***Spirit Filled Households***

**Message #8: Ephesians 5:15-6:9 October 25, 2020**

***Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery,
but be filled with the Spirit. Speak . . . . Sing . . . .
Always giving thanks . . . . Submit to one another . . . .***

**Ephesians 5:17-21**

**Setting up Scene 7: “Not . . . but . . . .”**

*Be very careful, then, how you live – not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is.
Do not get drunk with wine . . . but be filled with the Spirit . . . .*

Ephesians 5:15-17

 1) The final scene in our pilgrimage is about \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 2) “be filled” (the passive imperative!) is about \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 3) The key question: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ is going to control me

**A closer l**

*And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation,
but be filled with the Spirit,
 speaking to one another in psalms, hymn and spiritual songs,
 singing and making melody with your hearts to the Lord;
 always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to God, even the Father;/*

 *and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ*

Ephesians 5:18-21 (NASV)

 1) These are participles, pointing to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 2) These are imperatives, emphasizing the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**The Household Code and the Church**

1) Husbands and wives, Ephesians 5:22-32

*22Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. 23For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. 24Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.*

*25Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 26to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, 27and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. 28In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church—30for we are members of his body. 31“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” e 32This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. 33However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.*

 1) What I learned about the new humanity: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 2) What I learned about my place in the household: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

2) Children and Parents, Ephesians 6:1-4

*Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2“Honor your father and mother”—which is the first commandment with a promise— 3“so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.” 4Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.*

 1) What I learned about the new humanity: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 2) What I learned about my place in the household: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

3) Slaves and Masters, Ephesians 6:5-9

*5Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. 6Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. 7Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people, 8because you know that the Lord will reward each one for whatever good they do, whether they are slave or free.*

*9And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him.*

 1) What I learned about the new humanity: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 2) What I learned about my place in the household: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Resources for furth er studies of Ephesians**

For studying Ephesians 5-6
Spurgeon’s “Head and Body” sermon is still a beautiful look at our connection to the Head at [*https://www.monergism.com/head-and-body-ephesians-415-16*](https://www.monergism.com/head-and-body-ephesians-415-16)
Spurgeon’s “Christ’s Love to his Spouse” is attached below and is available at [*https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/christs-love-to-his-spouse/#flipbook/*](https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/christs-love-to-his-spouse/#flipbook/)
I also like Spurgeon’s “Our Motto” on the slave’s response at [*https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/our-motto/#flipbook/*](https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/our-motto/#flipbook/)
Maclaren’s short commentary at [*https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/mac/ephesians-5.html*](https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/mac/ephesians-5.html)Riddlebarger has four sermons on this passage at [*http://kimriddlebarger.squarespace.com/sermons-on-ephesians/Be%20Filled%20with%20the%20Spirit%2012%20edited.pdf*](http://kimriddlebarger.squarespace.com/sermons-on-ephesians/Be%20Filled%20with%20the%20Spirit%2012%20edited.pdf)
Bob Deffinbaugh has five sermons on this passage, three on marriage, beginning with [*https://bible.org/seriespage/20-walking-wisely-ephesians-515-21*](https://bible.org/seriespage/20-walking-wisely-ephesians-515-21)

This is a wonderful Bible Project introduction on youtube: [*https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\_continue=12&v=Y71r-T98E2Q&feature=emb\_logo*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=12&v=Y71r-T98E2Q&feature=emb_logo)

Bob Deffinbaugh’s Ephesians series is at [*https://bible.org/series/ephesians-glory-god-church*](https://bible.org/series/ephesians-glory-god-church)

Spurgeon’s series of messages on Ephesians are at [*http://www.romans45.org/spurgeon/index/r\_eph.htm*](http://www.romans45.org/spurgeon/index/r_eph.htm)

Kim Riddlebarger’s sermons on Ephesians are at [*http://kimriddlebarger.squarespace.com/sermons-on-ephesians/;jsessionid=3799445CA50CA06F2F395D4FBE89D586.v5-web017*](http://kimriddlebarger.squarespace.com/sermons-on-ephesians/;jsessionid=3799445CA50CA06F2F395D4FBE89D586.v5-web017)

ThirdMill has produced “Paul and the Ephesians” at [*https://thirdmill.org/seminary/lesson.asp/vid/19/version/*](https://thirdmill.org/seminary/lesson.asp/vid/19/version/)

Desiring God, John Piper’s media ministry, has some wonderful resources at [*https://www.desiringgod.org/scripture/ephesians/1/messages*](https://www.desiringgod.org/scripture/ephesians/1/messages)

Mark Johnston’s “Preaching Ephesians” at [*https://www.reformation21.org/articles/preaching-ephesians.php*](https://www.reformation21.org/articles/preaching-ephesians.php)

Doug’s favorite commentaries are John R. W. Stott’s *The Message of Ephesians* (IVP, 1979), William Hendriksen, *Exposition of Ephesians* (Baker Book House, 1967); Ephesians in the *Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (Zondervan, 1981) by A. Skevington Wood; and, much shorter, F. F. Bruce’s *The Epistle to the Ephesians* (Revell, 1961).

Martyn Lloyd-Jones has a wonderful seven volume series on Ephesians (Baker Books, 1978).

The text we spent the most time on in Darrell Johnson’s class was Timothy Gombis’ *The Drama of Ephesians* (IVP Academic, 2010)

The Gospel Coalition has resources on Ephesians at [*https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/course/ephesians/*](https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/course/ephesians/%20)

F.F. Bruce’s paraphrase is available at [*https://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/eq/1962-3\_163.pdf*](https://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/eq/1962-3_163.pdf)



**Working outline of Ephesians**

 Overall Theme:

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| --- | --- |
| Chapters 1-3 | The Glory of God in the Church |
| Chapter 1 | The glory of God in redemption |
| Chapter 2 | The glory of God in reconciliation |
| Chapter 3 | The glory of God in the revelation of the mystery of the church |
| Chapters 4-6 | The Glory and Pleasure of God through the Church |
| Chapter 4 | The glory of God in the unity and growth of the church |
| Chapter 5 | The glory of God in the imitation of Christ by the saints |
| Chapter 6 | The glory of God in victory of Christ |

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## Christ's Love to His Spouse

##### Spurgeon at [https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/christs-love-to-his-spouse/#flipbook/](https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/christs-love-to-his-spouse/%23flipbook/)

##### “Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.”— Ephesians v. 25.

THE love of Jesus, — what a theme it is! The apostle said that it passeth knowledge; and if it passeth knowledge, much more doth it excel any description that can be given of it. The heart may feel it hotter than the tongue may speak it. If there is one subject more than another upon which I wish ever to speak, it is the love of Christ; but if there is one which quite baffles me, and makes me go back from this platform utterly ashamed of my poor feeble words, and of the tongue which has uttered them, it is this subject. This love of Christ is the most amazing thing under heaven, if not in heaven itself. How often have I said to you that, if I had heard that Christ pitied us, I could understand it. If I had heard that Christ had mercy upon us, I could comprehend it; but when it is written that he actually loves us, that is quite another and a much more extraordinary thing. Love betwixt mortal and mortal is quite natural and comprehensible; but love between the infinite God and us poor sinful finite creatures, though conceivable in one sense, is utterly inconceivable in another. Who can grasp such an idea? Who can fully understand it? Especially when it comes in this form, — “HE” capitals) “loved me, and gave himself for me,” —this is (read the it miracle in large of miracles.

     I feel the more embarrassed with my subject, at the very entrance upon it, because this love of Christ is here positively likened to the love of a husband to his wife, and is so likened to it as to be made the model of what the husband’s love to his wife should be: “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.” I should never have dared to draw the comparison, nor should any man have drawn it, but that the Holy Ghost himself moved the pen of Paul to write it; and this being the case, we shall not be intruding into the secret places of the Most High if we now enter upon the consideration of this wondrous theme. Verily, I may well say, as the apostle does in the thirty-second verse, “This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.” It is a mystery, a subject far too deep for the mere intellect to dive into its depths, and too sacred for us to think or speak of except with utmost solemnity of heart How shall I order my speech in the presence of such a subject as this? How shall I be free and yet be guarded? How shall I take you to the edge of this great sea of truth, and even venture into it without getting at once out of my depth? “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church”: a parallel is drawn between poor mortals like ourselves who occupy the position of husbands and our glorious Lord who is God over all, blessed for ever. In boundless condescension, he deigns to occupy the same kind of place in reference to his church which he calls his bride, he himself being the Bridegroom who is soon to come. Again I say that I should never have thought of such a comparison had not the Holy Spirit himself put it before us, and invited us to consider it.

     So, dear friends, with great reverence, let us think, first, of how Christ loves the church; then, secondly, how he has proved his love by giving himself for the church; and then, thirdly, let us make the practical enquiry, how shall we think of this wondrous love of Christ?

     I. First, then, HOW DOES CHRIST LOVE HIS CHURCH?

     I cannot help beginning by saying that Christ loves his church specially. There would be no parallel whatever between the husband’s love to the wife and Christ’s love to the church if there were not a speciality about it. Christ is love itself; he is full of kindness and benevolence. In that sense, he loves all mankind; but that cannot be the meaning of the text, for it would be a very strange kind of exhortation to the husband if that were the case. No, the husband’s love to his spouse is something special and particular; and it stands quite alone, and all by itself. He will be kind and benevolent and generous towards all others, but that love which he lavishes upon his wife he must give to nobody else in the world. It is certainly so with our blessed Lord. Free and rich and overflowing in lovingkindness, yet he made a special choice of his people or ever the earth was; and having chosen because of his love, he loves because of his choice, and that love is a peculiar, special, remarkable, pre-eminent love such as he bestows upon none else of all the human race. It must be so, or else the passage would be all but immoral; certainly, it would be manifestly incorrect.

     There is, then, a special love which Christ has towards his own church, towards all believers, towards his chosen people, towards those whom his Father gave him, of whom he says, “They are mine.” I may invite each of you who are included in either of these descriptions to drink in the sweetness of that gracious text, “I have loved thee with an everlasting love.” That means, “I have loved thee with a special and peculiar and distinguishing love.” As many of us as believe in the Lord Jesus Christ are distinguished by the enjoyment of a love which is all our own. Dear follow-Christians, let us never forget this amazing love, and as Christ loves us so specially, let us feel that we are bound to love him specially. Let us give to him all our heart’s affection, for he is a jealous Saviour, and he will have our entire love; so let us render it to him, not of compulsion, but with a joyous willingness. Love dies in the presence of compulsion; it will wear no chains except its own silken fetters; but it flies, oh, how swiftly! on its own strong wings when once it perceives its beloved object. Christ loves his church, thon, specially, as good John Kent sings, —

“He loved the world of his elect, // With love surpassing thought;
Nor will his mercy e’er neglect // The souls so dearly bought.”

     And, next, I ask you to notice what is not always the case with regard to the husband and the wife, that the Lord Jesus loves his church unselfishly; that is to say, he never loved her for what she has, but what she is ; nay, I must go further than that, and say that he loved her, not so much for what she is, but what he makes her as the object of his love. He loves her not for what comes to him from her, or with her, but for what he is able to bestow upon her. His is the strongest love that over was, for he has loved uncomeliness till he has changed it into beauty; he has loved the sinner till he has made him a saint; he has loved the foul and filthy till he has washed them with water by the Word, and presented them unto himself without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. We love because of loveliness apprehended and perceived; but Christ loved because he would impart his own loveliness to the object of his choice. Even the best of men, doubtless, love in some measure from selfish motives; there is some mixture of self-interest in all human love, but Christ had nothing to gain by loving his church. He was very God of very God, the adored of angels, and the beloved of the Father; yet he fixed the eyes of his love— mark you, not of his pity, merely, but of his love, — upon those whom he had chosen out of the race of men. He loved them, not for anything that he could ever gain from them, for he had all things in himself, but because of what he would impart to them. They had nothing of good in themselves, and were only fit to be loved by Christ because, like empty vessels, their very emptiness fits them to be receivers of his fulness. In no other sense are we ever fit to be loved by Christ. As the sun chased the darkness away from the world, and still prevents it from going back into the darkness, so did Christ love a poor, fallen, darkened company of mortals, and loved them into light, and love, and joy, and still loves and enlightens them, and keeps them where they are. Oh, what a wondrous love is this! Let our souls rejoice and be glad therein.

     Further, brethren, as Christ’s love to his church is a love of choice, and of speciality, and of marvellous unselfishness, so I believe— although I do not understand how it can be so, — that it is a love of complacency. The husband’s love to his wife is not the love of a parent to a child, it is not the love of the philanthropist to the object of distress that he relieves; it is something very different from either of these forms of love. It may be that the husband confers benefits upon his wife as the result of his love, and he should do so; but still, the love of the husband to the wife puts them somehow on a level with one another. She has complacency in him, and he has complacent delight in her. If a husband only loved his wife with a feeling of pity towards her, with the notion of relieving her, and so forth, that would be a very poor kind of relationship; and though I speak with abated breath as I say it, I do believe that the blessed Lord Christ takes complacency in his people. That we should delight ourselves in him, is very easy to understand; but that he should delight himself in us, oh! the very thought of it is ravishing to my heart. Even in the Old Testament Scripture, our Lord said to his chosen, “Thou shalt be called Hephzi-bah,” that is, “My delight is in her.” Is it really so, that the infinite God takes delight in his chosen people? Here is another passage to confirm it: “My delights were with the sons of men.” Does Jesus find delight in men? Ay, that he does; and you know how he said to those who were the representatives of his church in his lifetime on earth, “I have called you friends,” and he did seem to find a solace in their company. Even when he had risen from the dead, and had no more work to do for their redemption, yet he came to them that he might enjoy their society. Poor, fallible, half-instructed men they were, yet he found his pleasure in them. He used to speak of them in this way, “I will declare thy name unto my brethren.” He is not ashamed to call us brethren; and in that rapturous Song of Songs, which is the very Holy of Holies of our blessed Bible, he does not hesitate to speak of his beloved as his spouse, and to use to her all those endearing terms which prove that he takes great delight in her.

     Think of it, my soul, that Jesus takes great delight in thee. He became a man, and it was not good even for such a man to be alone. He could not rest till he had found thee out, and had wooed and won thee. Wilt thou ever deny him thy company, wilt thou refuse him thy heart of hearts, wilt thou hide from him the secret of thy soul? If so, thou doest a grievous wrong to him who has deigned to stoop from the throne of his eternal glory to take delight in the company of his creature, man! I have looked abroad upon creation, and have seen all kinds of beautiful birds and intelligent beasts, yet have I never seen any towards which I would stoop to make them my intimate acquaintances, and marry them in the heart of my love. No, we would not stoop even that little distance; but we were infinitely below the Son of God, yet has he chosen us. He felt that he could link his destiny with ours, — I put it not too strongly, for that is what he has really done. He has become the Head of his body, the church; he has become the Husband of his chosen bride. He has, as it were, entered into the same boat with his people. He has made a household whereof we twain are the companion parts, himself the Husband, and his church the spouse. Oh, who shall tell it all out? I do but touch the surface of this boundless sea as with a swallow’s wing; happy are you if you dare to plunge into its depths.

     There is, then, between Christ and his church, to make a parallel between the love of the husband to his wife, a love of complacency.

     And being a love of complacency, in such a case as this, there is an intense love of sympathy. The true husband and wife are so united that they share each other’s joys and sorrows without making any effort to do so. It comes naturally to them, they cannot avoid it. And oh! let us tell out this great truth, the sympathy between Christ and his people is absolutely perfect. If he sees us in sorrow, he feels it at his heart. He was himself encompassed with infirmity, when he was here, and tempted in all points like as we are, that he might know all the trials of the church he loved; and now in heaven, as he has shared our sorrows, he decrees that we shall share his joys. He wishes us even now to let our hearts beat in sympathy with his triumph and his victory; I wish we would do so, why should we not? Our Husband is on the throne; then let us begin to reign with him. He has raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenlies; then let us have faith enough to claim what is really ours in him. Remember that quaint couplet of which good old Rowland Hill was so fond, and sing it yourself, —

“But this I do find, we two are so joined,
He’ll not be in glory, and leave me behind.”

Still better, recollect that word of power which fell from our Lord’s blessed lips while here below, “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory.” He has a perfect sympathy with us, and we should have a like sympathy with him. Blessed be his dear name that he should ever have entered into such bonds of love as these with such poor creatures as we are!

     Nor is that all. While it is very blessed to know that Christ has this love of sympathy, he has, further, a love of communion. Without this, there could be no parallel with domestic life, which includes much of happy communion and loving conversation. A brother-minister said to me, the other day, when we were talking to one another about what the gospel has done for men, “Did you never think what a wonderful thing the gospel is, that it has made possible such happiness as you and I enjoy in our domestic relationships?” And of course I heartily responded to that remark, for if there is anything that is a miniature picture of heaven upon earth, it is a pair of Christians happily united, whose children grow up in the fear of the Lord, and render to them increased comfort and joy every day. Oh, how much some of us owe to the gospel for the happiness of our homes! There could, however, be no such happiness in married life if there were no conversation, no communion; and our Lord Jesus Christ so loves his church that he often converses with her. He so loves each one of his people that, if we are only willing to have it so, we may walk with him, and we may talk with him, and he will speak with us as a man speaketh with his friend. Oh, my brother, if thou dost not every day commune with Christ, whose fault is it? Not his, but thine; for he loves thee so that he would never let thee be away from him if thou wert not so wayward, and so easily turned aside by little things. Yes, he manifests himself unto us as he does not unto the world. I am not going to tell out here all that he says; all the ways in which he manifests himself to his people, we could not tell; but there are times of such real delight in fellowship with the Lord Jesus, that we can only say, with Dr. Watts, —

“My willing soul would stay // In such a frame as this,
And sit and sing herself away // To everlasting bliss.”

     The pith of all that I have said— and I have much more to say than time will permit, — is just this. It is an extraordinary thing that Christ has entered into positive unity with his people. Unity, mark you, for that is the essence of the marriage-bond. We are one with Christ, who made himself one with his people. Hast thou ever realized this, even thou who art the best-tutored of the children of God? Hast thou ever taken a firm hold of this great truth, and gripped it so that thou wilt not let it go? Come back to what I said a little while ago, that Christ has linked his destiny with thine, his honour with thine, his life with thine, his happiness with thine. Thou must be in heaven, or else he will be bereaved. Thou must be in heaven, or else he will be imperfect. Thou art a member of his body; and if he should lose one of his members, then his body would not be perfect, nor the Head either. Thou art joined unto the Lord, and thou art “one spirit” with him, and thou mayest bravely say, “Who shall separate us?” for such is this eternal union that there is no separation between Christ and the soul that is joined to him. “The Lord, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away.” In the olden times, the husband might give his wife a letter of divorce, and put her away; but God says that he hateth putting away, and he will never divorce those who are joined to him. What a marriage is this! Do you know, dear friend, what I am talking about? I cannot speak of it as I would, but it is true, and there is the wonder of it. It is no fiction, no myth, no mere figure of speech; but it is really so in deed and in truth. For this cause, Christ left his Father, and became one with his church, that henceforth they should no more be twain, but one; and now we who have believed in Christ Jesus are one with him in time and to eternity. His love has made it so, and we may paraphrase the words we read just now, and say, “Behold, what manner of love the Bridegroom hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the spouse of Christ!”

     I have but very imperfectly spoken upon this part of my subject, but I must not linger longer on this most delightful theme.

     II. I now ask you briefly to notice HOW THE LORD JESUS PROVED HIS LOVE TO HIS CHURCH: “Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.”

     I will not at first restrict the meaning of this text to what is the real essence of it, but I will just observe that Christ gave himself for his church when he was born into the world, when he did not disdain the virgin’s womb, but was born of Mary, wrapped in swaddling bands, and laid in a manger. The angels have never ceased to wonder at this great mystery of godliness. The God who made the heavens and the earth, the God who upholdeth all things by the word of his power, lay as an infant in the manger of Bethlehem, because there could be no manifestation of his love to his people unless it could be said that they twain were one flesh. So he became bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, most surely and truly man, with all the sinless infirmities of our nature, and liable even to death in order to be fully one with us. Oh, how really he gave himself for us when he thus became a babe, a child, a man!

     That being done, he gave all his life here on earth for us. He did nothing for himself; it was all for us, for his church. His whole life was for her righteousness, for her example, for her teaching, and for her quickening. He loved her with no view but the glory of the Father by the salvation of his chosen.

     Nor was that all; it was indeed but the beginning. Having given his Godhead by the assumption of our humanity, having given his life by spending it all for us, Christ gave himself up to death for our sins. He went up to the felon’s gibbet, the cross of Calvary, and there he gave his hands and feet to the nails, and his heart to the spear. Laying down his body for us, but at the same time laying down his soul and spirit, he suffered that dread doom of being forsaken of his God, so that he cried, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” There, when you see his pale body, like a withered lily broken at the stalk, — when you see the holy men and women wrapping him in spices, and laying him in Joseph’s tomb, — you understand how he loved us, and gave himself for us, dying in our stead, a propitiation and atonement for our sins. He loved us so as to die for us. He could not have died had he not become man; but being found in fashion as a man, and partaking of our human nature, it was possible for him to prove the utmost extent of his love by laying down his life for us. Oh, could you not kiss those dear cold feet? Do you not half wish that you could have been there to wrap him in the spices and fine linen, and to lay him in the grave? But remember that he now lives, our heavenly Lover lives. He has proved his love by giving up his life, but now he has his life back again, and he has gone home to his Father, he has gone back to the royalties he quitted, and put on again all the splendour which for a while he laid aside.

     Yet he does not love us any the less, for he gives himself for us still. He acts the part of Intercessor for his church. For Zion’s sake he doth not hold his peace, and for Jerusalem’s sake he doth not rest. Nor will he; he is crowned that his church may be crowned, he is enthroned that she too may come to the throne; and he will further prove his love by-and-by, for he has so given himself for us that he is bound to come again, to fetch home his affianced when she is prepared for him, and the heaven above is prepared for her. Then shall he come in all his glory, and she shall be brought unto him in raiment of needlework, in all the splendour of his righteousness, and for ever and ever shall there be nothing but joy and blessedness.

     What I am driving at, and what I want every Christian here to get at, is this thought. Whatever Jesus Christ is, — and you do not know half of what he is, even you who know most of him, — whatever Christ is in any relationship, or from any point of view, he has given himself to us. Not merely has he given his thoughts, and his actions, and his wisdom, and his power, and his wealth; but he has given himself to us. Oh, I do like to think of this! All that I can imagine Christ to be must still fall far short of himself. It is himself that we love, and I would sooner have Christ than have heaven. It is himself we love, and I would sooner have Christ than his crown. It is himself we love, and I would sooner have Christ than all the golden streets. It is himself that we love, and it is himself that belongs to us; not merely the sight of his eyes, but his eyes themselves; not only the love of his heart, but his heart itself. Himself, his Godhead, and his manhood, the complex person of the Christ of God, is given unto his church.

     I feel as if I do not know how to talk at all about this great truth. Some brother cried out this morning when I was speaking, and I noticed that somebody else immediately followed him; but oh! if ever there is a time for crying out, — and yet, on the other hand, if ever there is a time for being struck with silence, — it is when we get on this topic of Christ’s love to his people. I feel as if I wanted to run off this platform, and just get home, and shut to the door, and sit down, and weep to the praise of this mighty love; and then I should want to get up, and run back again, and say, “What a fool I was not to tell you all I could about it!” May God the Holy Ghost help you to realize it! That you are loved by anyone, is a joy; for love is a precious thing, whoever gives it. But you, believer, are loved by Christ; you are so loved by Christ as not merely to be espoused to him, but united to him in eternal wedlock. You are joined to him in such a way that you must, by-and-by, be with him in all the glory of his royal estate, for the King will bring his queen home, and he will bring you home to dwell with him for ever and ever.

     I am very sorry for those who do not know anything about this great love, I am truly sorry for you outsiders.

“His worth, if all the nations knew,
Sure the whole world would love him too.”

If they did but imagine the sweetness of the love of Christ, they would never give rest to their eyes until they had looked to him by faith, and so had learned it, and known it for themselves.

     III. Now, lastly, dear friends, if such be the love of Jesus, and the way in which he has proved it, HOW OUGHT WE TO THINK OF IT? I hardly need suggest to God’s people anything about this, for you know it already, your own hearts have outrun my words.

     How should we think of the love of Christ? Why, with deepest gratitude. Oh, how couldst thou love me, my Lord, thou whose eyes outshine the light of the morning? How couldst thou love me, thou who canst make the fairest of all things with a wish of thy heart? How couldst thou love me in whom there was nothing fair, nothing worthy of thy love? Yet I do bless thee for it. Do not all of you who love him say in your hearts, “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name, that ever he should love me”? It is not his benefits that you have to think of just now, though they are innumerable. It is not his mercies that you have to think of at this moment, though they are immeasurable. But it is that he has loved you, and that he still loves you, and that he has given himself to you and for you. That is the point. Do you not bless him? Do you not feel as if you could lie at his feet, ah, and love the very dust he trod upon, when you think that ever he should love you? Very well, then, return to him your gratitude.

     But that is not half enough. The next thing is, render to him your obedience. Does not the Scripture say that the wife is to be obedient unto her husband? Well, in this case, shall we not prove our gratitude to Christ by a complete obedience to him? Is there anything that he commands you to do? Can you neglect it after such love as this? The least of his ordinances, will you not observe them? The smallest of his precepts, will you not regard them? Is there a word of his lips that you dare despise? Is there a wish that he has expressed in the Scriptures that you would fail to carry out? I hope not; such love as Christ has given to us ought to receive from us, without any exhortation, a complete and perfect obedience even to every jot and tittle as far as ever we can render it. I do not understand that love to Christ which makes men pick and choose, and say, “I shall not attend to that, for that is non-essential. I shall do this; I believe that it is wrong, but still, I daresay it does not matter much.” No, no, no! True wives act not so to their husbands; there is no wish of a loving husband which a loving wife would not regard. Nay, more, she anticipates his wishes, she delights to make him happy; and so should it be with my heart towards my Lord. I should be looking out for what I can do for him; I should be hunting high and low to find somewhat that would give him pleasure; and, above all, since he says, “If ye love me, keep my commandments,” my heart should answer, “Thy commandments are not grievous; it is my delight to do thy will, O my God and my Saviour.” That is the spirit in which to act towards Christ.

     Once more. There is a text which says, “Let the wife see that she reverence her husband.” I have sometimes thought that must be somewhat difficult for some wives to do. There has not been very much to reverence in their husbands; still, they are bound to do it as far as it is possible. In this case, there is everything to reverence in our Beloved; there is nothing about him but deserves our profoundest homage. Such an one as he, whose very name has music in it, whose very person is the delight of seraphim and cherubim, — he, the Christ, whom none can conceive of in all his fulness but the Father, — we must reverence him, and bow before him, and extol him. I grow angry, I confess it, when I hear some men speak of Christ. They talk of my Lord in these days as if he were some common person, and they have “comparative religions” in which they compare him with I know not whom. I love my Lord so well that I must boil over with indignation when his name is disparaged. Our hymn says, —

“Stand up, stand up for Jesus.”

It is almost too commonplace an expression in reference to him; still, what it means let us do; let us be ready, like the armed men who were about the bed of Solomon, to defend our King against all comers; for, if he loved us so much, we must love him in return.

     And what else shall we say? If such be the love of Christ, how shall we think of it but in a way of holiness? Let us seek to be like him; let us try to fulfil his will, that he may purify us, and sanctify us by the washing of water by the Word, that we may be holy as he who hath called us is holy. Let us think of this love by striving after sanctification; and let us think of this love, above all, by rendering to him now and as long as we live the full love of our heart. We cannot love him without being moved to love him more. We can love the more by thinking much of the person towards whom our hearts are drawn, so think much of my Lord, think of him every day. Get to be familiar with him. Read frequently the story of his life and death. Get alone as often as you can, and picture him before your eyes until you find your heart exclaiming, “I love thee, dearest Lord. Thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee.” I find it a profitable form of devotion, sometimes, to sit quite still, and not say a word; but just only think of him. My heart has burned within me while doing that, and I believe that it is not lost or wasted time, but time most profitably spent, for I come forth from my chamber and feel, “Now I am ready for the service of life, or for its suffering, for I have seen the Well-beloved, and the glances of his countenance have charmed away my griefs, and prepared me to take up my cross, and follow him whithersoever he goeth.” Oh, love the Lord, ye his saints; and as long as ye live, love him more and more, love him to the very utmost, till you die of love! Blessed, for ever blessed be his holy name! Amen and Amen.

# Walking Wisely (Ephesians 5:15-21)Deffinbaugh at [*https://bible.org/seriespage/20-walking-wisely-ephesians-515-21*](https://bible.org/seriespage/20-walking-wisely-ephesians-515-21)

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

### Introduction

Of all of the places our family has spent the night, one stands out in particular—the Alpine Lodge. We were driving back to Texas after having visited our families in Washington State. The fuel crisis of that time did not make travel any easier, and to make matters even worse, we had a large van with a healthy appetite for fuel and a small gas tank. Several times we found it necessary to spend the night in a small town, so that we would be able to get fuel the next morning, after the service stations opened.

We were driving in a remote area and it was beginning to get late. We needed fuel as well as a place to spend the night. When a small town finally came in sight, we all agreed that this was where we would stay, if we could find a motel with any vacancies. The flashing red neon sign of the Alpine caught our attention on the right hand side of the road. (We won’t forget that sign, because our room was right behind it, so that the blinking light illuminated our room the entire night.) There was no bathroom in the room we would rent for the night. It was down the hall. There was one bath, not two, and its doors were the kind you see on the old Western movies, with two swinging doors. The top and the bottom of the doorway was open, nor was there was there any lock on the door. It was not a time to be very particular about where we would spend the night.

We quickly learned that the Alpine Lodge was also a tavern. The bar tender was also the inn keeper and so I had to go to the bar in order to check in. I will never forget that scene, and neither will my girls. The bar, like the rest of that place, was far from elegant. A large but rather listless German Shepherd was lying on the floor, right next to the bar. And two drunks were seated at the bar, right where I had to go to get the towels for our room. The most amazing thing is the conversation which I happened to overhear while I was waiting for our towels. One of the drunks was witnessing to the other, attempting to lead him to the Lord.

While I might be willing to grant that a bar is a possible place for evangelism, it is not consistent with my view of the gospel to think of a drunk as an evangelist. There is something incompatible about drunkenness and evangelism. They just don’t seem to go together.

In our text in Ephesians chapter 5, Paul speaks of the incompatibility between drunkenness and being filled with the Holy Spirit. While the ill informed and unsaved might confuse these two (as we see happening at Pentecost in Acts chapter 2), no Christian should confuse them. And yet it seems that some did so. In the 11th chapter of 1 Corinthians, Paul found it necessary to rebuke the Corinthian saints for drunkenness at the Lord’s Table, an almost unbelievable thought (1 Corinthians 11:17-34; see especially verse 21). And so, in Ephesians 5:15-21, Paul speaks of the contrasts which Christian faith produces with our former walk as unbelievers.

### Our Text in Context

Ephesians 1, 2, and 3 reveal the eternal plan and purpose of God for His church, in a depth never before revealed until Paul’s conversion and calling to faith. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 describe the conduct of the Christian, which is to be the outgrowth of his identification with Christ and His church.

In Ephesians 4:1–6:9, Paul describes our conduct in terms of our walk.[117](https://bible.org/seriespage/20-walking-wisely-ephesians-515-21#P2209_683062) In Ephesians 6:10-20, he speaks of our conduct as warfare. Ephesians 4:1–6:9 speaks of our conduct in terms of its relationship to men, both non-Christians and our fellow-believers. In Ephesians 6:10-19, he speaks of our conduct in terms of our spiritual warfare with fallen and hostile celestial beings.

At Ephesians 5:15 we come to the final description of the Christian’s walk. This section continues through chapter 6, verse 9. In Ephesians 4:1-16, Paul calls us to walk in a manner worthy of our calling. In 4:17-32 Paul calls us to walk in a way that differs dramatically from our walk as Gentile pagans. In 5:1-6 Paul urges us to walk in love, while in 5:7-14 we are instructed to walk as children of light. Finally, in 5:15–6:9 we are called upon to walk as those who are wise.

This final command—to walk as those who are wise—is the longest of Paul’s instructions for walking. It begins at verse 15 of chapter 5, and ends with verse 9 in chapter 6. The overriding command of this section is recorded in verse 15, and repeated twice, in verses 17 and 18:

 15 Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise.

 17 So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

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

Each command to walk wisely has a corresponding contrasting command, not to walk unwisely. These three commands are all variations of one command, to walk carefully, as those who are wise. By the use of participles, Paul gives further clarification and illustration of his commands. Most of these participles are easily identified by the translation of the NASB, which gives them an “ing” ending. These are: “making,” verse 16; “speaking,” “singing,” and “making melody,” verse 19, and “giving thanks,” verse 20. The last participle is not as clearly indicated, because it is rendered as an imperative, “be subject,” verse 21.[118](https://bible.org/seriespage/20-walking-wisely-ephesians-515-21#P2216_685477)

Paul’s final command to walk wisely is stated in terms of being “filled with the Spirit” (verse 18), and then further clarified by the participles which follow. The submission which serves as evidence of the filling of the Holy Spirit is that which should be evident universally and mutually, as well as in marriage, the family, and in other social institutions of authority. The resulting structure becomes apparent:

 15 Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise,

 16 making the most of your time, because the days are evil.

 17 So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

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

 19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,
 singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord;

 20 always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God,
 even the Father;

 21 and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.

The universal and mutual submission which Paul calls for in broad and general terms in verse 21 is more specifically applied in 5:22–6:9. Here, Paul speaks of submission in the context of relationships: husband and wife (5:22-33); parents and children (6:1-4); slaves and masters (6:5-9). In later lessons, we will study these verses in detail. The important thing to observe at this point is that the submission called for in Ephesians 5:22–6:9 is that which is called for in 5:21. In other words, 5:21–6:9 is a unit, and the submission which Paul speaks of is but one manifestation of the filling of the Holy Spirit.

In this study, I have chosen to consider the text a command at a time, working down through the text as Paul has written it. Let us give heed to Paul’s instructions concerning wisdom, and let us endeavor, by God’s grace, not only to understand what Paul is teaching here, but to do it.

### The First Command:

*Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil.*

#### “Therefore be careful how you walk”

The Christian’s walk is to be one that is given careful consideration. It is one that is to be the outgrowth of thought, of purpose, of deliberate and disciplined action. This week I have watched, along with countless others, some of the Olympic Games in Spain. Not one of those athletes arrived at the Olympic games by chance, without thought, planning, or diligent and disciplined preparation. Paul, speaking of the “Olympic games” of his own day, calls for Christians to act with similar dedication: 24 *Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. 25 And everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. 26 Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; 27 but I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified* (1 Corinthians 9:24-27).

We will soon see that walking carefully is walking wisely, and that walking wisely is, in the final analysis, walking in the Spirit. Why is it, then, that so many Christians equate being filled with the Spirit with spontaneity? It was Paul who wrote to Timothy, “For God has not given us a spirit [Spirit] of timidity, but of power and love and discipline” (2 Timothy 1:6).

I remember well the senseless injuries and deaths of men and women soldiers after the Persian Gulf War ended. It happened because these soldiers were lulled into a false sense of safety and security. Sometimes in the course of duty, and other times in the pursuit of souvenirs, soldiers carelessly went about in places where mines and booby traps had been placed by the enemy. And this carelessness led to injury and death for some. Christians live in a fallen world, in a hostile and dangerous world. We dare not live our lives and Christians in a haphazard fashion. We must give careful thought to our attitudes and actions. This is what Paul calls for, nothing less.

#### “Not as unwise men, but as wise”

To walk carefully is to walk as those who are wise. To do otherwise is to walk as one who is unwise. Elsewhere in Scripture (see 1 Corinthians 1-3; James 3:13-18), two kinds of wisdom are contrasted. Divine wisdom is contrasted with mere human wisdom. But here in our text, Paul speaks only of divine wisdom as wisdom, while he identifies human wisdom as that which is, in truth, unwise. There is only one true wisdom, and all other wisdom is unwise. In our text, as in the Book of Proverbs, to walk as one who is wise one will live skillfully. In our text, as in Proverbs, wisdom begins with the “fear of the Lord.” As Paul writes elsewhere: 18 *For the word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 19 For it is written, “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, And the cleverness of the clever I will set aside.” 20 Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 21 For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. 22 For indeed Jews ask for signs, and Greeks search for wisdom; 23 but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness, 24 but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men* (1 Corinthians 1:18-25).

*14 You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them; 15 and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus* (2 Timothy 3:14-15).

I am impressed that here, as earlier in Ephesians, Paul seldom gives a command without also giving a corresponding prohibition. And so the instruction is given in terms of “not … but.” Paul does not speak of the relationship between our past life apart from Christ and our new life in Christ in terms of continuity, but in terms of contrast. We do not carry the baggage of our pagan lives into the faith; we jettison that baggage, replacing it with that which God produces in us through His Spirit. Christian living involves a complete mental overhaul, a whole new set of values, motivations, means and methods.

#### “Making the most of your time,[119](https://bible.org/seriespage/20-walking-wisely-ephesians-515-21#P2244_692340) because the days are[120](https://bible.org/seriespage/20-walking-wisely-ephesians-515-21#P2245_692618) evil”

The “time” to which Paul refers here seems to be a particular time, the opportune time. His instruction might even be paraphrased, “seize the moment.” In Colossians, the opportunity Paul has in view is that of evangelizing the lost: “Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity” (Colossians 4:5). In both Ephesians and Colossians, wisdom is in the context. It takes wisdom to recognize that the days are evil. The lost are inclined to be oblivious—morally numb—to rightness and wrongness of the world in which they live.

It takes wisdom not only to recognize the evil nature of the days in which we live, but wisdom as well to know how best to respond. A Christian may rightly sense the evil of an abortion clinic, but blowing up the building seems to fall far short of that action which is wise, which brings glory to God, which enlightens a darkened world, and which promotes the gospel. In these present evil days, a Christian teacher has many restrictions to the proclamation of his or her faith in the public school classroom. A wise Christian will manifest wisdom both in what is said and done, and in how it is said and done. A Christian employer faces many difficulties in terms of hiring and firing employees. Wisdom is necessary to know what to do and how to do it, to the glory of God, to demonstration of what is good, and to the advancement of the gospel.

Evil days also seem to present the Christian with many distractions and diversions. While we have more free time than any previous culture, look how many “time eaters” our culture has produced. It is no wonder that a friend wrote these words on a card, which he attached to his television: “Redeeming the time.”

Just before our vacation in England, I read a biography of John and Charles Wesley. These men traveled many, many miles, mostly on horseback. They preached in many different places. They wrote an incredible number of hymns. I was struck by the impact these men had as we went from place to place (some of which were out of the way places) and found historical markers indicating that one or both of them had preached in that place. These men knew how to make the most of their opportunities. How much greater the opportunities are in our day, not only because of the evil of our time, but also because of our technology. But who would dare to have our lives compared to the Wesleys?

### The Second Command:

#### “So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is”

Walking wisely is, according to these words, walking in accordance with God’s will. Walking wisely is walking in the will of God. To fail to know and to do God’s will is to be foolish. If Paul’s words imply anything, it is that God’s will is not a deep, dark secret, which only a handful of saints will ever be able to discern. The “will of God” is here depicted as that which is patently clear, and that anyone who fails to discern or to do it is foolish. Doing the will of God is acting wisely, and with sound reasoning, as guided by the Spirit of God and the Word of God. As Bruce puts it, “The doing of his will is not a matter of irrational impulse but of intelligent reflection and action.”[121](https://bible.org/seriespage/20-walking-wisely-ephesians-515-21#P2255_696129)

The important thing is for people to know and to do God’s will. But what is this “will of the Lord” to which Paul refers here? It is not surprising that fallen men have twisted the meaning of God’s will, focusing more on ourselves than upon God, and upon His plan. We just returned from a vacation with my parents. We had a choice to make whenever we took a picture. We could take a picture with only the scene. Usually, however, there were commercial pictures available which were far superior in quality. The other choice—the one which we made—was to “personalize” each picture. And so, in virtually every photo, one or more members of our family was in the picture. Often, our presence served to obscure the scenery.

We have likewise tended to “personalize” the picture of the will of God which the Scriptures paint for us. God’s will has thereby become “God’s will for my life.” When the Bible speaks of God’s will, there are times when it speaks of His specific will for a particular person, in a given situation. But this is not the norm. Much more frequently, the Bible speaks of the “will of the Lord” as His overall plan. In the context of Ephesians, the “will of the Lord” is the eternal plan of God, outlined in chapters 1-3. Through Paul, additional elements of God’s will, which were previously a mystery to men, have now been revealed. If we are to be wise, rather than foolish, we are to be astute concerning the plans and purposes of God, as revealed in the Scriptures. And we are to base our decisions on this eternal plan. We are to subordinate our plans to the eternal plans and purposes of God. In the vast majority of instances, the will of God for our life is dictated by God’s eternal plan. In those instances where specific divine guidance is needed, God will direct our path, whether by revelation, or providentially.

### The Third Command:

#### “And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation,[122](https://bible.org/seriespage/20-walking-wisely-ephesians-515-21#P2262_698208) but be filled[123](https://bible.org/seriespage/20-walking-wisely-ephesians-515-21#P2263_698632) with the Spirit”[124](https://bible.org/seriespage/20-walking-wisely-ephesians-515-21#P2264_698802)

In the second chapter of Acts, some mistakenly identified the filling of the Holy Spirit as the conduct of those who had too much to drink. In the eleventh chapter of 1 Corinthians, we learn that some of the Corinthian saints actually did become drunk while gathering together as a church to remember the Lord’s death through communion. Heathen religions did make use of wine, but in a way that led to sin and debauchery:

By the ancients, moreover, an overdose of wine was often used not only to rid oneself of care and to gain a sense of mirth but also to induce communion with the gods and, by means of this communion, to receive ecstatic knowledge, not otherwise obtainable.[125](https://bible.org/seriespage/20-walking-wisely-ephesians-515-21#P2267_701070)

There is an implied relationship between getting drunk with wine and being filled with the Holy Spirit. This relationship has, as I understand it, but one similarity, and that is the similarity of “getting drunk” with “being filled.” Both terms imply a control over an individual by an outside force, which alters one’s thinking and conduct.

The similarity between drunkenness and the filling of the Spirit ends here, with this one factor—control. The control which wine gains over the one who becomes drunk is detrimental and even destructive. The thinking and the actions of a drunk are not those for which a man is praised. The control of the Spirit produces clear thinking, a wisdom which is beyond human abilities, and conduct which benefits those with whom we associate.

I have yet to hear of a drunk who was considered wise in the midst of his drunkenness. A drunk makes a fool of himself. A drunk does not make wise use of his money, his time, or of his body when under the control of alcohol. He may gather together with others. He may even join with them in music, but it will not be for true worship. It will not result in the edification of others, or in the glorification of Christ.

Paul begins by contrasting the filling with the Spirit and drunkenness in a general way. Drunkenness results in dissipation—waste. By inference, we can see that the filling of the Spirit is fruitful, beneficial, edifying. Paul describes the benefits of the filling of the Spirit in several ways. Paul employs four participles in verses 19-21, which depict four manifestations of the Spirit’s filling.

Paul’s third command, recorded in Ephesians 5:18-21, is similar to another of his commands, recorded in the third chapter of Colossians. It may be well for us to refresh our memories as to this parallel text: *And Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you; with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father* (Colossians 3:15-17).

#### “Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs”

Here, as also in Colossians chapter 4, Paul seems to be referring to the public gathering of the church as well as to smaller gatherings as well. In verses 19 and 20, he seems to be dwelling on the role which music is to play in the church.[126](https://bible.org/seriespage/20-walking-wisely-ephesians-515-21#P2277_703654) The drunken man sings too, but not as Paul is describing.

Some have made noble efforts to define and distinguish “psalms,” “hymns,” and “spiritual songs.” I am not convinced that any of these is precise, or even intended by Paul. I am more inclined to find Paul indicating to us that our music in church may have a variety of forms. Through the years I have heard song leaders instruct the congregations, “Now let’s sing this song *worshipfully*.” What one meant was to sing acapella. Another wanted us to sing slowly and quietly. And yet another wanted us to sing loudly, briskly, and enthusiastically. By inference, Paul indicates to us that Christian music may have a variety of forms, none of which should exclude the other. Having said this, I must also go on to say that I believe some musical forms and styles have no place in Christian worship. While all things may be “lawful” and nothing evil of itself, not all things edify (see 1 Corinthians 6:12).

The music of which Paul speaks is not considered apart from its lyrics. The lyrics of the songs we sing are instructional. We sing to one another. In so doing, we speak to one another, by means of the lyrics of the songs we sing (5:19). In Colossians, Paul tells us that we teach Scripture through Christian music, and we even admonish musically. Music has a way of distilling our theology. It is one of the ways that we teach and learn. Thus, we should be careful about the words of the songs we sing. We should even be careful to enunciate the words we sing, so that others can hear and understand. Music that is not understood is not edifying:

What is the outcome then? I shall pray with the spirit and I shall pray with the mind also; I shall sing with the spirit and I shall sing with the mind also. Otherwise if you bless in the spirit only, how will the one who fills the place of the ungifted say the ‘Amen’ at your giving of thanks, since he does not know what you are saying?” (1 Corinthians 14:15-16).

I believe that good Christian music also focuses on the major truths of the faith and that it sets aside the minor issues which are divisive. In our church, a number of staunch Calvinists sing hymns written by the Charles Wesley, without any hesitation or reservation. Why? Because Wesley’s great hymns dwell on the “camels” of the faith and not on the “gnats” (see Matthew 23:23-24). Good Christian music tends to promote the unity of the church, rather than to divide it.

#### “Singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord”

Christian music is not just horizontal—”speaking to one another”—it is also vertical. And so Paul goes on to indicate that the Spirit-filled Christian not only speaks to his fellow-believers in song, but that he also speaks to God. If our theology can be expressed and communicated in song, so can our praise. This praise is not to be thought evident in music that is professionally and flawlessly performed, but in terms of the heart from which it emerges. This is not a justification for poorly performed music, but a reminder that, once again, it is not the outward appearance which matters so much to God and the inward motivation (see Luke 16:15). And because this music flows from the heart, it need not happen only in a congregation, or with accompaniment. It can and should take place all week long.

#### “Always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father”

As indicated earlier, Paul may well be speaking here of that thanksgiving which is expressed musically. The Spirit-filled Christian is evident by his on-going thanksgiving, expressed in the name of Christ to the Father. Such thanksgiving not only recognizes the existence of God, but the sovereign involvement God has in the life of the believer. It recognizes that all that happens in the believer’s life is from God, that every good and perfect gift is from Him (James 1:17), and that even suffering is a gift (Philippians 1:29) which comes from God for our good and His glory (see Romans 5:3-5; 8:28). It recognizes and responds with thanksgiving for God’s gracious involvement in our lives as the result of His fathomless wisdom.

33 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! 34 For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor? 35 Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to him again? 36 For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen (Romans 11:33-36).

#### “Be[ing] subject to one another in the fear of Christ”

Finally, the filling of the Holy Spirit is evident by our submission to one another. This submission ultimately stems from a fear or reverence of our Lord Jesus Christ, and not of the one to whom we are in submission. This submission is not just to those who are in authority over us. This submission is mutual—one to another. Since submission is the subject of the next several paragraphs, and of our next several lessons, we will leave this matter here for the time being. Nevertheless, let it be noted that the Spirit is viewed here as the source of our submission one to another, as we see elsewhere (see Philippians 2:1-8).

### Conclusion

In this section, Paul has exhorted Christians to walk as those who are wise. He has repeated this command three times, seeking to show what is involved in walking as those who are wise. He has also provided us with those manifestations of the Spirit which bear witness to His presence and control in the life of the Christian.

One test of the Spirit-filled Church and of the Spirit-filled Christian is their music. Notice what Paul gives as a test of the filling of the Spirit. Paul’s benchmarks are not the same as those often employed in the church today. Some think that a church is Spirit-filled when people sing skillfully, dramatically (dancing, for example), or enthusiastically (with clapping or raised hands). Others think that Spirit-filling is evident in restraint in worship and music. They may have a pipe organ, rather than guitars or drums or a keyboard. They may sing slowly and somberly. Neither method of singing sets a given church apart from others as “Spirit-filled.”

What does set apart a Spirit-filled church is that their music is understood as communication both with their fellow-believers and with God. The words which are sung are true to biblical doctrine, indeed, the expression of that doctrine. The “spirituality” of our singing and worship is not how we feel as we sing, but whether or not others are edified and God is glorified. The emphasis is not on us, on our feelings, or on our fulfillment, but on God. We should speak to others about God. We should admonish others not to be disobedient to Him. We should speak with great thanksgiving to God, giving Him praise and glory through Christ.

Spirit-filling is not evident in careless, thoughtless, structure-less spontaneity, but in godly wisdom and in orderliness. It is not seen in those who exalt themselves (even by means of actions and words which seem spiritual), but by submitting ourselves to doing that which edifies and builds up our brothers and sisters in Christ. Let us be careful, then, about judging the Spirit’s filling by standards which are worldly or fleshly, rather than in accordance with God’s Word.

Walking wisely involves thought, consideration, prioritizing and planning. It involves choices and disciplined living. It requires us to have a sense of the times in which we live, and a resolve to be good stewards of the opportunities which God gives us in this short period of time which constitutes our earthly sojourn. It shuns foolishness and it seeks to comprehend as fully as possible the plans and purposes of God, and then to subordinate our lives to God’s eternal plans and purposes. It means worshiping wisely, rather than foolishly, and particularly as this relates to music. Our music is to communicate to others so that they are edified, and to communicate with God in grateful worship and praise. It means living sacrificially toward others, seeking their good above our pleasure.

Walking wisely will be evident in the fruits which Paul has described in our text. But where does the walk of wisdom begin? It begins by coming to faith in Jesus Christ. The Spirit of God initiates God’s work in us, giving us light and life so that we recognize our foolishness and impending doom. We recognize that it is in Christ that true wisdom is found, and in Him alone. Before you can walk as one who is wise, you must come in simple faith to the “only wise God” through Jesus Christ.

10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding (Proverbs 9:10).

54 And coming to His home town He began teaching them in their synagogue, so that they became astonished, and said, “Where did this man get this wisdom, and these miraculous powers? (Matt. 13:54).

12 “But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and will persecute you, delivering you to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for My name’s sake. 13 “It will lead to an opportunity for your testimony. 14 “So make up your minds not to prepare beforehand to defend yourselves; 15 for I will give you utterance and wisdom which none of your opponents will be able to resist or refute (Luke 21:12-15).

8 And Stephen, full of grace and power, was performing great wonders and signs among the people. 9 But some men from what was called the Synagogue of the Freedmen, including both Cyrenians and Alexandrians, and some from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and argued with Stephen. 10 And yet they were unable to cope with the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking (Acts 6:8-10).

25 Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, 26 but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith; 27 to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen (Romans 16:25-27).[127](https://bible.org/seriespage/20-walking-wisely-ephesians-515-21#P2306_714076)

117 The structure of Ephesians 4:1—6:9 is quite clearly indicated in the text, although many translations do not reflect this. Two key terms indicate the structure. They are only found together (or in close proximity) in chapters 4-6 when they indicate a new paragraph. These terms are “therefore” and “walk.” Thus we find the indication of a new paragraph at Ephesians 4:1, 17; 5:1-2 (“therefore” in verse 1 and “walk” in verse 2); 5:7-8 (“therefore in verse 7 and “walk” in verse 8); and 5:15.

118 Thankfully, the King James Version and the American Standard Version do supply the “ing” ending by their renderings, “submitting” (KJV) and “subjecting” (ASV).

119 Virtually the same expression is found in Colossians 4:5, and yet the NASB renders it differently in these two texts. In Ephesians, it is rendered, “making the most of your time,” while in Colossians it is translated, “making the most of the opportunity.”

120 There is a future “evil day” which is yet to come. Paul refers to this future evil day in Ephesians 6:13. There are also certain times when evil seems to increase. Such as times is referred to by Paul in 1 Corinthians 7:26. Here, Paul is speaking of this entire age—until Christ comes—as evil (see Galatians 1:4).

121 F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles To The Colossians, To Philemon, And To The Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991 [reprint]), p. 379.

122 “The noun rendered ‘dissipation’ appears also in Tit. 1:6 (where the children of church elders must not be chargeable with dissipation) and 1 Peter 4:4 (in reference to the profligacy which marked the former lives of people recently converted from paganism to Christianity); the corresponding adverb is used of the ‘riotous living’ in which the prodigal son wasted his substance (Luke 15:13).” Bruce, p. 379.

123 Note that being filled with the Spirit is a command. It is also a present imperative, indicating an on-going process, rather than a once for all event.

124 The question here is whether the term “spirit” refers to the human spirit, or to the Holy Spirit. It is my conviction that the Holy Spirit is in view. Hendriksen holds this view:

“Although it is true that the apostle makes use of a word, namely, pneuma, which in the translation should at times be spelled *with*, at other times *without*, a capital letter (hence “Spirit” or “spirit”), it should be capitalized in this instance, as is often the case. Paul was undoubtedly thinking of the third person of the Holy Trinity, the Holy spirit. Evidence in support of this view: a. the expression “filled with” or “full of” the *pneuma*, when the reference is to the Holy Spirit, is very common in Scripture (Luke 1:15, 41, 67; 4:1; Acts 2:4; 4:8, 31; 6:3; 7:55; 9:17; 13:9); and b. the very contrast here in 5:18 between getting drunk on wine and being fulled with the *pneuma* occurs also, though in a slightly different form, in Acts 2:4, 13, where the reference can only be to the Holy Spirit.” William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1967), p. 239.

Bruce adds, “The same phrase, ‘in spirit,’ occurs in three other places in this letter—in Ephesians 2:22, with regard to the new community of believers as the dwelling-place of God; in 3:5, with regard to the revelation of the ‘mystery’ of the new community to God’s ‘holy apostles and prophets’; and in 6:18, with regard to the prayer life of Christians. In three places the Holy Spirit is certainly intended, and equally certainly it is he that is intended here.” F. F. Bruce, p. 380.

125 William Hendriksen, p. 240.

126 In Ephesians 5:20 Paul speaks of giving thanks. In Colossians 3:16 this thankfulness is expressed in song. It would seem then, that Paul may well be thinking of songs of thanksgiving in Ephesians 5.

127 See also 1 Corinthians 1:20-25, 30; 2 Corinthians 1:12; Ephesians 1:7-8, 15-17; 3:8-10; Colossians 1:9-10; 2:1-3; James 1:5; 3:13-18; Revelation 5:11-12; 7:11-12.