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The Spirit-filled Life and Singing; Ephesians 5:15-21

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Introduction – Last week we looked at the passage in Colossians 3 where Paul uses the terms psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Our main takeaway from that passage was a call to set aside our categories of traditional and contemporary, along with our individual preferences. Instead, let's pursue a vision of biblically-rooted song worship. Let's adopt new, better categories like older songs, newer songs, and the best songs. In other words, instead of trying to soothe everyone's preference of style, let's rather choose the songs that have the best lyrics. Let's sing words that richly fill us with God's Word. Older songs and newer songs that teach us the truths of God, Christ, and the gospel and that realign our hearts and minds with scriptural truth. If the lyrics bury sound doctrine in our souls, lift up Christ, magnify God, and declare the gospel, then let's sing those songs – old and new, with whatever style and accompaniment because in Christian singing it's the words that matter the most.

This week in Ephesians we find Paul using the same list of songs, psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, but in a different context and with a different emphasis. The point Paul is making is a call for us as believers to be filled with the Spirit of God. That is, to be walking in the Spirit and not in the flesh, for the Spirit to be primary in our lives rather than self. To be overflowing with the Spirit instead of sin. Paul then describes what it looks like to be filled with the Spirit by using 5 participles in vv19-21; addressing one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. Notice that 3 out of the four are in the context of congregational life. Coming together on Sunday to worship the Lord has a far greater impact on your spiritual life than we realize. God is working His Spirit in you during these times of gathered worship. Corporate worship is the primary context where God's grace is abundantly at work within our lives. It's not about legalism – you should come to church because that's what you are supposed to do. It's about life – gathering together is when the Lord equips and edifies and builds His church.

One more observation would be to note the direction of corporate worship – its for one another and to God. Addressing one another and submitting to one another both have an outward focus. In other words, our individual worship in the corporate setting is a blessing to our brothers and sisters in Christ. Singing to the Lord and giving thanks to God both have an upward focus. In other words, God is our audience. We sing to Him, giving thanks to Him – that’s why we can’t help but sing.

None of these are inward focused or me-focused. None of these are concerned with what I get or feel or like or prefer. Every one of them is either outward, for your good, or upward, for His glory. That’s the perspective for our worship. Let’s look now at how our worship leads us to the Spirit-filled life.

- I. A Spirit-filled Church Sings to One Another
 - a. Again we find that Christian singing is foremost a congregational activity. This is not popping in the ear buds and going for a solo walk while listening to your favorite Christian songs, as uplifting as that may be to us as individuals. Here Paul highlights the central role that congregational singing takes in the surrendering of our lives to leading of the Spirit.
 - b. In our private worship, we alone are uplifted. In our congregational worship, we uplift one another. When we sing the best songs, we are declaring together as a unified voice that we believe the things to be true, we affirm and cherish and cling to the eternal gospel, the glory of God, and salvation in Christ. Many voices become one voice.
 - i. There is a special blessing when we declare God’s Word together in song. We’re not alone. We are an entire body, a whole family, a gathered church – and we announce these things to be true. That’s the addressing one another part. I’m not the only one singing these words because I believe them to be true, but he is singing and she is singing and they are singing because we all hold these truths as life and salvation. We are in this together. We all believe, and therefore, we all sing.
 - c. We would also want to note that being filled with the Spirit is connected to the kinds of songs we sing. Just getting together and singing songs doesn’t produce Spirit-leaning in our lives.

- i. We could get together and sing Luke Combs or Post Malone songs and it might be fun but it wouldn't lead to the filling of the Spirit. That's why we want to sing the best songs when we do assemble together.
 - ii. Psalms – generally psalms are songs about God and His character. We've been studying the psalms on Sunday evenings. They declare the love and mercy and power and faithfulness of God. Ps 59. God is Our Strength
 - iii. Hymns – are generally songs that glory in Christ and the gospel. Hymns tell of the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Christ, and His return and reign. Hymns announce how the gospel transforms lives and fills us with faith and hope and joy and the promise of eternal life.
 - iv. Spiritual songs – generally sing of how the gospel informs and directs and empowers our lives. They sing about the church, faith through trials, and the certainty of salvation.
- d. It's when we come together and sing the best songs, we are filled with the Spirit of God.

II. A Spirit-filled Church Sings to the Lord

- a. Singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart. Our songs address one another in the sense that we all identify, agree, and affirm the truths we declare. But we sing to the Lord. He takes center stage. He is in the spotlight. Our worship is about Him, who He is, and all He has done for us in Christ.
- b. And when we sing to Him, we sing from the heart – not the head. We don't just follow the words on the screen and mouth them with our lips. But those words are speaking great, eternal, life-giving, soul-saving truth. Doctrine we believe. The Christ we have embraced. The gospel by which we live.
- c. Christian singing comes from the heart. It's not only congregational, in that since we are believers, we all sing. It's also from the heart, so when we sing, we sing with everything in us. We are the redeemed – let us sing so!
- d. I know we all love to hear Shane play the piano. Personally, I don't think anyone does it better. But when this many believers are in the same room, our voices should drown out the instruments in praise to

God. These things we sing are too precious not to sing from the heart!

III. A Spirit-filled Church Gives Thanks to God

- a. That's what's happening in the heart that gives rise to the singing to the Lord. He is so mighty and has proven Himself our strength. He is so faithful and has proven Himself faithful to us. He is so good and has proven Himself good to us. The gospel is so great and has transformed our lives, raised us from the dead, and seated us in the heavenly places in Christ. Christ has taken our sin, paid our debt, reconciled us to the Father, and given us a righteous standing before God!
- b. Not to mention all the thousands of ways He has provided and met our needs day in and day out.
- c. But this actually tells us something about the nature of corporate song worship doesn't it? Singing to the Lord, giving thanks to God. When we declare the truths of Scripture together in song, we are responding to God. We are declaring who He is and all He has done!
- d. I hear worship leaders and Christians talking about song worship and many times they describe it in the wrong direction as if in our singing we are trying to get a response from God.
 - i. Worship leaders talk of creating an environment for worship. Dim the lights. Have the instruments play soft and build loud. Sing in decrescendo and crescendo. Sing the same line over and over and over. Have the people raise their hands and move around a little. And if the audience will really get into it, the Lord will move. When you get goosebumps and have an emotional experience, that's when you know the Lord is moving. That's when you've worshipped.
 - ii. Listen to me carefully. God hasn't called us to create an environment for worship; He's already created the environment for worship – He sent His Son! Worship is not attempting to get God to move; God has moved! Worship is our response to His grace. Worship is not trying to get God's attention. We worship because He's already gotten our attention!

iii. We sing because we're happy. We sing because we're free. His eye is on the sparrow and we know He watches me!

IV. A Spirit-filled Church Submits to One Another

- a. Submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. As believers we are to submit to one another in all realms of life. In fact in the next verses, Paul gives instructions for the home; wife to husband, husband to wife, children to parents. Submitting to one another begins in the home and then branches out to the rest of our lives.
- b. So when it comes to singing in the church, what would it look like to submit to one another out of reverence for Christ? I would think at the very least it would look something like this: If singing this song edifies you and encourages you in the Lord, then let's sing this song together! Remember the direction is upward and outward.

Conclusion – Last week the lesson for us was to set aside preferences and adopt biblical categories for our singing. This week the lesson is about focus and perspective. May our singing be first to the glory of God and then for the good of one another. In so doing may we be a church filled with the Spirit of God!