### BEING FILLED BY THE SPIRIT AND THE MESSAGE OF CHRIST (Colossians 3:16)

Ephesians and Colossians are twin epistles. Paul writes them both while he is under house arrest in Rome. The theme of Colossians is the glory of God in Christ, the theme of Ephesians is the glory of Christ in the Church. While there are similarities throughout the epistles, the similarities are particularly striking when you compare Ephesians 5:18-6:9 with Colossians 3:16-4:1. A side by side comparison reveals more than thirty linguistic parallels, but you need look no further than Colossians 3:16 to get a feel for the similarities.

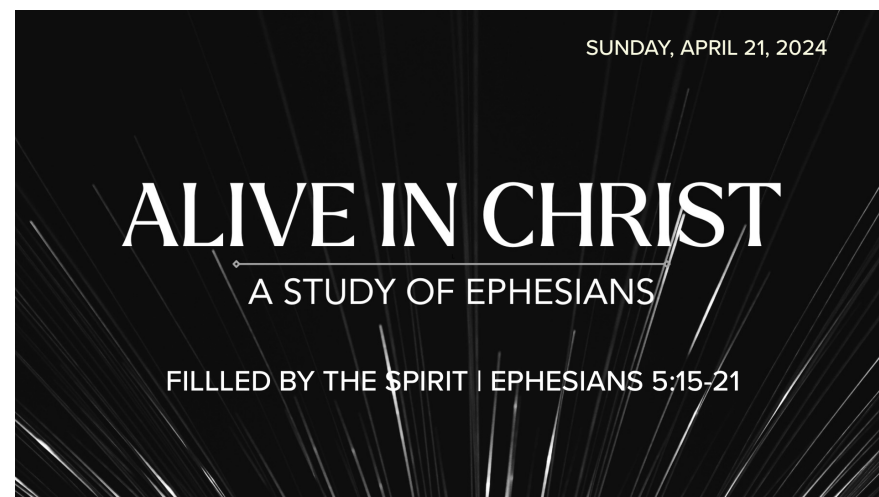
*COLOSSIANS 3:16 Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.*

In Colossians 3:16 you have the same speaking, singing and giving thanks pattern you find in Ephesians 5:18-21. The only real difference is the central command. In Ephesians the command is “Be filled by the Spirit.” In Colossians, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.” That means that for Paul these are interchangeable ideas. When we are filled by the Spirit, the message of Christ will dwell in us richly, and when the message of Christ dwells in us richly we will be filled by the Spirit.

1. What do you think it means to let the message of Christ dwell in you richly?
2. How does this happen?
3. How would you describe the vital relationship between the message of Christ and the filling by the Spirit?

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Sometimes we struggle in our walk with Christ because we insist on doing for ourselves what God intended us to do together in the power of his Spirit.

In the book of Ephesians, the goal of the Christian life is to be filled to the measure of the fullness of God. God has given us two incredible resources to make this possible. He has given us each other, and he has given us his Spirit.

Paul has already stressed the importance of the body of Christ. In chapter 3, he prays that God would “strengthen us with power through his Spirit in our inner being, so that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith...” and “that we together with all the Lord’s holy people” might “grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love Christ,” “that we might be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God (3:16-19).”

In chapter 4, Paul reminds us, Christ himself gave [us] apostles, ...prophets, ... evangelists, and pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ (4:11-13).”

The result is that we will “no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, ...blown here and there by every wind of teaching” so that “speaking the truth in love, we will... become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ (vv. 14-15).”

Now in Ephesians 5, Paul stresses the importance of “being filled by the Holy Spirit.”

## A WELL ORDERED LIFE (vv. 15-17)

Paul opens this section with a simple command “be very careful how you live,” followed by three vivid contrasts “not as unwise but wise,” “not foolish but understanding,” “not drunk, but filled by the Spirit.”

<sup>15</sup> *Be very careful, then, how you live—*

### A. Not Unwise But Wise (15b-16)

*...not as unwise but as wise, <sup>16</sup> making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.*

1. According to Paul what makes us wise?
2. The Greeks viewed time in one of two ways. “Chronos” refers to chronological time. “Kairos” refers to seasons of life or opportunities.” The opportunities Paul has in mind may be related to the “good works God created in advance for us to do (2:10).”  
  
What are some of the opportunities we need to be aware of as we order our lives and manage our time?
3. How is a “kairos” approach to time radically different than a “chronos” approach to time?

### B. Not Foolish But Understanding (v. 17)

<sup>17</sup> *Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is.*

1. According to Paul how do we become understanding?
2. Why is understanding “the Lord’s will” different from and superior to other forms of knowledge?
3. Why is it foolish to order our private worlds around any thing other than understanding and pursuing the Lord’s will?

### C. Not Drunk But Filled By the Spirit (v. 18)

<sup>18</sup> *Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit...*

Paul expends far more time and ink describing this third and final contrast than he does the other two combined. This may well be the central command of the entire letter. It leads to vibrant worship when we gather as God’s people and a gentle and loving spirit when we return to our homes and conduct business in the marketplace.

1. Pagan worship was often characterized by drunken orgies. Christian worship was the exact opposite—sane, orderly, edifying for everyone involved and deeply Christ-centered.

While it is quite obvious when someone is under the influence of drugs or alcohol, there are any number of more subtle outside influences that threaten to reorder our loves and dilute our worship. What are some of the more subtle influences that control our lives, order our loves, and shape our worship?”

2. The command to “be filled by the Spirit” is a present passive verb which means we are not the primary actor and it is something that needs to continually happen. The phrase more naturally reads “be continually filled by the Spirit.” The church is to be filled with all the fullness of God and the Spirit is the means by which we are filled.
  - a. If God is the primary actor and the Holy Spirit is the means by which we are filled, what is our role in the process?
  - b. Why does this need to be a continuing reality rather than a one time experience?

## BEING FILLED BY THE SPIRIT AND THE BODY OF CHRIST (vv. 19-21)

<sup>19</sup> *...speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, <sup>20</sup> always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>21</sup> Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.*

1. More often than not when we think of being filled by the Spirit, we think of something that we largely do on our own. For Paul being filled by the Spirit is a community project. The command is plural. He is speaking to the church as a whole not simply individuals within the church. The result Paul is looking for is vibrant worship and compelling community.

In Ephesians 4, Paul describes the church as “God’s people... built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.” He goes on to tell us, “In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord...” He tells the Ephesian believers in particular, “...you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit (Ephesians 4:19-20).”

- a. How does it challenge your understanding of “being filled by the Spirit” to know that it is not simply something we do by ourselves, but something we do together?
- b. What is your part in insuring that we are “filled by the Spirit?”