

Being filled with the Spirit

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 16 September 2018

Preacher: Nick Louw

- [0 : 0 0] Good morning, everyone. All right, now I want you to be honest. Who looked in the mirror before coming to church this morning? Okay? Fairly few, and it's no surprise that the people who looked in the mirror are the better looking ones this morning.
- Because most of us, before going out anywhere, do take a little bit of time to check what we look like. That's normal, right? And by the looks of it, most of you were careful this morning to make sure that you look at least presentable.
- So I'm very proud of you. Now, another question. Who ate something before coming to church this morning? Put up your hand. All right? Most people ate something. Because most of us will have a bite to eat before going out.
- So we've got a little bit of energy to get us through the sermon, right? But let me ask you a slightly different question. How much time did you take this morning to make sure you are filled with the Holy Spirit?
- That's a weird question. I doubt people even consider that before going out, right? And besides, isn't it God who fills us with the Spirit, not our job to be filled with the Spirit?
- [1 : 0 6] Well, actually, it is our job, according to this passage that we read this morning. Because have a look in your Bibles at how it begins. Paul writes, Be careful then how you live, not as unwise, but as wise.
- And then, from verse 16 to 18, he describes some ways we are to be wise and careful in how we live. And he ends off with this explicit command to be filled with the Spirit.
- And that is something we need to be taking care to do in our lives. This is an imperative. It's a command. Be filled with the Spirit. But now, what does that even mean?
- Well, the first thing we've got to notice is that Paul's writing this to Christians, right? Who he's already said have the Holy Spirit, God's Spirit, dwelling in them and influencing them. And acting as a seal of their new identity in the heavenly realms.
- We've read that all. A guarantee of their salvation. The work of the Spirit inside a believer. Because that's what the Bible teaches. That God's Holy Spirit makes a home in each believer who puts their faith in Jesus Christ.
- [2 : 1 0] Change the way they live to give them new desires. And so, these are people that he's writing to who already have the Holy Spirit dwelling in them. And yet, Paul tells them they must be filled with the Holy Spirit.
- Which means those are two separate things. Having the Holy Spirit and being filled with the Holy Spirit are two separate things. You can be a Christian and still not be filled with the Spirit.
- According to this passage. And I think that describes a whole lot of Christians today who are believers in Jesus. They do believe. And yet, they are not Spirit-filled believers.
- They're running on empty. And you can see it. There's no passion in their Christian walk. They're just going through their motions. And maybe that's you this morning. And so, what does it actually mean for a believer to be filled with the Spirit?

That's what we've got to determine this morning. And firstly, we see Paul explains it's the opposite of being drunk. Interestingly enough. Look at verse 18. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery.

[3 : 14] Instead, be filled with the Spirit. So, he contrasts. He uses the idea of getting drunk on alcohol, which many people are familiar with, to explain what the opposite actually is, which is being filled with the Spirit of God.

Now, there was this guy, an eminent theologian called Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones. And he wasn't only a pastor and theologian. He was a medical doctor as well. So, he is really the perfect person to comment on the comparison that Paul is talking about here.

Because he knew the effects of alcohol on the body. And he also knew the effects of the Spirit on the soul. And he says this. I quote. Alcohol, pharmacologically speaking, is not a stimulant.

It is a depressant. It works to suppress the senses of the brain, which gives a person self-control, judgment, the ability to assess. In other words, everything that makes a person behave at his very best and highest.

What the Holy Spirit does, however, is the exact opposite. If it were possible to put the Holy Spirit into a textbook of pharmacology, I would put him under the stimulants. For he stimulates our highest faculties, the mind and the intellect, the heart and the will.

[4 : 25] Okay, so this is a very important comparison. Paul is using this comparison to teach us something very important about the work of the Holy Spirit. And what it means to be filled with the Spirit.

And while the Bible doesn't say drinking is a sin. Alright? I mean, Jesus' first miracle was to provide alcohol for a party, remember? Drinking alcohol is not in and of itself a sin.

But abusing alcohol to get drunk is a sin, according to the Bible, because it removes your self-control and your judgment and your wisdom. And everything God has given you to walk in his ways.

It removes your ability to judge and make good decisions and control yourself. And if you doubt that, well then just go to the Chili Bar in Victoria Road on a Saturday night. And you'll see examples of just this.

But you see, the Holy Spirit does the opposite. And coming to church to hear from God and be filled with the Spirit is the opposite of going to the Chili Bar and getting drunk.

[5 : 26] Because the Holy Spirit stimulates and enhances those faculties in your mind and your heart that alcohol suppresses. Your self-control and your judgment and your wisdom.

And the Holy Spirit causes you to live more in line with God's will. Because he gives a stimulation to those things which make you act and live at your highest and best.

That is, if you let yourself fall under his influence. According to this passage, that's something you've got to choose to do.

You've got to choose each and every day to fall under the influence of the Holy Spirit. To be filled with the Spirit. You've got to take time to go through the spiritual disciplines that God has given us for that purpose.

Like prayer and fasting and Bible reading. Those are disciplines we learn about. Spiritual disciplines. They're not just something you do for show.

[6 : 26] They actually have a spiritual result in that they fill you with God's Spirit. They give space to the Spirit in your life and they allow you to fall under his influence.

So do you take time to do that? Do you take time to read the Bible? Do you take time to pray? Do you take time to meet with other Christians? Things like that are the means by which the Spirit works in our lives.

Because, and I never thought I'd say this from the pulpit, but you need to start coming to church under the influence. All right? Not of alcohol, but of the Holy Spirit.

You need to start coming to church and going to work under the influence. And living your daily life under the influence. And yes, even driving under the influence.

Don't quote me on that. You know what I'm talking about. The influence of the Holy Spirit. Because it's so important we do that. Because look what will happen when you allow yourself each and every day to live under the influence of the Spirit.

[7 : 31] Look what will happen. Because that's what Paul goes on to describe from verse 18. Be filled with the Spirit. And then he describes what that will look like in your life. And I'm reading from the ESV.

He says, Addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. Singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart. Giving thanks always for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Again, so in summary, what happens when you are filled with the Spirit? Well, you begin to praise God from your heart. If you're filled with the Spirit, praise and worship and thanksgiving become genuine.

It becomes something you want to do. And so, really, a great litmus test, a great indicator of whether you are filled with the Spirit, is how you sing to God at church on Sunday.

Ask yourself, how genuine is your praise and worship? Are you just doing it because everyone else is and it's the done thing? Are you just going through the motions? Or is it something you really want to do?

[8 : 40] Is it something you look forward to coming to church to do? Because that's what being filled with the Spirit will result in. He will give you an inexpressible desire to praise God.

And you'll see gathering with other Christians and being able to sing songs to do that is a great opportunity. And you will look forward to it if you are filled with the Spirit. But then also notice, Adrian mentioned it earlier, The Holy Spirit also affects our relationships with each other because not only do we sing to God, verse 19, we sing to one another about God.

In other words, the Holy Spirit stimulates Christian fellowship by creating in us a shared enjoyment of God. An enjoyment of God that we each have that is intensified when we meet with other people who have that same enjoyment.

Like in any group of people who choose to spend time together, they do so because of some shared enjoyment, don't they? Whether that's a hobby or a sport or a type of music, a shared enjoyment is what brings people together.

And in a way, when you meet with other people who share your enjoyment in something, it intensifies that enjoyment, doesn't it? Because you get to share it with others. And you tend to want to spend time with people who enjoy the same things as you.

[9 : 59] If you like soccer, you like being with other soccer fans, right? Because they get you. Even if your wife doesn't or your girlfriend doesn't. Well, in the same way, you see, if you genuinely love God and enjoy God, you'll want to be with other people who enjoy God.

And then when you are, that enjoyment of Him will be even more intensified. That shared excitement in God should be the glue that sticks us together as a Christian community.

If a Christian community is falling apart and is not unified, it's probably because they don't really enjoy God together. Because that is what being filled with the Holy Spirit results in.

Not just a desire to praise God, but a desire to be with other people who do. And not just on a Sunday, but during the week as well. But then there's another effect that being filled with the Spirit has on our relationships, which I want us to look at in more detail.

And it's mentioned in verse 21. And it's such a surprising effect of being filled by the Spirit that some translations put it in a new paragraph. But it actually belongs to the previous paragraph.

[11 : 08] In that it's another result of being filled with the Spirit. And it is that we will submit to one another. Verse 21. We will submit to one another. And Paul then goes into detail of what that looks like by giving us three examples of Christian submission.

Which are a wife's submission to her husband, a child's submission to her parent, and a servant's submission to her master. Now, I recognize that the idea of submission, especially a wife to her husband, is a hugely unpopular thing in today's world, right?

People are seen as not being caught up with the times. If you talk about submission from a wife to her husband.

I've married quite a few people who wanted to take that out of their wedding vows. Where the woman in her wedding vow says, I will submit to my husband.

It's not popular in today's world because we pride ourselves with our independence. Our independence is seen as something in the world which is praiseworthy, in which we should pursue.

[12 : 12] We don't want to have to submit to other people. That's looked at as weak and backwards. And yet, this verse, this passage rather, completely challenges the modern way of thinking because Paul says here, submission is actually a mark of spiritual maturity.

If you submit, you're showing yourself to be spiritually mature. And by the way, we've got to understand what the word submission means in the Bible.

It doesn't mean like a slavish blind obedience. No, submission in the Bible is rather, it's a voluntary placing of yourself under someone else's leadership in trust.

That's what submission is. A voluntary placing of yourself under someone else's leadership. And Paul says that kind of submission is actually evidence that you are filled with the Spirit. But how does that work?

I mean, how does submission have anything to do with being spiritual or being spiritual? They don't seem to connect, right? Well, to understand that, we need to go back to Genesis for a minute and to remember what caused humans to break their relationship with God in the first place.

[13 : 27] So what happened? God made man to rule creation, and he put creatures under man's authority, and then he gave man a helper to rule creation, which was Eve, woman. And so you've got this authority structure already in Genesis chapter 1 and 2 that God has put into place for the running of his creation.

You've got God over man, over woman, over creatures. It's an authority structure that God has designed for society to run at its best.

Not to say that women can't have leadership positions, but we've still got to recognize that God has made men and women different. We are not the same.

We are not unequal in status and value. So, you know, in fact, the New Testament was on the cutting edge of women's rights and women's equality. The Bible isn't anti-woman equality, but it does recognize that God has made us different, and we have different roles in the created order, and we are made to fulfill different roles in different capacities.

And that's the authority structure God has created for us to be working as a society at our best. But now, think about what happened when sin came into the world. Who sinned first?

[14 : 47] Tell me. Eve, sorry to say, but it's what the Bible says. And then she persuaded Adam to sin and resist God, and he did because he wasn't taking a leadership role, which is typical, isn't it?

Men being lazy and not stepping up to their God, given roles, leaving women to do all the leading as well as all the other work they've got to do, which is often the cause of so many problems in the home today.

And so Adam was just as much to blame here because he wasn't stepping up, and that is a major sin of men just not stepping up. But now who caused Eve to sin?

You tell me. Sorry? The snake, the serpent, an animal. And so now you see what's happened. You've got the reversal of the authority structure.

Now you've got an animal calling the shots over woman who's over man who thinks he's over God. The complete reversal of God's created authority structure. And that is the characteristic of the sinful world.

[15 : 48] And it's at the heart of the world's disunity. It's us thinking that we can run this creation better than God can, and so we reverse the authority structure.

And so that's the status of the world we're in today. But now in Ephesians, what have we been learning so far? I'm not going to ask you to tell me, but I'll tell you.

We've been learning about God's plan to create a new humanity, a new creation. Because this, by the way, was not how God intended it to be. God has always planned a new creation where there is no death and sickness and suffering and pain and crying.

And we have an amazing glimpse of that new creation in the last book of the Bible, Revelation. But we've been learning in Ephesians how the first step to creating that new world to come, which has always been God's plan, is creating a new humanity, new people to inhabit that world.

And that is what he is doing through the gospel of Jesus Christ today. So that's what we've been learning in Ephesians, where we, believers, are called to be a new humanity looking forward to the creation to come, where all things will be unified again under the authority of Jesus Christ.

[17 : 04] And that's what we've been told. Jesus himself will be the head. He will be the king. He will be the Lord of the new creation. And he will rule perfectly. And we will submit to him perfectly. But the question is, how do we in our lives now on this earth promote that kind of new creation unity?

How do we look forward to that new creation to come under the authority of Christ? Well, we do it by recapturing God's original authority structure in this world, which he intended for our best.

And we start recapturing that in our families and in our churches and in our workplaces. And that's why submission is actually a good and holy thing.

And something that should characterize God's people on earth. It's something that characterizes the new creation that's to come. Not that all of these relationships will exist like they are here on earth in the new creation.

For example, there won't be marriage, Jesus tells us, in the new creation. There won't be a need for wives to submit to their husbands. And yet, here on earth, in the situation we're in, these are the perfect opportunities to show the world what God's intended authority structure looks like.

[18 : 18] And when we are doing these things, not just will our families run at their best, but our societies will run at their best. So what does this submission look like in practice here and now in this life?

Well, he tells us, it looks like first, wives submitting to their husbands in recognition that God intended men to lead the households. Now, what does that mean practically?

It means letting the husband have the final say in making decisions. Not being an autocrat, talking about it. The wife has every bit of a say that the husband does in making decisions.

She's not to just keep quiet, but she is to recognize that someone has to have the final decision and God has given that responsibility to the husband. It also means following the husband's lead when he institutes new habits or rules in the family.

It means showing your children that you are united. You are a united front, even if you disagree with each other behind closed doors, which is absolutely fine. Don't do it in front of the kids. But notice, as well, that doesn't leave the husband without responsibility too.

[19 : 32] In fact, Paul writes, double the amount of verses to the husband as he does to the wife here. Because he calls them to do something which is possibly even more difficult.

And the husband is also, in fact, called to submit to his wife in a manner of speaking by sacrificially submitting his best interests in favor of hers.

Because remember, Paul said in verse 21, when he introduced this whole section, that there's a sense in which submission is mutual. There's a mutual submission. We're called to submit to one another.

It's not just one-sided. And so in each of these calls to submit, the wife to the husband, the child to the parent, the slave to the master, in each of these calls to submit to a God-given authority, there's also a call for those in authority to give of themselves to those underneath them in sacrificial service.

Because that's how authority works in God's economy. Those called to authority are also called to service. And Jesus, of course, was the ultimate example of this.

[20 : 42] And we see that in the very next instruction to children. The second call to submission. Children must submit to their parents in obedience.

Which means, children, if you disobey your parents, you are actually disobeying God who gave those parents to you for your good. Alright? There's a reason they tell you not to spend all day on screens.

There's a reason teenagers that they don't let you go to that club in Woodstock till two in the morning. Because your parents know what's good for you even when you don't. But parents, look at what you're called to do.

You're called to give yourselves to your children in service. In fact, especially, notice, fathers. I think mothers do that anyway.

I think it's natural for mothers to give of themselves to their children in service to nurture and protect them. And yet fathers, well, it's the father who's the lazy one who's sitting on the couch watching rugby, isn't it? And who normally leaves the parenting up to the mother.

[21 : 48] But that's why Paul makes a point here of saying fathers. God intends the father to lead and to serve his children by doing two things. By protecting them from their own sin.

By not arousing them to anger. That's what it means. Don't arouse your children to anger. We just learned previously in Ephesians that anger is a highway to sin. And that's why we've got to put off anger as quickly as possible.

Children whose emotions are still developing don't know how to put off anger right away. And so the father's responsibility is to protect your children from anger which will lead them to sin.

And then secondly, by training them in righteousness. By teaching them the gospel of Jesus. Teaching them the truth. And so fathers, you might protect your children physically. You might see yourselves as your children's protector but are you protecting them spiritually as well?

You might spend time training your son how to kick a ball but how much time do you spend training him how to follow Jesus? Because he's looking to you to see how to do that.

[22 : 54] You're his role model. He doesn't know what it looks like in daily life to follow Jesus except from what he sees you doing. So are you showing that? Are you modeling that?

Are you leading your children, fathers in the training and the instruction of the Lord? You know, if you haven't yet, get a devotional book that helps you that you can read with your children that takes you through the gospel that takes you through the teaching of the Bible.

Speak to me or Naomi about any resources that you need to do that. We're here to help you to do that at home. And then there's a third area of submission we see which is for servants or slaves in those days to submit to their masters.

In other words, to submit to those who provide for their livelihood because slaves, remember, in the ancient world, especially in the Roman world, were prisoners from war and generally, you were either going to get killed or you were going to be a slave to someone who committed to looking after you and giving you a place in his family.

So it wasn't slavery like we've seen in the last 500, 600 years. It was slavery where the slave was actually part of the household. In fact, all of these calls to submit are in the context of the household.

[24 : 13] And so, slaves, servants, were called to submit to their masters who provide their livelihood. But by the way, this could just as easily apply to modern employer-employee relationships, which I'm sure you often feel is no different to slavery.

But it is. Let's be fair. We live in a better world. But the principle is still the same of what slaves and servants are called to do and what employees are called to do in the workplace, which is submission to those that God has placed over you for your livelihood in order to reflect and promote God's order in this world.

But notice, the Christian master or employer still has a responsibility to serve their employees in treating them fairly and kindly.

In fact, they're called here to do the same. Just as their employees are called to serve them, they are called to serve their employees in fairness and kindness, things you don't see normally in modern businesses.

Treating their employees as people of value in and of themselves, not just human resources. And so you see, in all of these different relationships we have in life, in marriage, in the family and even in the working world, being filled with the Spirit will cause God's people to show a willing submission to those in authority over them as a way of upholding and promoting God's original created order as God's people.

[25 : 43] But not only that, profoundly we discover in this passage that there's one other reason that submission in these relationships is so important and that's because in them we actually promote the gospel of Jesus to the world.

Now I want you in your Bibles just to look back at the descriptions of the motivations Paul gives as to why we should submit and he explains three different ways in these three different areas of submission that we actually promote the gospel through our submission.

Namely, in a marriage where there's mutual submission the gospel is pictured, in a family where children submit to their parents the gospel is preserved, and in the workplace where Christians serve wholeheartedly the gospel is actually proclaimed.

And let me explain what I mean by each of those. So firstly, in a marriage the gospel is pictured. So when a wife submits to her husband and the husband sacrificially loves his wife, that actually paints a picture of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In fact, later Paul says that's the purpose God invented the idea of marriage right at the beginning. Not primarily just to be the way that societies are formed, but to give us a taster and a picture of the relationship between Jesus and his people in eternity.

[27 : 02] Human marriage is a foretaste. All the joys of human marriage when it's working like it should is a foretaste of the joys of the relationship that Christ and his people will have in eternity.

It pictures a marriage, a human marriage that works properly, pictures our trusting submission to Christ and his sacrificial love for us. And I mean, who has loved us more than Christ did?

How do you know? Well, you look at what he did for us. He showed his sacrificial love in making the ultimate sacrifice on the cross, willingly giving himself to die for our sins, to cleanse us from guilt, to restore us, to make us holy for our good.

He treated us not as we deserved, but he treated us according to what he saw we would become and what he would make us. Well, that's a standard of love, husbands, that you're called to have for your wives.

To seek her ultimate good, to see her not as she is now with her flaws, which you have double of, by the way, but to see her as Christ is making her to be, to pursue that, to work towards that, to partner with Christ, to work on your wife to help her to be the holy person, the beautiful person that God has designed her to be.

[28 : 34] Your job is to help her to become that by loving her sacrificially, just as Christ did for the church. And so that, as she also happily submits to your leadership, you together display to the world what the gospel looks like.

And it is beautiful. A Christian marriage that works well with the wife happily, voluntarily, trusting her husband and submitting to his authority and him seeking her best above his own, seeking to develop her and pray for her and help her in her spiritual walk.

That is a beautiful thing and the world looks on and says, what? How do we get that? You know, marriage is falling apart in our world. It's messed up and yet we look at Christians and we see marriages working.

Why is that? Well, we show people the gospel. We attract people to Jesus through our marriages. If you're married, if God has given you that gift, that calling in this life.

It's worth noting as well that these commands apply even if the other partner isn't a Christian and doing their part. And this is very important for us to see as well.

[29 : 45] Paul doesn't say, wives, submit to your husbands if the husband loves you as Christ loved the church. There's no ifs here. These are independent commands. And of course, while that's much harder, by the Christians still doing their part, by a husband sacrificially loving their unsaved wife or a wife voluntarily submitting to her unsaved husband, they will actually display the gospel for their spouse to see in their actions.

But then we also see when the next thing, when children submit to their parents and those parents bring up their children in the Lord, what happens? Well, then the gospel is preserved.

In other words, it passes on to the next generation. That is the mechanism God has created for preserving his truth. Ordered families with an authority structure. It's through children listening to their parents and, for example, going to church even when they don't feel like it.

It's through that obedience that they learn the gospel and so they, as promised, live long in the land that God is giving to them, which is the promise attached to the command for children.

In other words, they have life in the new creation because that is the land that God is giving us. So they have life, they access that life through their parents teaching them the gospel and through them submitting in obedience.

[31 : 08] And then finally, in the workplace, the gospel is proclaimed. When employees work faithfully, not primarily for their bosses, but for Jesus, the gospel is proclaimed through their work, through their work ethic, because Paul says, verse 7, serve wholeheartedly as if you were serving the Lord, not people.

And so that's the Christian work ethic that all Christians are called to no matter what your job, no matter what capacity you work in. You're called to work not for your boss, but for Jesus himself.

You're called to clean up that house as if Jesus was living there. You're called to fill out that Excel spreadsheet as if Jesus was going to check it. You're called to drive that delivery van as if you were delivering those goods to the Lord himself.

That's the Christian work ethic. And when you work like that, when you work for Jesus in everything you do, not only do you stand out from the laziness and the cutting corners of the work ethic of the world, but you're actually showing your boss and your colleagues who's really in charge of this workplace and who's really in charge of this world.

And so you proclaim the gospel, you proclaim the lordship of Jesus through your work. As is the case when Christian employers treat their workers fairly, they also show in doing that that they are under the authority, that they are not the ultimate authority.

[32 : 30] Christian employers, Christian business owners are called to show that they have a boss, the lord of the universe who they are working for and that should be seen in how they treat their employees.

And so you see, in closing, God wants to use us in our daily lives, at home, in our marriages, at work, to show the world the truth of the gospel. But to do that, we need to be filled with the Spirit each and every day.

And so I want to finish by asking the question I started with. How careful are you each day to make sure that you are filled with the Spirit? Are you letting yourself fall under His influence at home, at work, and wherever else you find yourself through regular spiritual disciplines are you living under the influence?

Because if you're careful to do that, then you'll be moved to enjoy God more in your daily life, to delight in His people more, and to be a signpost for the people around you pointing towards the new creation.

And so will you do that in the coming week, in the coming months? Let's pray for God's help to do just that. Lord, we thank you for this passage, this letter you've written to us, explaining and revealing to us who we really are in Christ.

[33 : 50] Thank you also for the practical instructions you give us of how to live that out, how to reflect this new humanity you are making and to point people towards the new creation.

Lord, thank you for the great hope we have. Thank you for your Holy Spirit who dwells in us as believers and acts as a guarantee of our salvation. But Lord, we pray that you would help us to be filled each and every day with the Spirit.

Help us through regular spiritual disciplines in our homes and our families to be Spirit-filled homes and to be a Spirit-filled church that we would stand out in this community and draw people to the gospel of Christ.

And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.