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THE FILLING MINISTRY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

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CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION

“And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit.” NASB  
“Never get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but always be filled by the Spirit.” AUTHOR  
– Ephesians 5:18

The goal of this paper is to clearly define what it means for a Christian to be “filled with the Spirit.” At first blush this may seem to be a trivial problem because of the short length of the phrase in question and the simplicity of the first half of the verse. But many commentators contradict one another with their explanations of this verse, or their explanations do not seem to be internally self-consistent.

For instance, some commentators make the filling of the Spirit the key to sanctification<sup>1</sup> while others argue that obedience is the most important issue in sanctification.<sup>2</sup> Many systematic theologies do not even mention Ephesians 5:18 in their indices, and this fact is used by some to indicate that the topic is overemphasized today (older commentators did not feel the need to mention it, why should we?)<sup>3</sup> while others use the same fact to say that it has been historically

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<sup>1</sup> John F. Walvoord, “Response to Hoekema,” in *Five Views on Sanctification* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), p. 101. Walvoord says “the filling of the Spirit is the secret of sanctification.” See also Charles C. Ryrie, *The Holy Spirit*, rev. and exp. ed. (Chicago: Moody, 1997), p. 155.

<sup>2</sup> William W. Combs, “The Filling of the Holy Spirit,” in *The Ministry of the Holy Spirit*, Proceedings of the Mid-America Conference on Preaching (October 16-17, 2003, Allen Park, MI): 55. Combs says, “Thus Walvoord is wrong when he argues that ‘the filling of the Spirit is the secret of sanctification.’ If there is a ‘secret’ or key to sanctification, it can be summarized by the word *obedience*.”

<sup>3</sup> Combs, “The Filling of the Holy Spirit,” p. 45-46.

underemphasized (older commentators missed an important issue).<sup>4</sup> Some make a strong distinction between spiritual maturity and Spirit-filling<sup>5</sup> while others say that Spirit-filling is equivalent to spiritual maturity.<sup>6</sup> Some say filling is repeatable<sup>7</sup> while others do not.<sup>8</sup> And so on.

Given this state of the literature, it seemed profitable to examine the concept of the filling ministry of the Holy Spirit and to clarify (at least for the author!) some of these issues.

### *Questions Addressed in This Paper*

In explaining Spirit filling, this paper will primarily refer to the “Dallas view” of Spirit-filling and will examine Ephesians 5:18 in its context and examine issues that include the following:

- How is the verb “filled” used in Eph 5:18 and in other Scriptures? Should normal Christian Spirit-filling be contrasted with special filling, as many authors advocate, or is this distinction artificial? In other words, is there only one kind of filling, or are there miraculous fillings and normal fillings?
- Is Ephesians 5:18 even addressing the question of Spirit filling?

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<sup>4</sup> John F. Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), p. 189.

<sup>5</sup> Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Major Bible Themes*, rev. John F. Walvoord (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), p. 115, “The state of being filled with the Spirit should be contrasted with spiritual maturity.” However, this must be tempered by another statement on the same page, “There is an obvious relationship between the filling of the Spirit and spiritual maturity...” See also Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 190.

<sup>6</sup> Dwight Allan Ekholm, “The Doctrine of the Christian’s Walk in the Spirit,” unpublished Th.M. thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1973, pp. 53-54, as quoted in Larry D. Pettegrew, *The New Covenant Ministry of the Holy Spirit: A Study in Continuity and Discontinuity* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, Inc., 1993), p. 213. Ekholm writes, “To say that a man is filled with the Spirit is another way of stating the fact that he is spiritually mature; his life gives evidence of the influence and domination of the Holy Spirit.”

<sup>7</sup> Rolland D. McCune, “Systematic Theology II.” Class notes, Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, Spring 2004, p. 194, among many others such as Chafer, Walvoord, Ryrie.

<sup>8</sup> Richard Gary Fairman, “An Exegesis of ‘Filling’ Texts Which Refer to the Doctrine of Filling.” Th.D. dissertation, Grace Theological Seminary, 1986, p. 327. He writes regarding “fullness” of the Spirit that “Temporality and repeatability are possible, but unlikely, given probably spiritual stability.”

- ❑ What is the traditional dispensational view of filling and are there any difficulties with this view?
- ❑ Are there conditions for Spirit filling, and if so, what are they? Is Spirit-filling primarily obtained by human effort or not?
- ❑ Is Spirit-filling a binary condition, i.e. are there only two possibilities—to be completely full or to be totally empty? Or is Spirit-filling to be understood on a non-discrete continuum? Can one be more filled at one time than another?
- ❑ Should Spirit-filling be contrasted with spiritual maturity, or are they the same?
- ❑ Is the Spirit the content of the filling, the agent, or something else?
- ❑ Can Spirit-filling be defined by “control,” as many commentators say, or is there a better way to describe it?
- ❑ Is filling the key to sanctification?

All of these issues are mentioned in the literature, and it seems necessary in formulating a clear definition of the Spirit’s ministry of filling that we address them as well.

#### *Issues Not Addressed in This Paper*

The Holy Spirit’s ministry of filling a believer is distinct from His ministries of conviction, regeneration, baptism, and indwelling, along with His ministry as the seal and earnest of our salvation. Filling is also distinct from the Spirit’s sovereign work in distributing spiritual gifts. Spirit-filling for the Christian is not linked with speaking in tongues or other miraculous gifts, nor is it a one-time crisis experience or signal that the believer has been perfected. It is not within the scope of this paper to demonstrate these truths from Scripture: they will be assumed here.

They are very capably demonstrated elsewhere.<sup>9</sup> Our interest is particularly in defining Spirit-filling in its context as a distinct ministry of God in the sanctification process of the Christian.

### *Approach*

We will approach this task in three parts. In the next chapter we will survey the doctrine of Spirit filling in the New Testament by studying various words related to filling. In the third chapter we will review and give a critique of the traditional dispensational view of filling. This view has pervaded many fundamental and evangelical churches, and is important to understand as a basis for the discussion.<sup>10</sup> In the fourth chapter we will study Ephesians 5:18 in more detail in order to determine what we can learn about Spirit filling. We will then draw our study to a conclusion.

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<sup>9</sup> See Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit*; McCune, "Systematic Theology II"; Stanley N. Gundry, ed. *Five Views on Sanctification* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987); Donald L. Alexander, ed. *Christian Spirituality: Five Views of Sanctification* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1988); among many others.

<sup>10</sup> It is also the view that the author was first taught and embraced regarding Spirit filling and so it is the author's desire to examine it in more detail and see if he can better understand it, better explain it, see if there are shortcomings to it, make a contribution to it, etc.

CHAPTER II  
SURVEY OF HOLY SPIRIT FILLING IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

We can easily accomplish the task of this chapter, which is to review all the passages that are related to Holy Spirit filling in the New Testament, because there are only 15 texts that use a “filling” verb with regard to the Holy Spirit. All the uses are in Luke and Acts, apart from the one in question in Ephesians. In particular, this survey demonstrates that there are two word-groups: 1) *pivmplhmi* and 2) *plhvrh* / *plhrovw*.<sup>11</sup> They fall into two well-delineated categories that will be helpful for our later study. These categories are special filling and normal filling.

*The pivmplhmi Group: Special Filling*

There are eight texts that use this verb (Luke 1:15, 1:41, 1:67; Acts 2:4, 4:8, 4:31, 9:17, 13:9). The verb means to be completely full and can be used of a person’s inner life.<sup>12</sup> The verses are reproduced in the chart below for ease of reference.

Verse	Text (NASB)
Luke 1:15	“For he will be great in the sight of the Lord; and he will drink no wine or liquor, and he will be <b>filled with the Holy Spirit</b> while yet in his mother’s womb.”

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<sup>11</sup> Studies that verify this can be found in: Richard Gary Fairman, “An Exegesis of ‘Filling’ Texts Which Refer to the Doctrine of Filling.” Th.D. dissertation (Grace Theological Seminary, 1986), p. 324 and throughout his work; Ryrie, *The Holy Spirit*, pp. 157-158; Pettegrew, *The New Covenant Ministry of the Holy Spirit*, p. 210; and Combs, “The Filling of the Holy Spirit,” pp. 49-52. The results of these studies are summarized in this chapter.

<sup>12</sup> Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3d ed., ed. Frederick W. Danker, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), s.v. “*pivmplhmi*”, pp. 813-184. This word can also refer to fulfillment of prophecies, or the satisfaction of a need. Hereafter this source is referred to as BDAG.

Luke 1:41	When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was <b>filled with the Holy Spirit</b> .
Luke 1:67	And his father Zacharias was <b>filled with the Holy Spirit</b> , and prophesied, saying:
Acts 2:4	And they were all <b>filled with the Holy Spirit</b> and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.
Acts 4:8	Then Peter, <b>filled with the Holy Spirit</b> , said to them, “Rulers and elders of the people,”
Acts 4:31	And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all <b>filled with the Holy Spirit</b> and <i>began</i> to speak the word of God with boldness.
Acts 9:17	So Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be <b>filled with the Holy Spirit</b> .
Acts 13:9	But Saul, who was also <i>known as Paul</i> , <b>filled with the Holy Spirit</b> , fixed his gaze on him,

These texts emphasize a one-time event that was not a normal situation.<sup>13</sup> “God simply overpowered these people, sovereignly filling and thus controlling them by the Spirit for some special activity.”<sup>14</sup> There were no conditions for these fillings. The event was repeatable as we can see from Peter’s filling in Acts 2:4 and then Acts 4:8, and Paul’s filling in Acts 9:17 and again in 13:9. The special filling was normally a pre-requisite to a revelation, miraculous gift such as tongues, or other proclamation activity. Combs notes that this type of filling is like that of the Old Testament, where believers were enabled to do certain tasks by an endowment of the Holy Spirit.<sup>15</sup> This kind of filling is called “special filling” in the literature.<sup>16</sup>

There are other examples of the use of this word in the NT which can help us understand

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<sup>13</sup> The Luke 1:15 text regarding John the Baptist may be an exception to this “event” idea in that his normal life condition would be one of Spirit fullness. This is the only future tense verb of the verses cited.

<sup>14</sup> Ryrie, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 157.

<sup>15</sup> Combs, “The Filling of the Holy Spirit,” p. 51. He lists Ex 28:3, 31:3, 35:31, Num 11:25, and Deut 34:9.

<sup>16</sup> Fairman, p. 5.



Spirit filling. For example, the word can be used of spatial filling, as in the full boat of Luke 5:7. The word can also denote a filling with an emotion or feeling, such as fear (Luke 5:26), rage (Luke 4:28, 6:11), wonder and amazement (Acts 3:10), jealousy (Acts 5:17), and confusion (Acts 19:29). Since the Spirit’s presence and ministry is metaphysical, the spatial sense of the term does not apply here.<sup>17</sup> The filling with an emotion or feeling, however, gives us a clue that the Spirit’s work in filling a person causes that person to be *enabled* or *characterized* by the Spirit of God, as the emotion of rage would tend to characterize a person’s behavior. The filling, whether of an emotion or of the Spirit, is of some fixed duration surrounding the event.

*The plhvrh" / plhrovw Group: Normal Filling*

There are seven texts that use one of these words (Luke 4:1; Acts 6:3, 6:5, 7:55, 11:24, 13:52; Eph 5:18). These words carry the idea of something as full as it can be, of persons being filled or characterized by something, to be full of a power, gift, feeling, characteristic, quality, or to make someone full of powers or qualities.<sup>18</sup> The verses are shown in chart form below:

Verse	Text (NASB)
Luke 4:1	Jesus, <b>full of the Holy Spirit</b> , returned from the Jordan and was led around by the Spirit in the wilderness.
Acts 6:3	“Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, <b>full of the Spirit</b> and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task.”
Acts 6:5	The statement found approval with the whole congregation; and they chose Stephen, a man <b>full of faith and of the Holy Spirit</b> , and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch.

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<sup>17</sup> Wallace categorizes the genitive uses of the word Spirit in these cases under the heading “verbal genitive of content” even though the Spirit cannot technically be spatially bound as the category initially suggests. See Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), p. 93. His mention of the “figurative” use of the genitive of content adequately handles this problem.

<sup>18</sup> BDAG, s.v. “plhvrh”, pp. 826-827, and “plhrovw”, pp. 827-829. These can also refer to completing a period of time, to bring to completion something that was started, to bring something to a designed end, to complete an activity.

Acts 7:55	But being <b>full of the Holy Spirit</b> , he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God;
Acts 11:24	for [Barnabas] was a good man, and <b>full of the Holy Spirit</b> and of faith. And considerable numbers were brought to the Lord.
Acts 13:52	And the disciples were continually <b>filled</b> with joy and <b>with the Holy Spirit</b> .
Ephesians 5:18	And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be <b>filled with the Spirit</b> .

These texts indicate “an abiding state of fullness of the Spirit rather than a specific event” and they produce “a character of life that may be equated with spirituality.”<sup>19</sup> This kind of filling is called “fullness” or “normal filling” in the literature.<sup>20</sup>

There are other Biblical uses of the term which can help us understand the meaning of the fullness of the Spirit. The word *plhrovw* is used to denote spatial fullness, either literally as in a fishing net (Matt 13:48) or figuratively, as in a house that is filled or permeated with fragrance (John 12:3). It can refer to persons who are filled with emotions such as gladness (Acts 2:28) or joy and peace (Rom 15:13), or qualities such as goodness (Rom 15:14) or wickedness (Rom 1:29). The Lord Jesus Christ is a prime example, being “full of grace and truth” (John 1:14), or Stephen as “full of grace and power” (Acts 6:8), or Dorcas who was full of good deeds (Acts 9:36), or of someone who is “full of deceit and fraud” or “rage” (Acts 13:10, 19:28).

Except for the cases where an obvious literal or spatial fullness is denoted, all of these references refer to a characteristic or quality of a person. We can say that the Lord is *graceful* and *truthful*; that Stephen was *graceful* and *powerful*; Dorcas was *characterized* by good works. One

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<sup>19</sup> Ryrie, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 158.

<sup>20</sup> Fairman, p. 5. Acts 7:55 regarding Stephen’s death might be an exception to the general category of “an abiding state” since the stoning was a one-time event for which a special work of the Spirit occurred in order to allow Stephen to see into Heaven and to ask forgiveness for his murderers. However, Stephen was characterized earlier as having this abiding state. Perhaps this text can be swapped with the Luke 1:15 text in the previous table, but this is of minor consequence to the argument that there are *basically* two types of filling which happen to neatly fall into two word groups.

who is “full of the Spirit” in this sense is a “mature Christian.” He is one who is characterized by the demeanor of the Spirit of God.

The Spirit is not the content of the person’s filling, just like in the previous category.<sup>21</sup> The idea of this kind of filling is not dissimilar to that of the *pivmphi* word group; it is the timing of the fillings that is the primary difference. The special fillings are *events*; the normal fillings refer to a *state*. Pettegrew describes the normal filling as emphasizing an attitude, as abiding spirituality, as progressively more apparent, as indicating Christian maturity, and intended to be normal.<sup>22</sup>

I have included Ephesians 5:18 in the list of normal fillings (following Ryrie) whereas Combs does not. Combs argues that since the other normal filling texts use a genitive of content, and Ephesians 5:18 is unique in that it uses a dative of means, these texts cannot be in the same category. But as I have demonstrated above, while grammatically the word “Spirit” might fit in the category “genitive of content,” the idea being conveyed is definitely *not* that the Spirit is the *content* of filling. The figurative use is evident here: the Spirit is *characterizing* the person.

### *Summary*

In this chapter, we have reviewed all the uses of “filling” verbs in the NT that are related to the Holy Spirit. We have found two categories of filling: discrete event-based “special fillings” and state-based “normal filling.” In the special filling, the person is specially enabled to carry out some task or deal with some situation. In the normal filling, the person is characterized

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<sup>21</sup> This is true in spite of the fact that Wallace classes such references to the Holy Spirit as “nominal genitive of content.” On the other hand, he correctly says that this nominal construction “is used in figurative language as a rhetorical device.” See Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*: p. 93.

<sup>22</sup> Pettegrew, *The New Covenant Ministry of the Holy Spirit*, p. 210.

by a stable lifestyle consistent with the desires of the Spirit of God.

## CHAPTER III

### THE TRADITIONAL DISPENSATIONAL VIEW OF HOLY SPIRIT FILLING

The purpose of this chapter is to survey how the data in the previous chapter is handled in a common dispensational view on Spirit-filling, and to offer some analysis of that view.

#### *Summary of Traditional Dispensational View*

In reviewing the variety of positions on Spirit baptism and filling, Pettegrew points out that the view expounded in the writings of Scofield, Chafer, Walvoord, Ryrie, and others “has been accepted by most classic dispensationalists since the beginning of the popularity of dispensationalism in conservative American Christianity.”<sup>23</sup> This view could also be called the “Dallas view” since its major proponents taught at Dallas Theological Seminary. We will follow the view of Walvoord in the following review.<sup>24</sup>

#### Overview

In Walvoord’s view, Spirit filling is the source of all vital spiritual experience in the Christian life. Those Christians who are not filled by the Spirit are called *carnal* Christians. Those who are filled are called *spiritual*. Spiritual experience is most significantly impacted by one’s carnality or spirituality, but spiritual experience is also connected to spiritual maturity. Ma-

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<sup>23</sup> Pettegrew, *The New Covenant Ministry of the Holy Spirit*, p. 202.

<sup>24</sup> Walvoord’s view can be distinguished from Ryrie’s view, though they are for all practical purposes the same view. They differ primarily on the idea of degrees of filling. Ryrie supports degrees of filling (*The Holy Spirit*, p. 156), whereas Walvoord suggests that filling is the immediate entrance into a higher spiritual state (*The Holy Spirit*, p. 191).

turity is a secondary determining factor to experience, with somewhat less importance than Spirit filling. Walvoord differentiates between Spirit filling (or spirituality) and maturity by illustrating that one is a healthy Christian if Spirit filled, but one is not a mature Christian until the gradual process of spiritual growth has occurred. One can be an immature Christian who is filled or not filled with the Spirit at any given point; *or* one can be a mature Christian who is filled or not filled with the Spirit at any given point.<sup>25</sup>

### Nature of the Filling of the Spirit

In defining the nature of Spirit filling, it is interesting that Walvoord never defines *what* it actually is. However, he defines *when* it happens and to *whom* it happens: “The work of the Holy Spirit in filling the believer may be simply defined as that ministry which is accomplished in the believer when he is fully yielded to the indwelling Holy Spirit.”<sup>26</sup> The filling ministry occurs in those *who* are yielded *when* they are yielded. He comes closer to a definition when he says, “Instead of being constantly in a state of being drunk with wine, the entire faculties of the body being subject to its power and influence, the Christian should be constantly filled with the Spirit.”<sup>27</sup> Thus the definition of filling is “power and influence.” Ryrie plainly states that Spirit filling is equivalent to Spirit control.<sup>28</sup>

Walvoord does distinguish between special and normal fillings but groups the texts differently than we did in the previous chapter.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 189-191.

<sup>26</sup> Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 192.

<sup>27</sup> Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 194.

<sup>28</sup> Ryrie, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 157.

<sup>29</sup> Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 193.

The present tense of the command “be filled” is used to distinguish the continual nature of filling with the once-for-all baptismal work of the Spirit and to argue that filling is not a second work of grace or other one-time crisis experience.<sup>30</sup>

### Conditions of the Filling of the Spirit

Walvoord’s view of Spirit-filling includes a set of conditions required for a person to be filled with the Spirit. The following table lists these conditions as given by several authors:<sup>31</sup>

Author	Conditions for Filling
Chafer	Grieve not the Spirit (Eph 4:30), quench not the Spirit (1 Thess 5:19), walk by the Spirit (Gal 5:16). Walvoord switches the first two but is otherwise similar.
Gromacki	Cleanness and submissiveness. <sup>32</sup>
King James Study Bible	Confession of sin (1 John 1:9), yield (Rom 6:13), desire and pray for it (Matt 5:6, Luke 11:13). <sup>33</sup>
McCune	Yieldedness (Rom 6:13), confession of sin (Eph 4:30), dependence on the Spirit (Gal 5:16, Rom 8:13), petition (Acts 4:24-31).
Ryrie	Yieldedness and obedience [to the commands to have a dedicated life (Rom 12:1-2), an undefeated life (1 John 1:7, 9), and a dependent life (Gal 5:16)]. <sup>34</sup>

Walvoord defines his first condition, quenching, as suppressing or stifling the Spirit. This is equivalent to being unyielding to him and thus requires an initial act of surrender and an ongoing life of yieldedness. The second condition is to avoid grieving the Spirit; this has to do with unconfessed sin. Grieving can be remedied by the positive command to confess sin. So, the first two conditions can be stated negatively (do not quench the Spirit, do not grieve the Spirit) or positively (yield to God, confess sin to God). The third condition is to walk by the Spirit. This is

<sup>30</sup> Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 195.

<sup>31</sup> A helpful table of this sort, though with more parameters, appears in Pettegrew, *The New Covenant Ministry of the Holy Spirit*, pp. 204-205.

<sup>32</sup> Robert Gromacki, *The Holy Spirit* (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1999), p. **183-191**.

<sup>33</sup> The King James Study Bible (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1988), p. 1838.

<sup>34</sup> Ryrie, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 160. See pp. 160-165 for the three sub-conditions of obedience.

necessary because of the high standards of Christian conduct set forth in the Scriptures, the power of Satan from without, and the power of the sin nature from within.<sup>35</sup> Once these conditions are met, the Christian can move immediately from the carnal state to the spiritual state.

### Results of the Filling of the Spirit

The results of entering into the “spiritual” state include the unhindered ministry of the Spirit in progressive sanctification, teaching, guiding, assurance, worship, prayer, and Christian service. All of these works of the Spirit are released to their full potential when one is filled with the Spirit.

### *Problems with the Traditional Dispensational View*

We will now review four difficulties with the view outlined above.

#### Problem of the Repetitious Nature of the Filling

Walvoord initially describes Spirit filling using phrases like “durative,” “constantly in a state,” “constantly filled,” “continuous ministry,” and “continuous reality.”<sup>36</sup> These seem to describe a state of stable filling. This is akin to the idea of a *durative* or *customary* present tense. But he then uses phrases like “moment-by-moment” and “repeated,”<sup>37</sup> which seem to change the idea from a stable spiritual state to an up-and-down experience. This suggests that the verb “be filled” is more an *iterative* present tense than a *customary* present tense.

To support the iterative idea of filling, Walvoord uses the testimony of the early church and its repeated fillings in the book of Acts. Many of the references he uses to demonstrate this

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<sup>35</sup> Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit*, pp. 196-218.

<sup>36</sup> Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit*, pp. 194-195.

<sup>37</sup> Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 195.



repeated nature of filling are from the “special” category described in the last chapter. It is this author’s understanding that the confusion surrounding terms like “continuous” and “moment-by-moment” is caused by appealing to the special filling ministry of the Spirit, which is quite different than the normal filling ministry that Christians can expect today.<sup>38</sup>

### Problem of Circularity of Conditions and Filling

There is a circularity inherent in the traditional explanation of filling which has to do with the conditions required to be filled with the Spirit. For example, to walk by the Spirit is one of the conditions listed above. But it seems that a condition of walking by the Spirit is that one must, practically speaking, be filled with the Spirit. In other words, A depends on B and B in turn depends on A. This is a chicken-and-egg problem. The kind of Christian who is filled with the Spirit is one who is walking by the Spirit, and the kind of Christian who is walking by the Spirit is one who is filled with the Spirit, but which comes first?<sup>39</sup>

Somehow this circularity needs to be broken in the mind of the believer. Practically what may happen is that the believer who wishes to be filled with the Spirit ends up striving to meet the conditions listed so that he can become filled, even though it is plainly stated in Walvoord’s view that “being filled with the Spirit...is not accomplished, however, by human effort; rather, it

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<sup>38</sup> [Need to integrate this into the above—I thought of this after handing in the paper.] Probably also behind this emphasis on the “repeated” nature of filling is the desire to avoid a second-blessing or second-work-of-grace type of theology. That kind of theology posits a saving activity of God, then some kind of filling or baptism in the Spirit or something at a second, subsequent point of salvation. Chafer, Walvoord, etc. oppose this kind of view. The opposition comes here—the present tense verb is understood as repetitive instead of as customary/habitual. The latter understanding, taken in this paper, avoids the second-blessing problem and correctly demonstrates Paul’s thought, not confusing spirituality with an up-and-down kind of filling that leaves the Christian wondering where he stands since he cannot be sure he has confessed all known sin. An up-and-down Christian, I would contend, is not a Spirit-filled one. A Spirit-filled Christian is one who has a stable Christian life (Eph 4:14, James 1:8).

<sup>39</sup> This has led at least one commentator to conclude that walking by the Spirit and being filled with the Spirit are basically the same thing: “Believers must be filled with the Holy Spirit, a condition simultaneous with and almost synonymous with walking by means of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:16).” Stanley D. Toussaint, “The Filling of the Spirit,” in *Basic Theology Applied*, ed. John R. Masters and Wesley R. Willis (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1995), p. 211.

is by permitting God to accomplish this work in the life of the individual.”<sup>40</sup> In effect, “permitting God” becomes “striving oneself” to meet the conditions because it is unclear how to permit God to do His work. In this way, the passive imperative of Eph 5:18 becomes essentially active.

Fairman explains the problem very well:

Relative to manner, filling is presented as dependent upon volition. This would be true if it meant willful attitudes in the sense of allowing the Holy Spirit to fill one. But the writers [in the victorious life view] mean willful acts; i.e. conditions you must fulfill to generate your filling. But there is an absence of explicit conditions in Scripture, which is strange if they are so crucial for Christian living. Instead, the lack of such necessitates inferring conditions from various passages, which leads to a diversity of suggested approaches. Many of the suggestions are unachievable. One would need to be filled to meet the conditions of being filled...<sup>41</sup>

The conditions for filling also cause confusion as to the ultimate outcome of a person’s sanctification. Since the conditions are pre-requisites to filling, and filling is pre-requisite to progressive sanctification, it seems that the believer has to obey the conditions before he can free up the Spirit of God to sanctify him. Or, if he cannot fulfill the conditions, he may never be sanctified. But it is clear in the Scriptures that it is inevitable that one will be sanctified.<sup>42</sup>

This circularity between sanctification and filling is attenuated when Chafer says, “a Christian filled with the Spirit will mature more rapidly than one who is not.”<sup>43</sup> Thus a way is made for an unfilled Christian to be sanctified. But it is strange to think of a mature Christian who is *not* filled by the Spirit—can there really be such a person? Walvoord says, “This gradual growth while conditioned to some extent upon the spirituality of the individual is nevertheless in

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<sup>40</sup> Chafer, *Major Bible Themes*, p. 116-117.

<sup>41</sup> Fairman, p. 341.

<sup>42</sup> See Matthew A. Postiff, “The Relationship of Position to Experience in Christian Theology,” unpublished Systematic Theology III term paper, Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, December 12, 2003, pp. 29-30.

<sup>43</sup> Chafer, *Major Bible Themes*, p. 115.

the sovereign control of God, and the individual Christian is promised ultimate perfection.”<sup>44</sup>

### Problem of Command Hierarchy

There is another problem with the list of conditions for filling. They form a hierarchy of commands that must be obeyed before Spirit filling can occur. The question is, why are these particular imperatives chosen as pre-requisites in order to achieve sanctification? In other words, is it not the case that when the Scripture gives imperatives in different locations on the same general topic that they are of equal importance? Why then does the traditional view select one of them (*be filled with the Spirit*) and raise it to a level where it cannot be obeyed in its own right until other commands are obeyed which are not explicitly mentioned as pre-requisites in the context?<sup>45</sup> The problem is made more complex when layers are added to the list of pre-requisites. A two-layer approach is advocated by Gromacki, who adds Rom 12:1-2 as a pre-requisite to avoid quenching the Spirit.<sup>46</sup> Ryrie has only two conditions (yieldedness and obedience) but the second one has three sub-parts. The conditions are made even *more* difficult when it is realized that the conditions only “provide a divinely inspired outline of the conditions for the filling of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>47</sup> It appears that this outline of conditions is a compaction of many more commands and sub-commands in the New Testament. The Christian attempting to follow these approaches to be filled with the Spirit may be brought to utter despair when he realizes that it takes all of this be-

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<sup>44</sup> Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 190.

<sup>45</sup> This tendency may come from the difficulty in defining Spirit filling. In order to avoid having to define it precisely, the conditions are raised to the primary level of importance. The conditions are easier to understand and can be explained more readily. Once the conditions are obeyed, Spirit filling will occur “automatically” with no definition needed.

<sup>46</sup> Gromacki, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 188-189.

<sup>47</sup> Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 196.

fore one can be filled by the Spirit!<sup>48</sup>

### Problem of Control

In the traditional dispensational view, the Holy Spirit basically controls the person. Instead of the person controlling himself, he relinquishes or yields control of his life to the Holy Spirit. A large number of commentators use this kind of language to define Spirit filling.

But there is a slight problem with this view, and it is pointed out by Reymond and others.

Reymond says:

Paul is commanding that we must never come ‘under the influence’ of the ‘intoxicating spirit’ of wine, but rather we must ever live under the ‘intoxicating influence’ of the Spirit who, far from taking away from us our self-control (which alcohol as a depressant drug does), actually *stimulates* us for the first time in everything that makes a person behave at his best and highest—including self-control (Gal. 5:22).<sup>49</sup>

Pettegrew follows up with this:

The word, “control,” though often used as the meaning of filling, is too strong. “Control” often has the connotation in our culture of a robot-like situation. It suggests either all or nothing. But this is more than the metaphor implies. Wine does not control a person as though he were a robot. Neither does the Holy Spirit. Just as there are increasing degrees of influence of wine on a person, so there should be increasing degrees of the influence of the Holy Spirit in the life of a Christian.<sup>50</sup>

It is apparent that a better word than ‘control’ should be used to describe Spirit filling.

### Summary

In this chapter we have reviewed the traditional dispensational approach to Spirit filling and noted several shortcomings of that view. These problems included the confusing explanation

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<sup>48</sup> [Integrate this also above.] Spirit-filling becomes therefore the Holy Grail of Christian experience, though very few can be sure they have it. [Witness Chafer himself when asked...I cannot remember where I saw him mention that.]

<sup>49</sup> Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Nashville: Nelson, 1998), p. 765-766.

<sup>50</sup> Pettegrew, *The New Covenant Ministry of the Spirit*, p. 213.

about how Spirit filling is repeated and not a stable spiritual state; the circularity between filling and the conditions that are required for filling; the splitting of Biblical commands into different classes or hierarchies; and the idea that the word ‘control’ overstates the definition of filling.

In the next chapter, we will carefully examine Ephesians 5:18 and address these and other questions that were raised earlier.

## CHAPTER IV

### EPHESIANS 5:18

In this chapter we will study Ephesians 5:18 in order to come to a final form of our definition of Spirit filling. We will do this by first examining the comparison of drunkenness to Spirit filling, then the details of the verb “to be filled,” and then the phrase “with the Spirit.”

#### *The Comparison to Drunkenness*

Paul’s command to avoid drunkenness is one of a sequence of imperatives that call for a walk different than that of the “sons of disobedience” described in 5:3-8.<sup>51</sup> The other commands in the context support this idea: that the Ephesians are to avoid participating in the works of darkness (5:11), to take care how they walk (5:15), to make the most of their time (5:16), to not be foolish, but to understand God’s will (5:17), and finally, to avoid drunkenness (5:18).

As one medical student recently told me, the very *first* drink of an alcoholic beverage begins to affect the brain. More and more alcoholic consumption in a short period of time leads to greater impairment, loss of judgment, loss of coordination, etc. It is easy to recognize therefore that drunkenness is a problem of degree. It is not an on/off condition. Because drunkenness is a

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<sup>51</sup> A few commentators have accepted the view that Paul’s command to avoid drunkenness really has its roots in the Dionysian cult. Rogers says that this cult was common in the ancient world and included practices that were largely centered around drunkenness to achieve a state of possession by the god Dionysus and to achieve a state of relief from stress of daily life.<sup>51</sup> Two factors weigh against Rogers’ interpretation. First, the phrase “do not get drunk with wine” does not in itself indicate any supernatural underpinnings or possession by a “wine god”; in fact, drunkenness is such a common phenomenon in all times that it is suitable for Paul to speak against it as unbecoming for the Christian who has departed from the unbelieving lifestyle. Second, the fact that Paul nowhere specifically mentions the Dionysian cult also weighs against the interpretation. It is possible, as Rogers says, that this may form part of the background, but it seems doubtful if this is the specific background on Paul’s mind.

problem of degree, Paul’s comparison of it to Spirit filling supports the notion that Spirit filling is not an all-or-nothing, on-or-off kind of thing either.

Furthermore, the comparison of drunkenness to Spirit filling indicates that Spirit filling is to be an “influence” of the Spirit on the person. Just like alcohol influences a person’s thoughts and behaviors, so the filling of the Spirit will do the same. Alcohol does not technically “control” the person<sup>52</sup> but we can say the person is “under the influence” or under the sway or power of the alcohol. It is not proper, based on this metaphor, to think of Spirit-filling as a complete giving up of self-control, or a relinquishing of all of self. The filling of the Spirit is not a robotic control by the Spirit, but is the influence of the Spirit of God on the person so that he can control himself, and exhibit the other aspects of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23).<sup>53</sup> Defining the filling as “influence” circumvents the problem of “control” that we mentioned in the last chapter.

### *The Verb “Be Filled” – plhrou'sqe*

The main verb being studied in this paper is the “be filled” of Ephesians 5:18. It is a plural imperative in the customary present tense. It is also a passive verb. We will analyze it according to these parameters in the following paragraphs.

First, “be filled” is a plural verb, addressing the command to the whole congregation. Based on this, it seems valid to make an argument for a corporate aspect of the Spirit’s filling,

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<sup>52</sup> See chapter 3 for the “Problem of Control” that is related to this.

<sup>53</sup> Of course, we must be careful not to press the comparison with drunkenness too far. For example, one might argue against what I have said by saying that a drunkard is beyond the mere “influence” of alcohol—in fact he is not in control of himself *at all*. After a certain amount of imbibing, the person just “loses it.” This would support the interpretation that Spirit filling is equivalent to “full control” by the Spirit since the person is not in control of his actions and may not even remember his own actions during that time of inebriation. But then again, I could press the comparison a step farther than that: if one partakes of even more alcohol, terrible sickness and unconsciousness will result, and death can even ensue from alcohol poisoning. In this case, there are *no* actions or thoughts for the alcohol to control—the person becomes totally immobilized. Spirit filling does not lead to a parallel kind of situation of “poisoning.” Rather, it leads to a life of wise self-control and spiritual fruit.

i.e. that the fullness of the Spirit cannot be experienced “to the full” by an individual in isolation. Because of the relational and one-another commands in Eph 5:19ff, Spirit filling is integrally related to our life with the rest of the local assembly of believers. This emphasizes the need for participation in the local church in order to be a Spirit-filled Christian. Many commentators do not mention this aspect of Paul’s teaching.

Second, “be filled” is in the imperative mood. It is a requirement for the Christian. In the midst of trying to understand the precise meaning of the filling of the Holy Spirit, and even debating its meaning with other commentators, it is easy to forget that Spirit-filling is *required* in the Christian life, not *optional*. In other words, it is a sin to *not* be filled with the Spirit. Paul makes this clear in Ephesians 5:18 when he contrasts drunkenness and Spirit-filling. Clearly Christians are not to be drunk; to do so is sin. But just as important is the command to be filled with the Spirit. To *not* do so is sin. It is not enough to *talk* about Spirit-filling—we must *live* it.

Third, “be filled” is in the present tense. Wallace categorizes present tense verbs as either narrow-band or broad-band. The command of Eph 5:18 falls under the broad-band category since it is intended to “indicate an event or occurrence taking place over a long interval.”<sup>54</sup> It can be further specified as a customary or habitual broad-band present tense because it is to be an ongoing state of the believer. It is not commanded to be a *repeated* event; rather it is commanded to be the life *habit* of the believer. The emphasis is not on the iterative nature of filling, as some commentators make it.<sup>55</sup> Spirit filling is to occur continuously in the life of the believer.

The parallel with drunkenness that we have described above helps us to understand that

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<sup>54</sup> Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, p. 519.

<sup>55</sup> Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, p. 521. He notes that the iterative idea cannot be totally ruled out, but he says, “Generally, however, it can be said that the *customary* present is *broader* in its idea of the ‘present’ time and describes an event that occurs *regularly*.”



any temporary interruptions in one's Christian life (due to sin) *are* setbacks, but they do not cause the believer to go all the way back to square one and start trying once again to be filled by the Spirit. It is apparent that filling is to be the believer's stable state in life. Some discussions of the doctrine seem to allow for a persistent unfilled state in the life of a believer, or seem to imply that it is "OK" to be "in and out" of the filled state as long as one is always endeavoring to get back into that state by meeting a set of conditions. The normal Christian life however, lived apart from a pattern of sin, is that the believer is filled by the Spirit of God with that influence that fosters those qualities that are becoming of the Christian.

What about the moment that a believer sins? Is he filled with the Spirit at that time? The present tense of the imperative would indicate that the doctrine of Spirit filling is not intended to answer that question. Filling, given as a customary present tense imperative, is intended to take the "long look" at the Christian's life. To take a microscope and look at a believer's moment-by-moment life is not an accurate way to see the forest of that person's life—such a myopic view tends to overlook the forest for a small number of trees. The command to be filled is meant to indicate an ongoing, consistent, stable Christian life. When committing a sin, the believer is involved in an *event* of disobedience that is displeasing to the Lord. But that believer may soon demonstrate corrected behavior so that it can still be said of him that he is in a *state* of being full of the Spirit. This indicates that to be "full of the Spirit" and to be a "mature Christian" are essentially the same thing.

Finally, we note that the verb "be filled" is in the passive voice. This indicates that a person is to permit himself to be filled by the Spirit. This is grammatically classed as a causative or permissive passive.<sup>56</sup> We could translate it, "Allow yourself to be filled with the Spirit." Caution

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<sup>56</sup> Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, p. 440-441.

is in order here because this allowance is not an “active” passivity. It is a matter of will and desire, not of striving action. It is a disposition toward the things the Spirit desires to do through us by His application of the Word of God (Col 3:16-17).

The passive nature of the verb is not the same as a requirement to meet a set of conditions. In fact, no conditions are explicitly mentioned in the context.<sup>57</sup> For instance, consider a commonly held condition for filling: confession. When there is a temporary setback in one’s Christian life, the very process of correcting that setback involves a mature, Spirit-filled response of confession of sin. Far from being a *condition*, confession of sin and other commands that are proposed as conditions are *evidences* of Spirit-filling. It is not that confession of sin leads *to* Spirit filling, but that confession of sin is done *through* an attitude generated by Spirit-filling. The Spirit is sovereignly guiding the Christian, using the commands of Scripture (1 John 1:9 in this case), to humble himself before the Lord, admit his guilt, and continue to demonstrate a Spirit-influenced life instead of a flesh-influenced life. We can say therefore that a sin-confessing saint is a Spirit-filled saint. A saint who is walking by means of the Spirit is doing so because he is a Spirit-filled saint. Not quenching and not grieving the Spirit are evidences in the life of a Spirit-filled, mature Christian. He does not do these things to *get* spiritual but he does them because he *is* spiritual.

#### *The Phrase “With the Spirit” – e\*n Pnevmati*

Ephesians 5:18 is often translated as “be filled *with the Spirit*.” This gives the impression that the Spirit of God is the content of the filling. This *translation* has led some to believe that

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<sup>57</sup> As noted earlier, this has led to a proliferation of conditions suggested. A particular set of conditions is proposed based on theological considerations or a neat summation of different aspects of our Christian walk, but nowhere in Scripture are any such conditions explicitly tied to being filled with the Spirit.

the common *interpretation* of “with the Spirit” is that the Spirit is the quantitative content of the filling.<sup>58</sup> But this is *not* the common interpretation, at least in dispensational circles. We demonstrated this earlier: the common idea for filling is that of “control” rather than “content.” In fact, Chafer plainly says, “To be filled is not the problem of getting *more* of the Spirit: it is rather the problem of the Spirit getting *more* of us.”<sup>59</sup> Many commentators parrot this phrase almost exactly. Chafer bases this comment on the fact that the Spirit already permanently indwells all believers—and we can have no more of Him in that sense.

Wallace’s grammar supports this understanding of the phrase “with the Spirit.” He notes with Abbott that there is no example of the use of the verb *plhvrow* with *e\*n* + dative noun (*pneumati* in this case) which indicates the content with which something is filled.<sup>60</sup> Rather, *e\*n* + dative indicates *means*. In other words, the verse should be translated this way: “be filled *by means of* the Spirit.” This is similar to another verse which says that, “by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body” (1 Cor 12:13). Both 1 Cor 12:13 and Eph 5:18 have the *e\*n* + dative construction and they both have the idea that the Spirit is the intermediate agent or means (of baptizing or filling the believer).<sup>61</sup> So the Spirit is not the content, but the agent.

### *What is the Content of the Filling?*

If the Spirit is not the content of filling in Ephesians 5:18, then what is? The previous and

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<sup>58</sup> Combs, *The Filling of the Holy Spirit*, p. 54; Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, p. 375.

<sup>59</sup> Chafer, *He That is Spiritual*, p. 44.

<sup>60</sup> Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, p. 375.

<sup>61</sup> If the reader would like to learn more about the difference between intermediate agent versus means, please consult Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, p. 373-375. I am not going to get into the debate at this point; suffice it to say that I understand there to be little practical difference between calling the Spirit the *means* by which baptism and filling occurs and calling Him the *intermediate agent* through whom they occur.

following context gives us the answer—not in a physical or spatial sense, but again, in the sense of what characterizes the Christian life. Paul prays in 3:19 that the Ephesians would be “filled up to all the fullness of God.” This phrase not entirely clear in itself, but in 5:19ff, various “external” results of filling are listed: worship, praise, and thanksgiving to the Lord, and harmonious interpersonal relationships characterized by submission, love, and obedience in the family and workplace. “Internal” results of filling include the fruit of the Spirit (Eph 5:9, Gal 5:22-23). These things constitute “the fullness of God.” That is, a Spirit-filled life is evidenced when one properly relates to God and to other people while maintaining pure attitudes internally.<sup>62</sup>

### *Summary*

In this chapter, we have seen that the filling ministry of the Holy Spirit is a matter of degree; it is a command to be carried out not only individually but corporately; it is to be a consistent state in one’s life; it is not intended to be the basis for a moment-by-moment analysis of the believer’s life; and it must be allowed or permitted by the believer as he responsibly participates with God in his sanctification. There are no conditions *per se* to achieve filling; instead, the normal Christian life is an evidence of filling. Furthermore, the Spirit is not the content of the filling, but He is the means of bringing about proper relationships to God and to others. One who is consistently acting in accordance with God’s word can be called a Christian who is “full of the Spirit.”

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<sup>62</sup> McCune, “Systematic Theology II,” pp. 195-196 lists the following results of the filling of the Spirit: strength in temptation (Luke 4:1-2); witnessing (Acts 4:5-6); boldness in testimony (Acts 4:23, 31); equipping for local church work (Acts 6:1-3); courage in the face of death (Acts 7:54-58); power to proclaim Jesus (Acts 9:17-20); thanksgiving and signing in the heart (Eph 5:18-21); and the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23).

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

In our endeavor to define the filling of the Holy Spirit, we have attempted to answer the questions posed in the introduction. Our conclusions are summarized below.

- A study of words related to Spirit filling in the NT shows that there are two particular kinds of filling: normal Christian filling and special filling. The latter occurs at particular times for particular proclamation events. It is an event. Normal Spirit filling is the *characteristic of godliness of the believer*. It is a *state*.
- We also noted in chapter 2 that while Ephesians 5:18 uses somewhat different syntax than the other verses that talk about normal Spirit-filling, such syntax does not remove it from the normal filling category because normal Christian filling never speaks of the Holy Spirit as the literal content of filling.
- In chapter 3, we reviewed the traditional dispensational view and noted several problems with it, namely the problems of the repetitious nature of filling, circularity of conditions, the hierarchy of commands that are built around filling, and the problem that Spirit control does not adequately describe a Spirit-filled person.
- In chapter 4, we saw that the Scriptures give no connection between Spirit filling and a set of conditions that must be met before one can be filled with the Spirit. Spirit-filling is not obtained by human effort.
- Spirit-filling is not a binary condition, as in an up-and-down situation where one

moves in and out of the carnal state. A Christian cannot be characterized as either completely full or as totally empty at any given point in time. The parallel in Eph 5:18 with drunkenness shows us that Spirit-filling should be understood on a non-discrete continuum where one should be characterized by a Spirit-filled life, increasingly so over time. Perfect Spirit-filling would equal perfection, which is impossible.

- Spirit-filling should not be contrasted with spiritual maturity. Since both filling and maturity take the “long look” at the pattern of a believer’s life, we can say that a mature Christian is one who is filled by the Spirit. Conversely, a Spirit-filled Christian is one who is mature. If a person is *not* characterized in the main by the fruit of the Spirit and such, then we cannot say they are mature or Spirit-filled, no matter how long they have been a Christian. Maturity in Christ does not have so much to do with time as it does with results.
- The Spirit is the intermediate agent who brings about Christ-likeness in the believer. Spirit-filling is not getting more of the Spirit in a quantitative sense but of his increasing influence in our lives.
- Spirit-filling can be defined by the word “control,” but to avoid any potential confusion, it should be defined as “influence” or “characterized by” instead. This leaves room for the fruit of the Spirit which includes self-control. When Spirit-filled, we do not relinquish control of ourselves; instead, the Spirit of God works in us so that we control ourselves in a proper Christian fashion.
- Regarding the question of whether filling is the key to sanctification or not, we could answer both ways. The answer is no if we mean that we have to *get* the Spi-

rit-filling in order to make our sanctification move ahead. The answer is yes if we are talking about a label for that pattern of life in which the Spirit is sovereignly working on the Christian in order to produce in Him the characteristics of a sanctified or Spirit-filled person.

If we look at the examples of Jesus, Stephen, Barnabas, and the early disciples (Luke 4:1, Acts 6:5, 11:24, and 13:52), we see men characterized by behavior consistent with the Spirit of God—thus, they could be labeled as “full of the Spirit.” Barnabas, for example, was full of the Spirit *and as such was a mature Christian*. Paul is enjoining us to be the same way, influenced by the Spirit so that we also are characterized by a consistently Christian pattern of life. The phrase “to be full of the Spirit” is a summary statement of the Christian life lived in faith and obedience to God, not a one-moment analysis.

Let us therefore “always be filled by the Spirit.”

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## ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Some of my own thoughts

Texts: Eph 5:18, Gal 5:16, Acts 2:4, 4:8, 6:3, 7:55, 2:13; Eph 3:16-19, 4:12-13, 1:23

Comparisons: wine, Acts 2:13 and Eph 5:18

It seems like we are saying that the Spirit filling is control, yet we control when he controls. This is somewhat strange and could use explanation.

Relation of Eph 5:18 passage with Col 3:16 as mentioned by MacArthur. Can I tie the temple picture from the OT into filling today for the Christian in his body, the temple of the HS?

Walvoord, John F. *The Holy Spirit*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991. Never defines filling in his chapter on it.

Question: is the filling moment-by-moment, binary/discrete, all/nothing, or continuous, analog, growing?

It seems like we might argue en *pneumati* in the 1 Cor 12:13 passage, by the Spirit, could be paralleled here, “by the Spirit,” both as instrumental. So to be filled “in” the Spirit or “with” the Spirit doesn’t cut it, but to be filled “by the Spirit” makes more sense, following Wallace.

I have not seen this elsewhere. We might make an argument for a corporate aspect of the Spirit’s filling, i.e. that the fullness of the Spirit cannot be experienced “to the full” if not in a corporate setting, because of the relational and one-another kind of things that happen in Eph 5:19ff. This would certainly emphasize the local manifestation of the body of Christ (aka the church) and participation in it.

Most expositors build some hierarchy of conditions before filling will occur, making an already difficult question (how to be filled?) even more difficult. A single-layer approach says you must walk, not grieve, and not quench the Spirit. Then maybe a two-layer approach will add obedience to Rom 12:1-2 in underneath quenching (Gromacki, p. 188-9). Why the complexity, and how do all these things relate? Couldn’t we just as well pick any other command, say “walk in the Spirit” and do the same thing there?

\*Bauer, Walter, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3d ed., ed. Frederick W. Danker, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.

*plhrhs* – of persons, mostly full of a power, gift, feeling, characteristic, quality, etc. Also pertaining to being complete and with nothing lacking (that’s an interesting defn) and they use this “full of faith” regarding Stephen in Acts 6:5.

*plhrow* – of persons fill with powers, qualities, etc. (This is not too helpful).

pimplhmi – of personal inner life, to be completely full.

\* Berkhof, Louis. *Systematic Theology*. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1998 Reprint ed.

Amazing thing here is that Berkhof's index doesn't even show Eph 5:18!

\*Brown, Colin. *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*. 3 vols., Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975, vol. 1, pp. 728-741.

“Just as a person can be full of pain, joy, love, and virtue, he can also be said to be filled with God...i.e. possessed and inspired by God.” p. 734. pimplemi endowment by the Spirit. plerow technical term for fulfilling of Scripture, but also the fullness of time in eschatological sense, the fulfillment of sin, full of Spirit, full of faith or good works, of God's will, of filling a need, of Christ's fullness of deity, life, grace and truth.

Filled with the Spirit. God is the giver; “filling is not an end in itself, but the condition for speaking with boldness in the missionary situation.” p. 739. s.v. “fullness.” It “appears to be the mark of the Christian in general, it is specially stressed in the case of certain individuals.” p. 739. Are they mixing special with normal filling? “To be filled with the power of the Spirit means to ‘live by the Spirit...’ (Gal. 5:25), or to be ‘in Christ’, to ‘have the mind of Christ...’ (1 Cor. 2:16), and thus to have the fullness of the gifts of grace flow through one as a member of the body of Christ.” p. 739. This seems like a thin definition.

\*Chafer, Lewis Sperry. *He That Is Spiritual*. rev. of 1918 ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1967.

Issue of *known* sin is put forth as important. Spirit-filling = spirituality (pp. 40-69, 133). This is different than the idea that the Christian is spiritual in the sense that He is saved (Rom 8:9, 1 Cor 2:12). And this in turn is very strongly stated in his opening to chapter 3 where he gives a lot of phrases that speak of unbelievers as if they are actually believers in Christ. But if it is a sin to constantly not abide, walk by the flesh, etc, and 1 John 3:6, 9 are what they are, then we have to say these are unbelievers.

Even he on p. 43 seems to equate walking with filling.

Circular definition: To be filled with the Spirit is to have the Spirit fulfilling in us all that God intended Him to do when He placed Him there.” p. 43-44.

He seems to go on to define it by what the Spirit does or how it manifests itself: producing Christian character, Christian service, teaching, praise and thanksgiving, leading, witnessing with our Spirit, making intercession for us.

It is positive instead of negative (helpful stmt).

\*\_\_\_\_\_. *Major Bible Themes*. Revised, John F. Walvoord. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974, pp. 114-125.

“The filling of the Spirit may be defined as a spiritual state where the Holy Spirit is fulfilling all that He came to do in the heart and life of the individual believer.” p. 115. But there is a note of “empowering” in his text where he contrasts

spirit filling with spiritual maturity. Seems like this is done in several places, but Ryrie does not; McCune does. I tend to not so heavily push the contrast.

Growth is always to be there, but health can be the present state of all. “There is an obvious relationship between the filling of the Spirit and spiritual maturity, and a Christian filled with the Spirit will mature more rapidly than one who is not.” p. 115. I doubt if one can be matured who is not.

Fiat statement next, as in all of such works on Spirit filling: “The filling of the Spirit is, accordingly, accomplished in every believer when he is fully yielded to the indwelling Holy Spirit, resulting in a spiritual condition in which the Holy Spirit controls and empowers the individual. While there may be degrees of manifestation of the filling of the Spirit and degrees of divine power, the central thought in the filling is that the Spirit of God is able to operate in and through the individual without hindrance, accomplishing God’s perfect will for that person.” p. 116. Interesting the note about degrees. No hindrance is hard to imagine. Less hindrance is not so hard to imagine.

He does mention “continually” and “temporarily” filled. This gives way the two kinds that I’ve seen in Combs, Fairman, Ryrie.

“Being filled with the Spirit...is not accomplished, however, by human effort; rather, it is by permitting God to accomplish this work in the life of the individual.” p. 116. Practically it seems to boil down to human effort though, to meet the conditions.

He uses the idea that it is present tense to emphasize the repetitious nature of the experience. This is helpful to allow them to avoid the once-for-all filled idea that is tied to a second work of grace. This distances Chafer-ism from that effectively. But again, it is to be continual rather than repeated. Filling is on page 117 again said to have to do with spiritual power, since “no Christian can live on yesterday’s spiritual power.” It’s like an influx of power that you need a new one every second to keep going.

Then he goes into conditions and results. Conditions are the quench not, grieve not, and walk in.

Results include progressive sanctification, teaching, guiding, assurance, worship and love of God, proper exercise of natural and spiritual gifts.

\*Combs, William W. “The Filling of the Holy Spirit.” Proceedings of the Mid-America Conference on Preaching *The Ministry of the Holy Spirit*. October 16-17, 2003, pp. 45-55.

This article is very good. Shows importance placed on this topic in evangelical theology with quotes and refs to Walvoord, Pentecost, Ryrie, Strauss. Not emphasized historically, however, as ref’d in Calvin, Strong, Hodge (I wouldn’t use this as a strong argument). Its once reference seems to make it suspect as the “key” to sanctification.”

Why the contemporary emphasis? John Wesley → John Fletcher → Charles Finney, Asa Mahan → Phoebe and Walter Palmer → William E. Boardman, Robert Pearsall and Hannah Whitall Smith → Moody’s 1873 campaign and Keswick movement roots with Moody and Torrey using “baptism of the Spirit” for the second work of grace but later teachers preferred “filling” → Chafer (Oberlin, C. I. Scofield connection) and is said to be distinctively Keswick. This I

doubt, but the counteraction theory of Keswickianism is there. There are a lot of differences in view about the baptism of the Spirit, for example.

Luke-Acts have all the other refs to the filling. There are two kinds: special filling (Luke 1:15, 1:41, 1:67, Acts 2:4, 4:8, 4:31, 9:17, 13:9) and fullness or normal filling (Luke 4:1, Acts 6:3, 6:5, 7:55, 11:24, 13:52). In this view of two kinds he follows Fairman, and actually quotes page 288 of his dissertation in support of. He does not really labor to prove the point about two kinds of filling.

Re: special filling: “no conditions have to be met to obtain it, since each one is sovereignly given. Special filling has no necessary correlation to the sanctification of the individual; it is never commanded.” Special filling is like the OT ministry of the Holy Spirit (Ex 28:3, 31:3, 35:31; Num 11:25, Deut 34:9).

The special filling is an EVENT while the normal filling is a STATE. That’s my terminology, but is what I’m hit by when I read the normal filling texts.

Special filling always uses *pimplemi* in passive voice and aorist tense, except Luke 1:15 which is future. Here is a questionable stmt I think: “In each case *Holy Spirit* is in the genitive case (verbal genitive of content), specifying the content of the filling.” That’s from Wallace!

For normal fullness, we have a nominal genitive (noun in genitive) of content; typically figurative, suggesting “full of wisdom” = a wise person.. “These references would seem to describe a quality of life, something that is generally characteristic of the person, and would seem to be somewhat equivalent to the popular use of the term *spiritual*, indicating a good degree of spiritual maturity, what we might describe as a godly believer.” One who is exhibiting the fruit of the Spirit.

Acts 13:52 is an imperfect, a continuing state (a customer imperfect). On that I wonder if he will say that the filling in Eph 5:18 is to be a customary present. This is just like above, “being used statively to describe a continuing disposition of joyfulness.”

In Eph 5:18 we have a dative case, object of prep *en*. Mostly ignored in commentators over the years. Abbott and Wallace had a handle on this. He then follows Wallace quite closely. *En* + dative not content, and parallel with wine before it indicates “by means of” should be the translation. The content is not mentioned therefore. Eph 3:19 and 4:10 (doubtful on the last one). But he says believers are to be filled by Christ by means of the Spirit with the content of the fullness of God. Filled with the Spirit then is to let the Spirit change so they imitate God (5:1). Parallel with Col 3:16.

Present *impv* is character building command. It says nothing about repetition or up and down kind of thing. It is to be always in force. It is “present *impv* in general precepts.” Example of “walk in love” is not to be construed in the up and down sense, but continue to do so, since they already love for the saints in 1:15. “The idea is of continuing to be filled by the Spirit with the character of God.” (p. 54).

Caveat: analysis says that 5:18 has no bearing on Spirit filling. But assuming that is incorrect, it would just be paralleling the passages in Acts with the goal that the Ephesians keep on displaying the godly character qualities that are the fruit of the Spirit. The (fruit) results of his work.

Normal fullness: It's not repeated, it is a metaphor for spiritual maturity.

His point rests on this: that filling BY the Spirit is in Ephesians and this is different than the content filling of the Spirit in Luke-Acts normal cases. But is it true that those are content filling? It seems those are godly character, control, whatever.

We are not to focus on whether we are filled or not, but rather live obedient Christian lives that are characterized by the Spirit's presence. It is not describing a direct work by the Spirit that is obtained by meeting conditions, but is a metaphor for what we might call a godly believer." p. 55. This seems to go with his "caveat interpretation" rather than his other interpretation.

Walvoord is wrong. His last phrase: "If there is a 'secret' or key to sanctification, it can be summarized by the word obedience." He needs to prove this instead of letting it hand out there like that. how can you obey if you are not filled?

His dichotomy is a bit strong. I don't know that I buy it.

\*Criswell, W. A. *The Baptism, Filling & Gifts of the Holy Spirit*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973. pp. 20-30.

Sounds good on Spirit baptism (judicial, into body of Christ, for all believers, not same as regeneration). Instrumental use of 'en' in 1 Cor 12:13 is feasible. "And it is the looking at that Greek text that has changed our ideas of the baptism and the filling of the Holy Spirit." (21). The baptizing is done instrumentally BY the HS.

The Bible emphasizes, Criswell says, not the baptism (as some do in holiness circles) but the filling – Eph 5:18 and example of apostles being repeatedly filled.

Baptism	Filling
no command to be baptized	commanded to be filled Eph 5:18 continuous
once-for-all	filling is again and again, repeated
positional, writing names in the book of life. God does it for us.	experiential, empowering, for service, Christian life.
places into body of Christ, positionally able to receive power etc.	victory and power itself.
Baptism not mentioned at Pentecost. The prophecy of Matt 3:11 and Acts 1:5 was fulfilled there but in the background.	Filling emphasized at Pentecost. Wrought wonders in the church (see Acts 2): foreign languages, praising God, boldness, steadfastness, unselfishness, worship (p. 25).

"To be filled with the Holy Spirit means for us to be so controlled and motivated with the presence and power of the Spirit until our whole being is one perpetual psalm of praise and service to God (Eph. 5:19-32)." (p. 27).

He takes the three-layered approach to humanity (spirit, carnal, and fleshly) though he labels them a bit different than Chafer's approach.

Yieldedness moment by moment will result in you experiencing the filling of the Spirit. Filling is plural present, commanded of all.

The verb is passive as well. The Spirit acts upon the person. Wine acts upon, dominates, controls the person (it is outside of that person or “external” at least initially).

Illustrates with the drunk doing, saying, thinking things he never would have—so with the Spirit, Criswell argues. Also uses John 3:34 to refer to all, not just Jesus—that he poured out the Spirit without measure on the world. Ties in James 4:5 and says that it means the Spirit envies anything that we love more than Him.

Empty ourselves, he says, of worldly affection, ambition, of self. Less of self, more of God is the mantra.

\*Erickson, Millard J. *Christian Theology*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998. p. 896-7.

“What we are commanded to do (Eph. 5:18) is be filled with the Holy Spirit (a present imperative, suggesting ongoing action). This is not so much a matter of our getting more of the Holy Spirit; presumably we all possess the Spirit completely. It is, rather, a matter of his possession more of our lives. Each of us is to aspire to giving the Holy Spirit full control of his or her life. When that happens, our lives will manifest whatever gifts God intends for us to have...” (896-7). He writes in the ctx of spiritual gifts and their exercise, but this is the only place he speaks about being filled with the Spirit.

\*Fairman, Richard Gary. “An Exegesis of ‘Filling’ Texts Which Refer to the Doctrine of Filling.” Th.D. dissertation, Grace Theological Seminary, 1986.

Major conclusions (p. 321ff). 1) “the synonymy of the “fill” word groups suggest that all fillings have the same lexical idea (with solid evidence); 2) “suggest two types of filling (i.e., fullness and special fillings).” 3) “The question is what (or who) pervades a person in the sense of characterizing (adjective, linear tenses) or controlling (aorist tenses of non-stative verbs) him. Some say there are three types of filling, lexically there is only one (synonymous) but “grammatically there are at least two; one major and one minor. The major contrast is between the aorist and durative ideas...A more minor contrast (occurring only in Eph 5:18) is between the passive with and without the imperative. The former refers to a disposition which is viewed as an obligation involving willingness. The latter is viewed as an act which is sudden and overwhelming in its occurrence.” (p. 324).

All of these seems quite technical to me.

But he summarizes the “fullness” and the “special fillings” positions. Under fullness, which includes Eph 5:18 along with a bunch of other texts (Ex 31:3, 35:31, 35, 28:3, Deut 34:9, 1 Kgs 7:14, Mc 3:8, Sir 39:6, Luke 4:1, Acts 6:3, 5, 7:55, 11:24, 13:52) he says it is “a disposition characterized by the control of the Spirit; involving appropriate attitudes and abilities which gradually develop in one who responds willingly to the Spirit’s indirect oversight of his circumstances and experiences, and are durative in nature, being appropriate to the person and applicable to any relevant situation...gradually and providentially cultivated capacity...” (p. 326). Seems to indicate a non-binary situation. He emphasizes willingness. Page 327: “It is not a crisis, or climactic. Temporariness and repeatability



are possible, but unlikely, given probably spiritual stability.” “It is accomplished indirectly through the Holy Spirit’s gradual development of these traits within one’s circumstances... involves willingness; and, beyond that, is unconditional.” “Descriptive of a particular disposition which is evident in the life of a person who is characterized and controlled by the Holy Spirit without limitation to only one task.”

His special fillings include Sir 48:12, Luke 1:15, 41, 67, Acts 2:4, 4:8, 4:31, 9:17, 13:9.

He points out that the victorious life view tends to mix up the two kinds of filling—special and normal fullness. In this view, “filling is presented as the method whereby one achieves a victorious Christian life. This ignores the passive voice that accompanies every verbal form. It also is contradictory to the sudden and unexpected manner in which the special fillings occur. They are not something a person accomplishes by his own efforts. It also misrepresents the descriptive nature of a fullness.” (p. 339). Emphatically states that 5:18 has to do with fullness, not with special filling, crisis kind of thing. I’m getting the idea here that this moment-by-moment idea is silly. Nothing works like that (I’m a green tree one moment, a dead one the next...no, rather it is growth, vitality, etc.)

“Relative to duration, filling is presented as dependent on obedience.” He quotes Morgan here. (340). “Again, this ignores the passive voice... Thus, it is dependent upon willingness, not obedience. But that is true only of fullness.” (But Matt asks here, is not “being willing” a subset of “being obedient”?)

**“Relative to manner, filling is presented as dependent upon volition. This would be true if it meant willful attitudes in the sense of allowing the Holy Spirit to fill one. But the writers [in the victorious life view] mean willful acts; i.e. conditions you must fulfill to generate your filling. But there is an absence of explicit conditions in Scripture, which is strange if they are so crucial for Christian living. Instead, the lack of such necessitates inferring conditions from various passages, which leads to a diversity of suggested approaches. Many of the suggestions are unachievable. One would need to be filled to meet the conditions of being filled...”** This paragraph is stacked with good stuff! Page 341.

Results: see Ryrie 101-103, Walvoord, 219-224 for examples. “The purpose of the fullness is merely description—the description of someone characterized by the Spirit’s control in some practical area of life.”

Note willingness of person in Eph 5:18, a consent (p. 306). Look at this further. Also p. 261.

\*Fee, Gordon D. *God’s Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul*. Peabody: Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994.

On filling, see pp. 22, 24, 48, 648, 660, 663, 676, 684, 689, 709, 711-12, 719-20, 733, 741, 830, 844, 865, 866, 875, 876. Filling does not appear in his subject index.

Points out that 5:18 is the last command of the series that started at 4:25. Interesting, because all of those are contrasts. Can we pick up anything from that? The drunkenness is a “never do so” but the filling is an “always do so” kind of

command. He takes this as the same thing, different metaphor, for walking in the Spirit.

The meaning is that life and deeds given over to the Spirit are as obvious in their case as the effects of too much wine are obvious in the other. He takes a fullness of the Spirit's presence (722).

Notes that "one misses too much if this text is completely individualized, as so often happens...the imperative can be responded to only by individuals...but in its immediate context the imperative has to do with community life." So there is the individual receptivity to it and the community.

P. 830 fn 5 indicates that the Spirit is "ultimately the 'element' of filling, as well as the agent."

Eph 5:18 and 2 Tim 1:6-7 "imply the need for ongoing appropriation. The Spirit's presence is a crucial matter, but that presence does not automatically ensure a quickened, fervent spiritual life...keep the gift aflame." (866). To do this, he says encouragement, growth, worship especially, prayer, awareness of God's presence in Him.

p. 663, this is a "hinge" exhortation "in that it concludes those in 4:17-5:17 and is the verb for which the following participles (vv. 19-24) serve modifiers." (fn 14, 663).

Mandatory to look at Col 3:16 in light of Eph 5:18ff.

\* Ferguson, Sinclair B. *The Holy Spirit*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996.

p. 89 is the only reference to Eph 5:18 and apparently the only place he speaks of filling (though not at all sure on this one). He says that filling is an ongoing condition, but also describes particular occasions. "In the case of the former the pleroma family of words is used (e.g. Lk. 4:1; Acts 6:3; cf. Eph 5:18); in the latter the verb *plimmi* is employed (e.g. Lk. 1:41, 67; Acts 2:4; 4:8, 31; 9:17). In the former sense, to be filled with the Spirit refers predominantly to exhibiting the fruit of the Spirit in a life that is under the lordship of the Spirit (cf. Eph. 5:18). But the latter occasions refer to a special influx of ability and power in the service of the kingdom." So he is making a huge distinction between the words. Others I've already reviewed reject that approach.

\* Fitch, William. *The Ministry of the Holy Spirit*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974. pp. 183-192.

He equates: "To be filled with the Holy Spirit means to be filled with 'all the fullness of God.'" (p. 185). Has idea that Holy Spirit makes us free from law of sin and death and so if filled, we will not sin. Supportive of Keswick convention. It is the moment-by-moment deal (186), with no once-for-all fullness possible.

Associates filling with a deep longing for it. Scripture support for this statement is, however, meager in his paragraph. Says to be filled you need to be emptied. This is camping on the English "fill" and ideas that pop to mind, but not dealing with the text. But this emptying in his case is cleansing from sin, not grieving. But he takes a spatial sense of filling somehow. Takes John 3:34 as ap-

plying to believers (“unto him” not in original text, he says). Supports Finney, Wesley.

Commandment nature of Eph 5:18 (p. 190). Allow him to have his way. Arminian approach – when God directs, He enables. For a believer I can see this is more sensible than for an unbeliever (commanded to repent, etc.)

Only way to glorify God is to be filled (191). But earlier he said “If Jesus is not glorified, the Spirit will not fill us.” (187). This is a circular thing – you have to glorify Jesus to be filled to glorify God. “And when the Spirit fills us to the uttermost, then we can be sure that He will bring forth fruit that will glorify our wonderful Lord.” (191). So we have to glorify the Lord, to be filled, to have HS bring forth fruit glorifying to the Lord. But weren’t we already glorifying the Lord when we started that cycle and thus filled?

\*Fox, Randall. “Spirit Filling and Spiritual Maturity.” FrontLine Pastor’s Insert, March/April 2004. FrontLine, Journal of the Fundamental Baptist Fellowship International, Taylors< SC: p. 6 in insert.

Example of filled in John 12:3 – pervading every area of our lives. Human emotions such as sorrow (John 16:6), fear (Luke 5:26), or anger (Luke 6:11). Filling has idea of domination or governing.

Makes no difference between special and normal fillings.

Acts 2:4, 4:8, 7:55. He equates supernatural early church with filling of Spirit (so why cannot we have this today?)

Col 3:16 is precisely parallel in his view: “When you let the Word of God have its home (dwell) in your heart, you are letting the Spirit of God control you. The will of the Word and the will of the Spirit are not two distinct things but one, since the Spirit wrote the Word.”

Filling is not the same as maturity (this view ignores the special vs. normal filling). Growth is part of life, but not to be confused with Spirit filling. “Spirit-filling is immediate. Spiritual growth is a long process.”

Paul lists areas that both demonstrate and necessitate Spirit-filling. Music, gratitude, relationships between believers, husbands and wives, parents and children, employers and employees are all connected to Spirit-filling.

He uses the health / growth illustration to back up his point. This is all common stuff taken from others that he has learned from.

“Being filled with the Spirit is, in essence, all about conscious submission to Him.”

\*Graham, Glenn H. *An Exegetical Summary of Ephesians*. Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1997.

Also supports the idea that the parallel between clauses “does not justify a conclusion that when we are filled with the Spirit we lose control of ourselves just as when we are drunk. After all, the final quality of the fruit of the Spirit in Gal. 5:22-23 is e\**gkravteia* ‘self control’. p. 467.

“The point of the contrast is to place the joy which comes from being filled with the Spirit, and the expression of this joy through Christian hymns and thanksgiving (5:19), in contrast with the joy of debauchery and its expression in the singing of drunken songs.” p. 468.

They say definitely it is not content filling. But they do lean to *pneumati* as the spiritual part of man! That’s new!

\*Gromacki, Robert. *The Holy Spirit*. Nashville: Word Publishing, 1999. pp. 183-191.

Spirit filling originates from within (like anger, fear) and not outside (as in if the Spirit were the content). He does a nice summary of the verbs and various usages (pimplemi, pletho, pleo, pleroo).

Regarding the command: can obey or not; never to ask for; In explaining our allowing the Spirit to fill us (verb is passive) he explains “we are active when we obey Him and yield to Him.” “Rather, we must obey the conditions for filling prescribed in the Scriptures.” But what about other commands in the Scriptures—do they have conditions that we hunt down elsewhere? It is continuous. Conditions include cleanness and submissiveness. He ties Col 3:16 in by saying we are filled when we are obedient to God’s word. (But this begs, does not obedience and understanding of the word require that we be filled, or can we do those things apart from filling?) Spirit filling has to do with control.

Results of Spirit filling are speaking, singing, giving, submitting (ministry to others, joy, thanksgiving, submission in all life relationships). Spirit-filling leaves a mark of character and conduct (Gal. 5:22-23).

Quotes Toussaint (see Bibliography): “The New Testament gives no specific instructions on the subject.” (p. 187). There are many things to obey, which as we do, we manifest our surrender to the Spirit. “Evidently, any heart that is open toward God and is in submission to the Scriptures will be filled with the Spirit.” (Toussaint again). Then he says if we obey three particular commands (walk, don’t grieve-deliberate sin, don’t quench-resist formation of Christlikeness in us), “we are filled or controlled by the Spirit.” (Again, begs: how do I obey THOSE commands if I’m not filled?) Also begs the question: what about unknown or un-deliberate sin. We are also culpable for this! He says quenching is not a possibility if we obey Rom 12:1-2. (p. 188-189).

Binary idea of vacillating “between spirituality and carnality moment by moment. We are either controlled by the Spirit (spirituality) or we are not (carnality).

His distinction between immaturity and unspirituality/maturity and spirituality is not too convincing. How can one who is not consistently filled with the Spirit grow to maturity? They are not separate items...

\*Hodge, Charles. *Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994.

p. 302: “so they are said to be filled with the Spirit, when he controls all their thoughts, feelings, words, and actions.”

\*Kent, Homer A. *Ephesians: The Glory of the Church*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1971.

p. 96. “The present tense of the imperative verb makes this a continuing obligation for believers... We must not imagine some sort of physical entry [of the Spirit into a person]. This is descriptive language which pictures the control of the person by the Holy Spirit. There is a certain analogy in this contrast between being drunk with wine and being filled with the Spirit. In both instances, the individual is under the control of another influence.”

I should note here also that the parallel between drunkenness and Spirit-filling is interesting since drunkenness is not a binary thing—there are levels or stages of it, stages of loss of control. So there are likely stages or levels of spirit filling instead of the binary thing.

So there are lots of people who say control, but again the point is well taken by another commentator somewhere in these notes that the Spirit fosters self-control (Reymond).

*King James Study Bible, The.* Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1988.

p. 1838 note on Eph 5:18 “Fullness of the Holy Spirit.” I find it interesting that they say this: “The words *be filled* here mean ‘be continually filled,’ emphasizing that the fullness of the Spirit is a repeated experience for believers.” This is interesting because continual and repeated are not exactly the same thing. The latter is arguing against the one-time-only filling which would be equated to baptism. Though that idea is there because it is a durative, the real idea is continual, a practice or habit or character kind of thing. They define it as control as well. “Because people are indwelt by the Holy Spirit at salvation, they do not need to get more of the Holy Spirit, but the filling of the Spirit occurs when the Holy Spirit gets more of the believer.” This indicates that they do not believe (as Combs says is common) that the Spirit here is the content of filling, but he is a controlling force and to be full means to be more controlled by the Spirit.

Conditions: confession of sin (1 John 1:9), yield (Rom 6:13), desire and pray for it (Matt 5:6, Luke 11:13).

\*Kuyper, Abraham. *The Work of the Holy Spirit.* Translated by Henri De Vries. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956.

There is no reference in the index to Eph 5:18! He takes that tongues are a miracle of hearing, and are not known languages.

\*Legters, L. L. *The Simplicity of the Spirit-Filled Life.* Philadelphia: Christian Life Literature Fund, 1930.

This is a victorious life guy, edits suggested by Robert McQuilkin. He emphasizes a quietistic kind of approach in the foreword, “Many will be filled when they stop trying to empty themselves, stop trying to surrender, stop seeking, and even stop praying for the filling of the Spirit, and quietly rest in the knowledge of His longing, and thank Him that it is His *will* that they be filled unto all the fulness of God.” (p. 7) This contradicts Fitch above. Doesn’t want us to think it is impossible when God yearns to do it, and the Spirit already lives in us. But he

seems to confuse seeking and not seeking when he says “Will you not thank Him that he hungers and thirsts after righteousness...” (13).

He turns the seeking around and says God is doing it.

He makes an excellent point (p. 20): “We all know it is a sin to get drunk. Do we all agree that it is as much of a sin not to be filled with the Spirit?” This is so simple yet profound. Obedience to the command to be filled is not optional. It is required, and God does not expect a Christian to go long without it. It is an affront to him, not like a “better Christian” but an “obedient Christian” is one who is characterized by this filling.

Says that the condition is to *thirst*, but then goes on to say that you have to totally submit yourself, and trust. So there are three conditions but not the same as Chafer’s, though his middle one would be somewhat akin to Chafer’s quench not and grieve not. (p. 40-43). Yielding is mentioned p. 46 explicitly. Lordship p. 47.

Filling can be known by fruit (p. 45). Consciousness can come to us of the absence of the fruit of the Spirit (guilt about being this or that) but we may not recognize the fruit, since it is normal.

He says that there is no necessary feeling (but believing) in the filling (p. 47), contra Criswell’s experiential factor. Another evidence is being occupied with Jesus.

It seems like a crisis, binary thing, that you are not necessarily even aware of. Effects of being filled are seen in life and service.

Now something interesting comes up. He had a chapter 7 on “The Condition of Being Filled” and then chapter 12, “The Conditions of Continuing Filled.” These are abide, grieve not, quench not. More similar to Chafer. Certainly a non-Lordship kind of position on salvation.

“It is possible to have the mind stored with Scripture, and not be filled with the Spirit.” p. 60. But to remain filled, we need filled with the Word.

Filling will increase consciousness of sins and grieving has to do with what we do about that consciousness. Confession looks like solution to grieving and quenching.

But belief is the key thing in all of this. I guess you could say that if you push belief over into the idea of obedience, as in obedient to the faith.

\* \_\_\_\_\_. “Systematic Theology II.” Class notes, Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, Spring 2004.

See section on filling.

\*Moule, Handley C. G. *Person and Work of the Holy Spirit*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1977. Reprint of 1890 ed. published by Hodder and Stoughton, London, under title *Veni Creator*. pp. 209-227.

Many examples of full of the Spirit kind of people (p. 209-210). There is habitual vs. special filling for empowerment and miracles. Eph 5:18 has to do with the habit of the Christian life (216), not a crisis. The things afterward in the passage are manifestations of it. Yield (218, 219), do not hide Him under disobe-

dience and unbelief (217). Not wait for it or tarry for it. Distinguishes it from the baptism.

\*O'Brien, Peter T. *The Letter to the Ephesians*, Pillar New Testament Commentary, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999, pp. 391-392.

“...understanding *en pneumati* as an instrumental dative, indicating the *means* by which believers are filled (i.e., by the Holy Spirit), is preferable syntactically and makes better sense” than being filled with the content of the Spirit. The content is the fullness of God (3:19). p. 391.

Notice tie 1:23, 4:10, 3:19, 5:18 with the fullness idea.

Hoehner, O'Brien says, argues for an instrumental understanding of the phrase, but translate the exhortation be filled *with* the Spirit.

He says that the dominant view is that of content. But if you look at Charlier He that is spiritual, you get a different picture, and many commentators say almost exactly the same words: “To be filled is not the problem of getting *more* of the Spirit: it is rather the problem of the Spirit getting *more* of us.” p. 44. In other words, it seems that he is saying it is not the problem of getting more Spirit-as-content but the Spirit getting more control of us.

This brings up the thought in my mind as to why Dr. Combs is so interested in this content idea. It is really orthogonal to the idea of the importance of filling and where that comes from. In other words, there is the importance of it, and the definition of it.

I don't think it is “commonly assumed” as Combs says, that the idea is *content* in Eph 5:18, based on all the things I've read. There is no real difference between Combs' points 8 and 1-7.

\*Owen, John. *The Holy Spirit*. Grand Rapids: Sovereign Grace Publishers, 1981?

No reference that I found on a quick perusal to filling or Eph 5:18.

\*Pache, Rene. *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1954.

Conditions: confess sin, desire and seek fullness; yield to God; believe that he has done so. Maintain it by walking after the Spirit Rom 8:4; get it back by confession, yield, believe (as above).

Pache does not have a binary nature to the filling but an increasing or decreasing of the “spiritual level.” Fullness => growth. Filling is according to capacity and stage of development.

\*Reymond, Robert L. *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*. Nashville: Nelson, 1998.

“It is addressed to the whole Christian community (the imperative is plural), the command is to be continually observed (the imperative is in the present tense), and it calls us, not to sectarian techniques or formulas, but to a *believing*

*openness* to the Spirit's working in us (it is in the passive voice, best rendered: "Let the Spirit be continually filling you"). p. 765.

He makes a great point in the next page: "Paul is commanding that we must never come 'under the influence' of the 'intoxicating spirit' of wine, but rather we must ever live under the 'intoxicating influence' of the Spirit who, far from taking away from us our self-control (which alcohol as a depressant drug does), actually *stimulates* us for the first time in everything that makes a person behave at his best and highest—including self-control (Gal. 5:22). p. 765-6.

The idea is that the Spirit causes you to control your self so that YOU live the life that the Spirit desires; so that YOU live the life such that your life looks like Christ. It's not YOU by YOURSELF but as you operate by the power of the Spirit. This is quite a thought that speaks about a life not exchanged but in control.

Ties Eph 5:18-21 with Col 3:15-17. "To be filled with the Spirit is to be indwelt by the word of Christ; to be indwelt by the word of Christ is to be filled with the Spirit." p. 766.

Regarding the participles in Eph 5 and Col 3, "The Christian who evidences these things in his life is 'being filled with the Spirit,' that is, is 'letting the word of Christ dwell in him richly.' He does not need to practice certain sectarian techniques or to recite certain sectarian incantations or 'Christian mantras' in order to receive the Spirit's filling. He needs only to cultivate these things by remaining humbly and believably open to the Spirit who works by and with the word of Christ in his heart." p. 766-7.

\*Richards, George W. "Spirit-Filled." *Interpretation* Vol. 4 No. 1, January 1950, pp. 36-39.

Quite a bit different approach in this article—no texts of Scripture quoted. I wonder if this guy believes in the personality of the Spirit given what he has written. He equates being filled with the Holy Spirit with having the mind of the master. "We are filled with the Spirit of the Lord in the same way as we are filled with the spirit of a nation, a poet, a historian, a scientist—by personal contact, by constant fellowship." (p. 37). "We can not fill ourselves with the Spirit; we can only put ourselves in the way of being filled by him." (p. 38). Ways of doing it: enter the fellowship of the church; constant contact with Jesus; permit him to set tasks for me, preaching, teaching, practicing of the truth.

One interesting comment he made in quotes, not sure why: " "Special preaching in which the person and work of the Holy Spirit are carefully but courageously pressed," will be of little avail. One cannot impart or receive the Spirit in so easy a way. "

\*Rogers, Cleon L., Jr. "The Dionysian Background of Ephesians 5:18." *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 136, Jul-Sep 1979, pp. 249-257.

"The wild, drunken practices connected with the worship of Dionysus or Bacchus, the god of wine, form the general cultural background for Paul's two commands in Ephesians 5:18." p. 249. I see the problem with this already: he is



not dealing with the verse in context with the other ideas of filling and stuff, and we don't have any firm inerrant information on the Dionysian stuff either.

He traces some history of this cult: its widespread practice, its worship practices, the contrast of the drunkenness (wine as the instrument) command with being filled with the Spirit (Spirit as the agent, same function basically as instrument above).

"This study has sought to identify a possible cultural background for Ephesians 5:18 and has suggested that it is the worship of the wine god Dionysus. This does not mean that the commands of Paul were necessarily directed primarily against the cult of Dionysus. It does, however, indicate that the dionysian worship could well have formed the background against which Paul gave his general instructions." p. 257.

\*\_\_\_\_\_. *The Holy Spirit*. Chicago, Moody: 1997, pp. 155-168.

See notes in the book. He has a different spin in some ways than I expected. He does emphasize that filling is the most important Spirit ministry to the believer.

Talks about spirituality and maturity. "*Spirituality* means a mature and maturing relation to the Spirit. *Maturity* involves both time and control by the Spirit." p. 156.

There are degrees of spirituality he concludes. Control is not an all or nothing thing but dependent on "where you are at" in the Christian life.

Filling is control. There are two kinds: special and normal. The latter "indicates an abiding state of fullness of the Spirit rather than a specific event and which produces a character of life that may be equated with spirituality...It denotes a believer's character as being spiritual." p. 158.

"Christians are expected to be continually filled with the Spirit, for the command is in the present tense indicating a continuing requirement." p. 159. This seems to agree with my thought that we are not commanded to be "repeatedly" filled but instead commanded to be "continually" filled. We are not commanded to be "filled and unfilled in alternation" but "always filled"!

Conditions for filling: not prayer, but a dedicated life (Rom 12:1-2 kind of presentation, separation, and transformation), an undefeated life with respect to sin, and a walk of dependence. Compare this to Chafer's conditions of quench not, grieve not, and walk in the Spirit.

Talks in the section on dedication about discerning the leading of the Spirit but does not include looking into the Word of God it seems. More subjective kinds of stuff. This has to do with presentation of yourself to do God's will in a general sense—known or unknown.

Consequences of being filled include Christlike character. Mentions again that walking in dependence on the Spirit is a condition for the filling. This condition stuff is an inherent weakness, it has lately seemed to me. Includes also worship and praise, submissiveness, and service.

"Filling means control of all known matters and areas of the Christian's life at every stage of our walk. Such control is prerequisite to Christlikeness, praise, submissiveness, and service. It seems that he is explicitly circular here—

you must be dependent on the Spirit and submitted to his control to be filled, but to be submitted you need to be filled. Now he could get around that by saying submission in this case is relationship submission as in Eph 5:18-21, but I don't know. I think the circularity of it all is confusing.

Shedd, William G. T. *Dogmatic Theology*. Edited by Alan W. Gomes. Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 2003. See p. 715.

No reference to Eph 5:18.

\* Toussaint, Stanley D. "The Filling of the Spirit," in *Basic Theology Applied*, ed. John R. Masters and Wesley R. Willis. Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1995. See p. 213.

"Believers must be filled with the Holy Spirit, a condition simultaneous with and almost synonymous with walking by means of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:16)." p. 211.

1. Meaning. Control and influence, dominant force in a person's inner life. Examples of emotions such as wrath, fear, foolishness or rage, wonder and amazement, jealousy (Luke 4:28, 5:26), 6:11, Acts 3:10, 5:17, 13:45, 19:28) or characteristics (deceit and fraud (Acts 13:10). A similar reference to John the Baptist (Luke 1:15) and the apostles at Pentecost (Acts 2:4) which I did not notice! Spirit-filled = Spirit-controlled.

2. How to be filled. No specifics given in Bible. "Evidently, any heart that is open toward God and is in submission to the Scriptures will be filled with the Spirit." Belief is the first requirement (John 7:37-39). Second is Col 3:15-17, "humble submission to Christ's words is the same as being filled with the Spirit." p. 215. So, trusting and obeying. Later in his conclusion he says it is a moment-by-moment trusting of Christ. p. 217. "The believer is filled by the Spirit when he or she fulfills the conditions for being filled, namely, trusting Christ and obeying His Word. When this is done the Christian is filled, that is, impacted by God the Spirit." p. 218. This falls in line with the normal Dallas teaching. I'm trying to get my brain really around that.

3. Evidences.

Wallace, Daniel B. *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996.

See pg. 93, 94, 171, 215, 375, 441, 487, 525, 639, 659, 717.

Naked dative not used for content except for 3 or 4 locations. "There are apparently no instances of e\*n + dat. for content in biblical Greek after plhrovw. One of the most misunderstood passages in the NT is Eph 5:18, where plhrovw is followed by (e\*n) pnevmati. A typical translation is 'be filled with the Spirit' which implies that the Spirit is the content of the filling. But this is highly suspect from the Greek point of view." See also Abbott, pp. 161-62.

Acts 2:4 speaks of this but uses a different verb and case, so we see that Eph 5:18 has nothing to do with tongues speaking. Wallace indicates this is the empowerment for a specific thing, whereas Eph 5:18 is more general. See Acts 4:8, 31; 9:17; 13:9, Luke 1:15, 41.

Possession, i.e. “your spirit” is not implied due to lack of article and lack of possessive pronoun.

“There are no other examples in biblical Greek in which en + the dative after *plhrovw* indicates content. [FN Abbot, p. 161-162]. Further, the parallel with *oi!nw/* as well as the common grammatical category of means suggest that the idea intended is that believers are to be filled *by means of* the [Holy] Spirit. If so, there seems to be an unnamed agent.

“The meaning of this text can only be fully appreciated in light of the *plhrovw* language in Ephesians. Always the term is used in connection with a member of the Trinity. Three considerations seem to be key: (1) In Eph 3:19 the ‘hinge’ prayer introducing the last half of the letter makes a request that the believers ‘be filled with all the fullness of God’ (greek...). The explicit *content of plhrovw* is thus God’s fullness (probably a reference to his moral attributes). (2) In 4:10 Christ is said to be the agent of filling (with v 11 adding the specifics of his giving spiritual gifts). (3) The author then brings his argument to a crescendo in 5:18: Believers are to be filled *by Christ by means of the Spirit with the content of the fullness of God.*” This is interesting!

Wallace makes the impvs in this verse as causative/permissive. Permissive in the sense of “allow.” The first is a simple prohibitive. The verb is gnomic present. Eph 5:18 does not mean “Do not *for the moment* be filled with wine, but be filled *at the present time* by the Spirit.” There is no idea that this might change in the future. This is a general precept.

The later participles Wallace takes as adverbial participles of result, not means, manner, attendant circumstance, or imperatival. See p. 639 for his discussion which is helpful though not too decisive. He includes the submit in v 22 as well though p. 659 fn 6 indicates the difficulties here.

The idea is not to stop being drunk with wine, but do not even get started (the issue of the aorist impv).

Eph 5:18 therefore seems to mean “Do not ever be drunk by means of wine, but always be filled by means of the Holy Spirit.”

\* \_\_\_\_\_. *The Holy Spirit at Work Today*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1973.

Makes points that Gal 5:16 should be “walk by the Spirit” instead of “in” KJV. p. 55. That is because it is dative. Same can be said for “by wine” in Eph 5:18. Similar for “by the Spirit” in same verses, though that has the preposition en before it. Seems since *oi!nw* is parallel with *en pneumatic*, that they are basically the same thing, and that it is a “by means of” kind of idea. No one would really argue with this. It is not content.

More on the hierarchy of conditions: “Walking by the Spirit is only possible as the Christian is first of all yielded to the Spirit of God, and, second, is walking in unhindered fellowship with the Spirit through confession of sin. Walking

by the Spirit, however, is a positive moment-by-moment dependence upon the Spirit of God and what the Spirit of God can empower the Christian to do. The walk by the Spirit includes dependence upon the Word of God as providing the necessary standards of life and instruction in holy living. As one walks by the Spirit, he must be guided by the Spirit of God.” p. 61. There is also dependence upon prayer, aided by fellowship with other believers. p. 62.

Wilmington, Harold L. “The Filling of the Spirit.” *Fundamentalist Journal* 2, No. 10 N 1983, p. 52.

Filling is control, give new boldness, produce desire for more (alcohol and Spirit); any disobedience causes ministry to be lost. Disobedience = quenching (not doing what HS wants us to), and grieving (doing what HS does not want us to). Means and method of forgiveness (blood and confession) are the key to regaining it. The quench and grieve ideas here seem to build tall structures on little words that don’t seem to clearly have the meaning assigned. “The union with the Spirit is so strong that nothing can break it, but the communion with the Spirit is so fragile that the smallest sin can shatter it.” Illustrates it with forward progress, not regressing back to unsaved or start-over condition.

Woodcock, Eldon. “The Filling of the Holy Spirit.” *BiblioTheca Sacra* 157, January-March 2000, pp. 68-87.

Greek: *plhrovw* and *pivmplhmi* and various ways that things are filled. He does a good job.

Filling is like “characterized by some of His qualities.” But he does not note that filling with “things” and substances and emotions are not the same as with the person of the Spirit.

Mentions fullness of God and of Christ as well which have to be dealt with.

Prereqs: regeneration, baptism, indwelling. “To be filled with the Holy Spirit involves an expansion and intensification of the impact of His indwelling presence.” (73). He quotes Goodwin, Mayers, and Pentecost on the bottom of that page as well as to the effects of the filling. See also Pache on The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit.

He points out that extent of yieldedness varies, so that also extent of control/filling also varies (74). Walvoord seems, as quoted in fn. 29, to say that the filling is what is accomplished in the believer. Woodcock takes a continue aspect (spiritual condition) and special fillings for empowerment, as in Stephen’s life (Acts 6:3,5; 7:55).

Maintenance of self-control is the issue in drunkenness, also wisdom, discrimination, judgment, ability to think properly. (75-6). Speaks of morals, diligence, not recklessness.

Woodcock takes the two datives in Eph 5:18 as instrumental datives. “In 5:18 the contrast ins between yielding to the controlling effects of excessive alcohol absorption and yielding to the control of the Holy Spirit.” Characteristic life-

style follows. “The Holy Spirit does not remove the believer’s self-control, but does enhance the use of his intelligence.” (78).

Filling “an influence.” (78). Effects of being filled are character (spiritual interests Rom 8:5, submissiveness Rom 8:14?, Eph 6:21-6:9, fruit Gal 5:16, 22-23, 25), worship (music, thankfulness), and ministry (in Acts, conversions, evangelism).

Quoting Schippers, “The filling is not an end in itself, but the condition for speaking with boldness in the missionary situation.” (82). This is a great point often overlooked.

Conclusions on NT data: manifestations varied, not single; related to effective ministry of the Word, and synonymous meaning of the verbs **plhrovw** and **pivmplhmi**.

There are no verses that identify conditions, but there are “certain conditions that are incompatible or compatible with being filled with the Holy Spirit.” (84). This is a very helpful sentence, since nowhere have I been able to discern a necessary scriptural connection between these things. He also mentions the interplay of them (inter-dependence) on p. 86, which is an idea I’ve had for a while.

Conditions are 1) not grieving (fix: confess), 2) not quenching (resisting His will; fix: submit). Admits that the difference is not clear but tries to make a distinction – moral sin in grieving and resisting guidance in quenching. 3) living by the Spirit Gal 5:16; 4) be involved in ministry (where did this come from? Acts 13?) It “is thus not intended to produce a special spiritual status; rather, it is a divine equipping for service.” Does this address “He that is spiritual?”

The interplay of them he calls “conditions or result?” as if to say that it seems they are conditions but also results of Spirit filling. Excellent. Spirit’s initiative and believer’s response are involved. This has got to be it because otherwise we would control the Spirit, ultimately.