

Ephesians 5:18-21 - Pentecostal Presbyterians

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Date: 02 August 2015

Preacher: Will Spink

[0 : 00] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.

Father, that's the prayer of our hearts this morning, that we would know more of the presence of Jesus in our lives, that Your Word, now as we open it, would dwell richly in our hearts. In this hour and in every hour of this week, would we be those who are shaped by what we find in Your Word, not by our own ideas, but by what You teach us this morning.

So, Holy Spirit, come and do that. That we are longing for You to work and to do things that we wouldn't even know to expect or to plan for.

Would You teach us this morning from Your Word? We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Beginning next Sunday, we are going to continue in the book of Ephesians, but slow down a little while to talk about marriage and the family.

[1 : 15] Some really crucial relationships that God begins to deal with here in the next several verses of Ephesians. And this is for everybody. Not just for those of you who are married with two and a half kids or something like that.

This is for all of us. As God has connected us in Jesus to each other, He's given us these particular relationships within families that are not even just about those who are in them, but about His name and His glory.

And so we all need to learn about that together from His Word. So, please join us for those. I'm really, really excited for God to teach us about His intent for those relationships over the next few weeks.

But before we get there, God has one more general set of instructions for us this morning for living as His new people, His holy, beloved children of light.

A way that He's calling us to live because of His love for us. Already in chapter 5, He's told us to guard what our hearts treasure, to exercise godly wisdom, to demonstrate sacrificial love to those around us.

[2 : 29] And so now we get to verse 18 and some more instruction to His church. Ephesians 5 at verse 18. This is God's holy Word. 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 our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

The grass withers, the flowers fade, but these words of our God will indeed stand forever. Have you been exhausted lately?

Have you felt like you were running on empty? Like life was running you ragged? I've got great news for you this morning. Summer vacation is just around the corner, and you're going to get a chance to recharge over the next few weeks.

Except that some of you are shaking your heads at me like, no, what happened is I went on the same vacation you went on this summer, Will, and I came back needing a vacation from my vacation.

It wasn't summer vacation that rescued me from feeling exhausted, burned out, tired. Here I am heading into a new busy season, and I'm already tired.

[4 : 02] The same thing happens to us spiritually, doesn't it? We have lots of stuff going on. A lot of times we call it feeling spiritually dry. I just, I mean, I love Jesus, but I don't feel the same kind of passion and zeal that I used to.

I'm around the people of God and the things of God, but I just don't get excited about it the way I once did. I feel like I'm running on empty spiritually too. Have you ever felt that way before?

A lot of times we look at our lives and we feel like this, and we diagnose our problem as busyness. Have you ever done that? I'm too busy. That's the problem.

If I just weren't so busy, I wouldn't be so exhausted or feel like I'm running on empty. I wouldn't be dry spiritually. And honestly, there's some truth to that, right?

I mean, if I didn't have work to do or clothes to wash or dinner to make or friends to spend time with, then maybe I would be less exhausted. But I want to suggest there's actually something beneath the busyness of life, something that drives that busyness, exhaustion, spiritual dryness.

[5 : 12] All of those things are symptoms, not usually the root problem. They're symptoms of our natural way of functioning. And that's this. We seek to fulfill or validate or soothe ourselves by achieving our own goals.

Isn't that the way we function? That's why we're so busy, because that's what we're seeking. That's what we're driving after. We're driven by a desire for fulfillment, by achieving some goal.

It's different goals for all of us. It could look like trying to earn the approval of others, trying to live up to our own standards, trying to earn a promotion, trying to impress a significant other, trying to just wring all the pleasure we can out of life to just have as much fun as possible and enjoy life.

It's exhausting. It runs us dry no matter how well we think we do. Even when we're the most successful, we struggle to be filled up. We keep running, looking for more of what it is that we can achieve.

Madonna said it this way in an interview with Vogue magazine. She said, My drive in life comes from a fear of being mediocre. It's always pushing me. I push past one spell of it and discover myself as a special human being, but then I feel I am still mediocre and uninteresting unless I do something else.

[6 : 39] Because even though I have become somebody, I still have to prove that I am somebody. My struggle has never ended, and I guess it never will.

Even with all the success that she's had, all the fame, all the possessions she's accumulated, meeting all sorts of goals for herself, she's still not fulfilled.

And she's honest enough, it's what I love about this, she's honest enough to say, I'm not sure that achieving all the goals I have for myself is ever going to make this stop. This struggle is going to continue.

I'm always going to wake up thinking, I've got to prove that I am somebody again today. The struggle has never ended, and it probably never will. Your goals for your fulfillment and your ways of reaching them are likely different from hers, but they may leave you equally empty, even when you reach them.

For some of us, the place we look to be soothed and fulfilled is the one Paul speaks specifically against in this passage. Getting drunk with wine.

[7 : 46] Look at verse 18. He says, Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit. I call this verse Presbyterian kryptonite, because Paul speaks against wine and about the Holy Spirit in the same verse, right?

I mean, what are we supposed to do with that? I say that jokingly, but this is very serious. Paul's not joking. The Bible is clear that God has given us wine as a good gift to be enjoyed as a part of God's good creation, but it is equally clear in many, many places over and over that we abuse that gift at our own peril, that it's not something to be taken lightly.

Paul speaks in his other letters about freedom in Christ, right? We often call it our Christian liberty. That we have freedom to do many things, and included in that is drinking alcohol.

Paul's not unclear on that, but he's also clear that our freedom is never to be used to indulge the sinful nature, to pursue self-serving fulfillment in sinful abuse of God's good gifts.

This verse in Ephesians specifically says getting drunk on wine is debauchery. It's a word that indicates all sorts of wild and out-of-control living.

[9 : 12] And many of us have lived that in our own lives or in the lives of those we've loved. We've experienced what that feels like. And our Heavenly Father is coming to us in this verse and He's warning us for our good.

Do not get drunk on wine. Don't take this lightly. And if you've struggled or if you are struggling with alcohol abuse, I want to tell you this morning, you're not alone in this church or in this room.

You're not. We're not a group of people who are fixed, who've gotten together because we've figured out how to manage life well and we don't struggle with things like that anymore. You're not

alone.

And we're so glad that you're here. I want you to know this is a safe place for you to have a struggle like that. We would love to come alongside you and help you.

The difficulties of addiction are not ones that disappear overnight just by reading a verse that says, don't get drunk on wine. I know that.

[10:18] It's a lot more difficult and painful than that, isn't it? We understand that and we would be honored to walk with you through that process. There is help. There is hope in the midst of that even when it doesn't feel like it and you're not alone.

But also notice the other key command in this verse. It's not merely that Paul wants to talk to us about our use of alcohol, although that's part of it.

Paul doesn't merely say, don't get drunk on wine, but instead stay sober all the time. That's not what he says, is it? What does Paul say? What does he connect it with?

Don't get drunk on wine, but be filled with the Spirit. Paul's talking about something broader than just how much we drink.

What is it that he's encouraging instead of drunkenness? It's being filled, controlled, influenced by, driven by, not wine or anything else except the Holy Spirit.

[11:20] Do you see where he's concerned again with our hearts and our natural way of functioning that seeks fulfillment in our own ways and through achieving our own goals? Do you see what he's getting at there?

Instead, Paul says, instead of functioning that way, function in a new way. Be filled with the Spirit. That may not be as simple to understand as not getting drunk.

We've talked about the Holy Spirit a fair amount lately. I'm thankful for that. Ephesians has brought us back there several times, but we normally don't do it enough. It's just one of those things we often neglect.

So just a couple reminders of who the Bible says the Holy Spirit is that will help us to understand this important command better. The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity, right?

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit equal in power and glory with God the Father. He's the one through whom the Father lives in His people, assuring them of their adoption, giving them power to obey, leading them, gifting them, comforting them, and many more things like that.

[12:31] In many ways in the Godhead, the Holy Spirit, while being equal with the Father and Son, plays the role of a supporting actor. He loves to exalt Jesus, the Son.

He shines the spotlight on the Son so that we see Jesus more clearly and more gloriously. The Bible talks about that role that the Holy Spirit has over and over in many places.

It even mentions it in Ephesians 3 that it's the power of the Holy Spirit in us that enables us to see the dimensions of Christ's love for us. That's what the Holy Spirit does.

In fact, in the book of Acts, where the Holy Spirit is talked about a lot, there's about a dozen times where this phrase we just read, being filled with the Spirit, is used to describe somebody.

You know what they almost always seem to do when that happens in Acts? They start to talk about somebody, to testify about somebody, but it's not about the Holy Spirit. They don't say, I have the Holy Spirit and He's great and He's wonderful and He does all these things.

[13:31] You know who they talk about? The people filled with the Spirit talk about Jesus. They talk about His greatness, His resurrection, His power, His salvation, over and over.

The idea of being filled with the Spirit is exactly that. It speaks about what drives us and controls us, what really fulfills us. So it's not simply talking about the idea of the Holy Spirit living within you, which is something the Bible does teach.

That's true of all of those who trust in Christ. But it's also not talking about some sort of second baptism of the Holy Spirit where it's a one-time event that you get the Holy Spirit more.

Instead, this is a moment-by-moment, a day-by-day, a constant, repeated being filled, living under the influence of, motivated by the priorities of the Holy Spirit.

I'll say it this way. A life or a church filled by the Spirit is fueled by Christ's glory and others' good, not its own goals.

[14:41] A life or church filled by the Spirit, when you're filled with the Spirit, what drives you, what's important to you, what really fulfills you is Christ's glory, Him being exalted, His name being made great, and others being blessed even at your own expense.

The rest of our passage this morning bears this out and teaches this. It's going to paint a picture with three phrases of what a Spirit-filled church looks like.

Let's look at it in verses 19 through 21. First, Christ-focused worship and relationships. Look at verse 19. Addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart.

I love this verse because what it does is it brings our worship and our relationships with each other right up against each other and it connects them. Commentators get all bent out of shape because they're like me and they're type A and they're Presbyterian and they want to figure out is God talking about a formal worship service or is He just talking about our relationships with each other? Because He uses these words that are just about talking and having conversation with each other and then He uses words about singing to God and it seems to be talking about the same thing and so it can be confusing and I think that's because we often have such a bright line between formal worship and the rest of life.

[16:14] We distinguish them too much and I'd suggest there's no bright line of distinction in this verse on purpose because there must be a vertical aspect to all of our relationships, a God-centered part of my relationship with all my brothers and sisters as well as a horizontal aspect to all of our worship in the church.

Here's what I mean. Addressing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs does not mean that all of your life becomes like some corny Christian musical where you run into people in the grocery store and you say amazing grace and start singing it and then when you leave them you start singing in Christ alone and that's the only way you speak to each other.

That's not what He's talking about. That'd be kind of fun though. No, maybe not. The word that is being used here is talking about our conversations, the way we engage and interact with each other and saying spirit-filled conversations should be Christ-focused.

That's what it's saying. We should point each other to praising His name all the time. Now you may be talking about football or the kids or politics or the new school year.

Any of those things and that's wonderful. It doesn't mean you stop talking about them. It means the spirit will be eager in the midst of those conversations to spotlight Christ rather than being self-focused or self-centered.

[17:41] Is there anyone else that's realized how easily you can become so self-obsessed that you forget God's perspective on the thing you're worked up about? Whatever it is you're really frustrated about the new things that are happening or the things with your kids or the stuff at work and you start talking about it and your conversation is just all about how it affects you and you forget God's perspective or what His Word would have to say about it.

The spirit in our brothers and sisters should push us to remember God's perspective. As we interact we ought to always be pointing each other to Christ.

Then likewise our worship services are of course to worship God. He's the only one worthy of receiving worship but they're also times to edify each other.

It shouldn't be surprising to be praying with or crying with or comforting someone in the middle of the worship service. The spirit may be working right there between brothers and sisters as He puts you right up against each other and He lives in both of you.

He may be at work right there and it may not feel very Presbyterian to you in that moment but it should because it's biblical so it should be Presbyterian.

[18:57] Similarly it shouldn't be surprising to be spontaneously praising God in your kitchen in your living room with a friend. You can even sing or share a psalm.

All of life is worship of God and all of our worship impacts our relationships with each other. Listen whether you enjoy the 60 seconds we take and hug and shake hands whether that's your favorite part or your least favorite part what that reminds us of in our worship is that we don't worship God alone do we?

We worship Him with brothers and sisters others who have received His love so that's a holy moment to realize that we don't worship God alone but with His people.

So secondly the Spirit filled life or church looks like not just Christ focused worship and relationships but Christ centered gratitude. Verse 20 giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Giving thanks always and for everything. Fairly inclusive. That pretty much covers it. Not just the big blessings but the daily provision.

[20 : 14] Not just in easy times but even on the hard days. And this isn't to make light of the brokenness or evil of the world that we encounter regularly in our lives.

We're not giving thanks for sin itself but even in those hard times we're giving thanks how? In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We're thankful that He reigns. That He saves. That His glory is always achieved through even the darkest situations. If we're driven and fulfilled only by achieving our own goals this would make no sense, right?

It would be impossible. If all that matters to me is things going the way I want them to then no way am I able to give thanks in everything because sometimes things don't go according to plan.

If I'm self-centered and self-serving there's often no room for gratitude. But instead of that self-serving attitude the Spirit-filled church learns to give thanks because of the magnificent grace of Jesus when the budget goes up and when the budget goes down.

[21 : 22] When the culture agrees with me and when the culture disagrees with me because the Spirit shines the spotlight on Jesus and we again see Him and have reason to give thanks.

And finally the Spirit-filled life or church practices Christ-honoring submission. I love this picture of submitting to one another because it's so easy in so many contexts to think about climbing the ladder to get ahead of each other to get our way to come out on top and stepping on each other on the way to the top and submitting to one another instead pictures us stooping to see others as more valuable than ourselves.

Running into each other at the bottom, right? That there would be crowding in the basement or in the nursery or during cleanup.

Where'd you expect to see the Spirit-filled members of the church? On the stage? In charge? Paul says they'll be submitting to one another and perhaps they won't be where we most expected.

And in the context of this passage submitting out of reverence for Christ likely refers to following proper authorities that Christ has established in His church within families, within a congregation, within workplaces and so on as we see in the following verses in Ephesians.

[23 : 00] And that's an important reminder for us as to how our hearts respond to the God-ordained leadership and the decisions they make for the church. Listen, out of reverence for Christ means we submit not because we think the elders are so wise, but out of reverence for Christ because Jesus, the King and head of the church, has placed them where they are.

And we honor and trust Him as we support the elders, the deacons, and others in leadership. But the other thing we can't miss out on in out of reverence for Christ is the model that the King and head of the church sets for all of us.

What does Mark 10 tell us about the way Jesus leads? Even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many.

If the King and head of the church is the one who serves, no leader is above serving any part of the body. I love this about the officers of this church.

You've seen them serve in many ways. What you don't get to see is the way they interact with each other in the meetings that you don't get to go to. The way that men with passionate opinions and godly wisdom strain to submit to each other.

[24 : 22] At a session meeting just a few months ago we were discussing something and there were some differing perspectives in the room. I of course was on the right side of things and I had said some things and there was a guy who wanted to speak on the other side but as he formulated his thoughts it didn't come out the way that he had intended and it just didn't make much sense.

And I thought to myself what? That's just fine. That was a bad idea anyway. I don't agree with his opinion so it doesn't matter that nobody understood what he just said. And then one of the other elders who saw things my way was on my side of things stopped and said hold on I want to go back.

Brother I didn't understand exactly what you just meant when you said that and I want to. He already knew he disagreed but he wanted to understand. He wanted to hear where his brother was coming from.

Praise God for the Holy Spirit who shows us the greatness of Jesus so that we can be self-effacing instead of self-exalting. So that we can value others rather than just valuing winning and being right. That's Christ honoring submission. So a spirit filled church is one that makes much of Jesus. That's caught up with who he is and exalting and praising him.

[25 : 45] They have Christ focused relationships and worship. Christ centered gratitude. Christ honoring submission. Because a person or a church full of the spirit is fueled by.

What drives them is Christ's glory and others good. And so we think of ourselves less because the spirit keeps shining the spotlight on Jesus. And right there in being filled with the spirit is where God's offering us true fulfillment.

Not the kind we've been talking about that our hearts so quickly go to where no matter how much wine you drink you'll be empty and unfulfilled again won't you?

You'll need more. No matter how much success or fame or whatever self-serving goals you achieve you'll need more of it to keep you full. But the spirit of God fills us in a true and lasting way because it's not by something we achieve and need to achieve again tomorrow it's something we receive. Fulfillment that's lasting because we receive it he fills us. That's what happens be filled with the spirit. So last question this morning how does that happen?

[27 : 03] Do I just walk around and one day all of a sudden if it's about receiving the spirit rather than achieving our own goals and we're very achievement minded I am what am I supposed to achieve?

How am I going to receive something? How am I going to get filled up? To answer that let me tell you something about myself. I'm one of those people that makes many of you very anxious and you already knew that but in a particular way I'm a person who loves to drive around with the gas light on and the car running on empty.

Seeing the gas light comes on makes me think something like this you know what sometime in the next few days I should start thinking about which gas station I might like to go to and when it might be on my way somewhere I'm already going so that I don't have to change my plans or interrupt my driving schedule I can just stop by and fill up at my convenience and I enjoy riding around with the gas light on running on empty I certainly don't want to stop for gas to interrupt any plans that I have when I'm driving and sometimes we can be like that spiritually too can't we?

The gas light is flashing in our hearts we're running on empty but we just keep on going and keep on pursuing our own goals we want that exhausted or dry feeling to go away but we don't want to change our plans or our goals it would be like me pulling the car into a filling station right up beside one of the pumps and then walking inside to the attendant and say hey I need some help I got this light on on my dashboard and I can't get it to go off and he says oh well let us put some gas in there for you we'd be happy to help and I said no no no listen I said I wanted the light to go off I didn't say I wanted you to change my focus or my fuel I wanted you to tell me I was okay to keep going but make that light turn off one of our members sent me this comment about something she learned recently in our marriage Sunday school class she said upon reading the book they were using in the class

I was reminded about considering the interests of others as more important than your own about the ability to serve another requires the Holy Spirit to drive the gospel into my heart until it changes me not my husband I found by serving my husband instead of seeking to make myself happy could actually give me more joy I was running on fumes and looking to the wrong filling station to fulfill me I was running on fumes and looking to the wrong filling station to fulfill me me too thinking that something that I wanted something that I felt I needed when I got it was going to be the thing that finally fulfilled me and God's word says this it says he pours his spirit out when we turn away from those things and turn back to him we call it repentance when we repent of our self-serving goals and turn back to him read Joel 2 sometime it's the classic passage where we see God pouring out his spirit on his people when they repent and turn to him repent confess you're looking to wine to money to others to your own goals and turn to God again or for the first time maybe you've never thought there was a possibility that something could actually fulfill you not just momentarily but eternally and day after day and for the rest of your life and that you could actually turn from the things you've been trying to find that in and find that in

[30 : 58] Jesus turn back to God and then look at Colossians 3 it's a really interesting verse it's actually a parallel verse to the one we read this morning Paul in another one of his letters talking about the exact same things but one phrase is different let the word of Christ dwell in you richly teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God do you hear the same themes the speaking to each other the singing the thankfulness except this time it comes instead of being filled with the spirit from what the word of Christ dwelling richly in you the spirit and the word are never disconnected ignoring

God's word when we're spiritually dry is like running on empty and driving past the gas stations it's like being parched in the desert and walking right by pools of water open God's word ask God to fill you with his spirit turn back to God as you're driving turn off the highway open God's word pull in at the filling station and then ask the father

Luke 11 if you then who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children how much more will the heavenly father give the holy spirit to those who ask him ask the father he's eager to give you the holy spirit to refill your running on empty tank I'm not saying that you immediately feel better I'm not saying everything in life immediately becomes easy or you have some amazing out of body spiritual experience I said it's not about us right the spirit doesn't focus us on ourselves God gives the spirit to his children when they ask him and their hearts are fueled again by the glory of Jesus and the good of others and that's what truly fulfills them not the way they feel listen if you've trusted Jesus if you're connected to him by faith the holy spirit lives in you and you have a father who loves to fill you up with him remember how this whole chapter started in

Ephesians 5 live this way all these things I'm about to tell you as beloved children I'm not here trying to give you a formula I'm reminding you you have a father how much more will the heavenly father give his spirit to those who ask him he's your father he longs to see your heart turned toward his son he loves to give you his holy spirit and fill you with him so that you'll always always rejoice in Jesus let's pray that he would do that among us father would you indeed give us your spirit to fullness we confess to you that most of us aren't sure what that would feel like for us it's confusing and difficult but father we know that it would be your delight and so we ask that you would turn our hearts toward Jesus again even this week as school schedules start up and work deadlines confront us would you show us

Jesus as church programs start coming fast and other good events in our lives that could end up being a distraction from Jesus if we're not thoughtful would you fill us with your spirit in all of it in everything that's going on would we make much of Jesus because we know how much we need him and we have seen what a glorious savior he is we ask you in his name amen for more information visit us online at southwood.org