

## Lesson 11 – Colossians 3:15-17

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### Review/Introduction

The apostle Paul is writing a letter to the church at Colossae – a church he does not know and one that is facing heretical attacks on the supremacy and sufficiency of Christ. Chapters one and two laid the foundation for the supremacy of Christ over all things and the believer's sufficiency in Christ for salvation and sanctification. Philosophy, human wisdom, legalism, mysticism, or asceticism by themselves or if added to Christ are useless in regards to salvation or sanctification. Salvation and sanctification are only found in Christ.

Union with Christ is the doctrinal prerequisite to walking with Christ. Chapters three and four address how the believer is to walk in light of Christ's supremacy and sufficiency. Here is where Paul exhorts the Colossian (and us) to strive in the power of the Spirit to walk in our position; to live out in practice what we already are in Christ.

Paul started the second half of the letter with the exhortation to continually devote yourself to serious effort and earnestly strive to glorify God, being a doer of His word (will), having your affections, will, and reason set on that. He then addressed positional and practical (or progressive) sanctification with the "already accomplished and yet still striving" structure. We are to mortify sin because the sin nature has already been laid aside. We are to renew our minds with God's word. We are to put on righteousness because the new self has already been put on.

3:5,8 Command → Put to death/put aside sin

3:9 Since already accomplished → laid aside the old self

3:10 Happening now → RENEWING unto a true knowledge

3:10 Since already accomplished → have put on the new self

3:12 Command → Put on righteousness

In the midst of teaching on progressive sanctification, he moved to relationships within the body. Five representative characteristics are given to describe body relationships: compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. These characteristics (fruits of the Spirit) are to be put on by "bearing with one another" (continually making allowances for each other's faults) and "forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you". Beyond all these things, we are to put love, which causes the characteristics to work together perfectly.

Paul will now continue the thought of body relationships and then will describe the "how" of walking in the Spirit.

### Life in the all-sufficient Christ – Spirit Filling (3:15-17)

1. Peace in the body (3:15)

<sup>15</sup>Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful.

<sup>15</sup>And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. (ESV)

There are two commands in this verse. The first is “let rule”. It has the sense of deciding an outcome or arbitrating. It is to be a lifestyle, to continually happen. We are to continually have the peace of Christ deciding the outcome in our heart and in our relationships.

“Peace” includes both the concept of an agreement, pact, treaty or bond and of an attitude of rest or security. Contextually, it is used several ways in Scripture.

#### Peace with God through reconciliation

<sup>1</sup>Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have **peace** with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>2</sup>through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. ... <sup>11</sup>And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation. (Rom 5:1-2, 11)

#### Orderliness or an absence confusion

<sup>33</sup>for God is not *a God* of confusion but of **peace**, as in all the churches of the saints. ...  
<sup>40</sup>But all things must be done properly and in an orderly manner. (1 Cor 14:33, 40)

#### An absence of fear or anxiety

<sup>27</sup>**Peace** I leave with you; My **peace** I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful. (John 14:27)

<sup>6</sup>Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. <sup>7</sup>And the **peace** of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Phil 4:6-7)

<sup>16</sup>Now may the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you **peace** in every circumstance. The Lord be with you all! (2 Thess 3:16)

#### An absence of strife in relationships

<sup>18</sup>If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at **peace** with all men. (Rom 12:18)

<sup>19</sup>So then we pursue the things which make for **peace** and the building up of one another. (Rom 14:19)

<sup>12</sup>But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, <sup>13</sup>and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in **peace** with one another. (1 Thess 5:12-13)

<sup>1</sup>Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, <sup>2</sup>with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, <sup>3</sup>being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of **peace**. <sup>4</sup>*There is* one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; <sup>5</sup>one Lord, one faith, one baptism, <sup>6</sup>one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all. (Eph 4:1-5)

#### ❖ Do you have all of these kinds of peace in your life?

There is an interpretive challenge here. What aspect or aspects of “peace” is Paul referring? Clearly, as we live the Christian life, we live it in light of our reconciliation with God; in light of that peace. As we walk in the Spirit, we are not anxious or fearful, so we have that kind of peace. But here the context is the put-ons of body relationships working all together in harmony in love. So, this peace appears to be directed to interpersonal peace within the body of Christ. Interestingly, you cannot have true body peace without the other two (salvation and Spirit-filling).

❖ **Are you pursuing peace in body relationships?**

The second command is “be thankful” or more literally, keep on being thankful. This is a grateful attitude for having the peace of Christ in all its forms and being connected to the body of Christ.

❖ **Are you thankful for the body of Christ?**

2. Spirit Filling (3:16a)

<sup>16a</sup>Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you,

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<sup>16a</sup>Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, (ESV)

Paul will now give the means to be able to live out the put-on one another's previously listed and the ability to have peace in the body. That is being filled with the Spirit.

“The word of Christ” is God’s specific revelation to mankind, the Scriptures, the Bible. The Bible, composed of the 39 Old Testament books and the 27 New Testament books, constitutes God’s only written revelation to mankind. It is the inspired, verbal, plenary, infallible, inerrant in the original manuscripts word.

“Richly” in its literal use describes abundant, vast material wealth, enormous affluence, great prosperity, immense riches, magnificent opulence, extravagant lavishness. Figuratively, it means abundantly and constantly. “Let dwell” means literally to take up residence, to make one's home in or among, to live in, to inhabit.

We are commanded to continually make the Scripture to take up residence and be at home in our lives. This must include reading, studying, and meditating on the word.

❖ **Are you interacting with the Scriptures on a regular basis?**

God has described Spirit-filling in the Scriptures in several ways to allow us to understand the deep truths of Spirit-filling. Spirit-filling is described as “abiding in Christ” (John 15:1-11); “setting apart Christ as Lord in your heart” (1 Pet 3:15); “living by faith in the Son of God” (Gal 2:20); and “presenting your bodies a living and holy sacrifice” (Rom 12:1-2). Yet the classic passage is found in Ephesians 5:18+.

<sup>18</sup>And do not get drunk with wine, for this is dissipation, but **be filled with the Spirit**,  
<sup>19</sup>speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; <sup>20</sup>always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; <sup>21</sup>and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ... (<sup>22</sup>Wives..., <sup>25</sup>Husbands..., <sup>6:1</sup>Children..., <sup>4</sup>Fathers..., <sup>5</sup>Slaves..., <sup>9</sup>Masters...) (Eph 5:18-6:9)

“Be filled” has the sense of being totally dominated and controlled. The contrast is clear; someone who is drunk is under the influence of alcohol – they have surrendered control to alcohol. Believers should only be controlled by the Spirit. The Greek for “filled” is a passive, present tense imperative (something that you are commanded to continually let happen to you). It is literally *let yourselves be kept being filled with the Spirit*. You are commanded to allow the Spirit to fill you. The implication is that **the usual, expected position of the believer is to be filled with the Spirit**. The believer in a right relationship with God will be filled with the Spirit. Being filled with the Spirit is the surrendering of every area of your life to God, making the words of Christ to richly dwell within you, so that the Holy Spirit is controlling you.

Being filled with the Spirit is equivalent to letting the word of Christ richly dwell within you (Col 3:16) and likewise produces the same result: Christ-like words, worship, reactions, and relationships (Eph 5:18-6:9 and Col 3:16-22 c.f. Gal 5:22-23).

	<b>Ephesians 5:18-21</b>	<b>Colossians 3:16-4:1</b>
Command	And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but <b>be filled with the Spirit</b>	<b>Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you</b>
Words	speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs	with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms <i>and</i> hymns <i>and</i> spiritual songs
Worship	singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord	singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God
Reactions	always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father	Whatever you do in word or deed, <i>do</i> all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.
Relationships	and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ... (Wives..., Husbands..., Children..., Fathers..., Slaves..., Masters...)	Wives..., Husbands..., Children..., Fathers..., Slaves..., Masters...

The filling of the Spirit is not some magical, super-spiritual experience. It occurs when you, in response to God and what He has done for you in Christ, bring your entire life under submission to Him as He has revealed to do in His word. The fruit of this filling is a tangible manifestation of strength, character, and your connection to God through Christ.

❖ **How do you understand the filling of the Spirit?**

The filling of the Spirit is brought about by:

1. Repent of any known sin – An attitude of the heart that is willing to always come under the Holy Spirit’s conviction of sin and genuinely repent (Eph 4:30).

<sup>29</sup>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. <sup>30</sup>**Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.** <sup>31</sup>Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. <sup>32</sup>Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you. (Eph 4:29-32)

❖ **Is your heart to quickly come under the Holy Spirit’s conviction and repent?**

2. Yield to God in every area of life – An attitude of the heart that yields to God’s Word (1 Thess 5:19).

<sup>16</sup>Rejoice always; <sup>17</sup>pray without ceasing; <sup>18</sup>in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus. <sup>19</sup>**Do not quench the Spirit;** <sup>20</sup>**do not despise prophetic utterances.** <sup>21</sup>But examine everything *carefully*; hold fast to that which is good; <sup>22</sup>abstain from every form of evil. (1 Thess 5:16-21)

❖ **Is your heart to yield to God’s word continually?**

3. Immersion in the Word – Comparing Eph 5:18-21 and Col 3:16-4:1 – The Spirit of God uses the Word of God to produce the will of God in a believer’s life.

❖ **Are you placing a priority on immersing yourself in God’s word?**

Walking in the Spirit is a moment by moment decision to recognize, repent, and confess sin; yield your will to God’s moral will as set forth in His word; and allow the word to richly dwell within you.

3. Results of Spirit Filling (3:16b-17)

<sup>16b</sup>...with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. <sup>17</sup>Whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

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<sup>16b</sup>...teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. <sup>17</sup>And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (ESV)

Being filled with the Spirit (letting the words of Christ to richly dwell within you) produces observable, tangible supernatural words, worship, reactions, and relationships in one’s life. Said another way, if the supernatural words, worship, reactions, and relationship responses are not present, then you are not walking in the Spirit and must again bow before God and be filled with the Spirit.

❖ **Are you self-aware to be able to know when you are not displaying the fruits of the Spirit?**

- a. God glorifying words

A result of Spirit filling is words that are God glorifying. “Teaching” means to provide instruction, impart positive truth, in a formal or informal setting. Inherent is the intent to influence understanding with the aim to shape the will of one taught.

“Admonish” conveys the ideas of encouraging, advising, and warning people of the consequences of their behavior. It speaks of encouraging counsel in view of sin and coming punishment; counsel with a warning involved. The word implies a definite exhortation, correction, and warning. When it is used, there is always the implication of a problem. It presupposes an obstacle that must be removed or changed.

The only requirement to be able to “teach” and “admonish” one another in the body is to be Spirit-filled (allowing the words of Christ to richly dwell within you).

❖ **As you approach relationship interactions do you ensure you are walking in the Spirit so you can have maximum kingdom impact in those relationships?**

b. A joyful heart

The NASB’s “with” is absent in the Greek. It appears that the ESV is preferable. A result of being filled with the Spirit is joy. “Psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God” flow from a heart bowed before Christ. This heart weathers any circumstance with supernatural joy.

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

Joy in the heart moves out in expressive worship and thankfulness to God. Paul lists three types of singing, which are not necessarily all inclusive, that flows from a joyful and thankful heart. “Psalms” are from the book of Psalms. “Hymns” were expressions of praise to God, perhaps portions of New Testament Scripture. “Spiritual songs” were songs of Christian experience. A joyful worshipful heart is the result of Spirit-filling.

❖ **Do you see a joyful, worshipful heart often?**

c. God glorifying reactions

A result of being filled with the Spirit is reactions that glorify God. “Whatever you do in word or deed” is all encompassing. There is no area of life that is excluded from the supernatural impact of Spirit-filling.

“Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus” describes the character of the doing. It is to be done in the way the Christ would do it. “The name of the Lord Jesus” serves as a summary description of all His attributes and characteristics. In everything you do, it is to be done as the life of Christ flows through you (Gal 2:20).

<sup>20</sup>I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, **but Christ lives in me**; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. (Gal 2:20)

A Spirit-filled believer responds to life as Christ does.

❖ **What is your first response to difficulty?**

d. God honoring relationships

Finally, Spirit-filling results in fulfilling relational roles in a way that honors God. We will look more at these in coming weeks. Both the Ephesians 5 and Colossians 3 passages on Spirit-filling result in the marriage relationship, parent-child relationship, and the work relationship being impacted by walking in the Spirit. It is unfortunate that most people who are in relational difficulties want quick, worldly fixes when the power to have God glorifying relationships is readily accessible to the believer through Christ.

❖ **Do you see yourself fulfilling relational roles to Christ’s glory?**

## Another way to look at Spirit Filling

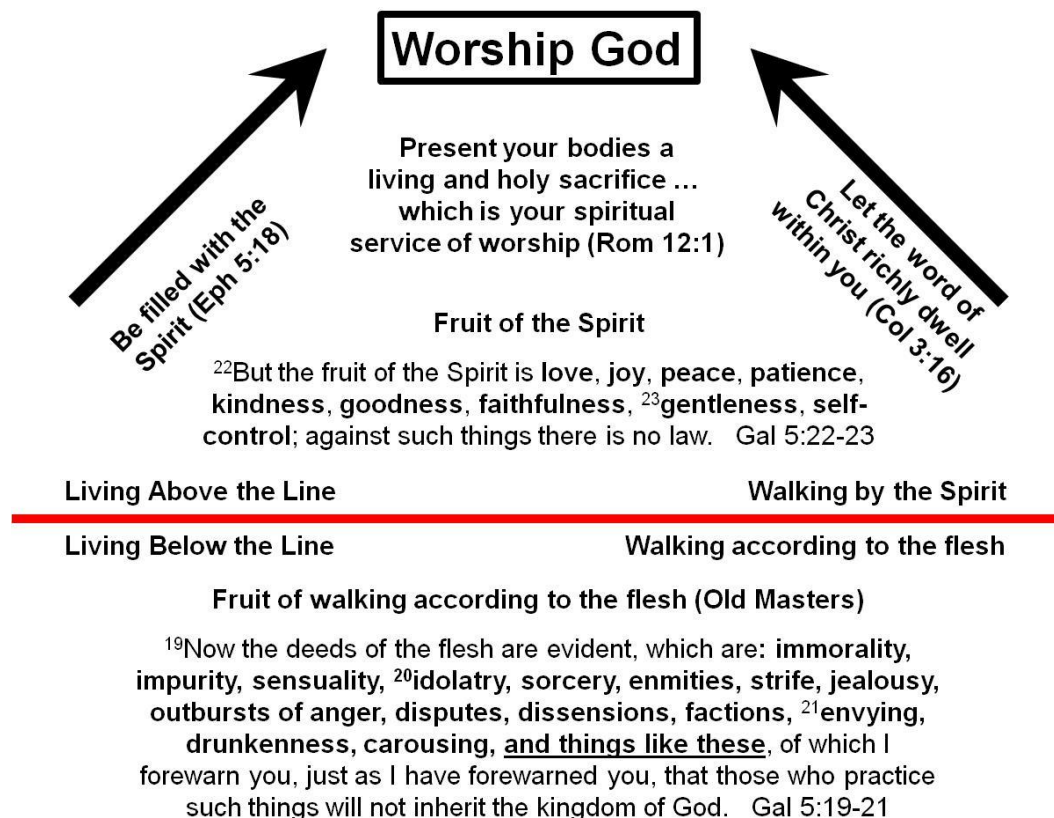
“Being filled with the Spirit” and “letting the words of Christ richly dwell within you” are the same spiritual realities viewed from different perspectives. Still another way to look at walking in the Spirit is “presenting your body as a living sacrifice” (Rom 12:1). Spirit-filling occurs when you choose to bow and present your body to God as a living sacrifice in response to all that you know about Him and what He has done for you through Christ.

<sup>1</sup>Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to **present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.**

<sup>2</sup>And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. Rom 12:1-2

Spirit-filling results in personal, manifold blessings. When you are not filled with the Spirit you will not be living in the midst of these blessings and you will once again be dominated by your old masters. The blessings of Spirit-filling will flow into your everyday life and will continue to be reaped as long as you are filled with the Spirit.

The illustration below shows that being filled with the Spirit is like “living above the line” and describes your everyday life when you are living in the midst of the blessings of Spirit-filling. “Living below the line” describes your life when you are not living in the midst of the blessings of the Spirit-filling. When you find yourself living below the line, the life of Christ is not flowing through you. You are once again dominated by masters other than Christ. You are living the kind of life that you were living prior to having gained access to God through faith in Christ.



If you find yourself no longer experiencing the fruit of walking by the Spirit, then you know something. You know that you are not walking in the Spirit. You are not being filled with the Spirit. You are not letting the words of Christ richly dwell within you. You are not presenting your body as a living sacrifice. You are living below the line. Fruit will be reaped in the walking. Walking in the flesh will reap fleshly character and weakness. Walking in the Spirit will reap the fruits of the Spirit and power.

When you find yourself walking below the line, you must immediately purpose to seek and set your mind on God and what He has done for you in Christ (Col 3:1-2). You must continue to remain focused on Him and what He has done for you in Christ until you are ready to recognize, repent, and confess your sin; choose to yield your will to God's moral will as set forth in His word; and choose to bring yourself back into God's presence as you commune with Him by prayer and meditating on His word. As you do this, you are again filled with the Spirit and are experiencing the Spirit's fruit. In the illustration, you will be living above the line.

❖ **Where do you find yourself walking mostly, above or below the line?**

### **Conclusion**

In our relationships in the body, there should be peace; Christ's peace. His peace should rule or be the arbiter in our relationships. Walking in the Spirit or being filled with the Spirit results in manifold blessings – observable, tangible supernatural words, worship, reactions, and relationships in one's life. I pray that each of us will be walking ever more consistently in our usual, expected position of being filled with the Spirit.

### **Additional Study**

Keep track of your day. When you move from one activity to another (like morning wakeup routine to commuting or changing freeways or moving from one relational interaction to another) do an evaluation of yourself. Have you been filled with the Spirit? Are you filled with the Spirit in the transition? What will you do to maintain or begin to walk in the Spirit in the next activity?