

THE NORMAL CHRISTIAN LIFE

"And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit." Eph. 5:18 (NASB)

We begin life in Christ when the Holy Spirit plants new life in us by the new birth (Jn 3:3, 5). At believing, we are all baptized by the Holy Spirit into Christ and into His body, the Church (Rom. 6:1-6; 1 Cor. 12:13). At the same time, He indwells us and seals us (Gal. 3:2, 14; Eph. 1:13). This is living in the Spirit (Rom. 8:9).

But now we are to go on walking in the Spirit (Gal. 5:25; Rom. 8:4). This calls for being filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:1).

The filling of the Spirit should not be considered an unusual, ecstatic experience received by a few who somehow get through to God. It is the normal Christian life. God requires it of all those who are born of the Spirit.

The tragedy is that so few know how to be filled and others care less. But we shall give account of our lives at the judgment seat of Christ and we shall squander the potential of our lives here and now if we are not normally, habitually filled with the Spirit (2 Cor. 5:9; 10; Rom. 8:12, 13; Matt. 16:23-27).

What is it to be filled with the Spirit? It means that the person of the Holy Spirit controls my person. This control causes me to be Christ-like and affects every area of my life.

We need His control and power in our lives to overcome our enemies of the world, the devil and the flesh. If we walk under His control these will not dominate us (Gal. 5:15, 17; 1 Jn. 4:4).

We need His control for the normal expression of the Christian life. The fruit of the Spirit is a direct result of the Spirit's control (Gal. 5:22, 23).

We need His control for effectively serving Christ in witness to the lost and in building the body of Christ (Acts 4:31; Eph. 2:20-22; 4:7-16). We need Him in family and social relationships (Eph. 5:18-6:9).

How can we be filled with the Spirit? The one simple requirement is obedience to the Spirit. God through the Spirit has spoken in His Word (1 Cor. 2:9-13). We follow the Spirit when we are full of the Word and follow it (Col. 3:15, 17). He always leads in agreement with His Word. His Word has some particular commands: 1) "Quench not the Spirit" (1 Thess. 5:19), but yield to Him and trust your life to Him and trust your life to Him; 2) "Grieve not the Spirit" (Eph. 4:30), but confess and forsake all known sin; 3) "Walk in the Spirit" (Gal. 5:16, 25), depending on Him and directed by Him. Then we shall be filled to the glory of Christ.

C. Fred Dickason; Moody Bible Institute, Chicago