

## Walk Together in Wisdom

Ephesians 5.15–21

*Pastoral prayer*

### *Introduction*

Eph 5 (p. 789). Nearing end of series on this brief letter: 2nd half divided acc to Xian walk (4.1 [unity], 17 [holiness]; 5.1 [love], 8 [light], 15 [wisdom]). Challenging txt bc so full, rich. Counted nine poss sermons from this psg (MLJ had at least six, perhaps ten). For now I'll cover in one. How to decide? Txt contains two oft-used phrases in Xianese, oft-misused. See if you can find them as I read.

Both oft-used phrases appear in our txt, ergo both Scr phrases, so good/true/inspired words. Perhaps precisely the reason we don't realize we misuse them (**misconceptions**), import ideas into them that Paul/HS didn't intend.

1st is "will of G." Xians often speak reverently of trying to "find the will of G," meaning seeking to know what decision G would have them make in some matter (e.g., college, marriage, buying into a co-op). Typically includes a # of features: prayer, fleeces (à Gideon), peace (à la Phil 4.7). 2nd is "filling of Sp." Normally conceived as an extraordinary power conferred on an indiv for a particular, spir purpose (e.g., to preach a sermon, share gos, launch min; à la OT prophets). We typically don't put these two together & if Paul hadn't, I might not. But what connects them: experiential.

I know that by what I've already said, some of you disagree w me strongly: "how can our pastor be against the filling of the Sp or finding the will of G?" So let me say from the outset, I'm not against G's will or the Sp's min. Nor am I saying that G never does these things: "I've seen/felt/experienced it." No doubt you have & I'm not trying to convince you otherwise. What I'm saying is this: my concern is that Xians have read certain experiences back into Scr rather than let Scr shape their experiences. & that's always a prob.

That's why I risk the anger of some of you to go ahead w this msg: the probs w this understanding of G's will & the Sp's filling have adversely affected many—maybe even you who disagree w me. Four probs. (a) Inconsistency. G's will: only follow that pattern for some decisions (the biggies), not others. Ill of picking socks. Sp's filling: only happens once in a while, but vb is pres (continual). (b) Individualistic thinking. Both are reflective of the culture in which we live: high emph on indiv, low on comm. No wonder these particular ideas were made in Amer! (c) Unbiblical choices. G's will: peo who have a peace about doing something contrary to Scr (e.g., divorce wo bib grounds). Sp's filling: told them off, don't even remember what I said, Sp took control (or unbib anger). (d) Fruit. Disillusion bc G never gave peace. Discouraged bc you thought he did but things didn't turn out. Angry bc you didn't feel the Sp when you began that min, felt all on your own. Guilty bc you missed it.

Again not saying that G's will or Sp's min are unimp, but that the understanding of far too many Xians is wrong. Thankfully G has given us these vss to correct our thinking. & I think if we understand how this txt works, it will enable us to put off that way of thinking & put on X. Pretty easy to break down: three contrasts (look for "but, instead") followed by five results.

Three **contrasts**: *not unwise but wise* (15), *not foolish but understanding what the L's will is* (17), *not drunk but filled w the Sp* (18). Don't read as a laundry list: nots & buts connected. (a) wis not foolish. Wisdom: skill, i.e., skill in living, knowing how to live. Some ways of life better than others: some skillful, some not. Ability to apply Scr to any given situation. Thus v. 16: *make most of every opp*. Classic ill: Prov, but also Job, Ecc, SofS, Lam. Written to take abstract truth & show its practical relevance for ordinary life. (b) understand L's will not foolish. Similar neg points to similar pos. *the L's will*: what the Lord wants, i.e., know what the Master wants. How do you know what he wants? He's told us in Scr. 1st evidence in telling us what G's will is: comparison bet 15 & 17: wis = app

Scr to sit, understand L's will = know how Scr relates to your circ. Not some esoteric, "figure out this mystery," but understanding Scr as it relates to your life. (c) filled w Sp not drunk. Drunkenness an app of foolish/unwise living (cp. Prov). Not a prohibition vs alcohol but abuse of it, coming under its control, which leads to *dissipation* (disorderly living that arises from lack of self-control). Alcohol so controls a pers that it affects all his/her decisions. & there's the key. Almost certainly shouldn't read "filled w Sp" but "filled by Sp." Sp not the content, not that Sp fills you from head to toe. Sp the means by which your life brought under X's control. As drunk controlled by alcohol, so our lives to be controlled by the Sp. & what does the Sp use to bring our lives under control? What means does he give to conform us to the image of X? The word! cf. 2Pet 1.21, Eph 6.17.

All of these injunctions (wisdom, the L's will, Sp control) point us back to the Scr. Sure, each has a dift emph: wis emphs skill/our activity, the L's will emphs our careful attention to the Scr, Sp control emph the divine Helper who is w us/changing us/ conforming us to X's image. Wis: the app. The L's will: the study. Sp control: the power. But all go back to the Scr.

Paul calls us here to be peo of the Book: not just do your duty, come on Sun, but be peo whose lives are shaped by the B. Includes not just reading, but meditating/thinking/pondering/contemplating. Not just attending Sun or grading sermon, but coming eager to hear G's voice in the pages of Scr. These three commands should shape the way we engage. Since wisdom, we come to Scr repenting of our foolishness, to become skillful in life. Since L's will, we come to Scr not having all answers, seek to understand G & his ways. Since we're to be controlled by the Sp, we come to Scr incapable of figuring everything out on our own, in desperate need for the Sp to do 1st & 2nd, i.e., obey it & understand it. Come to Scr w three qs: how does this psg change how I live? teach me about G? show me my need?

Rest of this psg: five **results** of Sp control, what happens when he does. (a) speaking. Classic txt on corp worship, but something more fund. Doesn't start w "singing pss" but "speaking pss." Before the Sp compels us to sing truth together, he compels us to speak truth to one another. Another evidence that Sp control has to do w the B: when he controls, we speak pss to one another. That means this vs not just talking about our song selection here in the sanc, but about your table conv downstairs in FH. What pss/Scrs will fill your mouths when you talk w one another? An indicator of the Sp's control of your life. (b) singing and (c) making melody go together. Overflow of joy that bursts out into song. (d) giving thanks at all times in every circumstance. (e) submission to one another in the body of X. Think of these five like gauges on your dashboard or vitals taken by a nurse: they indicate what's going on inside. Are they present in your life? A sign that the Sp has control of you. Are you reticent to speak? don't sing in ch? not marked by joy? complain more than give thanks? won't submit your opinion to another's? A sign that the Sp doesn't have control of you, that you're becoming foolish.

Throughout all of this, haven't addressed q some of you are asking: why does this matter? who cares about G's will? why follow the B? A good q, as fund as any. Ans embedded in these last two vss: bc J is L. L over circs (20), L over peo (21). Not just a relig teacher w good advice. Res proves he is L over all. Res has potential to be really bad news, bc if he is L & we don't want his lordship, then we're stand condemned. & none of us want his lordship. But the res is good news bc it points back to his death, where he suffered what we deserved bc of our sin. When we acknowledge that he is L, confess our sins, & trust in him, his lordship becomes the best news: nothing in life—no circ, no person—can escape his control. Thus "death is crushed to death, life is mine to live." Joyful, fearless, thankful, submitted. All bc of our LJX.

*Conclusion*

One q I haven't answered: if I'm not supposed to wait for peace, how do I decide what to do? Read your B, talk to peo who know the B better than you, and from what remains pick what you want. Luther: "Love G & do what you want." If G is the supreme love of your life, what you want will be shaped by him.