

The Word tells us to confess our sins to one to another and pray for one another that you may be healed. (James 5:16) So here is my confession. After a pain filled week of busyness and stress, I finally made it to my free day. Notice I said, "MY free day!" (1Corinthians 6:19-20) I'm always preaching to you that our lives are to be fully surrendered to the Lord. At the time, I was about to preach on yielding to resurrection life that indwells us. All the busy necessities of my free day was testing me on whether I was living it. My frustration level rose and rose and rose, while the tension in my back knotted my muscles. "Where is MY free time? Why can't I have a moment of rest?" I became snappy with my dear wife. Someone called and asked how I was and I answered with one word, "Busy!" What a Spirit filled godly leader, right?

The next morning was the day I work on the sermon for the following week, this one. The Holy Spirit kept on my case to read a commentary. I always save the commentary until after I write because I don't want it to influence what the Lord may want to say. But I was in no condition to hear from the Lord. He had to shout to get me to humble myself and break my routine. As I read the commentary, the message came through. This passage this week was for me. I'm going to borrow quite a bit from that commentary by R. Kent Hughes.³ I pray that it will speak to you like it did to me. God is faithful to call us back when we stray. He's the Great Shepherd! (Hebrews 13:20)

It begins by asking us to ¹⁵ *Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶ making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.* The Greeks used this term "walk" in a figurative sense of how you live out your life. Paul is telling us how to "wake up, rise from the dead and let Christ shine on us". (Ephesians 5:14) Be careful how you live out each day. There is a wise way to live and an unwise way to live. The wise way to live is to make the best use of your time. The original language literally means to buy up the time. Time is valuable. Those who are not wise waste it on the temporal or even destructive things. The wise invest it in eternity by doing what the following verses command. (2Corinthians 4:17)

Paul tells us why that is the wise way to live, because the days are evil. The world is fallen. The default mode is the flesh. It is self-centered. It is evil, because it is unlike our Savior and heavenly Father. It's all about what I want. That was where I was the day before. As the phone rang incessantly, I could only think that I was losing MY free day. God was giving me these great opportunities to invest in others and His Kingdom and all I could do was worry about not getting to do what I wanted. I really didn't have anything that urgent, so what *was* the best use of my time? I wasn't buying up the time; I was begrudgingly serving while murmuring about it. (Philippians 2:14)

There are so many great verses to guide us to a right attitude and a productive life, and this is certainly one of them. What if we contemplated this as we began each day? "How

Commented [notes1]: James 5:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.

Commented [notes2]: 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (ESV)

¹⁹ Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, ²⁰ for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

Commented [notes3]: Preaching the Word – Ephesians: The Mystery of the Body of Christ. Chapter 20

Commented [notes4]: Hebrews 13:20 (ESV)

²⁰ Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant,

Commented [notes5]: Ephesians 5:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."

Commented [notes6]: 2 Corinthians 4:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,

Commented [notes7]: Philippians 2:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ Do all things without grumbling or questioning,

can I make the best use of my time? How can I carefully walk in wisdom today?" (Colossians 4:5)

17 Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. To live in the light of eternity is to walk in wisdom. To live for temporary pleasure is to be foolish. (James 4:14) To understand what the Lord's will is for your day and for your life, is to be truly wise. To ignore God's will for you is to be foolish.

I love to read the biographies of great men of God. The way they bought up their opportunities by using their time for the glory of God always challenges me to quit wasting my time. Nearly all of them rose early to spend time with the Lord and His Word. Some of them wrote so prolifically while ministering to so many that we find it hard to imagine how they were able to accomplish so much with so little. Foolishness is wasting my time on things that really don't matter. Whether we wash dishes or are missionary to the unreached we should do all we do to the glory of God. (1Corinthians 10:31) Every day the choice is ours to make. But how do we live in wisdom and understand the Lord's will? The rest of our passage is one long sentence in Greek that tells us how.

18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, It certainly is not wise to spend time in drunkenness. That was a temptation in Ephesus which honored the wine god Bacchus and had numerous vineyards. It's a temptation today. Hidden alcoholism is a plague in towns like our own that have so many lonely elderly people whose spouse has gone on before them. It's a temptation with our youth, whose parents often even provide the drugs or alcohol so that their teens will get inebriated safely at home. Do they really think they won't do the same outside their home? Alcohol lowers the inhibitions. Drunkenness transforms the personality. It is a depressant, and it enslaves. It is foolish. (Proverbs 23:29-32) It causes you to act foolish. It endangers lives. It leads to debauchery. (Luke 21:34) Christians have no reason to be drunk. Some might be able to enjoy in moderation a glass of wine or beer (1Timothy 5:23), but we should always retain full self-control, which is a fruit of the Spirit. (Galatians 5:22-23)

We used to joke about getting high on the Most High. In other words that wine is just a cheap substitute for the Spirit. But that analogy is full of flaws and contradictions. One leads to loss of control, the other to being controlled by the Spirit, which includes self-control. One is a depressant and the other is a stimulant. (2Peter 3:1) One causes you to be foolish and the other to be wise. If we are talking about the feeling of joy that wine can bring, there may be a similarity, but one is joy in the Lord and the other simply a passing feeling.

The disciples at Pentecost were accused of being drunk (Acts 2:13), but that was by their detractors. Those who had ears to hear realized their words were not foolish but filled with eternal wisdom and conviction. The fullness of the Spirit is not always accompanied by a

Commented [notes8]: Colossians 4:5 (ESV)

⁵Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time.

Commented [notes9]: James 4:14 (ESV)

¹⁴yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.

Commented [notes10]: 1 Corinthians 10:31 (ESV)

³¹So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

Commented [notes11]: Proverbs 23:29-32 (ESV)

²⁹Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaining? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? ³⁰Those who tarry long over wine; those who go to try mixed wine. ³¹Do not look at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup and goes down smoothly. ³²In the end it bites like a serpent and stings like an adder.

Commented [notes12]: Luke 21:34 (ESV)

³⁴"But watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap.

Commented [notes13]: 1 Timothy 5:23 (ESV)

²³(No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.)

Commented [notes14]: Galatians 5:22-23 (ESV)

²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

Commented [notes15]: 2 Peter 3:1 (NIV)

¹Dear friends, this is now my second letter to you. I have written both of them as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking.

Commented [notes16]: Acts 2:13 (ESV)

¹³But others mocking said, "They are filled with new wine."

wonderful feeling. It is often joy, but it can also be boldness, insight, the quickening of the Scriptures, or sacrificial love. We must be careful that we are not seeking an experience or a personal sensation for our self. Drunkenness is seeking a temporary escape from our personality or from problems, while the Spirit is the empowering of our new personality to deal with problems in the light of the Lord and His wisdom. (Philippians 4:13)

¹⁹ addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, Believers are recipients of so many blessings that the Spirit brings to our lives. We are baptized into Christ's body and sealed by the Spirit. (1Corinthians 12:13) The Spirit is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance. (Ephesians 1:13-14) Many are regulars at church services, support the ministry, and even read their Bible regularly, but the joy and delight in God is noticeably absent. **Why are so many spiritually empty?** Could it be that we missed the command in the second half of the last verse, be filled with the Spirit! Instead, we have filled our lives with personal pleasures, entertainment, personal demands and anything other foolish thing that wastes our time, rather than buying up the opportunities. As Jeremiah told the people of Israel, we've forsaken the fountain of living waters and dug broken cisterns that can't hold water. (Jeremiah 2:13) And we wonder why there is no joy.

That was my wakeup call when I found my focus was misdirected. I had lost my joy. If you've lost the joy of the Lord, if your heart isn't singing praise to the Lord, you've been trying to fill it with something that is temporal. You are missing the intimacy of your loving Savior. That fountain that Jesus told the woman at the well that would be hers if she accepted Jesus' living water has been set aside for something that can't come close to taking His place. (John 4:14) "Wake up O sleeper and rise from the dead", wasn't just for the lost, but for believers who get side-tracked and quit drinking of the water of life!

The baptism of the Spirit is not just a one-time thing. The disciples at Pentecost in Acts chapter 2 were filled again in Acts chapter 4. (Acts 2:4; 4:31) **Jesus invites us to come to Him and drink freely of the water of life.** He promises that when we do we'll experience that overflow that Paul is describing in verse 19. (John 7:37-38) The church and the Holy Spirit also call to us to drink freely of the water of life. (Revelation 22:17) If the songs are not rising in your heart to the Lord, if the joy is not abundant, you need to hear the call and come to Jesus. We have to first recognize we've been drinking polluted water. Then we start to thirst for the living water. (Psalm 42:1) If you've tasted it, you know the difference. Can you hear the Spirit and the bride calling you this morning to come?

Songs are a product of the new life. Five times in the Psalms we are told to sing a new song. (Psalms 33:3; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9; 149:1) It is the overflow of the renewed heart in Christ. It is one of our expressions of the joy we experience as the artesian well within springs up. That vertical relationship with the Lord and His word spills over horizontally into our everyday speech. We can't help it because it fills our heart and mind. If you don't

Commented [notes17]: Philippians 4:13 (ESV)
¹³ I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

Commented [notes18]: 1 Corinthians 12:13 (ESV)
¹³ For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body - Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

Commented [notes19]: Ephesians 1:13-14 (ESV)
¹³ In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit,
¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

Commented [notes20]: Jeremiah 2:13 (ESV)
¹³ for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.

Commented [notes21]: John 4:14 (ESV)
¹⁴ but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.

Commented [notes22]: Acts 2:4 (ESV)
⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Commented [notes23]: Acts 4:31 (ESV)
³¹ And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.

Commented [notes24]: John 7:37-38 (ESV)
³⁷ On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink." ³⁸ Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, "Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."

Commented [notes25]: Revelation 22:17 (ESV)
¹⁷ The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come. -And let the one who hears say, "Come. -And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.

Commented [notes26]: Psalm 42:1 (ESV)
¹ As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God.

Commented [notes27]: Psalm 33:3 (ESV)
³ Sing to him a new song; play skillfully on the strings, with loud shouts.

know what I'm talking about you need to ask for the Lord to fill you with His Spirit and hear the call to come to Him and drink.

It is interesting to see this throughout church history. The church of Jesus has always been filled with song. Portions of our New Testament are believed to be songs of the early church. *The Roman governor Pliny, in his famous letter to the Emperor Trajan in a.d. 112, tells how the Christians in his province had the custom of meeting on a fixed day before dawn and "reciting a hymn antiphonally to Christ as God."* Tertullian, writing from North Africa toward the end of the same century, describes a Christian feast at which "Each is invited to sing to God in the presence of others from what he knows of the holy scripture or from his own heart."²⁸ Wouldn't you love to be in a time of worship with others like that, where people filled with Spirit let their praises overflow? That should happen in our small groups.

St. Francis was called the Troubadour of God because he often broke out in songs to the Lord. Martin Luther (around 1500) wrote a number of powerful hymns. These are times when the church was renewed and invigorated by the Holy Spirit. Isaac Watts (around 1700) dared to write hymns from the praises in his heart rather than right from the Psalms but He was challenged and rebuked for doing such a thing. It is his hymns that survived to today. During the Wesleyan revival, the brothers Charles and John both wrote new hymns and dared to use bar room tunes with which the people were familiar. How dare they! Charles Simeon whose preaching so stirred the people that experienced an enthusiastic outpouring of blessing that led to the Evangelical movement, was criticized by the other conservative church in Cambridge. The church that opposed him engraved on their new bell, "Glory to the church and damnation to the enthusiasts!" Moody and Sankey were prolific hymn writers in the 1870s which was an integral part of their revival services. And as if on cue almost a hundred years later in the 1960s and 70s a new explosion of praise music began that continues to this day. Some would still damn the enthusiasts. Believers in Jesus sing. You may prefer different styles, but don't stifle or ridicule the songs that rise from the heart in praise to God. Those songs are the genuine response to the Spirit within.

²⁰ *giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*, We continue with that long sentence of what it is like to live in wisdom and redeem the time. Not only do we sing in our hearts and have that communion overflow in our speech, but we also abound in thanksgiving. (1Thessalonians 5:18) Those who are light see the world with new eyes. Like the angels around the throne, they see the world filled with the glory of the Lord. (Isaiah 6:3) It is not that we thank God for the evil, for God hates evil and we should deplore it as well. (Psalm 97:10) Everything of God we see as a blessing to us for our good as the Scriptures declare (Romans 8:28), and so we are filled with thanksgiving. We need those God perspective glasses that change how we see things. If I had them on the day before I worked on this sermon, I would have seen things in a whole different light. Instead of murmuring about losing MY free day, I would have been

Commented [notes28]: Preaching the Word – Ephesians: The Mystery of the Body of Christ Chapter 20

Commented [notes29]: 1 Thessalonians 5:18 (ESV)
¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

Commented [notes30]: Isaiah 6:3 (ESV)
³ And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!"

Commented [notes31]: Psalm 97:10 (ESV)
¹⁰ O you who love the LORD, hate evil! He preserves the lives of his saints; he delivers them from the hand of the wicked.

Commented [notes32]: Romans 8:28 (ESV)
²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

praising God for the opportunities to be a part of what He is doing in the world, for the help I was receiving to make it all come to pass, even for the broken equipment that sent me to town to discover our message machine had the times of the service mysteriously erased, so that I could repair it for all the guests coming in that weekend. It was all good. I just had the "me first" glasses on. I was filled with ME instead of being filled with the Spirit. I'm thankful now! I'm thankful the Lord doesn't give up on us. I'm thankful He makes me uncomfortable until I wake up to how I've fallen. I'm thankful that I'm not satisfied with anything less than His Spirit!

A grumbling, negative attitude is a sign of self-focused heart. A person filled with praise and joy is demonstrating the sign of a Spirit filled life. Physical conditions have little to do with it. I have met the most joyful people that were filled with thanksgiving who had nothing. I have met super-wealthy believers that had all they could ask including health, but all they could do was to criticize and complain.

²¹ submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. A Spirit filled person is a servant of others because they recognize that people are made in the image of God. They take seriously the words of Jesus that "as much as you have done it to one of the least of these my brothers, you have done it to me." (Matthew 25:40) Instead of demanding our way, the Spirit filled person submits in reverence to Christ. (2Corinthians 4:5) Of course they have the boundaries of the Word. The point here is that they are humble and pliable, not demanding and proud. They practice Paul's words to the Philippians to consider others better than themselves. (Philippians 2:3)

These beautiful attributes of the Spirit when seen in a life, are exceptionally compelling! Why? Because they express Jesus' own life to those who are seeking. How incredibly attractive! Allow me close with Kent Hughes own well written summary of this passage.

Are we filled with the Spirit? Is there music in our souls? Is there thankfulness and praise? Is there submission in our lives? Do we want to be so filled? If so, there are several points we need to understand about the call to "be filled with the Holy Spirit." 1) It is a command, not a suggestion. We are not free to ignore it. 2) It is a plural command to the whole Church. None of us is to get drunk. All of us are to be filled with the Spirit. It is not for the few or for some elite. 3) It is a passive command. It means, "Let the Holy Spirit fill you" (NEB). There is no ritual, no formula. We must turn from any known sin. We must open ourselves to God's Word so it dwells richly in us (Col. 3:16). We must yield to the Spirit. 4) Last, it is a present tense command. It is not once for all but continuous. We are to go on being filled. We are to keep drinking and drinking and drinking.

We have capacities for spiritual life and power which we scarcely can imagine. "The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!'... Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life" (Rev. 22:17).³⁷

Commented [notes33]: Matthew 25:40 (ESV)

⁴⁰ And the King will answer them, "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me."

Commented [notes34]: 2 Corinthians 4:5 (ESV)

⁵ For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.

Commented [notes35]: Philippians 2:3 (ESV)

³ Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.

Commented [notes36]: Colossians 3:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ 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.

Commented [notes37]: Preaching the Word – Ephesians:

The Mystery of the Body of Christ.

Chapter 20

Questions

- 1 Why should we be careful how we live?
- 2 How do we make the best use of our time?
- 3 What does the Bible teach about alcohol?
- 4 What is the difference between spirits and the Spirit?
- 5 What does a lack of joy tell us?
- 6 What is a sign of the Spirit within?
- 7 Go over a brief history of songs in the church. Do you see a pattern?
- 8 What does a grumbling attitude declare?
- 9 Go over the points we need to understand about the Spirit.