

## Raised to Life – The Spirit-Filled Life

6/4/17 – Pastor Randy

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*In Eph. 5:15-20*

*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.*

In this passage Paul introduces another “change of clothes” (change of behavior) for the Christian. “Do not get drunk”. Instead, “be filled with the Spirit.” I want to point out four important truths from these commands.

1. The reason for the negative command. Why didn't Paul contrast malicious speech, or stealing, or sexual immorality with being filled with the Spirit? Why is drunkenness the antithesis of being filled with God's Spirit? The context provides the explanation through a series of contrasts in verses 15-18.

DRUNK/FULL OF THE SPIRIT

Unwise/ Wise

Foolishness / Understanding

Debauchery (Wild & Wasteful)/Redeeming the time.

Along with the explosion of technology in our day, has come the proliferation of various means by which man can intoxicate himself. We use the term substance abuse to cover the variety of illicit drugs that people have become addicted to. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that we live in a culture of addiction.

As with the issue of sexual immorality, there are many voices that argue that intoxication is a personal issue which can become a health issue, but it is not

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really a moral issue. We try and separate intoxication from its consequences. Getting drunk is your business, just don't drive in that condition. That's like saying, "Go ahead and get drunk, just don't do anything stupid!" Too late! Paul tells us it is a moral issue because it results in either wasteful, wicked, or foolish behavior. God is not a kill-joy! He is not robbing us from our fun. Actually, God has ordained festivals or parties. Parties and celebrations are a significant part of OT and NT culture. Sobriety and fun are not mutually exclusive! God's commands allow for celebration and joy, while protecting us from corruption and harm.

About a year and a half ago The Washington Post ran an article titled: *Americans are Drinking Themselves to Death at Record Rates*. The article stated: "Alcohol is killing Americans at a rate not seen in at least 35 years, according to new federal data. Last year, more than 30,700 Americans died from alcohol-induced causes, including alcohol poisoning and cirrhosis, which is primarily caused by alcohol use. In 2014, there were 9.6 deaths from these alcohol-induced causes per 100,000 people, an increase of 37 percent since 2002." (*Washingtonpost.com Dec 22, 2015*)

An article at the HuffingtonPost.com provided the following statistics: ("*15 Shocking Alcohol Statistics for Alcohol Awareness Month*" - 6/8/2015)

1. 88,000 deaths are annually attributed to excessive alcohol use.
2. Every day, almost 30 people in the United States die in motor vehicle crashes that involve an alcohol-impaired driver. This amounts to one death every 51 minutes.
3. Of the 3.9 million Americans who received treatment for a substance abuse problem in 2005, 2.5 million of them were treated for alcohol use.
4. Because of the astounding 80,000 deaths that are related to alcohol abuse every year, alcohol abuse is the third highest cause of death in the U.S.
5. 696,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 are assaulted by another student who has been drinking.

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6. Excessive alcohol consumption cost the United States \$223.5 billion in 2006.
7. Teen alcohol use kills 4,700 people each year – that’s more than all illegal drugs combined.
8. 5.3 million adults -- 36 percent of those under correctional supervision at the time -- were drinking at the time of their conviction offense.

I don’t believe it is a mere coincidence that this section of Ephesians concludes with the instruction to put off drunkenness. The other attitudes and behaviors that we are called to put off, or put away – angry shouting, malicious talk, lying, cheating, stealing, sexually immoral behavior; these are all exacerbated when people are intoxicated. Substance abuse influences people to say things they would not normally say and do things they would not normally do. It influences people to act foolishly and dangerously.

2. The command to “be filled with the Spirit” is the key to our new walk. This command is the decisive solution to carrying out all the commands that preceded it. Verse 15 begins with the phrase, “Look carefully then how you walk.” This “walk” talk began in chapter two. Paul described the Christian as one who was dead in sin but now has been raised and made alive with Christ. He followed that up by writing some of the most famous words in the NT. “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God, not the result of works, so that no one should boast.” Having clearly described the means of salvation – by grace, through faith in Jesus – and the essence of salvation – spiritually dead people raised to new life – Paul went on to write about our walk.

*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should **walk in them**. Eph. 2:9,10*

*I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to **walk in a manner worthy** of the calling to which you have been called, Eph. 4:1*

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you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. Eph. 4:17

And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. Eph. 5:1

for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light. Eph. 5:8

Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, Eph. 5:15

So Paul has been instructing us about putting off speech which tears people down and instead speak words that build people up. We have heard the instruction to put off lying, stealing and cheating and to put on honesty and generosity. We have heard the command to put off sexually immoral conduct and conversation and to walk clothed in pure love rather than lust. Now we have been instructed to put off using anything that would cause intoxication and impair our judgment so that our minds and bodies will be under the influence and control of the Holy Spirit.

It is fitting that Paul concludes this whole section on the ethical and moral conduct of the Christian with this statement: "Be filled with the Spirit". All of these new habits and patterns of thought and conduct that we are called to "put on" are only possible through the Spirit's influence and enablement. I completely agree with Gordon Fee when he wrote, "For Paul the Spirit, as an experienced and living reality, was the absolutely crucial matter for Christian life, from beginning to end!" (God's Empowering Presence, pg. 1)

3. Being filled, or clothed, with the Holy Spirit is a continual daily action. Look at the wording in Luke 24:49 related to the experience of being filled with the Spirit.

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“And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.” (ESV)

The Greek word translated by the English, “clothed” in Luke 24:49 is the same word Paul used in Eph. 4:24 when he wrote, “put on the new self”. The Holy Spirit is the source of our new clothing for our new walk.

The tense of the verb in the negative command, “Do not get drunk with wine” communicates the finality of a previous regular practice: “Never get drunk.” The tense of the verb in the positive command “be filled with the Spirit” communicates the need to begin a new ongoing action. Always be filled. Keep being filled. Notice it is a command! That means you and I have some responsibility over whether or not we are full of the Spirit. This does not mean we fill ourselves. It is a gift of God, but a gift that needs to be received but also maintained and cultivated. The Spirit is a person! His influence in you is through His relationship with you. That relationship must be cultivated!

4. The Spirit produces real joy, meaningful joy!

Look again at Eph. 5:19-21

*“...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.”*

Paul already gave us a part of the picture of what a Spirit-filled life looks like. That individual will act wisely and use his/her time for constructive and productive ends. Now Paul adds to that by creating a picture of a Spirit-filled gathering. It will be a joy-filled gathering, marked by joyful singing. They weren't singing the blues. I don't know if you realize this, but joy is a distinguishing mark of NT Christianity. It is all over the NT. Jesus repeatedly spoke of his desire to fill His disciples with joy. One of the amazing things about the NT is the picture it gives us of people who, while often suffering

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from the experience of poverty and persecution, are still full of joy. In Acts 13, right after Paul and Barnabas were literally chased out of the city we are told that they were “full of joy and the Holy Spirit.” Peter wrote his first letter to a community of Christians who were distressed by many trials but were still found rejoicing with an inexpressible joy!

The fruit of the Spirit, the love joy and peace which the Spirit produces in us, eliminates the need to self-medicate with chemical substances. People turn to alcohol and other substances in order to escape from reality. The Spirit enables us to cope with loss, grief, pain, and pressure, not by providing an escape from the reality of our circumstances, but by directing our attention to the broader context of those circumstances. If you have some circumstances today that are troubling you, you must not lose sight of the larger, overarching, enduring, circumstances of your life. We need to see the big picture. My wife lost her earthly father last year, but she still has the presence of God her Father. The Spirit has been sent into her heart, enabling her to sense the presence of her heavenly Father causing her to cry, “Daddy, you are with me.” Our loss, REAL AS IT IS, is overshadowed by the reality of what we have gained and can never lose in Christ.

When Christian gatherings are joyful gatherings because of three components that form the basis of real, lasting joy. Their joy came from:

1. Gratitude for what Christ has done. The thankful are the joyful
2. God’s Presence. We gather in God’s presence experiencing His joy! Worship Jesus! Pray! Commune with the Holy Spirit! Find joy in His presence.
3. Serving. In a Spirit-filled community you find people submitting themselves to one another which is another way of expressing that they are serving one another. Are you in need of some joy in your life? Find someone to serve!

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