

## Keep on Being Filled

Today is Pentecost Sunday. It is the day that the Church was born. Christ was crucified, rose again, spent forty days with His disciples, and then ascended to heaven. Pentecost immediately followed. It takes place 50 days after Easter Sunday. For over two millennia, Christians have been celebrating the church's birthday with joy and exuberance. The purest meaning of Pentecost is that of a time of renewal - a renewed focus on "empowerment" from the Holy Spirit.

Pentecost is believed to be the oldest feast in the Church; it dates back to the first century A.D. The Feast of Pentecost coincided with the Jewish Feast of Weeks, which occurs 50 days after the Passover (**Deuteronomy 16:10**). According to tradition, the Ten Commandments were given to Moses 50 days after the first Passover, which freed the Hebrews from their bondage in Egypt. As the Hebrews settled into Canaan, the feast became a time to honour the Lord for blessing the "fruits" of their labours. At the time of Jesus, the festival focused on rabbinical law and traditions. However, since the Feast of Weeks took place at the same time as the Feast of Pentecost, many Jewish believers turned this ceremony into a celebration of the "coming of the Spirit."

According to book of Acts, the Church came into being on the day of Pentecost. As 120 worshipers, including the disciples, were fasting and praying in an upper room in Jerusalem, the Holy Spirit descended upon them as a violent rushing wind that was heard throughout the city. Small flames of fire rested upon their heads, and they began to speak in other languages. As crowds came to investigate the commotion, the apostle Peter spoke to them about Jesus and exhorted them to repent. From the crowd of Jews and converts, 3,000 accepted the truth of his words and became followers of Jesus.

Yes, the Day of Pentecost is the day the Church was born, but it is also the day when **Joel 2:28** was fulfilled, "*I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh.*" In **Acts 1:8** Jesus said, "*But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you.*" Earlier (in verse 5) He told them that they shall be baptised with the Holy Spirit "*not many days from now.*" What was the consequence of this baptism? **Acts 2:4** says, "*And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.*" There was an infilling! They were all filled with the Holy Spirit! This is what I'd like us to focus on today.

**Ephesians 5:18-19**, "*And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation, but be filled with the Holy Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.*" The Greek word translated "be filled" literally means "to fill to the full", and implies "*always having a perfect measure of something.*" It is also used when referring to the 'joy' and 'peace'. **Romans 15:13** states, "*I pray that God, the source of hope, will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in Him. Then you will overflow with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.*" We are "filled" with a perfect measure of joy or peace because we trust in Him. However, these are fruits of the Holy Spirit! Can you see something here? When we have the fruits of the Holy Spirit overflowing in our lives, (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control), we are able to "*speak to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in our hearts to the Lord.*" What an encouragement!

*"And do not be drunk on wine, in which is dissipation, but be filled with the Holy Spirit."* The NLT says, "*Don't be drunk with wine because that will ruin your life. Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit.*"

Note the contrast between wine and the Spirit. This is the most basic point of the verse. There is a direct parallel drawn between being drunk with wine and being filled with the Spirit. But what precisely is the point of the comparison between wine and the Holy Spirit? The issue is influence or control. A person under the influence of wine experiences altered behaviour. He may say or do things he would not ordinarily do. Emotions may be heightened for a brief period, causing the person to experience anger, followed quickly by elation, followed quickly by depression. If the person drinks enough wine, his mental processes will be affected and decision-making ability radically altered; and almost always with a negative result.

Likewise, the filling of the Holy Spirit produces a change in behaviour. In the Book of Acts, the once timid disciples became bold evangelists for Jesus Christ. In this passage the apostle Paul mentions three practical results of the filling of the Spirit: (a) singing, (b) a thankful heart, and (c) an attitude of mutual submission. The last result is most significant because true submission always involves giving up your right to be in control. That's why the New Living Translation says, *"Let the Holy Spirit fill and control you."* When we submit from the heart, we are in fact saying, "I don't have to have my way all the time." Only a heart touched by the Holy Spirit can maintain such an attitude in every relationship of life.

In the Greek language, this verb **"be filled"** is in the imperative mode. This means the "filling" of the Spirit, isn't an optional part of the Christian life. Every Christian is to be filled with the Spirit all of the time. If you aren't, you are out of God's will. Also, the verb is in the 'present tense'. This insight is particularly helpful because the Greek present tense has the idea of continual action. You keep on (keep on) doing something! It's not a one-time event.

Therefore, this phrase could easily be translated, *"Be continually filled with the Holy Spirit,"* or, *"Keep on being filled constantly and continually."* That is why the filling of the Spirit is not primarily an experience. It's supposed to be the normal way of life for the Christian – a lifestyle!

Note, **"be filled"** is in the passive voice. This is a distinction many people would miss. In Greek, as in English, commands can be either active or passive. However, we're much more used to active commands: *"Go to the store and pick up some milk, please."* That's an active command. If I say, *"Fill that hole with dirt,"* that's also in the active voice. But this entire verse is in the passive voice. Paul doesn't say, *"Fill yourself with the Spirit"* but rather **"Be filled with the Spirit."** That's a bit harder to understand. It's like saying to someone, "Be loved." How do you do that? How do you "be loved?" However, this is the key to everything. To **"be filled"** means that the filling of the Spirit is a work of God and not man. God intends for us to be continually filled with His Spirit. At any given time, He is ready and willing to fill us to overflowing. The only thing we can do is to make ourselves available to Him. Like any empty vessel, we are to come into His presence and ask to "be filled!" Only the Holy Spirit can do this!

Therefore, today (the Day of Pentecost) make yourself available to Him - for Him to fill you. But also, remember that you must **keep on being filled constantly and continually!**