

A Two-Fold Address

Ephesians

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Let us turn our eyes to God's word now as we open it to the book of Ephesians 5 as we continue our study in this letter of Paul to the church at Ephesus, and our text tonight is going to be on verse 19 alone. However, as you know, these verses that we have been going through at length these past weeks, is found within this last paragraph of 15-21 before bringing us into the household code. So let us read tonight Ephesians 5:15-21 even though our text will be focused specifically on verse 19.

People of God, this is the word of our God.

15 See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, 16 redeeming the time, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. 18 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, 19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, 20 giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, 21 submitting to one another in the fear of God.

Thus ends the reading of God's word tonight.

Let us pray.

Our Father in heaven, tonight we are reminded that indeed You are holy and we as sinners in and of ourselves have no part on Your mountain, but yet because of our Lord Jesus Christ who has successfully gone into Your presence on the mountaintop, You, Father, welcome us to Mount Zion in him. Father, we thank You that in him by the Spirit we indeed have come to a mountain that cannot be touched, to Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem itself. Father, we thank You for the blessing of Your presence. Father, we pray tonight that you would bless Your word as it's proclaimed in our midst. May You, Father, grant us understanding of Your truth that we might be changed and molded and shaped by it all for Your glory. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

You may be seated.

You must be filled with the Holy Spirit. We considered this imperative at length last week. Because we are Christians who have believed upon the Lord Jesus Christ and are disciples of him, we are said to have been indwelt by the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit resides within us, and as participants in the age to come by the Spirit, by being regenerated, it can also be said that we live within the sphere of the Spirit for indeed the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the age to come, namely the Spirit of Christ, which is why Paul can later say that even when we pray, we pray in the Spirit. But we're called by Paul to have the Spirit of God as this dominating presence, this controlling influence and driving force in our lives which is what it means to be filled by the Spirit, and this is true insofar as we let the word of God dwell within us richly, as we saw this past week. It is a continuous filling that we are in need of as we let the word dwell in us richly.

It is very easy, probably the easiest way for a Christian to fall apart, the easiest way for a marriage to fall apart, the easiest way for a family to fall apart is for the word of God not to dwell within us richly. We remove ourselves from the word which is our resource of strength and filling, we endanger ourselves and our families. The Holy Spirit employs his sword, which is the word of God, to do battle with the evil forces that rage against those who are the saints of God, but if we were to ask the apostle to describe the results that issue forth from this indwelling of the Spirit, we would find the apostle's answer found in these next few verses. In fact, immediately following the command to be filled with the Holy Spirit, there are five dependent participles that provide us the result of this infilling.

If you were to think of the admonition to be filled as a fount, these five participles would be the gusts of water flowing out of that fount to be filled with the Spirit. The first of these participles, we have speaking; second we have singing; third, we have making melody; and then fourth, giving thanks; and then fifth, submitting. The first three of these five concern the matter of singing which is found in our text tonight, verse 19, which is what we're going to be concentrating on tonight, and in our upcoming sermons we'll consider the fourth and the fifth gust of water that flows from this fount of being filled with the Spirit.

Before getting into the micro level pieces of this text, let's step back just a moment and not miss the macro level point that we find in the flow of these verses. There is a simple observation that we need to make in relation to one of the chief results of being Spirit-filled and that is song. He goes immediately from Spirit-filling to song. The word-filled, Spirit-filled Christian, the word-filled, Spirit-filled church, finds song as God's ordained method of expressing their heart. The God who created the tongue in the mouth to talk is the same God that has created the tongue in the mouth to sing. God created song.

Now he could have created us only to use language to speak to one another, couldn't he? That form of communication would surely have been enough for us to share ideas, and it would be enough for us to evolve into a sophisticated and a productive society just simply by talking. God could have created music without song such that we could hear the sound of an orchestra but in no way have the reality of voice producing some type of noise that transcends mere language. Yet God chose to create song, something that

transcends the mere use of language, and it adds a mysterious beauty and a mysterious depth that transcends bare communication. That's what song does.

God has actually created song and we don't have to look far to find some of the inherent benefits of song. Memory. Song embeds truth in the memory like perhaps nothing else. I mean, you take someone who is very aged or someone who is fighting dementia, whose memory is very limited or failing, song seems to have stuck. They still are able to sing out songs that they've learned from long ago. Perhaps this is why Moses even after the people of Israel were redeemed from Egypt after the exodus, which we actually recited that only a few weeks ago in worship, he had them sing so that the people perhaps could remember and constantly be reminded of what God did for them in redeeming them out of Egypt.

So memory is certainly one element of this creation of singing, another one is expression. It is a means through which the affections of the heart can be expressed in a way that words, just bare words, have great difficulty. How many times have you been thankful that we sing, "How great thou art"? The heart channels it's genuine expression on a level that simply saying those words is found wanting.

Well, not only memory and expression, but it also raises the affection, doesn't it? Again, how many times have you sang a song that reminded you of just the sheer power of music to create and to evoke something out of you and within you? Even singing, "How great thou art," it can elevate the senses so as to have a powerful impact upon the affections, raising them all the more in praise to God.

God is the one that created this thing of song, perhaps something he would not have had to or must have made a part of our human experience but he chose to include it in his creative powers, and what we don't want to miss tonight is that out of all that can be said in these verses, we certainly don't want to miss that God has created song in part as an activity resulting from a heart that's Spirit-filled.

Well, let us consider our text a little more closely at a more micro level, if you will. If you look at verse 19, you'll find that there are two parts to it with a comma that divides the two. In verse 19 it says, "speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs," comma, "singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." So you're speaking to one another in song or through the means of song, and you're singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, but we need to note here that these are not actually two different activities that are going on. He doesn't employ a conjunction of "and" to make it read in such a way as to suggest that there are two different activities altogether; that on the one hand we are to speak to one another in song audibly, but on the other hand we're to sing in and from our hearts to the Lord inaudibly. That's not what Paul is getting at here, as if there are two different ways in which you engage in song. No, that's not the case at all. These are actually parallel parts and are not describing two different activities. They are parallel parts. Put simply, these two parts are like two dimensions of the same activity. The first part considers the horizontal dimension of song, and the second part consider the vertical dimension of song.

Let's first consider the horizontal dimension to song. Notice that Paul writes, "speaking," or addressing, "one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." I care not to get into too much detail on all the different views of how these three elements, psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, have been taken by various interpretive groups throughout church history, for there is actually a common agreement that these are not three tightly contained forms of song that have no overlap, in fact, there's tremendous overlap between these three items that are listed here. It's actually because of that overwhelming overlap, the overlapping nature of these three elements, that so much discussion has arisen over the years. Some will actually hold that the word "spiritual" here is simply to be rendered "inspired," requiring us to only sing Old Testament songs because certainly those are in the Canon of Scripture, and that the "hymns and songs" are just another way of expressing songs and other passages in Scripture, perhaps even outside the psalter, that use the actual words of the psalter in them. Others holding to that same idea of "spiritual" being taken as "inspired," would advocate that "psalms" is clearly referencing the Old Testament psalter, and "hymns and songs" would be any other Spirit-inspired portion of Scripture, meaning that so long as you're singing the word of God whether it's found in the Old Testament psalter or anywhere else in Scripture, you're okay because it is all Spirit-inspired and coming from God's Spirit-inspired book which is the word of God. However, I don't think that this text requires that we find Paul writing a treatise on worship music in these passages so as to require only Spirit-inspired song to be sung by Christians anymore than he requires Christians to use certain form prayers when they're praying. No, he can say that you pray in the Spirit because, again, of our spiritually existing within the sphere of the Spirit of Christ who is the Spirit of the age to come, and though the form of our prayers will vary, they are still said to have been delivered in the Spirit. While "psalms" is indeed referencing the Old Testament psalter, there's no doubt there, it should be sung by Christians. In fact, I would love for us to even sing the psalter more than we do. And while "hymns," as just simply songs of praise may be derived from Old Testament psalms or some other part of Scripture, the use of spiritual song language shouldn't, again, be seen as some third technical category that Paul is referencing. In fact, in first century Ephesus, there were both religious song and secular song. Paul is simply referring to song that would be in keeping with the nature of a psalm or hymn, namely that which arises from the truth of God's word though it may not be the actual words of the inspired text.

Additionally, it is questionable if Paul has in mind exclusively song that would be sung within the context of public worship, which is a whole other matter altogether. But again, there is another point here that we don't want to get distracted from and it is this horizontal dimension to song. Paul states, "speak," or address, "one another in song." Isn't that interesting? In other words, through the method of song we actually address one another. Have you ever thought about that? Paul says that we do. In fact, in the parallel passage in Colossians. Paul even uses the words "teaching and admonishing one another in song," that even through song you teach and admonish one another.

Paul is saying that there is a dimension to singing spiritual music that is horizontal. Now this doesn't mean that the song has to be specifically an exhortation to one's neighbor

directly, though some of our hymns that we sing, even, appropriately do. For instance, "Come, let us sing to the Lord." We're actually speaking to each other, "Come, let us sing to the Lord," as there are some psalms in the actual psalter that call the congregation to praise and to sing. In fact, in some of them we find the singer is addressing himself as much as he is the person next to him. "Arise, my soul, arise." Who are we talking to whenever we sing that song? "Arise, my soul, arise." But we can be singing, "How great thou art," which may, indeed, encourage the heart of our neighbor. Again, there is this horizontal dimension to song.

This should only actually reinforce for us the importance and the duty for us to sing aloud. Whether the song is one of praise or adoration or thanksgiving or petition or resolve or to one another, let us, or come now or praise ye the Lord, whatever we might be singing, we need to be reminded of its importance and duty as we sing aloud. In all of our song there exists this horizontal dimension which even mysteriously in the operation of the Spirit we are speaking to and addressing one another, even teaching one another through song. It's very important that we are participants in this activity of singing unto the Lord. Now while contemporary, the contemporary scene out there may rightly be criticized for its hyper-internal, hyper-individualistic individualism in a lot of its singing, we must not forget the reality and the importance that our song as Christians has this horizontal dimension to it.

So speaking of public corporate worship, just taking that context, how do we often speak about the corporate nature of worship? We speak of it as a dialog. The predominating subject matter of public worship is a dialogical principle where we are dialoging with God. God speaks to us and we respond in speech or song. He speaks, we speak. There is this dialog that we have with God but what I want to submit to you tonight based upon our passage of Scripture is that there is a sub-dialog that's also taking place and it's taking place between and among God's people as our song is also communicating much to the person that is next to us. That dimension must be remembered and revealed in. It's a very very important aspect to our singing.

Well, there also is a vertical dimension that we find. Our passage provides a comma as you see with this parallel part on the other side of that comma, it says, "singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." Here we find that our singing also has this other dimension which is vertical. This singing and making melody is just one unit that's followed by one qualifying expression which is, "in your heart to the Lord." Our song is directed to him as the object of worship. While we might say that our singing has a horizontal dimension to it where we're speaking, we are teaching and addressing one another, we're in no way worshiping one another.

There is that horizontal teaching aspect and communicating aspect but only God is the object of our worship and we should take a moment to explore this little phrase, "in your heart," or with your heart, where he says here, "singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." Again, Paul is not indicating that this is inaudible; that this is the aspect of singing that you're personally singing that doesn't come out. No, it surely is audible. What Paul is indicating here when he uses this phrase "in or with your heart," he's indicating

that the Spirit-filled heart is one that is not dishing out lip service when it comes to song. No, his or her entire person is filled with the songs of praise, expressing the reality of the life of the Spirit as one sings unto the Lord from the heart, not bare lip service.

So what are the results of the Spirit's infilling? Song. It's the first one, singing. Song through which we address one another and song through which we address the Lord. It's a two-fold address. Not two separate activities but it's actually one activity with two dimensions, a horizontal and a vertical dimension.

Now in closing, as was mentioned from the beginning, these five participles that we're going to be considering, the first three we did tonight, are predominantly describing the results of a life that is filled with the Spirit, but some have rightly acknowledged that there is also an undercurrent of means in these participles. An undercurrent of means. What is it to be filled with the Spirit? It is to be filled with the word of God; letting the word dwell in us richly, the word of truth dwell within us richly, right? Well, what is our singing filled with? What is our song filled with? It's filled with the word. It's filled with truth derived from God's word. Whether we're singing a psalm that is Spirit-inspired or we're singing music and taking words upon our lips that are derived from the truth of God's word, what we're singing is truth, what we're singing is the word, and in so doing, who are we also addressing? Not just God but one another.

So let us be mindful, brothers and sisters, and this is where I want us to land tonight, let us be mindful that while certainly the Spirit-filled heart results in song, it is through song as a means that God also uses that song singing to fill us with the Spirit as well. It's not just a result of the Spirit-filled heart, the Spirit-filled Christian, but it also has this undercurrent of means to it where God uses the very truth that we're singing to Spirit-infill his people as we sing not only praise and adoration unto the Lord, addressing him, but as our Scripture teaches us, we also through such singing address one another with truth, the word of God, through which God uses that to even fill us with his Spirit.

Let's pray.

Our Father in heaven, we thank You that You've gifted us this thing called singing that we take for granted as a delightful creation of Yours. And Lord, we thank You that You've give us singing in part as a way of our expressing hearts that are filled with Your Spirit. Father, we pray that You would help us not think of our singing as some extraneous or ancillary aspect of this thing called worship, this engagement that we call the service of worship. Lord, we pray that You would help us to see that in our ascribing praise to You vertically, that You by Your Spirit also use that very song to teach, admonish and communicate, address, each of us through one another. Father, we pray that You would help us as Your servants, singing servants, may we, Father, see that it's actually a duty that we are performing, a participation through which You're using us in the lives of those who are sitting next to us as we praise You in song. Father, we thank You for this text of Scripture through which You have taught us more about what is going on in our song singing. We pray, Father, You would help us to be faithful in it and may You use us

by Your Spirit to edify, encourage and sanctify one another even in our song. We pray this in Christ's name. Amen.