

Always More in Christ

Every Word in Ephesians

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Bible Text: Ephesians 5:18-21

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Heavenly Father, it's such a joy to be your child. Even as Alan was mentioning earlier, to be loved by the Creator of the universe and not just to be loved in a half-hearted way but, Lord, we know that you love us with an everlasting love. If we would go before the beginning of the world, we would see that you are choosing us, you are choosing believers to be part of your family; in love you predestined us Ephesians says. Lord, if we look at the cross and we look at Jesus, we see thousands of years ago, you loving us in this stunning way where you actually punish your own Son for the crimes that we have committed, for the sins we have committed. And Lord, if we look at our life, we look back at our life and we see the ways in which you've loved us as you've made us part of a church, you've given us the Holy Spirit who has opened up our eyes and given us faith, you have given us your word, Lord, and you've continually disciplined us and drawn us closer to yourself. Lord, we look forward thousands of years, we look forward millions of years, if we could somehow time travel to millions of years in the future, what would we see but we would see you loving your people with an everlasting love. And God, we just want to respond to all that love today by loving you back and so we would pray that you would fix our attention on the great work of Jesus Christ that your Holy Spirit would, Lord, help us to think clearly as we study your word and we hear you speak and that we would walk away from here if we're believers, more assured of how for us you are, Lord, with a greater understanding of your love and a greater love for you.

Lord, we also want to ask if there is anyone here who doesn't know you, that this would be the very day when you open their eyes to the greatness of what you have done in Jesus Christ and that, Lord, you draw them to yourself in repentance and faith. We pray this in Jesus, your name and for your glory. Amen.

As you know, we've been walking our way through the book of Ephesians and so if you'll take your Bibles and turn with me to Ephesians 5 and we're going to look again at verses 18-21. The Apostle Paul writes,

“18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, 19 addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, 20 giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, 21 submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.”

I've found that when you talk to people about church and I'm sure you've found this as well, that when you talk to people about church and maybe you're telling them a little bit about your church, that they sometimes ask all different kinds of questions. Sometimes the questions they ask seem like funny questions and sometimes they'll ask you questions that seem like good questions and sometimes they'll ask you questions that at first seem like funny questions but in reality are pretty good questions. I think for me one of the questions that people ask that is a little bit like that when they talk to me about the church, sometimes people ask, “Is the Spirit of God at work at your church?” They want to know: is the Spirit at work? That can seem a little bit like a funny question because what pastor is ever going to say that the Spirit of God is not at work at his church? Certainly not a pastor who's concerned about what the Bible has to teach.

On the other hand, though, it can be a good question. It's not just a funny question. It can be a good question for a whole lot of reasons. For starters: we are desperately dependent on the Spirit's work. We, as a church, desperately need the Spirit of God to be at work. We cannot accomplish anything that matters as a church apart from the Spirit of God's work. The Bible and a book like Ephesians, really, would be an incredible burden to us as a church if we came week after week after week and the Spirit of God was not at work in this church. The Bible and the book of Ephesians would be an incredible burden on our back because all throughout this book Paul's been describing God's great goal for us as a church and how God is calling on us to live as a church and it's huge, really. Think in your mind throughout the book of Ephesians: Paul has told us things like, “God has a great plan of presenting us to himself holy and blameless and above reproach.” He's told us even in chapter 5 that we are to be imitators of God which is a shocking command.

The Apostle Paul has told us as a church that we need to be like God and he's exhorted us in chapter 5 as we've studied this chapter, to be radically different than the people around us, specifically, you remember, he's called us to be sexually pure. He says there shouldn't even be a hint of sexual immorality in the church and he's told us to turn from greed and he's told us that our conversation needs to be different. Then he goes on to say in verses 15-17 of chapter 5 that we are to make the most of every opportunity. He acknowledges that the days in which we live are evil, we know that, and Paul says, “In evil days, because the days are evil, we need to grab hold of every single opportunity we have as a church to glorify God and to do people good.” He tells us we are to understand what the will of the Lord is, understand what God wants for our lives and all of this is very

exciting: to be holy and blameless, to be like God, to be different than the world, to know what God wants for my life, to make the most of every opportunity.

It's all very exciting but it is kind of overwhelming when you start to think about it because the question is: how in the world are we ever going to be able to do all of that? I know me and I know a little bit of what God's like, how am I going to be like God? I know us and I know a little bit of what the world is like, how are we going to be sexually pure? How are we going to stand before God holy and blameless and above reproach? How are we going to accomplish all these different commands that Paul describes for us in the book of Ephesians? I think an important part of Paul's answer is found in the work of the Spirit in terms of our everyday holiness. It's meant to be found in what Paul talks about when he describes in verse 18 the importance of being filled with the Spirit. An important part of the way, as one man puts it, that we fulfill God's great purpose for our lives and for our church is by being filled with the Spirit continually which is why this is a pretty good question: is the Spirit of God at work? Because if the Spirit of God is not at work doing this in us, the whole rest of the book of Ephesians cannot be fulfilled. If the Spirit is not at work in this way, if as someone has said, if you could somehow delete verse 18 from Ephesians 5 about the Spirit filling believers, then everything else in this book would become legalistic and actually pretty much impossible.

The problem is not with people asking you, "Is the Spirit of God at work?" That's a pretty good question if he's filling the church. The problem instead is sometimes with the way they try to go about answering it because they're often looking to things as proof of the Spirit of God's work that are very different than what Paul described as evidence of the Spirit of God's work. This is one of those questions where there can be a lot of confusion about. What does it mean for the Spirit of God to fill a church? What does it look like in a church, in a community, when the Spirit of God is really at work? There are a lot of people who are answering that question in a way that's very different than how the Apostle Paul does here. What we're going to see as we look at this passage is that one of the primary proofs that the Spirit of God is really at work in a church is when the lifestyle of believers in that church and the relationship of the members of that church are being radically transformed from what they were before they were saved, to something that looks a whole lot more like Jesus Christ. In other words, as we look at our church and we ask, "Are we being filled with the Spirit of God the way we should?" what we're going to see we need to look for, what we need to look at, is if we as a people are delighting more and more in Christ and experiencing more and more joy in Christ and becoming more and more like Christ Sunday after Sunday after Sunday.

That's basically the whole theme of what we're going to be seeing today and to show you that, I want us to look at this passage, verses 18-21 of Ephesians 5, and consider what does it mean to be filled by the Spirit and what it looks like for us as a church to be filled by the Spirit by thinking about three things. First of all, you'll see in this passage, I want us to look at the comparison that Paul makes. Second, we're going to look at the command that Paul gives. Third, we're going to look at the characteristics that Paul describes in Spirit-filled believers. So we're trying to get our minds around: what does it really mean for a church to be filled with the Spirit.

To answer that question, we're first of all going to look at the comparison Paul makes. The comparison Paul makes, we talked about this last Sunday, is at the beginning of verse 18 and so I'm just going to mention it again because it's so important. This comparison, you know a comparison or a contrast, is basically the setup for the rest of the verse and so if you're going to understand the rest of the passage, it helps to begin with this comparison. When Paul says "and do not get drunk with wine, which is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit" he's making a comparison. It's probably better to say he's making a contrast. And it's a contrast that at first seems a little strange for us. I understand that we're not supposed to get drunk with wine and I understand that we're supposed to be filled with the Spirit but why does Paul mention, this is the question you need to ask yourself as you study God's word, why does Paul mention these two things back-to-back? Why does he say "and do not get drunk with wine" and then in his mind he thinks that is an appropriate contrast to being filled with the Spirit?

What I hope you saw a little last week as we thought about this, is the reason Paul mentions these two commands back-to-back as a "put off" and a "put on" is because he's really describing two radically different kinds of lifestyles. He's describing when he talks about getting drunk with wine and he's talking about being filled with the Spirit, he's talking about two radically different ways of living. The first way of living, "do not get drunk with wine," is a foolish lifestyle. You remember if you look down at the text how Paul commanded us in verse 15, he says, "Look carefully then how you walk. Not as unwise but as wise." Then in verse 17 he says, "Therefore do not be foolish." This way of living that he describes at the beginning of verse 18 is just an expression of how a foolish person lives. It's how a person who doesn't understand the gospel and how it connects to his life lives. He's consumed with the desire for earthly pleasure. The days are evil, the world is wicked and so how does he respond to the fact that the world is wicked? He is consumed with a desire for pleasure. That's getting drunk with wine at its core; that's what you're doing when you get drunk with wine, you're cramming your face with pleasure. Getting drunk with wine is an expression of a foolish kind of lifestyle where a person's appetite for earthly pleasure is out of control or maybe a better way to say it: it's where a person's appetite for earthly pleasure is the thing that controls him. That's why Paul, the next thing he says, he says "don't get drunk with wine for that is debauchery." Do you know what "debauchery" means? It means "wildness." Paul says, "That's living like an animal." Being controlled by a desire for earthly pleasure is living this life in a foolish way like an animal.

They are thirsty, these people, and the thing they look to to satisfy their thirst is earthly pleasure which is why this is such a good place for us to start as a church. When we think about: is the Spirit of God working in this church? here's the question we need to begin with: where as a church are we looking to for alternate satisfaction? We're talking about control. Is the Spirit of God filling this church? Well, what is it that is really in control of what we do and what we think and the way we live our lives out? Is it the same thing as the world? A desire for pleasure, earthly pleasure? Is our appetite for earthly pleasure what controls us? Is that the center of our lives? Are we controlled by a lust for more? We need to ask that, we said, because there's a lot of religious activity that is trying to use

God the same way a drunk uses alcohol. A drunk looks to alcohol and stuffs his face with alcohol because of his passion for pleasure now and that's the way many people are in terms of their relationship with God. The reason they're excited about church, the reason they come to church, why they do what they do at church is all about pleasure now. How can I use God to get what I want now?

What happens when we're controlled by earthly pleasures and not the Spirit, it produces chaos in our lives and in our relationships. Paul says it's debauchery. It leads to wildness. It's kind of like, I think, if you can imagine you enter a room, there's a lot of people, this is the foolish lifestyle, this is the way many people are living in their life, it's the opposite of being controlled by the Spirit. But there are many people, it's sort of like if you enter a room and you can imagine in this room there are all kinds of instruments: there is a drum, there is a guitar, there is a piano, there is a keyboard, there is a trumpet. And these people enter the room and with the foolish person, the foolish people, it's like they go into the room and they're taking these instruments which could make beautiful music but they're going wild just playing these instruments as loudly as they can with no clue how the instruments are supposed to work and that's what's happening in our world. God has filled this world with all sorts of instruments that give him glory and are intended to bring us pleasure but the world doesn't know how to use them in a way that honors God and so what we hear is chaos, chaos. Loud crazy chaos.

One of the ways we can tell something is happening in our church is that we are starting to stop misusing the instruments God's placed in this world and that loud crazy chaotic noise is turned down a bit in our lives and in our relationships. Meaning, more specifically, that the church that is filled with the Spirit has turned and is turning from being controlled by desire for earthly pleasures like alcohol. They're not foolishly trying to find ultimate satisfaction in things that are not satisfying and instead they're being driven by a thirst for something that does satisfy, something that does last, something that is more significant than earthly pleasure and that is the gospel, God and the person and work of Jesus Christ.

So, if we want to know if we are filled with the Spirit, the first place to look is at this comparison. What is controlling you? What is it that controls you? The days are evil, where do you turn to for satisfaction? Are you stuffing your face with more and more earthly pleasure now, is that what controls you? Well, that's the opposite of a life that is controlled by the Holy Spirit, filled with the Holy Spirit. Secondly, think with me about the command Paul gives. The comparison is between getting drunk with wine and what? The command that Paul gives. Now, in our text, Paul says what? He says "but be filled with the Spirit." Really a better way to translate that would actually be "keep being continually filled with the Spirit." Paul is not talking so much about a one time event. In fact, one way you could translate this would be "be being filled with the Spirit." Don't ever get drunk with wine but continually be filled with the Spirit. Sometimes people think when they hear "filled with the Spirit" they almost think of just a one time zap, a one time event, a moment of ecstasy. Paul here when he talks about being filled with the Spirit, it's important, he's not just talking about a one time event, he's actually talking about a lifestyle. As one of my former pastors has put it, he says, "When Paul commands

us to be filled with the Spirit, we're not talking about some kind of momentous experience; we're not talking about some kind of euphoria; we're not talking about something that zaps you out of nowhere; we're not talking about 'being anointed.'" Rather, we're talking about a constant way of life, a constant reality, be being kept continuously filled with the Spirit."

I think that's important to understand otherwise you might think of being filled with the Spirit as something like a moment of just complete thoughtless ecstasy that you experience somehow at church when really when Paul talks about being filled with the Spirit, he's talking about something that's deeper than that, something that's more profound than that. He's talking about a lifestyle that we pursue as a church. You see, the idea behind being filled with the Spirit is not like what happens at a petrol station and maybe some of you think of it this way but it's not. You know, when your car runs out of fuel? Sometimes people sort of think of it like this: we have some of the Spirit and we need to go to the spiritual petrol station on Sunday and get some more fuel so more of the Spirit can fill us back up so we can run throughout the week. That's not what Paul is talking about. That's not what he means. It can't be that because when you're saved, you are given the Spirit of God. Paul told us that back in Ephesians 1. Remember, he said this is one of the blessings of being saved. You are sealed with the Spirit. In fact, when you're saved, one of the images the Bible uses to describe what happens to you is you are baptized with the Spirit. You may have heard of the baptism of the Spirit. That word "baptism" means "immersed." It doesn't even mean "sprinkled" there' it definitely means "immersed." You are baptized by the Spirit.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12:13 that's something that happens to all of us. We have all drunk of the same Spirit; we have all been baptized into one body by the Spirit. We are all indwelt by the Spirit of God and it's not like that goes up and down, you have a little bit of the Spirit today, a little bit less tomorrow. That guy has $\frac{3}{4}$ of the Spirit, you only have $\frac{1}{2}$ of the Spirit. No, no. No, we're all indwelt by the Spirit and that's a gift God's given to you on the basis of the work of Jesus Christ. Grace. If you are a believer, you have the Spirit. When Paul talks about being filled with the Spirit, he's talking about coming under the influence of the Spirit's power, yielding to the Spirit's control. In other words, when Paul talks he uses this word "being filled." You don't want to think of being filled the way you might think of filling a glass of water. That's not the greatest image for being filled with the Spirit because and this is a quote, "the word here 'filling' speaks not of filling up but filling through." So the contrast would be the difference between filling up a glass with water and filling the sail of a sailboat with wind. That's a very different kind of reality. One just sits there, the other doesn't just sit there. Water in a glass is just static, it stays in its place. Sails though that are filled on a boat, they push, the wind pushes the boat along. We're not talking about being filled up with the Holy Spirit as if that were some kind of momentary experience but rather we're talking about living an entire life that is literally carried along, moved along by the Holy Spirit like wind fills a sail to move the ship along. This filling when Paul talks about being filled by the Spirit, this command, it's talking about an influence that dominates your life. It's talking about control. It's kind of like what happens when a drunk is filled with wine. When you're drunk with wine, you are controlled by that wine. That's a picture of what it means for us

to be filled by the Spirit; it means we're dominated or controlled by the influence of the Spirit. As a church, we're not controlled by some sort of earthly pleasure like alcohol, but instead we're controlled by the Spirit of God.

Now, I think maybe one of the problems when we talk about a continual lifestyle that is filled by the Spirit, one of the problems that comes up very often, being under the continual control of the Holy Spirit, when people think about that and I don't know about you, maybe you think about it this way, but sometimes people are so focused on one kind of supernatural event, one kind of supernatural experience, they can only picture being filled by the Spirit as speaking in tongues or walking around and pointing your finger at a chair and somehow being able to lift that up out of there. They can only think of these sort of shocking miraculous events and that's the only image that can come into their minds when they think about what would it mean to be under the continual control of the Spirit. And what happens when you think of being filled with the Spirit that way is that you miss out on a whole other kind of supernatural experience. It's not less supernatural than that and it's just as profound as that, much more profound and one that I think a supernatural experience that is more important than being able to lift a chair with your finger just looking at it. Certainly.

And it's one that Paul is actually talking about here. There were some unique times throughout the history of salvation where God just picked up a man and caused him to do miraculous things that he couldn't do on his own. There definitely were times throughout the history of salvation when God did that but that's not what Paul is talking about when he says we as a church need to be filled with the Spirit. You don't need to go around feeling like, "Aw, maybe I'm not filled with the Spirit because I didn't have this momentous experience." Because that's not what Paul is getting at with this image of being filled by the Spirit. Instead, you know what is a characteristic of a person who is being filled with the Spirit? Do you want to know what it means? What Paul is describing? It's a church that is focused on Jesus Christ, that has a delight in the gospel of Jesus Christ. That's supernatural, when there's an individual and you've met these guys, some of you are these guys, I know you. You meet individuals and you talk to them and it's like they're bursting with love for Christ and you talk to this other guy and Jesus could not be more boring to him. But then you talk to this guy who's just like this other guy, they're both people, but this guy is bursting with a love for the gospel. This is what tastes good to him, tastes sweet to him.

That is a supernatural work of God and that is what Paul is meaning when he talks about being filled with the Spirit. I can say that with confidence to you because of what Paul has said. If you look back at Ephesians 3:14 and following, I think we find just a great description of what it means to be filled by the Spirit in Ephesians 3:14 and following. Paul's command in Ephesians 5, I think, is based on his prayer request in Ephesians 3. Now, listen to this prayer request, look at it, look at what Paul wants for us as a church. Paul says,

“14 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, 16 that according to the

riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith - that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”

What is Paul getting at there? Look at it. He says he wants us to be supernaturally strengthened with power through the Spirit in our inner beings. Now, what is that? Being supernaturally strengthened with power by the work of the Spirit? Do you know what that is? That's being filled with the Spirit. That's being filled with the Spirit when you're supernaturally strengthened by the Holy Spirit of God. Look at this, look down at the text again, Ephesians 3 there. What happens if you're supernaturally strengthened with the power through the Spirit? This is so cool. What does Paul say will happen to us as a church? He says, “I want you to be supernaturally strengthened with power through the Spirit in your inner being so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.” Now, what does that mean? He's writing to believers so he's not talking about salvation there, instead he's talking about Christ impacting more and more of your thoughts, desires and actions. When you are supernaturally strengthened by the Holy Spirit in your inner being, when you're filled with the Spirit, you begin living a Christ-centered lifestyle. Your life revolves around glorifying Christ and making Christ look great.

That's what it means to experience the supernatural power of the Spirit and you know what? I wonder if you've experienced that? I wonder if you've experienced that? Have you ever been amazed by the great love of Christ? Has there ever been a time when Christ is everything to you? Not just, “I go to church and I'm nice to people,” but you are filled with the Spirit of God and you've been strengthened so that you love Christ, your life centers on him and you want every area of your life: your work, your politics, your music, you want it all to be about the glory of Christ. When you see a people who are supernaturally strengthened by the Spirit, who are filled with the Spirit, what you see are a people who are focused on Christ and not themselves. They're bursting at the seams with love for others because they're overwhelmed by God's love for them. When you see a people who are filled with the Spirit, you see a people who are dazzled by the person and work of Jesus Christ and they're growing in their likeness to him.

Sometimes I almost feel like as a pastor, I want to get on my knees and plead with you not to turn to empty earthly pleasures, not to look to earthly pleasures as the thing that will satisfy you because it will not. It will make you into a wild person. Instead, turn from trying to find your ultimate satisfaction in earthly pleasures to finding your satisfaction in the person of Christ because he actually can fill you up. When you turn to wine and you get drunk with wine what does it do? It empties you out. When you cram your face full of Christ, you can't get enough. I cram my face full of earthly pleasures and what happens to me? I feel sick, it's starts to ruin me. Earthly pleasures weren't meant to be, you weren't meant to overdoes on earthly pleasures but if you turn to Christ, you can overdose on Christ. You can fill your face with Christ and you'll find that he only becomes more

satisfying. You can try to stuff your face full of the gospel and you'll only find there's more there, there's more room for delight there and joy and satisfaction.

We are filled with the Spirit as we drink deeply of Christ. That's the point and I keep pounding this home because what a lot of people are looking for in life is a quick fix. Do you know what they turn to? They turn to something like alcohol because they think, "I need a quick fix. My life is bad right now." They want an experience that will get their minds off their troubles. They're thirsty and so they keep reaching for a glass that is empty because it's closer and easier and when we look around us in our churches, sometimes what we see are people doing the same thing with religion. They want a quick fix and so that's even how they think of being filled with the Spirit, as if they could just keep on going living these wicked lifestyles throughout the week and then come to church and zap, boom, filled. Where they get the spiritual tingles and they feel so much better immediately and they didn't have to do anything but sit there. When what Paul means when he talks about being filled with the Spirit is something much better than that. He's talking about being strengthened to come back time and time again to Jesus Christ and centering your life on him and focusing your thoughts on him and finding your joy in what he's done for you.

Maybe the best description really of what it means to be filled with the Spirit is found over in Colossians 3 and if you'll just turn a couple of books over, Colossians 3. This is a passage where Paul is writing pretty much the same thing, he just uses a different phrase but he's making the same point to this church. I think as we look at this passage, it fills out for us what it means to be filled with the Spirit. Paul says, Colossians 3:15,

"15 And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. 17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."

That is Spirit-filled living right there. That's what it looks like to be filled with the Spirit. It's when the peace of Christ rules over you and transforms your relationships with one another. You're not just controlled by, "Hey, I want what I want." You are controlled by the peace of Christ, the peace that Christ has obtained for you through his work on the cross, it's the thing that's the umpire in your heart and you're thinking not just in this relationship, "Hey, that guy messed me up," you're think, "How can I honor Christ and what he's done for me?" It's when the word of Christ dwells in you richly, you're focused on his word and it's where everything we do as a church, whether it's an action that we do or a word that we say, we're doing it in the name of Christ and for the glory of Christ, giving thanks to him. Are we filled with the Spirit? Have we turned from trying to fill ourselves up with emptiness? Is it living a lifestyle where we are continually looking to Christ in the gospel? Where Christ is at the center? The Spirit fills us up to focus on Christ.

Third, let's look at the characteristics Paul describes. We looked at the comparison he makes, the command he gives, now third, to understand filled with the Spirit, look at the characteristics he describes. In verses 19-21 back in Ephesians 5, Paul gives several manifestations of the Spirit of God's work. These phrases in verses 19-21 describe what it looks like when the Spirit is at work in a church and what we're going to see is that when a group of people are filled with the Spirit, it's like they enter that room that's filled with instruments and do you know what they do instead of making loud crazy noise? They're able to make music that sounds sweet.

First Paul says when the Spirit fills us, he gives us five characteristics I think it is, when the Spirit fills us, verse 19, we're going to "address one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." In other words, we are going to encourage one another with biblical truth. When people are controlled by earthly pleasures, it changes their conversations, doesn't it? And so what happens is they spend a great deal of time talking about that kind of stuff. Have you ever hung out with a group of unbelievers? What's the kinds of things that they love talking about? It's usually stuff that has to do with now. But the point is here, when the church is drinking deeply of Christ and are filled with the Spirit, things become different when you're around these believers. The Spirit will transform the kind of things that we speak about to one another and sing about to one another. Specifically Paul says we're going to address one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs which are all three terms that pretty much have to do with praising God for who he is and what he's done.

You could try to talk about what's the difference between a psalm and a hymn and a spiritual song but these are all just ways of praising God for who he is and what he's done and Paul is saying this is something you can look for if we're interested in whether the Spirit is filling us. Are we a group of people who are constantly encouraging one another to look at God and to be amazed by his character? The word for "addressing one another," it's a Greek word that means basically almost like humming to yourself, humming to someone else, it's like there's a buzz. If you listen to a church that is filled, if you come into a community that's filled with the Spirit and they fellowship with one another, there's almost like a humming, a buzz and you know what that humming sound is? It's praises and hymns and spiritual songs. You come into a community that's filled with the Spirit, these are people as they interact with one another that are constantly trying to help each other see how great God is and there's a movement of the Spirit of God in that place because the people are centered not on themselves but on God.

Secondly Paul says, we're going to sing and make melody to the Lord with our hearts which means we're going to find deep down delight in God. I think one of the things I like most if you look down at that phrase "singing and making melody to the Lord," the thing I like the best about that is he says "with our hearts." In our hearts. He's not saying that when we get together as Christians we all stand here and the way we sing as Christians is with our mouths closed, we only sing in our hearts. That would be a strange worship time, wouldn't it? But that's not what he means when he says we sing in our hearts. Instead, he's talking about singing that comes from the bottom of your heart. We all know how easy it is to just come and mouth the words of a song and you get excited

after a while just because it's the song. That's not what Paul is talking about here. What he's talking about is when your heart is so filled up with joy in God that it's like you're singing on the inside and it's just bubbling out on the outside. For me, that's the best place to sing, in the heart, because when I sing with my mouth people usually hope I'm quiet but you can sing as loud as you want in your heart. Really, I think what Paul is getting at is that when the Spirit of God is filling us, we're not just jumping up and down on the outside but there's a deep profound delight in God that resides on the inside.

Third, when the Spirit of God is at work we address one another, we encourage one another with biblical truth, we have a deep down delight in God, third, Paul says, we're going to give thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, we're going to overflow with gratitude to God. You can underline in that verse "always" and "for everything." There is hardly anything that characterizes a person who's about himself more than complaining. A person who is about himself, he can complain always and in everything. Selfish, proud people can make a meadow into a manure pile. A meadow of flowers and they can find the manure in a meadow. Selfish people can complain and be discontent about whatever situation you put them in, that's why, listen, the answer to your discontentment if you're discontent is not a better circumstance. I guarantee you. People are amazing at being discontent with the best of circumstances. We need to be as filled with the Spirit so that we learn to give thanks always and in everything.

The crazy thing I've found about people who are controlled by a desire for their own pleasure is that they're still unhappy all the time. You meet a person who is controlled by a desire for his own pleasure and you usually are meeting a person who is profoundly discontent and that's because when you're proud, you think you deserve everything and so you complain and when you're selfish, you want everything exactly your way so you complain. Well, when the Spirit of God is at work, you see yourself for who you are and you see what you really deserve and you begin to understand that everything you receive is amazing and so you're constantly thankful and you become thankful about everything because you know God is for you in that moment and his hand is at work in everything for your good and for his glory. It's interesting too that Paul says the Spirit enables us as believers to give thanks in a very specific way. The Trinity is at work in this verse: it's the Spirit who causes us to give thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is a lot of theology and doctrine in that statement; that's Trinitarian thanksgiving.

Fourth, Paul tells us when the Spirit fills us as a church, we're going to submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. That's verse 21 which we're going to talk about a lot over the next several weeks because Paul goes into big time detail about this. Actually, from verse 21 down to chapter 6:9, he's talking about this aspect of being filled with the Spirit which tells us it's pretty important. But for now, just be sort of amazed by the way the Spirit of God works. When you're controlled by earthly pleasures like alcohol, what usually happens in your relationships with other people? It's usually people trying to outdo one another. Have you ever met materialistic people? Greedy people? "My BMW is bigger than your BMW. My Mercedes is bigger than your Mercedes. My suit is nicer

than your suit.” People constantly trying to be on top of each other, be higher than one another. But what happens when the Spirit focuses our attention on Christ? We're afraid of Christ so he said do this out of reverence for Christ. We see that he is the authority. We see that he is Lord. We are brought on our faces before Christ and suddenly we're not nearly as concerned about our own glory or importance anymore. It's Christ that matters and when it's Christ that matters most to you, that changes the way you relate to other people. When the Spirit is controlling you, you're going to happily go low in your relationships with others for the glory of God. That's basically what it means to submit, it's to put yourself under the authority of someone else and Paul is going to work out what that looks like in our family relationships and we'll begin to see that next week.

There is a lot of talk about the Spirit these days and that's good. Is the Spirit at work? Sometimes when people say, “Is the Spirit of God at work?” they mean these crazy, almost miraculous shocking works of power so they want to see it. I can sympathize with that. We all want to see the Spirit of God work powerfully in our midst but what I want you to hear now is that what Paul is describing here in these verses about the Spirit filling and controlling our community is powerful. It is powerful. I mean, again, imagine a group of people in a room with instruments making loud crazy chaotic noise and a conductor comes into that room and he goes to work with that community of people and as he works with that community of people, the noise becomes less and less chaotic and as you listen to these people play those instruments, suddenly the noise goes from chaos to beauty and what you're hearing instead of that chaos is you're hearing a beautiful symphony and that's power. It's a different kind of power but it's power.

That's what God wants for our lives and for this church and that's what I want. I want us to be a church that is filled with the Spirit, where people begin looking at our lives, the way we live and it's like they're hearing beautiful music come from this church, where they see people who are making Christ the center and as a result, it's changing their conversations with one another and they're meeting people who are worshiping God and not just that fake, you know, talking with deep voices about God. But there's a reality to their love for God and it's not just like people who repeat “Jesus' name, in the blood, in the blood, in the blood.” It's almost like magic but it's people who are really in awe of God. Then they see these people who are thankful always and for everything, they're just bubbling over with thanks to God. There's a deep, deep gratitude that they can't understand and then they see these people who are happy to go low in their relationships with others, to serve others, to submit to them. They hear this beautiful music and Christ will be glorified and exalted.

Are we a church that is filled with the Spirit? Is the Spirit of God at work? Have we and are we turning from being controlled by our appetite for earthly pleasure? Are we a church that is dominated by a desire to see Christ glorified? Have our conversations been changed? Are we a church that sings deeply from the heart? Are we a church that is thankful? Are we a group of people who are humble and glad to go low because we fear Christ?

Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, thank you for your word. Thank you for your Spirit that your Spirit does empower us and strengthen us and so we do pray, Lord, that we would be obedient, that we would yield to the control of the Spirit of God, that this would be a church whose lives and relationships look so radically different than the world, that we would be a community of people who are filled up with love for Christ and are becoming like Christ. Lord, we desperately want a work of your Spirit in this church. We thank you for the way the Spirit has worked and we cry out that we would continually be filled with your Spirit for the glory of your Son, we pray this in his name. Amen.