

Be Filled with the Spirit Ephesians 5:15-20

¹⁵ Consider carefully, then, how you walk, not as unwise people, but as wise people. ¹⁶ Make the most of your time, because the days are evil. ¹⁷ For this reason, do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. ¹⁸ And do not get drunk on wine, which causes you to lose control. Instead, be filled with the Spirit ¹⁹ by speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (singing and making music with your hearts to the Lord), ²⁰ by always giving thanks for everything to God the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Book of Proverbs tells us: the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (9:10). None of us want to be fools. We all wish to remain wise, and especially wise for salvation that is through faith in Christ Jesus. How foolish it would be for us to be raised in that faith, but then lose our faith by neglecting the one thing needful. Today Paul gives us guidance in remaining wise for salvation. He urges us to be filled with the Spirit. The Holy Spirit will keep us wise. The Holy Spirit will move us to heartfelt worship.

Paul had been showing his readers how harmful it is for people to wallow in the filth of immoral living. He also tells believers what their attitude is to be and what they are to do. To be wise they must pay close attention. Paul writes: *Consider carefully, then, how you walk, not as unwise people, but as wise people. Make the most of your time, because the days are evil.* Paul urges us to pay strict attention to our conduct by not being foolish but wise. The foolish man follows the impulse of the moment and ends up deceived. He finds himself trapped in sin and lost. The wise man watches his step. He does not leap before he looks. He make sure that what he intends to do is right and good.

One factor in wisdom is making the most of our opportunities. Alertness is important because the days are evil. Christians live in an environment in which the majority are comfortable living in sin. With empty words they try to convince Christians to join in. For them there won't be many opportunities for Christians to call them to repentance exposing their sin for what it is. Sadly many unbelievers continuing the path to hell, do not wish to be disturbed. Believers will need to stay alert to recognize those who seemed troubled by sin and are willing to listen.

So we grasp the opportunity. We use time wisely. Paul used the most of his opportunities in his ministry. The days were just as evil. The Jews hated him and Christians who followed him. But whenever he saw the opportunity to proclaim the gospel, he made the most of it.

We may complain that our times are evil. But stay alert, your may discover instances when the time is right. We'll stay alert so we can call others to repentance, so we can tell of their redemption through Christ's blood. We'll keep doing good so others are drawn to Christ. Then they will come to glorify our Father in heaven. May we recognize the opportunities the Lord places before us. And then make use of those opportunities. That's living wisely.

Paul writes: *For this reason, do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.* We need to know the will of the Lord. We'll search the Scriptures constantly to drill into our minds the principles God has laid down for us. With the Holy Spirit's help, we'll develop the ability

to know which principles applies in a given situation. That's how we handle correctly the words of truth. That's lively wisely.

The opportunity to know better the will of the Lord is coming to us once again. As summer draws to a close, we are heading to another school year. Here at St. Michael's that means another year of Christian education. We do have a few students attending St. Matthew's school. We do not have any at Luther High this year. We have some home-schooled children. But a good number of St. Michael's children are attending public school. One subject that will not be taught there is God's Word. That's why we need our families to take advantage of Sunday School at 8:15am on Sunday mornings and catechism instruction. Our Sunday School lessons are also taught in adult Bible class. I pray our parents will take advantage of being students of God's Word. This will bless them in being Christians parents and assist them in helping their children to make right choices and live wisely. For our high school students, I hope they take advantage of the quarterly gatherings that are being held at our Winona area churches. The first one involves a hayride at Trinity, Wilson on Sunday afternoon, October 20. I think we'd all agree that having our youth gather with people of the same faith is a wise choice.

Paul now reveals some specific items of the Lord's will. *And do not get drunk on wine, which causes you to lose control.* Paul offers a warning that is needed in our day as well. Our Savior offered a similar warning: *"Watch yourselves or else your hearts will be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and the worries of this life, and that day may come on you suddenly"* (Luke 21:34). Jesus would not have issued this warning if the period proceeding his return to judgment, people in general would stay sober.

Just as drunkenness is produced by something that comes from the outside, like wine or other alcoholic drink, so the fullness that Paul encourages comes from the outside. Paul writes, *"Instead, be filled with the Spirit."* The Spirit had come to them through Paul's preaching and teaching. He worked through their Baptism and every time they celebrated the Lord's Supper. Paul urges his readers instead of being filled with the spirits of alcohol, be filled with the Spirit, the Holy Spirit who brought them wisdom.

Paul showed them ways to be filled with the Spirit. He writes: *By speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (singing and making music with your hearts to the Lord).* Singing is a means used to bring about being filled with the Spirit. Paul mentions three kinds of singing. Psalms comes from the Old Testament hymn book. Hymns are songs of praise. Spiritual songs glorify the truths the Spirit has revealed. Believers are to speak to one another with Christian singing. When Christians sing together they worship God. But they also encourage one another to keep in mind the great things God has done for them. We know from experience how spiritually exhilarating it is to join with fellow believers in full-throated and wholehearted singing. Doing so helps one another be filled with the Spirit.

We are singing to our Lord. So our hearts must be involved. Otherwise, the singing is not worship, but vain repetition. Where the heart is involved, the singing will be directed to the

Lord in loving contemplation of what he has done. What about when a Christian is by himself. He may let his thoughts turn to Christian hymns. Maybe he doesn't sing out loud. Maybe he hums. Maybe the words and melody only pass through his mind. But he is in communion with his Lord. He is being filled with the Spirit. The singing of Christian songs is more than a matter of art. It is worship. It involves the practice of fellowship. It is a way of being filled with the Spirit. It expresses our appreciation for the amazing grace of our God.

Something else will help us be filled with the Spirit. It happens when we count the many blessings we receive from God and thank him for them all. Paul reminds us of that in our text: *always giving thanks for everything to God the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*. We are mindful of what James wrote: *“Every good and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights”* (1:17). So we approach God's throne in prayer to thank him. We do this in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Without the saving work of Jesus we sinners could not dare to approach the holy God, much less call him Father. But Paul has reminded us in this letter that it is through Jesus that we have access to the Father. We have boldness in approaching him and confidence that he will listen. His Word reminds us that our blessings come from the Father. Our approach to him has been mediated by Jesus. Paul wrote the Romans: *If God is for us, who can be against us? Indeed, he who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also graciously give us all things along with him? Who will bring an accusation against God's elect? God is the one who justifies! Who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus, who died and, more than that, was raised to life, is the one who is at God's right hand and who is also interceding for us!*

This thanking is to be constant. With eyes enlightened by the Spirit we recognize each good thing that comes our way is a gift from God. Our hearts are then moved to give thanks. Paul tells us to be thankful for all things. The Lord trains us to reach such a stage of spiritual maturity that we can say with Paul, *“We also rejoice in our sufferings”* (Romans 5:3). Filled with the Spirit we will continue to offer heartfelt worship thanking our God in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

One thing we especially thank our God for is the opportunity and the gifts he's given us for worship. Worship is a communion. In it people join together and praise God as well as encourage one another. This even goes on throughout the liturgy. We speak the confession of sins together. We hear together Christ's servant announce that for Christ's sake you are all forgiven. The creed is spoken aloud like we will do following the sermon. We Christians confess our faith in God and we do this together. These things are vital to our worship. It's not because they are required or because they are done for the sake of tradition. They are vital because, through them, believers speak the Spirit to one another.

Offering God such heartfelt worship will keep us filled with the Spirit. The Spirit keeps us wise for salvation and leads to wise decisions in life. May we always live wisely and worship wholeheartedly and stayed filled with the Spirit.