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## **Wise People Understand God's Will**

### **Ephesians 5:15-21**

**PowerPoint Presentation: None**

**Keywords: Wisdom, God's Will, Music, Singing, Submission, Thankfulness**

**SermonAudio blurb:**

#### **I. Introduction.**

- A. Read 5:15-21.
- B. We spent four Sundays trying to develop the first part of this passage — the idea of being a wise person rather than a fool.
  - 1. Starts by fearing YHWH.
  - 2. Not rejecting or resisting the Word of God.
  - 3. Prayer for it.
  - 4. Seeking to be in the company of those who are wise.
  - 5. Embracing rebukes and correction.
- C. Now I want to fit verse 15 into its context so that we can develop it as Paul intended.
  - 1. In verses 15, 17 and 18 underline or circle “but.” Very strong adversative used each time for Paul is making strong distinctions to make his point. What is helpful to understand is that the first half of those verses are not of central importance; rather, they serve to create the contrast needed for the second half of the verse, which is the main point he is making.
  - 2. Each point builds off of the previous and all of it moving us to verse 18 where we are to be filled by the Spirit. From there vss 19-21 give us clear examples of what it looks like to be filled by the Spirit.
  - 3. So, don't walk like a fool but instead walk as a wise person. In other words, don't be foolish but instead understand what God's will is. In other words, don't be drunk but instead be filled by the Holy Spirit.
  - 4. Being filled by the Holy Spirit is not some strange event where you experience something unique or ecstatic; rather, it is summed up in four ways:

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- a. Speaking to one another in a certain way.
  - b. Singing to one another.
  - c. Giving thanks to God.
  - d. Submitting to one another.
- D. Now the title of the sermon sums up the sense of this passage, “Wise People Understand God’s Will.”
1. Notice that it is the second part of this passage that deals with God’s will.
  2. But with the title written the way that it is I can deal with God’s will both by going backward in the passage and forward, because it is functioning sort of like a link in a chain. And that is how we will approach this passage.

## **II. Understanding the will of God.**

- A. To understand the will of the Lord is requires that you not be a foolish person.
1. That much is obvious.
  2. To not pursue wisdom is to spend much of your time not understanding the will of the Lord — which has consequences.
    - a. This means that you are not in obedience to your Lord.
      - (1) The term for “unwise” speaks like the Old Testament term for the fool. He is one who despises or ignore God’s word.
      - (2) This is a person who acts like he has no insight into what God is doing through Jesus Christ and the Church.
    - b. This means you are headed from much heartache.
    - c. This means you place yourself in a perilous spot spiritually speaking for you do not walk in God’s light nor God’s blessing.
      - (1) To walk in foolishness and enjoy it says much about your spiritual state.
      - (2) When you find the will of the Lord to be burdensome and you feel free when you shake of those commands and restrictions it is evidence that you never were purchased by Christ.
    - d. This means you presume that God will keep you safe while you reject His will.

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3. The first step in rejecting foolishness is to fear the Lord — to believe that YHWH is the only God, He is sufficient to deliver you from all things, including your sin, that He has provided sufficient and full salvation and redemption through Jesus Christ our Lord.
4. A mark of walking in wisdom is evidenced in how you order your life in this age.
  - a. This first assumes you believe that this life is not all that there is.
  - b. Second, it recognizes the basic problem with this age that we travel through, it is evil.
    - (1) The wise is seldom shocked for they assume that all things under the sun are vanity. Therefore you order your life in light of that reality.
    - (2) I encourage you to listen carefully to Matt Miller’s sermon coming up on Ecclesiastes for they will go far in helping you think through this point.
    - (3) The idea of the phrase, “the most of your time” is not just good time management. It is focusing upon snapping up opportunities as they come.
      - (a) Another way to say it is to make good use of every opportunity to walk as a wise person in the fear of the Lord and in active rebellion against the thinking and values of this age.
      - (b) Remembering that Ephesians is like a great drama God is unfolding and remembering that in chapters 4-6 we are told what our part is to be in this drama, then the meaning of this passage becomes quite clear.
        - i) In just a few vss we will be told to be filled by the Holy Spirit.
        - ii) We will be called to be a certain type of husband, wife, child, employer and employee.
        - iii) And that is the sense here. We take advantage of every opportunity to reject this world’s way of doing things in all that is

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normal and mundane. It is a showing of a hope that is beyond this age.

5. Verse 17 is essentially the conclusion of vss 15-16. It gives us the main idea that I am trying to develop in this sermon so we will move on so that we can continue to understand what the will of the Lord is.
- B. Second, to understand what the will of the Lord is that we do not let the things of this age control us.
1. The word “and” at the beginning here is not introducing something new; rather, it is expanding on the will of the Lord. You could easily translate it as “even.”
  2. The idea of drunkenness is one of a foil. “a foil is a character who contrasts with another character . . . in order to highlight particular qualities of the other character.” (Wikipedia)
    - a. The issue of drunkenness suddenly appears and then disappears which is one of the reasons we know it functions as a foil.
    - b. There is no real evidence that this was a specific problem in the church rather it is a specific problem that helps elevate the key point, which is to be filled by the Spirit.
  3. The point is that we are not to allow the thinking, values, and actions of this age be what motivates us or causes us to act and live.
  4. Drunkenness leads to a lifestyle of dissipation or debauchery.
    - a. It means a life that leads to ruin and disorder.
    - b. If you want to see that is action go by my house and watch those who are around the First Steps building and it will be obvious. Or just hang out on 22<sup>nd</sup> Ave between Roosevelt and 60<sup>th</sup>.
    - c. Whether it is drugs or drunkenness, adultery or laziness, violence or passiveness whatever it is that captures you and moves you in accordance to this age is to be avoided.
  5. When we choose actions like drunkenness we are not choosing to walk as wise people and we are not understanding what the will of the Lord is.
- C. Third, to understand what the will of the Lord is means that you are to be filled by the Holy Spirit (18b).
1. This, as I said in the beginning is the primary point of the entire section so it is here that we need to focus our attention.

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2. Key translation difference — “by” vs “with.”
  - a. It is worth your time to make a little note in your bible if you wish.
  - b. Suffice it to say the question is how do we deal with the preposition in the Greek. Is it describing the content of the filling (with) or the instrument that does the filling (by). In every other instance where the Greek construction is used it is translated as “by.”
  - c. What is worthy of notice is that Paul does not speak specifically with what the Spirit is to fill us. However . . . .
    - (1) Ephesians 1:23 we have the idea that Jesus Christ has filled the church with His fulness because of His exalted position over all things.
    - (2) Ephesians 3:19 Paul prays that we would be filled up to the fulness of God. Which is done by (18-19) knowing the incomprehensible love of Christ. Which is accomplish by being strengthened in the inner man (16) by the Holy Spirit.
    - (3) Add to this the parallel passage in Colossians 3:16 where we are to let the word of Christ dwell richly within us.
    - (4) Finally, understand that in Ephesians 5:17 the “Lord” referenced there is not the Father but Jesus Christ.
  - d. So the answer of what is to fill us is Jesus Christ and His Word. It is a people who are making decisions and acting:
    - (1) Out of a love for Jesus Christ.
    - (2) Out of a desire to reflect Jesus Christ to this world/age.
    - (3) Out of a knowledge of His Word and what it commands us to do and not do.
- D. This leads us to the final part of this section where the natural results of being filled by the Spirit are described.

### **III. What Being Filled by The Spirit Looks Like.**

- A. Just as being drunk by wine leads to a ruined life and lifestyle so too being filled by the Holy Spirit has natural results.
  1. There are four specific results.

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2. Each of them is identified with a word ending with an “-ing.” For those who learned Greek from Matt Miller, these are all participial constructs that are dependent upon the main verb/imperative “understand” in vs 17.
- B. Result #1: Speaking (addressing) one another.
1. How do we speak to one another? The means is described for us through these three aspects of song and poetry.
  2. To try to make too much of a distinction is not wise. In fact there is a good argument that can be made that he uses three different terms on purpose to say that in song we speak to one another.
  3. What we have here is a description of our corporate worship but it can also describe a time of worship in a CG or in a home with family.
  4. It is reflexive meaning I am speaking to you and you to me when we lift up our voices..
  5. Some applications therefore:
    - a. The words we sing are words we can speak. They should have substance rather than merely emotion driven by the music.
    - b. The music is the servant to the song.
    - c. Sound theology must be present in the song. Listen to me as I speak to you words of songs we sing:

**Absent from flesh, O blissful thought  
What joy this moment brings,  
Freed from the blame my sin has brought,  
From pain and death and its sting.**

**Absent from flesh, O glorious day!  
In one triumphant stroke  
My reckoning paid, my charges dropped  
and the bonds ‘round my hands are broke.**

**I go where God and glory shine,  
To one eternal day.  
This failing body I now resign,  
For The angels point my way.**

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**Let no one caught in sin remain  
Inside the lie of inward shame  
We fix our eyes upon the cross  
And run to him who showed great love  
And bled for us  
Freely you bled, for us**

**Beneath the weight of all our sin  
You bow to none but heavens will  
No scheme of hell, no scoffer's crown  
No burden great can hold you down  
In strength you reign  
Forever let your church proclaim**

**Christ is risen from the dead  
We are one with him again  
Come awake, come awake!  
Come and rise up from the grave**

**Oh death! Where is your sting?  
Oh hell! Where is your victory?  
Oh Church! Come stand in the light!  
The glory of God has defeated the night!**

**Oh death! Where is your sting?  
Oh hell! Where is your victory?  
Oh Church! Come stand in the light!**

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**Our God is not dead, he's alive! he's alive!**

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**Come behold the wondrous mystery**

**In the dawning of the King**

**He the theme of heaven's praises**

**Robed in frail humanity**

**In our longing, in our darkness**

**Now the light of life has come**

**Look to Christ, who condescended**

**Took on flesh to ransom us**

**Come behold the wondrous mystery**

**He the perfect Son of Man**

**In His living, in His suffering**

**Never trace nor stain of sin**

**See the true and better Adam**

**Come to save the hell-bound man**

**Christ the great and sure fulfillment**

**Of the law; in Him we stand**

**Come behold the wondrous mystery**

**Christ the Lord upon the tree**

**In the stead of ruined sinners**

**Hangs the Lamb in victory**



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**See the price of our redemption**

**See the Father's plan unfold**

**Bringing many sons to glory**

**Grace unmeasured, love untold**

**Come behold the wondrous mystery**

**Slain by death the God of life**

**But no grave could e'er restrain Him**

**Praise the Lord; He is alive!**

**What a foretaste of deliverance**

**How unwavering our hope**

**Christ in power resurrected**

**As we will be when he comes**

**What a foretaste of deliverance**

**How unwavering our hope**

**Christ in power resurrected**

**As we will be when he comes**

- C. Result #2: Singing/making melody.
1. Obviously this is tightly tied to the first point but it is also separated so we need to treat it on its own.
  2. The phrase “with your hearts to the Lord” speaks of the fulness of your being focused on singing to the Lord.
  3. Application:
    - a. A person filled by the Holy Spirit is one who sings. To not desire to sing is contrary to the working presence of the Spirit.

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- b. Music is to hold a central part of the worship of the Church. It is not a side light, it is an expression of the Spirit.
  - c. You should be a person who sings with more than a simple mumble. You need to consider what it means to sing with your heart.
  - d. At the same time loud singing is not the same as singing with your heart to the Lord. It involves your mind and your emotions. In fact there are times and songs that I find I can't continue to sing for I am captured by the words.
- D. Result #3: Giving thanks.
- 1. An unthankful heart, a bitter heart is one that is not marked by being filled by the Spirit. Rather it is a mark of one who needs to stop, consider their ways and repent.
  - 2. Thankfulness is not limited here. It is for all things. It is a heart that kisses the hand of God that may strike him because it comes from the Father who loves him.
    - a. Whether it is a time of feasting or famine, a time of joy or heartbreak, a time of light or a time of darkness, the heart trained to be filled by the Spirit knows it is to give thanks.
    - b. Is your household one of complaints or of thanks?
  - 3. Notice it is done in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Simply put this means it is done because of Him and what He has done on our behalf.
    - a. Note how Triune this is. The filling by the Spirit brings us to give thanks to God the Father in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.
    - b. Therefore we come to God not merely as God, but as Father.
    - c. We come because we are of the household of God.
    - d. We come and give thanks for we are adopted and loved and now joint heirs with Jesus.
    - e. Yes we must walk the path that He walked. Yes we must take up our cross and follow Him. Yes, we will lose husbands and wives, mothers and fathers to that fact. But we gain our eternal Father through Jesus Christ our Lord.
    - f. So we give thanks.
- E. Result #4: Submitting to one another.

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1. I will say this up front and then develop it in the next week or so.
  - a. This verse is one of those “hinge” verses which serves to transition us to the next major section and points made.
  - b. It is the final characteristic of one filled by the Spirit but also introduces us to the idea of submission in the following verses.
  - c. The point is this. The mark of one who is filled by the Spirit is one who submits to God’s divinely ordained relationships.
2. It is not speaking of each of us submitting to each other in some vague way that creates equals both in position and in calling and task.
  - a. The Spirit brings us to learn and to embrace our callings and positions. But not merely because of what society says but always in light of the Lord.
  - b. So we love our wives and respect our husbands. We obey our parents and train our children. We oversee our employees and we work for our employers. But always as unto the Lord.
  - c. And the greater we learn to be filled by the Spirit. The more we learn from the Word and yield ourselves to the Spirit’s work of conviction and guidance we learn to submit our heart to one another wherever we are called.

## **IV. Conclusion.**

- A. All of these four points are flowing from the idea that we are part of the cosmic drama of the Lord.
  1. Remember 3:10. Who is the audience to whom God plays out this cosmic drama? [the rulers, authorities. . .]. Who are the players? [The Church, me].
  2. How is this all done? By the power of the Spirit who strengthens and seals us until the day of redemption.
  3. And how do we play this out before the evil powers? We speak and we sing and we give thanks and we submit to one another. And the whole time we proclaim the victory of God in Jesus Christ.