

Living for Christ

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[0 : 00] A lot of Ephesians. And this morning we come to 15 to 21 of chapter 5.

Please follow along as I read. Look carefully then how you walk. Not as unwise, but as wise. Making the best use of the time because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery. But be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart.

Giving thanks always and for everything to God, the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

[1 : 31] Let's pray together. Father, we thank you for your word this morning. And we bow our hearts once again and ask that you would speak to us. Lord, I pray that you would anoint me by your Spirit, that I will be faithful to proclaim your truth to your people.

And Lord, may all of us hear as we ought to hear and respond as we ought to respond. And may your name be glorified through the preaching of your word, we pray in Christ's name.

Amen. Since the beginning of chapter 4, the Apostle Paul has been explaining what it looks like to be saved. To have been brought from spiritual death to spiritual life.

And he's been calling God's people to put off their former life and to put on their new life in Christ. And last week we saw how the Apostle Paul refers to our life before Christ as darkness and our life after Christ as light.

And now Paul is at the end of these exhortations and the next time we pick up this series we're going to see how he addresses husbands and wives and then he goes on to address parents and children and then masters and servants and then he begins to address this issue of spiritual warfare what we face as we try to live the Christian life.

[3 : 19] But here in these verses what Paul is doing in verses 15 to 21 he is concluding what those who belong to Christ are called to.

He is talking about the lives that we are called to live. And again Paul has been addressing this from the opening verses of chapter 4 and I think when we take all together what he is saying to us in these verses I think what he is saying to us is this those who belong to Christ must endeavor to understand God's will and be filled with God's spirit.

This is what it looks like to have been translated out of darkness into light to have Jesus Christ as Lord and personal Savior it is that we must endeavor to understand God's will and be filled with God's spirit.

And we are called to do this in an ongoing way. This is what is to mark our lives as believers. And so briefly let's consider this morning these two ongoing commands which all who belong to Christ are called to.

First in an ongoing way we are commanded to understand God's will. That's what Paul is saying in verses 15 to 17. Notice again how he says it.

[4 : 53] Look carefully then how you walk not as unwise but as wise making the best use of the time because the days are evil.

Therefore do not be foolish but understand what the will of the Lord is. The overall point that Paul is making is in verse 17.

That's the overall point. It's his concluding statement. He says therefore do not be foolish but understand what the will of the Lord is.

By calling us to be careful how we walk Paul is calling us to be careful how we live day by day. The Bible uses walk to talk about our way of life the way we carry ourselves and conduct ourselves and

behave ourselves day by day.

I remember last week we saw in verse 9 that he says that we are to walk in the light. We who belong to Christ are to walk in the light. In other words we are to live as children of the light not as children of darkness.

[6 : 04] And so here in verse 15 Paul is now giving us another kind of a contrast. He is calling us to live as those who are wise and not as those who are unwise.

Again there is a reference to our former life unwise and our new life in Christ which is to be marked by wisdom. No longer in darkness no longer unwise now in the light and now living with wisdom. And he tells us that we are to be careful how we live. We are to make the best use of the time because the reality is that our days are filled with evil and sin all around us seeking to beset us as we seek to do God's will.

And so mindful of these realities we live day by day and those of us who belong to Christ we demonstrate our wisdom by seeking to understand God's will so that we might do it.

Now when we think about God's will God's will has two basic aspects to it and we should always remember to keep these two in mind.

[7 : 29] The first is his general will his will for all of his people and then the second is his particular will his will for us individually and again we need to understand both.

So when we think about God's general will God's general will for us is included or is contained in his word. This is his general will for all of us.

And there are some places in scripture where we actually see where the Bible specifically says this is God's will for you. For example 1 Thessalonians chapter 4 verse 3 1 Thessalonians 5 18 Give thanks in all circumstances for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

And then 1 Peter 2 15 for this is the will of God that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. Just a few examples of explicit mentions of what God's will is for all of us for all of his people.

But much of scripture that expresses God's will for us doesn't have the words this is God's will. So for example we've been studying the Beatitudes together.

[8 : 57] When we study the Beatitudes that's God's will for all of his people. That's his general will for all of us. So God's general will is contained in his word.

He reveals it in his word. But what about his particular will? How can we know God's particular will in areas of our lives personally?

How can we know God's will in areas like vocation and career, marriage, or perhaps going into business for yourself or with somebody else?

Or moving from one island to another or from one country to another? And there are a myriad of other personal kinds of things that we face. We need to make decisions.

And we are called to know God's particular will. We are called to seek what his particular will is. And we aren't able to go to scripture to find particularly whether we should relocate to Andros or relocate to the United States.

[10 : 03] There are principles to guide us, but we don't have a specific word that we are to do this or we are to do that. And so what we are supposed to do is we are supposed to be guided by prayer, committing these particular areas to the Lord in prayer, seeking godly counsel, and trying to discern what is God's will in those particular areas.

So take for example two recent graduates from college, both Christians, both believers, and they both pursued the same course of study, and now before them they both have the same opportunities.

They can further their education, both given the same offer, same university, or they can enter into their profession, start in the job market.

They're both Christians, and they have these opportunities before them, and they need to each, for themselves, seek the Lord in prayer, get godly counsel, and seek what is God's will in that.

And here's the reality. The reality is that God may lead them differently. Although their circumstances are exactly the same in terms of what they're focused on, what they're praying about, God may lead them differently, as well as he might lead them in the same way.

[11 : 31] But we can't make the assumption that he is going to do the same for both. We need to seek to know what God's particular will is.

And we saw this last week in verse 10, where Paul says that we are to try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. what is pleasing to the Lord, not what is pleasing to me, not what I want to do, not what would fulfill me.

Lord, what is your willingness? Lord, what would please you in these options, these choices that are before me?

Let me just say this, just a practical word of guidance to us. You know, at the end of the day, after we have sought God's will, particularly, we cannot know with absolute certainty that what we have done is God's will.

We only know this to be certain. Only if it is in the word of God that we can have certainty of it. We know God's will is for our sanctification.

[12:41] We know that. But the one who may decide to further his education or both decide to further their education, they cannot have the same kind of conviction that that is God's will as they would with his revealed will in his word.

But here's what's most important. What's most important is this, that in their heart of hearts they know that they have sought to discern God's will because they want to please him.

That's the most important thing. That's the thing that we should all have in common. That we desire to do God's will and we may land in different places and you know what? We may even miss the Lord.

But it's okay. Our motivation ought to be though to please him, to see, to do his will.

That is our aim brothers and sisters. We are to aim to please the Lord. And so I asked you this morning, how are you living? Are you living carefully as a wise person, making the best use of your time, aware of the realities of sin and evil all around us, and seeking to understand God's will that you may do it?

[14:01] And I believe that when we consider how Paul calls us to this, that what he has more in view than God's general will is God's specific will.

Because pretty much once you're literate, we can know God's general will for us. We don't need to pray about God's general will for us, but we certainly do need to pray about his particular will, which is not revealed in Scripture.

But is God's word a priority for us? Reading it and studying it and regularly sitting under the preaching of it, so that our hearts may be shaped, that we may be better positioned to seek God's particular will, being guided by principles in his word, so that we might please him.

Or is the way you're living better described as living carelessly, without regard for God's will, without seeking to please the Lord. And friend, if you are living indifferently to God's will, if you are living carelessly regarding God's will, and you have no desire to discern what God's will is, and you profess to be a Christian, then I urge you to examine yourself, to see whether you are truly in Christ. Christ. And either way, whether you are in Christ or not, you need to cry out to the Lord in repentance that your life will be marked by a desire to understand and to do God's will.

[15:53] So first, we are called to understand God's will. This is what it looks like, brothers and sisters, to have been converted, to belong to Christ, to turn away from our old life, and to turn to a new life where we want to please the Lord.

And the starting point is, understand, what is God's will, generally and particularly? Well, in addition to calling us to understand God's will, Paul calls those of us who belong to Christ, to be filled with the Spirit.

Look again at how he says that in verses 18 to 21. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

One of the most helpful ways to approach understanding what Paul is saying to us in these four verses is to not miss that this is one long sentence.

And this one long sentence has one main thought. It says a number of things, but they all come back to this one main thought, and it is this thought, this command to be filled with the Spirit.

[17:40] What does Paul mean by be filled with the Spirit? Well, some Pentecostals say that this is a command to have some secondary experience after salvation, which is evidenced by speaking in tongues.

But a close reading of what Paul says in this sentence shows that he is not referring to an event. Instead, Paul is calling God's people to be filled with the Spirit, not as a momentary experience, but as an ongoing experience.

And what he is actually saying is keep being filled with the Spirit. And he also makes very clear what it means, what it means to be filled with the Spirit by pointing out what it looks like.

And again, to see Paul's point, in verses 18 to 21, it will be helpful to keep in mind how he calls God's people to understand God's will.

He's calling us. The contrast is living wisely, living wisely versus living foolishly. and now in these verses, the contrast is being drunk with wine or being filled with the Spirit.

[19 : 16] Those are the two contrasts that Paul is putting before us. And he tells us what being drunk with wine is.

It's debauchery. And debauchery is indulgence in excessive drinking of alcohol, seeking sensual pleasure. it is unbridled feeding of the flesh and the desires.

And one of the main manifestations is sexual immorality. But instead, Paul is calling God's people to be filled with the Spirit. And that is to be under the Spirit's control and under the Spirit's direction. Again, he's contrasting these two experiences. one, being under the influence of some drug versus being under the control of the Holy Spirit.

Paul, we're writing in our day, I don't think he would confine being drunk just to wine. He would use drugs as well because the same principle applies.

[20 : 30] And so properly understood, what Paul is saying to us is that we should be under the control or influence of nothing else, no one else, except by the Spirit, by being filled with the Spirit.

One of the helpful commentaries to me as we've been working through Ephesians has been John's start commentary on Ephesians.

And in covering these verses, he refers to a quotation from Dr. Martin Lloyd Jones, which I found very insightful.

He's a medical doctor. He's deceased now, for many years now, and he was a medical doctor as well. And he talks about the effect of alcohol on the brain, and then he goes on to talk about the effect of the Spirit on us.

Listen to what Dr. Martin Lloyd Jones had to say. He writes, wine, alcohol, pharmacologically speaking, it's not as, it's not a stimulant.

[21 : 46] It is a depressant. Take up any book on pharmacology and look up alcohol and you will find always that it is classified under the depressants.

It is not a stimulant. It depresses first and foremost the highest centers of all in the brain. Referring to these centers, they control everything that gives a man self-control, wisdom, understanding, discrimination, judgment, balance, the power to access everything.

In other words, everything that makes a man behave at his very best and highest. Dr. Lloyd Jones says that alcohol affects the centers of the brain that are designed to cause us to behave at our very best and at our highest.

That's the effect of alcohol use. and again, if we would have broadened this and we think of other drugs like marijuana, they affect these same control centers of the brain as well.

Where we have the sense of wisdom and understanding and discrimination and judgment and balance and power to access everything.

[23 : 11] I thought I would share this this morning because all of us need to hear it. We are in a culture where substance abuse is pervasive and sadly even in the church.

Even in the church. And so we need to hear this. We need to hear it both on the level of God's word calling us not to give ourselves a drunkenness but also from someone, a godly man who understands these things and who is sharing with us this is the effect of these substances on our brains.

We all need to hear it but I want to say especially to our counterculture students and our young adults, you need to hear this. Don't be wise in your own eyes.

Don't follow the way of the world. Don't give your mind to the control of any substance to any degree. And then Dr. Lloyd Jones goes on to describe the work of the spirit in the believer's life.

And what he knows is that the Holy Spirit does the exact opposite. Listen to what he says. If it were possible to put the Holy Spirit into a textbook of pharmacology, I would put him under the stimulants for that is where he belongs.

[24 : 32] He really does stimulate. He stimulates our every faculty, the mind and the intellect and the heart and the will. And this must be the aim of all those who belong to Christ and who seek to serve Christ and live for him, to be filled with the spirit that he might stimulate all of our God-given faculties, our mind, our intellect, our hearts, and our wills.

And then one last quote, this one from John Stott himself, commenting on these verses. Here's what he writes. People who are drunk give way to wild, dissolute, and uncontrolled actions. They behave like animals, indeed worse than animals. The results of being filled with the spirit are totally different. If excessive alcohol dehumanizes turning a human into a beast, the fullness of the spirit makes us more human, and he makes us like Christ.

These words are so true, brothers and sisters. The fullness of the spirit makes us more human. The fullness of the spirit makes us more like Jesus Christ.

And so what Paul helps us to see is what it looks like to be filled with the spirit in verses 19 to 21. And this is not exhaustive. He's not telling us every single expression or manifestation of what it looks like to be filled with the spirit under the spirit's control, but he does give us four important expressions of what being filled with the spirit is like.

[26 : 23] The first that he lists is fellowship in verse 19. When we are filled with the spirit, we address one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.

The things of God are on our lips. And we communicate with one another in accordance with the things of God.

We talk about God. We talk about his gospel. We talk about his goodness and his work and his purposes. These are the things that are central in our fellowship, in our being together.

Paul says, this is what being filled with the spirit looks like. Being filled with the spirit is not just some spiritual experience to be confined in a corner, but no, it pervades our lives and it pervades and affects our fellowship with brothers and sisters.

The second expression is worship, which we see in the latter part of verse 19. we sing and make melody to the Lord in our heart. We do what we sang this morning in that first song, praising my Savior all the day long.

[27 : 41] When we're filled with the spirit, there's a song in our heart. We're rejoicing. We are making melody to the Lord in our hearts. There is an overflow in our hearts of song and praise to God, not just when we're gathered as we are this morning, but as we go through our days, when we're filled with the spirit, it's going to be expressed in worship and praise unto the Lord from our hearts.

And then the third expression of being filled with the spirit that Paul mentions here is thankfulness. It's in verse 20. When we're filled with the spirit, we are thankful.

And we give thanks to God, the Father, for everything. For everything. Not just all the wonderful things, all the blessings that come out of it, but even in our trials and even in our hardships.

When we're filled with the spirit, we see them differently. We see them as part and parcel of the hand of a good and sovereign God working in our lives.

And we're able to be thankful to God for everything. And we do it in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[29 : 13] And so here we see our triune God at work in our lives, filled with the spirit, giving thanks to God, the Father, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is what it looks like to be filled with the spirit.

You see, when we're filled with the spirit, we awaken to spiritual realities that we wouldn't see otherwise. And that is why we are able to thank God for everything.

Because, you know, even our trials, God is able to use them for good in our lives, and he says that he does all things. Works in all things for the good of those who love him and are called according to his purpose.

It is when we are filled with the spirit that we can thank God for the trials. Because in the trials, he means good for us, and he works good for us in our lives.

And then fourth, the fourth and final expression that Paul tells us is evident about being filled with the spirit is submission.

[30 : 32] In verse 21, he says, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. And this is foundational, mutual submission that all of us are called to.

And the reason we do it is out of reverence for the Lord Jesus Christ. And I think that this mutual submission that we are called to out of reverence for Christ is so highly neglected among God's people.

And it's one of the primary reasons that there is so much strife and so much division among brothers and sisters because we don't submit to one another out of reverence for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, Scripture certainly does call us to submit in some specific relationships. It calls children to submit to their parents. It calls wives to submit to their husband.

It calls church members to submit to their leaders. It calls all of us to submit to the governing authority. But foundational to all those roles of submission as it relates to those of us who are brothers and sisters and then we are called to those specific roles, foundational is this call to mutual submission.

[32 : 04] Out of reverence for Christ. We keep him in view and so we do it because we reverence the Lord.

And really what this is a call to, this is a call to humility. This call to mutual submission is a call to humility.

Paul is going to go on. He's going to talk to wives and talk to parents and children. It's a call to humility and if we embrace this call to humility to one another out of reverence for Christ, we are better positioned to relate to one another in those submissive relationships.

Both the one who is submitting and the one who is being submitted to. We're better positioned if we are committed to submitting to one another out of reverence for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ. And so brothers and sisters, I pray that we have grasped the heart of this letter. I pray we have grasped the message of Ephesians.

[33 : 23] How Paul in the first three chapters, he tells us about this glorious salvation that God gave us, that he ordained before the foundation of the world, that he brought to pass in a time-space world.

How he saved us, brought us from death to life when we were dead in trespasses and sins, reconciled us, put us together in a body, and then he says, if that is true of you, you need to live this way.

Four, five, and six, he's saying these are the implications of what it means to be saved. And these concluding verses, I believe we need to hear them, we need to take them to heart.

We want to understand God's will. We want to be filled with the Spirit. And as we do that, we will give evidence to the fact that we have truly been converted, that we truly belong to the Lord.

Well, as I mentioned, there are just a couple more parts to Paul's letter that we will be considering before we conclude it, and I want to encourage you to make a special effort to hear the remainder of this sermon series.

[34 : 45] Let's pray together. Father, we thank you for your word this morning. Lord, I pray that you would help us to endeavor to understand what your will is, your particular will and your general will, and to live it out and to obey it.

And then, Lord, I pray that you would help us to be filled with the Spirit in an ongoing way, that we might live lives that are reflective of the fact that we have truly been converted and we belong to you.

Would you help us, O Lord, and glorify your name in and through our lives, we pray in Christ's name. Amen. invite you to sing along with me.

I want to know you. I've tried in vain I've tried in vain A thousand ways My fears to quell My hopes to raise But what I need Your word