

Shared life with God

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[0 : 00] Well, the last two messages that I have taught to the church, brought to the church, have been from Ephesians.

So we're back in Ephesians 5, looking at our life in the Spirit and what a shared life with God actually looks like. So we are titling this series or giving this series a title of Shared Life so that we can truly appreciate and understand that our life with God is a shared life and that has very much to do with God's influence over us.

So Ephesians 5 and 5 verses 15 through to 20, which is actually six verses.

Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of 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 all your heart.

[1 : 28] 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.

Let's pray. Father God, we look to you this morning to enable us to understand your words to us.

We thank you, Father God, that what you give us feeds us. It doesn't just cause us to understand, but it causes us to learn once we've understood.

Father God, what do we do after we have understood? Well, we thank you, Father God, that you have made that clear for us in giving us your Spirit.

We would ask, Father God, this morning that you would enlighten our mind with a view of changing our heart, that we would see your word clearly so that we would live it clearly. In Jesus' name, amen.

[2 : 26] Amen. So our life with God is a shared life, and that means that we're not living to God, living for God as though God is far away and we are here and we're trying to please the Father in heaven.

That would be looking at your Christian life in the wrong way. The way that Paul was encouraging us to look at the Christian life in the book of Ephesians is that we would understand that our life with God is shared.

That means God is present in our life, and now our life and relationship with God is shared. Now, because it is shared, it's going to come down to a matter of influence.

And in your life, you have influence, and in your life, God has influence. And the question before us this morning in Ephesians 5 is who has the greater influence?

Self-control leads to further self-control because you have a shared life with God. And those who belong to Jesus Christ ought to realize that what they have in Christ is Christ plus all the blessings that come with Christ.

[3 : 39] And we call this by virtue of union. What that means is this, that you cannot enjoy the blessings of God or even have the blessings of God outside of Christ. You must first belong to Christ, and then as you belong to Christ, the blessings that come with God come with God in Christ Jesus.

And so in this passage where you have the imperative, an imperative is something that you must do. It is a command that God gives you to fulfill.

It is that you not be drunk with wine, which is a choice. You do not want to become a drunkard. You do not want to bring your life under the influence of something else, but be filled with God the Holy Spirit.

So there is a choice to make this morning. There is a command to follow. And this is important because it will really emphasize who has the influence in the shared life that you have with God.

Now, the reason why God gives us his spirit, as we have already seen in the book of Ephesians, is so that we would be sealed with the spirit until the day of redemption. God does not want to lose, nor can he lose, what he has purchased.

[5 : 04] So he seals us with the spirit that since we have been bought with the blood of Christ, God is not going to lose his purchase. He is not going to lose the value of what he has purchased.

In fact, what he has purchased is going to increase in value, at least from your point of view, that you cannot be any more valuable than what you are right now in the eyes of God.

Incredibly valuable. And so God seals you with his spirit because of the value that you are as an image of God, essentially.

The next thing that we recognize is that when we are sealed with the spirit, there is an emotional reaction for the believer. Now, the trouble with emotional reactions, that these can ebb and flow.

Sometimes they can be there, sometimes they can't. But it doesn't change the objective truth. That is, that you can be sealed with the spirit and be doubting.

[6 : 13] In fact, we might even say that doubt exists. Doubt can only exist because God exists. If you think about it clearly like the psalmist would, the psalmist, in many cases, understand that the reason he doubts is because God exists, not because God doesn't exist.

In other words, because he knows God, and he knows what God can do, when God isn't doing what he knows that God can do, when it's not turning up in his life, he begins to doubt.

And the reason he begins to doubt is because he knows that God can do it. Why isn't God helping me? Why isn't God enabling me? Why isn't God stepping in? And so the believer then begins to doubt because he knows what God can do but doesn't seem to be doing it.

And so that emotional reaction needs to be challenged. So when you understand biblically that you have been sealed with the spirit, without emotion, you just take it as an objective fact, it will then naturally lead to the assurance if you concentrate on what God has done, not on what you're experiencing.

So the assurance comes not from what you experience, but what you actually know to be true as God has stated it in his word.

[7 : 43] This is really important because we tend to think, we tend to think that emotional assurances come from emotional experiences.

That's just not the case. The assurances that we have as in being assured of our salvation is not so much a feeling as much as it is confidence in what has been spoken.

This is crucial. That you understand that the feeling of, that the emotion of assurance doesn't come from an experience that you feel.

It actually comes from something you can know. That's crucial that you understand that. That's what it means to be sealed with the Holy Spirit and to have the assurance of salvation.

It doesn't rest on emotion, your feelings. It rests on what God has promised. And as we've been understanding over the last several Sunday evenings, that if you really live according to the covenant, you are actually living according to the promises of God, not what you experience, which is very different and very important to understand.

[8 : 56] So why then does God give us his spirit additionally to all of these reasons? And why are we then to be filled with the Holy Spirit? Well, this may surprise you, but this is the truth.

You don't actually know how to live the life that God has given you. God has given you this great gift, this new life in Christ Jesus. And you must not assume that you know how to live it because you have lived life for 20, 30, or 40 years.

The old life is nothing like the new life. In fact, the old life compared to the new life is considered death, the valley of dry bones, blindness. Whereas the new life is considered free in faithfulness, seeing by faith, that is, hearing God's word.

There is a contrast between the two that's very wide. And so what we have here in being filled with the Holy Spirit is not only is God enabling us to live the Christian life, but the Spirit instructs us in how to live it because we don't know how to.

In fact, you think of a child that's just being born into the world. We can argue endlessly that that child is alive and not dead.

[10 : 27] As the child cries, as the child weighs its arms and legs, as the child cries out in hunger and is fed, we can point to several things that indicate that that child is clearly alive.

But what we must also recognize is that being alive, it doesn't follow from being alive that you then know how to live. So being alive doesn't mean you know how to live, it just means that you're alive.

A child born into this world is alive, it doesn't know how to live. It is then instructed by God through the parents on how to live. And God, our parent, our Father in heaven, is now instructing us how to live because He has given us new life.

So you must be sort of very clear and very humble to admit and accept this morning that I do not know how to live the life that God has given me.

And God has then given me His Spirit both to enable me and instruct me. Because I don't just need instructions, I need enabling. Because that would be exasperation, wouldn't it?

[11 : 44] To tell a child to do something that they cannot do would exasperate the child. So God then enables His children with the gift of the Holy Spirit in order that they can fulfill the expectations of God.

Now the question this morning is, is whether or not we are consciously Christian in our commitments to God.

Are we consciously Christian? Remember this is about living the Christian life. Not about living, but this is about being consciously Christian in thought, word, and deed.

Are our thoughts Christian? Consciously Christian? Are our words consciously Christian? Are our deeds consciously Christian? This is what the filling of the Spirit is about.

So just look with me quickly over these few verses. You'll notice in verse 15 that Paul is instructing us on how to walk. Well, he would not have to if we knew how to.

[12 : 51] The reason we need the instruction how to walk is because naturally we don't know how to. We're told to be wise and not unwise and we're told to make the best use of our time.

Verse 15 and 16, do not be foolish. Verse 17, but understand what the will of the Lord is. This you can do because you have been saved and sealed with the Holy Spirit.

Verse 18, do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Holy Spirit. In other words, do not come under the influence of anything else other than God.

Do not bring your life under the influence of anything other than God. Verse 19, the filled person, that is the person who is being filled with the Holy Spirit, will then turn up to public gatherings, congregational gatherings, and the first thing that they will do is that they will edify one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.

Do you know why we sing? We sing so that we can edify one another, so that we can build one another up in the faith.

[14 : 10] Not only is it an act of worship towards God, it is primarily that, but in that, we build one another up with hearing someone else sing the same song that I'm singing.

Think of how encouraging that is, that this person next to me is saying the same things about God as I'm saying. That this person that I am sat next to is praying, giving the same amens that I am giving.

That's how we edify one another. We're always then, verse 19 into 20, to give thanks to the Lord for everything, always in everything. Then, verse 20, we're to submit to one another, sorry, verse 21, out of reverence for Christ.

And this, in part, is then how you live the Christian life. In other words, the person who is filled with the Spirit sings, gives thanks, and submits.

sings, give thanks, and submits. At least in this context, there is, of course, more. And then he goes on to instruct us on how to live for God.

[15 : 27] And therefore, being filled with the Holy Spirit has two parts to it. The first is enabling. If God is going to tell you to do something, he first has to enable you to do it, because if he didn't, it would be exasperation.

To ask a child to do something that they cannot do, maybe you're trying to push them. Now, you would only be trying to push them and convince them that they can do it if, indeed, they can do it.

That's how you build them up. You get them to do something that you know they can do, but they don't know that they can do. And you push them to do it, because when they realize that they can do it, then the confidence is built and they give thanks to God for it.

And so what God does with his spirit is he enables you because he's now going to tell you to do something. And it would be wrong for God to tell you to do something without giving you the ability to be able to do it.

In other words, you have to live the life that God has given you and God will enable you. So what does it mean to be filled with the spirit? So I want us to look at this under two headings.

[16 : 43] Firstly, being under the influence and then the outcome, the results of what it means to be filled with the spirit.

Now, you'll notice in verse 18 that the command is contrasted against a negative influence. And that is do not be drunk with wine. And that's a choice.

The choice is do not be drunk with wine but be filled with the Holy Spirit. In other words, which are you going to bring your life under?

You can bring your life under the influence of drink and then you lose the influence over your life because you're under the influence of alcohol.

That's what it's saying. That as you bring your life under the influence of alcohol, you actually lose every influence over your life because you're drunk. And Paul is encouraging us here that we must not do that.

[17 : 50] Rather, be filled with the Holy Spirit. in other words, choose, as a Christian, as one who has been bought by God, whose influence you are going to live under because you're going to have to live under one.

Either the influence of God or the influence of self. Self being your own choice. It may not be wine, it could be something else that has influence and mastery over you.

So being filled with the Holy Spirit is about being under the influence of God so that we can have greater influence over our lives. Being under the influence of drink only leads us to have less influence over our life.

So submitting to God is how we become filled. And as we submit to God we are then under the influence of God but we don't lose control, we gain further control over how to live.

So those among us who see this filling for instance as receiving more than what you currently have, that's also the wrong image to have.

[19 : 09] Here's why. God the Holy Spirit is a person and you cannot receive part of a person. So being filled with the Spirit does not mean that you have received part of a person and now you need to receive more.

That would be wrong understanding of what Paul is communicating to the church here. To be filled with the Holy Spirit is to be under the full influence of God because you have a shared life with him.

You are not receiving more of a person because you cannot receive more of a person. God did not divide his Holy Spirit out and you got a portion of it and you are now commanded to get more of a person.

It just doesn't make any sense. It's not even possible either. And so the command to be filled with the Holy Spirit is to come under greater influence.

The question is how does this happen? Well you have to think about this in terms of dilution. In fact if you deal with someone who has experienced trauma and has a memory that they cannot shift it will never go away.

[20 : 29] If you have someone who has experienced something as a child that seems to be affecting them for the rest of their life it will never go away. Even as a Christian it will not go away. It cannot be removed.

You cannot undo what has been done. I said this a few Sunday evenings ago that when you commit a sin against your brother and sister in Christ the devil sits back loading his thing with arrows.

You're giving the devil all the arrows to fire at that person in the future. After all the forgivenesses happened, after all the short accounts has been dealt with, that person sat at home having a bad day and all of a sudden these thoughts start coming back to them.

Those thoughts would not have been there if they weren't placed there by you at an earlier time. The devil has a great memory and it brings back to these people the arrows that they get shot with.

If you have a person that is like that where they just cannot let go of the past because the past will not let go of them, the question is how does the Bible help or how does God minister, shepherd, counsel a person in that condition?

[21 : 50] Well it happens through the dilution of self and this is how we are meant to understand the filling of the spirit in terms of influence. Think of those thoughts having influence over you and then think what would happen if those thoughts were then diluted by the filling of the Holy Spirit.

Think of the thoughts that can paralyze a person, the emotions that can paralyze a person, or even the behavior of getting drunk, how that can paralyze a person, and then think how those things get diluted as you are filled with the Holy Spirit.

So imagine it this way, you on your converted day are like a glass full of thick oil and you are placed under a running tap and as the tap, the water flows into the glass, over time there is the dilution of oil and as you are being filled and continually being filled, the dark dye in the glass becomes less and less and less.

It doesn't go away, but it becomes diluted because of the filling of the Holy Spirit. Do you understand this image? This is an important image so that you can understand how change in a person's life happens.

You, when you come to Christ, are a glass full of thick, horrible, gooey dye. And the way that that is driven out of you is that because it's still in your old life that will perish away, your body will go into the ground, but your spirit will go back to God who gave it.

[23 : 42] The Spirit of God dilutes it. And as you are in the place of being filled, or filling, constantly being filled, your life should be submitted to God in the same way a glass full of dye sits under a running tap.

And as the glass of dye sits under the running tap, the dye over time gets diluted. And the longer you are a Christian, Philippians 2, that God works in those, okay, according to his will.

That God is always at work in your life to bring you to the point of completion. God is pouring in over and over and over and over again as you sit under the running tap, and the water, the filling of the Holy Spirit, is constantly diluting and diluting and diluting self.

And as the dilution of self happens, the influence of God increases. And this is what it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit. And this is important, not just for people who get drunk with wine, and not just for people who have trauma or emotions that won't let go of them, or memories that won't let go of them.

This is important for any person in any part of their Christian life. Self wants to be master. God is the master.

[25 : 14] And the way you get less of self and become changed is by making sure that you're in the place where you are being filled by the Holy Spirit.

And one day you will run clean. You will run absolutely clean, and that day will be the day of glorification.

That when Christ appears, you will become like him, it says, because you will see him as he is. That's the day when your glass runs clean.

But until that day, the Spirit of God must continually fill you so that whatever is of you would be diluted up until that day.

So what then are the signs of that happening? Well, the first thing, and the most obvious thing, is that you have increased self-control. Self-control, when you look at the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5, self-control is the only one, at least in my understanding, that cannot be imitated.

[26 : 21] Patience can be imitated, copied, love can be copied, in worldly fashions. The one thing that cannot be copied is self-control. You just can't.

It's impossible to imitate or copy self-control. It is a fruit of the Spirit by which defines the saved person. So the major sign, the defining mark of a person filled with the Holy Spirit, or filled is the wrong word.

Being filled, which is not the same as being full. Okay, being filled is not the same as being full. You're commanded to be filled, you're not commanded to be full.

Because the point is dilution, that you are to be kept being full, that the filling must continue to happen so that dilution can continue to happen. This is why you will never be full.

You're never commanded to be full, but rather you are commanded to be filled. When does it stop? It doesn't stop because the running tap, the water has to dilute. We've all done it.

[27 : 28] We've all had a pot or a pan that we shoved under the sink. Or we've even had the children who says, can I pour myself a glass of orange? And they get the cordial and they put a little bit in the bottom and the tap comes on too quick and it washes all the orange out and all they're left with is a glass of water.

We've all been there. We've all seen how that dilution happens. Well, that's the way it's happening in the Christian life. You are not commanded to be full with the Holy Spirit.

You're commanded to be filled continuously, present continuously. What then are the signs? The first thing is self-control. No longer will you be drunk.

No longer will you be bringing your life under the influence of anything else other than God. Secondly, because of this you will then be able to edify one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.

Now I don't just come to church to sing. Now I recognize I am being used by God to build up the person next to me. Having self-control also enables me to be consciously Christian in my commitments, and here's the important part, without compromise.

[28 : 38] consciously Christian without compromise. And then notice where Paul places the commandment to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

He places it right before submitting to one another. Why? Because you cannot submit to one another unless you're filled with the Holy Spirit. Then where else does he place it?

He places it right before relationships in the home. wives cannot submit to their husbands. Husbands cannot love their wives. Children will not be able to obey their parents.

And interestingly, the children are commanded by God to obey their parents because why? Well, let's go back to the principle. Can God expect a child to obey his parents if they're not able to?

It's important. Really important. Well, in order for any of these relationships to work, they must be enabled and they must be instructed.

[29 : 44] And so notice where Paul places the filling of the Holy Spirit. Marriages work properly. Husbands love their wives properly. Husbands submit to their wives, sorry, wives submit to their husbands properly.

Husbands love their wives properly. Children obey their parents properly. Masters and slaves worked in harmony and you put on the arm of God. Why is all this possible? Because the person is first filled with the Holy Spirit.

None of those relationships could function properly without the instruction. But more importantly, none of the relationships could function properly without the enabling. Because to tell someone to do something they cannot do would be to exasperate them.

God does not exasperate us. He enables us, then he tells us what to do. And so being filled with the Holy Spirit is having humble dependence on God, placing your life in the position where you are going to come under God's influence, knowing therefore able to handle the will of the Lord on a daily basis.

We're never to rely on old experiences and the reason we can cope with new traumas, new challenges, new emergencies, whatever they may be, is because we have been enabled by the Spirit to do so.

[31 : 11] Well, here's the exhortation then as we close. Do you understand that the church would be different if we were being filled with the Holy Spirit? Do you understand that marriages would be different if they were being filled with the Holy Spirit if those in the marriage were being filled?

Do you understand that the relationship between parents and children would be different if they were being filled with the Holy Spirit? So notice where Paul places the command.

It's right before instructions. And why does he do that? Because you must first be enabled in order to be instructed.

God does not exasperate his children. And therefore, we should never expect to see the results of the Spirit if we are not first submitting to God and being filled by the Spirit.

This passage is cause and effect. Do this and this will follow. Be filled and this is what you can expect. This is what happens when you have a church filled or the people in the church who are filled with the Holy Spirit.

[32 : 31] So God has not, if I can put it this way, put the cart before the horse. He has not instructed you without enabling you. Rather, he has already given you his Spirit.

He is now telling you how you are to live your shared life with the Spirit. That is, be filled. Put your life in the same way you would put a dirty cup under a running tap in order that it would run clean.

Place your life under the influence of God the Holy Spirit through submission to everything it says in God's Word. That is how you do it. You submit to God's Word fully without reservation.

That is how you do it in the Christian life. The illustration is cup under a running tap. But how you actually do it is submission to everything that God's Word speaks.

And when that happens, you will begin to run clear, clearer over the time that you are a Christian before you are glorified. So remember this.

[33 : 37] God does not expect anything of you ever, ever, that he has not yet, that he has not first enabled you to do. Amen.

So as we come to the table this morning, we will recognize where everyone is sat.

John will carry out this side and Gerald will do this side. I will give thanks for the bread and the wine on behalf of us all as we come to the table.

Are we singing this song in two parts? Yeah. So we're going to sing the first part of this song prior to communion and then the latter part after we have eaten and drunk the wine.

Thank you. O precious sight, my Savior's stance, dying for me without stretched hands.

[35 : 16] O precious sight, I love to gaze, remembering salvation's day, remembering salvation's day.

life. I love to see you. Though my eyes linger on the scene, may passing time and years not steal, the part with which it impends me, the freshness of this mystery, the freshness of this mystery.

may I never lose the wonder, the wonder of the cross, may I see it like the first time, standing as a sinner lost, and done by mercy, and the speechless, watching wide-eyed at the cost, may I never lose the wonder, the wonder of the cross.

Well, as we come to the table this morning, we are reminded with familiar words, words that were handed down and therefore received, and because they were received, they can now be delivered to us.

But as we come to the table this morning, we recognize that we do so as people who have been clearly forgiven in the blood of Christ, and we recognize that our forgiveness is guaranteed because we have been sealed with God the Holy Spirit.

[37 : 17] with this in mind, these are the words that we come to this morning as we come to the table. For I receive from the Lord what I also deliver to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, this is my body which is for you, do this in remembrance of me.

In the same way also he took the cup after supper saying, this cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me.

For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Whoever therefore eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord.

Let a person examine himself and let him so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself.

Let's give thanks to God for what we have received. Gracious Father God, we recognize that you have given us bread and wine, but we recognize that what you have given us in the bread and wine is not just a memory but your presence.

[38 : 43] We recognize, Father God, that as we eat, we remember that as we drink, we remember that as we eat and drink, we proclaim to you, to the world, Christ's death and his return.

We thank you, Father God, that as we will eat and drink this morning, we do so to the spiritual benefit of ourselves, for you have given us spiritual food that will enable us, build us up, and make us strong.

we recognize, Father God, that you are present as we take this bread and drink this cup. And so, Father God, we thank you for the bread that you have given us, and we thank you for the cup that you have given us, reminding us and instructing us.

We recognize, Father God, that not only are we blessed people, but we are being blessed as we participate in this table this morning. So, Father God, as we take hold of the bread, may we recognize that it is not like any other meal that we could have, and that when we take hold of the cup, that that again is not like any other part of the meal that we could have, that this is special, that this is particular, that this is where we recognize that your presence is with us, and you are present in this act, this moment.

So, Father God, now as we eat and drink the bread, may we do so in full knowledge of what you have done for us, in Christ Jesus. Amen. Well, may you know the blessing of God, not only today, but all days, and may you live in such a way that you are constantly being filled with the Holy Spirit.

[40 : 23] May God be with you both now and forevermore, in Jesus' name, Amen.