

The Filling of the Holy Spirit  
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The filling of the Holy Spirit is a conditional blessing available to every believer. Unlike the baptism, sealing, and indwelling ministries of the Spirit, which are permanent realities received at the moment of faith in Christ (1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 1:13-14), the filling of the Spirit is an experiential condition that depends upon the believer's ongoing fellowship with God. Paul commanded believers, "be filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18), indicating that this ministry is both a divine mandate and a repeated necessity in the Christian life. The verb "be filled" (*plērousthe*) in Eph. 5:18 is a present passive imperative, indicating that believers are commanded to continually permit the Holy Spirit to exercise His governing influence in their lives; the present tense denotes continuous action, the passive voice emphasizes that the Spirit performs the work of governing while the believer responds in faith, and the imperative mood reveals that this Spirit-directed life is a divine command. Warren Wiersbe states:

"Be filled with the Spirit" is God's command, and He expects us to obey. The command is plural, so it applies to all Christians and not just to a select few. The verb is in the present tense—"keep on being filled"—so it is an experience we should enjoy constantly and not just on special occasions. And the verb is passive. We do not fill ourselves but permit the Spirit to fill us.<sup>1</sup>

The filling of the Spirit refers to the Spirit's governing influence over the believer's thoughts, attitudes, decisions, and conduct. It concerns operational control rather than positional standing. Lightner states, "To be controlled by the Spirit means the individual believer must cooperate with God in order to be under the Spirit's supervision, which is what filling means. In other words, the believer's obedience to God and his word is essential for the filling of the Spirit."<sup>2</sup> A similar concept appears in passages describing satanic and sinful influences. For example, Satan filled Ananias's heart to lie to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3), and certain unbelieving Jews were filled with jealousy (Acts 13:45). In these cases, the idea is

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<sup>1</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 48.

<sup>2</sup> Robert P. Lightner, *Handbook of Evangelical Theology: A Historical, Biblical, and Contemporary Survey and Review* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1995), 116.

that their thinking, attitudes, and actions came under the controlling influence of those forces. According to Warren Wiersbe:

The verb “fill” has nothing to do with contents or quantity, as though we are empty vessels that need a required amount of spiritual fuel to keep going. In the Bible, *filled* means “controlled by.” “They ... were filled with wrath” (Luke 4:28) means “they were controlled by wrath” and for that reason tried to kill Jesus. “The Jews were filled with envy” (Acts 13:45) means that the Jews were controlled by envy and opposed the ministry of Paul and Barnabas.<sup>3</sup>

The evidence of this filling is seen in a life characterized by worship, thanksgiving, humility, and Spirit-directed relationships with others (Eph. 5:19-21). As the Holy Spirit governs the believer’s life, He produces joy, gratitude, love, humility, and other aspects of spiritual fruit that reflect the character of Christ (Gal. 5:22-23; Phil. 4:4; 1 Thess. 5:18). This divine influence is expressed in relationships marked by mutual respect, service, kindness, forgiveness, and love, demonstrating the practical outworking of God’s truth in daily life (Eph. 4:2, 32; Col. 3:12-14). While these qualities do not appear in perfect measure, they serve as observable indicators that the believer is walking in fellowship with God and under the Spirit’s directing influence rather than yielding to the desires of the flesh (Gal. 5:16-17).

A key aspect of the filling of the Holy Spirit is His ministry through the word of God. The Spirit of God leads believers by means of the truth He inspired and now illuminates (2 Tim. 3:16-17; John 16:13). As believers learn and apply God’s word, the Spirit uses that truth to shape their thinking, direct their decisions, and govern their conduct. This connection is seen in the parallel passages of Eph. 5:18-21 and Col. 3:16-17, where being “filled with the Spirit” corresponds closely with “let the word of Christ richly dwell within you.” The Spirit of God uses the Word of God to accomplish the will of God in the life of the child of God. Therefore, spiritual maturity does not result from mystical impressions or subjective experiences but from the consistent intake and application of biblical truth. The believer who neglects Scripture deprives the Spirit of the very instrument He uses to guide, transform, and strengthen the Christian life (Ps. 119:105; Rom. 12:2; Heb. 4:12).

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<sup>3</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 48.

The filling of the Spirit requires positive volition toward God and His truth. While the Holy Spirit provides the power for spiritual growth, the believer must choose to submit to God's authority, learn His word, and apply it by faith. Spiritual advance is impossible apart from humility, teachability, and obedience to divine revelation (Rom. 12:2; 1 Pet. 2:2; Jam. 1:22). The believer who consistently presents himself to God, renews his mind with Scripture, and responds to biblical truth develops the capacity for greater spiritual growth and service. As God's word increasingly shapes his thinking and directs his decisions, the Spirit gains greater influence over his life, producing divine viewpoint, spiritual stability, wisdom, effective service, and Christlike character. Thus, the filling of the Spirit is not a passive experience but an active relationship in which the believer continually responds to God's grace through faith and obedience.

This ministry is directly related to the believer's response to God. When a Christian walks in dependence upon the Lord, learns and applies biblical truth, and remains in fellowship with Him, the Spirit exercises unhindered influence in his life. As the word occupies the mind and directs the heart, the Spirit gains greater influence over the believer's life, producing obedience, wisdom, stability, spiritual growth, divine guidance, effective service, and Christlike character (Gal. 5:16, 22-23). The filling of the Spirit is therefore one of God's provisions for victorious Christian living. It is not emotionalism, mystical experience, or a second blessing received by a select few, but the normal condition God desires for every believer.

Scripture teaches that believers can grieve the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30) and quench the Holy Spirit (1 Th. 5:19). To grieve the Spirit means to bring sorrow to Him through sinful thoughts, attitudes, words, and actions that contradict His holy character. Paul specifically connects grieving the Spirit with sins such as bitterness, wrath, anger, slander, and malice (Eph. 4:25-31). To quench the Spirit means to suppress, resist, or stifle His working in the believer's life. Just as a fire can be extinguished, the Spirit's influence can be hindered when believers reject biblical truth, refuse divine guidance, or persist in carnality. In both cases, the issue is not the loss of salvation or the loss of the Spirit's indwelling presence, but the interruption of His active influence and ministry.

When sin enters the believer's life, fellowship with God is disrupted and the filling of the Spirit is forfeited. The remedy is not self-reformation, emotional penance, or renewed promises of obedience. The biblical solution is confession. First John 1:9 declares, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Confession restores fellowship with God and returns the believer to a condition in which the Spirit's influence is once

again unhindered. Thus, the filling of the Spirit may be lost through sin and restored through confession.

Because believers continue to struggle with the sin nature throughout this life, the filling of the Spirit must be maintained continually. It is not a permanent state but a repeated condition that requires humility, dependence upon God, and responsiveness to His word. The Christian who consistently walks in fellowship with God enjoys the benefits of the Spirit's control, while the believer who walks according to the flesh forfeits this blessing. For this reason, the filling of the Holy Spirit stands as one of the great conditional blessings of the Christian life, providing divine power, guidance, and spiritual productivity for those who choose to walk in obedience to the Lord.