

LIVE WISELY, BE SPIRITUAL!

Ephesians 5.17-20: Walking wisely means living a Spirit-filled life

Theme: Live wisely by living spiritually—filled with (controlled by) the Spirit of God, not anything else.

(Eph 5.17) Paul uses another "connecting word" to start us out this morning: "Wherefore..."

- Because the days in which we live are evil (v16b), we should walk circumspectly (v15; watchful, vigilant), and that means we need to vigilantly redeem the precious little time we have (v16a; or we'll find the evil of our days carrying us away!).
- "Wherefore...": (v17-18) We need to live wisely and that means living spiritually—filled with (controlled by) the Spirit, not anything else.

We are going to look at our passage of study this morning in two parts:

1. (v17) To be spiritual, we need to be wise and understand the will of God.
2. (v18) To be spiritual, we need to be "filled" and do the will of God.
 - (v19-20) And as we do the will of God, we can expect some very real, visible results in several areas of our lives.

I. (v17) To be spiritual, we need to be wise and understand the will of God.

A. Paul uses the same structure as before to teach us how to be spiritual: Put off and put on!

1. (Eph 4.22-24) Paul's "biblical counseling" model: Put off the old man (stop doing wrong!) and put on the new man (start obeying Scripture, doing what's right, and acting like Christ!).
 - a) (Eph 5.17) Paul says: "be ye not... but..." (put off, put on!).
 - b) (Eph 5.18) Paul says, "be not... but be..." (put off, put on!).
2. And remember the key to make these changes real and lasting: (Eph 4.23) Renew your mind through the Scripture!

B. First the Negative: (v17a) Don't be unwise!

1. (Mat 7.24-27) To be unwise (the opposite of wise) is to be a fool.
 - a) (v24) The wise person will hear and do the words of God.
 - b) (v26) The unwise fool will hear the words of God, but will not obey them. He has some knowledge of what God wants, but he chooses not to do it—not to submit, not to obey.
2. The exhortation, therefore, in Ephesians 5.17 ("be ye not unwise") is two-fold:
 - a) First, in order to not be unwise (in order to be wise) we need to hear God's Word—we need to grow in our knowledge of Scripture (if you don't know it, how can you obey it?).
 - b) Second, in order to not be unwise (in order to be wise) we need need to do God's Word—we need to obey what Scripture says.
 - (1) And that brings us to the "positive" element of Paul's exhortation in Ephesians 5.17...
 - (2) We need to understand: Before we can do the will of God, we need to understand the Word of God, because that is where we find the will of God...

C. Now the Positive: (v17) Understand God's will!

1. To avoid be unwise fools—to actually be spiritual—we need understanding.
2. (1Cor 2.9-14, esp. vv12-14) Understanding the things of God is not natural; we need help and that mean's we need God's Spirit.

3. Wisdom (being wise—living according to God's will) in the Bible is result of three things:
 - a) Knowledge: You need to know God's will, and His will is found in Scripture. Wisdom will begin with a knowledge of the Bible.
 - b) Understanding: Intellectual information (knowledge alone) is not enough to make us wise.
 - (1) There are a lot of smart people that have a lot of information about the Bible.
 - (2) (1Cor 2.12-14) But if the Holy Spirit does not give them understanding, they'll never "get it"—they'll never understand what that Bible knowledge has to do with them personally and their lives practically.
 - (3) (Eph 1.17-18) That is why Paul prays for believers, that God would enlighten the eyes of our understanding.
 - This is a work of the Holy Spirit, therefore this is where true spirituality starts.
 - (4) But even knowledge and understanding are not enough to result in wisdom...
 - c) Choice: When you *know what* to do and when you *understand how* to do it...
 - (1) (Col 1.9-10) Wisdom comes when you *do* it.
 - (2) (Jam 3.13) Wisdom is living according to the Scripture you know and understand.
 - (3) Wisdom is *hearing* the Word of God (learning it, understanding it), and then *doing* it. To do otherwise is to be a fool—it is to be unwise.
 - *Doing* the will of God is what we see more in Ephesians 5.18, so let's review first...

D. [Review: v17] To be spiritual, we need to be wise and that means...

1. We need to always be growing in our *knowledge* of the Bible.
2. We need to always cultivate a humble, teachable attitude toward the Bible because our *understanding* of Scripture comes from the Spirit of God (and He will resist the proud).
3. And then we need to *live wisely* (not as unwise fools) by submitting and obeying what we know and understand of the Bible.
 - a) To hear God's Word and then not obey it (not do it) is to be unwise—it is to be a fool.
 - b) Remember:
 - (1) (v16) The days in which we live are evil and they will exert a continuous influence on us to pull us away from following God.
 - (2) (v17) "Wherefore..." we need to understand God's will in God's Word so that we can *do it*.
 - c) And doing the will of God is the focus of what Paul says in the following verse...

II. (v18-20) To be spiritual we need to be "filled" and do the will of God.

- Paul again addresses the negative first (what we need to "put off") and then he exhorts us to the positive aspect (of what to "put on").

A. First the Negative: (v18a) Be not drunk...

1. The contrast ("be not... but be...") helps us understand Paul's main point in the passage:
 - a) Be not drunk: Do not allow some "excess" in your life to control you.
 - The general principle here is this: (1Cor 6.12) We should not allow ourselves to be brought under the control of anything.
 - b) Rather, we should be filled with (controlled by) the Spirit of God. And that's Paul's point here.
 - c) However, in addition to Paul's "main point," this verse speaks directly to an issue that always needed clarifying in the church...

2. Alcohol: Biblical prohibitions, permissions, precepts, principals, patterns, and passages...
- a) (Eph 5.18) **Prohibition**: God, in Scripture, clearly prohibits drunkenness (the excessive use of alcohol—getting drunk—is expressly forbidden; it is sin).
 - b) (Deut 14.26) **Permission**: God, in Scripture, clearly permits the use of alcoholic beverages.
 - (1) (v22) Context: The passage gives the details of a part of the law concerning the tithe the Jews were required to pay to support and sustain their priests (it was a tax paid in food).
 - (2) (v23) Celebration: The time they paid their tithe was a time of celebration—they celebrated God's provision (remember Him in order to fear Him: God give the increase, or not!).
 - (3) (v24-25) Provision for travel: In the law about the tithe, God gave the Israelites a provision for those who could not feasibly transport the tithe of their increase because they lived too far away (from Jerusalem). He could sell the tithe and give the money to the priests.
 - (4) (v26) Celebration: With his money, the Israelite traveling to Jerusalem was expected to participate in the celebration. And God gave him permission to buy and drink alcohol.
 - (Ps 104.14-15) The Bible says wine "maketh glad the heart of man."
 - c) **Passages with Principles & Patterns**: Between these two extremes (the prohibition against drunkenness and the permission to drink alcohol), the Bible gives us a number passage that contain principles and patterns we should take into consideration...
 - (1) (Prov 20.1) Drinking alcohol is deceptive: It may start out innocent enough, but it will always have consequences.
 - (2) (Prov 23.29-35) Getting drunk is foolish—it's just plain stupid (lack of good sense).
 - (3) (Prov 31.4-5) Alcohol leads to a lack of discernment and a perversion of one's judgment, and God clearly warns those in leadership to not drink alcohol for just this reason.
 - (4) (Isa 5.11-14) Alcohol leads to suffering, even the suffering of hell (and notice in v12 how "parties" are mentioned as having music and alcohol; there is nothing new under the sun).
 - (5) (Isa 28.7-8) There is nothing clean in getting drunk and God says alcohol will lead to committing errors (especially among the leadership of His people).
 - (6) (Hab 2.15) Drinking and drunkenness often go hand-in-hand with sexual immorality.
 - (7) (Rom 14.21) Drinking alcohol will almost always result in offending a brother in Christ.
 - (8) (1Cor 5.11) God commands us to separate from anyone who calls themselves a "brother" (a Christian) and who is (or has the reputation of being) a drunkard.
 - (9) (1Cor 6.9-10) The excessive use of alcohol (drunkenness) will be severely judged by God.
 - (10) (1Pet 4.3-4) A true conversion to Christ will be a conversion from (among other things) the excessive use of alcohol.
 - d) **Pastors**: God gives some specific guidelines for pastors, elders, and leaders in the church with regard to the consumption of alcoholic beverages.
 - (1) (1Tim 3.3) The pastor/elder should not be "given" to wine (alcohol).
 - (a) This requirement goes beyond just saying he ought to be a drunkard.
 - (b) This requirement states, in essence, that to qualify for the office of pastor, a man must not have the reputation of being a drinker.
 - (2) Why is that?
 - (a) (Prov 31.4-5) Because alcohol will inevitably lead to a lack of discernment and perversion of judgment.
 - (b) (Rom 14.21) Because what a pastor allows in moderation, the brethren will do in excess (and the same can be said for fathers and sons: what a father allows in moderation, his children will take to excess).

(3) (1Tim 5.23) Pastor Timothy's use of wine reinforces this qualification.

(a) Paul had to *tell* (command) Timothy to drink a *little* wine.

i) Obvious implication: Timothy was not even permitting himself to drink even a *little* wine; he was avoiding it altogether!

ii) And he was avoiding wine even when the water he drank instead of the wine was making him sick! He took 1Timothy 3.3 pretty seriously.

(b) Paul prescribed the wine because of the water (it wasn't social drinking).

i) There are still many places in this world where you simply cannot drink the water because of bacteria and other contaminants that will make you sick.

ii) Timothy was getting sick because of the water, so Paul said to drink wine instead.

(c) The wine could have served one of two purposes:

i) It may have been unfermented wine (grape juice). If it was, then Paul was prescribing the wine (grape juice) to simply give Timothy a break from the water.

ii) It may have been fermented wine. If it was, then the wine would have served as an antiseptic against the bacteria in the water that was making Timothy sick. (The antiseptic benefit of wine is seen in the parable of the "good" Samaritan when, in Luke 10.34, he used wine to clean the beaten man's wounds.)

(d) Conclusion: Timothy's use of wine is a clear exception to the rule because Timothy was abstaining from alcohol, or even the appearance of such (even to his physical detriment).

e) **Predicament:** (1Thes 5.22) Can you, therefore, drink alcohol with a clear conscience before God?

f) **Personal Choice:** (1Cor 10.23-33) Alcohol is not a necessity of life, but it is given by God in His provision for us on this earth. Therefore He expects us to use it responsibly.

(1) Getting drunk is prohibited, but drinking alcohol is permitted.

(2) The Bible gives numerous principles and patterns related to alcohol, so we can be well informed about it.

(3) But the final decision is yours. And we are not to judge or condemn those who would drink alcohol (without getting drunk), nor are we to think we are more spiritual because we don't.

(4) And, before we make our personal choice, we should look at the other side of the coin...

- (Eph 5.18) Don't get drunk, but rather be filled with the Spirit...

[Part 2 follows...]

B. Now the Positive: (v18b-20) Be filled with the Spirit

1. Being "filled with" means being "controlled by."
 - a) (Luke 4.28-29) When the people were "filled with wrath," they were controlled by wrath.
 - b) (Acts 13.45) When the Jews were "filled with envy," they were controlled by envy.
 - c) When we are "filled with the Spirit," it means that we are yielded to Him and He is "controlling" our lives—He is guiding us, leading us... and we are following Him.
2. Being filled with the Holy Spirit has nothing to do with you getting more Him, but rather it is Him getting more of you.
 - a) The Holy Spirit is a Person, just like Jesus Christ. So, when you receive the Holy Spirit, you receive the Person, all of Him (you cannot receive part of a person).
 - (1) The Spirit is not some mystical gasoline that God gives you on Sundays to "tank up" or "top off" and thereby get you through the week until the next trip to the "gas station."
 - (2) The Spirit of God is a Person who lives in you; He (the Person) lives in you—all of Him.
 - b) So the filling of the Spirit should not be thought of as us getting more of Him, but rather as Him getting more of us. It's like a hand in a glove...
 - (1) You can place your whole hand in a glove and yet not "fill" the glove (the fingers). You just ball up your hand in a fist, and put your whole hand in the glove.
 - (2) Your hand is a picture of the Holy Spirit, and the glove is a picture of you.
 - (a) You get all of the Spirit there is to get at the moment of your salvation because the Person of the Spirit comes to live inside you—you become one spirit with Him (Rom 8.16 cf. 1Cor 6.17).
 - (b) The filling of the Spirit, then, is putting the fingers of your hand into the fingers of the glove so that you (your hand) can control the glove. As we submit to the Spirit's leading in our lives, through obedience to the Scripture, He fills more and more areas of our lives (like the fingers of a glove) and controls us by leading and guiding us into all truth—into the application of Scripture to all areas of our lives.
 - c) Being filled with the Spirit, then, is not getting more of Him, but rather Him getting more of us.
3. The Spirit fills and controls our lives through Scripture.
 - a) Remember, one of the principal ministries of the Spirit to believers is that of teaching.
 - (1) (John 14.16-26) After Jesus' ascension, God sent His Spirit to be with us in order to teach us (Jesus left physically and therefore cannot teach us here, so He sent His Spirit to do so).
 - (v26 cf. v21, 23, 24) The Spirit teach us and reminds us of God's Word so we can keep it (obey it).
 - (2) (John 16.12-14) This Spirit of truth was sent by God to guide us into all truth.
 - (a) (v12) The truth into which the Spirit guides us is that which Jesus says to us.
 - (b) (John 17.17) The truth into which the Spirit guides us is His Word.
 - (3) (1Cor 2.9-16, esp. v13) The Holy Ghost (the Holy Spirit in us—in our spirits) teaches us the words of God so that we can know and understand the things of God.
 - (4) One of the principal ministries of the Spirit among believers is that of teaching us Scripture in order to lead us to greater sanctification (to make us grow in holiness; to conform us to the image of Christ; to perfect us: 2Tim 3.15-17).

- b) Because the Spirit fills and controls our lives through Scripture, we see the same results being produced in our lives when we are filled with the Spirit as when we are filled with the Word.
- (1) (Eph 5.18-20) The filling of Spirit results in in our edifying one another through psalms and hymns and spiritual songs... making melody in your heart to the Lord.
 - (2) (Col 3.16) The filling of the Word results in teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.
4. This, then (the filling of the Spirit), is the spiritual warfare we face each day, all day.
- a) The Spirit fills and controls our lives through Scripture.
 - (1) In our souls (mind, will, emotions):
 - (a) We learn the Word... by means of our intellect and the work of the Spirit.
 - (b) We understand the Word... principally by the work of the Spirit (sometimes through other men, like pastors and teachers as the Spirit uses them to give us understanding).
 - (c) We decide to obey the Word through our free will (personal choice)...
 - (2) Our bodies:
 - (a) As we learn, understand, and decide to obey the Word, our bodies are made a living sacrifice to God—it is brought into subjection to God's Spirit.
 - (b) And we are "filled with the Spirit" just as the fingers of a hand fill the fingers of a glove—to control it, guide it, use it to accomplish the will of the head.
 - b) (1Pet 2.11) The spiritual warfare comes from (or through) the flesh.
 - (1) The flesh (itself/its desires; or the world or the devil through the flesh) wars against the soul, hounding you constantly to do what it wants you to do. This is "from the outside in."
 - (2) The Spirit (in our spirits) influences our souls ("from the inside out") through the knowledge and understanding of Scripture, thus showing us clearly what God wants.
 - (3) **The Warfare:** (Josh 24.15) Choose you (in your soul: your mind, you will) this and (and every day, all day) whom you will serve.
 - c) The filling of the Spirit, then, is the daily spiritual warfare we face.
 - (1) The filling of the Spirit is not getting more of Him (as if He were some sort of spiritual gasoline), but rather it is Him getting more of us.
 - (2) The filling of the Spirit occurs when we submit to the control and leading of the Holy Spirit through learning, understanding, submitting to, and obeying... Scripture.
 - (a) When we do that, He can "fill us" (control us, guide us) like fingers in a glove to accomplish what the Head of the Body wants to accomplish with each member.
 - (b) And that means that the results of the filling will visible and... practical...
5. The results of the filling of the Spirit are manifold but not mystical.
- a) The filling of the Spirit does not result in any kind of mystical, weird experience.
 - (1) You'll not hit the floor and flop around like a fish out of water. You'll not babble incoherently.
 - (2) The filling of the Spirit will result in very practical and visible ways because it is simply the Spirit of God leading you to participate with Him in what He is doing in the world...
 - ...just as a hand would guide the fingers of a glove in the work the head desires to do.

- b) (Acts 4.31) The principal result of the filling of the Spirit in the believer is boldness in evangelism because this is the focal point of God's work in the world today.
- (1) (John 16.7-11) The Spirit of God has been sent into the world to convict men of sin, righteousness, and judgment to come.
 - (2) (John 12.32) He has been sent into the world to do that work in order to draw sinners to Jesus Christ so that they might be saved.
 - (3) (Act 1.8) That's why when the Spirit fills the believer, that filling manifests itself in power (boldness/desire!) to witness to lost people. This is what the Spirit is doing in the world, and so when He controls us (leads us, fills us like fingers in a glove), we do what He does.
 - (a) (Acts 2.4) You see this boldness in evangelism when the believers first experienced the filling of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost.
 - i) Observe: (v4-14) The preaching was in known languages, not the incoherent babbling of the Corinthian unknown tongues.
 - ii) The filling of the Spirit results in preaching the Gospel to the lost; that's the point of the passage.
 - (b) (Acts 4.8-12) The filling of the Spirit moves us to boldly witness to lost people.
 - (c) This is why there is *so much joy* after you boldly proclaiming the Gospel to the lost.
 - i) You've just experienced the filling of the Spirit! You've just been used by the Spirit of God to accomplish the mission of God in this world!
 - ii) You died to self and experience a little bit of heaven... the filling of the Spirit of God! And that is incredibly enjoyable.
 - iii) That is *glorifying* God and *enjoying* Him forever (being filled with His Spirit)!
- c) Other practical and visible results of the filling of the Spirit:
- (1) (Acts 6.3-5) The filling of the Spirit results in a good reputation (holy living!).
 - (2) (Acts 7.55-56) The filling of the Spirit results in heavenly-mindedness (focusing on Jesus Christ and things above, not on your difficulties, trials, and tribulations here on earth).
 - (3) (Acts 13.8-10) The filling of the Spirit results in a bold confrontation of false teaching.
 - (4) (Rom 15.13) The filling of the Spirit results in abounding hope (sure hope).
 - (5) (Gal 5.22-24) The filling of the Spirit results in Christ-like character.
 - (6) (1Jn 2.27) The filling of the Spirit results in sound doctrine.
6. (Eph 5.19-20) These results will manifest in three areas (or three "directions"):
- a) Toward others: "...to yourselves..."
 - (1) The filling of the Spirit will result in our speaking to other believers in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.
 - (a) **Psalms**: Songs spoken as if one were speaking directly to God (prayers, just like we see in the Book of Psalms).
 - (b) **Hymns**: Words of praise or celebration about God—His character, attributes, or works.
 - (c) **Spiritual Songs**: Songs or words...
 - i) ...like Job or the Song of Solomon, which is written as a "song"—poetry; we're not talking about a Hillsong concert
 - ii) These are songs or words about any spiritual principle in general.
 - iii) This is a broad term referring to any kind of song, poetry, or things of that nature that speak of spiritual/Scriptural things.

- (2) The point Paul is making is not so much that we need a "diversified music ministry," but that when we are filled with the Spirit we will *speak the truth in love* (Eph 4.15) to other believers *for their edification in Christ* (Eph 4.16)
- (a) The filling of the Spirit refers to the Spirit's control of our lives through our submission and obedience to Scripture. We yield to Him and allow Him to use us in the mission and work He is carrying out in the world.
- (b) Among the brethren (the saved) the filling will result in edification, because that is God's mission and work among us: He is perfecting us, conforming us to the image of His Son, Jesus Christ.

b) Within ourselves: "...in your heart..."

- (1) The filling of the Spirit will also result in the accomplishment of God's mission and work in our lives. When the Spirit fills us, the Spirit changes us—He changes our hearts!
- (2) (Rom 8.28-29 cf. 2Tim 3.15-17; Eph 4.12-13) God is conforming each and every believer to the image of His Son. Therefore, our outward actions (toward others or toward God—loving our neighbor and loving God) is simply the result of the inward work God is doing in our hearts.

c) Toward God: "...to the Lord; giving thanks..."

- (1) (Num 11.1) The natural man complains when following God gets difficult or uncomfortable, and that displeases God (it is not in accordance with His will).
- (2) (1Thes 5.18) God's will is that we be thankful! Why...?
- (a) (Eph 1.3) Because in Christ, we have everything!
- (b) (Col 2.10) Because in Christ, we lack nothing!
- (c) (Rom 8.28, 31) Because in Christ, who can be against us? God will use *everything* for our good and His glory.
- (3) This does *not* mean you have to *like* or *enjoy* your circumstances or your situation.
- (a) I'm sure Job didn't enjoy his seven days of suffering. I'm sure cancer or the death of a child (or loved one) is not terribly enjoyable.
- (b) What this means is that, when we are filled with the Spirit, we acknowledge that God has *allowed* everything that we experience in life to happen, and we trust Him (because He said it in His Word) to use it for *His glory* and *our good*.
- (c) In *that* we can be thankful, even when we are going through suffering or difficulties.
- (4) When we are filled with (controlled by) the Spirit of God, we have our eyes set on Jesus, the Author and *Finisher* of our faith, and that results in total confidence, trust, and hope.
- (a) The Bible says that God cannot lie; He will do exactly as He promised!
- (b) Therefore, we glorify Him by giving thanks in all things because He promised to use all things (good and bad) to accomplish His purpose and will in and through us.
- (c) But this is only possible by the filling of the Spirit! We are not capable of this on our own.

Conclusion: Ephesians 5.17-20...

Our days are evil... our time is limited... and our mission is urgent.

- "Wherefore...": (v17-18) We need to live wisely, and that means *being spiritual*.
- And that brings me to the last thing I'd like to draw your attention to in this passage: You are *commanded* to be filled with the Spirit.
 - ✓ Ephesians 5.18 is not a suggestion... it is not something God does... it is a command to us.
 - ✓ Therefore the filling of the Spirit is a matter of *obedience*—it's our *choice*. It's not something God does, and it is not some mystical experience that the super-spiritual get from God.

All of the other works of the Holy Spirit are accomplished in us by God at the moment of Salvation.

1. (John 1.12-13; 3.3-6) The Holy Spirit regenerates us at the moment we repent and believe on Christ.
2. (Rom 8.9; 1Cor 6.19-20) The Holy Spirit takes up residence in us (we become one spirit, the Spirit of God with our spirits) in the moment we are saved.
3. (Eph 1.13-14; 4.30) The Holy Spirit eternally seals each repentant believer at the moment of salvation.
4. (1Cor 12.13) The Holy Spirit baptizes (immerses) each one of us into the Body of Christ in the moment we are saved.

Ephesians 5.18 contains the *only* commandment given to Christians regarding the Holy Spirit.

Clarification: To clarify, I would just like to say that this is the only commandment with regard to the Spirit's presence in our lives. There are other commandments regarding our relationship to the Spirit and His work in our lives (such as not grieving Him nor quenching Him; Eph 4.30 and 1Thes 5.19, respectively). The point to be emphasized is that we are never told to get more of the Spirit, rather we are told to give more of ourselves to Him through submission and obedience. Please forgive my oversight during the preaching with regard to other commandments given with respect to the Spirit's work in our lives.

- God already did everything else! We have the Spirit and we have the Scripture.
- God has done His part and now He commands us to do our: Be filled with the Spirit!
 - ✓ It is your choice to submit to and obey the Scripture—to allow the Holy Spirit to control your life by leading you to hear and do the Word of God.
 - ✓ (v17) We need to *know* God's will (learn Scripture) in order to *understand* God's will (by the Spirit).
 - ✓ (v18-20) And then we need to *do* God's will.
- Avoid being controlled by anything else...
 - ✓ Submit to the Spirit's control by submitting to and obeying Scripture.
 - ✓ That will result in *living wisely* because that will result in *glorifying* God and *enjoying* Him forever.
- Why is that...? Because when you are filled with the Spirit (submitted to His control through Scripture)...
 - ✓ You will be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ...
 - ✓ You will have faith and trust in God, giving thanks in everything...
 - ✓ You will labor boldly as the Holy Spirit leads you to evangelize the lost and edify the saved.

Live wisely: Be spiritual!

- Don't be a fool (unwise).
- Rather, hear the Word of God... and do it! Let God's Spirit fill you as the fingers in a glove... to lead you in doing the will of the Head, Jesus Christ. That's wise (because, really, that's all that matters)!