

Intro. What are you full of? It is an incredibly insightful question for anyone to answer carefully who professes to have been saved by God through Jesus Christ.

At this point, over half way through our study of Ephesians, the argument of this letter is that saved people are to live lives full of God's love, Jesus' lordship and the gospel's richness. These are the gospel blessings described in chapters 1-3 of Ephesians as the saved persons calling. These are the soul satisfying and joy producing realities that the Holy Spirit fills our hearts with as we subject our lives to his control.

One way to assess what you are full of or controlled by is to answer some rather simple questions about you. Questions that will help you get to heart motivations and turn to the gospel. I came across a list of gospel centered assessment/evaluation questions this past week that included the following . . .

1. What are you desiring more than anything else?
2. What do you find yourself day dreaming or fantasizing about?
3. Are you astonished with the gospel?
4. Where have you made much of yourself and little of God?
5. Is technology stealing attention from your family?
6. Is work replacing your spouse's place in your heart?
7. Where do your thoughts drift to when you enter a social setting?
8. What fears are paralyzing your heart from enjoying God?
9. What consumes your thoughts when you have alone time?

The scriptures teach us that our lives are directed and influenced by whatever our hearts are full of. Either, we fill our hearts with large thoughts of self and this world or the Holy Spirit supernaturally fills us up as we place ourselves under the influence of the scriptures and prayer. Fullness can be measured and identified by results. The resulting behaviors of Spirit empowered fullness are absolutely distinctive and satisfying. The resulting behaviors of self fullness are equally distinctive and unsatisfying.

Often, we answer questions like those above and believe that we need to get some joy, gratitude or less of self in our lives. The mistake we make, the lie we believe is that we can replace the boredom, discontent and self focus by simply doing more religious or churchy things. The truth is that these markers of satisfaction are only produced in our lives as a result of direct connection to the gospel of Christ. A life of complete satisfaction in God comes from yielding to the fullness of God's love, Jesus Christ's lordship and the richness of the gospel . . . as the Holy Spirit fills you up with these realities, the results in your life are nothing short of supernatural and amazing.

So we continue this morning trying to unravel and understand what it looks like to obey the command to be filled by the Spirit. Our text in Ephesians 5:15-21 teaches us to be very careful, to pay close attention to how we live our lives wisely in a world of opportunities, purposefully in doing the will of God and dependently connected to the Holy Spirit.

We notice that verses 18-21 teach 3 resulting behaviors that are produced in the lives of those who are filled by the Holy Spirit. We will review the first and take a closer look at the other two.

The first result of fullness by the Spirit is musical worship. We learned from this passage three truths about church singing.

1. Your singing is both a result of and response to fullness. 18-21

2. Your singing is intended to address two audiences with thanksgiving. 19

3. Your singing should embrace a variety of forms. 19

Another result of fullness by the Spirit is grateful engagement. 20

Giving thanks simply means that you acknowledge, accept and celebrate your dependence on God for all things. The word used for thanksgiving actually means ‘give freely.’ The concept of gratitude is giving credit or acknowledgment for receiving help or kindness. Being ungrateful especially toward God is evidence of a rebellious heart (Rom.1:21; 2Tim.3:2).

The heart this is full will acknowledge and celebrate that God is good, he cares and that he acts on our behalf. Note the qualifying concepts that teach us what Spirit lead thanksgiving looks like.

Gratitude is to be comprehensive.

As comprehensive as the gospel is

All times – ‘always’

All things – ‘for everything’

1:1-14 – song of thanksgiving

1:16 – do not cease

5:4 – sexuality

Cmp. Phil. 4:6-7 – anxiety

Psa. 100:4-5 – worship

Col. 4:2 - prayer

Whatever you do . . . word or deed . . . Col. 3:17

Gratitude is to be with confidence.

To God the Father

confident that God is the source of blessing, grace, love

in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ

confident in access and authority of Christ
cmp. 2:15-17; Romans 5:2

Fullness results in gratitude that makes much of God our Father and Christ our Lord.

Ingratitude is a dangerous signal/symptom . . . illustrate w/ context of marriage and parenting

A third result of Spirit fullness is mutual submission. 21

‘Submitting’ means to place under, to subordinate. In our text in the middle voice it is translated to subject oneself, to submit voluntarily. It is a mutual readiness to renounce your own will for others.

Submission is a key concept in the teachings of Christ of losing your life to gain it. It is a repeated concept of Christian living with regard to God Jas. 4:7; wives to husbands E.5:22; Col.3:18; 1Pet 3:1; people to human authorities Rom.13:1; 1Peter 2:13-14; Slaves to masters 1Pet. 2:18; 1Tim.6:1-2, and younger men to older 1Pet.5:5.

Submission is rooted in the gospel. You cannot be a Christian without some form of submission – placing yourself under the authority of Jesus Christ . . . Rom. 10:9 – confessing with your mouth that Jesus is Lord . . . Luke 9:23-25 – deny himself, follow me, lose his life for my sake.

Human problem – not submitting to God or his law Rom. 8:7, 20; 10:3; 1Cor 15:28

Objective of gospel – all things in submission to Christ E1:10; 3:11; 4:15

Power of the gospel – all enemies in submission to Christ 1Cor.15:25;1Pet.3:22;E1:20-22

Submission is motivated by your respect and reverence for Christ. As the Holy Spirit fills you up with the fullness of Christ, you think big thoughts about him, you have big pictures of him in your imagination, your affections are aroused by his sacrifice on your behalf, your hope is stirred by seeing him come in the clouds . . . you fear him like the sense of awe you have for that which is incredible and fantastic. The point is that you struggle with mutual submission because your thoughts of Christ are small and puny.

Wives 5:22; Col.3:18 and citizens 1Peter 2:13 with a small view of Christ will struggle placing themselves under the authority of others. Cmp Acts 9:31 for motivation of fear of God

Submission to each other is mandated. E4:2, 25, 32 teach the necessity of lining yourself up under or with others in the body of Christ. This is practically manifested in two major ways . . .

Carefully considering one another . . . Phil. 2:1-4

Actively serving one another in church 4:2,3 marriage 5:22, 25 parenting 6:1-4

Cmp. John 13

Danger signals of individualism, independence and superiority.

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A third result of Spirit fullness is mutual submission. **21**

Summary . . . live your life in subjection to the work and ways of God’s Spirit. Your being filled by the Spirit is dependent on your regularly placing your heart and life under the controlling influences of God’s truth. Three basic habits that lead to Spirit influence are . . .

1. The indwelling word. Col. 3:16

2. Abiding prayer. Acts 4:23-31

3. Confession and repentance of sin. Eph. 4:30

The greatest hindrance to your involvement in corporate worship is not the music.
The greatest cause for your ingratitude is not your life circumstances.
The greatest hope for your refusal to submit to others is not your reasonableness.

What you are full of will and does produce behaviors . . . allow the Spirit of the living God to fill you to overflowing with the joy of the Lord found in God's love for you, Christ's lordship over all things and the richness of the gospel. Then and only then, will you and others see and hear the songs of God, thanksgiving and humility flow from your life in a God glorifying manner.

Take Aways

1. Submit to Christ . . . confess him as Lord and believe today.
2. Subject yourself to the filling of the Spirit of God.

Study Questions

1. Read Ephesians 5:15-21 and summarize the instruction to be careful about how you live. What does it mean to be careful (5:15) and what does it look like in your life?
2. Discuss what has been taught in this study series that being filled with the Spirit means. What is the difference between means/instrument and content? What are the references to fullness in the earlier chapters of Ephesians? How do they help with an understanding of being filled by the Spirit? How is one filled by the Spirit? How does this explanation compare to your understanding of being filled by the Spirit? What is your greatest struggle with obeying the command to be continually filled with the Spirit?
3. Review the point regarding grateful engagement. What are the key truths of the gospel that when you are full of them, you will be grateful in a comprehensive and confident way? How can group or family members encourage you to be grateful in this way?
4. Review the teaching point regarding submission. What observations or impressions do you have from this section? Share a significant struggle you have with submission to others.