

(25) MORAL STUPIDITY VS. THE SPIRIT
(SUNDAY, MAY 10, 2020)

Scripture Reading: Prov. 5:1-13; Eph. 5:15-21

INTRODUCTION

Some background information again:

Paul's ministry in Ephesus, Acts 19:1-41

Years AD 52-55.

Letter to the Ephesians and others in the area around AD 60.

We know that Ephesus was a wicked, demonically influenced area.

Acts 19:19 – 50,000 pieces of silver, the worth of the magic books burned.

Eph. 6:12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*.

Gospel took root by God's grace and power in that area.

The challenge was for believers to resist false teaching and to not go back to the old ways of sin and temptation.

In light of God's gracious power to give you life and light, don't be a fool. Don't be morally stupid! Be filled with the Spirit!

God is sovereign in saving sinners.

It is God's grace not our goodness that is the focus.

Only reason why you have turned to the Lord is because of His sovereign work!

Yet, this doesn't mean that we have no duty or responsibility.

In light of what the Triune God has done, how are you to live?

There is what we can call a pleading of Paul as he writes those he knew personally and those he never had met.

I beseech you... (4:1) - *exhort, admonish, persuade*

Surveys and statistics related to Christians.

Can you always trust them?

Two Barna surveys that I noted recently.

51% of Evangelicals don't know the Great Commission is found in Matthew 28.

Only 10% of Christian Twentysomethings have resilient faith.

The call of God's Word is obviously relevant for our own time.

In light of God's gracious power to give you life and light, don't be a fool. Don't be morally stupid! Be filled with the Spirit!

1] INTRODUCTION, PART 2

Our text - See then that you walk circumspectly... (5:15)

6th use of the verb walk in this section and the 8th time in this book.

Look at the context.

Ephesians 4:1 - Walk worthy of the calling with which you were called.

Emphasis on how you are to live in light of God's grace.

Call to humility, kindness

Consideration of the theology of unity

Victory of Christ and the gifts that He gives to His church.

Ephesians 4:17 - Do not walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk

Emphasis on true repentance.

Putting off the old man

Putting away lying

Guarding our speech

The call again to put away that which causes division

Call to kindness, love, and forgiveness

Ephesians 5:1 – Walk in love

Turning away from fornication, uncleanness, covetousness, filthy language

Ephesians 5:8 – Walk as children of light

No fellowship with unfruitful works of darkness

Might be a reference to evangelism and conversion in 5:13-14

Now again in 5:15 – Command to watch how we walk.

All of these calls are a reminder that we have been saved by grace not anything of our own goodness.

The call of God's word is to turn from self-destruction and self-centeredness and live life in communion with the Triune God and with His people.

2] FIVE COMMANDS

There are five direct commands given in verses 15-18 and then there are descriptions of what being filled with the Spirit looks like, vv. 19-21.

1) v. 15 – **See** – this is the main command

Matt. 24:4 And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you.

Heb. 3:12 Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God;

There is a question in Greek manuscripts and then translations.

Word **circumspectly** – connect with **to see** or **to walk**?

Word circumspectly – giving careful attention to something.

There is a standard. It is not just how you feel or please.

What a blessing we have in comparison to what Christians for over 1500 years enjoyed.

We have God's truth and so many resources.

Fools (v. 15) – just used this one time, **a-wisdom** (ἄσοφοι)

Someone who lacks the power of proper discernment.¹

But as wise – 22x NT; 1x Ephesians

Be careful to not be a foolish Christian. Be wise!

Related to this call and challenge is what we see in verse 16.

Redeeming the time, because the days are evil!

Four times Paul used this word redeeming – Galatians, Ephesians, and Colossians.

Galatians – Christ’s work of redemption

In Eph. and Col. Paul uses the verb in light of making the most of the limited time that God has given.

Col. 4:5 Walk in wisdom toward those *who are* outside, redeeming the time.

Information Age – yet incredible lack of understanding

Incredible time savings – yet enormous distractions

Spiritual problem at heart.

Walk in wisdom, don’t be a fool.

William Carey (1761-1834) – Founder of Modern Missions

An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens

Translated the Bible into – Bengali, Oriya, Assamese, Marathi, Hindi, and Sanskrit (6 different languages)

Translated parts of it into 29 other languages and dialects!

Helped put together grammars for Bhotia and six other languages.

Helped establish the first theological university in Serampore (west Bengal).

Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God.²

2) Do not be unwise, morally stupid, v. 17

Different word used here – unthinking.

¹ BDAG, s.v. “ἄσοφος,” 144.

² [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Carey_\(missionary\)#cite_note-brit1-2](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Carey_(missionary)#cite_note-brit1-2)

Francis Foulkes describes this word as moral stupidity in action.³

We do not save ourselves, but it is possible to make decisions that are morally stupid.

I believe that moral stupidity is at the foundation of much unbelief and rebellion.

3) Contrast – Understand the will of Jesus Christ, v. 17.

Look back to verse 10 – finding out what is acceptable to the Lord.

Romans 12:2 - that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Francis Foulkes notes that Paul repeatedly presents this seeking to **know**, **understand**, and thus **to do** the will of God as a priority for the Christian's daily walk.⁴

How do we know the will of Christ?

- Clear revelation of God's Word
- Application of clear commands of Scripture
- Thinking and praying about how we are to live
- Seeking godly counsel from other believers

Prov. 3:5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart,

And lean not on your own understanding;

6 In all your ways acknowledge Him,

And He shall direct your paths.

4) Do not be drunk with wine, v. 18

This is the only command like this in the NT, though the NT uses three words that relate to this subject.

Our Independent Fundamental Baptist Brothers most often read this as do not drink wine.

Scripture commands do not be intoxicated by wine, beer, alcohol or other substances.

This relates certainly to any other way of trying to escape reality through the use of drugs.

The abuse of alcohol is a sad testimony for Christians.

³ Foulkes, 155.

⁴ Francis Foulkes, 155.

1 Cor. 11:21 For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of *others*; and one is hungry and another is drunk.

There is some question about the background of this command.

The best context is what we see in this passage – the call to wisdom and prudence cannot fit with the abuse of alcohol.⁵

1 Thess. 5:6 Therefore let us not sleep, as others *do*, but let us watch and be sober. **7** For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. **8** But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and *as* a helmet the hope of salvation.

Rom. 13:13 Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. **14** But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to *fulfill its* lusts.

Recall Acts 2.

What were the apostles accused of doing on the Day of Pentecost?

Acts 2:13 Others mocking said, “They are full of new wine.”

Peter’s response included:

Acts 2:15 For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is *only* the third hour of the day.

5] Be filled with the Spirit, v. 18.

So, in line with the contrast we find in other parts of Scripture, we are to be filled with the Spirit.

This is the only time this command is found in Scripture, however we find similar commands.

1Th. 5:19 Do not quench the Spirit.

⁵ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, vol. 42 of Word Biblical Commentary. Accordance electronic ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 344.

Gal. 5:16 I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

Gal. 5:25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

Eph. 4:30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

So how is a believer to be filled with the Spirit?

We cannot make ourselves filled with the Spirit through our own actions.

If you are a believer, then you have the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit does not need our permission to do His sovereign work.

But in light of God's grace, in light of the Holy Spirit's work, we are to live in such a way that shows the work of the Holy Spirit.

God's sovereignty does not mean you have no responsibility.

The NET Bible traces the language that Paul uses throughout Ephesians related to filling.

(1) In Eph 3:19 the 'hinge' prayer introducing the last half of the letter makes a request that the believers 'be filled with all the fullness of God' (πληρωθῆτε εἰς πᾶν πλήρωμα τοῦ θεοῦ). The explicit *content* of πληρόω is thus God's fullness (probably a reference to his moral attributes).

(2) In 4:10 Christ is said to be the agent of filling (with v. 11 adding the specifics of his giving spiritual gifts).

(3) The author [Paul] then brings his argument to a crescendo in 5:18: Believers are to be filled *by Christ by means of the Spirit with the content of the fullness of God.*"

Like what we see also in Galatians, I think what we have described in verses 19-21 are not steps to be filled with the Spirit, but what that fruit should look like.

3] FIVE PARTICIPLES/DESCRIPTIONS, vv. 19-21

Looking at verses 19-21, I think we can say these are things that we should seek.

This is what being filled with the Spirit should look like in this particular context.

One commentator writes:

Drunkenness leads to disorderly and dissolute behavior, but being filled with the Spirit produces very different results – praise, thanksgiving, and, when the participle of v 21 is also included, mutual submission.⁶

There are five verbs, participles, that are used in verses 19-21. Three are related to words and worship – speaking, singing, and making melody.

Another related verb is giving thanks.

The fifth verb, submitting, is a transition verb but it also connects back to the start of chapter 4.

Let's consider these verbs a little more.

The first verb is that of **speaking**.

speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.

This verb speaking is what is used earlier in 4:25 – Let each of you speak truth with his neighbor.

We normally think of singing hymns, psalms, and spiritual songs and that is part of the context, but the focus first is that God's praise and truth must be on our lips.

The context here could be that of a worship service.

I don't think we have to just restrict it to formal worship.

Hopefully God's truth, the wonders of the God we serve, come from our lips in other contexts and situations.

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.

Notice the three-fold description – psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.

Psalm - used 71x in the Greek New Testament in the headings of the Psalms.

⁶ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, vol. 42 of Word Biblical Commentary. Accordance electronic ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 345.

Hymn - used 6x in headings in the LXX and 7x in the body of the Psalms.

Spiritual Song - Spiritual song does not seem to be found in the LXX. (Song from the Spirit)

I don't think we can use this verse as an argument for the exclusive use of the Book of Psalms in our worship as some church traditions use.

But certainly, the book of Psalms is the great foundation for worship and the praise that God deserves.

You will find much discussion on these three words in commentaries.

MacArthur suggests the following definitions:

psalms. Old Testament psalms put to music, primarily, but the term was used also of vocal music in general. The early church sang the psalms. **hymns.** Perhaps songs of praise distinguished from the psalms that exalted God, in that they focused on the Lord Jesus Christ. **songs from the Spirit.** Probably songs of personal testimony expressing truths of the grace of salvation in Christ.⁷

Giving thanks is the next verb that should describe us.

Notice the breath of this command – always giving thanks for all things.

Thankfulness is stressed so often in Scripture because it is central to our response to what God has done.

You can't pay God back.

You can't say, well, I will show you how saving me was a good move.

Really, the only proper response is thanksgiving for your grace given to me totally undeserving.

Thank you for all the other gifts you have lavished on me!

May your life be characterized more and more by thankfulness through the Spirit's work in your heart.

Finally, we have in verse 21 – submitting to one another in the fear of God.

⁷ MacArthur Study Bible.

- Connects back with the start of Eph. 4
- Prepares the way for Eph. 5:22-33; the call given to wives and husbands.

Submitting - Used in a military sense of soldiers submitting to their superior or slaves submitting to their masters. The word has primarily the idea of giving up one's own right or will; i.e., to subordinate oneself.⁸

CONCLUSION:

In light of God's gracious power to give you life and light, don't be a fool. Don't be morally stupid! Be filled with the Spirit!

- We must hear the commands of Scripture, but we must never lose sight of God's grace to sinners.

Foolishness

Wasted time

Abuse of alcohol or other substances

Not being filled with the Spirit

Very little focus on praising, giving thanks to God.

May the Lord protect and keep us for His glory!

Prayer

Hymn 476

BENEDICTION – 2 PETER 3:17-18

You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; but grow in the grace and

⁸ Cleon L. Rogers Jr. and Cleon L. Rogers III, *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament*, Accordance electronic ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), paragraph 33036.

knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever.
Amen.