

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.

This is now the third time that we have read through these words of Paul to the Ephesians and by extension, it clearly is the Word of God to His church. We are just as subject to the authority of these words as those original Ephesian Christians were when they read them at the beginning.

That wasn't a phenomenon that the church figured out later. Even during the Apostolic age when the apostles were living and teaching and planting churches, they realized that they were under inspiration, writing God breathed scripture that has the authority of God behind it.

Peter tells his hearers to rank Paul's writings with the "rest" of the scriptures in 2 Peter 3. That's a reminder worth looking at;

14 Therefore, beloved, since you are looking for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless, 15 and consider the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, 16 as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.

Paul's letter was originally written from Paul to the church at Ephesus, but it clearly was set apart from other writings and recognized as scripture on the same level of being God breathed, inspired, as the old testament

writings.

During that period Paul would instruct the churches to circulate his letters. And so the process of carefully copying and making exact duplicate manuscripts began almost immediately.

And we sit, almost 2000 years later, studying these writings because they contain the same authority over us as they did at the first to the original recipients.

And so we make no apology for reading and re-reading this vastly important section a third time. Better theologians have written volumes of books about these same few words. They are a pinnacle of sorts.

It's one thing to study and understand the great doctrines of the church. Substitutionary atonement. Unbelievable grace that has catapulted me out of a state of helpless spiritual death and imminent eternal condemnation into being a fellow heir with the person who spoke the universes into existence.

Jesus purchased me with His own blood. That blood satisfied forever the unpayable debt of sin and rebellion against God. Doctrines that freed me from death and gave me life eternal. Doctrines are important to understand. They state clearly my position.

But this portion of scripture we are tarrying in is not a doctrinal statement of my position, it is a clear statement of practice. Chapters 1 - 3, this is who you are. Chapters 4 - 6a, this is how you walk. These are marching orders. In view of who we now are, in Christ, this is how we now live.

And Paul, for his purpose, continually takes the track of comparison. This is how the lost world lives. And by contrast, this is how true regenerated Holy Spirit indwelt Christians are to live by comparison.

For the sake of our study, the world gets full of wine and multiplies stupid.

But Christians get full of God's Word, and His Holy Spirit, and as a result, holy living is multiplied.

It's like the exact opposite of the world. They spiral down. We spiral up. They multiply in their wickedness, but God's chosen elect multiplies in increasing holiness and wisdom with a direct connection to the Word of Christ. They pour in more wine. We pour in more of Jesus through His written word.

On our introduction to this passage we spent an entire Lord's day understanding wisdom and foolishness. We never got out of verse 15. And it was a rich time spent understanding why our world is acting the way it does. Their minds are literally impaired by rejecting God and insisting upon increasing sinfulness. They double down and then double down again in sin.

Then last week we studied the filling of the Holy Spirit. Like filling a vehicle's gas tank. It is a constant necessity, not a one time 2nd blessing. And we made the important distinction that being filled with the Spirit is not some holy hocus pocus. According to the parallel passage in Colossians, all of the identical effects come from pouring in this book.

Being filled with the Spirit, being filled up to overflowing with Jesus, comes directly from being filled up continually and seriously with the continual study and meditation of the words of this book. All of the book.

I want to quickly expand on that idea. For many of you the idea of daily drinking in the words of this book is sort of like Spanky being forced to have a spoonful of Castor Oil in the 1930's Our Gang shorts. For you it is hard to choke a little down.

Let me recommend a method that is producing much fruit in my own family. Go to gty.org. Grace to You dot org, and there you will find a daily 25 minute teaching of sections of the word of God that if you listen to the continuing series daily, can't help but begin to awaken your appetite for

God's book. They have a phone app. You can listen to excellent teaching from your phone while you drive or do other routine jobs. A great starting point. Spirituality that bears fruit begins with pouring in this book.

So this morning, I want to look at the immediate fruit of God's filling in our spiritual gas tanks, and draw some conclusions. Cause and effect. We've spent two Sundays looking at cause, this morning we want to understand effect.

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

That's cause. By all means go back and listen to or read the two previous studies if you missed them. (tonopahchurch.org) vss 19 - 21 are effect.

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 3 distinct effects here. *Speaking* in vs 19, *Thankfulness* in vs. 20, and *submission to one another* in vs. 21. Being filled up with Christ and His book becomes visibly apparent in these resulting effects.

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

Last week we began to look at this, and we asked the question, is this what the world is witnessing in the modern church. What is the incidence of christians fellowshipping with other christians as the world watches at a distance, speaking with each other about spiritual things.

Is it even possible? Is it desireable?

One of the first things that comes to my mind is Dr. Mohler's daily little

broadcast called The Briefing, where he considers current cultural and world and political events and then gives us what he calls, a christian world view.

Besides being helpful and interesting, because Dr. Mohler is brilliant, and God has gifted his mind and perspective to the church, what he does in those 25 minute briefing's is show us how christians might speak with one another on topics important to our days.

Speaking to one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs sounds rather like angels floating along on clouds. Dr. Mohler is trying to couple a christian perspective, hopefully based in God's Holy Word, with the nasty now and now. I think it's an example for us of what this means.

The media tells us; X did Y to Z. What does the Word of God say about that news. Or . . . What is the biblical perspective of our presidential choices for our nation. Biblically. Awful and unthinkable? Christians can talk about that biblically. We might find our answers in Isaiah chapters 1 - 39.

Let me give you an example. This week I listened to a non christian conversation about what big pharma has done to our nation and our neighbors, quietly, behind the scenes, out of the news. The speaker said when he was a kid, you went to the hospital if you needed stitches. But now our children are sick and getting sicker because the big pharmaceutical companies get rich giving them more poisons to counteract all the problems the poisons in the foods and the poisons from all the required vaccinations have inserted in them. Scary stuff.

Immediately my mind goes to a passage in Revelation 18 that tells me one of the evidences present in the end time generation is drug use. pharmakeía. The greek word meant an enchantment by drugs or other mind bending sorceries. It's a picture of our nation, as we speak.

Christians, get filled up with this book, and talk to each other about current events we're living in and through. This is how we "walk" as christians.

If the bible gets poured in, the bible comes pouring back out. I do think it's possible for christians to fellowship and enjoy meaningful conversation that include Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. Very different from the worlds filthy talk and jesting and coarse speech.

The world's continual daily banter tears down. It's part of the negative spiral downwards. It comes from hell. The christian counterpart of that should do the exact opposite. It should edify one another, and build us up in our faith towards the goal of the ultimate reign of God in this world. It should be the exact positive counterpart of the worlds negative wicked speaking.

I think that's not only possible it's something I long for. But the other question I raised is whether Positive Godly Spiritual speaking is desirable.

And this question opens up a can of worms it seems. Is the fruit of the filling of the Holy Spirit, the manifest Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs speak what we want the watching world to see?

It seems to me that the modern church has bought into a pragmatism that says, the more we look just like them, the least offensive christianity appears and we need to be hip and cool and awesome and, well, for lack of a better word, worldly in order to attract the world.

Come on in world. We don't sing hymns anymore. We've got a fog machine and a stage and a sophisticated lighting system. Smoke and mirrors that would put Hollywood to shame. You don't have to sing. You can watch as some uber hip christian raps out bits and pieces of the psalms.

It's like, the church is Christ's bride, but the holy thing isn't much of an attraction. The bride needs to show some cleavage. She needs to be attractive to fallen vile sinners. She needs to let her hair down and put some rouge on her face. She needs to dress a little slutty. The holy thing clearly isn't working with the world.

The idea that the church can attract the world by imitating the world is in direct conflict with verse 19 here.

Go to a mega large modern quasi christian conference gathering of mega churches with the theme of church growth and tell them Paul's plan is a combined filling up of the Word of Christ and the Spirit of Christ which will produce psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, and that will draw the world to the church when they see that clear and distinct evidence.

You'd be lucky to make it out alive. The booing and hissing would start, and since they've all got hot designer coffee's those would likely come sailing towards you. You might get scalded to death.

And yet, didn't Jesus Himself say; *32 And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.*" Jn. 12:32

The only way this works, folks, is if we obey Paul's commandment to continually be being kept filled both with the book and the Spirit, which results in speaking in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, which is in reality a lifting up before the world of the true Christ, and I'm going to get all "reformy" on you here, and Christ then draws who Christ draws.

If we're doing it right, the world is repulsed, not drawn in. But the world is repulsed by Christ anyways. They hated Him. They crucified Him. But He calls out of this world, who He chooses to call out of this world, and He adds to His church.

You all didn't see it, but I did, one morning here. We had a little group of visitors who we reached out to and loved on, and during our singing phase, which I'm the first to admit is terrible, they physically laughed at the spectacle. They never came back. That's OK.

I'd far rather lift Christ up in preaching and bad singing and let Him add seed in good soil who will actually grow and prosper and bear fruit, than

have all of the rocky soil christians and weedy choked out soil christians who stay for a time and drift away, never to be seen again. I have zero interest in being the Tonopah Community Church of the Tares.

The **Lord** adds such to His church those who are being saved. cf Acts 2:47 I don't want to be in that business. I couldn't be if I wanted to. Can you picture me in a trendy T shirt and skinny jeans. It's a good thing the only option for me is to wait on the Spirit to add to the church.

So, the answer to the second question, is it desirable for us to be visibly Holy Spirit impacted with the fruit of the filling of the Holy Spirit in our lives as the world looks on?

The answer is yes and amen. 32 *And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.*" Jn. 18:32 The Baptist banner was correct. The world is in fact watching. And most of them would put Christ to death quicker today than they did when He walked among them. But some, will be drawn to Him when they see Him, truly, in us.

Reformed theology kills pragmatism. Some of you are saying, I don't know what reformed theology is and likewise, neither do I don't know what pragmatism is. Let me help you out.

In a nutshell, it's what we just talked about. Pragmatism is trying to use human methods to get people in the church doors. What's working. What are the latest church growth trends. How can we make sinners more comfortable so they will feel at home and welcome.

Megachurch's are such big business in population centers that they literally do door to door survey's of what kind of a mega church would work in a certain locality. That's pragmatism. Find out what works, and do it.

So, if we're going to go into the capital dollar business of church in a new neighborhood in the wealthier section of Las Vegas, we would do a house to house survey and try to come up with a formula that would best please

the cultural dynamic of the neighborhood we're trying to draw from.

We want this architecture that matches the ethos of this section of town, and we want a coffee bar, and we want lots of greeters who look just like us and make us feel welcome, and we want a certain style of hip music, we don't want to sing, we want to be entertained by a theater quality production, and then we want a preacher who never goes beyond about 20 minutes, and those 20 minutes are to be like a TED talk that makes us feel good about ourselves and our future and what we're currently doing.

Design it so that the parking lot looks like a display of wealth at a car show. No junkers please. No burners. They can go to a burner church we're working up a few miles away. And the survey comes back with clear design criteria. And the concrete standup walls go up. And the stage and theater lighting goes in. And the bands get signed up. And the skinny jean pastor gets hired. And the money flows in. That's pragmatism. Do, on purpose, what the world told you would work.

Reformed theology kills pragmatism. OK, what is reformed theology. In another nutshell, reformed theology believes God chooses the true believers and writes their names in a book before the foundation of the world, in eternity before time ever began.

It believes Christ draws men to Himself. Rather like He said. It believes salvation is originated and happens to individuals when the Spirit quickens them from death to life. It believes God calls out His elect, regenerates them, indwells them with His Holy Spirit, and transfers them from this condemned and imminently perishing world to His eternal Kingdom.

Pragmatism can indeed fill up buildings with tares and money. Only Christ can add regenerated Holy Spirit quickened to life believers to His true church. I've got no interest in the First Church of the tares. Lucky for me. Can you imagine how frustrating that scenario would be in Tonopah Nevada. Pragmatism's model is dependent on large population centers.

So then, I guess you could say, I do believe there is some Holy hocus pocus in church growth. We can't do it. Other than obediently modeling before the world an alternative culture of spiritual people encouraging and building up each other with biblical counterparts to this world's filthy speaking, the rest is up to the Lord to accomplish.

On the up side, that's why I don't get overly discouraged at a fairly constant 9 - 12 people in a population center of 1800 or so. Our agenda, our plan for church growth is to model Holy Spirit and Word of Christ centered communion with each other, and pray for a Jesus caused revival in our community.

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

The second open display of the filling with the Word of Christ coupled with the Spirit of God in our hearts is being thankful.

If we have Christ, alive in our hearts, His Spirit constantly quickening His Word in our hearts, the result is we have an abundance of all that we need. This idea of thankfulness is because of contentment with who we are in Him, what we have, in Him, and where we are at in Him.

Again, this is in direct contrast to the world. The world is burning down cities because of discontentment with what they have.

Marxism says; You are continually and constantly oppressed by people who got what you should have got but didn't get. The system must be dismantled. We must destroy everything in the name of equality. Everybody gets everything, evenly.

The entire concept is based in stirring up the counterpart of what God's plan for the human race states in vs. 20. You've got the God of creation living in your heart, supplying all your needs, He it is who gives peace of mind, peace of soul, wellness, contentment. In Him your cup is full and running

over. And in Him our hearts are thankful.

It's easy to see that Marxism and all other similar designed world systems that stir up discontentment and greed are based in hell. Polar opposite of God's design of fullness. They fan the flames of emptiness and discontentment.

Verse 20 is actually a positive version of the negative commandment that God gave to Moses on Mt. Sinai. Listen to the Word of God boom forth from that fearful mountain as God spelled out His moral law for all time.

Exodus 20:17

“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife or his male slave or his female slave or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor.”

It is sin if you want what God did not supply for you. Covetousness is sin.

The filling up of your heart and life with the Word of Christ dwelling richly in you combined with the filling of God's Holy Spirit causes the opposite of covetousness and greed. It brings a heart of continual thankfulness to God for all of His bountiful supply.

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

It's funny, but the older you get, the more you realize, this life is 5 minutes of minor inconvenience, where in my case at least, God has richly supplied not only my needs but He has showered me with things I really don't need, just because He loves watching me enjoy them I guess. This life is 5 minutes long and then we see Him face to face.

The world on the other hand has none of that. This life is all there is, and if your neighbor got what you think you should have got and didn't, you seethe with greed and bitterness and hate towards everyone who got what

you didn't. That's from hell my friends.

It's funny how discontentment can sneak up on you. Pam and I had never camped in a resort setting. The Mount Rushmore KOA Palmer Gulch campground is more than a camp ground, it's a resort.

And when we pulled in, our \$85 a night reserved spot wasn't what we expected. We were out in the cheap seats.

In view, across a babbling brook from us, were the \$165 a night spaces each with concrete patio's and tables with nice chairs and gliders for two and fire pits and gas barbecue's all part of the package in a manicured grassy park like meadow.

But more than that, what I'd never even considered before, the people in those spots are in a contest with each other. A quarter of a million dollar rig is rather ordinary. It was like a fashion show of glittery glampers. Newest, biggest, most dazzlingly expensive 65 foot long diesel pushers with more pop outs than picture of a covid germ. A massive display of American wealth.

But soon we discovered, out in the cheap seats we had shade all the time, and it was HOT. Plus out where we were, we were next to where the horses go by when the glampers go for a horsey back ride. And every morning at 6:30, the cowgirls would run those horses from their meadow area down to the stables. Yip yip yip. It was a beautiful sight watching the running horses on their way to work. 20 feet from our front door!

Satan sneaks up on you. I kept whining about being poor. But my beautiful bride whom God has given to me told me to knock it off. Discontentment, especially when God has rained blessings on us, is sin. We cannot allow ourselves to go there. Thankfulness is the christian default. Period. Covetousness of what someone else got that you didn't get is sin.

Finally, vs. 21. *21 and being subject to one another in the fear of Christ.*

This verse introduces us to the final section of the Christians daily walk in comparison to how Satan's world system walks.

In the rest of chapter 5 and continuing to chapter 6 vs. 9, Paul is going to expand on this idea of being in submission one to another.

I'm not going to say too much about submission to each other here, since Paul is going to speak directly to submission in 3 distinct areas. Marriage, children to parents, and workers in the workplace. Fasten your seat belts.