

FAITHFUL TO THE WORD

Systematic Theology Series

PNEUMATOLOGY

The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

UNIT 10: CONCLUSION — WALKING BY THE SPIRIT

Lesson 28

The Spirit-Filled Life

Walking in the Power of the Third Person

The Daily Reality of Life in the Spirit

Key Texts: Ephesians 5:18–21; Galatians 5:16–25; Romans 8:14; Ephesians 3:20–21; Colossians 3:16–17

“Do Not Get Drunk with Wine... But Be Filled with the Spirit”

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Series Verse

*“But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes,
He will guide you into all the truth;
for He will not speak on His own initiative,
but whatever He hears, He will speak;
and He will disclose to you what is to come.”*

John 16:13, NASB 1995

Introduction

Twenty-seven lessons have traversed the full landscape of pneumatology: the Person of the Holy Spirit as the Third Person of the Triune God (Units 1–2); the Spirit’s work in the Old Testament and in the life of Christ (Units 3–4); the Spirit’s application of redemption in regeneration, calling, conversion, and union with Christ (Unit 5); the Spirit’s permanent presence in the indwelling, sealing, and Spirit-baptism (Unit 6); the Spirit’s sanctifying work through progressive sanctification, the fruit of the Spirit, and mortification and vivification (Unit 7); the Spirit’s gifts in the church, including the cessationist theology and the careful examination of the controversial gifts (Unit 8); and the Spirit’s corporate ministry as the Builder, Bond, Power, and Presence of the church, through the Word in inspiration and illumination, and in the double intercession of prayer (Unit 9). All of this now converges in the series’ final lesson, which addresses the most immediately personal and the most practically daily question that all of this doctrine finally reaches: what does it look like, in the ordinary rhythms of an ordinary day, to walk in the power of the Third Person?

Lesson 28 is the capstone and conclusion of the entire series, and it is deliberately structured as a descent from the heights of theological reflection to the plain of daily life. The grand architecture of pneumatology, the procession of the Spirit from the Father and the Son, the Spirit’s cosmic work in creation and in the consummation of redemptive history, the Spirit’s once-for-all work of inspiration and the glorious reality of the double intercession, finds its intended outcome not in the academy’s applause but in the ordinary believer who rises in the morning and faces an ordinary day with the conscious, dependent, grateful awareness that the Third Person of the Holy Trinity has taken up residence within him and is willing, able, and committed to enabling his faithful walk through everything that day will hold.

The central text of this lesson is Ephesians 5:18’s command: “Do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit.” The command’s Greek grammar, a present-tense passive imperative (plērouō), yields the single most practical and the most continuously applicable instruction in the entire New Testament’s pneumatological teaching: keep being filled. Not once-for-all, not as a dramatic second-stage spiritual experience, not reserved for the especially Spirit-gifted or the exceptionally surrendered, but continuously, habitually, daily, moment by moment, keep being filled with the Spirit who has already taken up permanent residence within you and who is actively willing to fill you with His own presence, power, and character.

This final lesson will examine the Ephesians 5:18 command and its aftermath in verses 19–21 (what the Spirit-filled life looks like from the outside); the Colossians 3:16 parallel that equates being filled with the Spirit with letting the word of Christ richly dwell within (establishing the Spirit-Word relationship as the mechanism of the filling); walking by the Spirit (Galatians 5:16–25) and being led by the Spirit (Romans 8:14) as the daily pneumatological orientation; the eschatological Spirit as firstfruits and pledge of the glory to come; the grieving of the Spirit (Ephesians 4:30) and the quenching of the Spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:19) as the two New

Testament warnings about the believer's pneumatological responsibility; and a closing meditation on what the Spirit-filled life actually is, not a life of sensational experiences but a life of quiet, persistent, Word-saturated, Christ-exalting faithfulness in the ordinary rhythms of work, worship, family, and fellowship.

I. The Command to Be Filled

Ephesians 5:18, The Present Imperative That Governs the Spirit-Filled Life

Ephesians 5:18 is the New Testament's most direct and most practically governed command about the believer's pneumatological responsibility: "And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit" (NASB 1995). The command's grammar requires careful exposition because its grammatical features are its theological content. The verb *plērouō* (be filled) is a present-tense imperative: it commands an action that is continuous and ongoing rather than once-for-all. The passive voice indicates that the filling is something received rather than achieved: the Spirit fills the believer; the believer does not fill himself with the Spirit. And the imperative mood establishes that the filling is commanded, it is the believer's responsibility to seek, receive, and maintain the filling rather than to treat it as an optional spiritual enhancement.

The contrast with drunkenness is not incidental but theologically illuminating. Paul draws the contrast to capture an experience of external influence that produces a change in behavior, disposition, and speech that the person would not produce from his own natural resources. The drunk person speaks, walks, and behaves differently from his sober self because an external substance has altered his state. The Spirit-filled believer similarly speaks, walks, and behaves differently from the person he would be in his own natural resources, but the external influence is the Third Person of the Holy Trinity rather than an intoxicating substance, and the result is not dissolution but the whole range of Christ-reflecting character, speech, and behavior that Ephesians 5:19–21 immediately goes on to describe. The filling is a genuine transformation of the quality of the believer's life under the influence of the Spirit's own presence and power.

The present-tense character of the command establishes the most important practical truth about the Spirit-filled life: it is not a single, datable, once-for-all experience that is sought, achieved, and then maintained by periodic renewals. It is the continuous, habitual, moment-by-moment orientation of the believer toward the Spirit's filling, the daily, renewed, Spirit-dependent yielding that keeps the believer in the state of receptivity to the Spirit's filling rather than in the state of resistance, quenching, or grieving that interrupts the filling's continuity. To be filled with the Spirit is not the climax of the Christian life; it is the daily baseline of the Christian life, the state that the believer is consistently called to inhabit and consistently invited to return to when the filling is interrupted by sin, self-dependence, or spiritual carelessness.

II. What the Spirit-Filled Life Looks Like

Ephesians 5:19–21 and the Visible Outcomes of the Filling

One of the most corrective features of Ephesians 5:18–21 is the description of what the Spirit-filled life looks like. The popular Charismatic expectation of the Spirit-filled life is an expectation shaped primarily by extraordinary experiences: speaking in tongues, dramatic encounters with the divine presence, miraculous gifts, and emotional intensity in worship. Ephesians 5:19–21’s description of the Spirit-filled life is something altogether different: “speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ” (NASB 1995).

The Spirit-filled life, according to Ephesians 5:19–21, looks like: rich, Word-saturated mutual speech (speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, the community whose members address one another with the language of God’s own Word in its liturgical and devotional forms); genuine heart-worship (singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord, not merely external musical performance but the internal, deeply meant, Spirit-produced orientation of the whole person toward God in praise); universal thanksgiving (always giving thanks for all things, the Spirit’s fruit of joy and peace expressing itself in the habitual disposition of gratitude that persists through every circumstance, including those that seem to provide no obvious occasion for thanks); and mutual submission (be subject to one another in the fear of Christ, the Spirit-produced humility and servant-orientation that considers others’ interests above one’s own, in every relationship of the community’s life).

These four outcomes are not spectacular by the world’s standard or by the popular religious standard. They are the quiet, daily, relational, community-expressed signs of a life that is genuinely being continuously filled with the Spirit’s own presence and character. The community that speaks to one another in the language of the Psalms; that sings with the heart rather than merely performing for observers; that gives thanks for all things rather than only for the pleasant things; and that submits to one another in the genuine, others-oriented humility of one who fears Christ more than she fears losing status, that community is the Spirit-filled community of Ephesians 5, and it is far more demanding, far more genuinely pneumatological, and far more countercultural than any community defined by the spectacular gifts.

III. The Spirit-Word Parallel: Ephesians 5:18 and Colossians 3:16

Being Filled with the Spirit Means Being Filled with the Word

One of the most theologically illuminating connections in the entire New Testament’s pneumatological teaching is the parallel between Ephesians 5:18–21 and Colossians 3:16–17. Comparing the two passages reveals that the outcomes described in each are essentially identical, and that the agent producing those outcomes in each is described differently: in Ephesians 5:18–21, the outcomes follow from being filled with the Spirit; in Colossians 3:16–17, the same outcomes follow from letting the word of Christ richly dwell within you.

Ephesians 5:19 (“speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs”) is paralleled by Colossians 3:16 (“with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with

psalms and hymns and spiritual songs”). Ephesians 5:19’s “singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord” is paralleled by Colossians 3:16’s “singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.” Ephesians 5:20’s “always giving thanks for all things” is paralleled by Colossians 3:17’s “giving thanks through Him to God the Father.” The results of the two commands are verbally and structurally identical; the only difference is that Ephesians 5:18 attributes the results to the Spirit’s filling while Colossians 3:16 attributes them to the Word of Christ’s richly dwelling.

The pneumatological and theological conclusion is direct and decisive: being filled with the Spirit and being filled with the Word of Christ are not two different spiritual disciplines producing two different sets of results; they are the same spiritual reality described from two different angles. The Spirit fills through the Word; the Word is the Spirit’s primary instrument of the filling. The believer who is daily, richly, deeply, and expectantly engaged with the Word of Christ, reading, studying, meditating, memorizing, and applying the completed Scripture that the Spirit has inspired and illuminates, is the believer who is most fully in the context of the Spirit’s filling. And the believer who is most continuously filled with the Spirit is the believer whose inner life is most richly saturated with the Word that the Spirit uses to fill.

This Ephesians 5:18 / Colossians 3:16 parallel is the clearest possible New Testament statement of the cessationist principle that Lesson 26 established as the conclusion of the Spirit-Word relationship: the Spirit’s present ministry is through the Word, not alongside or beyond it. The mechanism of the Spirit-filled life is not the seeking of spectacular pneumatological experiences that supplement or transcend the Word; it is the progressive, daily, habitual saturation of the mind and heart with the Word that the Spirit produced and that the Spirit uses to fill the believer with His own presence, character, and power.

“Be filled with the Spirit” | “Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you” | “Walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh”

Ephesians 5:18; Colossians 3:16; Galatians 5:16, NASB 1995

IV. Walking by the Spirit and Being Led by the Spirit

The Daily Pneumatological Orientation

A. Walking by the Spirit: Galatians 5:16–25

Galatians 5:16’s command to “walk by the Spirit” (pneumati peripateite, walk in the sphere and power of the Spirit) is the New Testament’s most comprehensive description of the daily pneumatological orientation that produces the Spirit-filled life. The verse’s promise is immediate and unconditional: “Walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.” Not “try harder to resist the flesh”; not “list and memorize the flesh’s specific temptations”; not “pursue a program of behavioral modification”. Walk by the Spirit, and the Spirit’s own power will prevent the flesh’s desire from being carried out.

The metaphor of walking captures the ordinary, daily, step-by-step character of the Spirit-filled life. Walking is the most commonplace form of human locomotion, it is what one does to get

from one place to another in the ordinary circumstances of daily life. Walking by the Spirit is not the extraordinary pneumatological experience of the mystic or the revivalist; it is the ordinary, daily, step-by-step engagement with the Spirit's direction, empowerment, and presence in every circumstance of the believer's regular life. It is the prayer before the difficult conversation, the Spirit-dependent dependence in the moment of temptation, the gratitude that acknowledges the Spirit's provision in the ordinary gift of an ordinary day. It is the Spirit-filled life expressed in the quotidian rhythms of ordinary faithfulness.

Galatians 5:25 adds the indicative that grounds the imperative: "If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit." The believer who has received new life through the Spirit's regenerating work (Lesson 11) has the pneumatological ground for walking by the Spirit's direction: the Spirit who gave life is the Spirit who is now to direct and empower the living. The already-given life in the Spirit is the indicative that calls for the daily, step-by-step walking in the Spirit's direction, the same pattern of indicative grounding imperative that Paul consistently employs throughout his ethics.

B. Being Led by the Spirit: Romans 8:14

Romans 8:14 provides the adoption-grounded version of the Spirit-led life: "For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God" (NASB 1995). The being led by the Spirit is presented not as an occasional, dramatic, supernaturally specific divine communication but as the characteristic, consistent, ongoing experience of the adopted children of God, the normal mode of the Spirit-filled life in the community of the new creation. All who are sons of God are being led by the Spirit; the Spirit-led life is the adopted life, the regenerate life, the Spirit-indwelt life in its full, daily, ongoing expression.

The Spirit's leading in the present age is primarily the Spirit's leading through the Word (Lesson 26's illuminating ministry), through the sanctified conscience that the Spirit has formed by the Word, through the counsel of the Spirit-gifted community, and through the circumstances of God's sovereign providence. This is not a reduction of the Spirit's leading to the merely human and ordinary; it is the recognition that the Spirit's leading operates through the specific means He has ordained for the present age, and that the believer who is most attentive to these ordinary means of the Spirit's direction is the believer who is most genuinely being led by the Spirit. The hunger for dramatic, immediate, miraculous divine guidance that bypasses the Word, the community, and the providence often reflects an impatience with the ordinary means through which the Spirit chooses to lead rather than a deeper spirituality.

V. The Eschatological Spirit: Firstfruits and Pledge

The Spirit as the Down Payment of Glory

The Spirit-filled life is lived between two eschatological realities: the already of the Spirit's present gift and the not-yet of the consummation toward which the Spirit is leading the whole creation. Romans 8:23 identifies the Spirit as the firstfruits of the coming harvest: "even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body", and the Spirit is the firstfruits ("we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit")

of the eschatological harvest that the creation's full redemption will bring. Ephesians 1:13–14 identifies the Spirit as the pledge (arrabōn, down payment, earnest money, the legal guarantee of the full payment to come): the Spirit given now as “a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.”

The eschatological character of the Spirit's presence means that every experience of the Spirit's filling, every act of genuine worship, every expression of the Spirit's fruit, every exercise of the continuing gifts for the common good, every pneumatological reality of the present Christian life, is a foretaste and a guarantee of the eschatological fullness that the Spirit's work is heading toward. The joy that the Spirit produces as His fruit is a genuine, real, Spirit-produced joy; but it is also a down payment on the eschatological joy of the new creation. The love that the Spirit pours into the believer's heart (Romans 5:5) is genuine, transforming, Christ-reflecting love; but it is also the firstfruits of the eschatological love that will characterize the community of the new humanity in the new creation. The Spirit's present gifts are real gifts of real grace; and they are signs pointing toward and guaranteeing the fullness that the Spirit's final work will bring.

This eschatological horizon of the Spirit-filled life is both the most theologically profound and the most practically orienting reality of the entire pneumatological vision. The believer who walks by the Spirit in the ordinary day does so with the awareness that every step of that ordinary walk is a step on the road that leads to the consummation of everything the Spirit has been working toward since He hovered over the face of the deep: the fully renewed creation, the perfectly glorified people of God, the eschatological fullness of the divine presence in the world that God has always intended to inhabit in the person of His people. The Spirit-filled life is not its own goal; it is the road toward the glory that the Spirit Himself is the pledge of reaching.

VI. The Grieving and the Quenching of the Spirit

The Believer's Pneumatological Responsibility

The New Testament's two warnings about the believer's interference with the Spirit's work are among the most pastorally searching statements in the entire series. Ephesians 4:30 commands: “Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.” And 1 Thessalonians 5:19 commands: “Do not quench the Spirit.” Together, these two warnings establish the believer's pneumatological responsibility with a specificity and a seriousness that the Spirit-filled life's positive commands alone do not provide.

The grieving of the Spirit (Ephesians 4:30) is the Spirit's response to sin in the believer's life, described in terms that reveal the depth of the Spirit's personal investment in the believer's holiness. The Spirit can be grieved because He is a Person, not a force, not a power, not an impersonal divine energy, but the Third Person of the Trinity who has taken up permanent residence within the believer and who cares about the believer's character with the intensity and the personal involvement that the word “grieve” describes. The Spirit grieves because the sin that the believer commits is an offense against the One who dwells within him and who has been working to conform him to the image of Christ. The context of Ephesians 4:30, which concerns specifically the sins of unwholesome speech, bitterness, wrath, clamor, slander, and malice (vv. 29–31), establishes that the Spirit is most grieved by the relational and

communicative sins that most directly damage the community's unity and most directly contradict the love that is the Spirit's own first fruit.

The quenching of the Spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:19) is the suppression, the stifling, or the resistance of the Spirit's own active work in the community's life. In its immediate context (1 Thessalonians 5:19–22, “Do not quench the Spirit; do not despise prophetic utterances. But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil”), the quenching appears to refer specifically to the suppression of the Spirit's gifted ministry in the community through excessive skepticism or institutional control. More broadly, quenching the Spirit describes the believer's or the community's active resistance to the Spirit's work through unbelief, disobedience, spiritual complacency, or the substitution of institutional process for Spirit-dependent engagement with the means of grace.

The pastoral challenge of the two warnings is the pastoral challenge of the entire Spirit-filled life: the believer and the community are always either cooperating with the Spirit's filling or resisting it. There is no neutral ground. The sin that grieves the Spirit and the complacency that quenches the Spirit are both forms of the same fundamental pneumatological failure: the failure to take seriously the presence of the Person who has taken up residence within the community and who is actively working to fill, to sanctify, to empower, and to equip. The Spirit-sensitive life is the life that is alert to both the sin that grieves and the complacency that quenches, and that responds to both with the prompt repentance, the earnest return to the means of grace, and the renewed, Spirit-dependent seeking of the filling that Ephesians 5:18's continuous imperative commands.

VII. A Closing Meditation on the Spirit-Filled Life

Quiet, Persistent, Word-Saturated, Christ-Exalting Faithfulness

The Spirit-filled life is not what the popular imagination, shaped by a century of Pentecostal and Charismatic expectation, has portrayed it to be. It is not the life of perpetual spiritual excitement, of regular extraordinary experiences, of unmistakable divine interventions that punctuate the ordinary days with the extraordinary signature of God's spectacular presence. It is not the two-tier life of a spiritual elite who have entered a second, higher stage of pneumatological experience while leaving the ordinarily regenerate believer behind in the ordinary first-stage experience of Christian life. It is not the life that can be reliably identified by the presence of specific spiritual gifts, specific emotional states, or specific pneumatological experiences.

The Spirit-filled life is a life of quiet faithfulness. It is the life of the believer who opens the Bible in the morning with the Psalm 119:18 prayer, “Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Your law”, and who expects the Spirit who produced the text to illumine it for the day ahead. It is the life of the believer who carries the weight of Romans 8:26's assurance into the moments when prayer fails to find words: the Spirit is already praying. It is the life of the believer who mortifies the specific sin that Romans 8:13 calls her to put to death, not by willpower but by the Spirit's power, from the gospel's position of forensic victory, through the means of grace the Spirit has ordained. It is the life of the believer who exercises her specific

spiritual gift in the service of the community's edification with the faithful, grateful, other-directed stewardship that 1 Peter 4:10 commands.

It is the life of the believer who raises children to know the Word and to love the God who gave it; who works at his vocation with the integrity and the diligence that the Spirit's sanctifying work is producing in him; who serves the sick and the suffering in his community with the cheerful mercy that the Spirit's gift enables; who sits in the congregation week after week, receiving the apostles' teaching and the breaking of bread and the prayers, and whose faithful, unremarkable presence is itself the Spirit's temple in assembly. The Spirit-filled life is the life that looks, from the outside, most unremarkable, and that is, from the inside, the most profoundly pneumatological life available to a human being in the present age: the life of one who is continuously indwelt, continuously sealed, continuously sanctified, continuously gifted, continuously led, and continuously filled with the very presence of the Third Person of the Triune God.

And when this life reaches its eschatological completion, when the Spirit who is the firstfruits brings in the full harvest, when the Spirit who is the pledge delivers the promised inheritance, when the Spirit who has been conforming the believer to the image of Christ from glory to glory produces the final, eschatological, face-to-face glory of the new creation, then it will be fully clear what this series has been insisting from its first lesson: the Third Person of the Holy Trinity is not a supplemental religious experience or a secondary spiritual enhancement. He is the One in whom and through whom and by whom the entire life of the redeemed community is lived, from the first breath of regeneration to the last sigh of the mortal body that awaits its resurrection glory. He is the Spirit of the living God, the Spirit of Jesus Christ, the Spirit of adoption, the Spirit of truth, and to live in His fullness, in His ordinary, extraordinary, daily, eschatological power, is what it means to be a Christian.

*“Now to Him who is able to do
far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think,
according to the power that works within us,
to Him be the glory in the church
and in Christ Jesus to all generations
forever and ever. Amen.”*

Ephesians 3:20–21, NASB 1995

Theological Terms and Definitions

Term	Definition
Be Filled with the Spirit	The present-tense passive imperative of Ephesians 5:18 (plērouō, be filled, keep being filled). The grammatical features together constitute the key practical theology of the Spirit-filled life: present tense (continuous, ongoing, habitual, not a once-for-all event); passive voice (received rather than achieved, the Spirit fills; the believer does not fill himself); imperative mood (commanded, not optional, the believer's responsibility to seek and maintain the filling). The Spirit-filled life is the continuous baseline of the Christian life, not the climax of an exceptional spiritual experience; and the primary mechanism of the filling is the Spirit-Word parallel with Colossians 3:16: the Spirit fills through the Word of Christ richly dwelling within.
Spirit-Word Parallel	The theological conclusion drawn from comparing Ephesians 5:18–21 (outcomes of being filled with the Spirit) and Colossians 3:16–17 (identical outcomes of letting the word of Christ richly dwell within). The verbal and structural identity of the outcomes in both passages establishes that being filled with the Spirit and being filled with the Word of Christ are the same spiritual reality described from two angles: the Spirit fills through the Word; the Word is the Spirit's primary instrument of the filling. The cessationist implication: the mechanism of the Spirit-filled life is the progressive, daily saturation of the mind and heart with the inspired, illuminated Word, not the seeking of spectacular experiences that supplement the Word.
Walking by the Spirit	The ordinary, daily, step-by-step engagement with the Spirit's direction, empowerment, and presence in every circumstance of the believer's regular life, as commanded in Galatians 5:16 (pneumati peripateite, walk in the sphere and power of the Spirit). The walking metaphor captures the quotidian character of the Spirit-filled life: not the extraordinary experience of the mystic but the ordinary faithfulness of the believer who brings the Spirit's presence and power to every step of the ordinary day. The promise of verse 16: walk by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh, the Spirit's own power preventing the flesh's desire from being executed through the Spirit-directed walking.
Being Led by the Spirit	The characteristic ongoing experience of the adopted sons of God as described in Romans 8:14: "all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." The Spirit's leading is not reserved for occasional dramatic divine communications but is the normal mode of the Spirit-indwelt, adopted life. The Spirit leads primarily through the Word (illuminating what the already-inspired Scripture says), through the sanctified conscience formed by the Word, through the counsel of the Spirit-gifted community, and through the circumstances of God's sovereign providence. The believer

Term	Definition
	most attentive to these ordinary means of the Spirit's direction is the believer most genuinely being led by the Spirit.
Arrabōn	Greek: earnest money, down payment, pledge, the legal term for the initial payment that guarantees the full payment to come. Used in Ephesians 1:13–14 for the Spirit as the “pledge of our inheritance” and in 2 Corinthians 1:22 and 5:5 for the Spirit as the down payment that guarantees the eschatological body. The Spirit's presence now is not a substitute for the eschatological fullness but its guarantee: the same Spirit who fills the believer in the present age will bring to completion the full eschatological inheritance of which He is the firstfruits. Every pneumatological experience of the present age is both genuinely real and genuinely incomplete, the arrabōn of a fullness yet to be received.
Firstfruits	The Old Testament agricultural metaphor applied to the Spirit in Romans 8:23: “we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit.” The firstfruits are the initial portion of the harvest that both anticipates and guarantees the full harvest to come; the Spirit's presence now is the initial portion of the eschatological fullness of the divine presence that the new creation will bring. The Spirit-filled life in the present age is the foretaste of the eschatological life of the new creation: every experience of the Spirit's fruit, every act of genuine worship, every exercise of the gifts for the common good is a firstfruits experience, genuinely real, genuinely Spirit-produced, and genuinely anticipatory of the fullness that is not yet.
Grieving the Spirit	The Spirit's personal response to sin in the believer's life, commanded against in Ephesians 4:30: “Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.” The Spirit can be grieved because He is a Person (Third Person of the Trinity, not an impersonal force) with a genuine personal investment in the believer's holiness. The immediate context of Ephesians 4:30 (vv. 29–31) identifies the specific sins that most grieve the Spirit as relational and communicative: unwholesome speech, bitterness, wrath, clamor, slander, and malice, the sins that most directly damage the community's unity and most directly contradict the Spirit's own first fruit of love.
Quenching the Spirit	The suppression, stifling, or active resistance of the Spirit's work in the community's life, commanded against in 1 Thessalonians 5:19: “Do not quench the Spirit.” In the immediate context (vv. 19–22), quenching refers to the excessive skepticism or institutional control that suppresses the Spirit's gifted ministry; more broadly, any active resistance to the Spirit's work through unbelief, disobedience, spiritual complacency, or the substitution of institutional process for Spirit-dependent engagement with the means of grace. Distinct from grieving the Spirit (which involves specific sinful behaviors) as the more general suppression of the Spirit's active empowerment and direction.

Term	Definition
Quiet Faithful Life	The closing mediation's description of what the Spirit-filled life actually is: not perpetual spiritual excitement or regular extraordinary experiences, not the life of a spiritual elite who have entered a second higher stage, not a life identifiable primarily by specific gifts or emotional states, but the life of quiet, persistent, Word-saturated, Christ-exalting faithfulness in the ordinary rhythms of work, worship, family, and fellowship. The Spirit-filled life is the life of one who opens the Bible with the Psalm 119:18 prayer, who carries Romans 8:26's assurance into wordless moments, who mortifies sin by the Spirit's power, who exercises her gift in the community's service, continuously indwelt, continuously sealed, continuously sanctified, continuously filled with the Third Person of the Triune God.
Plērouō	Greek: to fill (present passive imperative in Ephesians 5:18). The full grammatical analysis of this single verb contains the complete practical theology of the Spirit-filled life: present tense (continuous, keep being filled, not a once-for-all event); passive voice (the Spirit fills the believer, the believer does not fill himself with the Spirit); imperative mood (the filling is commanded, the believer is responsible for seeking and maintaining it). The same verb is used in Ephesians 1:23 (Christ who fills all in all), 3:19 (filled up to all the fullness of God), and 4:10 (He who descended is also He who ascended... so that He might fill all things), establishing that the Spirit's filling is the Spirit's bringing of the fullness of Christ Himself into the believer's life.

Practical Application

A. For the Mind: *What Must We Believe?*

We must believe the Ephesians 5:18 grammar with practical specificity: the filling is continuous (not a dated experience to be remembered), passive (received, not achieved), and commanded (our responsibility, not an optional spiritual enhancement). These three grammatical features together address the three most common distortions of the Spirit-filled life. The once-for-all distortion (I had the experience of being filled at a particular moment and now I live from that moment's spiritual capital) is corrected by the present tense. The achievement distortion (I fill myself with the Spirit by sufficient spiritual effort, discipline, and earnestness) is corrected by the passive voice. The optional distortion (I can live the Christian life adequately without particularly seeking the Spirit's filling) is corrected by the imperative mood. The Spirit-filled life is the daily, received, commanded baseline of every genuine Christian's life.

We must also believe the Ephesians 5:18 / Colossians 3:16 parallel with its full cessationist weight: the Spirit fills through the Word. This is not a limitation on the Spirit's freedom; it is the Spirit's own design for the Spirit-filled life in the present age. The Spirit who inspired the Word, who illuminates the Word, who uses the Word as His primary sanctifying instrument (John 17:17), who fills through the Word-saturated soul, this Spirit has provided in the completed Scripture everything needed for the Spirit-filled life. The believer who is daily, richly, expectantly, and Spirit-dependently engaged with the completed Word is the believer who is most continuously in the context of the Spirit's filling. There is no shortcut, no spectacular alternative, no supplementary spiritual experience that produces the Spirit-filled life more effectively than the sustained, Spirit-opened engagement with the Spirit's own Word.

B. For the Heart: *What Must We Feel and Desire?*

Let the closing meditation of Section VII be received with the specific, personal, pastoral weight it is written to carry: the Spirit-filled life is the life you are already living, imperfectly and incompletely, in the ordinary rhythms of the ordinary day. The Third Person of the Holy Trinity has taken up permanent residence within you. He is at work in your specific relationships, your specific daily temptations, your specific spiritual disciplines, your specific gifts, your specific prayers, conforming you to the image of Christ from glory to glory, one ordinary day at a time. The Spirit-filled life is not a different, better, more spectacular life that is available to people who have achieved a level of spiritual experience you have not yet reached. It is this life, lived consciously and cooperatively in the power of the One who already indwells you.

Desire the sensitivity to the Spirit's person that Ephesians 4:30's warning about grieving and 1 Thessalonians 5:19's warning about quenching together call for. The Spirit-filled life is characterized by a specific, ongoing attentiveness to the presence of the One who dwells within, the alertness to the moments when sin is threatening to grieve the personal God who has made His home in the believer's soul; the alertness to the moments when the community's institutional tendency is threatening to suppress the Spirit's gifted, living, dynamic work in the

community's life. This sensitivity is not an anxious, Spirit-management spirituality; it is the natural attentiveness of love, the attentiveness of a person who cares deeply about the One who dwells within and who does not want to grieve Him or stifle His work.

C. For the Hands: *What Must We Do?*

- Read Ephesians 5:15–21 in its full context and trace the argument from “walk carefully, making the most of your time” (vv. 15–16) through “do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is” (v. 17) to “be filled with the Spirit” (v. 18) and its outcomes (vv. 19–21). What is the overall argument Paul is making about the Spirit-filled life in the context of the broader passage? And how does the contrast with drunkenness (v. 18a) illuminate not only the character of the Spirit's filling (it changes behavior through external influence) but also the danger of the unfilled alternative (dissipation, a characteristically unfocused, purposeless, self-dissipating life)?
- Compare Ephesians 5:18–21 and Colossians 3:16–17 side by side, matching each phrase from one passage to its parallel in the other. After completing the comparison, reflect on what the Spirit-Word parallel implies for your own devotional practice: if being filled with the Spirit and letting the Word of Christ richly dwell within you produce identical results, then your daily Word-engagement is your primary means of Spirit-filling. Evaluate the richness of your current Word engagement: not merely whether you read daily but whether the Word is richly dwelling, shaping your inner conversation, informing your affections, confronting your patterns of thought, and providing the specific pneumatological content through which the Spirit fills.
- Practice the Galatians 5:16 walking-by-the-Spirit orientation for one full week as a daily discipline: each morning, ask the Spirit to direct and empower the specific tasks, relationships, and challenges of the day ahead; at several points during the day, acknowledge the Spirit's presence and ask for His direction in the specific moment; at the end of each day, reflect on the moments when the Spirit's direction was followed and the moments when the flesh's desire was carried out instead. The goal is not self-assessment performance but the cultivation of the continuous Spirit-awareness that walking by the Spirit requires, the daily habit of looking to the Spirit for the direction and the power that the flesh cannot supply.
- Examine your own pneumatological life for the specific patterns that grieve or quench the Spirit. For grieving: identify the specific relational and communicative sins of Ephesians 4:29–31 (unwholesome speech, bitterness, wrath, clamor, slander, malice) that are most persistently present in your own patterns. For quenching: identify the specific forms of spiritual complacency, institutional over-control, or Word-replacement that are most characteristic of your community's pneumatological life. For each identified pattern, name the Spirit-dependent, means-of-grace-engaged, gospel-grounded response that the New Testament's own correction would prescribe.
- As the final act of this entire Pneumatology series, write a brief personal statement, not for anyone else but for yourself, of what the Holy Spirit means to you: what the doctrine of the Third Person has meant for your theology, your prayer, your sanctification, your community, your ministry, and your eschatological hope. Draw on the content of all

twenty-eight lessons, but let the statement be personal rather than merely doctrinal: how has the doctrine of the Holy Spirit changed, deepened, or confirmed your understanding of what it means to be a Christian who is indwelt, sealed, sanctified, gifted, led, and filled by the Third Person of the Holy Trinity? End the statement with the doxological word that ends every genuine pneumatological reflection: Soli Deo Gloria.

Study and Discussion Questions

Opening Question

1. Having studied twenty-eight lessons on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, what single insight, conviction, or truth from this series has most significantly changed or deepened your understanding of the Christian life? Not the most dramatic or the most controversial lesson, but the one truth that has most genuinely altered the way you think about being a Christian in the power of the Third Person.

Observation Questions (What Do the Texts Say?)

2. Read Ephesians 5:15–21. Paul’s command to “be filled with the Spirit” (v. 18) is immediately followed by four participial phrases that describe the Spirit-filled person’s characteristic activities: speaking to one another (v. 19a), singing to the Lord (v. 19b), always giving thanks (v. 20), and submitting to one another (v. 21). What is the grammatical relationship between the imperative “be filled” and the four participles, do the participles describe the means of being filled, the result of being filled, or both? And what is the significance of the communal character of three of the four outcomes (speaking to one another, giving thanks with others, submitting to one another)?
3. Read Colossians 3:15–17 and Ephesians 5:18–21 side by side. Identify every verbal and structural parallel between the two passages. Then note the key difference: Colossians 3:16 grounds the outcomes in “let the word of Christ richly dwell within you” while Ephesians 5:18 grounds the same outcomes in “be filled with the Spirit.” What are the theological implications of this parallel for understanding the relationship between the Spirit and the Word in the Spirit-filled life?
4. Read Galatians 5:16–25. Note the three pneumatological commands in the passage: walk by the Spirit (v. 16), be led by the Spirit (v. 18), and live by the Spirit (v. 25). What does each command add to the picture of the Spirit-filled life? And in verse 25, Paul uses a different Greek word for “walk” than in verse 16: verse 16 uses *peripateite* (the ordinary walking of daily life) while verse 25 uses *stoichōmen* (to walk in line, to keep step with). What does the change of vocabulary suggest about the relationship between the believer’s Spirit-filled life and the Spirit’s own ordering and direction?
5. Read Romans 8:12–17. Paul describes the Spirit-led life (v. 14) in the context of both the obligation to mortify the deeds of the body (v. 13) and the gift of the spirit of adoption (vv. 15–16). How do mortification (the negative, sin-killing work) and adoption (the positive, filial relationship) together define the Spirit-led life? Is the Spirit-led life primarily a life of overcoming sin (v. 13–14) or a life of intimate sonship with the Father (vv. 15–16), or are these two dimensions inseparable?

6. Read Ephesians 4:25–32 as the full context of the “do not grieve the Spirit” command (v. 30). The command appears embedded within a list of specific behavioral instructions about speech (v. 25, 29), anger (v. 26–27), work and giving (v. 28), and relational attitude (vv. 31–32). Why does Paul connect these specific behavioral instructions to the command not to grieve the Spirit? What does the specific context reveal about which kinds of sin most directly grieve the Spirit, and why those kinds of sin specifically?

Interpretation Questions (What Does It Mean?)

7. The Ephesians 5:18 / Colossians 3:16 parallel suggests that the Spirit fills through the Word. But the passive voice of Ephesians 5:18 (“be filled”) indicates that the filling is something the Spirit does to the believer, not something the believer does to herself by reading the Bible. How do the agency of the Spirit (who fills) and the instrumentality of the Word (through which the Spirit fills) and the believer’s responsibility (who must engage the Word and yield to the Spirit) all relate to one another in the mechanics of the Spirit-filling? Is the Word-engagement the condition of the filling, the means of the filling, or the context of the filling?
8. The lesson presents the Spirit-filled life as “a life of quiet, persistent, Word-saturated, Christ-exalting faithfulness” rather than a life of sensational experiences. The Charismatic response would be that this description of the Spirit-filled life is unacceptably domesticated, that the Spirit’s work in Acts was far more spectacular than this, and that the quiet, ordinary Christian life of the cessationist tradition is a cultural accommodation to the Western rationalism that has made the Spirit’s extraordinary work unwelcome. How does the cessationist respond to this charge? Is the “quiet faithfulness” description of the Spirit-filled life a biblical vision or a cultural concession?
9. The lesson presents the Spirit as the *arrabōn* (pledge) and firstfruits of the eschatological fullness to come. This eschatological framing establishes that every present pneumatological experience is both genuinely real and genuinely incomplete. How does this eschatological tension affect the way the believer evaluates her current pneumatological experience? Does the “still incomplete” character of the present filling produce dissatisfaction with what the Spirit is doing now, or does it produce grateful anticipation of what is yet to come? And how does the eschatological framing guard against both premature satisfaction with the present (as if the Spirit’s fullness were already complete) and spiritual restlessness that cannot accept the ordinary because it is expecting the eschatological?
10. The warning not to grieve the Spirit (Ephesians 4:30) implies that the Spirit is personally affected by the believer’s sin, that He is a Person who can be grieved. This is one of the most direct New Testament affirmations of the Spirit’s full personality and personhood (Units 1–2 established this theologically from John 14–16). What pastoral implications does the Spirit’s grievability have for the believer’s approach to sin? Does the awareness that specific sins grieve the specific Person who indwells you change your relationship to

those sins, does it make them more personally offensive in a way that mere law-violation does not?

11. The series has used the Ephesians 5:18 / Colossians 3:16 parallel to establish the Spirit-Word relationship as the mechanism of the Spirit-filling. But some interpreters have argued that the parallel proves too much: that it makes the Spirit's work merely the Word's work, collapsing the Spirit into the Word and eliminating the personal distinctness of the Spirit's ministry. Is the Spirit-Word parallel in danger of this collapse? How does the cessationist maintain both the Spirit's direct personal agency in the filling and the Word's instrumental role as the Spirit's means?

Application Questions (What Does It Demand of Us?)

12. The series has now covered twenty-eight lessons of Pneumatology. Looking back across the entire series, identify the three most practically significant doctrinal convictions you have either developed or strengthened through this study. For each conviction, state: (1) what the conviction is; (2) what specific text or argument established it; (3) how it has already changed or is currently changing a specific practice in your spiritual life, your ministry, or your community's life.
13. The lesson proposes examining your pneumatological life for the patterns that grieve or quench the Spirit. Having completed this examination honestly, which is the more urgent issue for you personally: the specific sinful patterns (particularly relational and communicative) that grieve the Spirit, or the patterns of spiritual complacency and institutional substitution that quench the Spirit's gifted and living work? What is the single most important repentance, the single most important return to the means of grace, or the single most important pneumatological reorientation that this examination is calling you to?
14. The final application point asks for a personal statement of what the Holy Spirit means to you, drawing on all twenty-eight lessons. Having written (or begun) this statement, read it aloud to someone who has studied this series with you. What did the act of writing it reveal about which aspects of the series had most deeply lodged in your understanding and which had remained more informational? And what aspect of the Spirit's person and work that you understood before this series do you now understand differently, more deeply, or with greater pastoral urgency?
15. The series closes with the doxology of Ephesians 3:20–21: "Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen." The power that works within us is the Holy Spirit. What specific dimension of the Spirit's work in your life and in your community does Ephesians 3:20's "far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think" most directly address? In what specific area of your pneumatological life or your community's pneumatological health are you most in need of the Spirit's "far more abundantly beyond" working, and what would it look like to ask for it?

Prayer Focus

This is the final prayer of the final lesson of the Pneumatology series, and it should be conducted with the full weight of everything that twenty-eight lessons have established about who the Spirit is and what He does. Open the prayer with a reading of John 16:13–15, the series verse, which has appeared at the head of every lesson. Let it come to rest now with the full depth that twenty-seven lessons have given it: “But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you.” The Spirit of truth, who guided the apostolic community into all the truth through inspiration, who continues to guide every believer into the truth through illumination, who glorifies Christ by disclosing the things of Christ, this is the One whose presence, ministry, and power the entire series has been examining. Let the reading be slow, reverent, and grateful.

Begin the corporate prayer with the most comprehensive act of gratitude that twenty-eight lessons of Pneumatology can inspire. Thank the Spirit for His personality, for not being an impersonal force or divine energy but the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, with a face toward the Father and toward the Son and now toward the people He has made His dwelling. Thank Him for His work in creation (hovering over the deep), in the old covenant (speaking through the prophets, empowering the judges, filling the craftsmen), in Christ’s birth, anointing, ministry, death, and resurrection. Thank Him for the great Pentecost outpouring that fulfilled the ancient promise and inaugurated the New Covenant era of the Spirit’s fullness. Thank Him for every dimension of His work in the individual believer, for regeneration, for indwelling, for sealing, for Spirit-baptism, for sanctification, for the fruit, for the gifts. Thank Him for His corporate work in the church, for building it as His temple, for maintaining its unity, for empowering its mission, for animating its worship, for inspiring and illuminating its Scripture, for interceding through its prayers. Twenty-eight reasons to give thanks. Take the time they deserve.

Pray then the Ephesians 5:18 prayer for the gathered community: “Be filled, keep being filled, with the Spirit.” Pray it as the continuous, daily, communal petition that the grammar commands: not once for all but continuously, not achieved by effort but received in yielding, not optional but urgently necessary for the faithful, fruitful, Christ-exalting life that the Spirit intends for this community. Pray for the Word to dwell richly within each member and within the community as a whole, for the daily, expectant, Spirit-opened engagement with the completed Scripture through which the Spirit fills the yielded soul. Pray for the specific outcomes of Ephesians 5:19–21: for speech that builds up with the language of God’s own Word; for worship that makes melody from the heart rather than performing for observers; for the grateful disposition that gives thanks for all things; and for the Spirit-produced mutual submission that expresses the love that is the Spirit’s own first fruit.

Close the series with the doxology that the series has been building toward since its first lesson: Ephesians 3:20–21. Read it aloud, together, slowly, as the final pneumatological act of the entire Pneumatology curriculum: “Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.” The power that works within us is the Spirit, the Spirit of the living God, who indwells, seals, sanctifies, gifts, leads, illuminates, intercedes, fills. He is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think. He has been doing it for two thousand years in the church He is building. He will continue doing it until the day when the firstfruits delivers the full harvest, the *arrabōn* delivers the full inheritance, and the Spirit who has been conforming the believer to the image of Christ from glory to glory delivers the believer to the final glory of the new creation. To Him be the glory, in the church and in Christ Jesus, to all generations, forever and ever. Amen. *Soli Deo Gloria*.

*“Walk by the Spirit,
and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.
For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit,
and the Spirit against the flesh...
But if you are led by the Spirit,
you are not under the Law.”*

Galatians 5:16–18, NASB 1995

Key Texts: *Ephesians 5:15–21; 3:20–21; 4:25–32; Colossians 3:15–17; Galatians 5:16–25; Romans 8:12–17, 23; 5:5; Ephesians 1:13–14; 1 Thessalonians 5:19–22; Psalm 119:18; John 16:13–15; 2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5*

Series Conclusion

Systematic Theology: Pneumatology

28 Lessons Completed

10 Units | The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit

From the Spirit's Person and Procession to the Spirit-Filled Life

*“Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all
that we ask or think,
according to the power that works within us,
to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus
to all generations forever and ever. Amen.”*

Ephesians 3:20–21, NASB 1995

Soli Deo Gloria

To God Alone Be the Glory

FAITHFUL TO THE WORD

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