

Walk Worthy (pt. 4): Walk By the Spirit of Wisdom
Ephesians 5:15–21 | 12.10.2017 | More Than We Can Imagine

What is a Spirit-Filled Church?

Is that a church . . . that speaks about the Holy Spirit?

Or . . . that practices and promotes the miraculous gifts?

Is it a feeling you get when you go that church ??

Or is it . . . something else?

If we agree . . . that a church *should* be filled with the Holy Spirit . . . what does that mean?

How can we make sure *our* church is . . . a Spirit-Filled Church?

And not one that goes through the motions without the Spirit?

Those are questions . . . we should be asking . . . and thankfully God's word is not silent.

This morning . . . as we come to Ephesians . . . we find the only passage in Scripture which talks about being filled with the Holy Spirit . . .

And for reasons in the text . . . and reasons today . . . we need to see what this means.

But . . . it may help to widen our lens and see . . . how Paul talks about Holy Spirit thru-out Eph.

So let's take a quick tour through Ephesians . . . to set up what Paul is talking about here:

First, in **Ephesians 1:13** . . . the Spirit is the one who seals us in Christ. This means that the Spirit is the One who keeps us and secures our eternal inheritance.

Likewise, in both of Paul's prayers . . . Paul asks God for the Holy Spirit to come and strengthen us

In **Ephesians 1:16–18** . . . Paul says

I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers,¹⁷ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him,¹⁸ having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints.

The importance of this verse is the way that Paul identifies the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of wisdom and revelation . . . he is the One who grants understanding and insight into the plans and purposes of God.

This identification goes back to **Isaiah 11**, which we read earlier, and thus we learn . . . the HS is less a power producing goose bumps . . . more a person who leads God's people to know him.

We see this again in **Ephesians 3:16** . . . where Paul prays for the Spirit to strengthen our inner being that we might know the love of God.

In between Paul's two prayers . . . in Ephesians 2 . . . Paul speaks of how the church as God's living temple is indwelt by the Spirit.

So the Spirit seals us . . . he instructs us . . . and he builds up the people of God into a dwelling place for the Lord.

We see this in Ephesians 2:19 . . . where the Spirit gives us access to the Father . . . 2:22 and 4:3 where the Spirit builds God's dwelling place . . . and unifies the body of Christ.

And finally . . . it is the same Spirit who in Ephesians 4:30 is grieved when members of Christ body chafe against one another with harsh words.

And the same Spirit who in Ephesians 6:19 empowers us to pray for the work of the gospel.

All this to say . . . there's a lot to learn about the Spirit in this book . . .

And now . . . we have Paul's command be filled with the Spirit in the center of this last section that begins with verses about wisdom and that conclude with verses about worship.

So . . . there's a lot going on here . . . but I believe the center of these verses is found in v. 18.

And that the other verses bottleneck into verse 18.

That is to say . . .

The commands related to wisdom (vv. 15–17) are only possible because of the Holy Spirit.

And the practices of worship (in vv. 19–21) flow out of a church that is filled with the Spirit.

And I say church . . . not just individual because this section is given to body of Christ.

And the command – be filled is given to all of us together . . . not soloists seeking to please God.

Thus . . . the church walks in wisdom as it is filled by the Spirit . . .

And the church will grow in worship of the Lord when it is filled by the Spirit.

So let's see what it means to be filled by the Spirit . . .

And to do that, I want us to consider v. 18 first, then verses 15–17, and then vv. 19–21.

The Spirit-Filled Church is Filled with the Spirit of Christ.

Now this may seem obvious . . . but believe me it's not.

Many churches pride themselves on being Spirit-Filled, but miss what the Spirit does.

What does the Spirit do – he speaks about Christ.

If you look at everything Paul says about the Spirit . . . it always comes back to Christ . . . and this is because . . . the Spirit was sent by the Father and the Son . . . to bear witness about Christ.

Just like Jesus said . . . Listen to Christ's words on the night before his crucifixion:

He says in John 15:25: **But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.**

This is massive . . . the Spirit is not Spirit-centered. He is Christ centered. He does not witness about himself, he bears witness about Christ.

Therefore, churches who are filled by the Spirit will also bear witness about Christ, as John 15:26 says: **And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning.**

So this is what Jesus says about the Spirit . . . and he actually says it more than once:

In 16:13–14, Jesus says, **When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.** ¹⁴ **He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.**

So . . . the Spirit comes to glorify the Son . . . and to share with Christ's followers all about Jesus.

Consequently . . . a Spirit-filled church is not filled with new revelations . . . it is filled with the Word of God . . . which speaks about Christ as the mediator between God and man . . .

So . . . you can tell if a church is Spirit-filled by whether or not they talk about Christ or not.

If Christ is ignored . . . or over-shadowed by the works of the Spirit . . . something is amiss.

By contrast . . . a Spirit-filled church will be filled with Christ and his word . . .

Which is exactly what we find in Ephesians 5:15–21 . . .

Notice the focus on Jesus in these verses . . .

v. 14 – Paul speaks of Christ’s light shining on those who have been raised from the dead

This feeds into the instruction in v. 15 . . . **to look carefully.**

You can’t look carefully without Christ’s light, but with Christ’s light you can walk in wisdom.

v. 17 . . . also speaks of Christ. The will of the Lord here is not a generic reference to God, but as v. 20 indicates . . . it is the title of the risen Christ.

v. 19 . . . Paul again says we are to sing praise to the Lord.

v. 20 . . . we give thanks to the Father through the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ

v. 21 . . . says we are to submit to one another out reverence to Christ.

So . . . in almost every verse, Christ mentioned.

Thus . . . like the old Hair Club for Men advertisement . . .

Paul is not only the president of the Jesus is the Center of Scripture society . . . he is also it’s leading example.

As a slave to Christ . . . he is zealous to extol Christ in all he says and does.

And he calls for the church to do the same . . .

In fact . . . I think the Christ-centeredness of the church also comes out in the fact that Paul calls the church to be filled by the Spirit . . . not to be filled with the Spirit.

Let's me try to explain . . .

Be filled with the Spirit is a common translation . . . but it makes it sound like the Spirit is liquid or gas that fills us up . . . and that we are Dixie Cups that need constant refilling.

Well . . . there is a sense in which we need constant refilling . . . but it's not so much the Spirit that gets dumped into our souls . . . as much as the Spirit fills us with the Word of Christ.

Here's what I mean . . . when Paul says be filled by the Spirit, he contrasts it to . . .

Do not get drunk with wine, which leads to debauchery,

In English, it looks like "with wine" and "with the Spirit" are two prepositional phrases set in contrast.

Drunks are filled up with alcohol . . . Churches are filled with the Spirit.

But in actuality . . . only "with the Holy Spirit" is a prepositional phrase.

And the word translated "with" could be translated "in" or "by" or a host of other prepositions.

So how do we decide?

My answer goes back to what we have seen about the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is not a force or a gas that enters a pious person.

The Holy Spirit is person who speaks and bears witness to Christ and the Father.

Thus When the Spirit works on a person . . . he communicates truth to them. = Spirit of Truth.

When a person is filled by the Spirit . . . it will become evident thru the words filling their heart.

In context . . . Paul says . . . Be filled by the Spirit . . . addressing one another . . . the word here is *laleo* . . . the word for speaking.

Thus . . . like the believers on the day of Pentecost . . . when they were filled by the Spirit, they spoke the words which glorified Christ.

Indeed . . . this is the Spirit's work . . . he fills the believer with WORDS that glorify God.

Therefore, based on all these thing . . . I think it is better to read verse 18 as saying . . . be filled BY the Holy Spirit . . . such that you might be filled WITH WORDS THAT EXTOL CHRIST . . .

Such filling . . . leads you to walk in wisdom (v. 15–17) and to worship God and do good works (v. 19–21)

Now can we test this? I think so . . . Colossians 3:16 gives us the final piece in this puzzle . . .

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

Why labor this point?

Because . . . Often believers talk about being filled with the Spirit in weird, mystical ways.

And when they seek the Spirit without regard to the Scripture . . . they swerve towards superstition and mysticism . . . rather than God's living and active Word.

Think of this way . . .

If Paul has prayed for the church to be filled with the Spirit . . . so that we might have power to walk in the ways of Christ.

But . . . then we wait for the Lord to zap us with power from on high . . . rather than the power of the gospel in here . . . then we will miss the thing we are praying for!

It's like owning a high-powered diesel truck that you drive like a solar powered SUV.

If you pray for God to fill you with his Spirit . . . and then you wait for the rays of God's sun to beam down into our souls . . . you will run out of gas.

You are not meant to run on solar power . . . the power of the Spirit comes when you feed on the Word of God . . . and drink deeply of all that the Spirit has for you here!

As Paul says in Colossians . . . let the Word of God dwell richly within you.

Be filled with the Word of God . . . BY the Spirit . . .

And when you are filled with the Word BY the Spirit . . . you will have power to walk in wisdom . . . and our church will overflow in worship.

So . . . this is why I labor this point . . .

We can't walk in wisdom . . .

We can't worship with zeal. . .

Without the Holy Spirit . . . AND the word of God . . . which the Spirit gives us.

So . . . the first evidence of a Spirit-Filled Church . . . is a people consumed with the word of Christ . . .

. . . because the Spirit of Christ has strengthened their inner being . . . and filled them with God's Word.

A Spirit Filled Church Walks in the Lord's Wisdom

We see this from verses 15–17.

First, Paul begins in v. 15 calling us to look carefully how we walk.

Believers who've been made new in Christ and alive to his light, no longer live haphazardly.

Now, we live with purpose and care.

It's the difference between being single teen living at home and married man with children.

When a young man lives at home without obligations of wife and children . . . he may care very little about his appearance, the cleanliness of his room, etc.

But when career, marriage, and children come . . . the weight of responsibility also comes.

So it is with the children of God . . . as we grow up in Christ, we see the need to take care of our walk . . . and not to live carelessly.

Inner urgency to care about how we walk . . . is the first step towards wisdom.

But second . . . we also need to know what wisdom is.

Paul says, walk as wise, not as unwise. But what is wise?

Well, you could go to the Proverbs and find a whole host of instruction about wisdom.

But if we remain in our book, we also learn somethings about wisdom.

What do we learn?

Namely . . . that Christ is the wisdom of God – Ephesians 1:7–8 says, **“In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, ⁸ which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight.**

Because God's wisdom is centered on Christ and the salvation that comes in him . . . our wisdom must also be coordinated with Christ.

Similarly, Paul later says that the church is the wisdom of God in Ephesians 3:10.

So this tells me . . . walking wisely is living life with Christ and his bride at the center.

Which is then developed in vv. 16 and 17.

In verses 16 and 17 . . . we find two statements that clarify what it means to walk in wisdom.

First . . . he says . . . **making the best use of time, for the days are evil.**

Second . . . **do not be foolish, but understand [or comprehend] the will of the Lord.**

Let's look at each of these . . .

First . . . I bet most in this room have done a far bit of reading or thinking about productivity.

I mean . . . we live in D.C. Metro area . . . where hour commutes are normal.

Thus . . . I am sure you have given many thoughts to redeeming the commute.

I am always encouraged when I hear of Christians using the train ride to study the Bible . . . or to rest on the way home so that they can better minister to their family.

Such use of time is good . . . and needed. With busy lives . . . if you are not creating time to read the Bible and serve the Lord . . . your precious hours will be stolen and consumed by others.

But this verse is talking about something more than time management . . .

The qualification listed here – **because the days are evil** – implies something else . . . **namely, that we live in an evil age filled with spiritual opposition.**

Therefore, I think the instruction here . . . is more than just being a good multi-tasker . . .

Rather, it is a command to use the hours of your life as a servant of the Lord, to invest in the age to come . . . and not just in this evil age.

How are you using your life . . . for the purposes of Christ?

This was a question that haunted C.T. Studd. Studd was a famous cricketer in the 19th Century.

But during his professional career . . . he came to faith in Christ . . . thus altering his perspective. No longer . . . did winning games matter to him . . . it was winning souls.

Famously, he said: **Only one life 'twill soon be past. Only what's done for X will last.**

Now . . . the Lord may not call you to be a FT evangelist . . . but walking wisely does mean investing your life in what is eternal . . . exchanging the wealth of this world for treasures in heaven.

It means orienting your life towards the gospel and towards Christ's church . . . using your life for his purposes . . . and not just your own.

And collectively . . . when a church lives like that . . . it displays God's wisdom to the world.

Then second . . . Paul speaks of understanding the will of the Lord.

Which prompts the natural question: **What is the Lord's Will?**

Again . . . we can answer that question by looking at how God's will is described in Ephesians.

First, in Ephesians 1:5 and 11 . . . Paul uses it to describe the eternal plans of God.

Second, in Ephesians 6:7 . . . Paul urges bondservants to obey their masters as unto the Lord, **doing the will of the Lord.**

In the first two uses, it seems to relate to God's divine decrees . . . something we know exists, . . . but something we cannot know unless God tells us.

By contrast . . . doing God's will is possible . . . because in the Scripture, God has revealed his will – what he expects of us.

When we put these concepts together . . .

It seems best to understand the command to discern his will (5:17) as a call to study his Word . . . to gain wisdom into what pleases him.

This is what it means to walk wisely . . . we do not seek to discern God's hidden will. Rather, as Paul said earlier in chapter 5:10 – **we try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.**

We know what pleases God . . . by what his Word says . . . and thus we seek to live out this revealed will . . . so that we will not miss out the good purposes of his hidden will.

How does this work out in practice? Listen in on this conversation from the College cafeteria . . .

Freshman girl: "You know I really like Johnny. We've been dating for a while and we are starting to talk about marriage. But I'm not sure he's the one." . . .

Senior girl: The One? . . .

FG: You know . . . the One God has ordained for me? I mean, marriage is so important, I don't want to miss his special someone. I want to be in the center of his will . . . and to know Johnny's the one.

Have you ever had a conversation about that . . . about marriage, a job, a house, a dog?

Let me make it really clear . . . there's only ONE '**THE ONE**' . . . Every other decision . . . is a matter of wisdom from His word.

To steal the subtitle from [Kevin DeYoung's helpful book on this subject](#): We make decisions based on biblical wisdom . . . not dreams, visions, impressions, open doors, random Bible verses, casting lots, liver shivers, or writing in the sky

To look for these other things . . . is to walk in superstition . . . not wisdom.

And it's wisdom from the Bible . . . that the Spirit gives . . . so we can walk with the Lord.

Even more . . . it's the church who helps us understand the Bible and how to apply it to life.

Thus . . . the Spirit filled church walks in wisdom . . . as they commit themselves to the Bible.

At the same time . . . the Spirit does more than give us wisdom . . . he also leads us to worship.

A Spirit-Filled Church Abounds in Worship

In verses 19–21 . . . we find four participles that express the way in which the Spirit leads us to worship.

That is to say . . . we are not filled by the Spirit if we do these things.

Rather . . . we will do these things . . . when the Spirit fills us with the gracious words of Christ.

But importantly . . . the Spirit-filled church is a worshipping church . . . and in these three verses we learn at least four important lessons about worship.

And there are at least 4 truths

1. Worship in the body of Christ should be diverse.

Now I say this because when Paul says “addressing one another with Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs,” it seems that he is picking up a word from the Hebrew tradition and the Greek tradition.

In other words, Psalms are a word well-known to be associated with Hebrew Bible. In Scripture we have 150 Psalms.

The word hymns is more likely derived from the surrounding culture, in which you would find hymns by various Greek poets (Arnold 533).

Thus, it seems to be saying that any song inspired by the Spirit to bring praise to Christ, whether Jewish in origin or Gentile in origin should be

How wonderfully does this instruct us today.

Not only should we seek to find ways to bring generations together, singing older hymns and newer hymns and choruses, . . . but we should also be open to various styles of music that may represent various races or cultures in our church.

Indeed, we should strive to have content that glorifies God . . . but God's glory is also magnified when various styles are employed . . .

Thus . . . we learn that music can and should be multi-ethnic.

2. Worship centers on Jesus Christ and builds up the body.

Again . . . notice how prominent the name of the Lord is.

X is the focus of our worship – his life, death, resurrection should be the content of our praise.

ATST . . . our praise to him should build one another up.

Verse 19 says we are to address our songs to one another.

Thus . . . when we sing . . . it's appropriate to close your eyes and sing to Jesus.

It's also appropriate to look around and sing to one another of the hope we have in Christ.

Worship centers on X . . . and builds up the body as we remind one another of gospel truths.

3. Worship is filled with thanksgiving.

The basic formula for worship is thanksgiving to God for what he has done in Christ.

Here verse 20 says that in everything we are to give thanks to God.

Everything includes the good times . . . when our hearts burst with thanksgiving.

And 'everything' includes the horrid times . . . when thanksgiving is a sacrifice.

But in all times . . . thanksgiving is appropriate . . . because our praise is not dependent on immediate circumstances.

Thanksgiving comes from our hope in the gospel . . . and thus remember who God is and what he has done . . . becomes the foundation of our thanksgiving . . .

In this way . . . trials actually prove and purify our worship.

4. Worship in turn empowers our service.

It's important to see how the last participle leads into the next section . . .

Where the posture of our heart is to submit to one another, meaning we are to not assert our rights against one another.

Rather . . . with Christlikeness . . . we are to consider others more important than ourselves . . . and take on the mantle of Christ . . . who though God in the flesh, did not strive to make himself great.

This is ultimately what displays the fullness of the Spirit in a church – a humble, loving people who are laying down their lives . . . to serve others.

And they can do that because of the Spirit of Christ at work in them . . .