

Eph 5:15 See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise,

Eph 5:16 redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

Eph 5:17 Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

Eph 5:18 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit,

Eph 5:19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord,

Eph 5:20 giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Eph 5:21 submitting to one another in the fear of God.

### ***Walk Cautiously***

*(Eph 5:15 NKJV) See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise,*

- The word “see” means “to discern mentally, observe, perceive, consider, contemplate, to take heed.”
- We’ve already studied the word, “walk” which means “to order your behavior, to conduct yourself.”
- The word “circumspectly” means “accurately, carefully.”

Paul says “See then that you walk circumspectly.” Take heed how you are accurately conducting yourselves—see to it that you are careful or cautious about the way you walk. Make sure that your walk, your behavior lines up with the demands of the Word of God!

Psalm 119:9 says, *“How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your Word.* Verse 11 says, *“Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You!”*

A world-famous skier, Jean-Claude Killy, was three-tenths of a second faster than his closest competitor; as a result, he earned \$3 million instead of having to settle for being a \$10,000-a-year ski instructor.

Three-tenths of a second made the difference. In the Christian life, the difference between being careful or it’s opposite—being foolish—can mean the difference between success and failure. It could even mean the difference between life and death.

Paul writes, *“See then that you walk circumspectly...”*--see to it that you are careful or cautious about the way you walk—make sure the way you conduct yourself lines up with the Word of God.

Some time ago, I was watching one of those shows (like COPS) where they show video of police officers catching criminals. One episode showed an officer pulling someone over on the highway at night. While the officer was asking for the driver's license and registration, a car seemed to come out of nowhere and hit him.

It was not too long after that that my family and I were on our way to church and our 15-passenger van stalled on Dogwood road near Woodlawn Drive during rush hour. I was extra careful and cautious about transferring my family from our van to my son’s car and another member’s van because the road was extremely dangerous at that time of evening.

If I were to let my daughter Rosie, who was around five years old at the time, and the rest of my children just get out of the van and stand on the side of the road, running around and playing games, I would have been acting foolish.

Many Christians approach life with this kind of recklessness.

They demonstrate this kind of recklessness when they do not come out to Sunday service or LIFE Group to be under the teaching of God's Word.

They live carelessly when they don't volunteer for ministry in the church—they are careless because they're not concerned that their lives don't accurately line up with the expectations of the Word of God.

As a result of this recklessness and carelessness many, like the police officer that had no regard for the highway traffic, are "run down" by the trials of life which seem to come out of nowhere. It is the foolish person that doesn't exercise care and caution about his walk in Christ. It is the wise person who walks cautiously.

### ***Take Advantage of Opportunities***

Paul continues: (*Eph 5:16 NKJV*) *redeeming the time, because the days are evil.* Paul commands the Christian to "*redeem the time.*" Why? Because "*the days are evil.*"

Let's not misunderstand Paul here. When he writes, "*redeem the time*" he is not saying "to make the best use of our time" or "don't waste or squander our time."

The word "redeem" used in verse 16 means to "buy up for one's self or one's advantage."

Paul is saying that we should, "take advantage of the opportunities that present themselves while we can." He's saying that we should "make a wise and sacred use of every opportunity for doing good." (Wuest)

There are a lot of Christians who get to the end of their lives with much regret.

- Some regret that they didn't get serious about the Lord until they didn't have much time to serve Him.
- Others regret that they didn't acquaint themselves more with the Word of God.
- Some regret that they didn't enroll in Bible College
- Others regret that they didn't go on a mission trip to some foreign land.

There are Christians that are extremely sorrowful over not telling a loved one about Jesus and His forgiveness before that loved one died.

God is giving us opportunities *right now* to do some of these things and the command here in Ephesians chapter five is to take advantage of those opportunities because the days are evil.

Christians are to be cautious about how they walk and take advantage of the opportunity they have to serve Christ. Make a wise and sacred use of every opportunity for doing good.

## ***Know Your Business***

Paul continues on in Ephesians 5:17 and writes, “*Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.*”

"An article in the *Harvard Business Review* called 'Market Myopia' talked about how some people didn't understand what business they were in.

For example, the railroad people didn't realize they were in the transportation business; they thought they were in the railroad business. If they had they realized they were in the transportation business they would have invested in the airplane.

The telegraph people thought they were in the telegraph business instead of the communications business. In 1886 or so, they could have bought all the telephone patents for \$40,000. So obviously these people didn't know what business they were in."

Some Christians are not aware of the business *they* are in. That is, they are not aware of their calling. They are not aware of God's plan for them. They do not know the real reason for coming to church and for doing ministry. It is just something they do.

The Bible tells us that we ought to know what business we are in: Ephesians 5:17 says, “*Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.*”

Rather than being as Paul says at the end of verse 15, “foolish” (*aphrones*, “senseless”) or “unwise” (*asophoi*), Christians are to understand (*syniete*, “comprehend intellectually”) what the Lord's will is.

Only after one understands what is acceptable to God or pleases God (vs. 10), can he carry it out in his life.

You come to *understand what the will of the Lord is* by walking circumspectly (vs. 15) or carefully or living cautiously. This is being diligent about discovering if your conduct is lining up with God's Word.

- Sometimes your conscience let's you know the answer to this...what you are about to do just doesn't feel right.
- Sometimes “understanding the will of the Lord” means going to someone who has walked with the Lord for a while and living it and asking for advice.
- Oftentimes “understanding the will of the Lord” means hearing the Word of God and comprehending it by studying and meditating on it until it “clicks” in your mind and spirit.

Beginning at verse 15 of Ephesians chapter 5, Paul has thus far told his readers to: (1) Walk Cautiously, (2) Take Advantage of Opportunities, and (3) Know Your Business.

Now he tells them in verse 18 to be controlled by the Spirit.

## ***Be Controlled By the Spirit***

*And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit. (Eph. 5:18)*

Verse 18 includes both a negative and positive command. The *negative* command is to abstain from getting drunk on wine, which renders the consumer uncontrollable of himself and others.

Rather than controlling himself, the wine controls him. Hence, the expression, "*under the influence.*"

The best story I can think of to illustrate this truth is one that my wife may think I tell too often. It was almost 30 years ago on the first anniversary of our wedding when Debbie and I decided to get some wine to celebrate. Deb fixed a nice spaghetti dinner and some garlic bread and we ate our meal together as we sat in the living room under a romantic candlelit atmosphere.

We were drinking our Manischewitz brand wine (you see, I wanted to drink a wine that was made and bottled under the strict Rabbinical supervision of the union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America). We were also listening to old records. After what seemed like several minutes, we finished our first bottle and I ran out to get another bottle.

Sometime during the evening I pulled out an album that had inscribed on it the name of one of Debbie's old flames and a sentence or two of her thoughts about him. By this time it wasn't Chuck speaking, it was the Manischewitz.

Paul writes, "*do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation...excess...riot.*" Our anniversary dinner went from romance to riot and cozy to catastrophe because the wine began to take control!

The negative is "*Be not drunk with wine*" but the *positive* command is, "*be filled with the Spirit.*" Paul is saying, do not be controlled by wine but be controlled by the Holy Spirit.

Paul presents this contrast between the intoxicating effects of wine and the control of the Spirit because of the religious practices occurring during his time.

His readers were well aware of the idolatrous rites and practices that were observed in temple worship. For many in the Greek and Roman culture, the height of their religious experience was communion with the gods through self-hypnosis and frenzied dances designed to work themselves up to some high ecstatic plane. They would drink heavily and participate in sexual orgies as their perverted way of communing with the gods.

In verse 18 Paul wasn't making a moral statement concerning drinking and drunkenness. There plenty of are other passages in Scripture to let us know that drunkenness is sin and it can cause heart wrenching disaster.

There is the time that occurred shortly after the flood where Noah got drunk and acted shamelessly. One of Noah's sons did not act properly with respect to his father's shame and was cursed along with his children and children's children.

Lot's daughters got their father drunk and committed incest because they wanted to have children.

In Daniel chapter five we find Belshazzar holding a drunken feast in which he and his guests praised the gods of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone. And during the very midst of the drunken brawl the kingdom was taken from him.

Some of the Corinthian Christians became drunk while at the Lord's table, and God caused some of them to become weak and sick and others to die because of their wicked desecration ([1 Cor. 11:27–30](#)).

The book of Proverbs has many warnings about drinking. Speaking as a father, the writer said, *“Listen, my son, and be wise, and direct your heart in the way. Do not be with heavy drinkers of wine, or with gluttonous eaters of meat; for the heavy drinker and the glutton will come to poverty, and drowsiness will clothe a man with rags”* (Prov. 23:19–21).

A few verses later he asked, *“Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has complaining? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who linger long over wine, those who go to taste mixed wine. Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it goes down smoothly”* (vv. 29–31).

Wine and other alcoholic beverages are enticing to look at, with their bright color, sparkling bubbles, and smooth taste—just as the commercials vividly portray. What the commercials don't tell you is that as Proverbs also says *“at the end, it bites like a serpent, and stings like a viper. Your eyes will see strange things, and your mind will utter perverse things.”* (vv. 32–33). [MacArthur Commentary on Ephesians]

Now on the other hand, Scripture sometimes commends wine. Sometimes the Bible even commands one to drink it.

Drink offerings of wine accompanied many of the Old Testament sacrifices (Ex. 29:40; Num. 15:5; cf. 28:7). It is likely that a supply of wine was kept in the Temple for that purpose.

The psalmist spoke of *“wine which makes man's heart glad”* (Ps. 104:15), and the writer of Proverbs advised giving *“strong drink to him who is perishing, and wine to him whose life is bitter”* (31:6). In speaking of God's gracious invitation to salvation, Isaiah declared, *“Ho! Every one who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.”* (Isa. 55:1).

Paul told Timothy, *“No longer drink water exclusively, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments”* (1 Tim. 5:23).

Jesus' first miracle was turning water into wine at the wedding feast at Cana (John 2:6–10). He also spoke favorably of wine in the parable of the Good Samaritan, who poured oil and wine on the wounds of the man he found beaten by the roadside (Luke 10:34). [MacArthur]

So we see that while Scripture gives many warnings about drinking wine, it does not forbid it and even commends it in certain circumstances. With this in mind, how can a believer know what to do?

I will happily email a teaching that Dr. John MacArthur has put together where he shares eight suggestions, given in the form of questions, which if answered honestly in light of Scripture will serve as helpful guidelines.

So Paul says in our text, a negative, *“Be not drunk with wine”* and a positive, *“be filled with the Spirit.”*

The English isn't as clear as the Greek in communicating what is going on here.

Paul is not saying to be filled with the Holy Spirit as one would fill a gas tank with gasoline. He is not saying, “*Be filled up with the Holy Spirit*” although this is how many people use this verse.

It may be more accurate to say, “*Let the Holy Spirit fill you up...*” It is the Holy Spirit who is the “Agent” of the filling. It is the Holy Spirit who has His hand, as it were, on the gas nozzle and is doing the filling. It is the Holy Spirit who is doing the filling and the Word of Christ is the “gasoline.”

We see this truth being taught in Colossians 3:16:

*(Col 3:16 NKJV) Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.*

In our text, Paul isn't describing Christians being filled with the *substance* of the Spirit. Something like this happens the moment a person believes and becomes a Christian.

The Spirit's *indwelling* (John 7:37-39; 14:17; Rom. 5:5; 8:9; 1 Cor. 2:12; 6:19-20; 1 John 3:24; 4:13), *sealing* (2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:13; 4:30), and *baptism* (1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:27) occurs at the time a person becomes a follower of Christ and thus are not commanded.

However, believers *are commanded* to be filled constantly with the Holy Spirit. Each Christian has all the Spirit, but the command here is that “the Spirit has all of you.” The way the Spirit has all of you is when the Word of Christ dwells in you.

How do you know when you are under the control of the Holy Spirit? Paul answers this question in verses 19-21 of our text.

*Eph 5:18 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit,  
Eph 5:19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord,  
Eph 5:20 giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
Eph 5:21 submitting to one another in the fear of God.*

There are certain characteristics that are evident when you are under the control of the Holy Spirit.

### *An Encouraging Heart*

*(Eph 5:19a NKJV) - speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs...Encouraging one another with the Word of God.*

When I was in my early 20s and new to the faith, there was on my job a man named Charlie.

Charlie would walk through the halls at work singing quietly or humming some Christian song in his tenor voice (like *In the Sweet By and By*). He would get especially loud when he walked into the restroom—I guess he liked the way the acoustics made him sound. I learned quite a few songs listening to Charlie sing but even better, I always got some encouragement hearing him sing those songs in the workplace.

Encouragement is a byproduct of our worship time. We worship God but we are also speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.

When one is under the control of the Holy Spirit he or she has a heart bent on encouraging another with the Word of God in song.

We watch a lot of family-oriented movies at the Brooks house. Some of the movies we like to watch are the older Disney movies—the ones where the characters are singing. One of the things that make us shake our heads in disgust are the times in these movies when you don't want to hear another song but the character decides to sing anyway.

When Paul writes, "*speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs*" he isn't saying we are to sing to one another. "Speaking to one another" or "Speaking to yourselves (KJV)" literally means, "speaking with yourselves."

Christians are to speak among themselves and to speak to one another, letting other believers know of their joy in the Lord that comes from being saved. Sometimes this should happen in testimony time and during the singing that occurs during praise and worship time.

#### *A Worshipful Heart*

*(Eph 5:19b NKJV) singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord...* This is having a heart of worship—not just singing in church on Sundays, but a constant abiding reverence for God in your heart.

You are not just thinking of God on Sundays and contemplating Him and meditating on His majesty and character on Sundays. You are not just pondering His ways and expectations for your life on Sundays; you are doing this throughout your day and throughout your week.

It's just a constant abiding reverence for God in your heart. It is like you are so much filling your mind and heart with the Word of God that it runs through the crevices and the nooks and crannies of your daily actions until it runs over.

#### *A Thankful heart*

*(Eph 5:20 NKJV) giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ...*

This is when you are always recognizing God's provision and sovereignty and being grateful for it.

The other day, I left for work and had driven a few miles when I realized that I had left my badge and work keys home. I can't do my job without those items so I had to double back to get them.

I got upset with myself and to smooth things over with myself I stopped at the bakery and treated myself and family to some donuts. While I was on my way back to work I contemplated the idea of God creating the circumstance that delayed me in order to keep me out of harm's way as I traveled on the beltway.

There have been times where if I would have left the house 5 or 10 minutes earlier, I would have been right around the spot where an accident occurred.

Paul says, “*giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ...*” We are to give thanks to our Sovereign God who is in control of all things and provides us with every good and perfect gift from above (James 1:17).

Like the song says, we are to “*Praise Him in the morning, Praise in the noonday, Praise Him when the sun goes down.*”

Now of course we need to take the command to “*give thanks always for all things...*” in light of the whole counsel of Scripture. I believe the context here not to thank God for the evil but for the good He blesses us with.

As for the evil that occurs in this world, Paul tells us in 1 Thessalonians 5:18, “*in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*”

The command to “give thanks for all things” or “give thanks in all things” does not mean that all things are good. We are to give thanks because we are confident in the purpose and the providence of God in any and every circumstance of life.

*Rom 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.*

*Rom 8:29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.*

Spirit-filled Christians are to have an *Encouraging Heart*, a *Worshipful Heart* and a *Thankful Heart*. Next Paul says that Christians, controlled by the Spirit, are to have a *submissive heart*.

#### *A Submissive heart*

*(Eph 5:21 NKJV) submitting to one another in the fear of Christ...*

This is being more concerned for others than for yourself because of your love and reverence for God.

The word, *submitting*, is *hupotasso* in the Greek. In New Testament Greek, the word *submit* means “to arrange under, to subordinate, to put in subjection.” It is in the middle voice in Ephesians 5:21 and means, “to subject oneself to, to obey.”

Following the context, we are to be under the control of the Holy Spirit and that control manifests itself in singing and rejoicing and thanking and praising but also in submitting.

One commentator says that “Subjecting one’s self to another is the opposite of self assertion, the opposite of an independent, autocratic spirit. It is the desire to get along with one another, being satisfied with less than one’s due, a sweet reasonableness of attitude.”

This submissive spirit was perfectly embodied in none other than our Savior Jesus as He submitted Himself to the will of His Father. Paul makes note of this in Philippians chapter two:

*Phil 2:3 Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.*

*Phil 2:4 Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.*

*Phil 2:5 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,*

*Phil 2:6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,*

*Phil 2:7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.*

*Phil 2:8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.*

There are no big “I”s or little “U”s in the body of the Christ. We are to humbly esteem others in the body as better than ourselves. This is what a Spirit-controlled believer does.

When you see a church member looking out for his or her own turf—they are not Spirit-filled.

When you see a church member exalting himself or herself—they are not Spirit-controlled.

Paul says when you are Spirit-filled, you have an *Encouraging Heart*, a *Worshipful Heart* a *Thankful Heart* and a *Submissive Heart*.

Now, notice how these truths progress in Ephesians 5. Paul presents the teaching on the filling of the Holy Spirit right before he begins to teach on the Christian family.

He has to because in his teaching on the Christian family he exhorts believers to live in such a way that goes against the grain of what was going on in the Roman culture.

From Rome's beginning, all legal rights and power belonged to the *man*. The expression, “*You da man!*” came straight from Rome (just kidding).

In the early Roman Republic, the law recognized only a man's rights. He had total control over the family: *patria potestas* ...

- Over his children he had the power of life and death.
- He could, at any time, for whatever reason he wished, sell his child into slavery
- A daughter remained under the control of her father unless he consented she could marry, where she is literally given over to the hand (power) of her husband and his family.
- He held absolute power over the slaves of the household, and all female relatives under his guardianship.
- He held all rights over his wife as well. He could punish, banish, denounce, divorce, and execute her if he so chose.

The husband and father who became a Christian and now became a servant of Jesus Christ had to live differently than the *status quo*. In Ephesians 5:21, Paul commands the believer to *now* submit to one another in the fear of God.

This may have gotten the husband to think, “*For all the years of my marriage, my wife was my property and my slave and now because of Christ I must submit to her? I must now love her and sacrifice for her? I must now be interested in what she has to say? I must now value her opinion because of Christ?*”

The Christian wife, in living in the culture of Rome, who has all her life been branded as less than a citizen and all her marriage been treated like an animal may have thought, *"Because of Christ I cannot go on blindly and without feeling catering to my husband's every whim? I must now have a heart-felt desire to minister to and support and give myself to my husband because of my love for Christ?"*

Next week, as we move into what Paul has to say about Christian family relationships, we must realize that in order to be successful, Christians must be empowered by the Holy Spirit.

In order for a marriage to be successful, the husband and wife must be controlled by the Holy Spirit--this is what the "filling of the Holy Spirit" is all about.

In order for parents and children, especially teenagers and young adults, to get along, there must be the control and influence of the Holy Spirit in the relationship.

Next time we are going to find out that God has left the bar high. But He has also left His Holy Spirit to help us to reach the bar.

If you are married or planning on getting married, you need to make sure you do not miss the next few weeks.

If you know anyone who is contemplating marriage or is experiencing trouble in their marriage you need to invite them (with fasting and praying) to hear these messages.

We are going to be looking at how to be a God-honoring wife, husband, parent, child, employee and employer. (You may want to invite your boss here!)

Let us pray.