

## **THE INDWELLING SPIRIT**

### **Ephesians 5:15-21; 6:18-20**

Paul regards the Spirit-filled life as normal Christianity. In contrast to being filled with alcohol, Paul appeal to believers to be filled with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit inhabits the lives of believers. One cannot be a believer, let alone an effective one, without the Spirit's personal transforming presence and power.

In the old covenant the temple was the focus of God's presence. The shekinah glory which filled the temple at Isaiah's call was the equivalent of the Holy Spirit's presence. 2 Chronicles 5:13,14 describes the temple of the Lord being filled with the glory of God during a time of worship, "The trumpeters and singers joined in unison as with one voice, to give praise and thanks to the Lord. Accompanied by trumpets, cymbals and other instruments they raised their voices in praise to the Lord and sang, 'He is good, his love endures forever.' Then the temple of the Lord was filled with a cloud, and the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the temple of God."

With the coming of Jesus, the need for a physical temple in Jerusalem is made obsolete. Under the new covenant, believers have replaced the physical structure of the temple as the dwelling place of God's Spirit. Believers now constitute the new temple. "In him (Christ Jesus) you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit." (Eph 2:22). "You yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives among you. God's temple is sacred and you together are that temple." (1 Cor 3:16)

Accordingly, in contrast to being filled with alcohol, Paul appeals to believers to be filled with the Holy Spirit. The person and work of the Holy Spirit is the foundation for living the Christian life. The ethical requirements which Paul makes are humanly impossible to attain. How can we love others to the same extent that Christ has loved us? However, the good news is this is made possible now by the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit. The chief concern of the Holy Spirit is to draw us and lead us into a lifestyle consistent with his name viz *Holy Spirit*.

What Paul describes in this passage is not simply the result of being filled with the Spirit but the *means* whereby we are filled. He uses a series of five present participles to highlight the transforming experience of the Holy Spirit viz speaking (v19), singing (v19), making music (19), giving thanks (v20) and submitting to one another (21). The primary means by which we are filled with the Spirit is worship as indicated by the first four.

Mutual submission reminds us that the fullness of the Spirit is not for our personal benefit alone. Deferring to others, counting them better than ourselves, concern for their needs are all signs of the Spirit's presence. In that the Holy Spirit is a person and not simply a power or a force, attitudes reflecting arrogance, harshness, impatience or intolerance grieve the Holy Spirit and hinder his work in the church and community.

As such Paul's admonition in v21 takes us back to the start of chapter four where Paul begins the ethical section of his letter: "Make every effort to keep the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace" (v3) "Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love" (v2).

The Christian life is life in the Spirit. Wherever we look, be it in our personal lives or the life of the church, there is a need for a deeper work of the Holy Spirit. We need to constantly look to God, for a fresh infilling of the Spirit each day, because in the words of the great evangelist of a former generation D.L. Moody "I leak". May God grant us a thirst for this continual infilling of his Spirit as we worship him and live in harmony with fellow believers.

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