

# “Filled with God’s Spirit”: Ephesians 5:15-21

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost – July 25, 2021

Tom Mount – Holy Trinity Chico

## Scripture reading – Eph 5:15-21 ESV

<sup>15</sup> Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, <sup>16</sup> making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. <sup>17</sup> Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. <sup>18</sup> And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, <sup>19</sup> addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, <sup>20</sup> giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>21</sup> submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

## Introduction

- Two weeks ago (5:1-2): imitate God through love. Last week (5:3-14): imitate God by avoiding certain behaviors. Today (5:15-21), Imitate God by following two positive commands: be careful how you live and be filled with God’s Spirit.

## Exposition

1. **First command: “Look carefully then how you walk”.** “Look”- *blepete* (Mk 13:5,9,23,33:). “Carefully”, *akribos*, “with extreme care.” Do you take a regular inventory of your attitudes, feelings, thoughts, words and behaviors each day?
  - “not as unwise but as wise” – Paul appeals to a Jewish “two ways tradition:” Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes, Second Temple literature.
  - “the days are evil.” Cf. Gal 1:4: “the present evil age.” Since the time of Daniel, roughly 500 BC, it was understood by the Jews that Messiah would come and usher in the “last days.”
  - “And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery” – drunkenness was a major problem in the Roman world at this time.
  - Some Greco-Roman religions taught that cultic inebriation was a means of communing with the gods. The cult of Dionysius or Bacchus, was a major influence in Ephesus.

- Roman meals typically featured a lot of alcoholic consumption.
  - The Jewish philosopher Philo wrote a book, *On Drunkenness*, and in one section he actually contrasted drunkenness with being filled with God's Spirit.
  - So, Paul says "don't get drunk on wine," from the Greek version of Prov 23:31. **"that is debauchery"** – Clint Arnold: "a senseless waste of time."
  - Is drinking alcohol is a sin? (Cf. Deut 14:26).
2. **Second command: "be filled with the Spirit"** – this is the quintessential sign of the new covenant. The sign of the old covenant was *Torah*, the law.
- In the OT, God lived in his temple and at times his glory would fill the temple visibly as a cloud, to demonstrate his pleasure with the people (Ex 40:34-35; 2 Chron 5:13-14; 7:1-6; Isa 6:1; Ezek 43:5; 44:4).
  - In the NT, God fills his new temple, individually and collectively as the Church, the holy ones of God (Eph 2:22; 1 Cor 3:16-17; 2 Cor 6:16). God has done everything necessary for us to be filled with his presence, his Spirit, continuously.
  - Throughout the bible, to be filled with something is to be characterized by that thing (e.g., anger, joy, wisdom, faith, evil spirits). To be filled with God's Spirit is to be characterized by the character of God (Gal 5:22-23).
  - Every believer has the Spirit of God (Rom 8:9; 1 Cor 12:12-13). But it is our responsibility to be "filled with" (Gal 5:16-23).
  - What does it look like, tangibly, for us to be "filled with" or influenced by the Spirit?
1. <sup>19</sup> **addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,**
    - A psalm, *psalmois*, refers to one of the 150 songs contained in the Hebrew book of *Tehillim*, (Psalms). A hymn, *humnois*, was what Greeks would call a song sung to one of the Greek deities. A spiritual song, *odais*, was a term used by both Jews and Greeks to refer to any song to God (cf. Rev 5:9).
    - When filled with the Spirit, we will be drawn to worship God together.
  2. **singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart,**

- We sing and make melody **“to the Lord”**, i.e. to Jesus.
  - **“with your heart”** – not just with your voice, but with your entire being. “heart” is *cardia*, the seat of our intellect, reasoning, affections and will.
3. <sup>20</sup> **giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,**
- God’s people are thankful people, who choose to focus not on the difficulties of life but on the goodness of the Life Giver.
  - Paul exemplified this in Eph 1:3-14 with his blessing or *berekah*.
  - “Giving thanks” is the participle of the verb *eucharisteo* (Eucharist).
  - For someone filled with God’s Spirit, this thanksgiving is constant: we give thanksgiving *“always”*, *pantote*, and for *“everything”*, *panton*.
  - We give thanks to “God the Father” in the name of Jesus through the Spirit.
4. <sup>21</sup> **submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.**
- **“Submitting”** is *hupotasso* (*tasso*, “to put in order, arrange”; *hupo*, “under”): to line up under another person, to defer to them, put them first, to be self-sacrificing. A Spirit-filled Christian does this naturally. Cf. Eph 4:2: humility, gentleness, patience (all virtues of submission).
  - All of us, when filled with God’s Spirit, will submit **“to one another”**, *allelouis* (cf. Phil 2:3-4; Rom 12:10; 14:7,13,15,18-19). This is within reason, guided by God’s Word and wisdom. Jesus is our example.
  - Notice the motivation: we submit to each other *en phobo Christou*, “out of the fear of Christ.” We love him and are called to follow him in every way. Jesus didn’t please himself but to serve us (1 Cor 15:1-3). We are to do the same (cf. Rom 14:15; 1 Cor 7:3-4).
  - In Eph 5:22-6:9, Paul shows how this command of mutual submission gets translated into three pairs of human relationships: wives/husbands, children/fathers, slaves/masters. Paul completely redefines each of these relational pairings by appealing to the example of Christ.

## **Take away**

What might it look like for you to “submit” yourself to others in your circle of relationships this week? Whom do you find hard to “submit” to? Why? Ask the Lord if there is something in you that needs to be surrendered and healed in order to submit to that person, and ask him what appropriate submission might look like.