

“Spirit-filled Relationships in God’s Family” **Ephesians 5:18-21**

Introduction:

1. One of the great truths of the Bible is the close relationship between God and his people. God has established this relationship by his choice, by his redeeming activity through our Lord Jesus Christ, and by his covenant promise: “I will be their God, and they will be my people” (Heb 8:10). This relationship is a personal, intimate relationship between the Holy and Sovereign God and his chosen people. As we have seen in this letter, it is a family relationship. God is our Father, and we are his sons and daughters.
2. This kind of relationship involves certain qualities:
 - a. Trust and commitment – We usually think of our trust and commitment, but God does the same toward us. He promises to stick with us, no matter how difficult and unpleasant the circumstances of our lives become.
 - b. Identification – God says that we are part of his family, from the least to the greatest. As I have said before, this should give us a profound appreciation for each other. If the Lord of the universe is on your side, I should treat you with deep respect.
 - c. Communication – In any personal relationship, the parties have to talk and fellowship with each other. There must be a sharing of life, ideas, feelings and decisions!
 - d. Leadership and submission – God takes the lead, and we must follow his lead in our relationship with him. As we shall see, God willing, he wants us to reflect his glory by being leaders and followers in various human relationships.
3. Today, let’s look at how these just mentioned qualities are an integral part of being filled with the Holy Spirit. As we do this, we will see how each of them contributes toward this church being “A Spiritual Shelter of Truth and Love”.

Exposition:

- I. An overview of this text
 - A. Some general observations
 1. The apostle uses five participles (verbal adjectives) to explain what he means by “be filled with the Spirit”. As we examine these five, it is clear that being Spirit-filled affects our relationship with God and with one another. The Spirit has definite purposes in mind as we “reach up toward God” and as we “reach out to one another”.
 2. Each of these participles is in the present tense, which shows our ongoing responsibility toward God and each other. If we are filled with the Spirit, these five actions will be happening. On the other hand, if they are not, we must face the fact that we are not being filled with the Spirit and so we are sinning.
 3. Paul does not present these five in a “cafeteria” fashion. No, this is good old “family style”, in which mom puts the food on the plates and dad says, “Eat everything on your plate!”
 - B. Reasons that the understanding and practice of these observations is important to our spiritual progress—individually and as a church
 1. It is too easy to disconnect “worshipping God” from “fellowshipping with one another”. Churches tend to drift in either direction, and people tend to choose churches according to their prevailing interest. In the worst cases, churches become either “religious

entertainment centers” or “religious social clubs”. One of our concerns in this church is to keep the two connected and in constant expression in a Biblical manner.

2. Each of these participles make it clear that being filled with the Spirit is far removed from the emotional or mystical experience that many think it is. Last week we saw how comprehensive it is. This week we should grasp how it affects our interpersonal relationships. A person who is a disaster in personal relationships (including a vital, dynamic, daily relationship with God) is not filled with the Spirit. He or she is a person with a serious spiritual problem.

Apply: Do you need some spiritual repair work in this area?

3. A church meeting ought to be a gathering of Spirit-filled people. Now you can only have the Spirit if you are right with God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. When you are justified, Christ gives you the Holy Spirit as your leader. It is then your responsibility to yield to his holy, peaceful, loving and joyful influence.

Apply: Does the way you act “in church” furnish evidence that you are filled with the Spirit? Take the self-test (on the previously mentioned four characteristics).

II. An examination of this explanation of being Spirit-filled

A. The first participial phrase, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, tells us the Spirit-filled minister to each other when they gather together.

1. In this phrase, the apostle uses the example of music. We should realize that when we are singing during a service, we are engaging in ministry. In an artistic form, we are instructing, encouraging, stirring up, comforting and counseling each other.

Example: Consider the music we have had in this service already. (The songs are: “Come, Christians, Join to Sing”, “He is Lord”, “Be Thou My Vision”, and “Tell His Praise in Song and Story”.)

2. It is generally agreed that it is difficult to distinguish “psalms, hymns and spiritual songs”. Whatever the precise meaning of each word, together they set forth a necessary element of public worship. This is a time when every believer-priest is to participate actively and vocally.

3. Since we are ministering to one another, we ought to be entering into this activity wholeheartedly. How can anyone expect to affect others in a positive manner if he/she sings in a cold, indifferent, sluggish or half-hearted manner?

Comment: I have heard people criticize preachers for lacking “fire” or for being dull and boring. That might be true, but I wonder if they should blame themselves for his dryness? Perhaps if the truth were known, they might be singing the poor fellow to sleep!

B. The second phrase, singing and singing praise in your heart to the Lord (consisting of two participles), presents our worship of the Lord when we assemble. Again, the form is music. When we sing together, we use our qualities of art and emotional expression in praise to the Lord.

1. Again, it is difficult to discern much difference between singing and singing praise. Perhaps it is a combination of synonyms for emphasis.

2. What we should notice is the two dependent ideas.

a. “With the heart” – God doesn’t want lip service. He wants what we sing to be the overflowing of the full inner person of the heart. We should be singing what is true! (That is why this pastor does not pick out certain songs. “Oh pastor, you’re being too precise!” My friend, I serve a precise God!). Our emotions should be following the truth,

whether it leads to solemn reflection or jubilant praise. Our wills should be determined to choose appropriate actions, perhaps those suggested in the song itself.

b. “To the Lord” – In context, Jesus Christ, the Son of God is meant, but praise to the Father and Spirit is proper as well. The idea is to have one’s focus on the Lord. Praise through music is a real way of communicating with God.

C. The third phrase, always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father, emphasizes gratitude.

1. Thankfulness should characterize the gatherings of God’s chosen people. Spirit-filled people are thankful people, because they know that they have received God’s free grace. “But with our songs of sovereign grace we’ll make heaven’s arches ring!” Thanksgiving, not grumbling (1 Cor 10:10-11) is our theme.

2. Too often we become problem-oriented. To hear some talk, they’ve been buried alive. “I’m doing well—*under the circumstances*.” My friend, who is in charge of all your circumstances? I know some circumstances are not pleasant but grievous. But don’t you have some word of thanks to say to God? Hasn’t he been gracious to your soul? Hasn’t he loved you with an everlasting love? Aren’t you a son of God, and heir of all things in Christ? Aren’t your sins forgiven? Hasn’t God freely justified you by his grace? Don’t you have peace with God? Isn’t God, who loves you deeply, keeping you as the apple of his eye? Aren’t you hidden in the shadow of his wings? Isn’t God working all things for your God? Aren’t you seated in the heavenly places in Christ? Then why not rejoice with an inexpressible and glorious joy?

D. The fourth phrase, submitting to one another in reverence for Christ, is the theme of 5:22-6:9! In those verses Paul explains how Christians display this grace in the various relationships we enter into with other people. The key to this attitude is again a focus on Christ, a proper fear of Christ that the Spirit produces. Since Christ humbled himself and submitted to God’s will, so the Spirit delights in generating this same attitude in Christ’s people!

Apply: Are you demonstrating these qualities of a Spirit-filled person? You and I must come to grips with this immediately! Come Holy Spirit; fill us, we pray!