

Empowered By The Holy Spirit

So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, . . . (NASB) Eph. 5:17-18

One summer, a father told his sons to cut down a small grove of trees and remove the stumps from the ground. The seven old, big plum trees were located in the backyard of the family's home along with blackberry bushes, poison ivy, and other smaller trees. The two sons agreed to remove the trees but having never done such a thing before, they did not understand how much time was required, how much effort was needed, and what tools to use. But they were eager. Their father provided them an axe, a shovel, and a short saw. These were the tools required to achieve the goal. The youth went to work, and the project was completed after many weeks of effort. When the task was accomplished, the father and his sons burned the huge pile of trees, vines, and debris. The bonfire was a celebration of a job well-done. But the task could not have been achieved without the tools and without a desire to use them.

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WE NEED HELP. In the Christian life, God our Father has asked us to glory in our knowledge and understanding of Him (Jer. 9:23-24). He wants us to know Him! And He wants us to love Him with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength (Matt. 22:36-39). These two things He highly values because they are essential to a relationship with Him. Some people focus on knowing God and others focus on loving God. But God the Father wants us to seek both. We cannot love Him if we do not know Him, and we will not want to pursue Him if we do not love Him. We believe that a study of God's Word will help us know Him; but when we read scripture, we may find that we did not understand it. So some say, "Forget the idea of trying to learn more about God - we just did not understand the passage!" Or, have you ever tried to love God more? Can you generate a greater love inside yourself for Him? Have you tried? Have you thought about 1 Cor. 16:22 which says,

If anyone does not love the Lord, he is to be accursed. Maranatha. (NASB) 1 Cor. 16:22

The Greek word for "love" in this passage means that you are to have an emotional love for Him. This love is not an abstract passionless love, but a real emotional one. Yet, no one has ever been able to generate a feeling of love for another person by a decision of their will. So how do we do both - know and love God? The answer is not found in ourselves. We need some help - we need a "tool." This is the first evidence that we need help in our "inner self."

The second evidence that we need help in our "inner self" is that every Christian struggles in the walk with the Lord Jesus. In fact, all of us want a greater relationship with God. We want to be godly, but sometimes our flesh is weak. Sometimes we

want to sin, but we know that would displease God. Let us admit that we are not what we want to be or what we should be. Anything less is pride and arrogance. Some Christians depend on counselors to provide this help. There are times when a good, biblically based Christian counselor is helpful. Yet, God has provided the greatest “tool” for spiritual growth, spiritual recovery, and victory in the Christian life. This is the same “tool” we have been alluding to above. Not only will “it” draw us into a deeper relationship with God, “it” will help us live a life that pleases God.

THE “POWER TOOL.” God has told us what this “tool” is in Ephesians 3:14-19 through the Apostle Paul.

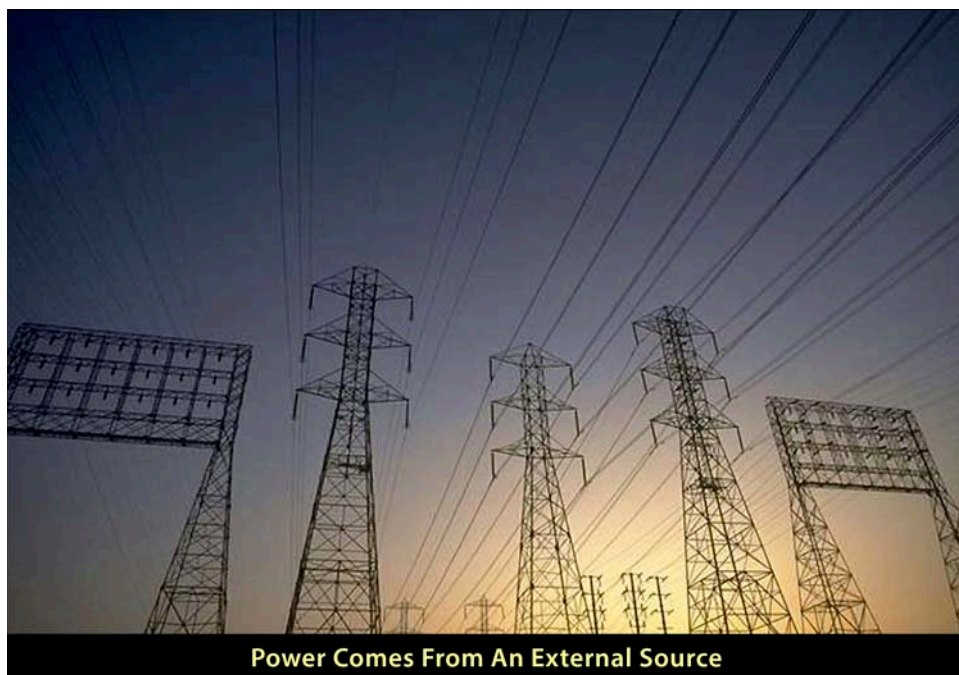
For this reason I bow my knees before the Father . . . that He would grant you . . . to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you . . . may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge . . . (NASB) Eph. 3:14-19

In this passage, Paul tells us that he had been praying for these Ephesian Christians on his knees. That was a wonderful sign of Paul’s humility and submission to God. It takes humility to kneel while praying. Some have prayed while lying on the ground. These are signs of a humble person. Then Paul adds that he had asked God do something for them. Paul was not interested in their outer appearance or outward conduct. He was concerned about something inside them – their inner self.

1) In Eph. 3:14-19, what did Paul say that he wanted to occur in their inner self?

2) According to Paul, who is needed to accomplish this task, and what is provided? The result is described below.

The result will be a greater relationship with God and Christian life. Paul describes the result as Christ dwelling in our hearts



through faith. Faith brings Him into our heart. “Is Jesus in your heart?” For a true Christian the answer is, “Yes!” But Paul means more than that. Paul says that the result will be that Jesus will fill our hearts and consume our attentions. Our love for Him will blossom and grow in every dimension. We will be like a fertilized garden. We will grow in every way. This happens because of the “power through His Spirit.” It occurs when the Holy Spirit has control of our lives.

FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT. Have you ever asked God to reveal His will to you? If so, the New Testament has already revealed God’s will for you in five different places in the New Testament. If you want to do His will, you should start here before you ask Him for something specific in your life. But in this study we will focus on only one.

3) According to Ephesians 5:17-18 what is the will of God for you?

4) In Ephesians 5:18 the Greek word translated as “dissipation” refers to reckless living. What does the illustration “do not get drunk with wine” mean? What happens when one is drunk?

5) The Greek word for “filled” in Ephesians 5:18 is a command, and it is also in the passive tense. This means that we are commanded to allow something to happen to us. What does “be filled with the Spirit” mean? How do we let it happen?

6) What are the evidences that a person is being filled with the Holy Spirit according to Ephesians 5:19-22, 25; 6:1, 5?

Seeking God’s Will?

God has already told us that His will for us includes at least five things:

Be filled with Holy Spirit	Eph. 5:17-18
Be sexually pure	1 Thess. 4:3-8
Give thanks always	1 Thess. 5:18
Submit to your government	1 Pet. 2:13-15
Be willing to suffer for God	1 Pet. 4:19

How To Be Filled. If one desires to be filled with the Holy Spirit, how does this happen? The answer is found in the following question, “Do you want the Holy Spirit to take control of your life?” To be filled with the Holy Spirit means that you are completely and totally willing for Him to control you. Notice God’s illustration in Ephesians 5:17-18. He commands us not to become drunk with wine but to be drunk with the Holy Spirit. To be drunk means that wine has taken control of us. In Jesus’ day the Greek word “filled” was used to refer to someone being filled full of food. That is what God wants us to be – to be filled full of the Holy Spirit. To be filled with the Holy Spirit is to be controlled by Him. If we turn to Colossians 3:16-22, we will discover that not only is it a parallel passage to Ephesians 5:17-6:5, but it gives us another aspect to being filled with the Holy Spirit. Both Ephesians 5:17-6:5 and Colossians 3:16-22 help us understand how to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

7) Do Ephesians 5:17-6:5 and Colossians 3:16-22 show that the same results occur from being “filled with the Holy Spirit” and “dwelling richly in the Word of God”? If so, can a Christian be filled with the Holy Spirit and not dwell

	<i>Ephesians 5:17-6:5</i>	<i>Colossians 3:16-22</i>
<i>The Start</i>	<i>Be filled with the Holy Spirit</i>	<i>Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you</i>
The Result	<p><i>Speaking in psalms, hymns, spiritual songs, singing and making melody</i></p> <p><i>Giving thanks</i></p> <p><i>Wives, be subject to your husbands</i></p> <p><i>Husbands, love your wives</i></p> <p><i>Children, obey your parents</i></p> <p><i>Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters</i></p>	<p><i>Teaching, psalms, hymns, spiritual songs, and singing</i></p> <p><i>Thankfulness</i></p> <p><i>Wives be subject to your husbands</i></p> <p><i>Husbands, love your wives</i></p> <p><i>Children, be obedient to your parents</i></p> <p><i>Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters</i></p>

richly in the Word of God? Are both required? Do they go together?

- 8) The Greek word for “dwell” in Colossians 3:16 has the idea of living in a home. Therefore, what do you think it means to dwell in the Word of God richly?

WALKING IN THE SPIRIT. There are three very important passages in the New Testament that help us understand how to be empowered by the Holy Spirit. We have looked at two of them. Now we will look at the third one. It is found in Galatians 5:16-23. But first, let us look at Galatians 5:16,

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. (NASB) Gal. 5:16-18

This is a wonderful passage because it tells us that if we are walking in the Spirit, the Holy Spirit will be making some new changes in our life.

- 9) According to Gal. 5:16-18 there is a war between two things. What is at war?

- 10) What does the flesh want to do according to Gal. 5:19-21?

- 11) If a person is walking in the Spirit what does the Holy Spirit produce according to Gal. 5:22-23?

In Gal. 5:16 we are commanded by God to walk in the Spirit. To walk in the Spirit is the key to victory over our sinful desires and to living a holy life. The key to victory over sin is not self-punishment, doing penance, or mortification of sin. It is not self-help books or going to prolonged counseling sessions. The key to living a holy life according to Gal. 5:16 is to walk in the Spirit. Christians are commanded to walk in the Spirit since they already live in the Spirit (Rom. 8:2; Gal. 5:25; 1 Pet. 4:6).

The Greek word for “walk” in Gal. 5:16 has the idea of continually walking in the Spirit and the Greek word for “carry out” has the idea of accomplishment. That is, if we are constantly walking in the Spirit, the desire of our flesh will not be satisfied. That is a strong statement. Now we need to ask, “How do we walk in the Spirit?”

The Greek word for “walk” is PERIPATEO which means “to walk up and down” or “walk about” in the Spirit. It does not mean to walk up and down on the Holy Spirit. It does not mean to walk around the Holy Spirit but “in the Holy Spirit.” Now how do we do that? Do you climb inside the Holy Spirit? If so, how do we do that? No, we cannot climb inside the Spirit, but He already indwells us and wants to direct us. This will occur as we walk in the Spirit. Walking in the Spirit is the habitual practice of “being constantly filled by the Holy Spirit” and “dwelling in the Word richly” day after day, moment after moment.


WHEN WE SIN. When we sin, our “walk in the Spirit” or our continual “filling of the Spirit” is broken. It is like a trained dog forgetting his training and wandering away from his master. When we sin, we need our relationship renewed and it can only happen when we confess our sins. We hurt our relationship with the Spirit when we sin in two ways.

12) Ephesians 4:30 tells us what happens when we sin. What happens between you and the Holy Spirit?

13) 1 Thessalonians 5:19 is a warning not to do something. What is the warning?

14) 1 John 1:9 says that if we confess our sins we will be forgiven. Since the Greek word for “confession” means to “say the same thing” that means confession is agreeing with God that you did sin. So what does confession of sin involve?

Confession of our sins will renew our relationship with God and then we can walk in the Spirit again by being continually filled moment by moment.

 *One of the most rewarding experiences of a “Spirit filled walk” will be a deeper relationship with God.*

CONCLUSION. Now let us put it all together. Walking in the Spirit is nothing more than a continual process of being filled by the Spirit moment after moment and dwelling in the Word of God day after day. God commands us to walk in the Spirit and to be filled with the Holy Spirit because this is His will for every Christian. The result is increasing victory over sin, peace and joy in the heart, and submission/humility towards others. But we must ask God to have the Holy Spirit take control of us – “fill us” - just as the apostle Paul prayed for the Ephesians. You must want Him to take over your life.

When you sin you need to confess your sins to God the Father every time you realize that you have sinned and ask for the Holy Spirit to take control of your life again. We should also spend as much time in the Bible as we can. This is what it means to live our life in the Spirit of God. Many Christians have found that the Holy Spirit has changed their lives, given them victory over many of their sins, provided them with peace and joy in their heart and given them a tremendous longing to know Him, and a deeper love for Him. Christians who are walking in the Spirit are not perfect and still sin but they can now see God making some big changes in them. They are sinning less and less. One of the most rewarding experiences of a “Spirit filled walk” will be a deeper relationship with God. You will know Him more and love Him deeper. Come – walk in

the Spirit - be filled with the Spirit - dwell in God's Word richly!

THINGS TO PONDER

1) What did you learn from your study of Ephesians 3:14-17? How can you obtain a deeper relationship with God?

2) Should Christian counselors also encourage Christians to seek help from God for their problems? If so, how and why?

3) God has commanded us to be filled with the Holy Spirit in Ephesians 3:17-18 and to richly dwell in the Word of God. Is this His will for your life? If so, how are you doing? What changes do you plan to make in your life so that you are pleasing more?

4) Why would a Christian who desires to walk in the Spirit also be a man or a woman who spends time in the Word of God?

5) Why would a Christian who desires to walk in the Spirit also be a man or a woman of prayer? How is your prayer life?

6) After examining your own life, do you believe that you have a Spirit filled walk? How can you make it better?

Power Living

Answer true (T) or false (F) to each of the following statements:

1. Confession of sin is where I admit my sins to God. _____
2. We should dwell in the Word of God richly. _____
3. Quenching the Spirit refers to a beverage. _____
4. It is not possible to disappoint God the Holy Spirit. _____
5. God never commands us to be filled with the Holy Spirit. It is an option. _____
6. If we walk in the Spirit, we will have greater victory over sin. _____
7. When a Christian is having difficulties, he/she should go to a counselor and ignore being filled with the Holy Spirit. _____
8. God commands us to walk in the Spirit, to be filled with the Spirit, and to study in the scriptures. All three are important. _____
9. The fruit of the Spirit is the best evidence that the Holy Spirit is living within us. _____
10. A spirit-filled Christian will be a joyful Christian. _____