

EPHESIANS

GRACE & GLORY

Commentary and Questions | Ephesians 5:18-21

Ephesians 5:18-21

Commentary:

Paul continues describing the life of a new believer after God has changed a person's heart. Further, the principle of being filled, controlled and indwelt by the Holy Spirit is specifically important for Christians who are called to "walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called (4:1)." In this passage, we are going to look at three things.

First, Paul juxtaposes being filled with the Spirit to being drunk with wine. We must be clear that drinking is a not the issue, but drunkenness is the issue. With that said, there are many reasons given for drinking alcohol but one of the most common reasons deals with a desire to be happy or at minimum to forget a sorrow or trial. This desire and motive is in itself not wrong. In fact, the Scriptures even teach that God gives us the desire to be happy (Eccl. 3:4; Prov. 17:22; Ps. 16:11; Matt. 5:3-11; John 1:4; Phil. 3:1; 4:4; Luke 2:10; et al). The problem then is not with the motive to be happy but with the means by which one acquires happiness. What in life gives you authentic happiness? When you go through trials or are faced with sorrows, where do you turn for joy and to get healing? The problems with drunkenness as a means for happiness are many. On the one hand, drunkenness is temporary and artificial. A person in a drunken state develops some kind of alternate reality that simply is not true! On the other hand, drunkenness has the potential to create even worse problems than the ones that prompted the drinking in the first place. Lastly, being drunk undoubtedly lessens or even eliminates one's sensitivity to spiritual matters. This is what I believe to be the main point of the passage.

Second, Paul states that we are to be filled with the Spirit. What does this mean? Ultimately Paul wants all believers to find their absolute joy and happiness in knowing Jesus Christ through the work of the Spirit. There is such a tendency for the human hearts to seek after either morally neutral things or sinful things for true happiness or joy. However, Paul has a deep longing that Christians to find their true joy in being filled with the Spirit. With that said, here are eight statements that clarify exactly what this means and does not mean:

1. Being filled with the Spirit is not a sudden dramatic and esoteric experience at some point after salvation where the believer's are energized and spiritualized into a state of advanced spirituality.
2. Being filled with the Spirit is not simply trying to do what you are supposed to on your own power devoid of the Spirit's help (the opposite extreme of number one).
3. Being filled with the Spirit is not the same as being sealed and indwelt by the Spirit upon conversion. This happens to every believer!
4. Being filled with the Spirit does not involve acquiring a "higher dosage" of the Spirit over a period of time.
5. Being filled with the Spirit involves a day-by-day, moment-by-moment surrender to the control of the Spirit. The filling of the Spirit is entirely the work of the Spirit but involves us having a willing heart. Being filled with the Spirit is much like a hand that fills a baseball glove. On its own, the glove will never function as it is supposed to. It needs a hand to fill it in order to function correctly. As Christians, we will never function as we are meant to function until we willingly submit to the Spirit's reign and rule in our life.
6. Being filled with the Spirit involves confessing sin regularly, surrender of will, intellect, body, time, talent and possessions. It requires that we die to ourselves in every possible way.

EPHESIANS

GRACE & GLORY

7. "To be filled with the Spirit is to live in the consciousness of the personal presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, as if we were standing next to him, and to let his mind dominate our life" (John MacArthur).
8. Being filled with the Spirit is another way to say being conformed into the image of Jesus for glory of God. We are created for Someone much bigger than ourselves, namely God. Therefore, absolute joy in life regardless of the situation comes through us conforming to the image of Jesus in hope that God might be glorified in our life!

Third, verses 19-21 simply describe the affects of being filled with the Spirit. Notice that being filled with the Spirit involves a personal response to other believers and to God. Men and women that are filled with the Spirit address one another with a God-centered affection. There is an aroma of kindness and love that manifests itself between believers. Further, there is a deep awareness and thankfulness to God for all that He has done.

Questions:

1. Write down any comments, questions or thoughts that you had from the passage and/or sermon.
2. Explain why Paul condemns drunkenness as a means and method for happiness?
3. There is a natural tendency for all people to pursue, that which makes them happy. What are some other things that Christians pursue as a means for happiness?
4. When you are faced with trials or sorrow in life, where do you look for comfort? Do you at times feel your heart gravitate towards something that is not God for comfort? Explain.
5. Describe in your own words what it means to be filled with the Spirit?
6. Read verses 19-21. List out some of the affects on community in being filled with the Spirit.
7. Think about your home group and the Stonegate Church body. Do you believe your home group and Stonegate Church have this kind of community? Why or why not?
8. What things can you begin doing, saying, or praying to help this kind of community to take place at Stonegate and within your home group?