



Walk Wisely, Filled With the Holy Spirit

Series: The Grand Plan of the Glorious God

Ephesians 5:15-21

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Introduction

Let's once again make sure that we remember where Paul is coming from in this section of Scripture that we are looking at – a discourse that began way back in chapter 4:17. Paul is driven to describe the transformative power of grace, the transformative power of the gospel of Jesus Christ heard and believed and received. He knew nothing of the modern, easy-believism, pray-a-prayer, make a decision, no-fruit Christianity. His whole premise for all of his ethical instruction, for all of his application is that the God, by His gospel, has done something in us – he has supernaturally, organically changed us. We are not the same people that we once were.

No longer do we walk as the Gentiles, as unbelievers do, in the futility of our minds and darkness and ignorance and alienation from God because of sin-hardened hearts. Now, we are new creatures in Christ, by His grace by which he exchanged our hearts of stone for hearts of flesh and put His Spirit within us and wrote His law upon our hearts and gave to us faith to behold the saving power of Christ and trust Him as our Redeemer and Lord. We have put off the old man who is corrupt and decaying and we have, by the grace of God, put on the new man, re-created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. We are not who we once were. We are new creatures in Christ and as new creatures in Christ; we no longer live as children of wrath under the judgment of God. Our lifestyle has changed.

Grace works. The grace of God in Christ changes His people. Faith that results in a life that is absent true repentance, that is absent the fruit of the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, shows that the person with such a life never had real saving faith to begin with. Those who persist in a lifestyle of unrepentant sin manifest the fact that they have never experienced the saving, re-creating, transforming, forgiving power of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the only thing that awaits them is judgment and for that reason Paul concludes the section we looked at last week by warning all of us to wake up, to stop slumbering in the darkness of sin and death, not to grow comfortable and desensitized in the shade and darkness of sin, but instead to wake up so that the light of Christ will shine on us and so that we might shine with his light. And it is in light of that last command to wake up that Paul makes this next exhortation to

1) Walk Wisely. (Eph 5:15-17) Paul is telling us to walk wisely, walk as one who has a clue. Look carefully how you walk. Know where you are going. Don't meander aimlessly through life but pursue the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Paul's assumption, here, is that someone who is a Christian is wise, that is, they have been clued in to what really matters. Unlike the pagans who are described as futile in their thinking and darkened in their minds, beloved, God has made you wise by the gospel. Like Timothy, you have known the Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. (2Ti 3:15) Like the Corinthians, you possess true wisdom, not the wisdom of the age which is perishing and worthless but the wisdom of the ages which eternal and priceless. Remember what Paul wrote to them. (1Co 1:17-24) The Holy Spirit has opened our eyes to see Jesus as He is. By God's grace, entirely by His mercy, we have had our eyes opened to the truth, to see Christ as the only hope of our salvation. God has called us to belong to Him and has given us the wisdom of the ages in Christ and now we must live like wise people, like those that have been clued in. Wisdom is not some theoretical thing, not some ivory tower, high sounding, erudite, scholarly, university professor, philosophical kind of thing. Not at all. Wisdom is not merely knowledge; it is the right application of that knowledge – biblical knowledge -- to the way that we live – it is being skilled in the art of godly living. That is true wisdom. (Jas 3:13)

Walking in true wisdom requires the application of the Word of God to your life. There are a whole host of people who sit in churches week after week whose lives are not discernibly different from those who don't come to church. People who hear the Word of God expounded and preached and applied who never apply the word of God to themselves at all. James talks about that as well: (Jas 1:22-25) Sermons are not preached for entertainment, but for edification so skillfully apply God's Word to your life. Let it change your understanding, let it inform your manner of living, let it renew and transform your mind. Engage the Word.

Walking in true wisdom requires discipline. Discipline is not in conflict with grace. Our walk before the Lord has got to be the outgrowth of deliberate thought and of disciplined action. (1Ti 4:7b-8) The book of Proverbs is helpful here. (Pro 13:4) -- The souls of the sluggard craves wisdom, knowledge, understanding, etc but will do nothing to get it. (Pro 19:24) -- Food is at the sluggards fingertips but he won't even feed himself. (Pro 20:4) -- He is one who has got so used to making easy and soft choices that he can never do anything hard or difficult. (Pro 22:13) -- the undisciplined man is so used to making foolish excuses, he has come to believe them. (Pro 26:14) -- He never gets anywhere. (Pro 26:16) -- The sluggard has it all figured out and leans on his own understanding and will not receive wise counsel though it come from wise men. (Pro 24:30-34) -- The picture of the vineyard here is the picture of the sluggard's soul. The "poverty" is the loss of the true riches of the soul.

Walking in wisdom requires self-examination. Charles Spurgeon wrote: To study one's self in the light of God's Word, and carefully to go over one's condition, examining both the inward and the outward sins, and using all the tests which are given us in the Scriptures, would be a very healthy exercise; but how very few care to go through it! I am not speaking of the morbid introspection that takes one's eyes off the grace of God in Christ, but the examination of the soul that asks, "Where is my life inconsistent with my faith in Christ and where must I repent and pursue Christ?" Walking in wisdom is walking with Christ as our pattern. Walking in wisdom is to be the way of the Christian. And specifically he tells us two ways in which to do that:

Making the best use of time... This is not some shallow Christianized version of "You only go around once, so make the most of it." Not at all. Paul wants us to see that we are in the midst of wicked and evil culture, a God-rejecting, Christ-mocking culture and so we must make the best use of the time for the Kingdom of God, because the days are evil. The sense is that we must live with an awareness that the way we live our lives has eternal implications. The idea in that phrase "make the best use of time" is literally to redeem or to buy up every opportunity for God. It is the idea of seizing every moment for the glory of God.

It is asking of the Lord the important questions. Scripture says: (Rom 12:1) and so I ask the Lord, how do I do that in the context of my life right now? How do I do that as a student, as a father, as friend, as a mother, as a housewife, as a husband, as a wife, in my neighborhood, with my parents, with my siblings, in my home? Scripture says: (Mat 16:24-25) and so I ask the Lord, how do I do that right now, right here in Salem, VA or wherever it may be? Scripture says: (Mat 5:16) How do I do that in every area of my life? How do I make the most of the time?

How do I grab every opportunity to grow in Christ and be more conformed to His image? How do I grab every opportunity and raise my kids to know and love God and serve Christ? How do I grab every opportunity to put Christ on display to a lost world? How do I live in a manner that shows that Christ is my greatest treasure? How do I be in the world and live in the world and yet not be sucked into worldliness – that mindset that is independent of God? How do I enjoy the gifts of this life, engage the world with the gospel, and expend myself for the Kingdom of God? Making the most of the time involves a cost. That is the idea inherent in "redeeming the time." Some things must go. I don't know what that cost may be for you – only you can answer that. Paul said of himself -- (1Co 13:11) So must we give up childish ways to make the most of the time. Walking in wisdom requires that we make the most of the time and that we

Understand the will of the Lord... Paul says: 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. What is this "will of the Lord" that Paul is talking about? This is not that personalized thing – "the will of God for my life." That's usually where we go with it. Specifically in the context of

Ephesians, the “will of the Lord” is the eternal plan of God, outlined in chapters 1-3. God’s eternal purpose to sum up all things in Christ, to magnify and glorify Christ through the saving of a people, the saving of His church from out of every tribe and nation and tongue – a people for His glory who will display his manifest wisdom before all of creation for all time.

To understand the will of the Lord is to understand the big picture of creation, fall, redemption, and consummation. This is the story of God’s creation of a wonderful and varied universe, made to display the glory and majesty of God. It is the story of our first parent’s massive rebellion and fall into sin and our sinfulness as well. It is the story of God’s mighty acts and deeds that bring about the redemption of a people for His own possession, acts and deeds that point to and culminate in God’s redemptive purpose in Jesus Christ – His death and burial and resurrection for the saving of us – His church. It is a story that ends with God bringing creation and humanity, redeemed and rebel, to His promised consummation under Christ’s Lordship – the redeemed forever beholding the glory of Christ in Heaven – serving Him with joy, and the rebels, forever suffering the consequence of their rejection of Christ. What Paul is getting at is that real wisdom is found in knowing your place in this grand story and living accordingly. And what does wise living in light of God’s will look like? It is living all of life in joyful submission to the Lordship of Christ, seeking to glorify Him in every thought, word and deed in every sphere of our lives. It is being faithfully committed to the family of God. If God is working out His purposes through the church, if He wills to display His glory through the church then we must be committed to the church. And it is to pursue the fame of Christ’s name throughout the entire world, in every mission context, starting in your own home. This is what it means to walk wisely. So Paul says, walk wisely and :

2) Be Filled With the Holy Spirit. (Eph 5:18-21) Now this seems to be coming out of left field. If we do not keep in mind what Paul is doing, when we read do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, we kind of get thrown for a loop, like where does that come from. And that happens lots of times when preachers get hold of this text. They immediately take this text and go on a diatribe against alcohol and against drunkenness and miss the point of the text. Now don’t get me wrong, drunkenness is a sin. Though Scripture does not anywhere forbid the drinking of alcoholic beverages, it clearly and everywhere forbids drunkenness. Do you really need me to tell you that drunkenness is a sin? That is elementary isn’t it? Do you need me to tell you that if you cannot forego your liberty to drink an alcoholic beverage for the sake of a weaker brother or sister in Christ, or so that you would not offend a brother or a sister’s conscience that that is a sin? You must be willing to limit your liberty or the sake of love. You must. Do I need to tell you partying, in the contemporary use of the word, is sin? Do I need to tell you that fellowship based in drinking together is not fellowship at all? Come on, that is an easy one. Whether or not someone drinks alcohol is a matter of personal conviction, but drunkenness is not. I would commend to

you the sermons from the Romans series regarding personal convictions for a more expanded treatment of this matter. Hear me again, drunkenness is a sin, a damning sin. Very clearly this is stated in Scripture and it is without dispute, but that is not all this text is about and we need to see this.

Remember what Paul has been doing. He has been establishing the great contrast between the lifestyle, the morality and the beliefs of the pagan unbelievers in Ephesus and of the Christians that were dwelling in that same city and he is continuing that trend here. Why does Paul say “Do not be drunk with wine”? Why doesn’t he say “Do not be drunk with power, do not be drunk with revenge, do not be drunk with materialism, or do not be drunk with beer?” Why does he pick wine? Here’s why. In Ephesus, the pagan worship and idolatries involved two particular sins – sexual immorality and drunkenness. The pagan worshippers thought that they were worshipping, they thought that the pathway of inspiration and of communion with the gods was through heavy drinking of wine, frenzied dancing, ritualistic orgies and sexual immorality, and revelry – the very debauchery that Paul is speaking of here.

Paul is drawing a sharp contrast between pagan worship and pagan ideas of communion with the gods, the temple worship – drunkenness and debauchery – with real communion with the one true God, with real worship. And he does it by saying: do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit. Now understand, Paul is making a contrast when he tells us to be filled with the Spirit. As Principal Donald Macleod: “There is nothing at all destructive in the experience of the Holy Spirit, and Christians should be exceedingly careful lest the language they use give any impression to the contrary. It is utterly misleading to speak of men and women as God-intoxicated or Spirit-intoxicated, as if the acme of spirituality were that men lose their inhibitions, their self-consciousness and their self-control and manifest their ‘liveliness’ by swooning, chanting, clapping and stamping their feet. Such thinking has lost all connection with Scripture, which expects us to present our bodies to God in reasonable service, to behave with decency and order and to practice a love which is always aware of other people and their needs. Far from overriding men’s capabilities, the filling of the Spirit sharpens our minds, strengthens our self-control and disciplines our emotions.”

Beloved, it is the very opposite of what drunkenness and revelry do to us. Paul is saying, don’t be like the pagans, don’t give yourself over to drunkenness and debauchery, but instead be filled with the Holy Spirit. What does that mean? What does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit? To be filled with the Holy Spirit is to live with every conscious area of your life yielded to the control of God. It is not some mystical, magical, heebie-jeebie kind of thing. When we speak of someone who is “full of the Holy Spirit” – for instance, Stephen, “a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 6:5) or Barnabas, “a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith” or even Jesus who is described in Luke 4:1 as being “full of the Holy Spirit” – that phrase “full of

the Holy Spirit” describes someone who habitually lives with every area of His life in submission to God -- a Spirit-filled, Spirit-controlled man or woman.

How is it that we are filled with the Holy Spirit? We know what it requires to get drunk – just drink – but how are we to be filled with the Holy Spirit. There is no technique to learn, no formula to recite, no experience to seek. The way that you live under the control of the Holy Spirit is to turn from the sin that grieves the Spirit of God and to abide in Christ and you will bear much fruit. It is that simple. To be filled with the Spirit, abide in Christ and let His word abide in you and as we do that we will be in submission to and filled with the Spirit of God. In fact, Paul makes the connection between abiding in Christ and being filled with the Spirit of God explicit in Colossians 3: (Col 3:16-17). Notice the effect there of the Word of Christ dwelling richly in the soul. Do you observe that you get the exactly the same results in Colossians when the Word of Christ dwells in you richly that you get in Ephesians when you are filled with the Spirit? What are we to take from that? If to be filled with the Word is equal in result to being filled with the Spirit, then it should be clear that the Word-filled Christian is the Spirit-filled Christian. As the Word of Christ dwells in us richly, inhabits our will and controls us, as we walk in obedience to the Word, as our minds are renewed by the word of Christ, the Spirit of God fills, dominates, and controls us to the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. The spirituality of the Ephesian cults was a false spirituality – a lot of emotionalism, mysticism, fleshly indulgence in the name of godliness, surface appearance and false wisdom – a lot of the same junk we see in so many professing churches today that are devoid of the Spirit of God.

We must walk filled with the Spirit of God so that our lives as the people of God, individually and collectively, will radiate the beauty of God. And they will. Paul tells us what a believer who is filled with the Holy Spirit looks like and it stands in sharp contrast to the fleshly debaucheries and drunken stupor of the pagan. The life and worship of the one who is filled with the Spirit will be characterized by

Addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs...Unlike the drunken pagan worshippers that speak foolishness and stupidity and babble incoherently thinking it is great wisdom, we will address one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. In psalms – songs of God’s majesty and greatness and glory, in hymns – songs of Christ’s magnificent person and glorious work, and in spiritual songs – songs of praise and personal testimony to the goodness of God. Paul’s point is that Spirit filled believers will be joyfully addressing and admonishing and instructing one another in the Word of God. We will joyfully speak to one another of the truth of God. We will speak to one another to edify and build up, to encourage and exhort, to move one another to worship, and adoration, to encourage one another in repentance and submission, to stir one another up to good works and prayer. The Spirit-filled believer will be characterized by

Singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart...Rather than the fleshly frenzy and foolish revelry and drunken singing of the pagans, the Spirit-filled Christian is filled with sincere, whole hearted, God-centered praise and devotion. The idea is that of worshipful singing that does not come from the lips only, but from the very depth of the soul.

Giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ...In contrast to the profane and obscene wickedness of the pagans, the Spirit filled Christian is filled with thankfulness to God for every good thing. The Spirit-filled Christian is evident by his on-going thanksgiving, expressed in the name of Christ to the Father. Thankfulness flows out of a heart that is rooted in Christ.

Submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ...Rather than indulging the self gratification, in contrast to the chaotic free-for-all of the pagans, the Spirit-filled Christian is one who submits to one another out of fear of and love for Christ. Submission out of reverence for Christ is the mark of being filled with the Spirit of God and having a right reverence for Christ and what He has done. Not being uncontrolled or self-directed but in proper submission to proper authorities out of reverence to Christ. We will see Paul begin to flesh these things out in the remainder of the letter, but the idea of proper submission is one of vital importance and an evidence of being filled with the Holy Spirit.

The fruit of being filled with the Spirit of God, Paul says, will be evident. There will be grateful, thankful worship, mutual edification of the believers as we speak and sing to one another and to God in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, mutual submission to one another and to the Word of God, a dedication to do all things in the name of, for the glory of Christ and to the praise of His name.

Once again these words of Paul come to us, beckoning us to examine ourselves before the clear instruction of the word of God. The person who has been gripped by the grace of God in Christ is going to be different than the world. His whole premise for all of his ethical instruction, for all of his application is that the God, by His gospel, has done something in us – he has supernaturally, organically changed us. We are not the same people that we once were. So in light of all of this we must examine ourselves...

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