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C0512 -- Mar. 23, 2005 – Ephesians 5: 15-21 – Walk in Wisdom

Paul’s progression in chapters 4-6 has been very logical. He has given us four applications of the doctrine in 1-3 thus far. Each application is demarcated by the words **therefore...walk** (*oun...peripateo*). 1) WALK IN UNITY because Christ broke down the hostility between believing Jews and Gentiles and united us in one new man. 2) WALK IN HOLINESS because you laid aside the old man and put on the new man at conversion. 3) WALK IN LOVE because Christ loved us and gave Himself for us. 4) WALK IN LIGHT because we are no longer darkness but light in the Lord. Therefore, expose sinful deeds because we love one another. Discipline and love go hand in hand. Lastly we have WALK IN WISDOM in 5:15-6:9. 5:15-21 is the key for the section on walking in wisdom. Paul is going to make a lot of practical applications in 5:22-6:9 but before he does that he commands us to be filled by the Holy Spirit. This is walking wisely.

So, our section tonight, 5:15-21 forms the basis of your behavior toward your marriage, children, employer, or employees. We’re going to look at a series of negative and positive commands related to a wise walk.

2PPAImp conj adv adv 2PPAI neg conj adjNPM conj conj adj
 NPM

¹⁵ Ble,pete ou=n avkribw/j pw/j peripatei/te mh. w`j a;sofoi avllV w`j sofoi,(
Ephesians 5:15 Therefore, you [all] look how carefully you [all] walk, not as unwise but as wise,

“The metaphor of darkness and light is dropped, and the contrast is now between a;sofoi and sofoi.”ⁱ The point is not how carefully one is to observe but how carefully one is to walk.ⁱⁱ Take care to walk carefully. This is almost saying that as a Christian you should walk on pins and needles. Your lives should not be lived recklessly but carefully. The words **be careful** comes from the Greek word *blepo* which means “to see”. Here it means to use your spiritual eyes to habitually walk carefully.

Then Paul introduces the FIRST OF FOUR CONTRASTS **walk, not as unwise but as wise**. These two words are obviously antonyms: *asophia* and *sophia*. “WISDOM” means true insight into God’s plan and God alone can give this kind of wisdom. Thus, God is the source of this wisdom and insight into God’s plan is the object. Wise people have insight into God’s plan and walk in accordance with that plan. Unwise people lack insight and despise God’s plan. So, we might say that wisdom is divine skill in thinking and divine skill in living. How do we walk wisely in accordance with God’s plan?

PMPart NPM art ASM conj art NPF adj NPF 3PPAI
¹⁶ evxagorazo,menoi to.n kairo,n(o[ti ai` h`me,rai ponhrai, eivsin

Ephesians 5:16 making good use of the time, because the days are evil.

This is a participial clause describing how to walk wisely. Wise people **make the most of their time**. The Greek word for **making the most** is the GREEK WORD *exagorazo* and it means “to purchase or buy an item”. Time is a limited commodity. We ought to “buy it up” intensely. Paul is telling us that if you are wise you will take advantage of any and every opportunity, you will make good use of every opportunity, you will take advantage of every chance. Unwise people waste time, are inefficient, over-sleep, are non-productive, and procrastinate. Wise people redeem the time, are efficient, productive, and get things done ahead of time. Why should we **make good use of time**?

because the days are evil. Christians are to make the most of every opportunity at hand **because the days are evil**. The word for **evil** is *poneros* and is the opposite of good. It describes anything that is opposed to God who is good, including evil people, evil thoughts, evil deeds, and the evil present age. Here **the days** refer to the present age. The present age is opposed to God because it is characterized by **evil** (Gal 1:4). Why is the present age opposed to God? Because the present age is controlled by the god of this world (2:2). Who is presently the god of this world? Wait for an answer. Satan is the god of this world. How did Satan become the god of this world? God gave Adam and Eve regal dominion over the creation. But, when Adam fell he handed over that dominion to Satan. From that point forward the kingdoms of the world have been the property of Satan. Satan even offered these kingdoms to Christ in Matt 4:8-9. Scripture tells us he has dominion over the world, he blinds the minds of the unbelieving, and the world lies under his power (John 12:32; 2 Cor 4:4; Acts 26:18; 1 John 5:19). Therefore, the days are evil because Satan is presently ruling over them. And he is at war with God trying to thwart the plan of God and fulfill his plan which is to take as many people to hell with him as possible. Therefore, Satan wants

you to be a time-waster. He doesn't want you to make the most of every opportunity. He wants you to be an impotent Christian. And you are impotent whenever you are wasting time. You are wasting God-given opportunities and useless, even harmful to God's plan and purposes. You are also opposing your fellow brothers who wisely make the most of their time.

Paul knew this lesson well all too well. Just think of Paul's circumstances of hardship; almost killed numerous times, almost drowned, shipwrecked, imprisoned and yet Paul made the most of his time in every circumstance. Paul used every circumstance as an opportunity to minister to others. He never wasted time or opportunities because he believed God was the author of all his circumstances. For example, where was Paul when he wrote this letter? Wait for an answer. That's right; he was in prison in Rome. Paul didn't sit around and waste time in prison. Paul capitalized on his time in prison by writing four of the most potent letters ever written to the Church. Paul took advantage of every opportunity. He didn't see his difficult circumstances as hardships that messed up his days but as opportunities to capitalize on (Phil 1:12-14). Likewise, you ought to regard all circumstances as opportunities. If you don't then you probably have a problem with the sovereignty of God. You probably don't accept the fact that God is the author of all your circumstances. Your circumstances are God-ordained and once you recognize that, like Paul did, you'll start buying up the time intensively. You'll start seizing every opportunity in this evil age. Stop wasting time! It's God's to give and you are wasting a gift of God when you waste time. When people say "take some time", just remember it's not ours to take, it's God's to give but never ours to take. So make the most of it. Notice that Paul doesn't say we should be afraid of this evil age or that we should avoid interacting with it. Instead we are to walk wisely in it because there is an ongoing war between the god of this world and the God of heaven. How are we to walk wisely in an evil age?

prep proASN neg 2PPMImp NPM conj 2PPAImp pro ASN art NSN
art GSM

¹⁷ dia. tou/to mh. gi,nesqe a;fronej(avlla. suni,ete ti, to. qe,lhma tou/ kuri,ou

Ephesians 5:17 For this reason, do not become foolish, but understand what is the will of the Lord.

This is done in two ways. First, in your thought life (v 17). You must become wise in the way you think. Paul says, **for this reason**. What does **this reason** refer back to? It refers back to everything in vv 15-16. Because you should walk as wise men by making the most of your time in an evil age you should not become foolish but rather understand what the

Lord's will is. This is the SECOND CONTRAST. The first was 1) do not be unwise but wise, the second is 2) do not become foolish but understand God's will. The negative command is **do not become foolish** rather than **do not be foolish**. There is the possibility that believers can **become foolish**. The word **become** signifies a habitual life pattern. Do not become and do not remain foolish. The Greek word for **foolish** is important. The word means "out of one's mind". A fool is one who despises wisdom, understanding and knowledge. Fools are not interested in increasing their knowledge. Because they don't increase knowledge they are ignorant and they live their lives foolishly and carelessly. When the Bible calls someone a "fool" it is not engaging in name calling but is describing the disposition of one who hates knowledge. All unbelievers are said to be "fools" in the Bible. They hate and reject the knowledge God has given them of His existence in both creation and conscience. Therefore, professing to become wise they become fools. This does not mean unbelievers can't be intelligent but it does mean that they don't have any divine wisdom. They may have the wisdom of men but that's the kind of wisdom that nailed Jesus Christ to the cross. What they lack is insight into God's plan. Such insight comes only from God. He is both the source of insight and the revealer of insight into the true nature of things. Therefore, unbelievers are fools. They reject what God has revealed to them. They engage in a lot of learning but never come to knowledge. Learning is simply the ability to remember what one saw or heard but understanding or knowledge begins when we accept God's interpretation of reality and we begin to put together the particulars of reality into a universal whole. That's true understanding or knowledge. And that is what Paul is commanding us to gain. He wants us to gain **understanding** in our thoughts. WISE THINKING (V 17) LEADS TO WISE LIVING (VV 18-21). The word for **understanding** means bringing the pieces together into a unified whole. I often tell people that they really don't understand a doctrine until they can explain it to someone else. But, we can go further than that. We don't really understand a doctrine until we know how it relates to other doctrines. Once you begin to connect doctrines and see the overlaps and implications for all the different doctrines then you are beginning to think theologically. Until then, these things are just pieces for you, but you're not able to put them together. You're not able to see the implications and the interrelatedness of God's plan and that's exactly what every Christian needs. You need to see the unified whole. When you do then you have **understanding**. So, understanding is Christ-centered and it deals with bringing all the pieces of reality together into a unified whole. We might say, "An Understanding of Everything", not in an exhaustive sense but in the sense that we see what the puzzle looks like because we've studied the pieces and put them together so we can see the whole picture. The picture should become clearer and clearer as we see what piece of the puzzle we are and how we fit within the rest of the picture and how all the parts interrelate and how to apply what we now know about God's plan. Rather than being ignorant of God's

plan and how all the pieces fit together, gain **understanding** in your thought life. The *present* imperative here signifies that you as a believer are to make it a practice to **understand what the will of the Lord is**. This requires a constant diet of Bible doctrine through listening to tapes and organized personal Bible studies (topical or book). How often? Daily. If you'll do this daily for 3-4 years you will grow like you never imagined in your **understanding of what the will of the Lord is**.

What is the will of the Lord? The Lord's will refers to his desire, His wish or resolve. Here it refers to His will or resolve for His plan in history. When we understand the will of the Lord for all of history then we can walk wisely, knowing where we are within His plan and purposes. Once you are granted this understanding then you can evaluate individual circumstances to see what the will of God is for you at that moment. But how can we comprehend God's will if understanding is a gift from God? Paul answers this in the next verse.

conj neg 2PPImp DSM prep pro 3SPAI NSF conj 2PPAImp prep
DSN

¹⁸ kai. mh. mequ,skesqe oi;nw|(evn w-| evstin avswti,a(avlla. plhrou/sqe evn pneu,mati(
Ephesians 5:18 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is reckless living, but be filled by the Spirit,

Second way we are to make the most of our time is in our lifestyle (18-21). Here we have the THIRD CONTRAST in the believers' conduct. **do not be drunk...but be filled by the Spirit**. When we are filled by the Spirit we are given understanding so that we can comprehend God's will. But first, let's look at the negative command **do not be drunk with wine**. **do not be drunk** is a present imperative meaning do not let drunkenness become a habit in your life. **drunk** people are not in control of their faculties and therefore they act foolishly. Therefore, **drunk** people are unable to understand what the will of the Lord is. The word for **wine** here is *oinos* and was a common drink in Paul's day. Paul is not prohibiting drinking wine but becoming intoxicated by it. Why should we not become drunk? Turn to **Proverbs 23:29-35**. This is the OT Wisdom Literature about wise living and drunkenness.

²⁹ Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has complaining? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? ³⁰ Those who linger long over wine, Those who go to taste mixed wine. ³¹ Do not look on the wine when it is red, When it sparkles in the cup, When it goes down smoothly; ³² At the last it bites like a serpent And stings like a viper. ³³ Your eyes will see strange things And

your mind will utter perverse things. ³⁴ And you will be like one who lies down in the middle of the sea, Or like one who lies down on the top of a mast. ³⁵ "They struck me, *but* I did not become ill; They beat me, *but* I did not know *it*. When shall I awake? I will seek another drink."

People who become drunk are foolish. It looks good at first but it bites like a serpent in the end. It impairs judgment and distorts the mind. You do stupid things when you get drunk. You forget what happened and when you wake up you start looking for another drink. How could such a person ever understand the will of the Lord? Then Paul describes why we should not get drunk. He says **for that is dissipation**. That is actually a good translation but what does **dissipation** or **debauchery** mean? The Greek word is *asotia*. Aristotle says that people with this vice are prodigals who WASTE THEIR SUBSTANCE and are IN THE PATH OF RUINATION OF THEIR OWN LIVES. Prodigals SQUANDER MONEY, HAVE LOW MORAL STANDARDS, and EASILY YIELD TO THE TEMPTATIONS OF HEDONISM. **Drunks** have a disorderly life, they WASTE THEIR RESOURCES to satisfy their own sensual desires, they LACK DISCIPLINE that leads to excesses, they LACK UNDERSTANDING and self-control. Do not be a drunk because it leads to unrestrained reckless living. It is the opposite of being wise and making the most of your time. Drunks waste time.

Instead of being a drunk which leads to a life of ruination, Paul says, **be filled by the Spirit**. The proper translation is not **be filled with the Spirit** but **be filled by the Spirit**. Believers always have the Spirit **with** them but they are not always **filled by the Spirit**. Regeneration, baptizing, sealing, and indwelling ministries of the Holy Spirit all take place at salvation and are a part of the gift of salvation. WE ARE NEVER COMMANDED to be regenerated by the Spirit, baptized by the Spirit, sealed by the Spirit or indwelt by the Spirit. But, ALL BELIEVERS ARE COMMANDED to be "filled by the Spirit." The verb **be filled** is a present imperative passive. *Present* means it's to be a repeated action. *Imperative* means it's a command to yield and the *passive* voice means believers cannot fill themselves. What is the believer's responsibility? To yield his will to the Lord's will. When a believer yields his will to the Lord's will then the Spirit fills him. This is in contrast to those who are drunk with wine. When a person gets drunk with wine he has yielded his will to the wine and it controls him. "WITH THE INDWELLING EACH CHRISTIAN HAS ALL OF THE SPIRIT, BUT THE COMMAND TO BE FILLED BY THE SPIRIT ENABLES THE SPIRIT TO HAVE ALL OF THE BELIEVER."ⁱⁱⁱ

In two other passages wine and the Spirit are contrasted (Luke 1:15; Acts 2:13-18). The common element between wine and the Spirit is control: both exercise a measure of control

over the faculties of the yielder. There is everything wrong with being drunk with spirits but there is everything right with being drunk with the Spirit of God. So, **TO BE FILLED BY THE SPIRIT MEANS TO YIELD ONES WILL TO THE LORD'S WILL.** It means to let the Spirit of God control our actions rather than ourselves or some other substance. No matter where we are or what we are doing we should be filled by the Holy Spirit. In this commandment is included all substance abuse, anything that takes control over the human faculties. Many young people say that the Bible nowhere prohibits drug use. Well it does here because the principle of the passage is that no believer should ever let his faculties be controlled by any substance other than the Holy Spirit. A wise man is one who consistently walks under the Spirit's control. Other phrases in Scripture that describe the same yieldedness include "walking by the Spirit" and "letting the word of Christ dwell richly within you" (Gal 5:16; 25; Col 3:16). Each of those phrases signifies that the believer has relinquished control over his will by giving it over to the Lord.

PAPart NPM proDPM prep DPM conj DPM conj DPF adjDPF PAPart
NPM conj

¹⁹ lalou/ntej e` autoi/j ÎevnÐ yalmoi/j kai. u[mnoi]j kai. wv|dai/j pneumatikai/j(a;|dontej kai.

PAPart NPM prep art DSF GPM art DSM

ya,llontej evn th/| kardi,a| u`mw/n tw/| kuri,w|(

Ephesians 5:19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord,

There is a FOUR-FOLD FRUIT of being **filled by the Holy Spirit** listed in vv 19-21.

- 1) Speaking to one another...
- 2) Singing and making melody...
- 3) always giving thanks...
- 4) submitting to one another...

These are all results of being filled by the Spirit. Whereas being filled with wine resulted in "reckless living" being filled by the Spirit results in these four characteristics. First participle, **speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs**. The word **speaking** is *laleo* which means "to communicate". Believers are to use their voices to communicate with one another. To **speak to one another** is defined in Paul's parallel passage in Colossians 3:16 as "teaching and admonishing one another". **TO SPEAK HERE THEREFORE MEANS TO TEACH AND ADMONISH ONE ANOTHER.** In the 1st

century local believers were educated by the clear teaching and admonishment of the word and not by tongues speaking.

The means of “teaching and admonishment” in this context is **psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs**. There has been a lot of debate about these words and they are very difficult to distinguish. The word **psalm** originally meant “to pluck the string of a stringed instrument or bow”. It is also applied to the OT Psalms. Therefore, **psalms** are songs that are accompanied by stringed instruments. The NT Church may have followed the OT practice of singing Psalms with a stringed instrument. There is not a lot of clarity here because the NT only has three passages that instruct us about music for the Church age (Col 3:16; James 1:8). The second word is **hymn**. A **hymn** was a song that would be sung to a great hero or conqueror or god; men such as Alexander the Great and gods such as Zeus. In a biblical context a **hymn** is “a song of praise to the only true God and the greatest conqueror, God. This word is also used of some of the OT Psalms, particularly the *hallel* psalms (i.e. praise psalms, e.g. 111-117, 146-150). The significance of the word **hymn** is that the praise is directed vertically toward God. Lastly we have the word **spiritual songs**. The Greek word for **songs** is where we get the English word “ode”. An **ode** refers to a song of joy or praise or just plain singing. Sometimes musical instruments are used and sometimes they are not. Significantly, this word is modified by the word **spiritual**. Paul doesn’t just want us to sing songs. He wants us to sing **spiritual songs**. What this means is that Paul wants us to sing songs that come from a heart filled by the Holy Spirit rather than wine. Drunk people love to sing loudly and boisterously, and quite out of character I might add, but when Christians are filled by the Spirit they should teach and admonish one another by way of a cappella and accompanied songs. The only role of biblical music is to teach and admonish. It is a fruit of being filled by the Spirit so it can only perform those two roles if it is of God.

It is really difficult to draw sharp distinctions between **psalms, hymns and spiritual songs**. The best I can say is that **psalms** refer to the OT psalms that praise God for His goodness and for victory over enemies. There may have been some NT psalms that followed this OT model as in 1 Cor 14:26. The **hymns and spiritual songs** were expressions of believer’s joy. The content of all three of these types of songs is best expressed in the parallel passage of Col 3:16 as “wisdom teaching and admonishing one another”. Many scholars think that certain sections of the NT epistles are early hymns. For example, some think that Ephesians 1:3-14 was an early hymn. There is very little evidence for such speculations. Although there is really very little about singing in the NT I wonder if the early NT church used singing as a tool to help them memorize Scriptural truths. People didn’t have Bibles in their homes and to hear Scripture one had to go to a local synagogue or church. Putting scriptural

truths in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs would help people to remember the teaching of the word of God. Although I don't know if this is true or not it does seem plausible. Regardless, it is a fruit of being filled by the Spirit.

The second participle is in v 19b. This is the second result of being filled by the Spirit; 1) **singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord**. Literally this says **singing and psalming with your heart...** Singing is self-explanatory but the word **making melody** or **psalming** needs some clarification. It is used five times in the NT (Rom. 15:9; 1 Co. 14:15; Eph. 5:19; Jas. 5:13) and in every reference it refers to the voice, not to the playing of a musical instrument. 1 Corinthians 14:15 is very important because Paul says, "I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the mind also." Believers are to sing inside their human spirits and to be thinking about the words they are singing. Additionally, believers are to **SING WITH THEIR HEART**. Believers are not to sing with their lips only but more importantly in their hearts. The **heart** is the location where the Holy Spirit resides (Rom 8:9). **WHERE IS OUR SINGING TO BE DIRECTED?** Paul says **to the Lord**. This is where we have many problems with modern Christian musicians. Their clothing, their movements direct people's attention to themselves and therefore turn people away from **the Lord** rather than **to the Lord**. This is what we call performance or entertainment. Performance or entertainment draws attention to the person onstage and their actions and movements entertain people. The whole thing has nothing to do with **psalming in one's heart to the Lord**. Biblical music is the means by which believers teach and admonish one another and sing to the Lord. I think we'll take next week to look at biblical music.

PAPart NPM adv prep adj GPM prep DSN art GSM GPM GSM
GSM

²⁰ eucaristou/ntej pa,ntote u`pe.r pa,ntwn evn ovno,mati tou/ kuri,ou h`mw/n VIhsou/
Cristou/

art DSM conj DSM

tw/| qew/| kai. patri,

Ephesians 5:20 always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father,

This is the third participle that describes the results of being filled by the Spirit. First, we "speak to one another". Second, we sing to the Lord. Third, we **give thanks...to the Father**. These are all present participles meaning that we do these things repeatedly or continually. Notice the words **giving thanks for all things** (1 Thess 5:18). Do you realize the implications of this? A fruit of being filled by the Spirit is that whatever comes into

your life, positive or negative, you give thanks. A believer who is filled by the Spirit will not gripe and complain about his circumstances. What about difficult circumstances? What about a miscarriage? What about a car wreck? Are we supposed to **give thanks** for these things? What do you think? According to this passage, what do you think Paul is teaching? How do you think Paul would respond to these questions? Was Paul bitter about his situation in prison (3:1; 4:1)? Was Paul bitter about almost being murdered? Was he bitter about being shipwrecked? No, he wasn't. He saw all his circumstances as God ordained. So, Paul decided to "buy up the time intensively", to use every opportunity for Jesus Christ. And that means **always giving thanks for all things**. So, this means **giving thanks** for a miscarriage. This means giving thanks for a car wreck. Why give thanks for these things? Because those circumstances become opportunities to put forth your witness to the world and to grow as a believer. All things work together for good for those who love God, for those who have been called according to His purpose. Whose purpose? His purpose. "How" you say, "how can I give thanks in such difficult circumstances?" The only way you can do this is by realizing one thing, that God is in control. If you don't respond with thanks then you don't really believe that God is in control. So, if you don't believe that God is in control then when difficult circumstances arise you will not be filled by the Spirit and you will not give thanks. Don't you realize that no Christian ever went through life without difficulties. It's what you do in the difficult times that signals where you are in the Christian life. Do you cop out and fail to live by faith? Do you start griping and complaining? God lets trials come into our life so that we will develop character, so that we will learn to be filled by the Spirit in the difficult times. Anyone can be filled by the Spirit when things are easy. What really counts is when things are rough. There are no excuses. There is no situation that gives you an excuse for not being filled by the Spirit. What are you doing when a difficult situation comes along and you get all upset and out of fellowship? You're abandoning the only help you have. Your saying, "I don't need any help. God is not in control of this so I'm going to take charge. I've got to work this out." Turn to Psalm 121

I will lift up my eyes to the mountains [get your eyes off your circumstances];

From where shall my help come?

² My help *comes* from the LORD (don't worry, worry is the most extreme form of self-worship), Who made heaven and earth.

³ He will not allow your foot to slip; He who keeps you will not slumber.

⁴ Behold, He who keeps Israel Will neither slumber nor sleep.

⁵ The LORD is your keeper; The LORD is your shade on your right hand.

⁶ The sun will not smite you by day, Nor the moon by night.

⁷ The LORD will protect you from all evil; He will keep your soul.

⁸ The LORD will guard your going out and your coming in From this time forth and forever.

Do not abandon your helper. The Lord is here called your **helper**. Do you realize that this word in the Hebrew (*ezer*) is the same word used of the woman in Genesis 2. God said, “Adam, your all alone. I’m going to make a **helper** for you. I’m going to make you an *ezer*.” The wife is the husband’s **helper** and the Lord is the **helper** of every Christian. If you gripe or complain in difficult circumstances then you have just abandoned your helper. You’ve refused your only help and now you’re out there alone. You don’t believe God is in control. You think you’re in control. You think you can fix the problem on your own. One of the most difficult things for a human to let someone else **help** us. You know why that is? Because when we let someone **help** us we’re saying “I can’t do this on my own.” But that’s exactly what God wants us to do in every situation. He wants us to say, “Lord, I can’t do this, but I know you can because you made the heaven and earth and if you can do that then I know you can help me do this little thing. I know you can help me get through this difficult circumstance because you are my keeper, you are my shade on the right hand, and you will protect me from all evil.” So, now you have no excuse in any situation. If you’re going to deal with your circumstances properly you’re going to do it while filled by the Spirit and that’s going to result in **giving thanks for all things**.

How are we to give thanks? Paul says **give thanks...in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ**. The **name of...Jesus Christ** is like a channel of power. Salvation, prayer, and thanksgiving, to be efficacious, must go through this single channel, the **name of Jesus Christ**. Apart from that channel nothing is going to happen. So Paul says we are supposed to give thanks through the channel of the **name of our Lord Jesus Christ**.

To whom should we give thanks? Paul says **to God the Father**. Observation, all three members of the Trinity have been mentioned in this section.

- 1) We are to be filled by the Holy Spirit
- 2) We are to give thanks in the name of Jesus Christ
- 3) We are to give thanks to God the Father

This is once again why Ephesians is known as the ‘Trinitarian Letter’.

PPPart NPM DPM prep DSM GSM

²¹ ~Upotasso,menoi avllh,loij evn fo,bw| Cristou/(

Ephesians 5:21 submitting to one another in fear of Christ.

Verse 21 is the fitting conclusion to verses 15-21. It is not the beginning of a new section. This is a wisdom principle. It is the fourth fruit of being filled by the Spirit. If you are filled by the Spirit then you will **submit to one another in the fear of Christ**. This is mutual submission. The word here for **subject** or **submit** is *upotasso*. It is a military word meaning “to rank yourself under a leader”. Under the control of the Holy Spirit a believer will rank himself under others whether he wants to or not because the one who is filled by the Spirit yields his will to the Lord’s will. He does this **in fear of Christ**. Believers are not to act like unbelievers. Unbelievers take great pride in “independence” and “individualism”. Believers are instructed to act otherwise. We are commanded to “give preference to one another in honor” (Rom 12:10). We are to be humble regarding “one another as more important than” ourselves (Phil 2:3). It is impossible to consider others as more important than ourselves unless we are filled by the Holy Spirit. If you are a self-centered brat, always concerned about yourself and your needs then you are rarely, if ever filled by the Holy Spirit. You are full of yourself and need to learn the Doctrine of Kenosis (Phil 2:5-8) and put it into action in your own life.

The question in 5:21 is “HOW DOES MUTUAL SUBMISSION WORK?” For example, if A submits to B then B is not submitting himself to A, but ruling. The solution lies in other biblical principles, particularly in those that follow in 5:22-6:9. The way this works is like this, “let each of you submit yourself to the ones who you should be submissive to” (e.g. children should submit to parents, wives to husbands, employees to employers, etc...). The bottom line is that you must be willing to submit to those who have authority, whether it be in the home, church, or society at large.

Submission to one another is not to be taken lightly but is to be done **in the fear of Christ**. The word **fear** is *phobos* and it can mean outright “terror”, something that sends you running or it can mean “respect”. The sense here cannot be simply seen as “respect”. It’s more than that. Here there is a mixture of being in “terror of Christ and respecting Christ”. Being in **fear of Christ** motivates believers to submit to one another in the body of Christ. This verse is the hinge verse as we move into the examples of walking in wisdom in 5:22-6:9. The reason this verse is the hinge is because submission to one another is the key in every relationship that follows. IF WE DON’T LEARN that submission depends absolutely on being filled by the Spirit then we will never learn to submit to those who have authority over us. Children will never learn to obey their parents if they are not taught that the way to do that is by being filled by the Holy Spirit. Wives will never learn to submit to their husbands if they don’t learn that the way to do that is by being filled by the Holy Spirit. Employees will never learn how to work honorably for their employers if they are

not taught that the way to do it is by being filled by the Holy Spirit. Being filled by the Spirit is the key to the first three Divine Institutions: Labor, Marriage, and Family. And what does it mean to be filled by the Spirit? It means relinquishing control of one's will and relying on the Lord's will. That's the key to submission to the Divine Institutions.

ⁱ Robinson, 202.

ⁱⁱ Hoehner, 691.

ⁱⁱⁱ Hoehner, 705.

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