

## Eph Ch 5 Vs 15-21

(Understanding the will of the Lord)

We're still in the midst of these stark contrasts that Paul the apostle has been making regarding what we're to be, what we're not to be, what we once were and who we are now and how it is that we once lived as compared to how we're to lead our lives now as children of God. and In short we're to walk in godly love, not carnal lust, we're to walk as children of light, because we are light in the Lord, though we were once darkness, engaging in the actions and deeds sourced in fallen humanity, dead in sin and transgression, that's not who you are any more in Christ. But rather you have become a partaker (the bible says) of His divine nature and Christ is the light of the world, therefore you (having Christ in you) are light in Him and are to lead your life accordingly.

By allowing the Spirit of God to have His way in your life and if you are in surrender and submission to the Spirit of God, then *your* actions, your deeds, your conversations will be characterized (according to vs 9) by all goodness, righteousness and truth. Because that is the characteristics, or the fruit, the outcropping of the work of the Spirit in a persons life, as opposed to the unfruitful works of darkness as mentioned in vs 3-5 and 1<sup>st</sup> Cor ch 6, Gal ch 5 19-21 and other places in Scripture.

We are to have no fellowship or nothing in common with these types of things, these aren't the things that are to characterize the life of the child of God, but rather your life is to expose those things for the sin that they are. Your life being characterized the fruit of the Spirit, you being light in the Lord, will shine and expose the reality of the lifestyles of people in the world for what they are, and you are to be a convicting influence around people who don't know Jesus Christ Because you lead a life of uprightness, honesty and integrity, therefore you won't engage in the shady things they want you to be apart of. and When you do that they are exposed, their sin is brought into the light, and they don't like that, because you are light, but they're darkness and love the darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil.

But if you're lulled to sleep or you grow apathetic in your relationship with Christ, and/or through that slip into compromise, then how can you be effective in what you're called to be as a child of God? That being light in a dark world, if you're engaged in the very things the world is engaged in, and there's nothing that sets you apart from them, you compromise right along with them, so the wake up call is given in vs 14 to sober up, to be aroused from any lack of spiritual vitality. To repent and follow hard again after Christ and He will give you light, you will once again have the light of life, and this is the concept that Paul draws from as he gets into this next section; that we wake up, and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, not walking as fools but as wise, because time is short and the days are evil. (Lets read vs 15-17)

## Vs15-17

Now this is where we left off last week, see then that you walk circumspectly, or carefully in wisdom, so we're to walk in love, in light and in wisdom. As a Christian you're not to just sort of drift through life, like a sleepwalker, but you and I are to make the most of the opportunities that God gives us. How many people take their sailboats out to sea, lower their sails and turn loose of the wheel and say, "lets just see what happens"? But rather they mark out their course, raise their sails, and guide the rudder until they reach their destination. Yet how many Christians have no real sense of direction, don't really know where they're headed or how they are to get there? (In regards to God's earthly plan for their lives), someone has said, "When the pilot doesn't know what port he is heading for, no wind is the right wind." We need to use wisdom in our decisions seeking the heart and mind of God, and when we receive direction from God, we need to allow Him to set our course, and guide us accordingly.

You see, walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise. Not as fools, the bible says that it's the fool who says in his heart that there is no God, and so he cast off restraint, leads life however it seems best to him. Again Prov 14:12 "*There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.*" Paul says don't live like the fool, living as if there is no God, and that you'll never have to give an account therefore vs 3-5 describes your life, and you're sleeping or dead spiritually. But rather walk in wisdom, redeeming the time because the days are evil.

Which is to say what we've already said, make the most of your opportunities in life to God's glory because life is short and the days are evil, the god of this world is working hard in the sons of disobedience. But you are to allow the One True Living God to work hard in you, so that many might be brought into His kingdom, for His glory. Be that through your prayers or personal evangelism or partnering together with those whom God has called to that office or ministering to the kids, who knows but that the next Billy Graham isn't back there right now being groomed by one of those teachers to share the love of Jesus Christ to a hurt and dying world. Take advantage and make the most of the opportunities of this temporal life, making investments for eternal life, that's what Jesus taught, that we lay up treasures in heaven.

## Vs17

Therefore- in light of the fact that life is short and the days are evil, don't be unwise, but walk in wisdom understanding what the will of the Lord is. So often we're prone to make this big mystical kind of an experience out of discovering the Lord's will that goes beyond the realm of our understanding and we think that God's going to reveal it to us in a dream or a vision and until that time we're going to wait to discover what God's will is. But basically what Paul is saying here is that God gave us all a brain and He wants us to use it, God wants you to know His will, and more than that He wants you to *understand* His will.

God's not into the divine guessing game and seeing just how cloudy He can make things for you, He wants you to be aware of His will for your life more than you want to know it, but you're not going to know it apart from prayer, fellowship with God and the study of His word, why because it's in His word that He reveals His will for you. and When you're not in line with what His word says for your life then that's going to limit your and my usability, how so, because you'll be subjected to different priorities in your life then God's, and when our priorities aren't His priorities then He can't do much *with us* because He doesn't have much of *us*.

Regarding the will of God for you I'm going to give you six primary examples of what the scripture has to say, but you need to know that God tells us what His will for us is, and we need to search the scriptures, using the mind that He gave us in order to discover it. As Rom 12:2 tells us, "*And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*" Now no doubt God has a specific plan for your life that is unique to you, but you don't need to worry about that, because as you find yourself in the general will of God that He has for every believer, it's there that God is going to begin to direct your life into the specifics. As a matter of fact many times God will guide your life and you don't even realize it accept through retrospect as you look back on your life. You were just loving God following after Him and lo and behold He was guiding the details of your life.

The other day my wife and I were going to meet in town, but she was leaving a few minutes earlier to get to some sale that had time limits, but she was going to drop our son off up the road to get his hair cut by a lady here in the fellowship that has a salon up the road. Now I had our daughter and I was getting ready to go get our son and so I put Elizabeth in the truck and then I realized that my wife had the base of the car seat. So I started to freak out because I couldn't leave and I was running late (and I knew she would be closing) and so I ran inside to get call the salon and then I realized the baby was in the truck so I ran out and put the phone book in the truck to make the call. But I decided to not call and just see if my folks could watch the baby. To make a long story short I got up there way later then I had hoped to but when I went in there was this suspicious looking guy just pacing in front of the window and leaning beside the door. I went in grabbed my son hopped in the truck and began to leave and I got this check.

I didn't know if it was maybe her cousin or a friend and so I didn't want to say anything about him seeming weird but I couldn't just drive off. I asked my son if they knew who it was and he said no he showed up about 10 min ago and had been walking around the building and looking in the window. and So I thought I'm going to call her and as it was I had the phone book right in my truck and so I pulled out and called her and sure enough she didn't know who it was and it was kind of freaky. So even though her mom was in the store I didn't feel right about it so I turned around and came back and made sure that they were able to leave ok. Well the guy began to walk off and then as I was pulling out of the lot he turned around and began to head back to the salon and by the time I was down the road I could see him pulling on the door.

So I pulled over and called the police, now had I gotten up there when I wanted to I would have grabbed Greg and left before this guy ever showed up and who knows what may have happened? But God was guiding the details of my life so that even though I was thinking I was running behind, He purposed that I would show up when this guy did, that I would have the phone book in my truck and the whole thing.

So don't worry about the details God will take care of that, but pursue by the Holy Spirit the things that God desires for every believer and then He'll lead you from there. 1<sup>st</sup> and foremost regarding all of mankind we know that it's God's will, His desire for all to be saved, and to come to know Him in a personal way. 2 Peter 3:9 says, "*The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.*"

Again Paul in writing to Timothy said in 1 Tim 2:3-4 in regards to praying for all men and especially those who are rulers, because it's good and acceptable in the sight of "*God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*" That's God's will, so when you're praying for someone's salvation, you can pray in confidence knowing that you're praying in accordance with the will of God, you don't have to wonder about that, God wants that individual to come to know Him and to be spared eternal separation from Him, and enter into an everlasting relationship that's personal with Him. Now when you come to know Jesus Christ it's God's will for you to be filled with His Spirit, as we'll see in a minute in vs 18 which says, "*do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit.*" That's the will of God for every believer, now one that kind of goes hand in hand with that one is your sanctification. Leave the book of Eph and turn quickly with me to 1<sup>st</sup> Thess ch 4, this is kind of a long one so I want to read it together.

Vs1-8

Now this kind of correlates with what we've been talking about the last couple of weeks, that you walk in true love, the fact that you're light, so live like it, we should walk as children of light and in wisdom. You see, being sanctified, or set apart from the world unto the Lord, in the world but not of the world. Jesus said, "*If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.*" Because you expose the sin and darkness of their lives by your integrity and uprightness of heart and life, but this is God's will for you; your sanctification. That includes abstaining from sexual immorality and worldly passions and lusts, that you consider others needs above your selfish wants (we talked about that a couple of weeks ago) and vs 7 and 8 are the clincher (repeat).

If you choose to ignore this exhortation, you're not rejecting me and my opinion but God and His word. and He has given you His Holy Spirit that you might be set apart or sanctified unto Him, not live like the rest of the world, He's called you out of that, and it's His will that you be sanctified. It's God's will for you that you not live in rebellion to the law and the governing authorities but that you willingly subject yourself to the ordinances of the land. 1 Peter 2:13-17 says, *"Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men-- as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God. Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king."*

You see there's a whole list of things that God desires of His people, submission to the ordinances of man, honor all people, love the brotherhood, reverence God and honor the king or your president. Even if you didn't vote for Him as the case with our last President, but it's God (according to the bible) who has allowed any man his office. So in that case you give them due respect, now there's only one exception to that rule of honoring men or the ordinances of man and that's when they set up an ordinance that requires you do something contrary to the revealed will of God. and We see that all throughout scripture, Daniel refused to quit praying when the King issued that decree, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego refused to bow to the golden statue, but rather chose to honor God over the decree of the king.

In the NT we see in the book of Acts ch 4 when Peter and John were basically on trial for spreading the Gospel and healing a man by the power of the Holy Spirit. and So the council, *"called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."* In other words, hey threaten all you want we have to obey God over man, but if what the law requires of you doesn't compromise the revealed will of God as found in His word, then we're to obey it, that's God's will, and it's a good witness. Heb 13:17 tells us in regards to church leadership that we're to, *"Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you."* So it's God's will that we submit to our church leaders as well, being courteous to the fact that one day they'll give an account for your soul, and it would be best for you (notice) if they were able to do that with joy and not grief.

Now, there may be times when God's will for you may involve suffering and persecution or tribulation. There are those who purport that anyone who suffers, they only do so because they don't have enough faith, however that's not what the bible teaches and you're not to take peoples word but search God's word for yourself and find out what it says.

If the only person who suffers is the person who lacks faith, then Jesus must have been pretty weak in the faith because He suffered a great deal, now are you going to tell me that wasn't God's will for Him? In the Garden the night before the crucifixion Jesus prayed that if there was any other way that sinful man could have a relationship with a Holy and righteous God apart from Him suffering the death of the cross then that was what He wanted to do. He was crying out for an alternate route for man to be righteous, nevertheless (Jesus said) not My will but Your will be done, speaking to the Father. and What happened? Jesus *Suffered* the death of the cross, the Father thereby confirming that there was no other way that man could be saved except through the work of His Son on the cross.

Now, Jesus said, *"Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him."* and If Jesus is your master and He suffered according to the will of God, what makes you think that God's will for you can never involve suffering, especially in the face of Scriptures like, John 16:33 where Jesus said, *"In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."* Not you may have, or if you lack faith you will have, but emphatically you will have tribulation.

But you're not without hope if you're in Christ because He has overcome the world, therefore the bible teaches that *we* are more than conquerors as well through Him who loved us. and If it's never God's will for you to suffer what do you do with 2 Tim 3:12 which says, *"Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution."* Not some will, not those who are weak in the faith will, all who desire to live godly in Christ will suffer persecution. Do you desire to live godly in Christ, then get ready, it's coming, maybe those who never suffer and teach that others shouldn't either just aren't living godly, so the enemy leaves them alone in their own little incoherent world of deceit. But this is what the bible teaches, if you want to follow Jesus, things happen because the world and Satan hates you and you are a threat to them, that's why Jesus said narrow is the way and difficult is the path that leads to everlasting life and there are few who find it. and That's also why it's so critical that you maintain eternal perspective, so that you might be able with Paul to say when things are coming down or going wrong in your life, *"we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal."*

Yeah things may look bad now, but in the eternal perspective it's but for a moment, and it's working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. One more, concerning the will of God for your life, that you be thankful, sure there are times when you may suffer and we don't thank God for evil. But you can be thankful that through it all you know Jesus Christ and even though you may not understand it, you can trust God in the midst of it knowing that ultimately, eventually He'll turn it to His glory. Rom 8:28 "*and we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.*" and So, "*Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*" 1 Thess 5:16-18

So if you're saved, filled with the Spirit, sanctified and set apart to God, in submission to authority, if you've been persecuted for His names sake and are through all things ultimately thankful to God for the work that He's done and is doing in your life, then you're in the will of God and believe me when I tell you He'll work out the specifics if you're in line with the general. So walk in wisdom, don't be unwise but understand what the will of the Lord is, seek God through His word offer Him your life fresh every morning if you're not certain in a given situation ask for God to give you wisdom and trust Him for it in your decision.

Vs18

Now again there are those who use this scripture to seek to officiate that being filled with the Spirit is like being drunk, but lets not forget the context Paul is dealing in contrast and counterfeits for the sake of clarity, love and lust, dark and light, sleeping and being awake, wisdom and foolishness, and now here, drunkenness and being filled with the Spirit. Now about the only thing that I can think of that being drunk and being filled with the Spirit have in common is that in both cases the individual is "under the influence." But one is under the influence of the Holy Spirit and the other is under the influence of a counterfeit "spirit." and Paul's point here is that being drunk or really in anyway being impaired by alcohol is foolishness and characteristic of darkness and is sin. As to where being filled with the Spirit is a mark of, and the source by which we walk in the light and in wisdom and understanding. Prov 20:1 says, "*Wine is a mocker, Strong drink is a brawler, And whoever is led astray by it is not wise.*" Let's look together at Prov 23: 29-35

The person who falls prey to alcohol in this manner or in any manner by which they are impaired has really, tragically fallen prey to the counterfeit, because they are seeking to be free from their pain or fill the void that's in their heart or to fabricate some type of happiness that they otherwise never experience. and The sad thing is, is that they've been deceived, because in reality all of those things; a healing in the heart, a filling of the void and joy unspeakable and full of glory is only found via the Holy Spirit coming into you and Jesus Christ taking residence in your heart by the power of His Spirit.

Alcohol is a depressant; it "loosens" people because it depresses their self-control, their wisdom, their balance and judgment. That's what's meant here by the word "dissipation" or maybe your bible says "excess", it means wastefulness or a dissolute, and degenerate life. The Holy Spirit however works in sharp contrast to that; He is a stimulant; He moves every aspect of our being to better and more perfect performance.

So don't be drunk with wine or impaired by alcohol, for a # or reasons, it's not necessary, it's a horrible witness, but most importantly because the word of God forbids it. But rather you (child of God) be filled with the Spirit, you "drink" in the Spirit. Jesus said, *"whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him (speaking of the Holy Spirit) will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life."*

Be filled with the Spirit, now notice with me this is not an option for the believer, this is a command, Paul didn't say, it would probably be a good idea if you were (if you wanted to be) filled with the Spirit. He didn't say that, he said, be filled with the Spirit and remember he's writing to believers, so we're not talking about being indwelt by the Spirit, that happens upon conversion. We're not talking about being sealed by the Spirit, that happens upon conversion, this is something that is subsequent to conversion by which you are empowered to lead a life that walks in the will of God.

Unless you are filled with the Spirit, even though you are saved, sealed and indwelt by the Spirit, you will still live a life of spiritual weakness, frustration and defeat. and The Greek language here makes this clear that this "filling" is not a one time, now live forever on it type of a process, literally it could be rendered (though is makes for bad English) "be being kept filled." It's a command that includes the idea of conscious continuation; even after Pentecost the disciples experienced this again and again. You remember after they had been threatened there in Acts ch 4 to stop preaching the gospel, that they prayed for boldness and for God to work in them and through them mightily so that Jesus might be glorified and read there in vs 31, *"And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness."*

So this filling involves a day by day, and really even a moment-by-moment submission to the Holy Spirit's control. You see this word is also passive meaning that it's not something that involves us, but rather it's something that we allow to be done in us, the work is all the Spirit's, but He'll only work through willing submission. and It's in the present tense as well which indicates that we can't rely on yesterdays filling or expect the future filling though we rejoice in past fillings and hope for future fillings, but we can only live in the present filling. Now, what does this word "filled" mean, it can mean filling as in filling something up, like a glass of water, and there's no question that God desires that we decrease and He by the power of the Spirit increase in our lives until there's no more of us left.

It also carries with it the idea of permeation, like salt that permeated meats in order to both flavor and preserve them. and No doubt the Holy Spirit of God wants to permeate your life so that everything that you think, say or do, is under His influence and control, reflecting Jesus Christ to those around you. But in the present context the word carries with it and the way I believe it leans here is with the idea of total control, as one who is “filled” with sorrow is really under the control of that emotion. Or if someone is filled with fear or anger or whatever they’re really no longer under their own control, but are totally controlled by that which dominates them.

So in this sense of the word to be “filled” with the Spirit is to be totally under the control and dominated by the Spirit, not because He’s taken over by force and you’re out of control (the fruit of the Spirit is self-control, the ability to maintain composure) but because you’ve surrendered to Him and allowed Him to have His way in your life.

Now before we close, I want to briefly consider what it is that earmarks the life of the “Spirit filled” believer, because there are those who would say that the evidence of the Holy Spirit in a person’s life is speaking in tongues. They are looking (for lack of a better term) a literal tangible verifiable witness and they consider that proof to be tongues. Now the bible says that faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen, and yet they want to see this take place.

Now there’s nothing-wrong with inspecting the fruit of a person’s life and wanting to observe the reality of the Spirits work in them. But the bible says that the fruit of the Spirit is Love, and you can read of that and all of the things contained therein in Gal ch 5 vs 21-23. and Even if you speak in the tongues of men and angels and have not Love the bible says it’s all pointless. But here we read of some of the characteristics that traffic together along with love in the life of the Spirit filled believer. Vs 18 says be filled with the Spirit (vs 19-21 being the subsequent results of that, or the manifestation of that)

Vs19-21

The 1<sup>st</sup> thing we see is worship, leading a life of worship to God, and encouraging other believers in like manner. What are the songs that burst forth from your heart, the words “spiritual songs” being those times of spontaneous worship that just well up with in you and you just start praising God in song, not one that someone else wrote but you’re just praising the Lord. Is there a song in your heart on a consistent basis of worship to the Lord, if so that would indicate to me that you’re filled with the Spirit.

Next as we talked about earlier, the Spirit filled individual will be marked out as one who has a thankful heart, you know where you've been and what you've done and yet God loves you and has called you out of darkness into His glorious light. The believer who shows genuine gratitude on a consistent basis is one who I would say is filled with the Spirit.

Then finally a mutual submission, you show me a believer who esteems others above themselves, operates in humility, and is willing to allow their desires in a given situation be placed aside out of their reverence for God and I'll show you a believer who is filled with the Spirit of God. (We'll pick up here next week.)