

darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. (Eph 6:12)

A foolish person neglects to prepare for what he or she knows is an inevitability. Even as a soldier prepares for the battle realizing that if he goes into the battle unprepared, he will be defeated, so the believer in Yeshua must recognize that we are in a spiritual battle, and that we have been given the victory if we but utilize all that God has given us in order to overcome the enemy and to be victorious for our Lord.

Paul instructs us to “understand what the will of the Lord is.” His words here make it clear that the will of the Lord is not “hidden” but is available to those who are His. This is because He has given us His word by which we may know His divine principles and by the power of His Spirit, we may apply these to every situation we face in life. This does not mean that we instantly are taken out of the battle! But what it does mean is that we may be assured that we will be victorious in the battle as we make the Lord’s will our delight.

He whose “delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates in it day and night,” (Psalm 1:2,) will triumph over every obstacle which Satan can oppose to his progress. Whence comes it that some wander, others fall, others strike against a rock, others go away, — but because we allow ourselves to be gradually blinded by Satan, and lose sight of the will of God, which we ought constantly to remember? And observe, that Paul defines wisdom to be, understanding what the will of the Lord is. “How shall a young man,” says David, “direct his way? By attending to thy word, O Lord.” (Psalm 119:9) He speaks of youths, but it is the same wisdom which belongs to old men.¹

18 – And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit,

The sentence begins with the conjunction “And” (*καί, kai*) linking it to the previous verse and Paul’s admonition to be wise by knowing the will of the Lord and being obedient to Him in all aspects of life. The connection is therefore obvious: to be “foolish” (*ἄφρων, aphrōn*) is to give over the ability to be in control of one’s thoughts and actions by becoming inebriated with alcohol.

¹ Calvin, *Ephesians*, p. 314-15.

Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, and whoever is intoxicated by it is not wise. (Prov 20:1).¹

The sudden reference to and prohibition of drunkenness has been explained several ways by commentators. It may have been that acute alcohol problems existed within the communities of the way and thus Paul chose this context of his epistle to address it. Another possible reference to alcoholism may have come from the fact that in the Dionysos cult, inebriation was practiced as a way to increase unity with the “divine world,” and this same notion, that one could escape the mundane world and ascend into the “unseen” world through inebriation, was common among the later Gnostic mystery rites as well. Likewise, the Feast of Bacchus, “god of wine, freedom, intoxication and ecstasy,” was marked by drunkenness.² We thus see that there was both a “religious” aspect of intoxication among the pagan religions of ancient Rome, as well as a cultural aspect in terms of a yearly festival.

Obviously what Paul warns against in this context is drunkenness, but in doing so he is not prohibiting the proper use of wine or beverages containing alcohol but rather its misuse which results in becoming intoxicated.

Whether it was because drunkenness was a known problem among the communities to which he is writing this epistle, or simply if the state of intoxication offered a clear and obvious example of being foolish rather than wise, makes little difference. For his words make it amply clear that to allow oneself to become drunk is sinful behavior and contrary to all that should characterize the life of a believer in Yeshua.

do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation – “Dissipation” translates the Greek word *ἀσωτία* (*asōtia*) which generally carries the sense of “reckless abandon, debauchery, dissipation.”³ The adverbial form of *asōtia*, i.e., *ἀσώτως* (*asōtōs*) describes the “loose living” by which the prodigal son “squandered his estate” (Lk 15:13). In the Apostolic Scriptures, the word pictures someone acting in ways that are clearly without value and contrary to a life of righteousness which is marked by obedience to God and an ongoing desire to become more and more like Yeshua.

1 Cf. Prov 23:31–32; Rom 13:13; 1Cor 5:11; 1Thess 5:7.

2 Marcus Barth, *Ephesians* 4–6, p. 581; Thielmann, *Ephesians*, p. 357.

3 *BDAG*, “*ἀσωτία*,” p. 148. The Greek word *asōtia* is found two other times in the Apostolic Scriptures: Tit 1:6; 1Pet 4:4.

but be filled with the Spirit. – In parallel to the opening phrase of our verse in which a negative command is given, i.e., “do not get drunk with wine,” in this concluding phrase a positive command is given “to be filled with the Spirit.” Often in our modern world, people have understood this verse in this way: even as someone who is intoxicated has filled himself with wine and thus is controlled by the wine they have imbibed, so we as believers are to be filled with the Spirit and controlled by Him. While not often explicitly stated, the general idea of some is that “to be filled with the Spirit” means to be given more of the Spirit, that is, more power, ability, and spiritual strength than one currently possesses.

The immediate question which confronts us is how we, as believers in Yeshua, are to obey this command. What does it mean to be “filled with the Spirit,” and what part does the believer in Yeshua play in being “filled with the Spirit”? Is the believer passive, simply waiting for the Spirit to give new, spiritual enablement or is there something the believer must do in cooperation with the Spirit?

It will be important for us to look more closely at the Greek of our phrase, “be filled with the Spirit,” *πληροῦσθε ἐν πνεύματι*. The verb *plērousthe* (“be filled”) is a plural imperative, i.e., a command to everyone, which is followed by the preposition *en*, “in” and the noun *pneumati*, “Spirit” in the dative case.¹ Note that the article “the” is not actually in the Greek, but in the context it seems clear that Paul is referencing the Ruach HaKodesh, the Holy Spirit. The use of *en*, “in” followed by the dative *pneumati*, “Spirit,” can be understood two ways: (1) either the Spirit is the *means* by Whom the believer is “filled” or (2) the Spirit describes the *sphere* or *realm* in which the believer is being filled.

In order to understand more fully Paul’s words in this phrase, we will survey other places in the Bible where the terminology “filled with the Spirit” is used. After analyzing these texts, we will seek to understand how they help us interpret and thus to obey this scriptural command in our Ephesians text.

1 The dative case in biblical Greek is often used with certain prepositions to denote the indirect object of a transitive verb. Such usage can denote the place or sphere where the action takes place, or the means by which the action is accomplished.

Excursus: Be Filled with the Spirit

Scripture	Greek	Comments
Exod 31:3 “ <u>I have filled him with the Spirit of God</u> in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all kinds of craftsmanship,	καὶ ἐνέπλησα αὐτὸν πνεῦμα θεῖον	Verb is ἐμπίπλημι (<i>emprīplēmi</i>) πνεῦμα θεῖον (Lxx) is in the <u>accusative</u> .
Exod 35:31 “And He <u>has filled him with the Spirit of God</u> , in wisdom, in understanding and in knowledge and in all craftsmanship;	καὶ ἐνέπλησεν αὐτὸν πνεῦμα θεῖον	Verb is ἐμπίπλημι (<i>emprīplēmi</i>) πνεῦμα θεῖον (Lxx) is in the <u>accusative</u> .
Mic 3:8 On the other hand I am <u>filled with power</u> — <u>With the Spirit of the LORD</u> — and with justice and courage to make known to Jacob his rebellious act, even to Israel his sin.	ἐγὼ ἐμπλήσω ἰσχύον ἐν πνεύματι κυρίου	כִּלְיָהּ - Qal (“to be filled”) כִּי = prep. (not sign of the direct object). Verb is ἐμπίπλημι (<i>emprīplēmi</i>) followed by ἐν + <u>dative</u>
Luke 1:15 “For he will be great in the sight of the Lord; and he will drink no wine or liquor, and he <u>will be filled with the Holy Spirit</u> while yet in his mother’s womb.	καὶ πνεύματος ἁγίου πλησθήσεται	πίμπλημι, <i>rimprlēmi</i> [passive part.] + <u>genitive</u>
Luke 1:41 When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was <u>filled with the Holy Spirit</u> .	ἐπλήσθη πνεύματος ἁγίου	πίμπλημι, <i>rimprlēmi</i> [aorist passive] + <u>genitive</u>
Luke 1:67 And his father Zacharias was <u>filled with the Holy Spirit</u> , and prophesied, saying:	ἐπλήσθη πνεύματος ἁγίου	πίμπλημι, <i>rimprlēmi</i> [aorist passive] + <u>genitive</u>

Scripture	Greek	Comments
Acts 2:4 And they were all <u>filled with the Holy Spirit</u> and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.	καὶ ἐπλήσθησαν πάντες πνεύματος ἁγίου	πίμπλημι, <i>rimplēmi</i> [aorist passive] + <u>genitive</u>
Acts 4:8 Then Peter, <u>filled with the Holy Spirit</u> , said to them, "Rulers and elders of the people,	πλησθεὶς πνεύματος ἁγίου	πίμπλημι, <i>rimplēmi</i> [aorist passive] + <u>genitive</u>
Acts 4:31 And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all <u>filled with the Holy Spirit</u> and began to speak the word of God with boldness.	πλήσθησαν ἅπαντες τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος	πίμπλημι, <i>rimplēmi</i> [aorist passive] + <u>genitive</u>
Acts 9:17 So Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Yeshua, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be <u>filled with the Holy Spirit</u> ."	καὶ πλησθῆς πνεύματος ἁγίου.	πίμπλημι, <i>rimplēmi</i> [aorist passive] + <u>genitive</u>
Acts 13:9 But Saul, who was also known as Paul, <u>filled with the Holy Spirit</u> , fixed his gaze on him,	πλησθεὶς πνεύματος ἁγίου	πίμπλημι, <i>rimplēmi</i> [aorist passive] + <u>genitive</u>
Acts 13:52 And the disciples were continually <u>filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit</u> .	ἐπληροῦντο χαρᾶς καὶ πνεύματος ἁγίου.	πληρώω, <i>plēroō</i> [3rd p. pl. imperfect, passive indic.] + <u>genitive</u>

Having looked at the times when the verb *πίμπλημι* (*pimplēmi*) is used in Scriptures with regard to “being filled with the Holy Spirit,” we now should look at the times when the verb *πληρόω* (*plērōō*) and its corresponding adjective *πλήρης* (*plērēs*), i.e., “to fill” and “full,” are found in connection with the Holy Spirit in the Apostolic Scriptures. We discover that such a combination is not found in the Lxx, so we are left to the Apostolic Scriptures for our investigation.

The Adjective *πλήρης* Followed by *πνεῦμα* + ἅγιος or By *πνεῦμα* Alone
 (“full” followed by “Holy Spirit” or “Spirit”)

Scripture	Greek	Comments
Luke 4:1 <u>Yeshua, full of the Holy Spirit</u> , returned from the Jordan and was led around by the Spirit in the wilderness	Ἰησοῦς δὲ πλήρης πνεύματος ἁγίου ὑπέστρεψεν ἀπὸ τοῦ Ἰορδάνου καὶ ἦγετο ἐν τῷ πνεύματι ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ	The Greek has the adjective <i>plērēs</i> followed by the <u>genitive</u> “Holy Spirit.”
Acts 6:3 Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, <u>full of the Spirit</u> and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task.	ἐπισκέψασθε δέ, ἀδελφοί, ἄνδρας ἐξ ὑμῶν μαρτυρουμένους ἐπτά, πλήρεις πνεύματος καὶ σοφίας, οὓς καταστήσομεν ἐπὶ τῆς χρείας ταύτης,	The Greek has the adjective <i>plērēs</i> followed by the <u>genitive</u> “Spirit.”
Acts 6:5 The statement found approval with the whole congregation; and they chose Stephen, a man <u>full of faith and of the Holy Spirit</u> , and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch.	καὶ ἤρεσεν ὁ λόγος ἐνώπιον παντὸς τοῦ πλήθους καὶ ἐξελέξαντο Στέφανον, ἄνδρα πλήρης πίστεως καὶ πνεύματος ἁγίου,	The Greek has the adjective <i>plērēs</i> followed by two <u>genitives</u> , “faith” and “Holy Spirit.”
Acts 7:55 But being <u>full of the Holy Spirit</u> , he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Yeshua standing at the right hand of God;	ὅτι ἦν ἀνὴρ ἀγαθὸς καὶ πλήρης πνεύματος ἁγίου καὶ πίστεως. καὶ προσετέθη ὄχλος ἰκανὸς τῷ κυρίῳ.	The Greek has the adjective <i>plērēs</i> followed by the <u>genitive</u> “Holy Spirit.”

Scripture	Greek	Comments
Acts 11:24 for he was a good man, and <u>full of the Holy Spirit and of faith</u> . And considerable numbers were brought to the Lord.	ὅτι ἦν ἀνὴρ ἀγαθὸς καὶ πλήρης πνεύματος ἁγίου καὶ πίστεως. καὶ προσετέθη ὄχλος ἰκανὸς τῷ κυρίῳ.	The Greek has the adjective <i>plērēs</i> followed by two <u>genitives</u> , “faith” and “Holy Spirit.”

In every place where we find the adjective *plērēs* followed by “Holy Spirit” or “Holy Spirit and faith,” the words “Holy Spirit” and/or “faith” are in the genitive case. This matches what we found with the verb *πίμπλημι* (*plimplēmi*), for likewise when “Spirit” or “Holy Spirit” are constructed with *plimplēmi*, everywhere this combination is found, “Spirit” or “Holy Spirit” is in the genitive case.

The Verb *πληρώω* Followed by *πνεῦμα* + ἅγιος or By *πνεῦμα* Alone
(Verb “to fill” followed by “Holy Spirit” or “Spirit”)

Scripture	Greek	Comments
Acts 13:52 And the disciples were continually <u>filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit</u> .	ἐπληροῦντο χαρᾶς καὶ πνεύματος ἁγίου.	<i>πληρώω plēroō</i> [3rd p. pl. imperfect, passive indic.] followed by the <u>genitives</u> “joy” and “Holy Spirit”
Eph 5:18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but <u>be filled with the Spirit</u> .	πληροῦσθε ἐν πνεύματι	<i>πληρώω</i> [2nd p. pl. imperative] followed by the preposition “in” and “Spirit” in the dative case.

In Acts 13:52, *plēroō* is described by the word “joy” and “the Holy Spirit.” Both “joy” (*χαρᾶς, xaras*) and “Holy Spirit” (*πνεύματος ἁγίου, pneumatōs hagiou*) are in the genitive case. A wooden translation would be “filled of joy and of the Holy Spirit.” This is consistent with what we found when investigating the verb *πίμπλημι* (*plimplēmi*) and its related adjective *πλήρης* (*plērēs*), for in every case, all words following that describe that which constitutes the “filling” are put in the genitive case.

But what is interesting and important to note as the one exception is Eph 5:18. Here the verb *plēroō* is not followed by the genitive case, but the dative case, with the prepositional phrase ἐν πνεύματι, “in Spirit,” where *πνεύματι*, “Spirit” is dative, not genitive.

When we analyze the times in the Apostolic Scriptures that persons are said to be “filled with the Spirit,” and the verb *πίμπλημι* (*plimplēmi*) is utilized for the verbal action of “filling,” we see these important facts. First, the verb is always passive and in the aorist tense, with the exception of Luke 1:15, which is in the future tense. In every case, “Holy Spirit” is in the genitive case, known in these contexts as the “verbal genitive of content.” What this means is that the genitive case is used to specify the content of the filling.¹ Further, all of the “fillings” in which the verb is *plimplēmi* are “special fillings,” that is, a special work of the Spirit upon an individual or individuals for a specific task.

William Combs writes this about “special fillings.”

Special fillings are sudden, sovereign, unexpected, overwhelming, incident-oriented acts of enablement; undefined as to duration, lasting as long as their purposes and situations demand, and resulting in some verbal proclamation. A special filling is not the result of prayerful seeking; in fact, no conditions have to be met to obtain it, since each one is sovereignly given. This special filling in the New Testament is similar to the coming of the Holy Spirit on Old Testament saints to accomplish a divinely given task (cf. Ex 28:3; 31:3; 35:31; Num 11:25; Deut 34:9). One can debate whether these special fillings occur today. My own opinion is that they ended with the apostolic age. Regardless, special filling has no necessary correlation to the sanctification of the individual; it is never commanded.²

When we consider the verses we have looked at in Luke and Acts which utilize the adjective *πληρης* (*plērēs*), “full,” and are followed by either “Spirit” or “Holy Spirit” in the genitive case, the genitive specifies the content. As Combs notes:

These references would seem to describe a quality of life, something that is generally characteristic of the person. The “deacons” in Acts 6 are described as having a lifestyle characterized by “wisdom,” “faith,” and the “Holy Spirit”—those who display the fruit of the Spirit, what Allison calls “an hon-

1 See Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Zondervan, 1996), 92–94; Blass and DeBrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament* (Univ of Chicago, 1961), §166, p. 92.

2 William W. Combs, “The Filling of the Holy Spirit and Sanctification,” *DBSJ*, Vol. 19.23-52 (2014), p. 32.

orable Christian lifestyle.¹ The idea is that of a godly believer, someone whose spiritual maturity is apparent to all.²

As noted in the charts above, the only time we find the verb *plēroō* followed by the genitive case, besides our text in Eph 5:18, is in Acts 13:52. What is important to note in this verse, however, is that *plēroō* is in the imperfect tense, which would indicate a continuing state, or what is called the “customary imperfect,” which is “used to indicate a regularly recurring activity in the past time (habitual) or a state that continued for sometime (generally).”³ In Acts 13:52, the imperfect tense of *plēroō* parallels the use of the cognate adjective *plērēs* in that it is being used statively, i.e. to describe a given quality of being in which a person exists, “to be full,” and thus describes a disposition of joyfulness, as Acts 13:52 clearly states. The reason that the NASB translation includes the word “continually” is because this is the emphasis of the imperfect tense verb: “And the disciples were continually filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.” This description of the disciples does not mean that they were “filled” and then become “less filled,” then sought to be “filled” again and so on. The Greek construction offers a general, overall characteristic of joy which is attributed to the regular and ongoing work of the Holy Spirit. Bock describes it this way:

The disciples are filled (ἐπληροῦντο, *eplērounto*) with joy and with the Holy Spirit (Luke 6:23; Acts 5:41; Gal 5:22; 1Thess 1:6). The verb here is imperfect, depicting an ongoing joy and full involvement with the Spirit. Even rejection and persecution do not stop the gospel’s progress, nor does such pressure discourage the disciples. This is part of what indicates that they are filled and controlled by the Spirit.⁴

Here, the verb *πληρώω* (*plēroō*) is in the passive voice, exactly as in every place where the verb *πλήρωμι* (*plimplēmi*) is found in connection with the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:41, 67; Acts 2:4; 4:8, 31; 9:17; 13:9). The “filling” is not the result of the disciples requesting “to be filled” but is the normal and active sovereign work of the Spirit as the normal result of personal

1 Referencing Greg R. Allison, “Baptism with and Filling of the Holy Spirit,” *SBJT* 16 (Winter, 2012), p. 14.

2 Combs, *Op. cit.*, p. 34.

3 Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, p. 548.

4 Darell Bock, *Acts in The Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Baker Pub., 2007), p. 466.

salvation through faith in the Messiah Yeshua and His saving work.

Here is where we see the language of our text, Eph 5:18 to be distinctly different than all of the other occurrences of either *πῖμπλημι* (*plimplēmi*) or *πληρόω* (*plēroō*) when these two verbs describe the work of the Holy Spirit within the life of a believer. For in our text, the verb *plēroō* is neither in the passive voice nor in the indicative mood.¹ Rather, the verb is an imperative. In fact, this is the only place in all of the Apostolic Scriptures that the verb *plēroō* is found as an imperative, a command. This in itself should cause us to reconsider the common idea, put forth primarily by the rise of the modern charismatic movement, that Paul is teaching the Ephesians (and us) that we must seek, ask, or pray to be “filled with the Holy Spirit.” Not only is such a view unsupported by the grammar and language itself, but the context of our text does not support such an interpretation either.

Primarily this is seen in that (1) this is the only time in the Apostolic Scriptures that any verb of “filling” is found as a command in connection with the Holy Spirit; (2) the only time that a verb of “filling” is followed by a dative complement rather than a genitive; and (3) the immediate context clearly indicates that the “filling” is the result of the believer in Yeshua pursuing a life of sanctification unto Him and apart from the world, not waiting for a special extra-ordinary event or moving of the Spirit in one’s own life.

Look at the wider context in which Eph 5:18 is found:

- 15 Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise,
 16 making the most of your time, because the days are evil.
 17 So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.
 18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit,
 19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord;
 20 always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Yeshua Messiah to God, even the Father;
 21 and be subject to one another in the fear of Messiah.

1 A passive verb denotes that the subject is being acted upon. An indicative verb indicates that the subject is the one doing the action described by the verb.

Paul begins by admonishing his readers to “be careful how you walk,” applying God’s wisdom to one’s life choices. Clearly the use of “walk” means “one’s life and growth in sanctification.” Then Paul gives an example of walking, i.e., conforming one’s life to God’s righteousness through applying God’s righteous ways (wisdom) to the choices one makes. He writes “making the most of your time, because the days are evil.” That is, using one’s life energies, opportunities, etc., to grow in holiness and conformity to Yeshua. Then he admonishes us “do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.” This informs us more clearly of what he means by “walking” in the ways of God’s wisdom: we must know what the will of the Lord is. This is not accomplished by waiting for a special sign, or unique emotional experience in one’s life. Knowing the will of God is to know the truths and teaching of the Scriptures and then, by God’s grace and the power of the Spirit in the renewed life of the believer, to make these truths and teachings the normal pattern of one’s thoughts and actions.

Then, as noted above, Paul gives an example of what he means by “foolish” as over against “wise.” To be “drunk with wine” is to live the life of a fool, for the mind becomes entangled in that which is worthless, and the name of Messiah that one has confessed to be his or her Lord and Master, is defamed. Paul refers to this as “dissipation,” *ἄσωτία* (*asōtia*), having its primary aspect to describe that which is “reckless abandon, debauchery, dissipation.”¹ The word *ἄσωτία* (*asōtia*) itself is cognate to the verb *σῶζω* (*sōzō*), the common verb used throughout the Apostolic Scriptures meaning “to be saved.” The alpha-privative² in *ἄσωτία* (*asōtia*) causes it to have the sense of the “opposite of saved,” much like the prefix “un” in English is used as a negation. For example: “successful” vs. “unsuccessful.” Thus, when Paul writes that being drunk with wine is *asōtia*, he means that a life-style characterized by drunkenness is a life-style contrary to preserving or saving that which is real, valuable, and righteous. It is a life-style marked by waste, debauchery, and unrighteousness.

He then contrasts such a life-style with that which is inevitably to be the characteristic of all who are genuinely born from above—who have had a dramatic change in their lives through being drawn to God

1 BDAG, “ἄσωτία,” p. 148.

2 “Alpha-privative” describes the placing of the Greek letter “alpha” to the beginning of a noun in order to reverse its meaning, much like in English we put “un” at the beginning of a word to reverse its meaning, e.g., “successful” vs. “unsuccessful.”

through the work of Yeshua and the indwelling presence of the Ruach HaChodesh. Such a life is marked by a continuing and growing conformity to the ways of righteousness, becoming more and more conformed to Yeshua. This takes place as the fruit of the Spirit is more and more seen in the life of a believer as he or she grows in the wisdom of righteousness, through prayer, conformity to the will of God as taught in the Scriptures, and through life-to-life service to one another in the body of Messiah, the *ekklesia*.

Further, the fact that Paul uses ἐν πνεύματι, “in the Spirit” (dative) rather than “of the Spirit” (genitive) is important. When “in” (ἐν) is found in such a prepositional phrase, the vast majority of times it denotes “location” (locative) or, in less cases, “agency. But it never refers to “content.” If Paul had intended us to understand “be filled with the Spirit” where “Spirit” is the content of the filling, he would have almost certainly used the genitive, since this is consistently the case in all of the other verses in which a verb of “filling” is constructed with “Holy Spirit.” As such, if we are willing to accept the overwhelming evidence of the grammar involved in the concept of “being filled with the Spirit” (genitive), the fact that Paul used the dative in Eph 5:18 as well as casting the verb in the form of a command, must be understood to mean “fill your life up in the realm/sphere of the Spirit.” This fits perfectly in the context in which Paul is admonishing us about our “walk,” i.e., our life of faith in Messiah Yeshua. Our “walk” is a way of describing our “life of faith,” and this is our life of sanctification, becoming more and more like Yeshua in thought, word, and actions. Sanctification is a cooperative work between the believer and the Ruach Who indwells every true believer. Sanctification is not a matter of “rely and relax,” but one of actively putting to death the sinful nature (flesh) and yielding oneself to the Spirit. It is more and more saying “no” to the flesh and “yes” to the Spirit.

Thus, when the Scriptures command the believer “to be filled in the Spirit,” the meaning is that we who confess Yeshua to be our Messiah and Savior are to continually “fill up our lives in the realm of the Spirit,” that is, in those things of life which please the Spirit Who dwells within us and not to participate in those things that grieve the Spirit of God by Whom we have been sealed for the day of redemption (Eph 4:30). We accomplish this by yielding to the Spirit as He urges us, leads us, and enables us to walk in the ways of righteousness. Indeed, the Spirit has been given to us as the *arrabon*, the divine “pledge” or “down payment” securing the fact that we belong to God for all eternity (Eph 1:14) and nothing can separate us from the love of God in Messiah Yeshua our

Lord (Rom 8:38–39).

Therefore, in full accordance with the fact that Paul gives us a command to “be filled in *the realm of the Spirit*,” we see that our becoming more and more separated from the world and unto Messiah is a cooperative work with the Ruach. Together He enables us to fill our lives in that which is pleasing to God and thus brings glory and honor to His great Name.