

A Greek Word Study – Fill and Full

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There are two specific words used in the Greek New Testament, which are both translated as *fill* or *full*. While there are a few other words also translated the same way, the two in question are the ones used in every instance relating to being filled with the Holy Spirit. They are also used in other contexts. By carefully examining how each word is used, we see that there are two distinct ways of being filled with the Holy Spirit. Knowledge of this can clear up much of the confusion and misunderstanding surrounding the doctrine of being filled with the Holy Spirit.

The two Greek words are listed below along with a brief explanation and a list of passages containing the word.

1. πληρωω (play-ro-oh), to make full or πληρησ (play-reys) to be full. This word is used to signify a long term or permanent filling, often expressed in personal characteristics. It is the filling, with the Holy Spirit or with evil, which bears fruit. It may be translated as *permeated* in the sense that one thing is so permeated with another that separation of the two becomes difficult if not impossible. (Our English word *replete* derives from this word.)
2. πληθω (play-thoh) from πιμπλημι (pim-play-mee), to fill or make full. This word is used to signify a filling with something, usually powerful, on a temporary basis, although there may be long-term effects. This filling may accompany or lead to the other type of filling explained above, but it may also be completely independent of it. A good English word to express this concept is *charged* or *charging*, as a storage battery receives a *charge* of electricity when it is *charged* up. Once the power has been used, the battery will need *re-charging*. (Our English word *plethora* derives from this word.)

The list of passages below will make this distinction clear. (This is not an exhaustive list. Anyone interested in pursuing this further can look up additional passages in any good comprehensive concordance.)

1. πληρωω / πληρησ (play-ro-oh / play-reys)
 - Luke 2:40 *filled* with wisdom...
 - 4:1 And Jesus, being *full* of the Holy Ghost...
 - 5:12 ...a man *full* of leprosy...
 - John 1:14 ...*full* of grace and truth.
 - 12:3 ...*filled* with the odor of the ointment...
 - 15:11 your joy might be *full*.
 - 16:24 your joy might be *full*.
 - Acts 2:2 ...a sound from heaven... *filled* all the house...
 - 5:3 Why hath Satan *filled* your heart?
 - 6:3 men... *full* of the Holy Ghost and wisdom.
 - 6:5 Stephen, a man *full* of faith...
 - 7: 55 ...he, being *full* of the Holy Ghost, looked up...

- 9:36 ...this woman was *full* of good works...
 11:24 ...he was a good man, and *full* of the Holy Ghost.
 13: 10 ...*full* of all subtilty and all mischief...
 Rom. 1:29 ...being *filled* with all unrighteousness...
 Col. 1:9 ...that ye might be *filled* with knowledge...

This is the filling that, if it be with unrighteousness (Romans 1:29-30) bears evil fruit as in Galatians 5:19-21, but if it be with righteousness and the Holy Spirit bears good fruit as in Philippians 1:11 and Galatians 5:22. Remember, Jesus said we would know people by their fruit, not by their gifts or accomplishments (Matthew 7:15ff). The one grows from what is inside, the other is given from outside.

2. πληθω (play-thoh):

- Mat. 27:48 ...took a sponge and *filled* it with vinegar...
 Luke 1:41 Elizabeth was *filled* with the Holy Ghost, and she spake out with a loud voice...
 1:67 Zacharias was *filled* with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying...
 4:28 ...were *filled* with wrath, and rose up...
 5:7 ...*filled* both ships, so that they began to sink
 5:26 they... were *filled* with fear...
 6:11 ...were *filled* with madness...
 Acts 2:4 ...were *filled* with Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues.
 3:10 ...they were *filled* with wonder and amazement...
 4:8 Peter, *filled* with the Holy Ghost, said...
 4:31 ...and they were all *filled* with the Holy Ghost,
 5:17 ...they... were *filled* with indignation...
 13:9 ...Saul... *filled* with the Holy Ghost... said, "O full of all subtilty..." (see above)
 19:29 ...the whole city was filled with confusion...

This is the filling that leads to spontaneous action. It is used of motivating or enabling power, e.g. the Holy Spirit or rage. It is commonly recorded as a repeated experience, as in Acts 2, on the day of Pentecost, then again in Acts 4. It is often accompanied by some manifestation of power or great emotion. Often, an individual would be filled in this way and then speak, usually prophetically. This is the filling that charges us up with the power of God and whereby the Holy Spirit gives gifts to build up the Church and do the work of the Kingdom.

Being filled, as in permeated (play-reys) with the Holy Spirit transforms our lives, giving us life, bearing good fruit. It is vital to our personal relationship to the Lord. It often fills us with a hunger for the Word of God and a deeper knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Being filled, as in charged (play-thoh) with the Holy Spirit enables us to do the outer works of God, to fulfill His commands. It is great fun for us (usually) and may fill us

with pleasurable emotion, but it is not a dependable indicator of the state of our own personal relationship with God. It is, however, extremely important to God.

His desire is for us to have both; the first, that we might live in Him, the second, that we might minister to others. If we refuse the second, we handicap His work no matter how deep our relationship with Him is. If we do not have the first, or stifle it through sin (Ephesians 4:30), the second will dissipate quickly or be recharged by the Evil One who will use it for his purposes.

Who of you, upon attempting to break open the gates of a prison to set your loved ones free, will continue to throw your body at the solid doors when your Commander has given you an artillery piece to use? And who of you, having received such an artillery piece, will cut himself off from communication with his Commander so that he will not know where to aim it, or, worse, will listen to the enemy's lies and turn it upon his own brothers?

Seek the infilling of the Holy Spirit (play-res) that provides you with the deep relationship with God, the open communication lines with the Great Commander, and also seek that infilling of the Holy Spirit (play-thoh) that gives you the armaments and power to do the mighty works of God and destroy the works of our enemy. Be both permeated and charged up!