

THE MEANING OF Ἐν Πνεύματι IN EPHESIANS 5:18

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The Statement of the Problem

Nestled within the apostle Paul's letter known as Ephesians lies an interpretive problem with ramifications that greatly affect the doctrine of the filling of the Holy Spirit. The problem centers around the command πληροῦσθε ἐν πνεύματι, found in Ephesians 5:18. There are three major views as to the meaning of the command. According to the first view, the preposition ἐν functions instrumentally, yielding the translation, "Be filled by (means of) the Holy Spirit." This will be called the "instrumental view."

The second view, popular among many dispensational, conservative scholars, takes the preposition beyond the instrumental use, to the point of declaring the Holy Spirit as the content of the filling. According to this view, the phrase is translated, "be filled with the Spirit,"¹ and therefore this position will be referred to as the "Spirit-filled" view.

The third view suggests that the preposition functions as a locative of sphere,² thus rendering the interpretive translation, "be filled in the realm of the (human) spirit."³ This position will be called the "human spirit" view.

One reason for the confusion is due to the range of meaning of the Greek word πνεῦμα and its cognates. In its root form, this word denotes the result of dynamic movement of the air, namely air sent in motion, considered as a special substance and with an underlying stress on its inherent power.⁴ As in earlier Jewish thought, the New Testament concept of πνεῦμα refers to that part of man which relates him to the spiritual realm, the realm of reality that lies beyond ordinary observation or human control.⁵

Within this broad definition, πνεῦμα has a fairly wide range of meaning. The most frequent New Testament use is clearly in reference to the Holy Spirit of God, the third member of the Triune Godhead. It is suggested that more than 250 uses of the term mention Him.⁶ Of the 91 New Testament uses of πνεύματι, the locative case, singular form of πνεῦμα, Easley believes that 60 occurrences have the Holy Spirit as the referent.⁷ In similar fashion, two of the three views on πληροῦσθε ἐν πνεύματι suggest Paul has in mind the Holy Spirit.

¹This is the translation found in the NIV, RSV, and AV.

²The eight-case system will be recognized, in lieu of the five-case system employed by numerous grammarians. The locative of sphere, which will later be discussed at greater length, will often be the term used where "dative" would otherwise be expected.

³Although this view lacks widespread support from modern scholars, many of the older writers preferred it. So T. K. Abbott, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians*, vol. unspecified, *The International Critical Commentary*, eds. J. A. Emerton, C. E. B. Cranfield, and G. N. Stanton (Edinburgh, Great Britain: T. & T. Clark, 1897), 161; B. F. Westcott, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians* (Minneapolis: Klock & Klock Publishers, 1906), 81; R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Galatians, to the Ephesians and to the Philippians*, vol. 8, *Commentary on the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), 619; Francis Beare, *Corinthians, Galatians, and Ephesians*, vol. 10, *The Interpreter's Bible* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1953), 714; H. B. Swete, *The Holy Spirit in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1964), 241.

⁴E. Kamlah, J. Dunn, and Colin Brown, "Spirit, Holy Spirit," vol. 3, *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986), 689.

⁵*Ibid.*, 693.

⁶*Ibid.*

⁷Kendall H. Easley, "The Pauline Usage of *Pneumati* as a Reference to the Spirit of God," *JETS* 27/3 (1984): 302.

Another important use of πνεῦμα is to represent the human spirit, or “man in so far as he belongs to the spiritual realm and interacts with the spiritual realm.”⁸ In this sense, πνεῦμα occurs at least 40 times. Moreover, the use of the locative, singular form πνεύματι is said to “refer to the human spirit *as easily as to God’s Spirit*”⁹ (italics added). Without the need to discuss other options for translation, it is safe to assert that contextual and exegetical considerations must be appropriated to properly discern the meaning of πνεύματι in the passages where it is found.

Another issue that lies at the center of the disagreement over the translation of ἐν πνεύματι in this passage is the proposed role the verse plays in relation to the doctrine of the filling of the Holy Spirit. Many dispensational writers depend upon Ephesians 5:18 as the central text to support the claim that Scripture commands believers to “be filled with the Spirit.”¹⁰ Says Ryrie, “The clue as to the proper definition of being filled with the Spirit is found in Ephesians 5:18.”¹¹ The fact is, aside from this disputed text, there are *no* such injunctions found in the balance of the New Testament. Pentecost rightly observes,

If you examine the doctrine of the indwelling ministry of the Holy Spirit, never is a command given that we should be indwelt. When we consider the sealing ministry of the Holy Spirit, a command is never given that believers should be sealed. If we consider the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit, never in the Word of God can you find a command that the believer should seek the baptism of the Holy Spirit.¹²

Certainly this assessment is to be affirmed, but then he goes on to note, “We move into an entirely different area, the area of practical experience, when the Apostle gives the command, ‘be filled with the Spirit.’”¹³ Yet, are there sufficient grounds in Ephesians 5:18 upon which to hinge a large part of the doctrine of the filling of the Holy Spirit?

The Importance of the Study

Although it is beyond the scope of the present work to determine the boundaries of the doctrine of the filling of the Spirit, it will be examined whether ἐν πνεύματι, from Ephesians 5:18 at least, is applicable to this doctrine. It will also be examined whether the command to be filled ἐν πνεύματι even refers to the person of the Holy Spirit at all, as the “instrumental view” also suggests. Or, is it the author’s purpose to demonstrate that the command in this passage is for believers to be filled in the realm of their human spirits, as the “human spirit” view suggests?

Does the “human spirit” view have strong enough support to compete with the other views? Fee, in an attempt to discredit this position, states his case with great zeal. “In an earlier generation some found this expression so difficult that they were willing to argue that it meant ‘be filled in one’s own spirit’; . . . but there is

⁸Kamlah, Dunn, and Brown, “Spirit, Holy Spirit,” 693.

⁹Easley, “The Pauline Usage of *Pneumati*,” *JETS* 27/3: 302. It is also interesting to note that this concession is made by an author who favors the Holy Spirit as the referent in Ephesians 5:18.

¹⁰This would include men such as Lewis Sperry Chafer, *The Ephesian Letter: Doctrinally Considered* (New York: Loizeaux Brothers, Bible Truth Despot, 1935), 150; Dwight J. Pentecost, *The Divine Comforter: The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1977), 154; John F. Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit: A Comprehensive Study of the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 193; Charles Ryrie, *The Holy Spirit* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1965), 93. Some non-dispensationalists, including Anthony Hoekema, *Holy Spirit Baptism* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1972), 83; and John R. W. Stott, *Baptism & Fullness*, 2d ed. (Downers Grove Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1975), 60, also believe that this verse is important to the doctrine of the filling of the Spirit.

¹¹Ryrie, *The Holy Spirit*, 93.

¹²Pentecost, *The Divine Comforter*, 155.

¹³*Ibid.*

nothing in Pauline usage, in the immediate context, or in the context of the letter as a whole that allows even the possibility of such a view.”¹⁴

Is Fee correct in suggesting that the “human spirit” view is the result of confusion on the part of many earlier exegetes who found the expression so difficult that they defaulted to this position? Or does the evidence warrant significant consideration which correctly drove them to embrace the view? If the view cannot be substantiated, then does Paul use ἐν πνεύματι to refer to a filling “by” or “with” the Holy Spirit of God? A true analysis of the exegetical data, from the framework of lexical and syntactical considerations must determine the merits of each view. At this point, it is left to discuss the means for arriving at a proper conclusion.

The Procedure of the Study

The first step in ascertaining the correct meaning of ἐν πνεύματι in Ephesians 5:18 will be to examine the occurrences of the phrase elsewhere. This includes a study of its uses in the LXX, other New Testament writings, other Pauline writings, and finally other uses in the book of Ephesians. All translations of the biblical text throughout the thesis will either be from the New American Standard or a direct translation by the present writer.

The second step will be to examine the relationship of πίπλημι πνεύματος and πλήρης πνεύματος, both of which are prevalent in Acts, to πληροῦσθε ἐν πνεύματι, the command found in Ephesians 5:18. Some writers¹⁵ interpret these phrases from Acts, “filled with the Holy Spirit,” and “full of the Holy Spirit,” as undergirding the theory that πληροῦσθε ἐν πνεύματι refers to one’s being filled with the Holy Spirit, making the “Spirit-filled” view the “generally accepted view.”¹⁶ Studying these passages will reveal the merits of associating the phrases with Paul’s command in the Ephesian letter.

The final step will be to examine the position of ἐν πνεύματι in the immediate context of chapter five, as well as the greater context of the book of Ephesians. The command, “Be filled ἐν πνεύματι,” will be considered as to its relationship with the previous command, “Do not become drunk with wine,” both of which are related to the initial command, “Walk as those who are wise” (5:15). Then, a discussion of the grammatical construction of the phrase in question will show the likelihood of each view. Finally, its relationship to the following participles, which modify πληροῦσθε ἐν πνεύματι, will assist in properly relating the command to what follows.

The Limitations of the Study

As mentioned earlier, the scope of the present work does not allow for a complete development of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit’s filling ministry. The passages in Acts will merely be surveyed to discern whether a relationship exists between them and the command in Ephesians 5:18. Neither will this work attempt to identify the distinctions, if any, between the doctrines of the “indwelling” and the “filling” of the Holy Spirit, which would certainly be a profitable study.

In addition, the present study cannot exhaustively examine the differences between anarthrous and articular nouns and prepositional phrases. In fact, the articular uses of ἐν πνεύματι, or even πνεύματι itself, will not be treated or discussed here. Such a study would entail far more treatment than this thesis can afford, though it would prove to be a fruitful study as well.

¹⁴Gordon Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 721.

¹⁵Notable examples include Hoekema, *Holy Spirit Baptism*, 82; Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit*, 195; Pentecost, *The Divine Comforter*, 156; and William Hendricksen, *Exposition of Ephesians*, vol. unspecified, *New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1967), 239.

¹⁶Hendricksen, *Exposition of Ephesians*, 239.

Finally, there is not opportunity to thoroughly research and define the relationship between finite verbs and participial phrases, which may shed more light on the participial phrase πλησθεῖς πνεύματος ἁγίου, found twice in Acts. Such a study may yield more information to determine whether a participle may be used with a main verb to form a compound predicative structure, or if a participle may be used only in a subordinate function when used with a main verb.

CHAPTER 2:

THE USES OF EN ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΙ APART FROM EPHESIANS 5:18

Introduction

The first step to take in an attempt to understand the meaning of ἐν πνεύματι in Ephesians 5:18 is to survey the use of the phrase in the other contexts of biblical Greek literature. This study will involve only its anarthrous uses and will cover three areas: the Septuagint,¹⁷ the Greek New Testament, and elsewhere in Ephesians; they will be treated in that order.

There are several predominant situations where the phrase tends to be used. First, it appears in conjunction with a qualifying word, normally in the genitive case, which helps to define it. This would include “Holy, unclean, of God, etc.” Such qualifying words render the phrase self-evident as to its meaning, thus not requiring formal treatment in the present work. Second, it appears several times where the writer referred to what took place under the guise of revelation. Here, many believe that ἐν πνεύματι has significant likelihood of indicating the instrumentality of the Holy Spirit.¹⁸

Third, it appears where a direct contrast is made, such as flesh against spirit, or physical versus spiritual. This is one of the more interesting uses, especially considering that one’s natural inclination might be to immediately assign the person of the Holy Spirit as the antithesis to any reference to something fleshly. Fourth, it appears where analogies are expressed in the context, such as that of a building (cornerstone, foundation, etc.). In these instances, it can be difficult to determine the author’s intended meaning.

It will be the attempt of the present writer to explore each of these uses of ἐν πνεύματι in the contexts of the passages where they occur. Hopefully, a study of the phrase will yield the range of meaning within biblical literature, possibly helping to determine Paul’s use of the term in the disputed text of Ephesians 5:18. However, the relative weight of the discoveries found in this chapter is limited, at least with respect to the importance of the contextual study of ἐν πνεύματι in Ephesians 5:18, which will be examined in chapter IV.

Ἐν πνεύματι in the Septuagint

Limitations of the Study

The Greek translation of the Old Testament, or Septuagint, contains 14 uses of the phrase ἐν πνεύματι. Three of these occurrences need not be studied, as the qualifying words that come after the phrase render them useless for the present task.

First, in Ezekiel 11:24 ἐν πνεύματι is followed by θεοῦ, thus, “by means of *the* Spirit of God,” indicating that the prophet was brought into the land of the Chaldeans through the agency of God’s Spirit.¹⁹ The difficulty with a “human spirit” interpretation here is that θεοῦ is positioned where it can only modify ἐν πνεύματι. Since the “human spirit” view is not likely an interpretive option, this passage from Ezekiel seems to do nothing more than to exemplify the instrumental use of the preposition ἐν.

Second, ἐν πνεύματι, in Isaiah 4:4, is preceded by κρίσεως καὶ πνεύματι καύσεως, “by a spirit of judgment and by a spirit of burning.” This usage clearly cannot allude to the Holy Spirit or to the realm of the

¹⁷Also known as the LXX, or the Greek translation of the Old Testament.

¹⁸This might be rendered, “. . . by means of the Holy Spirit.”

¹⁹Leslie C. Allen, *Ezekiel 1–19*, vol. 28, *Word Biblical Commentary*, eds. David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker (Dallas: Word Books, 1994), 129.

human spirit. While some see this as the Spirit of Yahweh,²⁰ the obscure construction bears no consequence for the task at hand.²¹

Third, in Micah 3:8 the LXX reads, “On the other hand, I myself will be full of strength, justice, and power, through *the* Spirit of the Lord (κυρίου).” Here again ἐν πνεύματι, qualified by κυρίου, is used as an instrumental (dative) of means, denoting agency.²²

With the preceding three references not requiring formal consideration, it remains to discuss the other eleven references. These subsequent Old Testament occurrences will be treated in the order of their appearances in the English text of the Scripture. Because of their similarity, the three references in Zechariah will be studied together.

II Kings 2:9

At the end of Elijah’s ministry in Israel, it was time for him to pass on the mantle to his successor Elisha. Just before the aged prophet was taken up by chariot, he took Elisha and crossed over the bed of the Jordan river, which he parted when he struck it with his mantle. Once they were on the other side, Elijah offered to do for Elisha anything he so desired. Elisha’s request, recorded in II Kings 2:9 from the LXX, was this: καὶ εἶπεν Ἐλισαίῃ Γεινηθήτω δὴ διπλᾶ ἐν πνεύματί σου ἐπ’ ἐμέ, or, “And he said to Elijah, ‘Let there truly be a twofold portion of your spirit upon me.’”

Here the LXX translators seem to have intended for ἐν πνεύματι to identify the human spirit of Elijah, a spirit so enviable in the sight of Elisha that he wanted it for himself. Elisha did not ask the departing prophet for a double portion of the Holy Spirit upon him, but a double portion of Elijah’s own spirit. His successor saw in Elijah the boldness and strength of a godly man and desired to exhibit that in his own ministry.

In the words of Patterson and Austel, “He [Elisha] asked for a double portion of Elijah’s spirit. . . . He wished, virtually, that Elijah’s mighty prowess might continue to live through him.”²³ Hobbs adds that “double share” indicates something specific. “Elisha is asking for the status as rightful heir to the prophetic leader’s role.”²⁴ Support for this interpretation is found later, in II Kings 2:15.

Once Elisha crossed back over the Jordan river, having himself parted it with Elijah’s mantle (II Kings 2:13-14), the sons of the prophets who saw him could only say, “The *spirit of Elijah* rests on Elisha” (italics added). From this verse, it does not seem to mean that a double portion of the Spirit of God came upon Elisha at his request, but the spirit of the prophet Elijah. The statement that “‘the spirit of Elijah’ came upon Elisha” demonstrates the motif of rightful succession.²⁵

I Chronicles 28:12

²⁰According to Oswalt, this would include Gray, Delitzsch, Skinner, Calvin, and Mauchline (John Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1–39*, vol. unspecified, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*, ed. R. K. Harrison [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986], 148).

²¹Calvin, arguing that the Spirit is known by what He does, suggests that the sense is of judgment and burning done by the Spirit. Others believe that a figurative use of “wind” is intended. The allusion would be to the hot searing wind coming from the desert or to the storm wind accompanying a theophany. It could also suggest a periphrastic construction in which “spirit” almost serves to introduce an abstract concept. If this interpretation is correct, it would be appropriate to translate the phrase, “through the process of burning and judgment” (Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, 148).

²²“Micah was preaching because he was sent by the spirit and power of God.” (Ralph L. Smith, *Micah-Malachi*, vol. 32, *Word Biblical Commentary*, eds. David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker [Waco: Word Books, 1984], 33).

²³R. D. Patterson and Hermann J. Austel, *1, 2 Kings*, vol. 4, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988), 176.

²⁴T. R. Hobbs, *II Kings*, vol. 13, *Word Biblical Commentary*, eds. David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker (Dallas: Word Books, 1985), 21.

²⁵*Ibid.*

Located in I Chronicles 28 are David's last instructions to the people and to his son Solomon, whom God appointed to sit on the throne over Israel after his father David. In 28:11, the text states that David gave Solomon "the plan of the temple porch, its buildings, its storehouses, its upper rooms, its inner rooms, and the room for the mercy seat." In 28:12, he continues the thought, "and the plan of all that he had ἐν πνεύματι αὐτοῦ (LXX)."

The Hebrew text of I Chronicles 28:12 reads, כָּל אֲשֶׁר הָיָה בְּרוּחַ עִמּוֹ, which could be translated, "all that was with him by the Spirit," so that the plans David gave Solomon were directly communicated according to the dimensions that the Spirit of God revealed to him. This view is reflected in the NIV translation, "He gave him the plans of all that the Spirit had put in his mind for"

According to Payne, "The plans of . . . the temple were directly revealed to David by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, even as those for the tabernacle that preceded it had been given to Moses" (Exodus 25:9, 40; 27:8).²⁶ Such a view could also reflect David's notation in I Chronicles 28:19, which reads, "'All this is in writing,' David said, 'because the hand of the Lord was upon me, and He gave me understanding in all the details of the plan.'"

However, the NAS translates I Chronicles 28:12, ". . . and the plan of all that he had in mind, for" This means David simply stated that he gave Solomon the plans according to all that was within him, which needed to be communicated from one man to the other. This view is similar to the LXX rendering, ". . . in his spirit," which also interprets this as the realm of David's own human spirit.²⁷ Keil & Delitzsch concur, "And the pattern, i.e., the description of all that was in the spirit with him, i.e., what his spirit had designed, לְמַצְרֹתָהּ as to the courts."²⁸

Ultimately, though, the correct rendering of the Hebrew text is insignificant to the purpose of the present study, since the issue is the meaning of the LXX text itself. Nonetheless, it is insightful to observe that the LXX translators understood the meaning of the Hebrew text to denote David's spirit, or mind. The most telling feature of the Greek translation is the inclusion of the possessive personal pronoun αὐτοῦ, not present in the Hebrew text as such, which clearly communicates their commitment that the reference is to David's own spirit, in contradistinction to the Spirit of God.

Nehemiah 9:30

The next use of ἐν πνεύματι is found in Nehemiah 9:30. After Ezra read the law of Moses to the people who returned to Palestine after the Babylonian exile (Nehemiah 8), the peoples' response was weeping and sorrow over their sin against God. In their confession and subsequent covenant with the Lord (chapter 9), they described His mercy toward them throughout the hundreds of years of rebellion (9:30). In the text of Nehemiah 9:30 it is said of God, "You admonished them many years and testified to them by your Spirit by the hand of your prophets" (LXX).²⁹

The Hebrew text for this verse, unlike the two previous passages, clearly qualifies the word for "spirit," assigning identity to it by rendering the text, ". . . by Your Spirit, by the hand of Your prophets."³⁰ The

²⁶J. Barton Payne, *1, 2 Chronicles*, vol. 4, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988), 436.

²⁷Braun, whose translation is the same as that of the NAS, notes that the LXX and most older commentators agree upon a "human spirit" rendering (Roddy Braun, *I Chronicles*, vol. 14, *Word Biblical Commentary*, eds. David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker [Dallas: Word Books, 1985], 266).

²⁸C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *The Books of I & II Kings, I & II Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther*, vol. 3, *Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1976), 292.

²⁹καὶ ἐπεμαρτύρω αὐτοῖς ἐν πνεύματί σου ἐν χειρὶ προφητῶν σου. Rather than διὰ or ὑπὸ, the LXX translators used ἐν twice, a weaker method of conveying agency.

³⁰The Hebrew term, בְּרוּחְךָ, possesses the 2nd person, masculine, singular pronominal suffix, which is always added to the construct form of the noun.

commentators are essentially unanimous in attributing this to the Spirit of God.³¹ Therefore, since the preposition ἐν seems to function instrumentally, the argument for the “instrumental view” using ἐν receives important precedent.

However, in the Greek Septuagint, because of the qualifying pronoun σου (“of you”), the syntax, and the context, all pointing to the Spirit of God as the only possible referent, the influence of Nehemiah 9:30 upon an unqualified ἐν πνεύματι, such as is found in Ephesians 5:18, bears only limited impact on the task at hand. The Nehemiah passage is made abundantly clear, while the use of the phrase in Ephesians 5:18 cannot be interpreted as easily.

Psalm 48:7

Psalm 48, clearly a song of Zion, begins with an ascription of praise to God (vv. 1-3). In the middle section, the psalmist reflects on God’s past acts and on His attributes (vv. 4-11), and he concludes with an encouragement to fully enjoy the evidences of God’s presence (vv. 12-14).³²

In the middle section of Psalm 48, the presence of the Great King evokes two kinds of responses, terror and joy. First, the kings who were enemies of God’s people fled in terror when they saw the mighty workings of God (vv. 4-7). Second, the people of God also saw His mighty works, but they rejoiced (vv. 8-11).³³ Psalm 48:5 reveals that these enemy kings of the nations “saw and were amazed; they were terrified, and they fled in alarm.” The next verse states that the panic that seized them is comparable to the anguish of a woman in childbirth.

Then in 48:7, the psalmist adds the statement, “You break the ships of Tarshish ἐν πνεύματι βιάω.” The NAS translates this phrase, “*With the East Wind*” (italics added). In context, the idea is that even as the powerful east wind shatters these strong and majestic ships, the storming of the nations comes to an immediate end, according to the fierce wrath of the Lord.³⁴

Though this reference cannot greatly assist in the present study since the meaning is “wind,” and not “spirit,” it derives some benefit. First, the instrumentality of the preposition ἐν reinforces the possibility of the “instrumental view.” Second, the English translation “with” shows the confusion added by the use of this term. Although the usage here is intended to denote means, “with” also happens to be an English preposition used to denote content. The danger is that this latter usage might be imported back to Greek, with the English speaker thinking that ἐν could be translated “with” to denote content, such as the content of the “filling” in Ephesians 5:18.

Ecclesiastes 7:9

The preacher of Ecclesiastes takes the opportunity in chapter 7 to impart practical proverbs for daily living.³⁵ When he says in verse 8 that the end of a matter is better than its beginning, and patience is better than haughtiness of spirit, he implies that patience is needed to see one’s resolutions and enterprises through to the

³¹So Charles F. Fenham, *The Books of Esther and Nehemiah*, vol. 15, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*, ed. R. K. Harrison (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1982), 226; H. G. M. Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, vol. 16, *Word Biblical Commentary*, ed. David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker (Dallas, Texas: Word Books, 1985), 302; and Walter F. Adeney, *Ezra and Nehemiah* (Minneapolis: Klock & Klock Christian Publishers Inc., 1980), 302; et al.

³²Willem VanGemeren, *Psalms*, vol. 5, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 361.

³³*Ibid.*, 364.

³⁴Peter Craigie, *Psalms 1–50*, vol. 19, *Word Biblical Commentary*, eds. David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker (Dallas: Word Books, 1983), 354.

³⁵J. Stafford Wright, *Ecclesiastes*, vol. 5, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 1174.

end.³⁶ Solomon follows this statement in 7:9 by advising, “Do not be eager ἐν πνεύματι σου to be angry, for anger resides in the bosom of fools.” The qualification of “your,” as in “your spirit,” limits the reference of the spirit to the spirit of the one whom he is advising not to be angry.

In the words of Leupold, “It involves a man in difficulties with others and induces rash thoughts in reference to God’s dealings (Jas. 1:19). In short, the bosom where anger dwells is the bosom of the fool.”³⁷ Therefore, the “human spirit” view appears to be the only possible option here, and the sole contribution made to the present work is that this use exemplifies a precedent for the locative of sphere. The place where one is not to develop anger is within the sphere of his heart, a place equated with the bosom of a fool.

Ecclesiastes 8:8

At the beginning of Ecclesiastes 8, Solomon compares the one who aims to please God to a courtier who attempts to please the king. Out of loyalty to his sovereign, the courtier is to obey the king’s commands, recognizing that he is pledged to serve him (8:2). If the courtier displeases him, he must accept that there will be a rift between himself and the king.³⁸

The courtier should not leave the king’s presence or stand up for a bad cause quickly, because the king does what he pleases (8:3), and he is accountable to no one for what he does (8:4). When he knows the king’s will, he will be wise to do it at the proper time and in the proper way (8:5), even though he cannot see the whole purpose behind the king’s actions (8:6-7).³⁹

Ecclesiastes 8:8, translated from the Hebrew text, begins by saying, “No man *is* powerful in the wind to restrain the wind; and no one *is* powerful in the day of death.” The LXX renders the statement, “There is no man of authority ἐν πνεύματι to restrain with⁴⁰ the wind, and there is no authority in the day of death.” Though most consider this to be a reference to wind rather than a spirit,⁴¹ thus reducing its significance to the task at hand, this construction defies a simple explanation.

The use of ἐν πνεύματι is probably locative, with the sense that “in that place where the wind blows, man has no authority or ability to restrain its movement or hold it back.” Therefore, the previous analogy of the king and the courtier illustrates the concept of God’s total plan. Like the king, God has the power of life and death. In Wright’s words, “When the time of death comes, man cannot insist that he should retain the breath of life.”⁴² This would be as vain as thinking he could restrain the course of the wind itself.

Isaiah 11:4

In Isaiah 11:1-12:6, the prophet provides a picture of Messiah’s millennial reign after the second advent.⁴³ With Christ on the throne and Satan absent, sin and evil will both be reduced and sternly corrected.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Ecclesiastes* (Columbus, Ohio: The Wartburg Press, 1952), 155.

³⁸Wright, *Ecclesiastes*, 1178.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰“With” translates the preposition σύν. The English “with” seems awkward to include, and Brenton’s LXX translation omits it altogether. The omission better represents the Hebrew text, which uses the direct object marker תָּנִי before the following noun “wind.” Lancelot Brenton, *The Septuagint with Apocrypha: Greek and English* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1990), 825.

⁴¹Leupold, who insists on a “human spirit” translation, claims that this refers to keeping back a spirit that is about to depart from the earthly tabernacle of its body. Leupold, *Ecclesiastes*, 189.

⁴²Wright, *Ecclesiastes*, 1179.

⁴³John F. Walvoord, “The Prophetic Context of the Millennium-Part II: The Second Coming of Christ,” *Bib Sac* 114/454 (Apr 1957): 99.

Walvoord, referring to Isaiah 11:1-10, describes it this way, “The millennial kingdom will therefore be a time of justice for all, and any who dare to rebel against the king will be subject to immediate divine judgment.”⁴⁴

Isaiah 11:3-5 assures the poor that their cause will be dealt with righteously in the day of Christ’s reign.⁴⁵ In 11:4, the LXX reads, “But He will bring judgment to the cause of the lowly and will reprove the lowly of the earth, and He will smite the earth by the word of His mouth, and ἐν πνεύματι of His lips He will take up the ungodly.”

Once again the inflected form of πνεύμα cannot be translated with any form of the word “spirit,” as it is preferable to use “breath” instead. Thus the text must be translated, “by the breath of His lips He will take up the ungodly.” Vine affirms the instrumental use as the only viable option, “And with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked.”⁴⁶ Isaiah 11:4 merely contributes precedent for the instrumental use of ἐν.

Ezekiel 37:1

In Ezekiel 37, the prophet predicts the political and spiritual revival of his nation (37:1-14) and the reuniting of its two divisions, Judah and Israel (37:15-28).⁴⁷ The restoration of the nation is depicted in Ezekiel’s vision of the dry bones, which were turned into an exceedingly great army (37:1, 10). At the time when Ezekiel was to be transported to the valley where the Lord caused this to happen, a translation of the Greek text of Ezekiel 37:1 reads, “The hand of the Lord came upon me, and the Lord led me out ἐν πνεύματι and set me in the midst of the plain, and it was full of human bones.”

Grammatically, the rendering of the LXX may support either an instrumental use of the preposition, used to signify the Spirit as the agent through whom the Lord accomplished this feat, or a locative use of the preposition, used to signify that Ezekiel was taken up in spirit, as opposed to being taken up in his physical body.⁴⁸ The Greek text itself does not conclusively favor one view or the other.

Though the LXX reading is left vague, the Hebrew text remains clear. “The hand of the Lord was upon me, and He brought me out בְּרוּחַ יְהוָה, and He set me in the middle of the valley, and it was full of bones.” The words, “by the Spirit of the Lord,” shown in Hebrew letters, are considered to be in construct in the Masoretic text.⁴⁹ Because of the construct relationship, the Hebrew construction must be rendered, “by the Spirit of the Lord.” Therefore, the proper noun “Yahweh” cannot be the subject of the clause (i.e. “Yahweh brought me out”), as was done in the Septuagint.

Many commentators reflect the obvious conclusion presented by the Hebrew text. To quote one author, “This restoration is vividly portrayed in Ezekiel 37 as the resurrection of Israel by means of the life-giving Spirit.”⁵⁰ Allen agrees, “Divine agency is indicated both by the pressure of Yahweh’s ‘hand’ and by the participation of his ‘spirit.’”⁵¹ The Septuagint, in contrast, does not in itself settle the issue.

⁴⁴John F. Walvoord, *Israel in Prophecy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1962), 122.

⁴⁵John F. Walvoord, “The Doctrine of the Millennium-Part I: The Righteous Government of the Millennium,” *Bib Sac* 115/457 (Jan 1958): 6.

⁴⁶W. E. Vine, *Isaiah: Prophecies, Promises, Warnings* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1971), 49.

⁴⁷Charles C. Ryrie, *The Ryrie Study Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1976), 1283.

⁴⁸See Revelation 1:10, 4:2, 17:3, and 21:10 for uses of the phrase in other contexts where one of these two views is intended.

⁴⁹A noun in construct is “bound” to the following noun or nouns, the Hebrew equivalent of a genitival relationship. The definiteness of a noun in construct is dependent on the governing noun at the end of the construction; a noun in construct is definite if the absolute is definite, which is true of יְהוָה in Ezekiel 37:1 (the absolute is said to be definite if it is a proper name, has the definite article, or is specified by a possessive suffix; here יְהוָה is a proper noun). If a prefixed preposition is used with the noun in construct, that preposition will be indefinite in form, which is true of the anarthrous construction בְּרוּחַ in Ezekiel 37:1. C.L. Seow, *A Grammar for Biblical Hebrew* (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1987), 70.

⁵⁰Robert A. Pyne, “The ‘Seed,’ the Spirit, and the Blessing of Abraham,” *Bib Sac* 152/606 (Apr–Jun 1995): 220.

⁵¹Allen, *Ezekiel 1–19*, 184.

Had the Septuagint translators considered the Hebrew phrase to be in construct, one would expect κύριος to be κυρίου, the genitive form of the noun. This change would render the phrase “by the Spirit of the Lord,” as opposed to making “the Lord” the stated subject of the clause. Instead, they severed the construct chain and put “the Lord” in the nominative case. Though it may be suggested that the LXX translators still intended ἐν πνεύματι to be taken instrumentally, one should not press such a statement, since an error in translation leaves room for uncertainty. As a result of either the instrumental or locative use being possible, Ezekiel 37:1 provides only meager assistance in the present debate.

Zechariah 1:6; 4:6; 7:12

The prophetic horizon of Zechariah is far broader than that of the other minor prophets. His book has been called an apocalypse because of the presence of numerous visions. Zechariah can be divided into two large divisions: chapters 1-8 and 9-14. In the first section is a series of eight prophetic visions with the prophet’s contemporaries in view; the second portion deals with the events surrounding the future of Israel and Jerusalem. A simple threefold outline of the prophecy is as follows: 1) visions, chapters 1-6; questions, chapters 7-8; burdens, chapters 9-14.⁵²

The prophet gives a complete spiritual history of Israel and of the Gentiles’ relations with her from the Babylonian exile until the end of time. The first prophetic message of Zechariah came in the second year of Darius’ reign. In strong language, Zechariah sets forth the displeasure of the Lord with the fathers of his contemporaries. They were faulted both with negligence in rebuilding the Temple and their overall spiritual condition.⁵³

In the Greek version of Zechariah 1:6, the Lord asked this question through the prophet, “But do you receive my words and my ordinances, as many as I commanded ἐν πνεύματι μου to my servants the prophets, who lived in the days of your fathers?” Interestingly, the LXX added the phrase, “by my Spirit,” which does not appear in the Hebrew text. Considering the qualification “my,” the LXX translators’ addition points the reader to the Lord as the one whose Spirit is being referred to.

In Zechariah 4:6, the use of “my” again clarifies the meaning of ἐν πνεύματι. “And he answered and said to me, saying, ‘This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel, saying, ‘Not by mighty power, nor by strength, but ἐν πνεύματι μου,’ says the Lord of Armies.’” Temple construction, already under way, would be completed, but it would not be completed by military strength or human prowess, “but by my Spirit,” as Baldwin notes.⁵⁴

Charles Feinberg makes a similar observation, “The civil head of the nation is assured that the prosecution and success of the work upon which he is laboring are dependent upon neither human strength nor external resources. The task before him requires more than mere human strength can afford.”⁵⁵ Once again, there appears to be an instrumental use of ἐν πνεύματι with God’s Spirit as the referent.

The final use of ἐν πνεύματι in the LXX is found in Zechariah 7:12. According to the Septuagint, the passage reads, “And they made their heart disobedient, so as not to listen to my law and the words that the Lord of Armies dispatched ἐν πνεύματι αὐτοῦ by the hand of the former prophets, and great wrath came from the Lord of Armies.” A qualification again appears, this time in the form of the pronoun, “his.”

Baldwin makes this comment on the Hebrew text, “*The words which the Lord of hosts had sent by his spirit through the former prophets.* This remarkable doctrine of the Holy Spirit as mediator of God’s word to the

⁵²Charles L. Feinberg, *The Minor Prophets* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1990), 273.

⁵³*Ibid.*, 274.

⁵⁴Joyce Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1972), 121. She does not capitalize “spirit,” but her subsequent interpretation betrays her view that this a reference to the Holy Spirit.

⁵⁵Charles Lee Feinberg, *God Remembers: A Study of the Book of Zechariah* (New York: American Board of Missions to the Jews, Inc., 1965), 73.

prophets, who were themselves its mediators, has no parallels in the prophetic books” (italics added).⁵⁶ There does not seem to be debate among commentators that ἐν πνεύματι has an instrumental use in these verses, especially since the possessive pronouns “My” (used twice) and “His” point the phrase back to “the Lord” as the antecedent. Therefore, the Zechariah passages assist mainly in reinforcing the instrumental use of the preposition ἐν.

Ἐν πνεύματι Elsewhere in the New Testament

Limitations of the Study

Though the LXX reveals only 14 places where ἐν πνεύματι appears, the Greek New Testament features 36 occurrences of the phrase. Not all of these uses need to be treated independently, since a significant number of them are qualified by words that immediately follow the phrase and clarify its meaning and use. On the other hand, an in-depth survey of the non-qualified uses of the phrase is certainly required.

In reference to the qualified uses of ἐν πνεύματι, 14 of its 36 New Testament appearances are followed by ἁγίῳ, “in/by *the* Holy Spirit,” which prohibits a “human spirit” translation.⁵⁷ This qualification is so clear in the mind of the author and the reader that the article, normally used to denote identity,⁵⁸ is not needed. On two occasions, the phrase is qualified by θεοῦ,⁵⁹ thus yielding the same result as the former scenario, with the translation, “*the* Spirit of God.”

Twice, ἐν πνεύματι is followed by ἀκαθάρτῳ, where the type of spirit is said to be an “unclean spirit,” known to most as an evil spirit-being.⁶⁰ Once, ἐν πνεύματι is preceded by καὶ δυνάμει Ἠλίου, “in *the* spirit and power of Elijah,” signifying the human spirit of Elijah.⁶¹ One final qualification is that of πραύτητος, “in a spirit of gentleness.”⁶² This refers to a quality of one’s spirit, describing the type of spirit to be possessed by one who confronts a sin or trespass of another.

Of the 16 remaining instances of ἐν πνεύματι, four occur in Ephesians, three of which will be dealt with later in this chapter.⁶³ This leaves 12 occurrences, two of which can be treated together, since they are found in consecutive verses.⁶⁴ Four of the ten remaining uses can be treated as a unit, because they appear in the same writing and bear great resemblance in usage.⁶⁵ Therefore, the final six occurrences, along with the two treated together and the four to be treated as a unit, will be discussed according to their order of appearance in the New Testament. The chapter will then be concluded with a discussion of three of the four appearances of ἐν πνεύματι in the book of Ephesians, with Ephesians 5:18 to be reserved for the final chapter.

Matthew 22:43

In the context of Matthew 22:43, Jesus had just asked the Pharisees whose son is Messiah (22:42). They answered that He was the son of David. Jesus subsequently posed the question, “Then how does David ἐν πνεύματι call Him ‘Lord,’ saying . . . ?” (22:43).

⁵⁶Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, 147. In similar fashion, Charles Feinberg translates, “. . . which Jehovah of hosts had sent by his Spirit at the hand of the former prophets.” (Feinberg, *God Remembers*, 124).

⁵⁷Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:5; 11:16; Romans 9:1; 14:17; 15:16; I Corinthians 12:3; II Corinthians 6:6; I Thessalonians 1:5; I Peter 1:12; and Jude 20.

⁵⁸The use of the article is discussed in Chapter 4, under The Omission of the Article.

⁵⁹Matthew 12:28 and I Corinthians 12:3.

⁶⁰Mark 1:23 and 5:2.

⁶¹Luke 1:17.

⁶²Galatians 6:1.

⁶³The fourth use of the phrase is found in Ephesians 5:18, which is treated in Chapter 4.

⁶⁴John 4:23 and 4:24.

⁶⁵Revelation 1:10; 4:2; 17:3; and 21:10.

For this to refer to the human spirit, one would have to propose that David has such a commitment to Messiah's being David's Lord, that David calls Him 'Lord' within his own spirit, the place of sincere belief and conviction. Or, it might mean that Jesus wanted the Pharisees to know that David spoke this not in his flesh, a matter of his own belief, but in spirit, in obvious conformity to the will of God.

However, most believe the phrase here refers to the inspiration of the Spirit of God. "David wrote this Psalm 'in connection with the Spirit,' under the Holy Spirit's influence, which if it means anything, means by divine inspiration."⁶⁶ The use of the phrase also reinforces the truth of what David said, so it may be integrated into the belief of the hearers.⁶⁷

This would then indicate that David, by inspiration of the Spirit, spoke of a kingdom to come.⁶⁸ The "instrumental view" seems to be strongly supported by the parallel account in Mark 12:36. "Αὐτὸς Δαυὶδ εἶπεν ἐν τῷ πνεύματι τῷ ἁγίῳ," or "David himself said by the Holy Spirit." Thus, it may be true that the anarthrous construction ἐν πνεύματι in Matthew 22:43 is instrumental and refers to the Holy Spirit.

John 4:23; 4:24

The two uses of ἐν πνεύματι in the gospel of John are found in chapter 4, where Jesus confronts the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well. After Jesus rebuked this woman for living in adultery (4:18), she told Him that she perceived Him to be a prophet (4:19). The woman then began speaking to Him about worship, adding that the Jews worship in Jerusalem, but the Samaritans worship on Mt. Gerizim (4:20). Jesus responded by telling her that an hour is coming when God will not be worshipped in either (4:21).

In John 4:23, Jesus said, "An hour is coming and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father ἐν πνεύματι and in truth. . . ." In John 4:24, Jesus summarized the principle behind what He was telling her by saying, "God is [by quality] spirit, and it is necessary for those worshipping to worship [Him] ἐν πνεύματι and in truth."

Commentators are basically unanimous in interpreting both of these uses as referring to the realm of the human spirit. "It is not likely that 'spirit' refers to the Holy Spirit (though the Spirit does help our worship, Rom. 8:26ff). It is the *human spirit* that Jesus means. A man must worship, not simply outwardly by being in the right place and taking up the right attitude, but in his spirit"⁶⁹ (italics added). Lenski agrees, "Jesus here describes what the genuine way [to worship] is. It centers in the worshipper's own 'spirit' and spirit nature" (Rom. 1:9).⁷⁰

Hendriksen, a staunch supporter of the "Spirit-filled" view in Ephesians 5:18,⁷¹ concurs that this cannot be a reference to the Holy Spirit. "In such a setting, it would seem to us, worshipping *in spirit and truth* can only mean rendering such homage to God that the entire heart enters into the act."⁷² The key to the certainty in

⁶⁶R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel*, vol. 1, *Commentary on the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), 887.

⁶⁷D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, vol. 8, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 467.

⁶⁸Stanley D. Toussaint, *Behold the King: A Study of Matthew* (Portland: Multnomah Press, 1980), 260.

⁶⁹Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, vol. 4, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, ed. F. F. Bruce (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971), 270.

⁷⁰R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel*, vol. 4, *Commentary on the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), 322.

⁷¹"Paul was undoubtedly thinking of the third person of the Holy Trinity, the Holy Spirit. . . . The suggestion that in the present case the unusual phrase was selected in order to convey that the Holy Spirit is not only the agent *by whom* believers are filled, but also the One *in whom* they are filled, must not be lightly dismissed." (William Hendricksen, *Exposition of Ephesians*, vol. unspecified, *New Testament Commentary* [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1967], 239).

⁷²William Hendricksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to John*, vol. unspecified, *New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981), 167.

identifying the phrase as a reference to the human spirit is actually the nature of the contextual contrast. Jesus showed the woman that the essence of worship is not centered around a chosen site. Instead the issue is true worship, performed in the realm of one's own spirit. Therefore, the use of ἐν πνεύματι in John 4:23-24 seems to affirm the "human spirit" view as the preferable option for translation.

Romans 2:29

Romans 2:29 is a significant passage for the meaning of ἐν πνεύματι. Having discussed the condemnation of the moralist who judges others in an attempt to affirm his righteousness (2:1-16), Paul turns to the condemnation of the Jew, who places his faith in keeping the Law to gain righteousness (2:17-3:20). It is within this latter framework that Romans 2:29 is found. The Jew who transgresses the Law has become uncircumcision (2:25), because he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, since true circumcision is not of the flesh (2:28). Instead, Paul contends that *he* is a Jew who is circumcised inwardly (2:29).

This appears simple to understand, until the second phrase of 2:29 is added. "And circumcision *is* of the heart ἐν πνεύματι not in/by letter. . . ." The apostle is either adding the parenthetical thought that heart-circumcision is done by the Holy Spirit and not by the Law, or the thought that heart-circumcision is accomplished in the realm of the spirit, in contrast to that of Law-keeping. There is certainly much disagreement as to the correct interpretation of this phrase.

Dunn does not interact with earlier writers who discuss both views but rather assumes the "instrumental view" and proceeds onward. "The circumcision God looks for is . . . something which could be fully accomplished only by the Spirit of God."⁷³ Cranfield, however, defends the view by attacking the credibility of the "human spirit" position.

That πνεῦμα here denotes the human spirit is unlikely, since the inwardness of this circumcision is already adequately expressed by καρδίας. Moreover, in 7:6 and II Cor. 3:6 (two other passages where πνεῦμα and γράμμα are contrasted) πνεῦμα refers to the Holy Spirit.⁷⁴

Murray agrees with Cranfield, "It would be superfluous for the apostle to specify the sphere after he had said that 'circumcision is that of *the heart*.'"⁷⁵

Should the "instrumental view" thus be adopted as the proper interpretation of the anarthrous construction? In actuality, there are numerous concerns that must be addressed. The first area of concern is found in one of Murray's own statements, "Although the doctrine of the work of the Holy Spirit is not developed until later in the epistle it is presupposed and introduced as relevant to an argument the burden of which is the universality of sin and condemnation."⁷⁶

Murray inadvertently introduces the weakness of his view, noting that the doctrine of the Holy Spirit's work does not appear until a much later time in the epistle. If Romans 2:29 is a reference to the Holy Spirit, it is the first such reference in the book. Moreover, it would be the last reference until 5:5, where ἀγίου appears with πνεύματος and Paul *begins* discussing the results of justification. In defense of the "human spirit" view, Lenski responds to Cranfield's earlier assertion by saying,

Because Paul says "of heart," it has been supposed that it is impossible to add "in spirit" as referring to this Jew's

⁷³James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, vol. 38a, *Word Biblical Commentary*, eds. David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker (Dallas: Word Books, 1985), 127.

⁷⁴C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, vol. 1, *International Critical Commentary*, eds. J. A. Emerton, C. E. B. Cranfield, and G. N. Stanton (Edinburgh, Great Britain: T & T Clark, 1994), 175.

⁷⁵John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, vol. 6, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, ed. F. F. Bruce (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1982), 88.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, 89.

own spirit but only as referring to the Holy Spirit, of whom we are then told, what no one would deny, that he alone bestows circumcision of the heart. Who could guess that in this connection of the opposite of “in flesh” is not “in spirit” but “in (the) Spirit”? The doubling of the terms “of heart in spirit” emphasizes the inward spirituality, and in the last clause of a series we usually have more fullness. Physical circumcision calls for its exact and true opposite which is not merely circumcision of the heart but spiritual circumcision.⁷⁷

Lenski does well to draw upon the heart of the issue, the object of comparison with “the flesh.” Just as was the case with John 4:23 and 4:24, where the contrast was between a physical place of worship and worship within one’s spirit, here the contrast is between circumcision done outwardly in compliance to the written record (the Old Testament Law), and circumcision that takes place in the inward regions of the heart, one’s own invisible spirit.

When Cranfield says the inwardness of circumcision is adequately expressed by καρδίας, it is acknowledged that this interpretation could be sufficient if the context did not demand otherwise.⁷⁸ However, Paul follows his statement that “circumcision is of the heart” with an implied, “that is . . . ‘in one’s spirit,’ not in [adherence to] a written record.”⁷⁹

This final contrast is the height of the entire passage, a summary of the principle he intends to communicate, and it naturally follows the reference he made to the region of the heart. McClain adequately synthesizes Paul’s intent, “No man can be a Jew unless he is born outwardly as a son of Abraham, and also inwardly in spirit; therefore, a man born only outwardly of Abraham is not a true Jew.”⁸⁰

Romans 2:29 may be either an instrumental use of ἐν πνεύματι referencing the Holy Spirit, or a locative use denoting the spiritual sphere. However, because of the strong possibility of seeing the contrast between outward and inward circumcision as the difference between flesh and spirit, not between the flesh and the Holy Spirit, and because the Holy Spirit is not found anywhere in the immediate or near context, this anarthrous construction of ἐν πνεύματι may more likely refer to the realm of the spirit.

Romans 8:9

In Romans 8, Paul instructs his readers on the role of the Holy Spirit, who sets believers apart from sin and assists them in the sanctification process. Paul then sets up a direct contrast between flesh and spirit (whether spirit begins with a small or capital “s”). In Romans 8:9, the apostle states the following: ὑμεῖς δὲ οὐκ ἐστὲ ἐν σαρκὶ ἀλλὰ ἐν πνεύματι, εἴπερ πνεῦμα θεοῦ οἰκεῖ ἐν ὑμῖν, or, “But you yourselves are not in flesh but in spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you.” The question again is whether ἐν πνεύματι implies man’s spirit or the Holy Spirit.

For Murray, this verse is a simple conditional statement. The believer has the assurance that if the Spirit has indwelt him, then he is in the Spirit.⁸¹ Dunn does not clearly state the relationship between the terms for “spirit,” but he does say, “Possession of the Spirit is what constitutes a Christian, so naturally he assumes that the members of the Roman congregations have received the Spirit. . . . The inner compulsion of God’s Spirit has become the most important factor at the level of primary motivation and enabling.”⁸²

Dunn adequately relates the importance of the indwelling of the Spirit to the true faith of the believer, but his understanding of “being in the Spirit” does not clearly explain Paul’s contrast with their “not being in the flesh.” Murray’s explanation is guilty of circular reasoning: a believer is in the Spirit since the Spirit indwells

⁷⁷R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans*, vol. 6, *Commentary on the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), 205.

⁷⁸Cranfield asserts a similar contrast between πνεῦμα and γράμμα in Romans 7:6 and II Cor. 3:6, both of which, he says, refer to the Holy Spirit. Cranfield, *Romans*, vol. 1, 175.

⁷⁹Lenski, *Romans*, 205.

⁸⁰Alva J. McClain, *Romans: The Gospel of God’s Grace* (Winona Lake, Indiana: BMH Books, 1989), 86.

⁸¹Murray, *Romans*, 287.

⁸²Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 444.

him. Such a definition does not take into account the context or the flow of Paul's argument in relation to the flesh. Cranfield discredits the alternative "human spirit" view.

ἐν πνεύματι has often been understood to refer to the human spirit or to the spiritual enrichment of the human spirit effected by the presence of the Holy Spirit (e.g., among modern commentators, Sanday and Headlam, p. 196; Cornely, p. 407; Zahn, p. 390f); but it is much more satisfactory to take πνεῦμα throughout vv. 1-11 to refer to the Holy Spirit.⁸³

Must the interpreter accept that all of these uses of πνεῦμα refer to the Holy Spirit simply because the central theme, agreed upon as such by all, is the ministry of the indwelling Spirit of God in sanctification? In order to answer this question, a proper examination must begin with the context. Christ condemned sin in the flesh (v. 3) in order that the Law might be fulfilled in the Christian (v. 4), who does not walk κατὰ σάρκα, "according to flesh," ἀλλὰ κατὰ πνεῦμα, "but [strong adversative] according to spirit [anarthrous construction]."

Romans 8:5 reveals that those whose being is "according to flesh" set their minds on τὰ τῆς σαρκὸς, "the things of the flesh" (articular use), but those whose being is "according to [that which is by quality] spirit" set their minds on τὰ τοῦ πνεύματος, "the things of the spirit" (articular use). Here, "the spirit," which is used with the Greek article, means one of two things. First, it may be used to identify an individual, the use that Dana and Mantey consider to be the chief function of the article,⁸⁴ thus making reference to the person of *the* Holy Spirit.⁸⁵ Second, it may denote previous reference,⁸⁶ referring to the anarthrous construction, "according to *spirit*," in Romans 8:4.⁸⁷

The context following Romans 8:9 might also support the idea that ἐν πνεύματι means "in spirit," in contrast to "in flesh." In Romans 8:10, Paul says that though the body is dead because of sin, yet *the spirit* is alive because of righteousness. In this verse, the RSV, NAS, and NIV all support a "human spirit" rendering of τὸ πνεῦμα. The AV, along with Cranfield and Dunn, interpret the verse as denoting the agency of the Holy Spirit.⁸⁸

These commentators are forced to take this position in order for them to maintain consistency in their translation of πνεῦμα. However, it might be difficult to interpret this as the Holy Spirit, if read naturally, because the contrast with the body would be rendered ineffective and lifeless. "This is not the Holy Spirit (A. V.) because he cannot be made the opposite of our 'body;' it is our spirit, our spiritual nature as this is made new and living in us."⁸⁹

Finally, 8:9 itself must be examined. Paul's comment, "You are not in flesh but in spirit," is a statement for the Romans to understand that the focal point of their lives must be spiritual realities. No longer is desiring or pursuing physical things to consume their time and energy; now they are free to pursue those things that are of the spirit, the place of unseen, yet far greater eternal realities.

Paul then says, "ἐἴπερ the Spirit of God dwells in you." The word ἐἴπερ, is a compound of εἰ and πέρ. The conditional conjunction εἰ is used with the indicative to make an assertion that is assumed by the speaker to

⁸³Cranfield, *Romans*, vol. 1, 387.

⁸⁴H. E. Dana, and Julius R. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1957), 137, 141. In contrast, Wallace believes that previous reference is the most common use of the article (Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996], 218).

⁸⁵Cranfield takes this as identifying the Holy Spirit (Cranfield, *Romans*, vol. 1, 386).

⁸⁶Dana and Mantey, *A Manual Grammar*, 141.

⁸⁷Lenski takes this as a use of previous reference (Lenski, *Romans*, 503).

⁸⁸Cranfield, *Romans*, vol. 1, 390; Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 428.

⁸⁹Lenski, *Romans*, 512.

be true.⁹⁰ The particle *πέρ* means “to do a thing to the limit, or thoroughly.”⁹¹ It is as if Paul were saying, “You operate in the realm of the spirit, and I assume with full assurance that the Spirit of God dwells within you.” For those who have indeed been filled by God’s Spirit, they can focus their attention on all that the spiritual realm offers, due to the God who caused His Spirit to dwell within them.

Lenski sums up the point, “You are not in the sphere consisting of what is flesh, in your old unregenerate nature; on the contrary, you are in the sphere consisting of what is spirit, in your new spiritual nature.”⁹² Again, the common thread in determining the meaning of *ἐν πνεύματι* is a proper understanding of the contrast, along with context, to clarify the matter. Though *ἐν πνεύματι* might be used instrumentally or as a locative, the context and the meaning of the contrast appear to favor the latter.

I Corinthians 14:16

I Corinthians 14:16 will not be formally treated, since the Greek New Testament encloses the preposition *ἐν* in brackets, which means its presence in the text is regarded as disputed.⁹³ Nonetheless, the NAS, NIV, RSV, and AV all translate this “human spirit,” which in its context has been placed in opposition to the mind. The “human spirit” view is reflected in the paraphrase of Thomas. “If you do not pray and sing with the mind as well as with the spirit.”⁹⁴ Lenski describes the significance of the phrase, “The dative *πνεύματι* states that only the speaker’s ‘spirit’ is employed in his utterance, since this is made in a tongue and not in his ‘understanding.’”⁹⁵ MacArthur notes that only charismatics tend to take this as a reference to the Holy Spirit.⁹⁶

Colossians 1:8

The apostle Paul begins his letter to the Colossians, a church consisting of believers Paul has not personally met, by informing them of his continual thanks to God for them (1:3). After speaking of their warm reception of the gospel (1:5) and subsequent commitment to it (1:6), Paul says it was Epaphras through whom they learned of the truth (1:7). In Colossians 1:8, Paul also states that it was Epaphras who informed them (Paul and Timothy) of the Colossians’ love *ἐν πνεύματι*.

The interpreter is faced with the dilemma of whether this refers to the Holy Spirit (through an instrumental use),⁹⁷ the realm of the Holy Spirit, or the realm of the human spirit. In support of the second view, Abbott says in relation to the prepositional phrase, “[It] expresses the ground of their love, which was not individual sympathy, personal acquaintance, or the like, but belonged to the sphere of the Holy Spirit’s influence.”⁹⁸ However, Abbott does not proceed to explain the importance of this love in the Spirit.

Eadie remains more outspoken, offering an explanation of the “realm of the Holy Spirit” view and a critique of the “human spirit” view. “To give this phrase . . . the mere sense of true Christian love, is a weak

⁹⁰A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman Press), 1008.

⁹¹*Ibid.*, 1154.

⁹²Lenski, *Romans*, 509.

⁹³United Bible Societies, *The Greek New Testament*, 3d ed. (Stuttgart, Germany: Biblia-Druck, 1983), xlvii.

⁹⁴Robert L. Thomas, *Understand Spiritual Gifts* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1978), 134.

⁹⁵R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians*, vol. 7, *Commentary on the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1963), 593.

⁹⁶John MacArthur, *I Corinthians*, vol. unspecified, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1984), 377.

⁹⁷O’Brien holds to the “instrumental view” here (Peter T. O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, vol. 44, *Word Biblical Commentary*, eds. David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker, [Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1982], 16).

⁹⁸T. K. Abbott, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians*, vol. unspecified, *The International Critical Commentary*, eds. S. R. Driver, A Plummer, and C. A. Briggs (Edinburgh, Great Britain: T. & T. Clark, 1968), 201.

dilution . . . or as if the meaning were—a love to the absent apostle which must be spiritual, as they had never seen his face in the flesh. The words, as in Pauline usage, refer to the Holy Spirit, and point out the source and sphere of this gracious affection.”⁹⁹ As he continues, Eadie seems to veer from this position.

For this love is no affection based on common relations—such as human friendship or social instincts. It is the offspring of spiritual influence in a heart so full of antagonism by nature to what is good and pure. The Spirit of Him who is Love takes possession of the believing bosom, and exerts upon it His own assimilating power.¹⁰⁰

It must be questioned whether the “human spirit” view proposes a “mere sense of true Christian love,” as if to imply that “love in [the realm of one’s] spirit” is excluded from or not rooted in the love of God that abides in the believer, due to the indwelling Holy Spirit. Lenski says, “The fact that such love is due to the Holy Spirit goes without saying.”¹⁰¹

Likewise, Eadie’s comment that this cannot be love for the absent apostle, which must be spiritual since they had never seen his face in the flesh, is also beside the point. The apostle probably would not be distinguishing between a love that exists in spirit, for someone who is unknown to another person, and a love that exists in the flesh, for those who are well known to the individual. It might be more appropriate to say that the love the Colossians had for Paul and Timothy was evident within their spirits, even though they had no opportunity to express it tangibly. Lenski explains, “‘In Spirit’ the Colossians are joined by love to Paul and to Timothy and love them for their work’s sake.”¹⁰²

Eadie also mentioned that ἐν πνεύματι denotes the “sphere of this gracious affection,” but must it be concluded that Paul’s intention was to designate the Holy Spirit as the source of this love? None would deny the truth that the Holy Spirit is the source of all Christian love,¹⁰³ but if Paul wanted to communicate this fact, why would he not have done so in clearer fashion? Eadie’s final comment, that “love is no affection based on common relations” but “is the offspring of spiritual influence in a heart . . . ,” presents confusion. He seemingly moves from signifying the Holy Spirit as the source of love to a description of the relational love of the recipients toward the writer.

Although an instrumental or locative use that refers to the Holy Spirit is certainly possible, the thrust of Paul’s point would be dulled if taken instrumentally. Bruce, in defense of the position that the Holy Spirit is in view, inadvertently points out a weakness in his own view when he says, “This is the only explicit reference to the Spirit of God in the letter.”¹⁰⁴ Since there are no other references to the Holy Spirit in Colossians,¹⁰⁵ apart

⁹⁹John Eadie, *Commentary on the Epistle of Paul to the Colossians* (Minneapolis: James and Klock Christian Publishing Co., 1977), 19.

¹⁰⁰Ibid.

¹⁰¹R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistles to the Colossians, to the Thessalonians, to Timothy, to Titus and to Philemon*, vol. 9, *Commentary on the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1964), 32.

¹⁰²Ibid.

¹⁰³Hendricksen asserts that the “instrumental view” is correct because “spiritual love” without any reference to the Holy Spirit runs counter to the fact that love is a fruit of the indwelling Spirit. However, the “human spirit” view does not imply that Christian love can somehow be rooted outside the Holy Spirit. Rather, it suggests that the source and instrumentality was simply not discussed here by Paul. Would the apostle not have introduced the source of this love if he had intended to relate this information? (William Hendricksen, *Exposition of Colossians and Philemon*, vol. unspecified, *New Testament Commentary* [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1975], 54).

¹⁰⁴F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, vol. 10, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, ed. F. F. Bruce (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1993), 44.

¹⁰⁵According to Vaughan, “This is the only reference to the Holy Spirit in Colossians.” (Curtis Vaughan, *Colossians*, vol. 11, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein [Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978], 176).

from this disputed text, the lack of supportive allusions to Him in the context weakens the case for ἐν πνεύματι referring to the Holy Spirit here.

I Timothy 3:16

In Paul's first letter to Timothy, the apostle advises the young pastor how to "conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, . . ." (3:15). In the preceding verses, he outlines the character traits of an overseer, a deacon, and a godly Christian woman (3:1-13). In verse 16, Paul summarizes the content of the mystery of the Christian faith, possibly using an excerpt from a primitive hymn about Christ.¹⁰⁶ It is in this section of the letter that Paul says, "He who was revealed ἐν σαρκί, was vindicated ἐν πνεύματι, beheld by angels . . ." (3:16).

Some regard the expression, "vindicated ἐν πνεύματι," as parallel to the previous phrase, in which case since "in flesh" denotes the sphere of operation for the verb "manifest," so "in spirit" must denote the sphere of the verb "justified." If this assumption is correct, "in spirit" would refer to Christ's spirit, and it would mean that Christ was vindicated by God in the spiritual realm, i.e., when God declared Him to be His Son.¹⁰⁷

If this parallelism is not enforced, the preposition could be taken instrumentally, in which case the Holy Spirit would be the agent who vindicated the cause of a crucified, rejected Messiah.¹⁰⁸ However, Guthrie and Kelly both believe the former view merits greater support. As Kelly puts it, "If a choice must be made, it should probably be in favor of [the human spirit] view of the manifest parallelism between flesh and spirit and the consequent difficulty of giving 'in' before the latter an instrumental sense."¹⁰⁹

Hendriksen demonstrates his consistency in translating ἐν πνεύματι as "Holy Spirit," whenever possible. "The AV and the RSV are entirely correct in spelling Spirit with a capital letter, as referring to the Holy Spirit. The combination 'flesh and Spirit' has scriptural warrant. . . . But it was especially by means of his resurrection from the dead that the Spirit fully vindicated the claim of Jesus that he was the Son of God" (Rom. 1:4).¹¹⁰ Lenski, however, disagrees about the nature of the contrast.

But one is not justified or declared righteous "in flesh" but "in spirit," for one's spirit is judged when a justification occurs; here it was Christ's spirit of holy obedience unto the death on the accursed cross. . . . "Flesh" = the whole human nature of Jesus assumed at the incarnation (body, soul, and spirit, the material and the immaterial part); "spirit" = his human spirit as this was joined to his body, in which the ἐγώ was that of the eternal Son. That is the only contrast there is in these two parallel phrases. To assume a different contrast, one in which "spirit" is something else, is to go beyond Paul's intention.¹¹¹

He then explains what he believes to be the weakness inherent within the "instrumental view," the view taken by Hendriksen and the AV and RSV translators.

How Jesus could be declared righteous "in the Holy Spirit" is inconceivable. At his baptism the Holy Spirit was bestowed upon Jesus for his great work; that was all that happened as far as the Holy Spirit was concerned. The

¹⁰⁶Kelly asserts that the evidence for its being a hymn and not a creedal fragment or piece of catechetical material is the careful parallelism of the strophes, the rhythmic diction, and the deliberate assonance of the six third-person singular aorist verbs J. N. D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* [New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1963], 89). Cf. II Tim. 2:11-13.

¹⁰⁷Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. unspecified, *The Tyndale New Testament Commentary*, ed. R. V. G. Tasker (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1972), 89.

¹⁰⁸Ibid.

¹⁰⁹Kelly, *Pastoral Epistles*, 91.

¹¹⁰William Hendricksen, *Exposition of I, II Timothy and Titus*, vol. 14, *New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1957), 140.

¹¹¹Lenski, *Timothy*, 612.

declaration: “This is my beloved Son, in whom I was well pleased” (aorist), refers to the human spirit of Jesus who came to the baptism in holy obedience to fulfill all righteousness (Matt. 3:15). . . . As the A.V. has “spirit” = the Holy Spirit, so some have “spirit” = the divine nature, the deity of Jesus. They argue that, if “flesh” = the human nature of Jesus, then “spirit” must = his divine nature. Thus they get a wrong contrast. Since this is wrong, it matters little where they find the justification, whether at his baptism, or in his whole earthly life, or at his resurrection from the dead. It is unthinkable that Jesus should be justified in his deity just as it is unthinkable that he was justified “in the Holy Spirit.”¹¹²

Indeed, the point of man’s unrighteousness is his inability to fulfill all the works of the law; therefore, no man can be justified on the basis of perfect obedience.¹¹³ Also, δικαιοῦν, which always means to pronounce a verdict on character, conduct, or deeds, as to whether they are righteous or not, cannot be taken in the sense of proving the deity of Jesus.¹¹⁴ Thus the context seems to prefer the “human spirit” view over the “instrumental view.”

Revelation 1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10

In the apocalypse of Jesus Christ, as recorded by the apostle John, are found four uses of ἐν πνεύματι. They will be treated together, because they are used much in the same fashion. In Revelation 1:10, John writes, “I came to be ἐν πνεύματι on the day of the Lord, and I heard behind me a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet.” In 4:2 he says, “Immediately I came to be ἐν πνεύματι, and behold a throne was standing in heaven.” In 17:3, John adds, “And he carried me away into a desert ἐν πνεύματι, and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast.” Lastly, in 21:10 he says, “And he carried me away ἐν πνεύματι onto a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem.”

John finds himself in four entirely different environments in these prophetic trances: on the earth (1:10), before a throne in heaven (4:2), in the wilderness or place of desolation (17:3), and on a mountain top (21:10).¹¹⁵ Within each of these situations, John seems to experience an ecstatic condition, into which God placed him in order to grant him the revelations recorded in the book.¹¹⁶ But what was the nature of being carried away ἐν πνεύματι? This either means John temporarily existed in the Spirit or temporarily experienced consciousness solely in his spirit, apart from the presence of his body.

Mounce uses the capital “S,” as if to imply Holy Spirit, but this does not seem to coincide with his explanation. “This expression refers to a state of spiritual exaltation best described as a trance. Peter at Joppa (Acts 10:10; 11:5) and Paul at Jerusalem (Acts 22:17) had similar ecstatic experiences.”¹¹⁷ Mounce not only does not explain the role or position of the Holy Spirit here, but he also fails to point out that Peter’s and Paul’s experiences occurred in their dreams, while John never slept during his revelations.¹¹⁸

Thomas, adhering to the “human spirit” view for ἐν πνεύματι in Revelation, says, “It has been described as a ‘state in which the ordinary faculties of the flesh are suspended, and the inward senses opened.’”¹¹⁹ The encounters John had in these prophetic visions were conscious episodes experienced not by his

¹¹²Lenski, *Timothy*, 612–13. Homer Kent is one who concludes that “spirit” is equal to the divine nature of Jesus. “In view of the evident contrast to ‘flesh’ (which meant humanity), the writer concludes that the reference to ‘spirit’ is to Christ’s divine nature (which resided in His own spirit).” (Homer A. Kent, Jr., *The Pastoral Epistles: Studies in I and II Timothy and Titus* [Chicago: Moody Press, 1979], 146).

¹¹³H. Seebass, “Righteousness, Justification,” vol. 3, *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986), 363.

¹¹⁴Lenski, *Timothy*, 613.

¹¹⁵Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 8–22*, vol. 2, *An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), 285.

¹¹⁶Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 1–7*, vol. 1, *An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992), 90.

¹¹⁷Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, vol. 18, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, ed. F. F. Bruce (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977), 75.

¹¹⁸Thomas, *Revelation 1–7*, 90.

¹¹⁹*Ibid.*

fleshly body, but by his spirit. The natural senses, mind, and spirit are ordinarily operative and responsive only to the natural world, but in John's case, God suspended this law and brought his spirit into direct contact with the invisible, spiritual world.¹²⁰ Therefore, for the occurrences of ἐν πνεύματι in Revelation, the "human spirit" view seems to be the most credible explanation in all four cases.

Ἐν πνεύματι in Ephesians

It remains in this chapter only to address the uses of ἐν πνεύματι in the book of Ephesians. Each of these uses, except for Ephesians 5:18, will be treated here. Whatever weight can be assigned to occurrences apart from the text under study is increased when studying other uses in the same epistle or book. Therefore, Paul's use of ἐν πνεύματι in Ephesians may shed some light on its meaning in 5:18. These three occurrences will be treated according to their order of appearance in the letter.

Ephesians 2:22

Contextually, the significance of Ephesians 2:22 goes back at least to Paul's explanation of how he prays for these believers (1:15ff.). He prays that they would know 1) what is the hope of their calling (1:18a), 2) what are the riches of the glory of Christ's inheritance in the saints (1:18b), and 3) what is the surpassing greatness of God's power toward those who believe (1:19ff.). It is the topic of the extent of this supernatural power that Paul develops from 1:19 to 2:22.¹²¹

This is the same supernatural power that 1) was manifested in Christ's exaltation (1:19-23), 2) was manifested in the believers' release from bondage to sin and their enabling to serve God in obedience (2:1-10), and 3) was manifested in bringing both Jew and Gentile into one spiritual body, known as the mystery of Christ (2:11-22).¹²²

While speaking of the Gentiles being made fellow-citizens of God's household (2:19), Paul relates the analogy of a house, namely that it has been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ as the corner stone (2:20). It is in Christ that the entire building is being fitted together (2:21), and it is in Christ that the recipients of Paul's letter are being built together into a dwelling of God ἐν πνεύματι.

The question that arises is whether this is a dwelling of God built by the Holy Spirit, a dwelling of God in the Spirit,¹²³ or a dwelling place of God constructed in the spiritual realm. "Here, as so often, the Apostle does not make it plain whether he is speaking directly of the Divine Spirit or not."¹²⁴ Though Leon Morris

¹²⁰R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John's Revelation*, vol. 13, *Commentary on the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1963), 593.

¹²¹Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, vol. 42, *Word Biblical Commentary*, ed. David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker (Dallas, Texas: Word Books, 1990), 50. See also Donald G. McDougall, "Outline of Ephesians," p. 1, unpublished class notes.

¹²²Ibid.

¹²³This view is reflected by the translators of the New American Standard Bible, which says, "In whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit" (with a capital "S" on Spirit). This view is also taken by Robinson, who states, "The Gentiles are built along with the Jews to form a dwelling-place for God 'in the Spirit'." (J. Armitage Robinson, *Commentary on Ephesians* [Grand Rapids: Kregel Publishers, 1980], 166).

¹²⁴Robinson, *Ephesians*, 72.

believes that the expression “may be understood in more ways than one,”¹²⁵ it is safe to say that most commentators take this as some type of reference to the Holy Spirit.¹²⁶

Lincoln, adhering to the “instrumental view” here, states that “ἐν πνεύματι may well color the whole preceding clause so that the Gentile believers are thought of as being built together into a whole structure by the agency of the Spirit. More particularly, the Spirit is seen as the means by which God dwells in the Church.”¹²⁷

Lenski agrees that the Holy Spirit is in view here as well, though he believes the preposition is used in a locative sense; varying from his normal pattern of taking ἐν πνεύματι as a reference to the sphere of the spirit, he comments, “Here ἐν πνεύματι is parallel to ἐν κυρίῳ, which shows that here, unlike in 5:18, the Holy Spirit is referred to. . . . ‘In the Spirit’ explains ‘in the Lord,’ for union with the former mediates union with the latter and thus makes us a habitation of God.”¹²⁸ If Lenski is correct that Paul drew a parallel between the Lord and the Spirit in Ephesians 2:22, this might present an important precedent in Ephesians for Paul’s use of ἐν πνεύματι to refer to the Spirit.

Although there is a parallel construction due to ἐν followed by a locative object, this may not necessitate that because one refers to the Lord the other must refer to the Holy Spirit. For “the Spirit” to *explain* “the Lord,” as Lenski stated, it might suggest that in many passages of Scripture the Holy Spirit is considered to be interchangeable with the Lord, rather than distinct in person and function. The fact remains, however, that this practice is not common in the Bible, so another explanation warrants consideration.

An examination of the syntax will assist in developing the alternative view. Westcott observes that ἐν πνεύματι is “opposed to ἐν σαρκί, Rom. 8:9. The indwelling is realized in the highest part of our nature.”¹²⁹ What he alludes to is that the true object of contrast with “in spirit” is “in flesh,” though the latter is not stated in the text. To understand this, one must refer back to the analogy of the structure that “is being built.”

The metaphor is that what God is doing in the realm of the spirit, with Israel and the Church, can be compared to a lasting structure that is erected. Just as a builder lays the corner stone, builds a foundation under the surface of the ground, and puts up the frame and then the rest of the structure, so God has erected a building not made with hands but fashioned in spirit. Though a building is built with hands and can be seen with the eyes, one must not expect God’s edifice to be seen or touched.

Ellicott, however, objects to the “human spirit” view on these grounds. “[It] introduces an idea not hinted at in the context, and obscures the reference to the Holy Trinity.”¹³⁰ Does this view actually ignore the context? Robinson answers,

But it is to be observed that this section, which began with the words “in the flesh” (twice repeated), ends with the words “in the spirit.” No doubt the thought that the habitation of God is spiritual, in contrast to the material temple, is present to the Apostle’s mind, even if it does not exhaust the meaning of his words. And we may perhaps regard the expression of I Pet. 2:5, “a spiritual house,” as the earliest commentary on this passage.¹³¹

The notion that the reference here is actually “a dwelling of God that exists not in flesh, but in spirit,” seems to fit the immediate context well. Ellicott’s proposal that this would obscure a reference to the Trinity

¹²⁵He maintains this lack of commitment since “no convincing reason seems to have been urged to rule out any of these [views].” (Leon Morris, *Expository Reflections on the Letter to the Ephesians* [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1994], 82).

¹²⁶So Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 158; Abbott, *Ephesians and Colossians*, 76; Hendriksen, *Ephesians*, 143; R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistles to the Galatians to the Ephesians and to the Philippians*, vol. 8, *Commentary on the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), 460.

¹²⁷Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 158.

¹²⁸Lenski, *Ephesians*, 460.

¹²⁹B. F. Westcott, *St. Paul’s Epistle to the Ephesians* (Minneapolis: Klock & Klock Publishers, 1906), 41.

¹³⁰Charles J. Ellicott, *A Critical and Grammatical Commentary on St. Paul’s Epistle to the Ephesians* (London: Savill and Edwards, 1859), 64.

¹³¹Robinson, *Ephesians*, 72.

must be met with the objection that the apostle more assumed the Trinity than attempted to prove or display it. If Robinson is correct that Paul here is referring to a spiritual dwelling of God, this would present support for the “human spirit” view. However, either a locative or instrumental reference to the Holy Spirit cannot be ruled out.

Ephesians 3:5

At the outset of Ephesians 3, Paul returns to the intercession he departed from at the end of chapter 1. However, in 3:2-13 he again stops to reflect upon the nature of the mystery of Christ (3:2-6) and his own part in proclaiming that mystery (3:7-13).¹³² Within the context of the nature of the mystery, namely that Christ has joined together Israel and the Gentiles into one body, Paul informs his readers that they can understand his insight into this mystery by reading his words (3:4). This mystery, hidden from past generations, has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets ἐν πνεύματι (3:5).

Despite the odd syntactical position of ἐν πνεύματι, placed after “apostles and prophets,” it is agreed upon that the phrase “must be joined with the verb [‘was made known’], not with προφήταις, to which it would be a superfluous addition, or ἀγίοις, or the following εἶναι.”¹³³ As was the case with Ephesians 2:22, there is uncertainty here regarding the meaning of ἐν πνεύματι.

Wood exposes the lack of clarity, as he says, “There may well be a subtly ambiguous allusion here, as elsewhere in the NT, to the interplay between the Holy Spirit and the human spirit (Eph 1:17; cf. 2:22; 5:18). This is particularly relevant in the context of revelation.”¹³⁴ Robinson stands in agreement. “Here, as in other places, the Apostle’s language is so vague that we cannot tell with entire certainty whether he refers directly to the personal Divine Spirit, or rather desires to suggest that the reception of the revelation is a spiritual process. The actual phrase ‘in [the] Spirit’ does not preclude either view.”¹³⁵

For Hendriksen, the matter of the mystery being associated with the work of the Spirit that began at Pentecost is clear. “It is a mystery which . . . has now been revealed or unveiled by the Spirit. . . . Illumined by the Spirit given to the church on the day of Pentecost, [the apostles and prophets] were able to set forth with greater clarity than ever before the meaning of the prophecies and their application to the new order of events.”¹³⁶

Lenski, though opposing the “instrumental view” here, believes Paul is referring to the Holy Spirit because the revelation came “in connection with the Spirit.”¹³⁷ In fact, he attempts to discredit Hendriksen’s view that the revealing was given *by means of* the Holy Spirit.

But we dismiss the mechanical idea of instrumental ἐν. . . . Here the idea to be expressed goes beyond the thought that the Holy Spirit was instrumental in making the revelation to the apostle-prophets; the cardinal part of the revelation here considered is that the Gentiles are included equally with Jews, and that this was revealed “in connection with the Spirit” who fell upon the Gentiles in Caesarea just as he descended on the 120 at Pentecost in Jerusalem.¹³⁸

Another option is that the mystery has now been revealed to the apostles and prophets in a spiritual sphere.¹³⁹ This view concedes that God prompted the knowledge of the mystery, since the verb ἀπεκαλύφθη is aorist passive. Robinson, acknowledging the possibility of the human spirit in Ephesians 3:5, says, “Here, as in

¹³²Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 168. See also McDougall, “Outline of Ephesians,” p. 1, unpublished class notes.

¹³³Abbott, *Colossians*, 83.

¹³⁴Skevington Wood, *Ephesians*, vol. 11, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), 46.

¹³⁵Robinson, *Ephesians*, 78.

¹³⁶Hendricksen, *Ephesians*, 154.

¹³⁷Lenski, *Ephesians*, 472. The New American Standard translators seem to agree, as they translate, “. . . as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit.”

¹³⁸Ibid.

¹³⁹For the possibility of this view, see Robinson, *Ephesians*, 78.

some other places, the Apostle's language is so vague that we cannot tell with entire certainty whether he refers directly to the personal Divine Spirit, or rather desires to suggest that the reception of the revelation is a spiritual process. The actual phrase 'in [the] Spirit' does not preclude either view."¹⁴⁰

If the "human spirit" view were correct, Ephesians 3:5 would be saying that although other generations were unaware of the mystery because it was not shown to them, the mystery has now been made known to the apostles and prophets of Paul's day. Instead of this reality being shown to them in the realm of flesh and blood, it was revealed to them in spirit. Though this view seems feasible in the context, ultimately the interpretation remains highly debatable. Therefore, either the "human spirit" view or the "instrumental view" may be correct, though most are in agreement with the latter.

Ephesians 6:18

From Ephesians 4:1-6:20, Paul discusses the practical ramifications for the believer who understands his earthly role as it relates to the overall plan of God, in which he plays an important part. Within this framework, Paul describes the preparation for the spiritual warfare in which the believer is engaged (6:10-20).¹⁴¹ Part of this preparation is taking the helmet of salvation and the sword τοῦ πνεύματος, the word of God (6:17). In 6:18, Paul then says, "By means of all prayer and petition, praying at all times ἐν πνεύματι, and with this in view, watching in all perseverance and petition for all the saints."

Most would agree that τοῦ πνεύματος (6:17), an articular genitive noun, refers to the Holy Spirit, thus "the sword of the Spirit." However, such clarity cannot be attributed to ἐν πνεύματι in 6:18. Lincoln thinks Paul uses the phrase instrumentally and refers to the Holy Spirit. "Praying 'in the Spirit' has reference to the Holy Spirit (cf. also Jude 20, 'Pray in the Holy Spirit') rather than to the human spirit. In Paul's thought, the Spirit is intimately involved in believers' prayers. . . . The writer is calling for prayer inspired, guided, and made effective through the Spirit."¹⁴² Bruce adds that προσευχόμενοι ἐν πνεύματι is "praying under the Spirit's influence and with his assistance."¹⁴³

Certainly all effectual prayer involves the influence and assistance of the Holy Spirit, a fact evident in Scripture,¹⁴⁴ but there is some doubt as to whether this is Paul's intention here. Lincoln stated self-evident generalities ("In Paul's thought, the Spirit is intimately involved in believers' prayers," etc.), but he neither substantiates his case nor attempts to prove that Paul was not referring to the spiritual realm.

Lenski points out the weakness in saying that Paul is referring to the Holy Spirit. "Then, however, we find the absence of the article strange, the more so since 'the Spirit' has just been mentioned, and the article of previous reference would be in place."¹⁴⁵ His point is that when a noun is repeated later in context, the Greek writer normally assigns an article to the subsequent use of that noun. Wallace adds, "It [previous reference] is the most common use of the article and the easiest usage to identify."¹⁴⁶ However, 6:18 bears no article of previous reference that would syntactically link it to "the Spirit" from 6:17.¹⁴⁷

While some assert it would be too obvious an admonition for Paul to say, "Pray always in your spirit," Lenski addresses this criticism by saying, "To say that this would be self-evident is to overlook our experience.

¹⁴⁰Ibid.

¹⁴¹Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 430. See also McDougall, "Outline of Ephesians," p. 1, unpublished class notes.

¹⁴²Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 452.

¹⁴³Bruce, *Ephesians*, 411.

¹⁴⁴"But the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words" (Rom. 8:26).

¹⁴⁵Lenski, *Ephesians*, 676.

¹⁴⁶Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 218. Dana and Mantey disagree, saying instead that the chief function of the article is to denote identity (Dana and Mantey, *A Manual Grammar*, 137, 141).

¹⁴⁷The question may be asked whether the use of "previous reference" applies to nouns that are objects of prepositions, as is true of πνεύματι in this verse. In his first illustration of the article of previous reference, Wallace cites the use of an articular noun that is the object of the preposition μετά. "John 4:40, 43 ἔμεινεν ἐκεῖ δύο ἡμέρας . . . he stayed there two days . . . μετὰ δὲ τὰς δύο ἡμέρας . . . after the two days . . ." (Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 219).

This is the very point to be stressed because the spirit, the new man in us (4:23-4), is often languid even in critical days and needs stimulation.”¹⁴⁸ He also defends his position by appealing to context. “Because ‘in spirit’ is Paul’s meaning he adds: ‘and thereunto (ever) being vigilant in all steadfastness,’ etc. It is our spirit that must keep vigilant unto prayer, yea, vigilant ‘in all steadfastness.’”¹⁴⁹

Another argument from context is the analogy of the battle and the soldier’s armor. Since the battle is not against flesh and blood but against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenlies (6:12), the means of protection are all spiritual (6:13-17). Likewise, there is no actual sword to wield, but the Word of God is one’s sword (6:17).

This sword is to be used in the context of praying (a participle, not an imperative), praying at all times (6:18), which is done in the spiritual realm, the same place where the believer’s defenses are found. Therefore, praying “in spirit” is praying “not in form or in word only, but in that part of our being through which we hold communion with God.”¹⁵⁰

The use of ἐν πνεύματι in Ephesians 6:18 may refer either to the instrumentality of the Holy Spirit or the realm of the human spirit, with both views demonstrating credible reasons for receiving support. This means that all three passages from Ephesians are anything but abundantly clear as to their meaning, each with the possibility of referring to either the Holy Spirit or the human spirit.

Chapter Summary

A compilation of the information from this chapter reveals support for both the “instrumental view” and the “human spirit” view, though no instances were found where the preposition ἐν means “with,” denoting content.¹⁵¹ There were 13 occurrences where the phrase in question most likely is to be taken as a locative: II Kings 2:9; I Chronicles 28:12; Ecclesiastes 7:9 and 8:8; John 4:23 and 4:24; I Corinthians 14:16; Colossians 1:8; I Timothy 3:16; and Revelation 1:10, 4:2, 17:3, and 21:10. Of these 13, Ecclesiastes 8:8 refers to “wind,” and not “spirit,” making it of only slight help to the study. Also, I Corinthians 14:16 encloses ἐν in brackets, meaning it is absent from some manuscripts.

There were seven occurrences where ἐν πνεύματι most likely is to be taken instrumentally: Nehemiah 9:30; Psalm 48:7; Isaiah 11:4; Zechariah 1:6, 4:6, 7:12; and Matthew 22:43. Of these seven, Nehemiah 9:30 is qualified by σου, Zechariah 1:6 and 4:6 are both qualified by μου, and Zechariah 7:12 is qualified by αὐτοῦ. This renders these four uses only partially helpful, since the definiteness provided by the pronouns might free the author from a perceived need to add the article to ἐν πνεύματι for the purpose of identifying the πνεῦμα in question. Psalm 48:7 refers to “wind,” while Isaiah 11:4 refers to “breath,” making them of assistance only in establishing the validity of an instrumental use of the preposition. This leaves only Matthew 22:43 of primary help.

Though most of the passages that have been reviewed are understood by many to refer to the Holy Spirit, at least in the minds of modern commentators, it has been demonstrated that many of the passages might also be understood to refer to the human spirit, or spiritual realm. Moreover, a closer look into the context and exegetical data revealed that in many passages the “human spirit” view actually might be a more acceptable interpretation. The places where the writer was setting up a contrast or using an analogy are especially prone to the possibility of locative uses. As the survey of the preceding passages has shown, each use of the phrase ought to be studied in its context in order to arrive at the correct interpretation.

¹⁴⁸Lenski, *Ephesians*, 676.

¹⁴⁹Ibid.

¹⁵⁰Westcott, *Ephesians*, 97.

¹⁵¹There were 6 uses of ἐν πνεύματι that are either instrumental or locative, with each of them capable of being used either way. These include the following verses: Ezekiel 37:1; Romans 2:29 and 8:9; Ephesians 2:2, 3:5, and 6:18.

CHAPTER 3:

THE RELATIONSHIP OF ΠΙΜΠΛΗΜΙ ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΟΣ AND ΠΛΗΡΗΣ ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΟΣ ΤΟ ΠΛΗΡΟΥΣΘΕ ΕΝ ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΙ

Introduction

Crucial to a proper understanding of ἐν πνεύματι in Ephesians 5:18 is its relationship to the governing verb, πληροῦσθε, a present passive imperative that means “be filled, be made full.”¹⁵² For those who believe this use of πνεύματι has the Holy Spirit in view, especially adherents of the “Spirit-filled” position, much of their case rests on an alleged correspondence between the command to be filled “with the Spirit” and statements found in Acts, such as “being filled with the Spirit,” and “they were filled with the Holy Spirit,” and also “full of the Spirit.”¹⁵³

Anderson points out that many “interpreters restrict their analysis of Ephesians 5:18 to a comparison of the ‘filling’ command with seemingly parallel texts in Acts. They assume that Paul’s command to “be filled ἐν πνεύματι” is synonymous with Spirit-filling terminology found in Luke’s account of the early church.”¹⁵⁴ A large part of an important doctrine, the filling of the Holy Spirit, is based on this supposed link between Ephesians 5:18 and various Acts passages, as is suggested by such authors as Pentecost.

Of all the doctrines in the realm of the person and work of the Holy Spirit, there is none more important, as it relates to the believer’s Christian life, than that of the *filling of the Spirit*. The Apostle Paul gives us a command: “. . . be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.” (Ephesians 5:18). . . . If you consider the teaching in the Book of Acts on the filling of the Spirit, you will notice that the same disciples were filled again and again.¹⁵⁵

Therefore, one is asked to believe that the filling of the Spirit “came and went” according to some criteria not explicitly stated in any “filling text.” Chafer concurs with Pentecost.

The command to be Spirit-filled is imperative, both as a divine necessity and as a divine authority. There is nothing optional on the human side. However, the tense of the verb [πληροῦσθε] is significant indicating, as it does, not a once-for-all *crisis*-experience, but rather a constant in-filling. The New Testament teaches that all believers are *indwelt* by the Spirit of God (John 7:37-39; Rom. 5:5; 8:9; I Cor. 2:12; 6:19), but it also teaches that those in whom the Spirit abides need always to be *getting filled* with the Spirit.¹⁵⁶

Though it may sound harmless to assert that one must continually be receiving this filling of the Spirit, the comments immediately following Pentecost’s statement about Ephesians 5:18 expose the logical conclusion of such a view.

The Word of God divides men into several different classifications. After Paul has spoken of the natural man, he divides believers into two classifications: the carnal man, and the spiritual man (I Corinthians 2:9-3:4). The carnal

¹⁵²William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 2d ed., Walter Bauer’s 5th ed. revised and augmented by F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), 670.

¹⁵³The participle form of πίμπλημι occurs in Acts 4:8 and 13:9, while the verb form of πίμπλημι is found in Acts 2:4; 4:31; and 9:17. The adjectival form of πλήρης appears in Acts 6:3; 6:5; 7:55; and 11:24.

¹⁵⁴Chip Anderson, “Rethinking ‘Be Filled With the Spirit’: Ephesians 5:18 and the Purpose of Ephesians,” *Evangelical Journal* 7/2 (Fall 1989): 57.

¹⁵⁵J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Divine Comforter: The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1977), 154.

¹⁵⁶Lewis Sperry Chafer, *The Ephesian Letter: Doctrinally Considered* (New York: Loizeaux Brothers, Bible Truth Despot, 1935), 151.

man is the man who lives by the power of the flesh, according to the dictates of the flesh, and the spiritual man is the man who lives by the power of the Spirit.¹⁵⁷

This reveals the precarious tendency of some dispensationalists, who inadvertently compartmentalize truth to the point that they sometimes make distinctions which cannot be biblically supported.¹⁵⁸ Thus the filling ministry of the Holy Spirit, as it relates to numerous passages in Acts, has great bearing upon the purpose of this work.

Though it goes beyond the scope of the present work to embark upon an exhaustive study of the filling ministry of the Holy Spirit, it is necessary to explore the meaning of the “filling of the Spirit” and “full of the Holy Spirit” in Acts to substantiate its proper relationship to the command in Ephesians 5:18. The purpose of this chapter is to consider whether or not *πίμπλημι πνεύματος ἁγίου*, “filled in/with the Holy Spirit,” and *πλήρεις πνεύματος*, “full of the Spirit,” both found throughout Acts, ever refer to anything beyond the initial filling of the Holy Spirit. Do the individuals in Acts receive only one filling of the Spirit, or do they receive subsequent fillings as well?

Many believe that these phrases, which describe a person as being “filled by the Spirit” or “full of the Spirit” *after* he has already received the initial filling of the Holy Spirit, speak only of subsequent fillings of the Spirit. They do not accept that the phrases describe an “abiding characteristic” within the individual that accentuate his level of spirituality and obedience to God.

The idea of an abiding characteristic is the conclusion arrived at in the doctoral dissertation of William Arp, though he believes that some uses of *πίμπλημι πνεύματος ἁγίου* describe a sudden filling of the Holy Spirit, resulting in inspired speaking and preaching.¹⁵⁹ This abiding characteristic would be the result of genuine conversion and a life lived under the influence of the Spirit of God, with whom the believer has been fully and completely filled since regeneration.

The process involved in determining the correct rendering includes an examination of the initial filling of the Spirit at Pentecost, followed by a study of all subsequent uses of cognate phrases, including participial, verbal, and adjectival forms. The study of these phrases in Acts hopefully will shed light on the nature of their relationship to the command given by Paul in Ephesians 5:18.

The Filling of the Spirit at Pentecost

Prophecy of the Baptism of the Spirit

Before His ascension into heaven, Jesus gathered His apostles together and commanded them to stay in Jerusalem until they received what the Father had promised, the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4).¹⁶⁰ Then in 1:5 Jesus says, “For John baptized in water, but ἐν πνεύματι βαπτισθήσεσθε ἁγίῳ (“you will be baptized in/by *the* Holy Spirit”) not many days from now.” Luke uses an interesting Greek construction, placing the verb βαπτισθήσεσθε directly between the words “Holy” and “Spirit,” by which he reinforces the fact that immersion takes place in the realm of the Holy Spirit of God.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁷Pentecost, *The Divine Comforter*, 154.

¹⁵⁸Cf. John MacArthur, Jr., *The Gospel According to Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 25. In his book, MacArthur presents an insightful critique of the unbiblical dichotomy between carnal and spiritual Christians.

¹⁵⁹William E. Arp, “An Interpretation of ‘Be Filled in Spirit’ in Ephesians 5:18” (Th.D. dissertation, Grace Theological Seminary, Winona Lake, Indiana, 1983), 74.

¹⁶⁰All Bible citations in this chapter, unless otherwise noted, will be from the book of Acts.

¹⁶¹This is a logical rather than a spatial relationship. The believer’s spirit is certainly not removed from his body and transported to any location where the Holy Spirit resides.

Whereas John the Baptist immersed in water those who came to repent of sin, Jesus predicted to His apostles that several days hence they would be immersed in the One who was by quality Holy Spirit.¹⁶² Though there is a stark contrast between the simplicity of water and the unfathomable depths of the Holy Spirit, Luke did not intend the Spirit to be a counterpart to water, as “a sort of fluid that sprinkled, washed, or even immersed a person. . . . The Spirit filled the disciples in a miraculous way and gave them great power.”¹⁶³

“The apostles were the nucleus of the Church, and as such had to possess the Spirit, for this is the indispensable token of belonging to Christ.”¹⁶⁴ Therefore, in order for Christ to exhibit the transfer of His authority to these select men, He saw to it that they would be the first to be baptized in the Spirit. Moreover, “just as water baptism is a once-for-all matter, so is baptism with the Spirit.”¹⁶⁵ Among non-charismatics, there is basic agreement on the baptism of the Spirit, as seen in Pentecost’s comment, “If we consider the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit, never in the Word of God can you find a command that the believer should seek the baptism of the Holy Spirit.”¹⁶⁶

Result of the Baptism of the Spirit

When the apostles asked Jesus to instruct them as to when He would restore the kingdom (1:6), He rebuked them with the admonition that the times and the seasons were not for them to know (1:7). Within that context, Jesus proclaims in Acts 1:8, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be My witnesses. . . .” In actuality, there was something the disciples could know relative to time, yet this belonged to the near future rather than to some uncertain time in the future.¹⁶⁷

They would receive spiritual empowerment for their world-wide testimony. “This is spiritual power which is communicated directly by the Holy Spirit in the Pentecostal miracle, a complete and an adequate equipment of mind and of spirit for the great future task. A genitive absolute explains how the apostles were to receive this power: ‘the Holy Spirit having come upon you.’”¹⁶⁸ Many translations add the word “when” to this phrase,¹⁶⁹ because “most genitive absolutes in the New Testament are temporal. Using ‘while’ or ‘after’ will normally make proper sense.”¹⁷⁰

The emphasis of the writer is inescapable: the apostles’ receiving of power to make them effective witnesses for their Lord would be directly linked to the event of their receiving the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus had promised them just prior to His ascension. As Lenski put it, this would be “a complete and an adequate equipment of mind and of spirit for the great future task.”¹⁷¹ Though Jesus would not reveal the time of His

¹⁶²Commenting on the parallel passage in Mark 1:8, Wallace observes, “Here it is obvious that Christ is the agent (since *αὐτός* is the subject, and the Holy Spirit is the means [*and perhaps sphere*] that the Lord uses to baptize” (Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996], 374 [italics added]).

¹⁶³R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of The Acts of the Apostles*, vol. 9, *Commentary on the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), 27.

¹⁶⁴Everett F. Harrison, *Acts: The Expanding Church* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1975), 38.

¹⁶⁵Ibid.

¹⁶⁶Pentecost, *The Divine Comforter*, 155.

¹⁶⁷Harrison, *The Expanding Church*, 39.

¹⁶⁸Lenski, *Acts*, 31.

¹⁶⁹E.g. the NAS, NIV, and RSV.

¹⁷⁰William D. Mounce, *Basics of Biblical Greek* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1993), 275. Wallace agrees that the majority of genitive absolutes are temporal, “The participle [in the genitive absolute] is normally (about 90% of the time) *temporal*, though it can on occasion express any of the adverbial ideas.” (Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 655). Cf. Henry Anselm Scamp, “The Case Absolute in the New Testament,” *Bib Sac* 59/233 (Jan 1902): 76–84; *Bib Sac* 59/234 (Apr 1902): 325–40.

¹⁷¹Lenski, *Acts*, 31.

return to the apostles, He informed them that *when* the Holy Spirit came upon them, they would have the power to accomplish great things in Jerusalem, Samaria, and beyond (1:8).

Fulfillment of the Baptism of the Spirit

When the time of the Pentecost celebration had come, the apostles were all together in one place (2:1). Suddenly a noise came from the sky and filled the entire house (2:2), and tongues appeared to them and rested on each (2:3), “and they were all ἐπλήσθησαν πνεύματος ἁγίου (‘made full of the Holy Spirit’),” then began speaking with other tongues (2:4).

It may be noted that the term used here, an exclusively Lukan phrase, features the verb πίμπλημι plus the words “Holy Spirit” in the genitive case. Wallace explains the difference between the genitive case used here and the locative used in Ephesians 5, “Normally, a verb of filling takes a *genitive* of content; rarely, a simple dative of content. However, we know of no clear examples in biblical Greek in which ἐν + the dative indicates content” (italics added).¹⁷² Crater voices the same opinion, “The genitive is the normal case after verbs of filling when the content is to be expressed.”¹⁷³

Fundamental to this filling of the Holy Spirit is that the event directly fulfills Jesus’ prophecy to His apostles that they would be baptized in the Holy Spirit (1:5). “The emphasis is on the passive verb, ‘they were filled,’ for it was Jesus who filled the disciples with the Spirit; the aorist simply states the great fact. This is the realization of the promise, ‘he shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit.’”¹⁷⁴ Bruce concurs on this last point, “The spiritual baptism foretold by John and promised afresh by the Lord was now an accomplished fact.”¹⁷⁵

The question then arises as to the overlap between the “baptism” of the Spirit, which was prophesied, and the “filling” of the Spirit, which was the fulfillment of this prophecy. At this point, possibly due to their assumptions regarding Ephesians 5:18, many commentators differentiate between the baptism and filling in Acts 1 and 2.

Luke uses the word *fill* to describe the experience. This word is used when people are given an initial endowment of the Spirit to fit them for God’s service (9:17; Lk. 1:15) and also when they are inspired to make important utterances (4:8, 31; 13:9); related words are used to describe the continuous process of being filled with the Spirit (13:52; Eph. 5:18) or the corresponding state of being full (6:3, 5; 7:55; 11:24; Lk. 4:1). These references indicate that a person already filled with the Spirit can receive a fresh filling for a specific task, or a continuous filling. . . . The basic act of receiving the Spirit can be described as being baptized or filled, but the verb “baptize” is not used for subsequent experiences.¹⁷⁶

If Marshall is correct, the subsequent use of “filling” throughout Acts implies fresh fillings of the Holy Spirit. Though an examination of this claim is forthcoming, here it may be said that this would make the filling in Acts 2:4 merely a measure, a portion, or an incomplete part of Jesus’ prophecy uttered in 1:5.

If this be so, why did Jesus not qualify His prediction in 1:5, 8 of the coming indwelling Spirit? Why would Luke further complicate the issue by using “filled” instead of “baptized,” if the term “filled” (and its cognates) in later instances would diverge from this original meaning? Moreover, 1:8 reveals that the power infused in the apostles was, in all its fullness, intertwined with the event of the Holy Spirit’s *initial* coming upon

¹⁷²Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 374.

¹⁷³Timothy D. Crater, “The Filling of the Spirit in the Greek New Testament” (Th.M. Thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1971), 15. Cf. Lenski, *Acts*, 185.

¹⁷⁴Lenski, *Acts*, 60.

¹⁷⁵F. F., Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, vol. 5, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, ed. F. F. Bruce (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988), 51.

¹⁷⁶I. Howard Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. unspecified, *The Tyndale New Testament Commentary*, ed. R. V. G. Tasker (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1984), 69.

them. This is confirmed by Jesus' earlier statement, "But you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). Lenski drives home the point.

At Pentecost the Spirit himself came to dwell permanently, throughout all the ages, in the hearts of those who constitute the *Una Sancta*, the Christian Church. . . . Since Pentecost he actually fills the church with his powers and his gifts, and that by way of his own blessed presence. Hence these miraculous manifestations on this day of Pentecost; hence the new influx of power into the disciples, especially into the apostles for this witness-bearing in all the world (1:8).¹⁷⁷

All the power needed for all the church through all the ages was manifest at Pentecost.

It seems preferable to consider the predicted baptism of 1:5 and its fulfillment, the *filling* of the Spirit in 2:4, to be the same event. They are simply viewed from two different vantage points, because "*filling* and *baptism* are not completely synonymous terms."¹⁷⁸ If this be true, the baptism of the Spirit may have in mind the inception of the action, while the filling of the Spirit considers the ongoing reality of the Spirit's presence within the individual. Whatever the emphasis, Scripture demands that the event in 2:4 cannot signal anything less than the complete fulfillment of Jesus' declaration in 1:5. It remains to consider the later references to the filling of the Spirit throughout the balance of Acts.

The Filling of the Spirit Subsequent to Pentecost

The Participle Form of Πίμπλημι

The participial phrase πλησθεῖς πνεύματος ἁγίου, "being filled with the Holy Spirit," appears twice in Acts (4:8 and 13:9). Because of the similarity in their uses, the two verses may be treated together. In the context of 4:8, Peter and John were arrested by the Sadducees for proclaiming the resurrection of the dead (4:1-2). When they stood before the high priest and his officials, they were asked in what power and in what name they had healed the lame man and preached (1:7). The text of Acts 4:8 reads in the following manner: Τότε Πέτρος πλησθεῖς πνεύματος ἁγίου εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτούς. Peter then began to preach Jesus as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.

In Acts 13, Paul, having received the Holy Spirit sometime soon after the pronouncement of Ananias in Acts 9:17, was witnessing to Sergius Paulus. At this time, he was being opposed by Elymas the magician (13:8). Then in 13:9 the text reads, "But Saul, who was also known as Paul, πλησθεῖς πνεύματος ἁγίου, fixed his gaze upon him." Paul then rebuked the magician and told him he would be blind for a time. As the prophecy was immediately fulfilled, Sergius Paulus believed in the Lord (13:12).

In both situations where πλησθεῖς πνεύματος ἁγίου is found, many commentators¹⁷⁹ adhere to the view that Peter and Paul received a special filling of the Holy Spirit for the ministry activity at hand. "All those who were gathered together in the upper room on the day of Pentecost were 'filled with the Holy Ghost. . . .' (2:4). But Peter, who was one of those in the upper room on the day of Pentecost, was filled again (4:8)."¹⁸⁰ Bruce suggests, "This use of the aorist passive participle denotes a special moment of inspiration."¹⁸¹ Those who prefer this view translate the participial phrase, "being filled with the Spirit," as a finite verb, "[he] was filled with the Spirit."

¹⁷⁷Lenski, *Acts*, 60.

¹⁷⁸Harrison, *The Expanding Church*, 51.

¹⁷⁹So Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, 92; Harrison, *Acts: The Expanding Church*, 82; Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 100; and Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971), 216; et al.

¹⁸⁰Pentecost, *The Divine Comforter*, 156.

¹⁸¹Bruce, *Acts*, 92.

But was there truly a special moment of inspiration? The question, then, is whether the filling was immediately prior to the proclamation, as in a direct succession of the two events, or at some time earlier. The suggestion that both the participle and the verb are to be translated as finite verbs would render Acts 4:8, “Then Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit *and* said to them, ‘Rulers and elders of the people.’” One problem with this translation is the need to supply a conjunction (καί) that was not included by Luke.

If the New Testament author desired to describe two successive and logically interwoven events, would he not use two finite verbs joined by a conjunction, as was the case with Acts 4:31?¹⁸² Therefore, a second problem with translating the participle as another finite verb is the principle that if an adverbial participle can be identified as dependent upon a finite verb already in the context, it should be considered to function as a participle and not as a verb. In his section on doubtful examples of independent verbal participles, Daniel Wallace establishes this principle with an example from Ephesians 5:22.

Although most would consider the first four of these participles [which are all governed by πληροῦσθε from 5:18] as adverbial, many, including recent editions of the Greek NT, would consider the last participle as imperatival. Such is doubtful, especially since it too is a present anarthrous participle, as are the first four. *The basic rule here is simply this: If a participle can be identified as dependent (i.e., if it can at all be attached to a verb), it should be so considered (italics added).*¹⁸³

Since the participle in Acts 4:8 is anarthrous, and adverbial as well, and since the participle clearly may be understood to be dependent on the verb εἶπεν, one may regard the same rule as applicable in this passage also.

As a result, it might be preferable to take πληθεῖς πνεύματος ἁγίου as a parenthetical statement included to demonstrate the initial filling of the Spirit (i.e., Pentecost, for Peter) to be the reason for the empowerment for ensuing ministry. Thus, Peter spoke to the rulers and elders with great power and authority, because the boldness to preach the riches of Christ was infused in him when the Holy Spirit came upon him. This view suggests an abiding condition that is directly linked to an earlier event.

In his thesis on the filling of the Spirit in the Greek New Testament, Timothy Crater writes in relation to Acts 4:8 and 13:9, “The aorist participle, however, refers to a previous or contemporaneous moment when the event of filling took place, and not to an abiding state or condition. Hence, we may render it thus: ‘And Peter [Paul], having been filled with the Holy Spirit, said,’”¹⁸⁴ Crater’s translation more accurately reflects the normal function of a participle, instead of reflecting the function of a verb.

In Acts 13:11, Paul struck Elymas with blindness since the enablement to accomplish wonders was the result of the power at his disposal after being filled with the Spirit. Therefore, the participial phrase may be used to impress upon the reader that the power to perform great acts of service is contingent upon the event of one’s initial filling with the Spirit. A proper understanding of the aorist participle bolsters this argument.

While discussing the aorist participle, A. T. Robertson says, “Antecedent action is the usual idiom with the circumstantial participle. This is indeed the most common use of the aorist participle. But it must not be forgotten that the aorist part. does not in itself mean antecedent action, either relative or absolute. That is suggested by the context, the natural sequence of events.”¹⁸⁵ Therefore, the most common (though not exclusive) use of the aorist participle is action that is antecedent, or prior to that of the main verb, implying either the distant or the immediate past.

In harmony with Robertson’s observation, Dana and Mantey add, “As a particular tense may fit better into certain time relations of the context, we ordinarily find that tense used in such a connection in preference to

¹⁸²“And they were all filled (ἐπλήσθησαν) with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke (ἐλάλουν) the word of God with boldness.”

¹⁸³Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 651.

¹⁸⁴Crater, “The Filling of the Spirit in the Greek New Testament,” 15.

¹⁸⁵A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman Press, 1934), 860.

other tenses. . . . Antecedent action relative to the main verb is ordinarily expressed by the aorist or perfect. . . . Simultaneous action relative to the main verb is ordinarily expressed by the present.”¹⁸⁶

In their example of antecedent action for an aorist participle, Dana and Mantey turn to Acts 4:32,¹⁸⁷ where it states, “There was unity in the multitude τῶν πιστευσάντων (‘of those who had believed’).” The multitude that experienced unity consisted of those who had previously believed. In the same manner, Peter and Paul ministered with power because they previously had been filled with the Holy Spirit of God. Thus Hoekema’s claim that “obviously here too [Acts 13:9] there was a specific momentary filling with the Spirit which enabled Paul to do what he did”¹⁸⁸ may rightly be questioned.

The Verb Form of Πίμπλημι

Apart from Acts 2:4, which has already been discussed, there are two instances of πίμπλημι in its verb form in Acts (4:31 and 9:17). Acts 9:17 is the account of Ananias informing Paul that God had sent Ananias to him “so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” Since this is Paul’s initial filling of the Spirit, the equivalent to the other apostles’ Pentecost, it need not be treated. After reviewing 4:31 briefly, 13:52 must be considered more carefully, because this occurrence of the verb πληρόω, similar in meaning to πίμπλημι, appears in the imperfect tense and is interpreted differently.

Having previously discussed the context of Acts 4, only a brief introduction is needed for Luke’s use of πίμπλημι in 4:31. After Peter’s address to the Sadducees and religious leaders (4:8-12), they instructed Peter and John not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus (4:18). Once released, the two returned to their companions (4:23), a group which obviously included some or all of the 5000 just converted (4:4), who all gave praise to God for the deliverance of the two apostles.

“And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and ἐπλήσθησαν ἅπαντες τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος, and began to speak the word of God with boldness” (4:31). Though the similarity between this verse and 2:4 almost renders it insignificant to address, it is important to evaluate what some believe this verse implies. Says Pentecost, “And the believers, who had previously been filled with the Spirit, were filled again as they heard of the report of Peter’s conflict with the Sanhedrin (4:31).”¹⁸⁹

Hoekema adds, “Interestingly enough, this must have been a kind of second filling with the Spirit for some of them, since the original company of 120 disciples (1:15) had been filled with the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost.”¹⁹⁰ From this, one is led to believe that some of those present received the filling of the Spirit for the first time, while others were filled for the second time (the 120 disciples), and Peter was filled for the third time.¹⁹¹

This view presents several exegetical problems. First, like Pentecost, where the Spirit first came upon the apostles partly to authenticate them as primary caretakers of Jesus’ teachings, the emphasis is on the Spirit’s coming upon those who had not received Him. “The description here is reminiscent of the description of what happened on the day of Pentecost, both in the external signs of the Spirit’s advent and in the prayerful attitude of the disciples at his coming.”¹⁹² This is also the equivalent of Jesus’ statement in Acts 1:8, in that their receiving

¹⁸⁶H. E. Dana, and Julius R. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1957), 230.

¹⁸⁷Ibid.

¹⁸⁸Anthony A. Hoekema, *Holy Spirit Baptism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1972), 82.

¹⁸⁹Pentecost, *The Divine Comforter*, 156. See also John F. Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit: A Comprehensive Study of the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 195.

¹⁹⁰Hoekema, *Holy Spirit Baptism*, 82.

¹⁹¹See also Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, 92; Harrison, *Acts: The Expanding Church*, 82; Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 100; and Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 216.

¹⁹²Bruce, *Acts*, 100.

the Holy Spirit brought them power to preach the Word with boldness, something the apostles already possessed (2:4ff.; 2:14ff.; 2:40; 3:12ff.; 4:13).

Second, the pronoun used of those who received the Holy Spirit refers not to the apostles but to the new believers. The nearest antecedent to the pronoun in 4:31, “they [who were all filled],” is found in 4:24, those who had heard the report given by John and Peter, obviously a great number of whom were part of the 5000 new believers (4:4). “The verb ‘they had been gathered together’ may be considered the periphrastic past perfect or the imperfect plus a perfect participle: ‘they were,’ namely ‘as having been gathered’ and thus still being together.”¹⁹³

Also, the beginning of 4:32 and 4:33 says, “And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; . . . And with great power the apostles were giving witness.” By implication, this congregation that Luke described in 4:32 was the same group of people that had just been filled with the Spirit in 4:31, the “people” who saw the lame man healed (3:9) and heard Peter’s gospel message at the temple (3:11; 4:1). Having added an insightful statement about them in 4:32, he then turns his attention to the role of the apostles in 4:33.

Third, there is no explicit indication on the part of the author that any of those present during this filling were filled again, whether for the second time, the third time, or any subsequent number of times. The statement to that effect made by Hoekema goes beyond the words of Luke and says more than he does. Such a view is based on an argument from silence, if not based on an unintentional reading into the passage.

Finally, it also confounds the evidence that the filling of 2:4 was the *complete* fulfillment of Jesus’ prophecy in 1:5. For these reasons, there is ample evidence to suggest that the filling of the Spirit in 4:31 might consider only the initial filling of the Spirit for those in the assembly who had yet to be filled. Even if the apostles and previously filled disciples are part of the “all” in 4:31, there is no proof that Luke’s statement indicates they were filled again. Rather, it may be implying nothing more than the fact that whereas only some were previously filled, now all were filled.

Turning to the reference in 13:52, Luke employs a different verb, πληρόω, which also means “fill, make full.”¹⁹⁴ After being rejected by the Jews in Pisidian Antioch (13:45), Paul turned his attention to proclaiming Christ to the Gentiles (13:46). The Gentiles rejoiced and praised God at the good news of the gospel, and many believed (13:48). Then the devout Jews were stirred up with anger and drove Paul and Barnabas out of their district (13:50), and after the missionaries shook off the dust from their feet, they proceeded to Iconium (13:51). Then in 13:52, Luke adds the parenthetical statement, “And the disciples ἐπληροῦντο with joy and πνεύματος ἁγίου.”

The questions that must be answered are these: Who are “the disciples who were being filled with joy and the Holy Spirit”? Why did Luke use the imperfect tense, the tense of durative (ongoing) past action? Pentecost and Walvoord both believe that whoever might comprise “the disciples” referred to here, the list must include Paul and Barnabas. “Paul and Barnabas on a number of occasions were repeatedly filled with the Holy Spirit (9:17; 11:24; 13:9; 13:52)”¹⁹⁵ (italics added). Hoekema discusses the use of the imperfect tense.

After telling us that Paul and Barnabas were driven out of Antioch of Pisidia, Luke goes on to say, presumably about the disciples who had been left behind in Antioch, “And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.” Here the tense of the Greek verb is imperfect, implying that these disciples continued to be filled with the Spirit.¹⁹⁶

Are there any alternatives either to Pentecost’s claim that Paul and Barnabas were again filled with the Spirit, or to Hoekema’s assertion that the imperfect tense implies the disciples at Antioch kept getting filled with the Spirit again and again?

¹⁹³Lenski, *Acts*, 184.

¹⁹⁴Arndt, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 670.

¹⁹⁵Pentecost, *The Divine Comforter*, 156. See also Walvoord, *Holy Spirit*, 195.

¹⁹⁶Hoekema, *Holy Spirit Baptism*, 83.

Quick to imply that “the disciples” referred to in 13:52 are not Paul, Barnabas, or any traveling companions, Haenchen observes, “An edifying Lukan conclusion, which with the word μαθηταὶ reminds the reader that a Christian community has arisen in Pisidian Antioch.”¹⁹⁷ Since Luke commented in 13:51 that Paul and Barnabas embarked on a journey to Iconium, the new Christian community in Pisidian Antioch, consisting of “disciples who were being filled with joy and the Holy Spirit (13:52),” obviously did not include Paul and Barnabas, who were absent at the time of this closing remark.

Regarding Hoekema’s claim that the disciples there went on receiving repeated fillings of the Spirit, F. F. Bruce remarks, “But the converts whom they left behind in Pisidian Antioch, far from being discouraged by the expulsion of the men who had brought them the gospel, were . . . filled with the joy begotten by the indwelling Spirit of Christ.”¹⁹⁸ Since all non-charismatics are in agreement that the indwelling of the Spirit is a one-time act at regeneration, Bruce’s comment affirms that since the focus is on the converts and not the missionaries, few would assert this to be a matter of on-going fillings.

For what reason, then, is the imperfect tense used, if these were not repeated fillings for individuals previously filled with the Spirit? Lenski attempts to answer this question. “The expulsion in no way injured the disciples who were left destitute of these leaders. They had the best Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, who filled their hearts and also gave them joy. The imperfect describes this condition as one that continued indefinitely.”¹⁹⁹ To Lenski, the issue is not that new joys and new fillings kept coming, but that the result of their new belief (13:48) and acquisition of the Holy Spirit gave lasting joy and provided the continuing presence and ministry of the Holy Spirit who had filled them for all time to come. This rendering might better capture the thought of the imperfect tense used here by Luke.

The Adjective Form of Πλήρης

The final task of the chapter will be to examine the adjective form of the filling of the Spirit, πλήρεις πνεύματος ἁγίου, or “full of the Holy Spirit.” This term appears in four verses found in Acts: 6:3; 6:5; 7:55; and 11:24. The overlap in meaning between these uses warrants treating all these passages together.

In Acts 6:3, the apostles instructed the church to choose from among themselves seven men of good reputation, “full of the Spirit and wisdom,” whom they could put in charge of serving tables so that the Hellenistic Jews would be treated in the same manner as the native Hebrew Jews. In 6:5, the church selected Stephen. “And the statement found approval with the whole congregation, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit.”

Acts 7:55 once again refers to Stephen, just before his martyrdom, saying, “But being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.” In Acts 11:24, the text says Barnabas was “a good man and full of the Holy Spirit and faith.”

Do all these passages imply fresh fillings of the Holy Spirit, or do they in some fashion describe the character of the individuals and their reliance upon the Spirit of God? Dwight Pentecost’s opinion remains consistent with his stance on the verbal and participial forms of πίμπλημι, yet he shows inconsistency when interpreting “full of the Spirit” in 6:3 and 7:55: “Stephen was chosen *because he was* a man *full* of the Holy Ghost (6:3), but just before he was martyred for his testimony for Jesus Christ, Scripture records he was *filled again* (7:55)” (italics added).²⁰⁰ As noted earlier, Pentecost also believes Barnabas was repeatedly filled with the Holy Spirit.²⁰¹ Walvoord agrees with Pentecost on all these counts.²⁰²

¹⁹⁷Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 415.

¹⁹⁸Bruce, *Acts*, 269.

¹⁹⁹Lenski, *Acts*, 556.

²⁰⁰Pentecost, *The Divine Comforter*, 156.

²⁰¹Bruce, *Acts*, 100.

²⁰²Walvoord, *Holy Spirit*, 195.

Those opposing the idea that πλήρεις πνεύματος ἁγίου represents repeated fillings of the Spirit believe the term describes the quality of the individual's character. According to F. F. Bruce, who comments on Acts 11:24, "The presence of a man of such sterling character and faith, a man 'full of the Holy Spirit,' gave them the stimulus they needed to prosecute their evangelism more vigorously."²⁰³ Lenski views "full of the Spirit" in similar fashion.

The reason that Barnabas showed such interest in the growing church at Antioch was his personal character. . . . In that he was "full of the Holy Spirit and faith" he was a man like Stephen, of whom Luke records the same thing in 6:5. The Holy Spirit had taken possession of his heart through the Word and filled it with strong and virile faith.²⁰⁴

In his dissertation on the interpretation of "Be filled ἐν πνεύματι" from Ephesians 5:18, William Arp states, "On the other hand, πλήρης πνεύματος ἁγίου seems to refer to an abiding characteristic of a person. The phrase πληρώω πνεύματος ἁγίου (13:52) alludes to the same abiding characteristic as πλήρης πνεύματος ἁγίου."²⁰⁵

The phrase, "full of the Spirit," addresses the outward manifestation of godliness visible for all to see. This outward visibility represents an inward transformation of the heart, bearing witness of one whose life is wrought in God. This type of person demonstrates genuine faith by mighty deeds that display the power of God (1:8).

A word must also be said about Pentecost's statement that Stephen received a filling of the Spirit before his death. Luke's remark, "Being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven" (7:55), reveals the effect of the Spirit of God abiding within him, a response that could only have come from a genuine believer. The comment is added to point all glory to God for the demonstration of the power Stephen received when first converted.

Harrison, writing on the meaning of "full of the Spirit" in 7:55, refers the reader to this quote from his comment on the same phrase in 6:5, "Clearly the purpose of the rite in this instance *was not the communication of the Holy Spirit*, for the possession of the Spirit in fullness was a qualification for the selection of the seven (6:3) and is explicitly noted in the case of Stephen (v.5)"²⁰⁶ (italics added).

Stephen, as was true of Paul and Barnabas, apparently did not receive a fresh filling of the Holy Spirit; rather, the author chose to add this parenthetical remark to demonstrate the power of God at work within him. If Luke wanted to communicate that a person was receiving a second filling of the Spirit, he likely would have used two main verbs and a conjunction instead of the phrase πλήρεις πνεύματος ἁγίου. This critique is also true for the participial form πλησθεῖς πνεύματος ἁγίου, which is better viewed as a descriptive characteristic of a person.

Chapter Summary

A study of the phrases "being filled with the Spirit" and "full of the Holy Spirit," both found in Acts, was necessary to substantiate their proper relationship to the command in Ephesians 5:18 to "be filled ἐν πνεύματι." Many take this later Pauline command to be an imperative for Christians to be filled with the Holy Spirit. This has become a substantial proof text for the doctrine of the Spirit's on-going filling ministry. Since there are no similar commands in the New Testament, many attempt to draw support for their view by comparing it to the seemingly-related phrases in Acts.

This chapter revealed that the verb and participle forms in Luke, which, except for one occurrence of πληρώω with πνεύματος ἁγίου, always use πίμπλημι plus a form of "Holy Spirit" in the genitive case, the only

²⁰³Bruce, *Acts*, 227.

²⁰⁴Lenski, *Acts*, 454.

²⁰⁵Arp, "An Interpretation of 'Be Filled in Spirit' in Ephesians 5:18," 74.

²⁰⁶Harrison, *The Expanding Church*, 107 (from p. 126).

Lukan means of denoting one's filling with the Spirit. There exists a great difference between the genitive case used here and the locative case used in Ephesians 5. Normally, a verb of filling takes a genitive of content, and only rarely a locative of content. However, there are no clear examples in biblical Greek in which ἐν plus the locative indicates content, as in the content of filling.

This chapter also demonstrated that πίμπλημι πνεύματος ἁγίου, "filled with the Holy Spirit," and πλήρεις πνεύματος, "full of the Spirit," may not actually refer to subsequent fillings of the Holy Spirit, as many writers have suggested. It cannot be substantiated that the believers in Acts received the filling of the Spirit more than once each, and any subsequent references to "being full" or "being filled with the Spirit" may actually imply an "abiding characteristic." As such, Luke would have employed these terms in order to reveal that the individual's strength for ministry, courage to undergo adversity, or godliness of character is always the direct result of a life transformed by God and lived with power, as a result of the filling of the Holy Spirit.

CHAPTER 4:

THE MEANING OF EN ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΙ IN THE CONTEXT OF EPHESIANS 5:18

Introduction

Any attempt to evaluate πληροῦσθε ἐν πνεύματι in Ephesians 5:18, in order to determine the intended meaning, encounters a number of obstacles. In the first place, the prevailing interpretation²⁰⁷ that this is a universal command to “be filled with the Spirit” is so entrenched in the minds of scholars and believers alike, that any consideration of an alternative understanding would likely be received with resistance or rejection.

In addition, since scholars have seemingly investigated the subject almost *ad infinitum*, it would seem that everything that can be said on the subject has already been said.²⁰⁸ Finally, the range of the meaning of πνεῦμα can easily render either a translation of “Spirit” or “spirit,” so apart from context, it would be difficult to be dogmatic as to the author’s intended meaning.

On the other hand, a perusal of the extensive literature on the matter reveals a notable lack of specific contextual exegesis.²⁰⁹ Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to provide an exegetical analysis of Paul’s command, as it relates to both the greater context of the epistle and the immediate context within chapter five. A study of this nature should demonstrate the merits of each of the three views under consideration.

Regarding the relationship of πληροῦσθε ἐν πνεύματι to the overall context of Ephesians, the study of any selected passage must reflect in some way the general purpose of the letter. The command in 5:18 is certainly no exception. Says Anderson, “The command does not appear in a vacuum, nor does it come from Paul’s hand as an off-the-cuff remark. What Paul means . . . should reflect the purpose already established by the previous context (1:3-5:14).”²¹⁰ Finding the purpose of this epistle, however, is a difficult proposition, since various studies of Ephesians have produced many conflicting answers to the question of purpose.²¹¹

Regarding the relationship of πληροῦσθε ἐν πνεύματι to its immediate context, the earlier commands to walk carefully (5:15),²¹² to understand what is the will of the Lord (5:17), and not to become drunk with wine (5:18) will be examined as to their bearing upon “be filled ἐν πνεύματι.” Next, the imperatival clause πληροῦσθε ἐν πνεύματι will itself be considered, with special attention given to grammar and syntax. Finally, the subsequent participial phrases governed by πληροῦσθε ἐν πνεύματι (5:19-21) will be evaluated to determine their significance to the discussion.

The Greater Context of Ephesians

The Identity of the Recipients

What is the greater context of the Ephesian letter? What was the overall purpose Paul had in writing to these believers? The first matter of importance is identifying, if possible, the recipients of the letter. According to Guthrie, the external evidence seems to support the conclusion that Paul did not include within the letter a

²⁰⁷This cannot be called the traditional view, because many earlier commentators such as Lenski, Abbott, Westcott, Beare, and Swete did not believe this passage refers to the Holy Spirit.

²⁰⁸Chip Anderson, “Rethinking ‘Be Filled with the Spirit:’ Ephesians 5:18 and the Purpose of Ephesians,” *Evangelical Journal* 7/2 (1989): 57.

²⁰⁹Ibid.

²¹⁰Ibid.

²¹¹Ibid., 58.

²¹²All biblical citations in this chapter, unless otherwise noted, will be from Ephesians.

destination for the church to whom he was writing.²¹³ The best and earliest manuscript evidence suggests that the reading ἐν ῚΕφέσω in 1:1 may be an inauthentic textual variant added to the original manuscript.²¹⁴ Guthrie notes that most modern scholars conclude that the original reading omitted the words,²¹⁵ though many current translations have yet to reflect this.

It is also possible that Paul did not intimately know the Christians to whom he wrote. As Lincoln put it, “He . . . appears to have a general but not intimate knowledge of his readers.”²¹⁶ The internal evidence favors this conclusion as well.²¹⁷ In 1:15, among other examples,²¹⁸ the apostle says, “On account of this I also, *having heard of the faith* in the Lord Jesus which exists among you . . .” (italics added).

From the account in Acts 19 and 20, it is clear that Paul knew the Ephesian church quite well. He solemnly testified “to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ” (20:21), and with tears he admonished each one of them “night and day *for a period of three years* [italics added]” (20:31). The Ephesian church was a church whose faith was founded and built by the apostle, so the notion that Paul “heard of their faith” would be difficult to accept.

What is the importance of recognizing that Paul had little knowledge of those to whom he wrote? If he did not know them, he probably would be compelled to provide them with the most important, comprehensive truth he could communicate in a single epistle. The text of Ephesians 1 portrays this vital truth to be the overall, redemptive plan of God for the ages, along with these believers’ role in that great plan.²¹⁹ As Anderson said, “The two governing concerns for Paul in Ephesians seem to be 1) God’s redemptive activity in Christ and 2) the participation of the redeemed community in that activity.”²²⁰

Ephesians 1:3-14 and the Purpose of the Book

After addressing the people to whom he was writing the letter (1:1-2), Paul embarks on a one-sentence anthem of praise to God that extends from 1:3 to 1:14.²²¹ This is followed by a powerful prayer rooted in a resolve to carry out his part in the application of this great spiritual truth to their lives through intercessory prayer. Within this mighty passage of praise is found the key to understanding the entire epistle.

In 1:3, Paul provides an *umbrella* of the eternal plan of God, under which the course of events that unfold the will of God for the ages is found. The “umbrella” is found in the statement, “He blessed us in every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ.” These timeless blessings encompass the outworking of God’s plan that involves man’s election, redemption, and future glory. It is also crucial to note that the accomplishment of God’s redemptive plan is rooted “in Christ,” a phrase appearing five times.

To one side underneath the “umbrella” of God’s eternal blessings lies the past event of the predestination of God’s chosen ones. “He called us out in Him before the foundation of the world” (1:4). In the center of the

²¹³Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 508.

²¹⁴This includes the Chester Beatty papyri \mathfrak{P}^{46} , dated to A.D. 200; \mathfrak{S} (Sinaiticus), dated to the 4th century A.D.; and B (Vaticanus), dated to the 4th century A.D.

²¹⁵Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 508.

²¹⁶Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, vol. 42, *Word Biblical Commentary*, eds. David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), lxxv.

²¹⁷It is the conviction of the present writer that the epistle was written to the churches at Laodicea and Hierapolis, if not several others in the Lycus valley as well. Intrinsic evidence for this view is found in the following references, though the present work does not allow opportunity to elaborate: Colossians 1:4; 1:7; 4:7–8; 4:12–13; 4:15–16 (4:16 being most significant); Ephesians 1:15; 3:2; 4:21 (cf. I Corinthians 2:1–4); 6:21.

²¹⁸See also Ephesians 3:2 and 4:21.

²¹⁹Since Paul “did not shrink from declaring to you [the Ephesians] the whole purpose of God” (20:27), why would he write a letter to them in which his primary intent was to reveal the overall plan and purpose of God for the ages? This also argues strongly against the epistle being written to the Ephesian church.

²²⁰Anderson, “Rethinking ‘Be Filled with the Spirit,’” 59.

²²¹These 12 verses are comprised of one lengthy sentence in the Greek language.

“umbrella” is the current reality being experienced by His people. “We have redemption through His blood” (1:7). To the other side of the “umbrella” is a future guarantee. “We were sealed in the Holy Spirit of promise until the redemption of His possession to the praise of His glory” (1:14), the consummation of which is eternal life and the full realization of the spiritual blessings that will endure forever.

A summary of the epistle’s purpose is found in 1:9-10, namely that God has “made known to us the mystery of His will according to His favor which He purposed in Him [Christ], for an administration [of God’s will] to head up all things in Christ.” Therefore the purpose of the letter is to introduce them to the eternal, redemptive plan of God and to show them their part in it. Anderson put it this way, “Paul writes in order that his readers might understand and recognize their place in God’s redemptive plan.”²²²

The Purpose of Ephesians in the Ensuing Chapters

In calling attention to the believer’s role in the redemptive plan of God, Paul later prays (3:14ff.) that God would enable His people to comprehend His plan and power, which works first in the church (2:1-6; 2:11-22), and then through the church to the world (3:10; 3:20-21).²²³

In Ephesians 4:1-6:20, Paul discusses the practical ramifications for the believer who understands his earthly role as it relates to the overall plan of God, in which he has an important part. “The doctrine expounded in the earlier part is to be worked out according to the practical guidance given in the later part. . . . As members of the new humanity, the readers have already been reminded of the purpose to which God has called them: the hope of their calling requires lives which are in keeping with their high destiny.”²²⁴

Paul directs his discussion of the practical application of the believer’s part in God’s eternal plan into four areas: unity in the church (4:1-16), purity in conduct (4:17-5:21), submission in relationships (5:21-6:9), and preparation for warfare in the spiritual realm (6:10-20).²²⁵ From beginning to end, this epistle addresses the eternal and temporal from a spiritual perspective. If there is any unique emphasis, it is that because of all that God has accomplished in Christ, the believer is free to abundantly live the present life in light of what God is accomplishing in the spiritual realm.

Ephesians 5:18 and Its Immediate Context

The Command to Walk Carefully

Before addressing the commands in 5:18, the verse must be connected to the flow of Paul’s argument up to that point. In 5:15-16, Paul issued the command, “Therefore, see how you walk,²²⁶ that it is carefully, not as unwise men but as wise, redeeming the time because the days are evil.” The significance of this command is rooted in the previous context. Having instructed the readers to be imitators of God (5:1) and to walk in love (5:2),²²⁷ Paul spends the next several verses differentiating godly behavior of children of light from the evil done in darkness by the sons of disobedience (5:2-12).²²⁸

²²²See previous note.

²²³See previous note.

²²⁴F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, vol. 10, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, ed. F. F. Bruce (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1984), 333.

²²⁵Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 224, 271, 352, 430. For similar section summaries, see also Donald G. McDougall, “Outline of Ephesians,” p. 1, unpublished class notes.

²²⁶Anderson states that Paul’s command “to walk” is the governing verb in the pericope (5:15–21), the immediate setting of 5:18 (Anderson, “Rethinking ‘Be Filled with the Spirit,’” 59).

²²⁷Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 294.

²²⁸*Ibid.*, 317.

In 5:13, Paul notes that all things become visible when exposed by light.²²⁹ He subsequently inserts an imperative, considered by some to be a couplet taken from a Christian hymn that may have been in circulation,²³⁰ which says, “Arise, sleeper, and stand up from the dead, and Christ will shine on you” (5:14). Because Christ is the light that illumines all things and reveals the evil done in darkness, His illuminating power brings life to the spiritually dead.

Since Paul’s readers, after meditating on the importance of this verse to them, would consider anew how Christ had indeed illumined them, the apostle could then present this message: “Because He has illumined you and brought you true life, see that you walk carefully” (paraphrase of 5:14-15). Lenski adds, “The summary of this admonition is the exercise of Christian wisdom. It is a natural admonition in this place; for those who are to rebuke others must be wise and not foolish in both heart and conduct.”²³¹

The Command to Understand God’s Will

For this reason, namely that the days are evil (5:16), these beloved Christians were not to be foolish but to understand what is the will τοῦ κυρίου, “of the Lord” (5:17). “Behave as a people worthy of your royal dignity!”²³² The use of the article here, denoting identity (*the* Lord), is significant in the context. There seems to be a parallel²³³ between verses 17 and 18: “Do not be foolish (5:17); do not get drunk (5:18),” both followed by the strong adversative ἀλλὰ (but),²³⁴ then two positive statements, “Understand the will of the Lord (5:17); be filled ἐν πνεύματι” (5:18).²³⁵ Since the first of the two corresponding constructions is articular and refers to *the* Lord, and the second construction is anarthrous, the idea that *by analogy* the latter phrase refers to *the* Holy Spirit is somewhat suspect.

The Contrast Between Imperatives in Ephesians 5:18

The first matter to be discussed in Ephesians 5:18 is the contrast between the command to avoid getting drunk (μὴ μεθύσκεσθε οἴνω) and the command to be filled (πληροῦσθε ἐν πνεύματι). Determining the author’s intent for the contrast actually hinges upon one’s understanding of ἐν πνεύματι. Many believe the Holy Spirit is here said to be the content, or object, of the filling. “The Holy Spirit is given to believers to fill them with his presence and power.”²³⁶ This represents the “Spirit-filled” view.

For those of the “Spirit-filled” view or the “instrumental view,”²³⁷ the contrast in 5:18 is between wine and the Holy Spirit. Lincoln defends the “Spirit-filled” view when he says, “The shift from the notion of

²²⁹Ibid., 318.

²³⁰R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistles to the Galatians to the Ephesians and to the Philippians*, vol. 8, *Commentary on the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), 611.

²³¹Ibid., 613.

²³²Anderson, “Rethinking ‘Be Filled with the Spirit,’” 60.

²³³It must be acknowledged that the parallel is not complete. Whereas “the Lord” is in the form of a genitive of relationship, “spirit” is used as the object of a preposition. However, this lack of syntactical congruity also plays against the notion that the latter must refer to the Holy Spirit since the former refers to the Lord.

²³⁴H. E. Dana, and Julius R. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1957), 240.

²³⁵The command in 5:18 is the final imperative in the series of μὴ . . . ἀλλὰ contrasts (Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 343).

²³⁶F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, vol. 10, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, ed. F. F. Bruce (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1993), 380.

²³⁷Wallace, representing the “instrumental view,” says, “The parallel with οἴνω 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.” (Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996], 375). Whereas the “Spirit-

drunkenness to that of being filled with the Spirit is not as abrupt as it may appear at first sight.”²³⁸ Lincoln and Bruce both believe the harshness of this contrast is tempered by a “similar” occurrence in Acts. Bruce observes,

The choice of drunkenness as an antithesis to the fullness of the Spirit is not unparalleled: when the disciples were all filled with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost the resultant phenomena moved some of the spectators to say in derision that they were “filled with new wine” (Acts 2:13).²³⁹

Though the possibility of a correlation does exist, there are several concerns about the suggestion that the Spirit of God and wine were meant to be set in opposition. First, the mockers in Acts 2:13 were attributing the unusual behavior of those who received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost to wine, because in their unbelief, they could explain the phenomenon in no other way. This is quite different than an apostle contrasting the Spirit of God with liquor. Lenski remarks, “But St. Paul would not combine ‘wine’ that is used for the purpose of drunkenness with the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Godhead.”²⁴⁰

The second reservation concerns the position of the nouns. “The contrast lies not in οἶνος and πνεῦμα, because otherwise the text must have run μὴ οἶνω μεθύσκεσθε, ἀλλὰ ἐν πνεύματι πληροῦσθε.”²⁴¹ Abbott affirms Meyer’s conclusion, “The antithesis is not directly between οἶνος and πνεῦμα, as the order of the words shows, but between the two states.”²⁴² Westcott remarks that the contrast is actually between flesh and spirit, “ἐν πνεύματι is opposed to ἐν σαρκί,”²⁴³ though the contrast is never stated as such.

This leads to the third reservation with the alleged contrast between wine and the Holy Spirit, the emphatic position of the verbs. “The contrast centers on the verbs, both of which are placed forward for that reason; the modifier of each verb simply goes with it and thus shares a bit of the emphasis. That is why ‘wine’ is dative and ‘in spirit’ a phrase; being diverse, they are not pitted against each other as are the verbs.”²⁴⁴ The next issue to treat is the meaning and usage of πληροῦσθε, a more complex verb than μεθύσκεσθε.

The Meaning and Usage of Πληρώω in Ephesians 5:18

The meaning of πληρώω was previously established to be “fill, make full.” Many who hold to the “Spirit-filled” view of ἐν πνεύματι in 5:18 are not satisfied with a literal rendering of the phrase. Representing this position Francis Foulkes advises, “To take the expression as meaning merely to be filled in spirit would be to deprive it of the force of meaning that it clearly has in the context, and indeed how can the Christian be filled in spirit but by the Holy Spirit of God?”²⁴⁵

Foulkes makes two mistakes. First, he presents no contextual support for why this must be the Holy Spirit. Second, Scripture records other objects of filling for one who is filled with the Spirit, such as in Acts 11:24. “For he [Barnabas] was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and faith.” Certainly it was the spirit of

filled” view would say the contrast is “filled with wine versus the Holy Spirit,” the “instrumental view” would say the contrast is, “filled by means of wine versus the Holy Spirit.”

²³⁸Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 344.

²³⁹Bruce, *Ephesians*, 380. See also Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 344.

²⁴⁰Lenski, *Ephesians*, 619.

²⁴¹Heinrich A. Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Epistle to the Ephesians* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1884), 505.

²⁴²T. K. Abbott, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians*, vol. unspecified, *The International Critical Commentary*, eds. J. A. Emerton, C. E. B. Cranfield, and G. N. Stanton (Edinburgh, Great Britain: T. & T. Clark, 1897), 161. See also Ellicott, *Ephesians*, 124.

²⁴³B. F. Westcott, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians* (Minneapolis: Klock & Klock Publishers, 1906), 81.

²⁴⁴Lenski, *Ephesians*, 618.

²⁴⁵Francis Foulkes, *Ephesians: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 10, *The Tyndale New Testament Commentary*, ed. R. V. G. Tasker (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1989), 159.

Barnabas that was full of faith (cf. Acts 13:52). This raises the question as to how the supporters of the “Spirit-filled” view define πληρώω, if not relying upon the root meaning, “fill, make full.”

Foulkes continues, “Finally the tense of the verb, present imperative in the Greek, should be noted, implying as it does that the experience of receiving the Holy Spirit so that every part of life is *permeated and controlled* by him is not a ‘once for all’ experience” (italics added).²⁴⁶ Dwight Pentecost likewise concludes, “If we would understand what Paul is trying to teach us in Ephesians 5:18, in place of the word ‘filling,’ or ‘filled,’ use the word ‘controlled.’”²⁴⁷ Is this a fair representation either of the meaning of πληρώω or of the locative case of the prepositional phrase that follows it?

Of the 87 occurrences of πληρώω in the New Testament,²⁴⁸ the New American Standard Bible never translates the term “controlled, permeated,” or any such cognate form of these words.²⁴⁹ More importantly, two of the most prominent Greek lexicons bear no sign of either English word, or any words synonymous with them, in their range of meaning.²⁵⁰ There is also a problem with taking πληρώω plus the locative case to denote the content of a filling.

Foulkes, a strong supporter of the “Holy Spirit” view, says, “Usually the Greek New Testament has the genitive case after the verb or adjective used to describe the filling of the Spirit.”²⁵¹ Wallace, a proponent of the “instrumental view,” strongly opposes the idea of πληρώω, plus ἐν, plus the locative to denote the content of a filling.

To see ἐν πνεύματι here as indicating content is grammatically suspect (even though it is, in many circles, the predominant view). Only if the flow of argument and/or the lack of other good possibilities strongly point in the direction of content would we be compelled to take it as such. There are no other examples in biblical Greek in which ἐν + the dative after πληρώω indicates content.²⁵²

Beare concurs with this assessment, “There seems to be no instance of the construction πληρώω ἐν in the sense ‘fill with.’”²⁵³ Abbott’s stance also parallels that of Wallace, “But the use of ἐν with πληρώω to express the content with which a thing is filled would be *quite unexampled*” (italics added).²⁵⁴ Therefore, the “Spirit-filled” view is hindered by its treatment of πληρώω’s meaning and its usage with the prepositional phrase.

Daniel Wallace introduces support for the “instrumental view,” as found in Paul’s use of πληρώω in the epistle. According to Wallace,

The meaning of this text [Eph. 5:18] can only be fully appreciated in light of the πληρώω 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

²⁴⁶Ibid.

²⁴⁷Dwight J. Pentecost, *The Divine Comforter: The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1977), 158.

²⁴⁸W. F. Moulton, A. S. Geden, and H. K. Moulton, *A Concordance to the Greek Testament*, 5th ed. (Edinburgh, Great Britain: T & T Clark, 1978), 816–7.

²⁴⁹Robert L. Thomas, ed., *New American Standard: Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 1981), 253 and 940.

²⁵⁰William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. 2d ed. Walter Bauer’s 5th ed. revised and augmented by F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), 670–72; G. Abbott-Smith, *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament* (Edinburgh, Great Britain: T. & T. Clark Ltd., 1991), 365–66.

²⁵¹Foulkes, *Ephesians*, 158.

²⁵²Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 375.

²⁵³Francis Beare, *Corinthians, Galatians, and Ephesians*, vol. 10, *The Interpreter’s Bible* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1953), 714.

²⁵⁴Abbott, *Ephesians*, 161.

believers “be filled with all the fullness of God.” The explicit *content* of πληρώω 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.²⁵⁵

Though Wallace’s argument bears significance, his practice of reverting back to 3:19 to express the content of the filling in 5:18 remains questionable. The context of 3:19 is so far removed that it becomes difficult to defend such a conclusion.

The Meaning and Usage of ἔν in Ephesians 5:18

Many proponents of the “Spirit-filled” view take the preposition ἔν to mean “with,” implying that the substance (or Person) with which one is to be filled is the Holy Spirit. Fee, having begun by taking the preposition to be instrumental, articulates the “Spirit-filled” view with clarity. “The dative ἔν πνεύματι fits with the other datives in this letter, most likely reflecting ‘means.’ But when one asks, ‘but with what substance?’ it is but a short step to seeing the Spirit as that substance as well.”²⁵⁶

Hendriksen argues in favor of using the English word “with,” in order to denote the content of the filling. “The preposition ἔν covers a very wide area, especially in Koine Greek, in this case an area probably even broadened by the influence of Hebrew *bē*, either directly, or indirectly via the LXX.”²⁵⁷ Unfortunately, Hendriksen never defines the boundaries of this “wide area,” nor does he cite the direct or indirect evidence from the Hebrew text or the Septuagint. The range of meaning for the preposition must be outlined in order to properly assess its use in Ephesians 5:18.

The root meaning of the Greek preposition ἔν is “within.”²⁵⁸ The resultant meanings with the dative or locative cases include the following: in, on, at, within, among. The resultant meanings with the instrumental case include these: with, by means of.²⁵⁹ In reference to this preposition Robertson says, “The simplest use [of ἔν] is with expressions of *place*. . . . One must observe that *all* the N.T. examples of ἔν can be explained from the point of view of the *locative*. . . . ἔν in itself does not mean ‘with.’ That resultant idea can only come in the proper context” (italics added).²⁶⁰

Dana and Mantey explain the most common way to denote instrumentality. “Ἰπὸ is most frequently used for expressing agency. In fact, agency is expressed with the aid of ὑπὸ more frequently than it is by all the other methods combined.”²⁶¹ Based on the root meaning and use of the preposition, the general likelihood is that ἔν is used here to describe a place, or sphere; if the author wanted to indicate agency, the more common method for doing so would be to use ὑπὸ or διὰ,²⁶² especially since the noun is anarthrous. Lenski says this about the use of ἔν in Ephesians 5:18,

²⁵⁵Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 375.

²⁵⁶Gordon D. Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 721.

²⁵⁷William Hendriksen, *Exposition of Ephesians*, vol. unspecified, *New Testament Commentary*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1967), 239.

²⁵⁸Dana and Mantey, *A Manual Grammar*, 105. The resultant meaning, “with,” is intended to represent the instrumental sense of the English word, not the sense of introducing content.

²⁵⁹Ibid.

²⁶⁰A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman Press, 1934), 586, 590.

²⁶¹Dana and Mantey, *A Manual Grammar*, 112.

²⁶²Eadie, quoted in his commentary on Colossians, rejects the substitution of ἔν for διὰ. “Ἐν will not stand for διὰ as Grotius renders it.” John Eadie, *Commentary on the Epistle of Paul to the Colossians* (Minneapolis: James & Klock Christian Publishing Co., 1977), 19.

Some regard ἐν as instrumental or think that, besides being construed with the genitive, the dative, or the filling is done, this verb [πληρόω] may also accusative of that with which use ‘in’ with reference to the filler, and thus our versions translate, ‘Be filled with the Spirit.’ . . . ’Εν does *not* state ‘with’ what we are to be filled. Paul is not stating with what we are to be filled, he has no opposite for ‘wine.’ He lets us gather what this filler is to be from the context.”²⁶³

Therefore, Lenski suggests that the object of the preposition ἐν, the locative noun πνεύματι, cannot be identified as the content of the filling, or the object with which is filled. Crater adds to the argument,

Even if the preposition is taken as instrumental, which would certainly be possible grammatically, it would not mean the same thing as the genitive even though they both are translated “with.” No one questions that the genitives after verbs of filling signify the content with which a thing or person is filled. The instrumental ἐν, however, does not signify content but the instrument or means by which something is done. If the preposition in Ephesians 5:18 is taken as an instrumental ἐν it would mean that the Spirit is the *means* by which a believer is filled with some other unspecified content, not that the Spirit is the content with which the believer is filled.²⁶⁴

Crater correctly points out the fallacy in using the English word “with” to indicate the object of a filling. There seems to be no precedent for this practice in all of extant Greek literature.²⁶⁵ However, evidence exists to assert that ἐν may retain its root meaning “within” here in Ephesians 5:18.

The root idea of the preposition points to the designation known as the locative of sphere. Dana and Mantey illuminate the concept when they remark, “We have a metaphorical use of the locative, but still exhibiting the root idea. The limits suggested are *logical* rather than spatial or temporal, confining one idea within the bounds of another, thus indicating the sphere within which the former idea is to be applied.”²⁶⁶ This would yield the translation, “Be filled in the realm of the spirit.”

The Omission of the Article

It must at once be observed that the phrase ἐν πνεύματι does not include the Greek article. The significance of this fact cannot be overlooked. Easley, a proponent of the “Spirit-filled” view, observes this about the presence or absence of the article, “The construction πνεύματι is found in four primary forms: πνεύματι, τῷ πνεύματι, ἐν πνεύματι, and ἐν τῷ πνεύματι. The presence of the article as well as the preposition has a decided effect on the meaning of the noun.”²⁶⁷

Noted Greek grammarians Dana and Mantey discuss the difference between an articular and an anarthrous construction.

An object of thought may be conceived of from two points of view: as to *identity* or *quality*. To convey the first point of view the Greek uses the article; for the second the anarthrous construction is used. . . . We adopt Robertson’s conclusion that it is more accurate to speak of the “absence” of the article than the “omission” of the article (R. 790). . . . Winer (W. 119) discusses the “omission of the article,” and falls into

²⁶³Lenski, *Ephesians*, 618–19.

²⁶⁴Timothy D. Crater, “The Filling of the Spirit in the Greek New Testament” (Th.M. Thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1971), 51.

²⁶⁵Beare has found that “there seems to be no instance of the construction πληρόω ἐν in the sense ‘fill with’” (Beare, *Corinthians, Galatians, and Ephesians*, 714). Abbott adds, “The use of ἐν with πληρόω to express the content with which a thing is filled would be quite unexampled.” He then proceeds to note that other occurrences in Philippians (4:19), Colossians (2:10; 4:12), and Plutarch (*Plac. Phil.* 1:7:9) are not parallel (Abbott, *Ephesians*, 161).

²⁶⁶Dana and Mantey, *A Manual Grammar*, 87.

²⁶⁷Easley, “Pauline Usage of *Pneumati*,” *JETS* 27/3: 302.

the common error of supposing that where the article is not used it is merely because the substantive is sufficiently definite without it. Rigid caution should be exercised in viewing the article from its Greek character and history and not from English usage. . . . It is instructive to observe that the anarthrous noun occurs in many prepositional phrases. . . . In a prepositional phrase it is the qualitative aspect of the noun which is prominent, rather than its identity.²⁶⁸

Though Dana and Mantey correctly note that in a prepositional phrase quality is more often the prominent feature, A. T. Robertson points out that New Testament writers often use anarthrous prepositional phrases that are “definite enough without the article.”²⁶⁹ Robertson summarizes, “The word may be either definite or indefinite when the article is absent. The context and history of the phrase in question must decide.”²⁷⁰ While the context is currently under review, from the history of the phrase as studied in Chapter II, it was found that seven LXX and New Testament uses of ἐν πνεύματι are most likely instrumental, while 13 are most likely locative.

Though Robertson’s statement leaves room for the prospect of definiteness in ἐν πνεύματι, it seems that Paul may have purposefully omitted the article from ἐν πνεύματι to emphasize “that which is by quality spirit.” There is certainly the possibility that Paul intended to connote the characteristic quality of the Holy Spirit,²⁷¹ but more likely he would have used the article to specify the Holy Spirit, especially since he made an articular reference to the Lord in 5:17 (τί τὸ θέλημα τοῦ κυρίου).

Another reservation about Paul’s use of the article to denote the Holy Spirit is “previous reference.”²⁷² As Dana and Mantey describe one of the regular uses of the article, “[It is used] to denote previous reference. The article may be used to point out an object the identity of which is defined by some previous reference made to it in the context.”²⁷³

Considering the arbitrary nature of chapter breaks, the context prior to 4:30 refers specifically to the Holy Spirit. “And do not grieve τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον τοῦ θεοῦ, in whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.” Therefore, if Paul intended to mean “Holy Spirit” in 5:18, “previous reference” might have prompted him to use the article.²⁷⁴

Indeed, the use of the anarthrous construction likely represents that which is by quality spirit, or the realm of the spirit. This fits better contextually, since Paul contrasts the drinking of wine, which is a corruption of the flesh and leads to the ruin of life in dissolute living of every kind,²⁷⁵ with being filled in spirit. The instruction for his readers was to avoid filling up the body with a substance that destroys the flesh, and instead to be filled in their spirits, where the unseen benefits will continue into eternity. This brings to light a weakness of both the “instrumental view” and the “Spirit-filled” view.

The Relationship of the Participles to the Command to Be Filled

²⁶⁸Dana and Mantey, *A Manual Grammar*, 149–150.

²⁶⁹A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 791.

²⁷⁰Ibid., 790.

²⁷¹See the discussion of Matthew 22:43 in Chapter 2, under Ἐν πνεύματι Elsewhere in the New Testament, which is most likely an anarthrous reference to the Holy Spirit.

²⁷²The tendency toward the use of previous reference is not without exception, but reflects the general tendency of Koine Greek writers.

²⁷³Dana and Mantey, *A Manual Grammar*, 141 (cf. John 4:11, where the articular phrase “the living water” refers back to the water to which Jesus had just made reference).

²⁷⁴The New Testament yields seven uses of ἐν τῷ πνεύματι: Mark 12:36; Luke 2:27; 4:1; 10:21; Acts 19:21; Romans 1:9; and I Corinthians 6:11. Of these seven, five are indisputable references to the Holy Spirit, one is followed by μου (thus “my spirit,” spoken by Paul), and the other (Acts 19:21) could be a reference to Paul’s human spirit or the Holy Spirit, though probably the latter (cf. Matt 4:1). This evidence strongly corroborates with the findings of Chapter 2.

²⁷⁵Beare, *Corinthians, Galatians, and Ephesians*, 714.

Many commentators who attempt to explain the meaning of the command to be filled ἐν πνεύματι avoid or fail to properly treat the significance of the participles that follow the contrasting commands in 5:18. In his article, “Rethinking ‘Be Filled with the Spirit;’ Ephesians 5:18 and the Purpose of Ephesians,” Chip Anderson does not even devote a section to the role they play in a proper interpretation of the passage.²⁷⁶

What follows the command to “be filled” are not four separate commands somehow unrelated to what preceded them. Rather, Paul links four participles²⁷⁷ that are directly governed by πληροῦσθε. “The present participles partake of the imperative character of the main verb, ‘be filled.’”²⁷⁸ Any attempt to understand the command without grasping the importance of the ensuing participles is to interpret this difficult problem-passage in isolation.

Arp articulates the point, “Therefore, however πληροῦσθε ἐν πνεύματι is interpreted, the meaning of the command should be consistent with the instructive meaning of the participial clause.”²⁷⁹ Therefore, the purpose of this subsection is to investigate the relationship between the imperative verb and the participles that follow.

There are four participles following the command in 5:18, all of which are grammatically related to the preceding command. First, speaking to fellow believers in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Second, and possibly related closely to the preceding participle, singing and psalming in their hearts to the Lord. Third, always giving thanks for all things in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to God, who is also the Father. Fourth, submitting themselves to one another in the fear of Christ.

Dwight Pentecost, who adheres to the “instrumental view,” reveals his position on the relationship between verb and participles, in his interpretive translation, “Do not be drunk with wine, which produces riotous living, but be controlled with the Spirit which produces psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs; it produces giving of thanks; it produces submission.”²⁸⁰ Pentecost is persuaded that these participles denote the results that naturally follow when one is filled with the Holy Spirit.

Meyer, also representing the “instrumental view,” interprets the participles as denoting result. “Ver.19. Accompanying definition to the just required ‘being filled by the Spirit,’ as that with which this λαλοῦντες ἑαυτοῖς [ἐν] ψαλμοῖς κ.τ.λ. is to be simultaneously combined as its immediate expression: so that ye speak to one another through psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.”²⁸¹

It is assumed that neither Pentecost nor Meyer is implying these to be the only expressions of the filling of the Spirit. However, the question might be raised whether these participles necessarily denote result. If the result of being filled by (or “controlled by”) the Holy Spirit includes speaking in psalms and hymns, making melody in one’s heart, giving thanks continually, and becoming subject to other brethren, why are none of these associated with the “fillings” in Acts? Since the proponents of the “Spirit-filled” view link Ephesians 5:18 to fillings and/or re-fillings in Acts, why are there no examples of these results found within the contexts of the verses studied in Chapter III?

The reason some commentators are pressed into this dilemma is that they take “the Spirit” to be both the means and the object of the filling. “Paul says . . . ‘be filled by the Spirit,’ with the emphasis on being *filled to the full by the Spirit’s presence*. . . Here, then, is the ultimate imperative in the Pauline corpus: God’s people so *filled by/with the Spirit’s own presence* that they . . .” (italics added).²⁸² If one adheres to the “Spirit-filled”

²⁷⁶Anderson, “Rethinking ‘Be Filled with the Spirit,’” 59–65. Anderson discusses many of the elements contained in 5:15–18, but his final section before concluding is “With the Spirit,” from 5:18. His conclusion refers to an analysis of 5:18–21, though 5:19–21 went untreated.

²⁷⁷“Singing and psalming” are taken as one participle for the sake of simplicity.

²⁷⁸Lenski, *Ephesians*, 619.

²⁷⁹Arp, “An Interpretation of ‘Be Filled in Spirit’ in Ephesians 5:18,” 148. The present writer prefers “clauses” to “clause.”

²⁸⁰Pentecost, *The Divine Comforter*, 158.

²⁸¹Meyer, *Ephesians*, 505.

²⁸²Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, 721.

position, he is forced to render the locative ἐν πνεύματι instrumentally, though in fact, this interpretation goes beyond a mere instrumental use.

Therefore, the “instrumental view” must render the participles in 5:19 as resultant. “Believers, filled with the Spirit, sing hymns to Christ, while also thanking God in the name of Christ for all things.”²⁸³ Those adhering to this view are also forced to take these participles as the result of being filled by the Spirit, as Meyer’s previous comment demonstrates. However, they would not be criticized for the lack of similar references in Acts, since they do not equate the filling in Ephesians 5:18 with the fillings in Acts.

Only the proponents of the “human spirit” view take the participles instrumentally. “But be filled in spirit by means of speaking to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.” Writing on the interpretation of πληροῦσθε ἐν πνεύματι, Arp reveals his commitment to this conclusion when he announces, “Paul writes that the Ephesians are to be filled in their spirit by speaking to each other with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.”²⁸⁴

This view does beg a further question, “With what then is the believer filled?” Lenski suggests, “It is spiritual joy, happiness, enthusiasm, thankfulness that overflow in the utterance of psalms, hymns, and odes even as the mouth speaks from the abundance of the heart. This statement . . . deals with the richness and the abundance of the spiritual life ‘in’ our own ‘spirit.’”²⁸⁵ This scenario represents an unstated content of the filling, suggesting that justice is better served by allowing the object of the filling to remain unstated than by stating it outright.²⁸⁶

Summary

Clearly the vast majority of modern commentators take ἐν πνεύματι in 5:18 as an allusion to the Holy Spirit, whether to denote the content or instrumentality of the command to be filled. Though both the “Spirit-filled” view and the “instrumental view” warrant the support of many, the “human spirit” view should not go unexamined. Unfortunately, many dismiss this view as inconsequential; this is reflected in the lack of in-depth attempts to refute the position by those holding an opposing view. As quoted earlier, Fee articulates the prevailing attitude, “But there is nothing in Pauline usage, in the immediate context, or in the context of the letter as a whole that allows even the possibility of such a view.”²⁸⁷

It has been the intent of this chapter to determine, both through overall and immediate context, which view best represents the exegetical data. As far as the overall context, it was seen that the believers to whom Paul wrote were being informed of God’s plan for the ages, as well as the unfathomable role they have in His revealed will. The command to be filled ἐν πνεύματι is directly related to their role in the will of God, thus establishing the notion that Paul is referring to something that must take place within their own spirits, or by means of God’s Spirit, in order to achieve His sovereign plan.

As far as the immediate context, it was shown that the command to “be filled” must be understood in light of several contextual matters: the commands to walk carefully (5:15), to understand the will of God (5:17), and not to become drunk with wine (5:18), plus the subordinate participial phrases that follow πληροῦσθε (5:19-21).

Within 5:18 itself, the grammar and syntax revealed several facts. First, Paul’s contrast was probably not between two objects, namely wine (the content of drunkenness) and the Holy Spirit (the content of the filling), but between the two emphatic verbs (getting drunk vs. being filled). Second, the Greek verb πληρόω was never found to mean “control,” only “fill,” and its use with a locative to express content would be unparalleled in the New Testament. Third, the preposition ἐν is best taken either as a locative of sphere, denoting a logical place, or

²⁸³Ibid., 723.

²⁸⁴Arp, “An Interpretation of ‘Be Filled in Spirit’ in Ephesians 5:18,” 218.

²⁸⁵Lenski, *Ephesians*, 619.

²⁸⁶For a fuller treatment of these participles and their meanings in context, see Lenski, *Ephesians*, 619–24.

²⁸⁷Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, 721.

as an instrumental, expressing agency. Fourth, the omission of the article suggests “quality,” rather than “identity,” which would favor the “human spirit” view over either of the other two views, both of which attempt to identify the “spirit” as the Holy Spirit.

CHAPTER 5:

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Summary

It must be affirmed by all that Ephesians 5:18 is difficult to interpret because of the uniqueness of the command: πληροῦσθε, in conjunction with the phrase ἐν πνεύματι. Nothing in the entirety of the New Testament parallels this imperative. With the absence of the Greek article before πνεύματι, the potential for disagreement escalates. Many refer to this command, with a form of πληρόω followed by ἐν πνεύματι, as one of the most misunderstood passages in the New Testament. It is typically translated, “Be filled with the Spirit,” which implies that the Spirit is the “substance” with which one is to be filled. Yet it was also noted that although in many circles it is the predominant interpretation, taking ἐν πνεύματι to denote the object of the filling is grammatically suspect.

Many modern Bible scholars and interpreters are convinced that this is a reference to the Holy Spirit as the content of the filling. One of the ramifications of this view is that the imperative is said to teach that one may never claim to have received the filling of the Spirit once and for all. Certainly these scholars are not taking a charismatic position, but it does give cause for concern when it is suggested that the initial filling of the Spirit in one’s life might be lacking in any way.

With no precedent for a command to be filled with the Holy Spirit, apart from Ephesians 5:18, it behooves one to investigate the matter more closely. This rings true especially since many earlier scholars, as well as a few recent ones, were convinced that Paul is actually commanding believers to be filled in the realm of their own spirits. In this sense, the Christian is to continually fill himself with spiritual things that count for eternity. The fact that the Holy Spirit oversees this process would be self-evident.

On the other hand, if the Holy Spirit is in view, a purely instrumental rendering is also worth examining. This would mean that the Spirit of God is the agent through whom the believer is instructed to allow himself to be filled. If either the locative or instrumental use is the proper rendering, the object, or content, of the filling would either be stated in the context or implied.

Chapter II

The first matter to explore was the use of ἐν πνεύματι in the LXX and elsewhere in the New Testament. Though many of the uses of the phrase were qualified, as in “unclean spirit,” “Holy Spirit,” or “Spirit of God,” thus making them unimportant to the present study, a large number remained that bear some significance.

Of the eleven Old Testament passages studied, four of them most likely are locative uses, while six are most likely instrumental, and one is disputed. Of the four locative uses, three refer to the human spirit of a man (II Kings 2:9; I Chron. 28:12; Ecc. 7:9), and one refers to the logical sphere of the wind (Ecc. 8:8). Of the six instrumental uses, one refers to the wind (Psalm 48:7), and another refers to breath (Isaiah 11:4). Of the four remaining uses, all of which refer to the Holy Spirit, they all are actually qualified by personal pronouns: “your Spirit,” “my Spirit,” “my Spirit,” and “His Spirit” (Neh. 9:30; Zech. 1:6; 4:6; 7:12). This leaves no unqualified, clearly instrumental uses of ἐν πνεύματι in the LXX that seem to refer to the Holy Spirit. The disputed passage (Ezek. 37:1) would make one unqualified use if it were instrumental, but it may actually be a locative use.

Of the twelve New Testament passages studied, apart from those in Ephesians, only Matthew 22:43 definitely seems to be an instrumental reference to the Holy Spirit. Nine references appear to be locatives of sphere, denoting the realm of the human spirit (John 4:23, 24; I Cor. 14:16; Col. 1:8; I Tim. 3:16; Rev. 1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10). The two remaining passages are disputably instrumental or locative, with strong arguments for both views (Rom. 2:29; 8:9).

Of the three passages in Ephesians, apart from 5:18 itself, they all must be labeled as inconclusive (Eph. 2:22; 3:5; 6:18). Though each one can either be a locative of sphere or an instrumental of means, denoting the

Holy Spirit, some proponents of the “instrumental view” believe they are locatives indicating the realm of the Holy Spirit.

From this study, it may be concluded that both the “instrumental view” and the “human spirit” view have precedent for translating the phrase ἐν πνεύματι. There are seven times where the phrase appears to denote means, 13 times where the spherical use is preferred, and six times where it might be one or the other. However, in none of these biblical references was the preposition ἐν argued to be translated “with,” denoting content, as in the “content of the filling” suggested by the “Spirit-filled” view for Ephesians 5:18.

As previously noted, the use of ἐν with πληρώω to express the content with which a thing is filled would be *quite unexampled* if this is what Paul intended for Ephesians 5:18. This fact, combined with the lack of content-related uses of ἐν πνεύματι throughout the Greek Scriptures, demonstrates the implausibility of the “Spirit-filled” view for Ephesians 5:18, at least from evidence outside of Ephesians. Conversely, the study in this chapter adds credibility to and support for the two other views.

Chapter III

The second matter to explore was the references in the book of Acts to the filling of the Holy Spirit, since many proponents of the “Spirit-filled” view cite these passages as the basis for the “filling with the Spirit” in Ephesians 5:18. Included in Acts are verbal, adjectival, and participial uses of the phrase. If these passages exemplify subsequent fillings of the Holy Spirit in believers, the case for the “Spirit-filled” view in Ephesians 5:18 might gain significant theological support. If it were found that there was only one filling of the Spirit for any individual, or that the Lukan accounts are clearly different than Paul’s command in Ephesians 5:18, the case for this view would not be as strong.

The study began by investigating the initial filling of the Spirit at Pentecost (2:4) and its relationship to Jesus’ prophecy of the coming Spirit (1:5 and 1:8). It was seen that the “filling” of the Spirit was the fulfillment of Jesus’ prophecy of the “baptism” that was to come, thus equating the two verbs as two different ways of viewing the same event. Even “Spirit-filled” view advocates were willing to admit that regarding the baptizing work of the Spirit, never in the New Testament was a command issued that the believer should be baptized by the Holy Spirit. If “filled” is the term Luke used to describe the fulfillment of this Spirit-baptism prophesied by Christ, one is at a loss to understand how the believer might be commanded to repeatedly be filled with the Holy Spirit.

It was then seen that the other verbal uses of “fill” might just as well refer to those who were receiving the Holy Spirit for the first time than as to believers previously filled with the Spirit. Moreover, the verbal and participial uses of “filled with the Spirit” are followed by a noun clause in the genitive case, denoting the content of the filling, unlike the locative case used with ἐν πνεύματι in Ephesians 5:18. As Acts confirms, the genitive case is the normal case used to express content after verbs of filling.

The adjectival and participial forms, “full of the Spirit” and “being filled with the Spirit,” seem to demonstrate an *abiding characteristic* employed by Luke to validate that the individual’s strength for ministry, courage to undergo adversity, or godliness of character is always the direct result of a life transformed by God and lived with power, after the initial filling with Holy Spirit. The Acts passages warrant no clear evidence of subsequent fillings. This study from Acts does little to aid or discredit the “instrumental view” or the “human spirit” view, but it does substantially weaken the credibility of the “Spirit-filled” view.

Chapter IV

The final matter to explore was the phrase itself, as found in the context of Ephesians. Many books written on the subject of the Holy Spirit’s filling ministry fail to explore the contextual considerations in Ephesians. It was the purpose of the present work to first examine the overall purpose and greater context of the epistle, then to review the immediate context of 5:18, and finally to examine the grammatical and syntactical

nuances of the passage. Since the context of a given text is the final authority on interpretive difficulties, this would be the most crucial chapter in the investigation.

The greater context of Ephesians demonstrated several things about the book. Paul wrote to inform these believers of God's eternal plan and the wonderful part they have in it. The command to be filled ἐν πνεύματι is directly related to their role in the will of God. The apostle spoke of something that must take place within their own spirits, or by means of the Holy Spirit, in order to live in light of God's plan, in which they have a part. The immediate context featured these elements: a command to walk carefully (5:15), a command to understand the will of God (5:17), a command not to become drunk with wine (5:18), and subordinate participial phrases that follow the previous commands (5:19-21).

Because of the emphatic position of the verbs, Paul's contrast in 5:18 seemed not to be between wine and the Spirit of God, but between getting drunk in one's flesh and being filled in one's spirit. The Greek verb πληρώω, which cannot rightly be translated "control," was best seen to be rendered "fill," its root meaning. When put with a locative object, in no other New Testament passage or any profane Greek writing is the verb used to denote content. The preposition ἐν must either be taken as a locative of sphere or an instrumental of means. Though the omission of the article can denote either quality or identity, as in *the* Holy Spirit, the predominant use is to emphasize quality, especially with prepositions. Finally, the participles seem to better describe the agency, or means by which one is filled ἐν πνεύματι, rather than explaining what occurs as the result of being filled.

Conclusion

Therefore, it must be concluded that the "Spirit-filled" view cannot be maintained as an acceptable interpretation of ἐν πνεύματι in Ephesians 5:18, as the weaknesses of the view seem insurmountable. As for the "instrumental view," this remains a viable option, though its three greatest weaknesses are the awkwardness of the contrast between wine and the Holy Spirit, the absence of the definite article, and the difficulty of reconciling the participles with the command to be filled.

This leaves the "human spirit" view as the best option, slightly outweighing the "instrumental view" and best fitting the immediate and overall context in which the phrase is found. However, since the evidence does not allow conclusiveness on this matter, the "instrumental view" cannot be ruled out as a distinct possibility. Enough support for this view exists to consider it a close second to the "human spirit" view.

The nature of a study such as this has raised as many issues as it answers. For instance, it remains to better define the parameters of the Spirit's filling ministry and examine whether there are any biblically-delineated distinctions between the filling and indwelling of the Spirit. In addition, there is much room for detailed study in the relationship between anarthrous and articular uses of nouns and phrases. Also, the myriad of occurrences of πνεῦμα demands better research in order to accurately determine the identity of the "spirit" spoken of in each instance. Finally, an analysis of the relationship between finite verbs and participles is worthy of the effort it would entail. To such ends, may this effort further fuel the fire of biblical exegesis.