

LSB Ephesians 5:15 - 21

15 Therefore look carefully how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, 16 redeeming the time, because the days are evil. 17 On account of this, 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 being subject to one another in the fear of Christ.

Thank you all for your loving tolerance of us getting away by ourselves from time to time. We appreciate and love your support of us. And sometimes God uses times outside the normal day to day living to illuminate things for us. It's important to break the routine once in a while and see things from a different perspective.

God blessed us and sustained us through 48 hours of driving and we covered 2240 miles to Mount Rushmore and return. All without incident. We are grateful for that. We enjoyed God's glorious creation. Even the ugly parts are beautiful.

Last time we met together to work through this passage of God breathed scripture written by Paul to the church at Ephesus, we spent the entire morning looking at vs 15. Wisdom and foolishness. A topic that is on open display every single day because foolishness is magnified like never before in this culture.

And we said wisdom comes from God and is available for all who recognize and honor God as the sole source of wisdom. He gives it liberally to those who humbly ask Him for it. Those who willingly submit to His ownership.

And likewise we said that foolishness is the resulting state of those who dismiss God and refuse Him. Disbelief is a choice made in overwhelming

evidence to the contrary, and having made that choice, your thinking processes are given over to increasing folly.

Looking backwards at the section we are studying of how christians are to walk in this world which Paul begins in Chapter 4 vs. 1 we can outline a series of comparisons.

Paul says to the believers: *Therefore I, the prisoner in the Lord, exhort you to walk worthy of the calling with which you have been called,* Eph. 4:1

And as we move through Paul's exhortation he keeps making comparisons. The world walks like this, but christians are to walk in stark contrast to the world. They do this, we do this.

They walk in futility, we walk in knowledge. They walk in immorality, we walk in holiness. They walk in darkness, we walk in glorious light. They walk in covetousness, we walk in thanksgiving. They walk in anger and slander and bitterness and malice, and we walk in unity and we edify each other. We build each other up. And finally they walk in folly, we walk in wisdom. Without God only foolishness is possible. With our God, and His revealed truth, we enjoy Godly wisdom.

And this morning we will compare the religious fervor of the world with the true religious zeal of those who God indwells. Christian fervor vss. worldly fervor. Something easy to see and define in our current culture. Lines that were once blurred are becoming much more clear in our current culture.

15 Therefore look carefully how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, 16 redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

Paul is going to get very explicit with this idea of wisdom versus folly. He tells us first of all that there is a wise use of time and a foolish use of time.

Isaac Watts who was one of the most brilliant gifts that God ever gave to

christianity for our edification wrote these words in his hymn; **Our God, our help in ages past.**

“Time, like an ever-rolling stream, Bears all its sons away;

I listened this morning to a story about Pavel Durov, a russian billionaire equivalent of Elon Musk who owns a platform called Telegram and he claims to have fathered at least 100 biological children.

Two men who are hugely important in this world in 2024, but if there is a 2074, will anything that's important now be important then? Time will sweep them away and all of their importance and wealth will be nothing.

Paul tells us, in the case of wisdom and folly, that time is fleeting. What are you doing, right now, that will matter in eternity? Those who are wise are aware that time can be used for eternal value, or it can be wasted, and lost.

We christians, who have been purchased out of this evil world, where Satan is the god of this world, and he tirelessly works in the cause of evil in order to rob God of the glory of His creation, we have a choice.

We can work towards the goal of the increase of the authority to reign of God in this world . . . or not. We can use the time we have to build up God's holdings in this world . . . or not. We can be like the stewards who took the money that the Master gave them and used it to make a profit for Him upon His return, or we can be like the steward who said, "why would I do that?" "This is MY time and I plan to spend it on ME."

Time is fleeting. It's moving. And those of us with white hair can tell you, it happened fast. Astonishingly fast. I just passed an anniversary of sorts. It was August 26, 1970 while I was at a teenage church camp at westmont College that God used words from His book, spoken by one of His slaves, to cause the lights in my heart to switch on.

I'm one of those who can tell you the moment that God quickened me from death to life. On Monday last, as we finished our last leg of our journey home from Wendover, I completed 54 years as a christian and began my 55th year.

Here is the haunting question for me. In those 54 years, time I can never get back, swept away like a river to the sea, what has God done through me, using me as His tool, what has He done through me that has eternal value.

The days are evil. This is Satan's world, Satan's time. Most of what I did is just part of that whole. I worked every day to make a living, to provide safety and shelter for my family. Most of my time got used up just living in an evil world as best I could. Little or no eternal value.

Paul speaks to this truth to the Corinthian christians.

11 For no one can lay a foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, or straw, 13 his workmanship will be evident, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will prove the quality of each man's work....

What out of my 54 years will make it through that fire? That wooden car and all my wood cameras for sure are just BTU's. Most of what I did for 54 years is going to go up in smoke. There's no do-overs. I look back at this verse with sorrow. I haven't redeemed the time very well.

Now Paul has a method that will ensure that you don't come to the end of your allotted time with zero fruit to return to the Master who owns you. And it's simple, anyone who is a christian can do this, and indeed is commanded here to do this.

And as is Paul's method in his instruction in how to walk as christians and not to walk like Satan's world walks, Paul is consistent here. This is what the world does. This is what we do.

17 On account of this, do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

On account of this. On account of what, Paul? What is the object here in the context of vss 15 and 16?

15 Therefore look carefully how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, 16 redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

Do not be foolish like the world. Do not waste your time here on earth as a called out of this world christian. Instead, vs 17 do God's intended will for you.

And that leads right into Paul's methodical comparison. This is what the world does. This is what christians do instead.

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

There's so much here! You need a better teacher! I cannot do the truth here justice, but I'm all you've got right now and I'm going to give it a go.

The word drunk, and the word filled both have the same causal effect. Drunk people do things in dissipation. The drug is a driver, a motivator. Likewise, Spirit filled people do things under the direct effect of an outside driving force.

Alcohol becomes an outside of you driving force that causes you to be stupider than you would be otherwise. And pagan religion was driven by alcohol. It was a driving force. Drunkenness dis-arms the conscience and thereby leads to all kinds of perversions.

Pagan religions were famous for sexual deviance of every kind. Drunkenness is an open door for every kind of evil spirit to move you into darkness and sin.

We just got back from Mount Rushmore. One day we made a side trip to Sturgis South Dakota. Evidence of a religious festival that had ended the day before we got there was rampant.

Motorcycles can be a fun deviation and relaxation, or they can become a religion. A lifestyle complete with required religious observances. First century christianity while it was still looking for a defining name was for a time called; The Way. And that title works on so many levels for so many false religions.

Motorcycle culture is to thousands of believers, the way. Sturgis is a Mecca of sorts where the true believers gather for a yearly festival to celebrate the religion of motorcycle culture.

During the same week, 837 bird miles away on Black Rock Desert playa the Burning Man festival is taking place at the same time. So many parallels. Also a religious festival. Also to it's thousands of adherents, it is "the way". Both are drunken orgies. Lifestyle worship. Both are equivalents of ancient Roman world festivals of debauchery.

Meanwhile to two other groups of religious adherents, we could state that the Democratic National Convention is a religion. To many thousands, it is "the way", and to be fair, to many thousands of other zealous religious followers, Trump Rally's are "the way".

No matter which "WAY" different people flock to, the alcohol industry is doing a massive business. In every one of those false hope "ways" I mentioned, alcohol is as big a player as it was in Ephesus in the first century. Alcohol disarms the conscience and opens doors to debauchery. "Tequila makes her clothes fall off". Alcohol is an avenue to ecstasy.

As usual, Paul says, this is how the world rolls, but it is not how christians are to "roll", or in biblical parlance, "walk". Instead of alcohol and all of it's related effects, we are commanded to be filled with something else.

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

We have much to tell you about Paul's directive here. First the word translated filled.

It isn't the word you would use to speak of filling a receptacle up, like a water glass or a pitcher. Instead it is the word you would use for filling up a sail on a boat with air that causes movement.

Picture if you will, a sailing vessel, caught for two weeks near the equator, in what the sailors called the doldrums. No wind. No movement. You're stuck and going nowhere until wind blows again. Your sails are all up, but they hang limp and lifeless.

Suddenly, unseen, but heard and felt, the wind comes. The sails fill up with air and the movement of the wind overcomes the ship's static friction with the water and begins to move it along. The sailors quickly trim the sails to achieve maximum effect for the desired direction and the ship moves along smartly in the direction of the destination. All rejoice!

That description is exactly like what Jesus explained to Nicodemus regarding the Holy Spirit in John 3. Nicodemus is confused about eternal life. How do I do it! How do I make it happen?? And Jesus' answer is, you're as helpless to do anything about your own salvation as those sailors trapped by the equator in the doldrums.

Bringing about your own salvation is about as effective as 4 sailors standing and blowing as hard as they can into the sails. Useless. Here's what Jesus told Nick. John chapter 3;

2 this man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him." 3 Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly,

truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” 4 Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” 5 Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. 6 That which has been born of the flesh is flesh, and that which has been born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ 8 The wind blows where it wishes and you hear its sound, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who has been born of the Spirit.” 9 Nicodemus answered and said to Him, “How can these things be?”

The Spirit quickens dead people to life. The Spirit is who saves us. He it is who makes us alive from the dead. But having done that, He doesn't then vanish and never returns.

On the night before Jesus death, as the idea of being bereft of Him is causing sorrow and terror in His disciples, Jesus assures them, He will be with them, in a different form than His physical person.

When He tells them, *and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age*, Mt. 28:20b He wasn't speaking of His physical presence in a human body. He spoke of His Spirit who not only quickens us from death to life, in a rebirth, we are born again by the Spirit. We are called out of this perishing condemned world into God's kingdom. His world.

But having begun with the Spirit, He doesn't then leave us to fend for ourselves. The Spirit who quickens us to life then dwells with us and in us. God lives in my heart. The Holy Spirit dwells inside me.

So foundational is this truth to actual regenerated born again believers that Paul will state in Romans 8:31; *If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.*

All true christians are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Or you aren't a christian

at all.

Well, then, that begs the question; Can you have the Holy Spirit dwelling inside your heart and yet not be filled with the Spirit. And sadly, the answer for most christians is yes.

Let me push our metaphor of a ships sails being filled with wind which bears the ship along. The air causes real movement. Sadly I think most christians drop their sails and tie them up in a bundle, stowed, and the wind can blow all it wants, they remain stagnant.

The next truth we want to understand about this command is connected to the verb tenses of the word filled. Now I'm weak at english, so could get myself in trouble here. Others who are much stronger in languages have pointed this verb tense in this verse out to me. People I rely on and trust.

The greek word translated filled is a present imperative plural. An imperative is a command, it's not a suggestion. Christians are commanded to be filled with the Spirit. And further, besides being an imperative, it is plural. We aren't filled one time. We are to be filled with the Spirit continually, and forever. We don't fill the truck with gas one time, singular. We continually fill the truck with gas many many times. Or we're stalled.

We could translate the section like this.

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

Hey, the world doesn't get drunk and stupid once. They do that continually. And Paul, as is his method, says the christian counterpart to what the world does is to likewise continually be being kept filled with the Holy Spirit, over and over again.

It's kind of like a christian breathing. Filled with the Spirit. Something trips me up and I sin. I grieve the Spirit. I grieve my friend. There's a separation. We walk apart from each other in disagreement caused by sin.

Then I repent and ask His forgiveness. I ask for restoration of our fellowship. Please fill me again with your Spirit. Please move me along in my walk, where you want me to go. Something like that.

Not unlike married people who might quarrel and go to different rooms. For a time. But we know that won't last. We get over it, apologize, and restore our love for each other. Been doing that for 49 years. Apparently I'm a real jerk. Been doing the other deal with my Lord for 54 years. *Be being kept filled with the Spirit.*

The filling of the Spirit is similar to the friendship walk of two married people walking through life together. God invented marriage in order to give us a living example of walking in friendship over a long time period.

Now for better or for worse, Pam follows my lead in our marriage. One day I waited for her to come home from JPL where she worked in order to tell her I'd taken a job in Carson City Nevada. She followed me to Nevada. Then one day I went in partnership with my brother and his wife and we bought the Sears Catalog store business in Tonopah, Nevada. Pam followed me to Tonopah. She goes where I go. Her parents thought we were nuts. For a time. Pam is a faithful wife and friend. And we don't like to be apart from each other very often or very long. So If I move to some bizarre frontier place, she follows me there.

In this friendship of Jesus, this marriage to Him, this commitment to follow Him, I don't make the decisions. Ultimately. The Holy Spirit leads and I follow Him for all the same reasons. I can't be away from Him for very long. He is leader and I am follower. I seek His filling. His moving in my life. Wherever He's going, that's where I want to be. My sails are up and I long to feel that wind filling my sails and moving me.

A further understanding of the Spirits movement of us is in John 15:5. The metaphor of the vine and the branches. Jesus says: *"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing*

I am painfully aware of this part of the truth of spiritual effectiveness. I can study and write out a manuscript and preach as passionately as I know how to do, and without the Spirit causing increase, it is useless noise.

The farmer plants the seed and makes sure it is watered, but he has no control over growth. The plant that comes bearing fruit is a miracle. God does that. Without being filled with the Spirit no miracle fruit is possible. Increase in His kingdom and for His glory is done through useless vessels who become useful, when He turns our useless water into useful wine.

Now this is all foreign and new to us worldlings. We know what drunk and stupid looks like. We're surrounded by evidence. Literally choking to death in evidence these days. But what does the christian counterpart look like?

Well, Paul doesn't stop with the imperative, he tells us what the filling of the Holy Spirit produces in christians. There's a direct parallel. Wine makes you stupid. The filling and bearing along, the walk in the fulness of the Spirit also has a visible effect. Instead of becoming stupid from wine, the Spirit gives us God's wisdom living in us.

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 being subject to one another in the fear of Christ.

There are three distinct evidences given in those verses. Speaking, vs 19, thankfulness, vs. 20, and submission in vs. 21. We'll just scratch the surface of the first one, speaking, utterance, this morning and we'll with God's good pleasure, pick up this discussion more fully next week.

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

Again this is a direct counterpart to what the world without God does. The world speaks to each other in filthy jokes, boasting, foolish talk, pretty much all day long.

I've worked in the world and with the world, most of my life. We like to laugh. It passes the time. Most jobs you don't have to give full concentration continually. You nail up boxes. You drill holes that connect the boxes. You string wire from box to box. It isn't rocket science.

In construction we pass the time talking stupid and telling stories and laughing at people. It can get pretty rank. I have found it the most rare of things to be working with another christian and passing the time talking about spiritual things.

I work well by myself. I like to listen to MacArthur teaching while I work. That's a form of vs. 19. *speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord;*

So rare is it for christians to experience vs. 19 with other christians that I must again recommend to you a book. Pilgrims Progress. The entire book is an example of two christians walking along together and doing what this verse says. *speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord;* They never stop talking about spiritual things for their entire journey.

Why is this kind of christian fellowship with each other so rare? I look back over 54 years of being a christian and these times where I was with other christians enjoying speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and christian banter can be counted on my fingers. Why is that? Paul says this should be normative.

This is the christian counterpart to drunk and stupid. Why is it so rare? I believe the answer is spelled out for us in Colossians 3:16.

16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, with all wisdom teaching and

admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with gratefulness in your hearts to God.

The words are a direct parallel. But in Ephesians it is the filling of the Holy Spirit that is causal. And here in Colossians it is the filling up of the Word of Christ that is causal.

Most christians will proudly tell you they own multiple Bibles. Oh we have 7 or 8 Bibles in the house. And you go to their house and those Bibles have a layer of dust on the covers that would choke you.

There is a direct triangulation here. The *Word of Christ dwelling in you richly* is the same thing as *be being kept filled with the Holy Spirit*, which causes the christian equivalent of the worlds drunk and stupid.

Well, let me tell you, the drunk and stupid world is looking at the christians, looking for something counter to drunk and stupid, and they're not impressed. Is the world looking at us and seeing: 16 *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with gratefulness in your hearts to God.*

Yeah, right. The world clicks on the internet and watches christians flaming other christians and says to itself, I think I'll just stick with drunk and stupid.

The church is broke, and the dust on the Bibles is telling. I am weary of weepy christians singing about more of Jesus, I want more of Jesus, and they couldn't quote one verse of their Bible if a gun was pointed at them. *Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me . . .* is not a verse in the Bible.

The filling of the Holy Spirit has a direct triangulation with the long term study and time spent in your closet, with the Book. Pouring in the book is equivalent to pouring in the Spirit. They are NOT mutually exclusive.

There is no possibility of *be being kept filled with the Spirit* Eph. 5:18 without *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly*, Col. 3:16

I can tell you the number of times someone has sent me an email and said, Pastor, I'm trying to understand such and such a passage of scripture, and I've prayed and meditated over it, but I'm still confused; what do you make of it? How many times in 12 years of teaching here? Zero.

Drunk and stupid is winning the day, christians. Apparently we have no alternative to offer. We are commanded to be being continually filled with the Spirit, but that does not happen without the counterpart of the Word of Christ dwelling in us richly. Both must be present, or, the alternative is ignorant christians bearing zero fruit.

A few years back the Southern Baptists had their convention hall filled with banners that said, **The World is Watching**. They are, and they aren't impressed.