

Spirit-Filled Fellowship

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Bible Text: Ephesians 5:18-21
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Grab your Bibles and let's go back to Ephesians, Ephesians 5, and we come to that familiar verse and actually we're not going to deal with it very much tonight because Ephesians 5:18 is a text that we pastors like to visit fairly regularly, "do not be drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit." Keep on being filled. The emphasis there is you have a responsibility in this. Some people like to make this some mysterious thing, you know, this filling of the Spirit is something that you kinda have to know the right formula and do the right stuff and there must be a trick to it. Being filled with the Spirit is just choosing not to fellowship with sin. You just choose, "I'm not going to walk in sin. When I find sin, I'm going to call it evil. I'm going to repent of it and I'm going to draw back near to God. I'm going to get into his word. I'm not going to let anything be between me and a brother or sister in Christ. That will certainly quench the Spirit of God, and I'm just going to choose to walk in that fight." There's a reason why the Apostle Paul ended his ministry saying, "I fought the good fight," because it was a fight the whole way and much of Paul's fight was with Paul. Romans 7 makes that very clear, "Much of my fight is with me. As a matter of fact, it's my worst fight. It's not my brother, it's not my sister, it's me, O Lord, standing in the need of prayer." Amen? So being filled with the Spirit is something you have a choice in if you're a child of God.

Now in the culture of this day, Paul is writing to the church at Ephesus, the culture was filled with paganism, where we are fast coming as a country, where it was commonplace drinking and drunkenness and sexual immoralities. I say drinking and drunkenness because they didn't have the option of some of the narcotics and drug abuses and things that we see in our culture, but they would have if they had it. Revelries and ecstatic, much like what you would see in a rock concert or a wild nightclub or bar setting, I guess in today's world. That was just common but they had mixed it with their religion. They brought the religion, actually their religion had invited in those worldly things.

So Paul writes to the church at Ephesus and he says, "Now that you are a product of God's saving grace, you've been changed, you have now the capacity and it's right and it's your duty to walk in the Spirit and your fellowship as God's church should be markedly opposite and different from the world. So you don't get together for drunkenness and revelry." You see, they would get together and just worship their false God in a drunken, ecstatic praise and commotion, and then call it, "Boy, didn't we feel God today?" And do we not see a little of that bouncing around in so-called Christianity? It's all about the

experience of the hour when you go to church. "Wasn't I blessed? Man, that was moving. Man, that stirred me up." Usually they're talking about the song service because they'll darken the lights and do all kinds of things in the environment and for me, I'll just give you this comparison in my own heart, I came out of a life of revelry, you might say, and drinking quite a bit, those type things many many years ago now, and I remember what it felt like, I remember what it looked like in those venues. And just this last June when I was, as you well remember, deeply frustrated about what I'm hearing out of the Southern Baptist Convention, and I saw some videos and some pictures of the pastors' conference. Now throughout the years, the pastors' conference of the annual meeting is the conservative Bible-believing, Bible-preaching arm, you might say. I mean, it was always good. I'm not saying it's all bad now but it looked like some sort of concert thing. It was dark and there were these bright lights. It kind of had a nightclub feel and setting and I thought, "What in the world has happened to the pastors' conference?" Again, it was bringing the feeling, the emotion, the stirring, the excitement of the world into the church. That's what I feel like the pastors' conference looked like this year at the Southern Baptist Convention.

Well, that's a little bit about what Paul, I'm not going to say a little bit, I think that's what Paul is getting at. He's saying, "You guys came out of that type of worship, that you called that worship, that type of environment to where you thought you were getting close to your gods." He said, "Now you have a radically different way to fellowship." Now listen church, this may take some work. You're not just going to get saved and wake up the next morning and say, "Shazam, I don't desire any of that anymore. I want a new type of fellowship." No, you're to be being filled with the Spirit, that is, purpose to walk to where you are learning to enjoy communion with God's Spirit and the people who have God's Spirit.

Brothers and sisters, surely to goodness, your love for me and my love for you, our love for one another since God has changed us, is bigger than whether or not the lights and the music was cool that week at church. Are you going to bail out on me because our service isn't as cool as somewhere else? Are you kidding me? I'd hate to be married to you. If your devotion to Jesus and his church is just as good as the church is cool, then we ain't got nothing. I want a body of Christ that will go to war with me. Now we're not looking for war, amen? Done enough of that already. If you've been around a while, you know we've done enough of that already. I'm not looking for any fights but I'm not backing up when essential stuff is on the line either, and I've got to know I've got people with me and you want to know you've got brothers and sisters with you, and our fellowship is deeper than are we stirred, are we excited, are we blessed, is it fun, is it neat, is it cool. It may be fun and it may be neat at times and that's okay, but that's not the glue that holds me with you.

Alright, Paul writes to this church and he says, "Let's talk about the spiritual fellowship." We might just call this the spiritual fellowship that you and I are to be about and are to be cultivating now that we are born again Christians in one local church together. So he says beginning in verse 18,

18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit,

Don't go back to the way you learned getting close to God looks like and feels like, you've got to relearn, you've got to re-program. That's dissipation. You've got a new type of fellowship, a spiritual fellowship now.

Now he says here are some of the ways. He's not saying this is exhaustive but here are some of the ways a spiritual fellowship looks and maybe you could say feels. Verse 19,

19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord;

Let me just stop right there. So immediately he just draws a sharp contrast. He said, "You know the kind of singing and carrying on you're used to in your Ephesian culture, now you need to go to psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." Our music ain't like their music. Did you hear what I just said? In the church, our music ain't like the world's music. That's just what Paul is saying here. It ought not to look like or sound like what's going on that thrilled your heart back when you were hanging with the guys and not loving the Lord.

He said here's another characteristic of a spiritual fellowship,

20 always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father;

So it's not a spirit of pride and, "Man, we've arrived, and man, we're the coolest and man, we're really sharp and man, we're happening." I remember a guy told me, it's been, good night, 25 years ago, he was a businessman in town and I just happened to know him. He went to a church known for, well, it was a charismatic church. I mean, boy, they got with it in their worship. They had a rock band and got with it and he said, "Yes, y'all are the most happening church over there across the river. We're happening." I didn't know if that was good or bad but he said we were. But Paul writes to the Ephesians and says the way you sing and why you sing and the feel of it, I'll even say that the feel of it is different the way it felt in the world. Boy, I'm getting way ahead of myself but, folks, coming to church shouldn't be just a little cleaner version of the enjoyments you have in the world. Can I say that again? Coming to church shouldn't be just a little cleaner version of what you enjoy in the world. If Garth Brooks thrills you, I'm not saying that's all wrong, but it should be very different than what thrills you in this building. We're not looking for that thrill. We've found some better ones for when we are fellowshiping together around the things of the Lord. I'm not saying go and burn your Garth Brooks tapes. That's not what I'm saying. That's not what I'm saying.

"Always giving thanks," verse 20, "for all things in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father," and then here's another characteristic,

21 and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.

So let's just break this down a little bit. First of all, he talks about the spiritual fellowship, just a lot of singing to it and, you know, that is true, and if your heart is Spirit-filled, the Holy Spirit is who you are fellowshiping with and you don't want to grieve him and you're striving, this takes some effort, you're striving, you're having your daily quiet time, you're striving to make sure you don't have unconfessed sins, you're striving that you don't have any aught between you and a brother and sister in Christ, he's not going to let that happen because you know that will quench the Holy Spirit, you want to walk in the flow of the Spirit singing and music comes out of that in order to praise the Lord and to help one another. You may say, "Pastor, I just ain't much of a singer, you know, but I believe I love the Lord. I believe I'm walking in the truth." Well, if you don't sing much, if you're walking in the Spirit, you want to. Something in you wants to say more about him, amen?

Have you ever noticed you sing about what you like? It's just true. This is the silliest thing in the world but do you know what just came into my mind? When I was a little boy, we moved into a new subdivision so there were constantly guys building houses and I was a constant problem for them because, I mean, I'm a little boy but that's back when you just turned your boys out in the morning and hoped they came in at night. I mean, that's just what we did. There wasn't all this fear of all this stuff happening to you. Man, I lived free. I would go a mile and a half from the house and build a treehouse and come in and my mother would say, "I've got to get that rust out from behind your ears now." That's the way I grew up. But anyway, I tried to help those carpenters out there and I know that must have been a problem but I just loved it. I just thought it was neat they could build stuff and everything. So they let me help a little bit and there was one guy I'll never forget, he had a country music song, I shouldn't even say this because some of you will know the song and you'll be singing it the whole time I preach, and he'd sing, "Ruby red lips and coal black hair," and that's all I remember. He sang it over and over again. Do you know what country song I'm talking about? Don't raise your hand.

My point is, that was on his heart. That was on his heart, maybe that was his wife. I hope so. I don't know who he was talking about but you sing about what's in your heart and if Jesus is in your heart, you're Spirit-filled, Jesus is in your heart, that's got to come out some. Tonight we come in this service, Brother Tom leads us in a good song but immediately my heart is stirred about the Lord because it harmonizes with what's in me. He said, "Your fellowship and the way you sing and the way you act and the way you function together as a Christian fellowship is different from the way the world fellowships. It's not just a little cleaner version of it either, it should be different."

Just a few cross-references here. Psalm 40:3, "He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God." Psalm 96:1, "Sing to the LORD a new song." Notice the emphasis there. Then John's vision of what's going on in heaven in Revelation 5:9, "And they sang a new song, saying, 'Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.'" We're new people with a new song, not the old songs of the world.

I think we need to be very cautious about bringing the old music and the old style and the old feel from the world into the church. We need to be very cautious that that is an effective way to reach people for Christ. You might make church members out of them, you might grow a group out of them, but I don't know if you can build a church leaning on that stuff very hard. There is so much today about, man, we've got to have the lights right and especially it's got to get dark and we're going to have spotlights and strobe lights and smoke and all this stuff and perhaps some of that is not evil in itself but here, let me tell you this: if Satan can get you going down that road, it's real real hard to stop. Listen to me: and before long, he's got it to where a good percentage if not a large percentage of your congregation is starting to depend on that environment, that feel and that excitement instead of the Lord. You've created an environment to allure them and you've given them a false drug instead of the real thing. So I'm saying we need to be cautious with that mindset because that's exactly what he's unraveling here and trying to get them off of. Your old fellowship looked like this, now this is a new kind of fellowship, a Spirit-filled fellowship now.

I gleaned these things out of John MacArthur's thoughts on this from many years ago. When we bring contemporary or worldly things into the church where, let's say, it's an intentional effort to bring the worldly amusements and uplifting things, let's say, from the world into the church to reach people, here's what he says happens, I couldn't agree more: it weakens the church's evangelism. It tends to create pride in the musicians rather than humility, the happening church has got the greatest singers and bands. It makes the Gospel a matter of entertainment when there is nothing entertaining in it at all. The ones that become the public proclaimers of Christianity are those who are the most talented musically versus not necessarily the ones who are the most godly. It blurs the gap between worldly satanic values and divine values. It tends to deny the power of the simple Gospel and the sovereign saving work of the Holy Spirit.

If I could just pause there, boy, that is something that is so valid. If you've been at it for four decades like I have, you should have learned something about what really converts and keeps people. God forbid we have a bunch of people come to Christ until they find a church with a better light show than we've got, they find a church with a better praise band than we've got. We want to do things in an excellent way and by the way, I don't think there's a music program anywhere more excellent than ours. I'll just tell you, it's just the truth, but we are not depending on that. Do you know who leads that charge? His name is Tom Clay. Brother Tom would be against that with all of his heart if we began to sell that as, "Come here, you'll love our music program." Well, I love it but that's not why I'm here. It leads to the propagation of bad or weak theology and drags the name of the Lord down to the level of the world. It cheapens the priceless and trivializes that which is profound.

So Paul says, "When you get together, don't be drunk with wine. That's dissipation. Be filled with the Spirit. Your fellowship is not like the worldly so-called worship fellowships you came out of in pagan Ephesian culture." So we have a new song. Here's an interesting fact from history. Do you know from about 580 to about 1500 A.D. the

church did not sing? Congregational singing was not allowed and if they had singing, it was some high professional musician and they sang and played stuff the common man couldn't really even relate to, but then the Protestant Reformation began with men like Martin Luther and others and they began to preach the Bible, just exegete the Bible, and that's why I always go back to the scholars of that era because they were so careful and diligent to make sure they were teaching what the Bible said because they were going against everything and putting their lives on the line to do it. But when the Bible came back and biblical exposition came back, the singing came back, and so there wasn't much to draw from to sing so we have some of the great old hymns written during those eras. "A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing." Martin Luther wrote that song during the Reformation. Rich, biblical, sound singing. We sing so many of these still today.

So if I'm giving an outline tonight, if where spiritual fellowship and we individually are Spirit-filled, we sing in a way that edifies the saints and glorifies God. We sing in a way in our fellowships that edifies the saints and glorifies God. Now let's just break it down. In verse 19 he says we are singing to one another. Now this obviously means congregational singing. Nothing wrong with a special, nothing wrong with the choir singing, but Tom and I have worked for years to pray about ways to continually try to bring what the choir is singing into all of our hearts. You know, it's not uncommon for Brother Tom to start with the choir and then turn to all of us and we all join in the singing and that's because we want to be careful that it's not just a presentation of one to another, it's all of us one to another, not just one group. It's not wrong but we all are responsible to be Spirit-filled. That's where it has to start. Spirit-filled heart is the key, and then edifying one another.

Then he says speaking to one another, verse 19. I think what he means here as you're singing your songs, you're actually speaking truth one to another, so we ought to be very careful that the lyrics of our songs are very thoroughly biblically sound, not just kind of publicly sound, not just sort of biblical but thoroughly biblical. I understand, you know, there is a large church in our area, I say a large church, there are people that have a large group gathering on Sunday morning and they've gone full-bore to secular music in their church worship service and obviously there is some very bad stuff being stated. They'll pick out a song that has some little hint to it that corresponds maybe with the Bible truth the pastor is going to talk about that week. Well, that is totally going back to what the pagans would do in Ephesian culture 2,000 years ago versus what a Spirit-filled group should do together.

Well, he mentions three types of things here. He says singing to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. Now it's really hard to pin down just what exactly is Paul saying here, but generally speaking the first one is the easiest, I think to understand. Psalms is the Psalm-book, the great truths of the Psalms was the songbook of the Jews. He said, "You can get a lot of good singing of truth in the Psalms."

Then he said: and hymns. Hymns probably has the idea of rich Gospel singing. It doesn't necessarily mean a certain style but music that has the story of Christ and his saving

power all in it. And then spiritual songs kind of takes up what's left, I would assume, and perhaps it means more songs of testimony, songs that declare how God has helped me and saved me and changed me. I think what he means is all of these are okay if your heart is Spirit-filled. That's where it begins. That's the cornerstone. Verse 18, "be filled with the Spirit," now you will be singing to one another in songs and hymns and spiritual songs.

Then he says making melody. It has the idea of plucking on a stringed instrument or any other instrument, that the harmony of it is communing with a full heart to God. The point is your communion with God makes your singing effectual for your brother and sister in Christ. It's not your tone, it's not hitting the note. Pam and I when we were on our break, we were at a little country church and we just happened to read their website and we were a long way from here, and I thought, "I'm going to go there. I like what this guy is saying on his website." We go in there and the preacher had to lead the music because they don't have a guy to lead the music, and that used to be real years ago. So he got up and led the music and I think, well, he had a guitar too, and that's all they did, and musically it was okay, it wouldn't be anything like what you and I are used to but it was so good. Do you know why? Their hearts were making melody with the Lord. You sense what I sense when I'm here. It was sweet. It was God-centered. It was genuine. There was a spirit of humility and love there, and I'd much rather have that than the biggest show in the whole state I was in on a Sunday morning. As a matter of fact, the big show distracts me from God. Look, I come into church, I don't need to be reminded of the nightclubs I went to when I was a college guy. Amen? I don't need to be reminded of the rock concerts I went to as a lost man. I don't want my heart and mind going back there. Give me another kind of fellowship. There's a new spirit in me now.

Well, when you look at these verses, verse 18, "don't be drunk with wine, be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms, hymns, spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord," one scholar, and I think he's hitting solid here, he says don't make this a progression. Don't make this when you get step 1 down, then you go to step 2. You know, we're a little bit like that. I can be a little bit like that. Okay, you do this and then this and then this. Engineers do things that way and that's good. They're supposed to do things that way, but this is more like the combination of the whole just all blooms together. You are full of the Spirit. Your heart is making melody with the Lord. You're singing to one another. It's just all one big, full, blossoming event. So the one who is striving toward a Spirit-filled heart will be one who has melody in his heart and will be one who is edifying his brothers and sisters in singing to the Lord.

Now when you're making melody and harmony, it has the idea that you are in harmony with God but you're in harmony one to another, and as we begin a small group year, let me give an exhortation here: do everything you can to keep the unity in your small group. Do everything you can to keep the unity in your small group. At Grace Life Church we don't talk about each other. If we have a problem, we talk to each other. Amen? Now look, stuff can slip. A good godly person can slip, but do you know what you do when you slip? You go to that person and say, "Man, I shouldn't have said that about you. Will you forgive me? I was on the wrong track." That's being Spirit-filled. So strive to keep the harmony. If you're at odds with the brother or sister, or if you're critical of a brother

or sister in the church fellowship, you can't walk in that. If it happens, hey, it happened but get it right. Don't walk in it. The Spirit of God doesn't do that. He creates harmony, not disharmony. He creates unity, not disunity.

Well, we're singing in a way that edifies the saints and glorifies the Savior also in a spiritual fellowship, a Spirit-filled fellowship, there is a life of thanksgiving. Notice how he continues on and one of the marks he says that would be different from you guys, for you than what you came out of in the Ephesian culture is this humble spirit of gratitude. Verse 20, "always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father." So you are to look back at what God has done for you and how he has had favor on you, and how he has sent his Son to die for you, how he has given you pastors to preach his truth to you, how he has cleansed you by the blood of his Son and a continual Spirit of humility and thanksgiving should mark your fellowship.

Do you know the phrase that I use when I talk about fellowships that have an important characteristic that really everything else depends on? Do you know the phrase that I use? Do you remember it? I wonder if you could tell me right now? What? He's on the paid staff so he's got to get that right. A Gospel humility, and he's humble about it too, by the way. A Gospel humility and that's what Paul is talking about here. We just walk in and deal with one another in fellowship with one another, study our Bibles with one another with a thankful heart because our hearts are humbled by the glorious truth of the Gospel.

Thankfulness is the byproduct of nearness to Jesus. Thankfulness is the byproduct of nearness to Jesus. Envy, that's the opposite of thankfulness. Strife, jealousy, covetousness, "They have this. I don't like it because they've got this and I didn't get that," all those things are fleshly non-Christian spirits. Ours are always thankful. If a brother does better than you even though you've worked harder, and you may be a little better person as far as virtue concerns, but somehow that brother has done better than you, do you know what you ought to be? You ought to be thankful God was good to that brother. Can I get an amen there? I'm just, look, I just choose not to walk in envy. I just choose not to walk in jealousy. I just choose not to be bitter and covetous. God makes the rich and God makes the poor, the Bible says, and when God blesses a brother, I'm going to rejoice with him not because my old fleshly heart wants to, but I'm going to make my fleshly heart get in line with the truth that my Lord stands for. Amen? You don't live by your feelings, you live by truth. You keep living by the truth and pretty soon your feelings will start feeling the truth. Guys, you love your wives like Christ loved the church. You say, "You don't know how she treats me." I don't care how she treats you, you love her like Christ loves the church and your heart will start loving her that way. You do what's right and let your feelings catch up. Isn't this good stuff? It's so simple but it's impossible to do if the Spirit doesn't help you. That's why he says be filled with the Spirit is the first thing here. Thankfulness. Thankfulness, not envy, not jealousy, not the stuff that can get in the fellowship and wreak and wreck havoc.

As a matter of fact, can I just give you a fair loving warning? If you have a pattern of causing disunity, if you have a pattern of not being in harmony, we're coming to see you. We are and we're not going to talk about you to anybody else but we're going to lovingly

come to see you and say, "Can we get this fixed? I love you. Let's don't be like this, okay?" And we have a wonderful record if that ever has to happen. Maybe you have to come and see me? Please do, if I have a pattern of causing disunity somehow. But we have a pattern of folks when you do that, do you know what they say? "Thank you, pastor. Thank you. You've served me and helped me and I'm going to get that right." Do you know what we do? We go on like it never happened, then. Amen? That's the Spirit-filled walk. That's the kind of thankful fellowship we want one to another.

You know, it's just far too easy for you and I in this present world system to succumb to the ever-present temptation to feel like, "God owes me something. Well, God's got to love, he owes me love. God owes me forgiveness. God owes me a good life. I should have what everybody else has." This whole movement today in our country of socialism and communism, what a bunch of foolish nonsense. I was fishing on my break in another state and a guy was fishing beside me and I started up a conversation with him and I got to share a little bit about how Christ had changed my life. He said, "You know, that's interesting. I'm a college professor, or I was a college professor. I'm a professor of debate." Oh, wouldn't I talk to him. He was pretty interesting to talk to and I said, "You are?" He said, "Yeah." He said, "Well, I was." He said, "As a matter of fact, when I was a young man," he said, "I lived in Seattle, Washington and I was an anarchist. I mean, I was a rebel against the society, I was a rebel against everything, the establishment, the one percenters, you name it. I was a rebel." He said, "Then I became a college professor and that's what we do, we rebel as young people and then we become college professors." He didn't say that but I thought that's where they come from, it seems like. And he said, "Then I quit and started my own business and it's really doing well." He said, "Do you know what? Today I'm a full-bore capitalist." I thought, "What we need for some of these young socialists is give them a job and make them pay their own bills for a while." Amen? Where do they get this time to run around in the streets all the time? I'll tell you where they get the time, they live off somebody else. What got me on that? What's my point?

My point is, look, you and I are tempted to think, "Well, we're owed something. They've got too much and I ought to have more." You don't go down that road if you are Spirit-filled. You say, "I ought to be in hell. I ought to be facing the judgment and wrath of God and if my loving sovereign Lord let's Sister So-and-so be blessed in a way I've never been blessed and I don't think she loves Jesus the way I do," then just praise the Lord God has been good to Sister So-and-so. Amen? Am I preaching to anybody tonight other than me? Why do I always just preach to me? What about you? Am I preaching to you tonight? I know I am.

We want to have a Spirit-filled... and I just have to, I just want to be honest, it would be false humility if I didn't say this, you overwhelmingly walk in this stuff but I don't want us to stop because it is a fight and it is a choice and it is a discipline to walk in this and not go to other stuff. Thankfulness, he's talking about. Thankful for all things. He says that in verse 20. Now when something really bad happens to you, we don't thank God if somebody does something evil to you and very hurtful, but we thank God that he's going to cause it to work together for our good. That thing was evil, we know that, we can't call

that good. So many have suffered some sort of abuse as a child and I tasted some of that myself. I was the victim of some of that myself but that's no excuse for anything in my life. I have been thankful to God that God purposed it for good. The evil wasn't good but God can purpose it for good and so in your life. Only the Spirit-filled heart can do that because we are learning to discipline ourselves to believe God is who he says he is and he said. "All things will work together for your good and for my glory if you love me, if you're called according to my purposes."

Being thankful. Are you thankful for all things? Well, work at it. Don't stop trying. If we're not thankful in everything then we are certainly out of God's will. Did you hear that? It's God's will for you to be thankful in everything. "Well, sometimes I can get grumbly and gripey and critical and comparing." Do you know what the next step is? Repentance. "Lord, I'm thankful for you." What helps me and I've said this to you many times, is very often I have to take the things I have and I found through the years it's not how many things you have, you can have one little thing and a guy over here will have a thousand real nice things, and the guy with one little thing can be as unthankful as the guy with a thousand good things. It's a heart condition. Whatever it is that you're tempted to put your joy in other than Jesus, you've got to as an act of your will keep taking that to the Lord, "That's yours and thank you that it's not my treasure. I enjoy it but it's not my treasure. You gave me this and I enjoy it but it's not my treasure. You've blessed me with a lot of wealth maybe, I thank you for that but that's not my treasure. I can enjoy it and help me use it right, Lord, but it's not my treasure." I have to do that to talk myself back to where I need to be at times and you have to talk to yourself. It will help you have an attitude of thanksgiving for all things.

Sometimes God gives you stuff to let you know that stuff ain't where it's at. Have some of you been there? I remember when I built my first house over here in Jackson Heights and I grew up thinking, "Man, I'll never have a house," and all of a sudden I've got a house. Well, let me correct that, me and the bank have owned a house now for about 40 years. And I remember getting through with that house and Pam and I had done a lot of the things we wanted to do. Of course, you're always restrained by finances. You do the best you can where you are, and you do a little more, and do a little more, whatever it is, and dear heavens, if HGTV stays on any longer, we'll never get done with our houses, and that's the purpose behind all of that, by the way. I think we ought to have a year of no HGTV, a church edict. Wives are just wringing their hands and the guys are thinking, "Amen, brother!" Joanna Gaines, that woman's not a Christian, she's wrecking our homes. I'm being very very lighthearted here as I think she is a fine lady, actually. But Lord, I can't do everything she suggests.

Nevertheless, saying all of that to say be thankful where you are. If it isn't turning out like you thought, be thankful. I didn't get nominated as a deacon, praise the Lord for the brothers that did. Be thankful in what you are. You might not want some of the responsibilities and this is the God's truth, some of the roads some of our elders have walked down and, boy, I thank God for them, there are a lot of really good men that don't want to go down some of those roads. It's tough facing some things sometimes. Just purpose to be thankful. Say, "God, I'm going to be thankful until I feel like it." Did you

get that? "I'm going to be thankful until I feel like it." Do you get that? That's the way Christianity works. A Spirit-filled heart will receive that and wants to walk in that. If we cultivate being filled with the Spirit, it's going to help us to continually have an overflowing thankful heart.

Well, lastly, a life of yielded submission. He said, "That ought to mark your fellowship. You're not like the old fellowships you had out in the world, you're different now. You're to have a Spirit-filled fellowship." In verse 21 he says, "and be subject to one another in the fear of the Lord." Here we have that military term. He uses it in wives being subject to their husbands in just a minute, same word. It means to line up under. He said it should just be the general permeating spirit of we want to be humble toward each other and willing to yield to one another. One of the most beautiful things I think we have in our church is sometimes we'll have a man or a family in our church who from the world's perspective would be very prominent and very esteemed and may be very wealthy, but they walk in the door here and they'll sit in a classroom under a guy that has 1/100th of what they have and they honor them as their small group leader. That's what that's talking about. We're all just being subject to one another, again, that spirit of Gospel humility.

Now listen: in a spiritual fellowship, there is no place for haughtiness, arrogance and pride. What I'm asking you to do is do what I have to do, fight it. Do that whack-a-mole thing. I mean, as soon as it pops up, you whack it back down with repentance. "Lord, I ain't gonna walk in that." Talk to yourself. "Lord, I'm not going to walk in that. I'm not going to let that fester. No, sir. I thank you for that event. I'm not going to let myself become bitter or jealous or whatever it's going to become. I'm going to stay thankful for what I do have because you're faithful to me."

So here in verse 21, he tells us all in the church family to be subject to one another and, of course, he's going to go on in chapter 6, verse 1, and he's going to tell children to honor their parents, or obey your parents, that's the idea of submitting under them, and so what Paul is doing he's saying a spiritual person in the church acts the same way at home. There is a spirit of subjection in the home. There is a spirit of subjection in God's church.

So as Paul is writing these things, as we are Spirit-filled, he says we're in harmony with the Lord from our hearts, we're singing, making melody with our hearts to the Lord, and edifying and encouraging one another, we have a continual cultivation of a thanksgiving attitude in our fellowship, we're fighting off all the things that would undermine this unity, this harmony and this thanksgiving, all the jealousies, all the envies, all the bitterness, all the resentment, all the stuff the flesh brings with it. That was your fellowship out in the world, now you're a part of a different kind of fellowship and you have a spirit of submission in your heart to say, "What do my elders want me to do? What's pleasing to the Lord? I want to be marked by submission in the church family." Why? Because you're not like the old fellowships you came out of.

As a matter of fact, I found this and I thought this was very interesting. In Ephesus, in the Ephesian culture at this time, the Greek God Dionysus, sometimes called Bacchus, was the Greek god of vegetation. He was the god over the fruit trees, the ivy and the vine,

including grapes which you made wine out of. He had the image of a bull or a goat and when they went to worship Dionysus, they would have plays and dramas. They put on the biggest shows because that stirred people and emotionally drew people in. As a matter of fact, once a historian scholar said that ancient Greek drama, which we know so much about, it's kind of the background of our modern movie and theater, ancient Greek drama owes its origin to the worship of Dionysus. So they get together and have these big plays and all the stuff. So in Paul's day, he's writing this letter to the church at Ephesus knowing that that's what they are used to, the worship of Dionysus, which was the craze of the day. It was so extravagant that the Greek civil authorities tried to subdue it and push it back but they couldn't. It was just so popular it just took over. And of course, a centerpiece of the worship of Dionysus was getting drunk. It was thought that when you started getting a little intoxicated and tipsy, you free up a little bit more, you're a little bit more free to express yourself, and you begin to feel your communion with Dionysus.

So what are these guys and these girls doing that go out to clubs and the honky-tonks and drink and get halfway intoxicated and cavort around in these settings? They're worshipping Dionysus. There's nothing new to this stuff. It's just old rebellion. In this day, they called it worship. I don't know too many of those folks would call that worship but I can tell you this, more and more of this spirit is getting in the church and they call it worship, and they are feeling something but they're not feeling the Holy Spirit Paul is talking about here. It's the old Dionysus god of the vine spirit.

So there was music, dancing, every kind of ecstatic revelry, drunkenness, frenzies, and of course, immoralities always go along with that. This was very very popular and so the Apostle Paul writes to the Ephesians and says, "Make sure your worship looks nothing like that."

Now here's one thing you have to be careful and, boy, isn't it amazing, this is true about Jeff Noblit and it's true about all of us: if Satan can't get you over here, he'll get you out of balance over here. I know of churches that, boy, they're strict. They are strict. They dot every I and cross every T. Boy, you don't sing but certain songs. You don't preach but out of the Authorized Version. It's just strict. We're not letting any of the world in here and they are so proud of it. They are so proud of it. You don't sense a spirit of thanksgiving. You don't experience sweetness. You don't experience a submitting to one another. You don't sense a Gospel humility. What you sense is that we're strict. So they don't have the spirit of Dionysus, they've got the spirit of the Pharisees. We don't want that either, amen? Do you know what fixes every bit of that? The key is each individual being filled with Spirit. That's the key. So let's strive to walk in that and fellowship in that spirit and be the church God has called us to be.