

Ephesians

Chapter 5:15 - 21

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Ephesians 5:15-21

As we continue through this book, where Paul gives many specific practical applications, we should keep in mind that Paul first equipped us with instruction in sound doctrine and, building on that foundation, he gives instruction on how the church at Ephesus should live their lives. This section also precedes Paul's extensive section on specific relationships and the submissions within them.

15 See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise,

16 redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

- After Paul provides the instruction that they are not to have fellowship with the works of darkness but rather to expose them, he further instructs them to walk wisely. God has built the world in such a way that we are required to use our heads. Because we are surrounded by evil, we are faced with the necessity of discerning good from evil. We are to walk with our heads up and alert for danger. A fool will not anticipate peril; *Prov 13:16 "Every prudent man acts with knowledge, but a fool lays open his folly."* (NKJ)
- The phrase "...redeeming the time" is somewhat problematic. It's translation is difficult, but the concept to be understood in the verse is that we are to make excellent use of the time given to us because we are surrounded by evil. Another way of understanding the term "...because the days are evil." is, "...because we live in evil times." This begs the questions, "Am I making good use of the time God has given me?" "Am I spending my time on eternal or temporal things?" "What do I invest my time in?"

17 Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

- The instruction to understand the will of the Lord presupposes that this is possible. However, understanding the will of the Lord is not the same thing as having a divine agenda for each day, month or year of your life. God simply does not give us agendas, but He has revealed His mind in His word. Therefore, I take this verse to be an imperative to understand scripture. This can only happen through prayer, rigorous study and instruction.

18 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit,

- It would be wrong to think of God as a cosmic kill-joy. He is not looking for those having fun just so that He can tell them to stop. Those things which are enjoyable have come from Him. The problems usually arise when we misuse these good things. Here Paul gives us a brief instruction on the use of wine or alcohol (*application mine*) by giving us a prohibition against drunkenness; not drinking. A proper understanding of alcohol is not that the alcohol is inherently bad, rather Paul is warning us against the misuse of it.
- Some Christians have established a prohibition of alcohol for themselves and that is good. Others have done so as well, but theirs is a false piety.
- The last part of this verse is also problematic. It is expressed in the form of a command and is frequently interpreted as something that the believer must do. Too many Christians think of themselves as a jug or vase and the Holy Spirit as some kind of fluid that fills them up. They also think that they can drop the level of Holy Spirit in them through various sins. This is absolutely false. The Holy Spirit is not a fluid or commodity, He is a person. Upon conversion, Christ sends His Holy Spirit who indwells the believer and then is sealed as a guarantee of the day of redemption. See verse Ephesians 1:13-14. In Old Testament times the Spirit came upon men to accomplish various tasks. Now, as part of the new covenant, the Spirit takes up residency and

never departs.

1722 en (en); a primary preposition denoting (fixed) position (in place, time or state), and (by implication) instrumentality (medially or constructively), i.e. a relation of rest (intermediate between 1519 and 1537); "in," at, (up-) on, by, etc.:

KJV-- about, after, against, + almost, altogether, among, as, at, before, between, (here-) by (+all means), for (... sake of), + giveself wholly to, (here-) in (-to, -wardly), mightily, (because) of, (up-) on, [openly-], outwardly, one, quickly, shortly, [speedily-], that, there (-in, -on), through (-out), (un-) to (-ward), under, when, where (-with), while, with (-in). Often used in compounds, with substantially the same import; rarely with verbs of motion, and then not to indicate direction, except (elliptically) by a separate (and different) preposition.

4151 pneuma (pnyoo'-mah); from 4154; a current of air, i.e. breath (blast) or a breeze; by analogy or figuratively, a spirit, i.e. (human) the rational soul, (by implication) vital principle, mental disposition, etc., or (superhuman) an angel, demon, or (divine) God, Christ's spirit, the Holy Spirit:

KJV-- ghost, life, spirit (-ual, -ually), mind. Compare 5590.

- I believe the proper way to understand this command begins with a look at the Greek words, as shown above. The term "en" is translated a myriad of ways throughout the new testament. I believe that a more consistent way to translate this word would be "by" or "by means of". What this would teach us is that the Holy Spirit is not the substance of our filling but rather the mechanism or instrument of filling.
- This then creates an additional question, "What does the Holy Spirit fill us up with then?" A parallel passage in Colossians may give us insight. ***Col 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. (NKJ)***

19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord,

- The next three verses give a description of the behaviors manifest in one who has the Word of Christ dwelling in them richly.
- Note that the context of this verse is not corporate worship. This is an instruction to sing as part of our private worship. However, there is a valid application to be made to our corporate singing, I think it is important to note the typical lack of personal worship in song.

20 giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,

- Because we believe in the complete and exhaustive sovereignty of God, it is then possible to give thanks to Him always for all things. Additionally, we do so in the name of, or for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ.

21 submitting to one another in the fear of God.

- This verse sets up our discussion of marriage and other relationships. This is a broad command for all believers to be characterized as submitting to one another because we fear or revere God. This means that we are always deferring to one another and seeking the betterment of our neighbor or brother. This general command will be followed by specific instruction on how submission should look in a number of various relationships.