

**Date:** 02-24-2019  
**Series:** The Holy Spirit

## WHAT DOES “BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT” MEAN IN EPHESIANS 5:18?

(Ephesians 5:15-21)

**Ephesians 5:15–21**-----<sup>15</sup> See then that you walk circumspectly [be careful about how you live], not as fools but as wise, <sup>16</sup> redeeming the time, [using your time productively] because the days are evil. <sup>17</sup> Therefore do not be unwise, [don't be foolish] but understand what the will of the Lord is. <sup>18</sup> And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation [reckless]; but be filled with the Spirit, <sup>19</sup> speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, <sup>20</sup> giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>21</sup> submitting to one another in the fear of God.

**Intro:** Cup/Pitcher illustration (man named “Water” holding pitcher of water)

**Title:** What Does “Be Filled with the Spirit” Mean in Ephesians 5:18?

(Prayer)

Nearly every day in the newspaper I read about people in Dallas who, typically between midnight and 6 AM, drive across Dallas in a drunken state and end up killing either themselves, others, or both. Drinking too much alcohol is reckless and it results in all kinds of horrible outcomes.

And that is why Paul tells God’s people in Ephesus in Ephesians 5:18: “Do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation (recklessness)...” One Greek dictionary defines “dissipation” this way:

“...behavior which shows lack of concern or thought for the consequences of an action—‘senseless deeds, reckless deeds, recklessness...’”<sup>1</sup>

Believers are not to allow alcohol to make them drunk, which shows they are reckless and foolish, **BUT**, Paul says, “be filled with the Spirit.”

Unfortunately, this is an English translation that is not very clear at all. One of the big problems is the word “with.”

There are at least three issues that I would like us to contend with this morning, and the first one is this:

### 1. Is this filling active or passive?

In other words, does it mean (1) I am to fill myself with the Spirit (active); or, (2) I am to let the Spirit fill me? (Passive)

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<sup>1</sup> Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 752.

**Answer? #2**---this is a passive Greek word, and thus, the correct translation here would be, “**Do not allow** yourself to be drunk with wine which is recklessness, but **allow yourself** to be filled...”,

That’s issue number one. Our next issue is this...

## 2. **Is the Spirit the content or agent of the filling?**

In other words, is the Spirit (1) **what we are** filled with (the content) or is the Spirit (2) **the One** who **does** the filling (the agent), the One who fills us with something?

**Answer: #2**---He is the agent of filling, the One who fill us with something.

Greek expert Daniel Wallace said that the English word “with” in v. 18 is the most unlikely way to express agency (or the **cause** of the filling). **The word “with”** should never have been used here. The correct word to use here is our word “by.”

The Holy Spirit is the agent who fills us. So the correct translation here would be, “**Do not allow yourself** to be drunk with wine ... but allow yourself to be filled **by** the Spirit...”

And this brings us to issue number three.

## 3. **What is it that the Holy Spirit wants to fill us with?**

In other words, what is the content He wants to fill us with?

We get an idea of what the Spirit desires to fill us with based on the **results** of being fill that are listed in verses 19 through 21. “...be filled by the Spirit...”

**Ephesians 5:19–21**-----<sup>19</sup> **speaking** to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, **singing** and **making melody** in your heart to the Lord, <sup>20</sup> **giving thanks** always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>21</sup> **submitting** to one another in the fear of God.

The key to understanding this is to look at a parallel passage in Colossians 3:

**Colossians 3:16**-----<sup>16</sup> Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, **teaching** and **admonishing** one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, **singing** with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

In this verse, what is the content that is to fill us? “**The word of Christ.**”

When you read, meditate upon, or memorize God's word, you are allowing the Holy Spirit to fill you, not with the world's thinking, but with God's thinking. This reminds us of what Paul said earlier in v. 16: "... do not be unwise [foolish], but understand what the will of the Lord is."

The context of Ephesians 5:18 is walking wisely rather than foolishly. Where do we get that wisdom? From the word of God.

We understand God's will through his Word.

**Therefore, based on** comparing Ephesians 5:18 with Colossians 3:16, the **"filling"** that is being spoken of here is you allowing yourself to be filled **by** the Spirit **with** the word of God.

When this happens, there are four results:

**(1) You edify with your words rather than destroy (5:19a)**

<sup>19</sup> speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs...

(as opposed to speaking the "corrupt words" spoken of in Eph. 4:29).

**(2) You worship the Lord in song (5:19b)**

"...singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord..."

No Word, no worship. No Scripture, no song.

The happy person is the person whose delight is in the law of the Lord!

Want to overcome depression? Let the Spirit fill you with God's word.

He'll put a new song in your heart!

**(3) You give thanks to God in good times and bad times (5:20)**

"...giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ..."

**(4) You want to bless those around you at home, work, and church (5:21)**

"...submitting to one another in the fear of God..."

**Application** (once again, we see the importance of God's Word)

**Closing illustration:**

Potato chips, cheese curls, and candy may be some of your favorite things to eat, but for a few mule deer in Arizona's Grand Canyon National Park, these foods proved to be deadly. Park rangers had to kill over two dozen mule deer because they became hooked on junk food left by visitors to the park.

Once the deer get a taste of the sugar and salt, they develop an extreme addiction and will go to any lengths to eat only junk food. The result is that the animals ignore the food they need to thrive, leaving them in poor health and on the edge of starvation. Because of junk food cravings, the deer lose their natural ability to digest vegetation. One park ranger called the junk food “the crack cocaine of the deer world.”

(Closing comments about the dangers of allowing ourselves to be filled by this present world system with its tasty junk food rather than by the Spirit with God's Word.)