

The Spirit-Filled Christian

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Well, it's a wonderful privilege to be a preacher, a minister of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, on a time like this season where we remember the wonder of the incarnation of God and Christ came to earth because he came to save sinners like you and me. To know that that message of the Gospel is perfectly sufficient for the spiritual needs of everyone who is under a crushing load, as we just sang, knowing the circumstances of many of you are difficult and there are immediate pressing challenges in what you are facing day by day as you come in here today, to know that we don't have to pretend with a pretense that everything is great simply because it's Christmas season and get swept up in the hypocrisy that that generates. But at the same time, not to simply bend under the crushing load as we just sang and give way to the fears and the sorrows of this life, but to be able to put Jesus Christ central in the midst of all of that and say, "Here is the sufficiency for your spiritual need. Here in Christ is the sufficiency that answers the guilt of your sin. Here in Christ is the sufficiency that answers your daily circumstances. Here in Christ is your hope for eternal life." Yeah, to be able to stand and proclaim that is a great, great privilege for us collectively to be able to know that, to know Christ, to receive him, to own him as our all in all, is a blessing beyond description.

So as we come to God's word here today, we can set aside, trusting in Christ, we can set aside the distractions of the day, the burdens of life, and just focus on Christ, focus on his word, and know that we have in Christ that which satisfies our every need. That's true. Christ said, "I am the way, the truth and the life." Everything about life and godliness is given to us in our Lord Jesus Christ; is revealed to us in Scripture. If you have Christ, you have all that you need. Period. End of sentence. End of paragraph. And I encourage you to rest in that and to rejoice in Christ as we enter into God's word this morning.

We're going back to the book of Ephesians 5 and I would invite you to turn there with me in Ephesians 5. As we speak about the glories of salvation, there is an incredible symmetry in the way that the individual persons of the Trinity executed the plan of salvation. God the Father appointed before time began a people that would be chosen, that would be saved. He chose those who would be saved before the time of creation began. Our Lord Jesus Christ came into the world and when he died on the cross, he secured the salvation certainly and infallibly for those that God had chosen. Then the Holy Spirit comes and applies that salvation to those and leads to Christ those that God had chosen. And in the Father, in the Son, and in the Holy Spirit, we have a unified

approach to salvation which guaranteed the certainty that you would come to Christ and now here you are in Christ and you're responding to that life that God has given you; that new life that he planted in your heart and looking forward to that eternal life that we'll share in heaven. And what happens in that window of time between now and the time that we enter into glory? Well, Scripture makes it plain that what's intended to happen, what's commanded to happen, is that you would live a Spirit-filled life. That your life would reflect the nature and character of the God who saved you by his Triune mercy and that in the Spirit of God's working in your heart, there would be a consciousness of the Trinitarian nature of your salvation that manifests itself in your daily life.

Let's look at verses 18 through 21 and you will find that each person of the Trinity is laid out in the nature of the Spirit-filled Christian life. We looked at verse 18 last time. I'll read it today simply to set the context. The Apostle Paul, appointed by Christ, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, God's perfect inerrant word, giving us that which is divine instruction, perfect for your life and godliness, says in verse 18, "do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit." Filled with the Spirit is the central command in this text and what we're going to see now in verses 19 to 21, are the consequences of that. It's the results of being filled with the Spirit and that's what we see in verses 19 through 21. What flows from a life that is filled with the Spirit; what marks a Christian who is under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Well, this is what it produces. Verse 19,

19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,
singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; 20 always giving
thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the
Father; 21 and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.

Now, in light of what I said about the Trinitarian nature of salvation, just notice how clear and plain it is right on the surface of the text. Be filled with the Spirit, the Holy Spirit. Be filled with the Spirit of God as you live your Christian life. And what will that produce in a vertical sense in your life? Verse 20, it will result in you giving thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father. And so a Spirit-filled life is going to be a Trinitarian focused life and that your mindful that God is your heavenly Father; that the Lord Jesus Christ is the one who reconciled you to him, who gave you access to God and so through Christ you offer your thanks to God for your salvation and the blessings of life, all of this flowing from being under the influence of the Holy Spirit of God. It makes perfect sense when you have any sense of the meaning of the Trinity, that the Spirit of God would be directing you not to a self-centered focused life, but he would be drawing you into that, bringing into the fullness of the greatness of the Trinity, as flavoring and influencing the way that you approach life.

Another aspect of it, just speaking in general before we get into the text, this all makes such perfect sense, is that if the Spirit of God is the one who leads people to a saving faith in Christ, then it would be evident, it would be apparent from the Spirit's own concern for the people of God and to deliver to Christ those for whom he died, then it would make sense that someone who was under the influence of that selfsame Holy Spirit would have

a concern for the people of God as well, wouldn't it? I mean, there's just a unity of purpose in the Trinity and if God has saved you and brought you into a saving knowledge of Christ and you are part of that Trinitarian purpose, then it is obvious that the fullness of the people who were the objects of his saving mercy would somehow have a bearing on what you're concerned about, what you love, and what you give your life over to. So there is just this wonderful Trinitarian focus to our text this morning, a wonderful Trinitarian focus to the Spirit-filled life.

Well, what we saw last time was we saw this command, "Be filled with the Spirit." We said that that's to be under the influence of the Spirit of God. Our text today shows us the practical impact that that has on your life as a believer. If you're going to be a Spirit-filled believer which you are commanded to be, then what does that look like? What can we see as the results of being filled with the Spirit? Well, the results are found in four characteristics of life. There are four characteristics of a Spirit-filled Christian that we're going to see laid out for us here this morning, and what you're going to find as you read this text is that it's horizontal in your relationships within the body of Christ, and it's also vertical in the heart orientation that you give to God. So what's the consequence? What's the characteristic of a Spirit-filled life? Well, it's really minor, you could say. I'm speaking foolishly here as Paul said one time in his own writings, I'm speaking foolishly. You say it's minor, it's minimal. All that it involves is your orientation toward an eternal God and your complete demeanor of life toward his people. In other words, speaking seriously now rather than by minimalization, this goes to the fullness of the way that you think about God and respond to him and it goes to the fullness of your life in the body of Christ, is involved and is invoked in a Spirit-filled life.

So as we come together as Christians today under the influence of God's word, we need to kind of buckle up our seatbelts and realize that what we're about to see here is permeating, the implications of this are flowing through every aspect of your being. That this is no minor incidental point of Scripture, this is the Lordship of Christ being asserted over your soul and you being shown in clear terms from God's word how this plays out in your life. This is a wonderful text. It's a shame that we are only going to spend one week on it here.

What are the four marks of a Spirit-filled Christian? 1. The first mark that Paul goes into is: Christian speaking. That's point 1: Christian speaking. Being filled with the Spirit influences what comes out of your mouth and not only influences what comes out of your mouth, it goes to the core of what you want to come out of your mouth when you see what is being said here. The first thing that Paul calls attention to is the fellowship of believers within the body of Christ here in verse 19.

Look at it with me. He said, "be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another," horizontal dimension, "speaking to each other in the body of Christ in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." Let's stop there for a moment. Notice the horizontal dimension. The first thing that he invokes as he's speaking is that, "I want you to realize that the way that the Spirit influences you, is that it influences your relationships in the body of Christ. It influences your perspective, the way that you think about your contribution to them." I

realize that most of you at one time or another in prior years, the whole nature of what passes for Christian ministry these days, is designed to put you at the center and let the church serve you and what do you want in a church. You know, the whole seeker sensitive movement was started by a survey designed where someone went out and said, "What do you want in a church? We'll give it to you." And the whole self-centered mindset develops and now you have a whole generation that has been nurtured and nursed on this thinking, "What I get out of church is the primary focus." Nothing could be more contrary to what it means to be a Spirit-filled Christian than to think like that. That is not the question at all.

You see, Paul comes and talks to us, instructs us, "You be filled with the Spirit," and then he leads us into what that means for our responsibility and our approach to life in the body of Christ. And what does he say? He says, "You speak to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." We come into the body of Christ, we come into corporate worship being mindful of the fact that what we are here for is to be an instrument of edification and encouragement to the Christians around us. That it's not, it's okay if I walk out of church today and don't receive any strand of encouragement whatsoever, the more important thing is that someone else has found blessing through my presence. Someone else has found blessing through what I had to say to them and the way that I spoke and cared for them. We really have to get away from that self-centered mindset that says, "What's in it for me?" Because listen, you did not become a Christian because Christ in heaven before his incarnation said, "What's in it for me?" He laid aside his glory. He came to seek and to save that which was lost. He put someone else at the forefront and laid aside his glories in order to come and offer himself as a sacrifice on Calvary for your sins.

Well, how is it, how is it, I mean, honestly, I'm asking for information, although I'm not inviting you to speak out verbally here, we want to do everything decently and in order. How is it that a Christ like that who laid himself down now has become, in his name the church has become that where people are self-centered and focused? I'm not talking about our church, I'm talking about broadly speaking. How is it that that act of self-sacrifice turned into something where people think the church is about their personal self-fulfillment? How did that happen? What a complete reversal of purpose. Well, thank God he has given us his word so that we are able to come and see the right perspective; that the perspective that collectively and individually we come together for worship today is that we're speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. In other words, beloved, a Spirit-filled Christian is someone who understands that their life is designed for mutual interaction with other Christians and that our relationships within the body of Christ are designed to edify one another; designed to encourage one another; that when we come together, as you approach and think about your life with other Christians, you realize that the central focus is not what you get out of it, but is there some way that I can be a benefit to the other person around me, the one that is sitting next to me? And that fundamental purpose redefines the way that you think about church; redefines the reason for your existence; redefines what you want on Sunday morning.

I realize, perhaps generally speaking, not addressing any of you in particular, I realize, although I very rarely think about it, it just comes to my mind now, that the tendency is sometimes to go out and critique the sermon or critique the music and come out and say, "Well, how did those guys do in their responsibilities on the platform?" Well, that's just a total travesty if that's what you think about going out. Rather, the self-evaluation that should be coming is, "What did I give? Was there somebody that I was able to reach out to? Was I able to speak? Was I able to serve in a way that produced benefit to someone else?" Boy, would it transform a congregation, would it transform a congregation if, can you imagine if there were several hundred people coming together or several thousand people coming together rather than saying, "What can I get out of it or what did I get out of it?" and rather saying, "You know, I'm coming to contribute here. I'm coming to be a blessing, not to receive one." Then incidentally you receive a lock of blessing beside, but it's not the primary focus.

You see, what we want, what the Spirit of God wants is for us to have an active engagement in one another's lives that is of benefit to them. We meet for mutual benefit. We meet to encourage one another. We meet because we're supposed to be together. We don't serve God alone. We don't walk alone with God and think that it's acceptable that, "I'm going to go out in nature and I'll sit in a deer hut hunting deer and that's where I'll worship God," as if isolation could carry out the purposes of the Spirit of God and what we're talking about here. That can't be, can it? Look at verse 19 with me again. Look at verse 19 with me again, "be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another." There is interaction. There's mutuality. There's edification that takes place and it is not the mark of a Spirit-filled Christian to stand on the sidelines and say, "I'll just come and I don't want anyone to talk to me and I don't want to talk to anybody." We've got to understand that that self-centered approach is not the Spirit-filled life. The Spirit directs us to engage with the people of God in a way that benefits them.

Look over at Hebrews 10, beginning in verse 24. Hebrews 10:24, we'll start in verse 23, it says, I know you laugh because I always do that. One day I'm going to tell you to turn to Revelation 6 and say, "No, let's go back to Genesis 1:1 and work our way up there," just to take all of this to its logical conclusion. Hebrews 10:23, "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some." You see it was a problem even back in the first century, wasn't it? People forsake the assembling together. Scripture says, "No, that's not what we do. Don't do that. I recognize the habit of some but that's not what we do as Spirit-filled Christians." What do we do? We're "encouraging one another and all the more as you see the day drawing near." Same thing, same principle there in Hebrews 10 as we're seeing in Ephesians 5. Stimulate one another. Encourage one another. Being assembling together.

So on a day like this where the room is pretty full and everyone is gathered together, praise God that you recognize the importance of assembling together; that you made the effort to get yourself here; that you got the little children together and dressed and cute and all of that, put together, and you made the effort to be here. Beloved, that is a great

starting point for exhibiting the Spirit-filled life. I am glad for that. I thank God for that. What you're doing here is important. Your presence here is a manifestation of a Spirit-filled life. Praise God for that. And as we get together and we are mindful of that, okay, so we have assembled together, that's a good start, well the question is, "Well, what do we talk about then?" Is there going to be a little bit of awkward silence? Well, now that we're here, now what? Well no, Scripture tells us. What is it that we talk about? Well, beloved, let me just encourage you. As you're thinking about your Christian life, as you're thinking about your involvement in the body of Christ going forward, to realize that there is a spiritual purpose for which we get together. That when we interact with one another, it's much more than, "Hey, how are you doing? Who dey?" That's right, I said that from the pulpit. Who dey? With the point of saying that it's more than that. It's more than just these earthly superficialities that we engage in. Look at verse 19 with me. We're speaking to one another in psalms and in hymns and in spiritual songs.

Now, these three terms are not easily distinguished from one another. Psalms comes from a word that refers to playing a stringed instrument with the fingers. The main thing that I would have you see is that there is a biblical, there is a spiritual focus to the content of our conversation with one another that Scripture calls us to. One another, contemplating a corporate gathering. Understanding for you and for me, that there is fellowship. There is mutual participation in worship together, even on a horizontal level, and that worship is not, when we gather together that we understand that, yes, central is the vertical focus, but realizing that God has called us together so that we would encourage one another. I need your encouragement and you need mine and we need your encouragement and you need ours, speaking individually and in the plural.

So we come together mindful of the fact that we are gathered together with the purpose and here's the thing, beloved, here's the thing, beloved, Spirit-filled Christian: is to realize that you individually have a part with that. You have a part in that, even if it's just you talking to one. Even if it's you just turning to the one person sitting alone and reaching out to them, or whether you have a more public role or you have multiple relationships to realize that that is the one of the key purposes of gathering together, one of the key purposes of being a Spirit-filled Christian, is your commitment to one another. And, you know, we can't help after hearing this but to walk out saying, "Okay, where is my life in this?" For many of you, you should walk away saying, "Well, praise God, apparently, even though it doesn't always feel that way, apparently the Spirit is influencing my life because I love to be with the people of God." Praise God for that. For some of you you'd say, "Wow, you know, really, my goal is to arrive just in time and to leave quickly and if I can get out without saying anything to anybody, that's a good Sunday for me." Well, it may be a good Sunday for you but whether it's a good Sunday for the Spirit of God in your life, we might need to ask a different question, huh?

We just need to realize, beloved, that this is commanded by God; that this flows from the command to be filled with the Spirit; that this is not optional. Christ as Lord, the Lord who laid his life down for your salvation says, "This is how I want my people to be." And as we come together and we say, okay, we raise the bar and we say there is a spiritual dimension to our conversations and in our interactions, and that I'm not content to just

come in and have a carnal mind and a few carnal words and then go out and continue my carnal life. That's not being filled with the Spirit. So we need to get in step with the Spirit.

Spirit-filled Christians speak about our common life in Christ. We talk about Scripture. We talk about the character of God. We talk about Christ and salvation. We talk about the doctrines of grace. We talk about how wonderful it is to belong to him and to have a future hope of heaven. And as you initiate conversations like that with me and vice versa, then there is just an elevating influence that takes place which is a reflection of the influence of the Spirit of God on your heart. I realize some of you are struggling but do you realize that in your struggle when you can speak about the hope of heaven, what a profound impact that has on young developing believers who perhaps haven't had the experience of dealing with the temptations of life that you have? We share each other's joys and burdens. There is just a Christian speaking that takes place that is informed by an understanding of what the Spirit of God is trying to accomplish. The Spirit of God is working to build up the body of Christ and you need to get into the current; you need to get into the stream of the work of the Spirit of God so that you're contributing to his work amongst his people rather than swimming upstream against it.

Christian speaking is one of the marks of a Spirit-filled Christian. It leads to Christian fellowship. Secondly, continuing on in verse 19 we see that the the Spirit-filled Christian is someone who is also marked by Christian singing. Christian singing and the musicians in here should be especially open and thankful for what God's word says here, but it applies to all of us as well. It's not isolated to those of you who are skilled musicians and those of us like me who don't have a musical bone in our body are exempted from this. No, look at what it says in verse 19, Christian singing. Verse 19, you're "singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord." The vertical dimension is now introduced into it, that our music under the influence of the Spirit of God, is lifted as an act of vertical worship to God to honor him for his great character; to honor him for his grace and our salvation; to praise him for his perfect Providence in our lives; to thank him and trust him that the outcome of our Christian existence on earth will be eternal life in heaven. So we sing and we praise him for that.

Notice, again, look at it again with me, "singing and making melody with your heart," from the fullness of your being, thoroughly engaged with your mind, with your emotions, with your intellect, thoroughly engaged in the process and elevating and as we come together realizing, "I am here to praise God and I need to put myself into this and this needs to receive my best effort in singing." And I realize for some of you like me your best effort doesn't look like and sound like it's too good, but that doesn't matter. It's what's coming out of the heart and it is a wholehearted heart response to God. Every Spirit-filled believer should find delight in singing his praise.

You know, I remember when one of the marks, you know, just to say that the Spirit produces music in the hearts of true Christians, I remember a missionary that I met many years ago. He's not a part of my life now. You know, our lives went separate ways, but he was a missionary to an unreached people group in the Pacific. I can't remember exactly where; not that it's important. But this was a dark culture that had no music even in their

culture and so he comes in with the other members of his team and they just start teaching the Bible chronologically and calling people to Christ and lifting up Christ in their midst. A place with no music background whatsoever and one by one these pagans start to come to Christ. He was astonished in that culture with no prior musical background that these new Christians, one of the marks of their new lives was they started writing songs and they started developing their own singing and their own music, having had no prior experience with that whatsoever. It was a mark, it was a signature stamp of the Spirit of God that music came out; that singing praise to God became a natural response to them, showing the supernatural nature of their salvation. Something that they had no prior experience with now was as natural to them as breathing and it started to manifest itself in that practical way.

I told you, when I was converted, one of the things I did was I went out and I bought a hymnal. I had never sung hymns before, not in a meaningful way, certainly not from my heart, but I had to have a hymnal. It was like the one at my church so that I could open up that hymnal and sing those hymns during the week. There had to be expression given to the music that was resident in my heart now that I belonged to Christ and he belonged to me.

So it's not just about skilled music in an earthly sense, it's about a Christ-centered, a God-centered worship that comes up out of your heart and says, "I've got to give expression to this." Praise God from whom all blessings flow. The only reason I don't start singing is I'm not willing to inflict that upon you as I stand here today, but you know what I'm saying. A joyful, Spirit-filled Christian, that has to find its expression in music and so it's worth asking yourself: do you love the hymns of the faith? Do you love music that is designed to give praise to God, not to express earthly carnality or simply human emotions? Is there a vertical dimension to the heart of music that's in your heart? That's part of being a Spirit-filled Christian, not limited to those who can play with skill on the platform. That's true for all of us.

So we see that biblically oriented corporate singing is crucial to true worship. Let me say one other thing about our philosophy of ministry at this exact point: one of the things we do here at Truth Community, one of the things that we gladly do is that we emphasize congregational singing. We want everybody singing from the hymnal. We deliberately do not make it the pattern, the focus, the attention to have a bunch of performers on the stage who are performing like they're at a concert while everyone stands and watches. That's not Spirit-filled music. Spirit-filled music is everyone is involved. Everyone is singing and making melody, not simply being a witness to others doing something on a stage. We participate in this together. Why? Because the same one Spirit is at work in all of our hearts and as we blend our voices together, we bring this together in a way that offers a corporate vertical praise to God. We understand that we are meant to be participants in that, not spectators. So we have an emphasis on congregational singing rather than individual performance from a stage. So that's why we do that and we just want to understand and be in step with the Spirit as we do.

So you can recognize a Spirit-filled believer by his Christian speaking: the way he interacts on a horizontal basis with the people of God. You can recognize him by his praise to God: his desire, worship, the voice of his heart lifts itself in song to God. That's a Spirit-filled Christian. Thirdly, you can recognize a Spirit-filled Christian, you can kind of check your life in a third way with what Paul says here. We can put it this way, thirdly: saying thanks. Saying thanks. So speaking, singing, thirdly, saying thanks. Paul next turns to the vertical dimension of gratitude as he writes here and this goes deep into the fibers of your spiritual heart.

Verse 20, "always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father." You recognize a Spirit-filled Christian by their continual and as you think about it personally, you can look at your life and assess the influence of the Spirit of God on your heart by assessing the spirit of gratitude that marks your life. Paul says, "always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father." You know, we talked about the difficulties that I know many of you are going through, you know, even in the midst of that, Scripture says there should be an element of praise, an element of gratitude that marks your life. You don't have to thank God for the trial. You don't have to thank God for the way that people have sinned against you, that would be perverse in one sense, but what you can do, you can thank God that, "God, your over all of this. That you work through even the bad things that happen to me and, Lord, I thank you for that." You can always give thanks in a way that says, "Lord, whatever else is happening here, thank God I belong to Christ. Thank God that my home in heaven is certain. It is reserved for me. As it were, there is a name plate engraved with my name at the banquet table of Christ. No one else is going to sit there but me. Lord, I thank you for that. Thank you for how you have brought me out of trials in the past. Thank you for the presence of your Spirit. Thank you, God, that we have a word, your word in written form to read. Thank you for the indwelling Spirit. Thank you for Christ. Thank you for Calvary." You know, once you get started, there's so much momentum you can hardly stop if you're thinking rightly about it. A Spirit-filled Christian is to be marked by an ongoing character trait of gratitude, "always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father."

Serious question, sincere question here. God's been good to us, hasn't he? God's been good to you, hasn't he? In ways that go beyond what you deserve, right? Isn't that true? Well, look, if that's true, you know, and you haven't received the just desserts that your sins deserve, shouldn't there be a fundamental settled attitude toward God that says, "God, thank you." As we sing the song, "Jesus thank you, the wrath of God has been fully satisfied and you're the one who did it. In your name I offer thanks to God, Lord Jesus." Isn't that appropriate? Isn't that the right way to be? Well, when you see that and when it starts to move your heart, then you realize that the Spirit of God is influencing you in the right direction; that this is the way a Christian should be, one who is filled with gratitude. We have every spiritual blessing in Christ. We have loving human relationships. Those of us that attend here at Truth Community, we have a church where we have a pretty good idea of what's going to happen Sunday to Sunday and it's not going to be some kind of weird thing that takes place. We have material blessings. We're going to heaven to see Christ face-to-face. Well, when you're oriented toward those things, all you can do is be

grateful and, beloved, sometimes it's going to require the mental effort and the spiritual commitment on your part to subordinate the things that drag you down and to put them aside from your mind long enough to say, "Lord, there are more important things. There are greater things for which I am thankful. These earthly things, it's not so great, but do you know what, Lord? I'm going to center on gratitude. I'm going to be focused on thanks here because there is a transcendent element to your grace and goodness and greatness in my life that I must thank you for. I can't stay silent. I can't withhold my thanks simply because of my earthly circumstances, God, because the way you have blessed me, the goodness that you have shown to me, transcends earthly life and therefore my gratitude will not be constrained by earthly sorrow. It will burst the bonds of that so that I give you the praise that you deserve." You know, it's the Spirit of God that makes you think that way and your response is to express it. To be thankful in good times and in bad.

Do you know what this means, beloved? Do you know what this means? It means that your gratitude toward God is absolutely independent of your circumstances. That your circumstances do not have to be aligned in favorable earthly ways for you to be grateful. Gratitude does not flow from your circumstances, gratitude flows from you being in a proper relationship to the Spirit of God. If you're a grouch as my wife's husband often is, if you're a grouch and you just kind of carry a dark cloud around you that everyone can recognize, if you're selfish and self-oriented that way, understand that you're like that and it has nothing to do with your circumstances and it says everything about your relationship to the Spirit of God. Why? Because if you are under the influence of the Spirit of God, you will be a grateful, thankful person, always giving thanks to God. So if you're unhappy and ungrateful as you sit here today, I want you to understand, you need to understand clearly from Scripture. I mean, it's right there on the surface of the page, that being filled with the Spirit leads to gratitude toward God. And if you're unhappy and grouchy, then you need to trace it back and say, "I don't need different circumstances or different relationships. You know, there is a spiritual problem here that I need to confess my sin. I need to get back into the word of God and relate rightly to the Spirit and then gratitude will flow from that." You don't have to wait until your circumstances are fixed to your liking to be thankful, in fact, you shouldn't. You should find yourself, you should be striving after expressing gratitude even in the midst of your sorrow because gratitude comes from a right relationship to the Spirit and that is independent of your circumstances. Do you all understand that? That's really important because understanding this shapes your whole character in a way that has nothing to do with present or future circumstances.

You know, I remember a long time ago I met an orphanage director in Mexico on a little short-term trip that was related to my seminary studies. I don't remember his name, but I'll never forget the encounter that I had with him. Drove for hours into the backwoods of Mexico and going through these country environments and come back and you find this orphanage that's in the middle of nowhere. I don't know how you would ever find it on a map. And, you know, we interacted with some of the kids and they are clean and well cared for, and I ran into the director of the orphanage and in my broken Spanish and his less broken English I said, "What do you think about this?" I got to know him a little bit. He had overseen this ministry for 25 years. His clothes were old. His face was weathered.

The facilities were modest and this is a place where there is no earthly recognition to be had. There is no financial flourishing that's going to take place for him in this ministry. I said, "What do you think about this? What do you think about all of this after 25 years?" I will never forget his response. In circumstances that would make most Americans complain, he immediately without hesitation said, "Oh, glory to God. Glory to God. I'm so grateful." What he was saying was, "I'm so grateful that I belong to Christ. I'm so grateful that I can care for these homeless children and protect them from the ravages of the world that would take advantage of them. In my obscurity," he didn't say it this way, I'm interpreting it now, in his obscurity, in his poverty, the first thing out of his mouth after 25 years of ministry in that environment was, "Glory to God. I belong to Christ and I get to serve him."

Well, that made me feel about that big, you know, because I'm thinking at that point in my life I'm saying, you know, if my earthly ministry leads me to obscurity and poverty, how what I respond to it? Would I be saying glory to God after all that? That's a pretty challenging question, isn't it? You know, has life led you to obscurity or poverty or difficulty? Beloved, you have every reason you need to still say glory to God because God is worthy of your praise and your thanks because of who he is, not how your circumstances have manifested themselves.

Why is it that we complain or fret when our circumstances aren't to our liking? Here's a different question: why is it that you get complacent spiritually when things are going well and you can just go on and just kind of get wrapped up in life and family and all these things and hardly give a thought to giving thanks to God for it all? Why is that? Well, in light of our text there's really only one answer. I'll state it as a question: could it be that our lack of conscious ongoing gratitude is simply a reflection that you and I aren't as filled with the Spirit as we think we are? That we're not as under the influence of the Spirit of God as we think? Complacency and indifference to God is the mark of someone who is not under the influence of his Spirit because his Spirit drives your thought to Christ and in that contemplation of Christ, you give gratitude and thanks to God the Father.

That's what the Spirit of God does, that's the mark of his influence. Before you walked into the corporate worship with the people of God this morning, at any point since the time you woke up to the time that we're talking right now, has there been any prior thought of giving thanks and glory to God? If there has been, good on you. That's a mark of the influence of the Spirit of God in your life, no matter what else you see, praise God for that. If the thank-o-meter has been on empty, well, you need to get back to relating to the Spirit of God in a proper way. This is just laid out here clearly in Scripture. So it's kind of searching, isn't it? That what comes out of our mouth horizontally would be God honoring to other believers. That there would be this heart of praise offered up to God, this gratitude offered vertically up to God. I know that as we talk about these things, we feel the ways that we fall short. Well, God convicts you in order to bring you back under his word and to have you get back to where you were supposed to be in the first place. It's an act of grace that he convicts you like this. To sanctify you. To set you even more apart from your own selfishness, from the world that never gives thanks to God. To set you

apart and to make you distinct in heart and in expression with these manifestations of Christian virtue that are the mark of everyone who is under the influence of the Spirit of God.

Well, there's a final mark of the Spirit-filled life. We said speaking, singing, saying thanks, now we come to a fourth and final one here in our text this morning and we'll call this one Christian submission. Christian submission. You know, I think that if we just started talking about the glories of Christ and just delineating and numbering out one after one all of the reasons that he's so glorious, if we were thinking rightly, the list would go on and on and on. If the ocean was ink and the skies were a scroll and all of us had a pen to write it with, we wouldn't have enough room to describe the glory of God and to write it all down. But, you know, central to the glory of the Gospel, central to the glory of Christ is this: Christ humbled himself in order to lay his life down for us at the cross. He left, he abandoned the glories of heaven which belonged to him by divine prerogative and said, "Do you know what? I'll step out of this. I'll take the clothes of a servant in human flesh and I'll go down and I'll enter into life and I'll live for decades in a way that is beneath, in one sense, my regal glory, in order that my life, that my flesh could be offered up as a sacrifice for my own people," for you and me. And he did that. Complete humility. A complete submission to his Father's will.

And as he did that, as he offered himself as that atoning sacrifice for our sins, he was doing something else as well. He was setting a pattern for us. He was showing us by his example how it is that you and I should approach ourselves and think about our own perspective on life. Philippians 2 talks about this and we have preached on that in the past: have this mindset about yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus who although he existed in the form of God did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, a thing to clutch to, but emptied himself by taking the form of a bondservant, becoming a man, going to the cross, going to death on our behalf.

Well, in that pattern, beloved, as we respond to that under the influence of the Spirit of God who intimately knows the Christ of God, look what the result of that is in verse 21. He comes back to the horizontal dimension and he says, "and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ." This verse here in verse 21, it's a hinge verse. Paul is now pivoting to a longer section that he's going to address in verses 22 through chapter 6, verse 9, about how submission works itself out in practical human relationships. First, however, before he does that, he states it as a general principle by which we live within the corporate body of Christ.

The word for subjection, look at verse 21, "and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ." This word for subjection has the idea of subordination. You arrange your life and your attitudes under someone else. This is the same verb that is used to describe the submission of soldiers to those of superior rank and so you get a sense of the order and the arrangement and a recognition of prior claim on your allegiances.

In this general statement, Paul is expressing the fact that Christians should have a ready deference to others in the church. That the needs of others would be of greater paramount

importance than my own. Again, turn over to Philippians 2. We need to see this. I hadn't planned to go here but I need to just make this point for you to see a biblical commentary on what Paul has in mind. He's talking about a whole mindset here, the way that you think about your place in the body of Christ and again we see that the self-centered seeker model of ministry leads people to exactly the opposite character of what Scripture calls them to do by telling them, "You tell us what you want and we'll give it to you." Okay, what do I want? Here's what I want, "I assert myself on the direction of this ministry by telling you what I want to come from it." Oh, oh, oh, that's so distasteful. By contrast, the biblical model, Philippians 2:3, "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others." The sense of who's important here, your mindset should be, who is important in the church? It's not me, it's you. I subordinate, I subjugate my own personal interest to what would be best for you is the idea. Be subject to one another in the fear of Christ. Be ready to defer. Be ready to serve. Be ready to contribute to what the other person needs.

So let me just lay this out as plainly as I possibly can with bad memories from other places, not in here, not at Truth, the people that I have encountered in other churches in other times to say this: an arrogant, demanding person is not a Spirit-filled Christian. That has no place in the body of Christ for someone to assert themselves, to be demanding, to be critical toward other Christians. That does not have a place in the body of Christ. Why? Because we're supposed to be filled with the Spirit. And what does the Spirit do? He leads us into the same kind of self-sacrificing humility that Christ himself manifested when he gave himself on the cross, and before that left the glories of heaven, and before that had that mindset to begin with that this isn't for me to keep my glory to myself, I can use this to the benefit of others. And that's exactly what he did. Fall on your face before the Lord Jesus Christ and give him glory because without his willingness to submit himself to that which was less than he deserved, you would still be in your sins.

So Paul says, go back to verse 21. You say, "Why should I be that way? Why should I set aside myself? You know, I can go down the street and find a place that will cater to my needs, right? Cater to what I want." Well, do what you may but first relate yourself to the Spirit who says in verse 21, "be subject to one another in the fear of Christ." Think about it this way: this word for "fear," profound reverence, profound awe mixed with such great love and devotion to Christ; respecting his great authority; loving him in response to the way that he first loved you in a response of fear to him. You live this way. You express this kind of profound reverence. You recognize that Christ commands you to this kind of life. That he set an example and that he will hold you accountable one day for your response. Wow.

So when you're under the influence of the Spirit of God, it leads you to a contemplation of the sufferings and the self-emptying of Christ and you realize that that has an influence on the way that I think and live. At home, yes. In the body of Christ, certainly. That this shapes my character. That this shapes who I am to be. And if you're given to being an assertive person, that can be okay, but just be careful who you are being assertive on behalf of.

"Be subject to one another in the fear of Christ." There will be times where it will seem like that is beneath you. Oh, beloved, when it seems like something is beneath you, fall on your knees and confess your sin of pride because what did Christ say? What did Christ do? Matthew 20:28, he said, "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." If our Savior, if our Lord, if I our Master, was a servant to others, then isn't it obvious that we as his disciples would simply do best to aspire to be like him? Isn't that obvious? This is undeniable. Once it's undeniable, all of a sudden you have plunged a dagger into the heart of your arrogant demanding spirit. You realize, "I can't be this way." Not after Christ, not after the Spirit.

So, Christian speaking, Christian singing, saying thanks, and Christian submission, all the marks of a Spirit-filled life. Now, do you know what that means if you're a Christian? We'll end on a high note here. Do you know what that means to you? That God commands this and this is what the Spirit directs us to and the Spirit lives within you, do you know what that means? It means that you can live this way. That you can be this kind of person as a Christian because the Spirit of God is in you and with you to enable you to live this way. Every resource necessary for you to manifest this godly life is already resident in your heart through the indwelling Holy Spirit. Bring yourself under his influence through Scripture, through confession, through obedience and what we'll see as you do that, are these marks coming out naturally as the overflow of your joyful heart.

Let's bow together in prayer.

I would have you deal with this one question in light of what we've seen today. Be honest, transparent before the Lord as you respond to it in your heart: are you a Spirit-filled Christian? Many of you, sure seems to me like you are and I give thanks to God for you. Perhaps you know the carnality of your own mind. You say, "I belong to Christ but, boy, this has shown me how carnal and selfish I am." Why don't you take a moment to repent before God and redirect the focus of your life in response to his word? For some of you, perhaps you're recognizing, "I am not a Christian at all. I've never loved Christ. I've never given myself to him. I've never repented of sin." Here's an invitation to you from Christ, "Come unto me." Christ calls you, commands you, "Come." The Spirit says, "Come. Come to Christ to be saved."

Father, seal these things to our heart. Make us like this. Bring the influence of your Spirit so powerfully to bear upon our church and upon us individually that these four marks of a Spirit-filled Christian would be undeniably evident in each of our lives starting today, starting right now, as we sing in response to your word. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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