



Eph. 5:18 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit.

As we examine this verse, we find that the context in which it is written makes its importance all but impossible to mistake. Every verse following in this chapter has to do with a relationship.

We can see from the outset, that the first implicit command preceding all the listed relationships is “be filled with the Spirit”. The reason for this is that it is through relationships that sin is most often revealed. We need the power of the Holy Spirit in order to relate with each other! We should note at this point, that the command “be filled” is a continual process that might be better translated “be being filled continually”. The idea here is two fold. Firstly, we should recognize that we can be emptied of our resource. Secondly, and as a result of the first issue, we need to insure that we are always being “capped off” ... just like a car. As we drive, we begin to use up the gasoline that gives the engine power. The power stops abruptly when that gasoline is gone. If the tank isn’t full, it diminishes our ability to go the distance.

As with the analogy of the car, so is it true of us as believers. As we go through our day, we are continually confronted with different situations and relationships that expend power and reduce our spiritual ability to go the distance. If we continue in this way, we will eventually run out of “gas”. Many of us can relate to coming home drained at the end of the day with nothing left over for our spouse and family... And what about the spouse that may be home all day caring for the house and kids? Is there anything left to give after 5 PM? I would suspect that we have been there more times than we would like to admit. Just like the car without gas, we slowly pull over and stop because there is nothing left.

Now it is at this point that we have a decision to make. We can either stay in the car and wait, or get out and find a gas station. Either way we realize that we need to get filled up again but which decision should we make? I would say that many of us at the end of the day roll off life’s highway, coast to a stop and fall asleep in the vehicle. In this scenario, gas will just have to come to us. We’re worn out. We actually believe that if we just get some rest (usually translated “sitting in a vegetative state in front of the television, falling asleep, and then staggering into our bedroom for the night) we’ll be ready for the day

when we wake up. In other words, our strategy for “filling up” is really “drying up”. Whether we realize it or not, our attitude often seems to be that God is cruising the highways of life looking for us asleep in our vehicle. Silently He stops; takes off our gas cap and fills us for the next day. Although we might chuckle at this picture, how many times have we been there... off the road, asleep, and expecting to be filled? Does this sound like it may have happened before? Think about when Jesus asked the disciples to pray with Him during His hour of deepest need. What did they do? They fell asleep. Not once, but repeatedly! The very time they needed to be praying... filling up... preparing for what was ahead... their tank was empty... they fell asleep...and did not get filled. They were not ready for the experience that awaited them. They were ill-prepared and failed miserably.

At this point, it is so important to note that God knew what was ahead. God provided a strategy for them to be filled. God gave them ample opportunity. But God, knowing what would await them; knowing their need; and knowing their potential for disaster did not fill them. It is imperative that we recognize that there are situations in which God expects us to obey his commands. It is for our own good! And if we fail to prepare ourselves, we will struggle to fight a battle in our flesh that was meant to be won in the Spirit. Hence the command “(you) be being filled”. The weight of the command is on us getting to where we need to be and doing what it is we have been commanded to do that we would be filled.

As we recognize our need, we begin in the same way when we fill up our automobile. We stop. Now this might seem like a really basic thing that need not be mentioned, but in my experience, it is not merely important to stop, but crucial we stop. Many of us (myself included at times) try filling up “on the go”. We wouldn’t think of doing this in our automobile, but somehow we have the expectation that God will be running along behind us ready to “fill ‘er up” at our command. Somehow I don’t think that this is what God has intended. I believe that God not only expects us to stop where He is but to stop when he commands us to do so, not the other way around.

Secondly, we need to get out. We must cease what we are doing in order to do something completely different. God requires us to “get out of ourselves” because He knows that there is nothing within ourselves that can nourish ourselves. We are designed to use, expend, give out, and eventually run out. We have no way either in the natural or spiritual to independently sustain ourselves. What ever goes in, gets used. So much of our time and energy is spent... literally spent... on the highways of life’s daily experiences and relational demands. Thankfully, God makes it clear that He provides opportunities for us to pull off the highway of life, on to the exit for heaven, and invites us to get out of ourselves and to come in and be refreshed.

Once there, the only things available to us are “heavenly”. Nothing that we would find on the highway of life is there. Not one single thing. At our

heavenly stop, there is only Spirit, Truth and Life. Everything we need for our journey on the road of life is there for the asking. There is “gas” for the spirit and food for the body and soul. The shelves are fully stocked with every fruit of the Spirit, the Bread of Life, and best living water available... just to name a few! Unless we stop and fill up daily on the Word of God, commune with God, and worship our God, we, like the disciples mentioned above will be ill prepared for the relational demands that await us on a daily basis. But let us rather seize the wonderful opportunity we have to come “boldly before the throne of Grace”, be in the presence of the Living God, eat at His table, and be filled with His Spirit! Who wouldn't want that!

As we think about the issue of sin being revealed through relationships, we find many scriptural examples from which we might draw.

Take Adam for instance. Adam was doing fine until Eve came along. (I say this to in no way malign Eve. After all, it was Adam's responsibility to accurately convey to Eve the command God had given him. The fact that she was confused and Adam, who was with her, said nothing to allay that confusion, makes him, in my opinion and in some measure, responsible for her decision.) It was then, through the husband/wife relationship, that the sinfulness of Adam's heart was revealed. Worse yet, when Adam was confronted with his sin, he immediately put the blame on “that woman you gave me”. The inference being that Adam had made no mistake, but rather it was God who was to blame for giving her to him in the first place. This relational exchange of course got Adam even deeper in sin.

Cain and Able were doing fine until that unfortunate “offering thing” happened. Again we see a relationship questioned. Why did you receive his offering and not mine... wasn't mine good enough? I suppose you like Able more than me? These statements and mindsets have relational roots.

There are many examples of how sin is revealed as a result of a relationship and also how we excuse and refuse to take ownership of our sin, but what is important to take with us is the fact that relationships have the potential to either bring out the best in us by yielding to the power of the Holy Spirit, or bring out the worst in us by yielding to our own soulish desires. It is through relationships that God reveals to us the desperate need we have for His loving salvation and the necessity of being filled with the Spirit on an ongoing basis. When we get angry, upset, hurt, feel unappreciated, disappointed, or feel any one of a hundred negative emotions, our heart is exposed and the response that is most often triggered is one of a sinful nature. Whether we act on it is not the issue.

The issue is that of our sinful nature. It is that nature that must be addressed, it is that nature from which we must turn, and it is that nature that must be replaced by the person, presence and power of the Holy Spirit.

Thankfully, by the mercies of God, we have been given the answer for our sinful nature. The only remedy for the removal of sin is salvation through the blood of

Jesus Christ. The only assuring strategy we have to keep ourselves from sin is the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. It is not complicated, difficult, or outside of our grasp. It is God's way of continually reaching down to us. We need only to reach up, take a hold, and ask for His help.

Therefore, if we are to have any hope of being effective within the many corporate environments in which we might find ourselves, we must depend upon the presence and direction of the Holy Spirit for any success we might enjoy.