

God's Will - Be Filled With The Spirit

I think every true Christian wants to obey Jesus. If you are not a true Christian, then you probably do not care whether you obey Jesus or not. But every true believer will want to obey Jesus. That is a mark of a true Christian. One of the most significant passages in the New Testament is Matthew 7:21-23. The verse reads,

Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.' Matthew 7:21-23 (NASB)

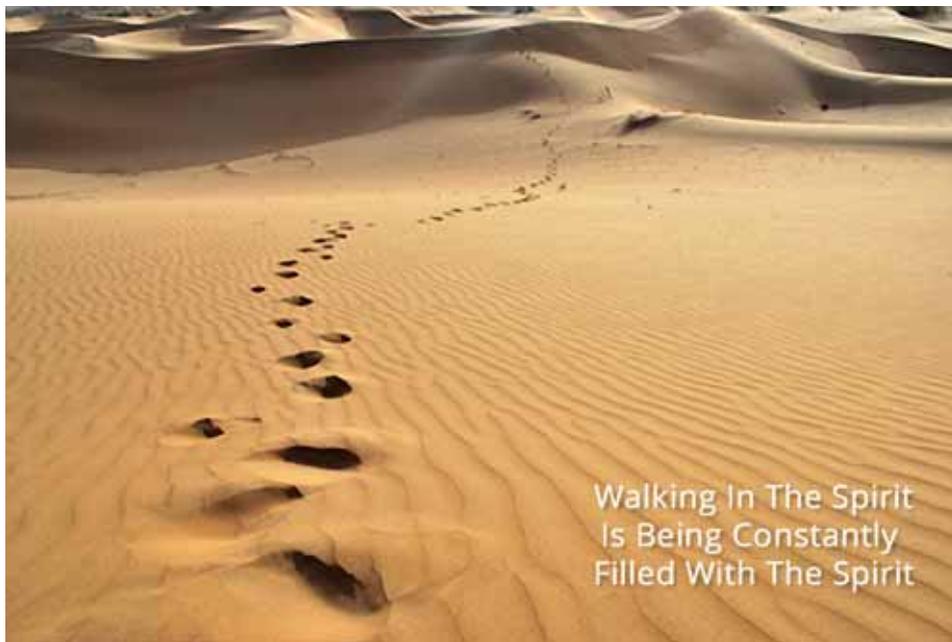
SCARIEST PASSAGE IN THE NEW TES-

TAMENT. I consider this to be the scariest passage in the New Testament for a Christian, or for someone who claims to be a Christian. I believe this because it is clear in verse 23 these people are not Christians. They are not believers who are going to heaven. They are going to hell because Jesus said, "I never knew you. Depart from me, you who practice lawlessness."

But if you look at verse 22, they sound like Christians because we are told that these people on the day of judgment will try to defend themselves as they stand before the great

white throne described in Revelation 20:11. They will tell Christ, "We prophesied in your name, and in your name we cast out demons, and in your name we performed many miracles." They sound like believers, like Christians. Our first response is to ask, "Who else would be able to do these things? Who else would prophesy, cast out demons, and perform many miracles?" Let us stop to think for a moment. The word for "prophesied" actually just means to speak forth. We have tended to give the word the unique meaning of prophesying about the future. Some people say predicting the future. The word just means to speak forth. So the prophets of old "spoke forth." When you read the prophets, they

speak of many different things. They were not just predicting the future. They did speak prophecies that came from the Lord as they "spoke forth" for the Lord, but they were not always giving prophecies about future events. Think with me



of Jonah. The only prophetic thing that he said was to the city of Nineveh when he told them to repent or they would end up being destroyed. He did not say something that was going to happen in the future. He just spoke forth what the Lord wanted him to tell the people in Nineveh.

Essentially these people are saying, "We spoke in your name. We preached or we taught. We shared the word." Someone might respond, "Well, yes, but how about casting out demons? Only Christians can do that." We need to remember that Jesus told the Pharisees in Matthew 12

that their sons cast out demons. Then in Acts 19:23, we read that there were some Jewish exorcists that were casting out demons. So the question is, how did they do that? They were not Christians. This indicates that unbelievers can cast out demons. There is a difference in the results between the exorcism of demons done by an unbeliever and that done by a Christian or a believer. The casting out of demons done by a Christian dependent on the power of God has permanent results. When attempted by an unbeliever, it is not permanent or effective.

Or how about performing miracles? Certainly only a Christian could do that. Do you remember what happened when Moses was before Pharaoh and he took his rod, threw it on the ground, and it turned into a snake? Immediately, Pharaoh's magicians did the same thing. You might not call it a miracle, but it is at least a sign or a wonder. Then the same thing happened with two more plagues. One of them was frogs. Pharaoh's magicians conjured up frogs. Now talk about a miracle! That is incredible! They pulled it off using their occult or demonic powers.

So these people will say, "We did all these things in Your name." And if you look at verse 21, Jesus told us what their problem is. He said,

Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Matthew 7:21 (NASB)

Jesus is not saying that the way you become a Christian or the way you get into heaven is by doing good works. Jesus is saying that those who are believers will do good works. One of the good works is doing the will of God. The only way one can do that is through the power of the Holy Spirit.

THE REAL PROBLEM. Now someone might ask, "What is the real problem? Are these people Christians who lost their salvation?" Verse 23 quotes Jesus as having said, "I never knew you." The word that is translated as "never" in the Greek is a compound word. One of the words means "not," and the other means "at any time." So the word "never" could really be translated this way, "Not at any time." Now what does that imply? "I never knew you at any time." They

were never, ever Christians. That is why they did not do the will of God. What is Jesus telling us? Jesus is telling us that one of the marks of a believer, or a Christian is that we do the will of the Father. You can find in Matthew 12:48-50 Jesus' response to some comments that were made in the preceding verse where people had told Jesus that,

But Jesus answered the one who was telling Him and said, "Who is My mother and who are My brothers?" And stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, "Behold My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother." Matthew 12:48-50 (NASB)

So what is the message? Jesus' message is the way you can tell who is a Christian, or a follower of Christ, is that they do the will of the Father. That message is repeated again and again in the gospels. He states this truth in different ways. What is the will of the Father? It is actually every precept and command in the Bible - every one. But did you know that on certain occasions we are actually told, "This is the will of God," or "This is the will of the Father." I did a search in the New Testament, and I found that phrase showing up twenty-one different times from Matthew through Revelation. One of these times is in Ephesians 5:17.

THE WILL OF THE LORD IS. Our study today comes from Ephesians 5:17-18. Verse 17 says,

So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. Ephesians 5:17 (NASB)

Now we usually think that foolishness is ignoring advice. But we are told in this verse that the foolish person does not understand. Believers will want to know what the will of Lord is. One of the marks of a believer is one who wants to do the will of the Lord. So our question is, what is the will of the Lord? Verse 18:

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

Now in the Greek, there are a number of words that can be translated as “drunk.” But only two words are applicable here in this verse for “drunk.” One of the words is *methuo*, and it means “to be drunk.” The word simply means to be drunk or to get drunk. The other word is used here in this verse. It is *methusco*. *Methusco* means “to cause to become drunk.” I will repeat it: to cause to become drunk. The difference is subtle, but it is important because it is not just to be drunk. We are being told not to cause ourselves to be drunk. Perhaps you have heard someone say that they have had such a horrible day that they are going to go out and get stoned. They believe that by getting drunk they can forget all their problems. So they intentionally go out and drink to excess because they cannot handle or deal with their problems. The way they handle their problems is by getting inebriated so they cannot think about their problem. That is the idea here. We need to intentionally get drunk—intentionally be filled with the Spirit. This means that the will of God is for every believer to intentionally, purposefully, desire to be filled with the Spirit.

HOLY SPIRIT ALREADY MINISTERS TO BELIEVERS. Now you may ask, “What does it mean to be filled with the Spirit?” Let me help you understand that this should not be confused with some statements in scripture that describe what is already true of us. One of them is in 1 Corinthians 12:13. It speaks of the baptism of the Spirit.

[For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. 1 Corinthians 12:13 \(NASB\)](#)

This is an important passage, because it tells us that we were all baptized into one body. Now notice the word “all.” The word “all” includes how many people? Every Christian, every believer! Here we are told that we were all baptized into one body - the body of Christ. When a person becomes a Christian, they are put into the body of Christ. Some believe that this means you will be speaking in tongues. Verse 30 helps us understand that this is not true. It says,

[All do not have gifts of healings, do they? 1 Corinthians 12:30a](#)

(NASB)

And the answer is no.

[All do not speak with tongues, do they? 1 Corinthians 12:30b \(NASB\)](#)

And the implied answer is no.

[All do not interpret, do they? 1 Corinthians 12:30c \(NASB\)](#)

Again, the implied answer is no. So what does this verse tell us? What does this verse teach us about tongues? Not every believer has the gift of tongues. That is what Paul and the Holy Spirit are telling us. In other words, because you are a Christian, you should not expect necessarily to be speaking in tongues. The verse is very clear. 1 Corinthians 13 and 14 are a rebuke to the Corinthians who wanted to speak in tongues, and Paul made the point that not everybody is going to speak in tongues.

Now let us go back to verse 13 where it states we are all baptized into one body. We are to understand that the author is not referring to speaking in tongues. Only some Christians had that spiritual gift. The baptism of the Spirit means that at the moment one believes in Christ, that person is put into the body of Christ. That is, being filled with the Spirit is not the baptism of the Spirit.

Being filled with the Spirit is also not being sealed by the Spirit either. That is the message of Ephesians 1:13 which says,

[In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation — having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise . . . Ephesians 1:13 \(NASB\)](#)

So at the moment the Spirit indwells you, your sins are forgiven and you have eternal life. So being filled with the Spirit is not being sealed by the Spirit either. The word for “sealed” here is in the aorist tense in the Greek, and the aorist tense refers to something that has already happened, a completed

action. Completed is the key word. Being sealed by the Spirit means it happened already. It is a one-time event. It is not going to happen again. But being filled with the Spirit is an ongoing process. It is important to understand the difference.

Let us look at James 4:5.

Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: "He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us"? James 4:5 (NASB)

The word for "dwell" is also in the aorist tense. That means that at the moment you became a believer the Holy Spirit continued to dwell in you after you were placed into the body of Christ. At the same time, you were sealed by the Spirit, granted forgiveness, and given the promise of eternal life in heaven. We know that in 1 Corinthians 3:16 we are told that we are the temple of God, the Spirit is within us. In Romans 8:9, 11, we are told that the Spirit of God dwells in us. In Galatians 5:25 we are told the Spirit is living in us. In summary, we have discovered that being filled with the Spirit is not being baptized. It is not being sealed; it is not the Spirit dwelling or living in us. What then does it mean to be filled with the Spirit?

Before we answer the question, let me show you what is already happening to the believer. Romans 5:5 is an incredible passage of scripture. Most of us have asked God to help us love someone who was difficult to love. This verse is incredible because it says,

... and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. Romans 5:5 (NASB)

What does that say about love? It says the Holy Spirit has shed the love of God in your heart. That is, God has poured out His love into your heart by the Holy Spirit. Maybe you are thinking, "Why am I having trouble loving other people if the love of God is in my heart?" The reason we have trouble loving others is because we sin, and we are not being filled with the Spirit as we should.

Let me show you another benefit of the Holy Spirit in your life. 1 Corinthians 2:12-14. It says,

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. 1 Corinthians 2:12-14 (NASB)

We are told the natural man does not understand the things of the Spirit. The advantage of the Holy Spirit living inside a Christian is that He helps us understand scripture. Now go to Romans 8:26-27. It says,

In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. Romans 8:26-27 (NASB)

The Holy Spirit helps you pray. You may be struggling, trying to pray, trying to express your desires, and the Spirit intercedes on your behalf. It is an incredible statement.

If you look at verses 13 and 14 in the same chapter, it says,

... for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. Romans 8:13-14 (NASB)

The verse says if the Spirit is in you, you are putting to death the deeds of the body - that is, sin.

BEING FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT IS UNIQUE. What is the Spirit doing for us already? The Spirit helps us pray. The Spirit helps us defeat sin, and the Spirit is helping us to love. The reason that we have any difficulty in any of these areas is because we are not filled with the Spirit as we should be. I just made a very important statement. It is because we are not completely filled with the Spirit or not controlled by

the Spirit as God wants us to be. Being filled with the Spirit is something unique. I have made a number of important statements. My next statement is probably the most important one so far. If you are a believer, you already have the Holy Spirit helping you to live your life, but being filled with the Spirit is something more. Being filled with the Spirit does not take place when you first receive the Spirit as a new believer. Being filled with the Spirit happens when the Holy Spirit has more control of you.

Let me illustrate for a minute by going to Numbers 11:24-26. Moses had seventy elders. God told Moses that He was going to take a portion of the Spirit off of Moses and put it on the seventy elders. That implies that there are various degrees of how much of the Spirit you can have. In Judges 14:6 we are told the Spirit rushed upon Samson, but, the Spirit only came on the other judges.

So when Ephesians says it is the will of God that we are to be filled with the Spirit, it is not that we do not already have the Spirit. The Spirit is already ministering to us and helping us. Therefore, what does this mean? What are we supposed to do? The Spirit is already transforming you, already working in you. If you remember Philippians 1:6, Paul is writing to the Philippians and says,

For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus. Philippians 1:6 (NASB)

That means that God is already working in you. If you are never filled with the Spirit, God is still working in you, He is still helping you. He is still transforming you, but there is a benefit to being filled with the Spirit. What is that benefit?

BENEFITS OF BEING FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT. Go back to Ephesians 5:18. That is where we are told that we are to be intentionally, purposefully, be filled with the Spirit. That is we are to let the Spirit fill us, take total control of us, like a glass overflowing with water. Verse 19-21 tells us the benefit.

... speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord .

.. Ephesians 5:19 (NASB)

What is one of the benefits of being filled with the Spirit? The answer is being filled with joy! Verse 19 says joy is a result of being filled with the Spirit. Look at the next verse.

... always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father . . . Ephesians 5:20 (NASB)

Another benefit is giving thanks. Then verse 21 says,

... and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ. Ephesians 5:21 (NASB)

Submission is an expression of humility. But first let me speak of the two characteristics already mentioned. If you are a person who is always grumbling and griping, and you are always unhappy, may I tell you kindly that you are not filled with the Spirit as you should be? The Holy Spirit does not have control over all of you, because verse 19 says a Spirit filled person will have joy. Verse 20 says you are going to be thankful. Now that does not mean that you will never have criticism of someone, but it will not be the pattern of your life. Verse 21 talks about being subject to one another. If you are a proud person, you will not be subject to anyone. The only way verse 21 can be true is if you are a humble person. So let me change it: a Christian will be humble as a result of being filled with the Spirit.

Now look at verse 22 to see the results of that humility.

Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. Ephesians 5:22 (NASB)

Verse 25:

Husbands, love your wives . . . Ephesians 5:25 (NASB)

Chapter 6, verse 1 is still a benefit of being filled with the Spirit.

Children, obey your parents . . . Ephesians 6:1 (NASB)

And in verse 5:

Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters . . . Ephesians 6:5 (NASB)

These are all results of being filled with the Spirit.

Some will now ask, “How do I become filled with the Spirit?” We just examined what the benefits are.

HOW TO BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT. Now, how can we be filled with the Spirit? To find the answer go to Colossians 3:16-18,

Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father. Wives, be subject to your husbands . . . Colossians 3:16-18 (NASB)

Verse 19 continues with husbands.

Husbands love your wives . . . Colossians 5:19 (NASB)

Verse 20 adds,

Children be obedient to your parents . . . Colossians 5:20 (NASB)

Verse 22 states,

Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters . . . Colossians 5:22 (NASB)

May I update that last sentence? Employees, obey your employers. Did you notice that the Colossians passage we just read sounds like the one in Ephesians? Only it started differently. Look at verse 16. In Ephesians it started with psalms and hymns and spiritual psalms, singing with thankfulness in your heart. Remember we made the point of a Christian being filled with joy. Colossians 3:16 is also talking

about joy at the end of the verse. Then the end of Colossians 3:17 talks about thankfulness. We saw that in Ephesians too. In Ephesians wives were to be subject to their husbands, and husbands were to love their wives. Children are to be obedient to their parents, and employees are to be obedient to their employers. The only difference here in Colossians is that it starts differently. Look how it started in verse 16:

Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you . . . Colossians 3:16a (NASB)

Watch this: we see the same result whether it is being filled with the Spirit or letting the word of Christ richly dwell within you. What does that mean? This means that if you want to be filled with the Spirit, you must spend time in the word of God. This requires daily interaction with the Word of God. It is like the difference between being wealthy and being poor. Verse 16 is saying be in the “Word wealthy.” That is, you are to spend time in the Bible, and not just Sunday morning, or Sunday night at a Bible study. You must daily, regularly, spend quality time in the word of God. That is how you are filled with the Spirit, because you are letting the word of God be in you so much so that it is guiding you in your daily life.

There is one more important piece to being filled with the Spirit. We do not want to grieve the Spirit. Ephesians 4:30 says,

Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Ephesians 4:30 (NASB)

Here we are told not to grieve the Spirit. The word for “grieve” implies exactly what it sounds like. Being grieved means that somebody is effected emotionally. Did you realize you can affect the Spirit? By sinning we actually grieve the Spirit. That is the meaning of the word. In 1 Thessalonians 5:19 we are told not to quench the Spirit.

But how do we grieve the Spirit? The answer is found in Ephesians 4:29.

Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only

such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear. Ephesians 4:29 (NASB)

Verse 31 continues the thought,

Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Ephesians 4:31 (NASB)

Ephesians 4:30 is sandwiched between a discussion about sin. The Holy Spirit and Paul are giving us a list of these sins and saying do not grieve the Spirit by committing such sins.

Therefore, how do we let the Spirit take control of us? We intentionally give ourselves to the Spirit so that He can take control of us. That means that when we sin, we must confess our sin, and we must regularly spend time in the word of God. It is really simple. The way we are filled with the Spirit is we spend time regularly, daily reading, studying, meditating and obeying the word of God. And every time we sin, we confess our sins.

If you get angry, do not wait until three days later to confess your sin - confess it right away. If you do something else that is a sin, confess it right away. Every morning when I get up, I ask God to convict me of any sin that I have not remembered so I can confess it. I ask the Holy Spirit to take control of me. I want to be filled with the Spirit.

DEGREES OF BEING FILLED BY THE SPIRIT. The fundamental principle we have from scripture is that there are various degrees of being filled. Every true believer has the Spirit living within. We already saw in the Old Testament there are various levels of being filled. Paul, at the very end of 1 Corinthians 7 says, "I think I have the Spirit." It is a very interesting statement. It implies that Paul had known on occasions when he was filled with the Spirit, and as he is writing 1 Corinthians, he says, "I think I have the Spirit." I take that to mean he is saying, "I have the sense that the Spirit is guiding me in what I am writing." That gives us insight that someone can be filled with the Spirit and not necessarily be aware of it.

But what is the evidence, you are filled with the Spirit?

Ask if you have joy? Are you constantly thankful? What is your attitude toward others? Are you in competition, are you in combat, are you submissive, do you try to be Number 1? There was a statement made not too long ago that stuck in my mind. An individual said one of the problems with Christians is that we never want to be in second place, we always want to be in first place. Humility is another mark of being Spirit filled.

Galatians 5:16 says,

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. Galatians 5:16 (NASB)

One may ask, "What is the difference between walking in the Spirit and being filled with the Spirit?" The word for "walking" is *peripateo* in the Greek, and it just means to walk around. Walking in the Spirit is a moment-by-moment refilling of the Spirit, continually being refilled by the Spirit. So "walking" refers to the fact that you are constantly being filled with the Spirit. Being filled with the Spirit is a moment in time event. "Walking" refers to the continuous pattern of being filled with the Spirit over and over again. What is the result? You will not be pleasing the flesh. What does the flesh want?

WALKING IN THE SPIRIT—THE BENEFIT. Verse 19 says,

Now the deeds of the flesh are evident . . . Galatians 5:16 (NASB)

What is listed in verses 19, 20, and 21? A group of sins. That means that if you are walking in the Spirit, or you are repeatedly being filled with the Spirit, you will not be constantly sinning. It does not mean you will not sin, but you will sin less and less and less. Verse 22 is a contrasting statement. It says,

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Galatians 5:22-23 (NASB)

Now if you go back to verse 16 and review the verse, it says,

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh . . . Galatians 5:16-17a (NASB)

Do you see the conflict? The Spirit is opposed to the deeds of the flesh which want to sin and flesh is opposed to the Spirit. What is another benefit of repeatedly being filled with the Spirit—walking in the Spirit? You are going to have increasing victory over sin in your life. The more you are consistently filled with the Spirit or walking by the Spirit, you are

going to discover that you are sinning less and less. This is called victory over sin. This is terrific!

The Holy Spirit will help us grow spiritually, help us move from being a little child, to being a young man, to a spiritual father (1 John 2:12-14). This is ultimately the work of the Spirit as we yield ourself to the Spirit.

A Spirit-filled Christian not always be happy and thankful. There will be times where pride gets in the way, because pride is the root of all sin. You will still sin. But walking in the Spirit does say that joy, thankfulness, humility and victory over sin will become more and more and more present in your life.