



Making Melody With Your Heart

For the better part of one and a half chapters in Ephesians, Paul schooled us on how believers must live differently from the unsaved if we are to consider ourselves true Christ-followers. But now at the mid-point of chapter 5, Paul begins to shift more toward a positive exhortation, transitioning from how we behave in the world to how we must within our inner circles and families.

And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ. [Eph 5:18-21](#)

Paul begins this portion by reminding believers not to be drunk with wine. While Scripture does not prohibit drinking alcohol, we are charged in several places not to consume it in excess. Some obvious reasons are that it affects our ability to make good decisions, it's a distraction, it dulls our senses, and it can lead to us being poor witnesses for Christ. I believe in context Paul took this as an opportunity to remind us that when we are among other Christians we need to reflect Christ's light even more brightly. He instructed the Corinthians not to cause another believer to stumble by eating foods in their presence that they found offensive as it could harm their faith ([1 Cor 8:9-13](#)). Likewise, if we drink liberally in the company of other believers, it could very well cause a newer or weaker brother or sister to stumble, and that sin falls on us ([1 Cor 8:12](#)).

Instead, Paul tells us we must ***be filled with the Holy Spirit*** and speak to one another in ***psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs***. I love this – it is so encouraging! What better way to lift the spirits of a fellow believer than to quote scripture, to share a beautiful hymn, or sing a Christ-centered worship song together?

We all know the mysterious power of music. Our brains can literally play songs in our mind on 'track repeat'. I believe this is a gift and is one reason it is very important to listen to music that honors God. I'd much rather have *Amazing Grace* stuck in my head than *YMCA*! ***Singing and making melody with our heart to the Lord*** helps us meditate on these truths and praises, bringing adoration to our Lord and uplifting our spirit as we worship our loving God and Savior.



And as we've seen before, Paul encourages us to **give thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ**. Many studies have been done on the power of living in gratitude. When we are truly thankful for what the Lord has given us, both spiritually and materially, it is hard to be depressed or feel defeated. Despite being in prison, Paul lived in thankfulness to the Lord. Even Jesus gave thanks to the Father for the provisions He provided His Son (cf: [Mark 8:6](#)). And so must we. See [1 Chronicles 16:8](#), [Psalm 7:17](#), [Philippians 4:6](#), [Colossians 4:2](#), and [1 Thessalonians 5:18](#) for a few examples on the significance of being grateful.

Then, Paul continues his transition in instruction when he writes **be subject to one another in the fear of Christ**. At first glance this seems like an odd statement. Should we be afraid of Christ? And how does that relate to being subject to one another?

I looked up the Greek word for fear used here ([phobos](#)) and it means exactly what it says in every instance in the New Testament. But I suspect by the context of this passage it is to be interpreted in two ways. First, it is a very fearful thing to fall into the hands of God as an unrepentant sinner ([Heb 10:31](#)). God is no joke, and every human should consider the gravity of meeting our Maker in a sinful state. But thankfully, we will not be subject to His wrath or punishment, as Christ took that on Himself for us ([Rom 6:23](#), [8:1-2](#)). So, secondly, as believers we should fear Christ in *reverence* and *admiration*. Just as a child should fear and respect his parents (we'll get to that in [Ephesians 6](#)), we too should live in extreme reverence, esteem, and surrender to Christ as our Lord. It is not a fear of His wrath, but a fear of veneration. If we would treat our boss, or a pastor, or our favorite President with high reverence, we should do so a million times more to Christ who redeemed us. We owe every ounce of ourselves to Him, and this reverent fear will help keep us careful in our thoughts and actions.

Looping back, Paul instructs believers to **be subject to one another** in this fear of Christ. I believe Paul is saying that we should not hold ourselves or our needs above others', but instead live in service to our brothers and sisters in Christ, just as he did. Doing so is a tangible exercise of living outwardly in worship and reverence (or fear) to Christ. This sentiment is echoed throughout Scripture and especially in Paul's letters. And truly this is where we get to the action of "walking our walk" as believers in our personal relationships with other believers, especially in our family, as we'll see in the next portion of the text.

As we close, let's allow Paul's words here to remind us to purposely bring joy and encouragement, not strife, to those around us. Even if we are not singing worship songs aloud, we can use songs, hymns, scripture, and God-honoring prayers in our daily speech and interactions to edify, uplift, and inspire our Christian family. As King David wrote in [Psalm 19:14](#), **"Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my rock and my Redeemer."**