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Ryan Epley

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Making The Best Use Of Time

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Ephesians 5:15-21



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Good morning, Providence. I'm so thankful you're here with us this morning an hour earlier, right, a little bit earlier getting going this morning. If you're a guest, we're especially thankful that you're here with us, and just so you are familiar, if you aren't familiar with Providence, one of our desires, one of our prayers is that we would be faithful as a church to go and spread the good news of Jesus Christ, and so we get to celebrate that a little bit this morning because we have 18 mission trips that are planned, that are going out from Providence, and two went this last week, a trip to Portland and a trip to Toronto.

I just want to give you a quick update on that. We have some pictures to show you as well, so if you look up on the screen here, on the left side, you'll see the team that went to Portland. These are our college students that went, and on the right side you'll see Toronto. It's amazing to see that many people sacrificing their time and their money and their thoughts to go and share the gospel in these areas.

What they're doing in those two areas is they're partnering with young churches, what we call church plants, to help just build them up and encourage them and faithfully share the gospel while they're there and so in Toronto, specifically, they got out on college campuses and they just started to share the gospel with a number of people, and we just want to celebrate and praise the Lord that at least one person came to faith that we know of from this trip.

We have a picture of him. If you look at the picture right there in the middle, the guy that looks like Jim Gaffigan, that guy named James came to know the Lord this last week and he's just excited to faithfully follow him and get plugged into the church that we're supporting up there in Toronto, so let's just praise God for his faithfulness to do that this morning. Thankful for his faithfulness to seek out James and to save him, but also in his faithfulness to seek and to save us who are distant and running from God, so we're going to talk about that this morning and just continue to thank and praise Jesus.

If you have a copy of God's word, we're going to be in the book of Ephesians this morning, Ephesians chapter 5, and we've been walking through the book of Ephesians for a while now just kind of verse by verse, chapter by chapter, and we're in chapter 5, and we'll be in verse 15, and so we're getting close to the end now. We have one more chapter after this, chapter 6, and as we walk through Ephesians chapter 5, we're actually going to do it a little differently this time. We're going to look at a couple verses at a time and walk through verses 15 through 21, but before we dive into the text to start this morning, let's just take a moment to pray. Take a moment right now no matter where you are in your spiritual journey. Just stop and just ask God to speak to you this morning. Take a moment just to pray for me that I would communicate God's beautiful gospel this morning.

Lord, we do praise you just like that song we just sang, that we thank you God. We thank you that you, in your wisdom, created all things and that in your creation you also attached design and purpose to our lives. God, we thank you for your word that corrects us when we falter, that gives us direction when we're confused and, God, that speaks into our everyday circumstances, and so, Father, give us wisdom today to hear, to believe and to apply your word to our lives. It's in your name that we pray. Amen.

All right, this morning I want to start and just get you thinking. This is participation time. I want you to answer this question. Just answer it to yourself, but if you had to answer the question, "What do you need most right now?" how would you answer that? What do you need most right now? I want you to answer that question as if you're sitting in your car, driving or sitting across the lunch table, not like you're sitting in a religious meeting right now, right? I want you to think about that for a second. How would you answer that question? What do you need most right now?

You should think about that. There's probably a number of answers that are coming to our minds in this moment. What do we need most right now? I mean, some of us are sitting here thinking, "If I could just get a new job, that's what I need right now. I need a new job." Some of us are thinking, "I need a girlfriend," or, "I need a wife. Like that would be great if I could get that. If I could get out of debt, if I could get a little bit more money, then I would be good." Some of us are thinking, "If I could just lose 10 pounds, I'd feel so much better." All of us are probably thinking, "If I could just get a nap, ah, if I could just get a nap today, like that would be great. That's what I need more than anything else, just a nap."

As we think about this, my guess is that most if not all of our answers that we've given to this have to do with our circumstances, that if our circumstances could just change, then things would be better, but I want to submit to you this morning that, even if we had different circumstances, things might not always be better. Even if we had the ideal circumstances, God gave us everything that we hoped in life, that maybe that wouldn't be what we need most of all.

If you don't believe me, just look at Hollywood for a second. Think of ideal circumstances. These are people that have beauty. They have talent. They have money. They have influence. They have all these things, right, everything that we think we would need and, yet, what do you have with that? You've brokenness. You have pain. You have divorce. You have scandal. All that stuff is found there, so, even in the ideal circumstances, we would mess up. As human beings, we would just mess up. Even if we're dealt the perfect hand, we would still mess it up and, even if we were given the best circumstances, it's always changing. Circumstances are always changing. We get money, and it flies away. We get health, and then we lose it.

Circumstances are always changing, so what I want to say this morning, what I want to submit to you is what we need most is not different circumstances. What we need most is to be able to flourish no matter what the circumstances of our life are. We need to flourish no matter what the circumstances in our life are, and I think that's one of the things we find in this text today. As we find this passage and we look at this text, what we're going to see is God is saying, "Here's the things that you need and, as I equip you with these things, you will flourish as you live life."

The first thing I want us to see is that we need to be wise in Christ Jesus. We need to be wise in Christ Jesus. Look at these first couple of verses in our text with me. Verse 15, it says, "Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise, but as wise, making the best use of the time because the days are evil. Therefore, do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is."

He starts here and he says, "Look carefully at how you walk." Now, what he's meaning there when he talks about walk is your everyday routine, your everyday life. He uses the term walk because that's something that we all do every day, just routine. We don't even thinking about it. I'm not thinking, "Okay, here's my left foot and my right foot." Like it just happens. We just do this, and so Paul said, "Hey, your everyday life, I want you to live it carefully. Live it with wisdom."

It's interesting. Paul could have used a ton of different analogies, but I love that he uses this with walk because it shows that God cares about our everyday life, our ins and outs of working and playing and spending time with friends and family. God cares about all of those avenues. If he didn't, he would have said something like this. "Be careful how you somersault." Maybe I can must that up. I do that once in a while, but it doesn't really matter. I could do that every once in a while, and that's important because, if God only cared about these couple of hours that you're here on Sunday morning, that's all that God cared about in your life, then maybe that's what it would have said, "Just be careful how you somersault," but he's specific on, "Be careful how you walk, how you live all of your life."

When he says, "Be careful," there, what he's saying is look intently at it, examine it, and make sure you're living it wisely, how you're living your life and, if we look at the rest of our lives, we look carefully into everything these that we do, anything that at least we value, right, I mean, if we work, we consider how we work and we try to work efficiently, we try to work hard. We look at how ... at our hobbies or even looking intently in our hobbies, right? If you play golf, you're like, "Okay, I want my swing to go this way and I want to hit the ball straight. I want to work on that." We think about that.

Getting ready for church today, we looked intently into what we wore, right? You looked in the mirror and you said, “Okay, is my, my hair fixed?” or, “My shoes look good with this.” We examine how we dress. We look carefully into all those different things of our lives and, all of those different things, we have different targets that we’re trying to hit, right? We dress a certain way because we want to have a nice appearance. That’s our target. We want to be a better golfer so we can impress our friends, right? Maybe that’s our target. We want to work hard so we that we could be secure in our jobs, maybe have more money. All those things are our targets that we look until the end.

Here, in this text, God’s speaking and he says to us, “Look intently how you walk. Examine your whole life,” and the goal, the target that we want to hit is that we would walk wisely. Want to be known as wise people. Now, be careful right now because some of us think, “I already am wise. I’m living a perfectly wise life right now. Whatever you have to say, I’m sure I’m already doing it.” Be careful because Proverbs chapter 26 says this, “Do you see a man who is wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him,” and those are some pretty bold words, but what it’s saying there is if you’re not willing to take wisdom and counsel from others around you, if you’re not willing to examine your life and to seek wise counsel, there’s more hope for somebody who’s foolish who just doesn’t know why they do it than somebody’s who’s arrogant that says, “Yeah, I got it all together.”

Our heart always wants to go to be bent that way. “I know what I’m doing, and I know I’m doing it right,” even from when you’re a child. I mean, we’re not born with this wisdom. We just don’t have it innately. I mean, if I could write a book of things that I’ve told my kids not to do, I mean, it’s amazing. No joke, I said one day to my kids, “Please don’t lick the dog. Don’t lick the dog.” I have to say that to my kids. I mean, the wisdom is just not innate within them. It’s not innate within us either.

We make foolish decisions, and, wisdom, we think we gain it when we gain intellect, but I have met a lot of wise or a lot of smart people that aren’t wise, I mean, a lot of extremely educated people, people that I would trust to build a rocket for me to take me to the moon, but I wouldn’t walk the streets of New York City with them because they don’t have street smarts. Like just because you have education, it doesn’t mean you have wisdom, so we don’t get it when we’re born. We don’t get it in education necessarily. It’s not bad, but we also don’t get it with experience and age. It’s not guaranteed, just because you gain experience and age, that you gain wisdom. It doesn’t always happen like that.

I’ll never forget a perfect example of this. I went to play golf one time and, if you aren’t familiar with golf, you normal go out with four people and, if you have less than four people, the golf course just pairs you up with somebody because they want to make as much money as they can, right? There’s three people, me and two other of my friends. We got paired up with this other guy who was probably I would guess in his mid-80’s, maybe late 80’s and was still playing golf, and he was an incredible golfer, I mean, an incredible golfer, and as we went from hole to hole, we just started to kind of share stories.

This guy has a ton of experience in life. I mean, he had come of a family of I think six or seven siblings and he talked about, over time, how he had just lost all of his siblings, that he was the only one left and he had three wives, but he didn't lose his three wives from divorce. He lost them through death, and he had this experience with work where he had worked a great job and worked high up in the company and had a lot of great experiences with work, and so we're just listening to this guy tell stories, and it's amazing the experiences that he's had in life.

We get to the end of our round of golf, on the 18th hole, and one of the guys in the group says, "Hey, would you just impart some wisdom to us? Like you've experienced a lot in life, so like what's some words of wisdom that you would give just to some, some younger guys on, on how to live life?" and I would never forget this. This guy looked down and he thought for a minute, and then he looked up at us and said, "Don't drink beer. It'll make you fat. And exercise and you'll be good," and I'm like, "Okay. Okay. Like that's true. Like those are some good, helpful tips, but like that's not the deep wisdom we were looking for, right?"

Just because he had all these experience and he had all these things that happened in this life, he didn't give us the wisest words at the end here, but I'm thankful that, in this text, like, if Paul was the one that was paired up with us and we asked him, "Hey, Paul, what are some, some tips that you would give us to live wisely?" He gives us two in this text. He tells us, "Hey, here's two virtues of a wise person. Here's a little bit deeper things to hold on to, and the first thing is this, making the best use of your time." Look at verse 16. This is one of the ways we walk wisely. This is one of the targets we want to hit is to make the best use of our times. This the virtue we want to grasp.

Now, when it talks about time here, it's not talking about in the Greek, the way the word is based. It's not talking about like watch time. It's talking about opportunities, and what this is teaching us is that God has given us opportunities in our lives day in and day out to live wisely, and he says, "What I want you to do is to examine your life, to look for these opportunities and, when you see them, seize them." Like make good in all the opportunities that God has blessed us with. Buy up the opportunity because even the wisest person knows how precious a commodity time is, but even the wisest person, once the opportunity has passed, he can't get it back again. You can't.

The Bible talks about life as just a vapor. It's a mist. That's just for a little bit and then it's gone. Time is this great equalizer for us all. We all have 60 minutes in a day and 24 hours ... or 60 minutes in an hour, 24 hours in a day. We all have ... That's a great equalizer. We can't stretch time, but what we can do is look and examine and live wisely, taking advantage of every opportunity that God has blessed us with because we can't be foolish and waste the time and waste the opportunities the God has given us.

For me, I even think about opportunities that God has opened the door for me to share the gospel and how I missed some of those. I will never forget, I was sitting on campus in Charlotte, USC, Charlotte, and I was reading the article that I had to read for seminary, and it was actually on hell, and, this girl, I don't know who she is, she came and sat down beside me and she just struck up a conversation, and she says, "Hey, what are you, what are you reading right now?"

I was like, "I'm actually reading an article on hell," and she was like, "Wow, like that's really interesting," and I took that first step and I said, "Uh, what, what do you think about hell?" and she said, "Well, I think it's a, it's a bad place that, that nobody wants to go to," and, to be honest with you guys, I wish I could say I took that opportunity to take that next step and tell her about Jesus and his love, but I didn't. I did nothing. I was like, "Hmm, okay." I just kept reading. Like I completely missed the whole opportunity that was placed before. I didn't even take the next step. This girl says, "Hell is a terrible place that I don't want to go to", and I didn't give her any hope. I didn't give her any gospel, any good news.

Every day, there's people around us that God has placed, neighbors and coworkers and friends that are opportunities for us to declare the good news of Jesus Christ, to declare the power and the might and the hope that we have in him. We need to seize these times of opportunities to share the Lord because it says, "Because the days are evil." The days are evil.

This world we live in is a broken world. It just is, but God has called us with wisdom to redeem the time and to help fix what is broken, to take part in God's rescue mission to redeem this broken world. The days are evil, but we have hope in these days because of Jesus Christ, so let's be intentional to leverage every opportunity that we have to redeem these broken days. It's what God had given you to use for his rescue mission. Are you called to leverage your job? Are you called to leverage your friendships for his rescue mission? Are you called to leverage your vacation time or maybe your finances for his kingdom? Where is God giving you opportunities and then asking you to redeem that time?

The question we want to ask in our everyday lives is, a thousand years from now, would we be glad with how we spent our today? A thousand years from now, would we be glad with how we spent our today? The only way we know that is that we know God's will and, when we align it with God's will, we can look forward and we know that, a thousand years from now, we will be happy with how we spent our time, and that's the next virtue of a wise person that we find here is that we'd know God's will. Look at verse 17, "Therefore, do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is."

Now, I get more questions as a pastor about what the will of the Lord is than anything else, and we all have different techniques of trying to find God's will for our lives, right? God has a design, too, but a lot of times, it looks a lot like this. We're like, "Man, should I take that new job? I don't know. I don't know. God, help me out. Um, and Samson smote the Philistine with the jawbone of a donkey. Is that positive or is that negative. I don't really know what to do here. Like I don't really know if this should be that ... Should I take it or not take it? I don't know."

We do that, but here's the reality that we need to grasp is that God desires for you and I to know his will more than we desire to know it. He does. God is not one to hide his will from us to be like, "I don't want, want you to know how you should spend your life. Like I don't want you to know it, so like I'm going to hold it over here until maybe one day you're good enough that I'll give you a glimpse of it." It's not what God does. God lays out in his word clearly his will for our lives, but we need to be day in and day out building our life upon his word so, when that time comes, we understand God's principles and we can make wise decisions based upon what we know from God's word.

Jesus told it in a parable like this. He said, "There's two men. One man build ... One man builds his house on the sand, and the storm comes and it falls down; and one man builds his house upon the rock. The storm comes, and he continues to thrive," and he says that rock that he built his house on is the word of God.

Now, what's so fascinating about this is the guy that builds his house on the sand, nobody builds their house on the sand thinking that their house is going to fall. Nobody's like, "Hmm, yeah, I really want to build a house here because it's going to crumble and fall." That's not what we do, but in our foolishness, a lot of times, we build it on things that are our principles instead of building it upon the word of God, something that will last, so I want to show you what this looks like very practically in our lives, because God lays out what we call in the theological world his general principles or general will for all of our lives and, as we understand God's general will, it filters down to his particular will. "Should I date this person? Should I watch that TV show? Should I spend my money this way?"

One of the things he talks about in his word, you'll see these passages on the screen, in 1 Thessalonians 4, he says this. "For this is the will of God." Okay? We don't have to wonder. This is the will of God, your sanctification. This is your being more like Christ, your holiness, and he says, "That you would abstain from sexual immorality and that each of you would know how to have self-control and holiness and honor," so we read that, and this is the truth. This is a general principle for all of God's people, that he desires for us to be more like Christ. That's what he desires for us to do. He wants us to have a purity within our heart and be holy, so, when we turn on certain TV shows, we're like, "Should we watch this or not? Well, God's general principle is that he desires for us to be holy, so maybe I shouldn't watch that."

Okay, does, does God want me to, to sleep with my girlfriend or my boyfriend? “Abstain from sexual immorality.” No, we don’t have to say, “Well, I really love him. Like I should evaluate this and think this through.” No. God’s word is clear. That decision’s been made for you if you’re following the Lord. We could just think on these truths, and what we’ll find is that God will lead us in the particulars of our lives.

Another one is 1 Thessalonians chapter 5. It says, “Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. Give thanks in all circumstances for this is the will of God,” here it is again, “the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” Some of us sit sometimes in self-pity and we wonder, “God, do you want me to stay this way? Like, God, am I supposed to, to live in this loneliness in my life? Am I supposed to fill this darkness and depression all the time?” No, that is not God’s will for your life. That’s not where God wants you to rest, that we may walk through the valley of the shadow of death. We don’t stay there. We don’t lay down there and just rest. We don’t. God wants us to rejoice, to give thanks in all circumstances.

Then this last one is from the book that we’re in now, Ephesians chapter 1. This one’s a little more wordy, but you’ll see it in here as well. Ephesians 1 verses 7 through 10, it says, “In him,” this is in Christ, “we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace which he has lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight, making known to us the mystery of his will,” and here’s the mystery of his will, according to his promise which he set forth in Christ as a plan in the fullness of time to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

What’s that saying there is that God’s will is that you would be united with him. If you’re here today and you’re thinking, “Does God really want me to follow him? Like I’m pretty messed up. Like I’ve got a lot of sin and, and, and junk in my life. Does God really want me to follow him?” Yes. Absolutely. He said this is his will for you, that you would be united with him. This is his desire, and then it says, “He wants to unite all things, things in heaven and on earth,” and so that even affects how we work our jobs. We work our jobs to help bring things back into union with Christ, so we don’t work and misspend our money or mismanage the time that work has given us, but, rather, we work diligently, being an example in redeeming things for the glory of God, so a wise person is going to take God’s general will and then he’s going to use it as a [inaudible 00:25:23] to make all the other to make all the other decisions in life.

Church, listen, if we know God’s word, if we’re reading it, all these other decisions will be so much easier as we grow in the Lord, and I would describe it like this. I have a seven-month old, a three-year-old and a six-year-old right now, and I’m teaching them the principles of how to live life in the Epley family. I’m teaching them that right now. They get disciplined for the disses, if they disobey, they’re dishonest or they disrespect, right?

That's kind of my rule, so I'm teaching them to be honest and to work hard and to respect, all those things, and so they're learning that now when they're young, but if they get to college one day, my son [Reese 00:26:02] goes to college, and he calls me up on the phone and he says, "Hey, dad, I've been really wondering, um, and I wanted to ask you if I could do this. Is it okay if I, if I go, uh, play basketball with my roommate this afternoon?" I'd be like, "Why are you asking me? Like, you're, you're an adult now. Why are you asking me that question?" It would just be odd, right? He should know these principles and he should be living in line with these principles of what it means to live a good life.

It's the same in the family of God. Lots of times, we've been walking with God for years, we haven't dove into his word and we don't know his word well, and so we're asking him questions. God is like, "Hey, man, I care more about who you are than where you are," and so maybe think about, "Am I aligning my life up with, with God's design?" As we do that, we're walking in wisdom. We're grasping all these things. That's what God wants us to do. He wants us to walk wisely, redeeming the time and living according to his will.

What's so amazing about this is, if we want to grasp wisdom, what God's word does is it just doesn't give us wisdom, rather it points us to wisdom. What I mean by that is in Colossians, in another book of the New Testament, it says this about Jesus. It says that Jesus, in him, all the treasures of wisdom are found. All the treasures of wisdom are found in Jesus, so as we read the Bible, what we're doing is we're learning who Jesus is and we're learning how to relate to him. Wisdom is found in a person, not in a fact.

What's so amazing about this is this is different from every other religion. Every other religion out there is different. Every other religion talks about grasping wisdom, and Jesus says, "I am wisdom. I give it you." Others say, "I want to grasp this abstract thing of truth," and Jesus says, "No. No. No. I am the truth."

What's so amazing about this is, because it's that simple and it's about a person and not about facts and knowledge and abstract theories, it makes it easy for even a child to know and to trust and to follow Jesus because they don't have to understand all the depths of wisdom. All they have to do is understand Jesus Christ and his love and his sacrifice. This is different than everything else the world has to offer. It's found in Jesus, so if you want to have wisdom in every circumstance and you want to flourish in every circumstance, it's founded first in Jesus because in him the treasure of wisdom and knowledge are found.

The second thing we need to do to flourish in any circumstance is that we need to be filled with the spirit. We need to be filled with his spirit. Look at the text again in Ephesians chapter 5 verse 18. It says, "Do not get drunk with wine for that's debauchery, but be filled with the spirit." Don't get drunk with wine, but filled with spirit. There's two commands we find in this one verse, one negative and one positive. The negative is don't get drunk. The positive is be filled with the spirit.

Now, why in the world would Paul put those back to back? Why would he put drunkenness with the spirit? Like that's just kind of odd, right? There's a couple of reasons why. We'd talk about just a few of them, but I think one is because both are ways to deal with life's pressures and anxieties. They are. We can pursue drunkenness or we can pursue the spirit, but both of these things lead us in different destinations.

See, drunkenness depresses our thoughts and senses of reality. It makes you less aware of what's going on in your surroundings, where the Holy Spirit, by contrast, stimulates us and makes us more aware of reality. The Holy Spirit helps us to cope with difficulties by opening our eyes to the promises of the gospel, and alcohol rids our worry by making us forget. The spirit, instead, rids our worries by helping us to remember who God is and what he's done. Drunkenness gives us courage by making us less aware of the dangers around us, but the spirit gives us courage by showing us how much larger our God is of anything we're afraid of.

He's showing these parallels. Drunkenness can rob you of self-control and of wisdom and of balance and even of speech, but the Holy Spirit does the opposite. It strengthens us where we're designed to be strengthened. If you look at it, the contrast, one is moving you more to being like an animal that you can't speak well, you can't walk well, you can't think well, you can't reason well, and then the Holy Spirit does the exact opposite. It heightens you to be the human that you're designed to be, that you would think well, that you'd reason well, that you'd speak well, that you'd act well, that you'd walk into the right places, all of those things.

This is important for us as we think about this like to see the contrast between the two of them, and I know it might seem odd to think about being filled with the spirit. What does that even mean, right? What does it mean to be filled with the spirit? Like that's kind of odd. That's kind of sci-fi or way out there. Like, "Okay, what does that ... Filled with the spirit? What does that mean?"

If you think about it and look at the parallel of alcohol, all those things that alcohols slurs, the spirit strengthens, and so the strength, when we're filled with the spirit, it's God in our words. The words that we would speak are different. The things that we would talk about are different because the spirit is indwell in us. It's filling us. The things we think about, we have more clarity in thought, and the things we think about and dwell on are different. The Holy Spirit is filling us. It's aligning our will with his will. Being filled with the spirit is doing that, and so our thoughts, our inclination, even our emotions are guided by the Holy Spirit when we're filled by him. There's an action connected to this Holy Spirit being filled in us.

If that's still not clear, if that still doesn't make sense that everything is aligning with what God's design is, in the Old Testament, in the book of Exodus, it talks about people being filled with the spirit in light of their work. It's fascinating. They're building the temple for God, and it says that God filled them with the spirit so they had the knowledge and they had the ability to do the work of God. Now, this isn't talking about the priests in this moment. These are talking about construction works, like, literally, those that are building the temple and placing the block down.

When it talks about the spirit filling us, it's not just like some holy religious setting, the Holy Spirit will fill me when we come in to church on Sunday morning. Rather, it's in your everyday lives, the spirit is filling you and changing how you work and you live. If you're a believer, have no doubts this morning that the Holy Spirit is within you. That's not up for debate. The Bible says that. If you've come to trust Christ, you have his spirit. That's within you. The question is are we being filled with his spirit? We've talked about this over the last few weeks, but we can grieve the Holy Spirit and we can quench the Holy Spirit.

We can grieve Holy Spirit by rebelling against him. He's inaudible [00:33:28] our heart, we should do this, and we're like, "Nope. I'm actually not going to do that. I'm actually going to do the exact opposite." We go the other direction. We can also quench the Holy Spirit where he's fanning a flame in your heart and he's like, "Hey, do, do these things. Read my word. Speak words of encouragement to other people. Share the gospel," and, this time, we're not going into a complete rebellion in this direction. Rather, we're just like, "I just don't really care. I'm just not going to do anything." We're quenching the Holy Spirit when we do those things. We're quenching him, and God says, "No." I want you to be filled. I want all of your life to be filled so that your will would align with God's will, your actions would align with his actions, that you would be obedient to him.

There's a couple more things I just want us to grab from this text though about being filled with the spirit. The first thing is this, that it's a command, so, for those of us that have checked out right now and are like, "Once we get past the filling of spirit thing, I'll move on to the next point." No. This is a command that's given to us. It's given to the church, to be filled with the spirit. It's not an option. This is God's purpose, that our mission would align with his mission and not our selfish desires.

Secondly, this is, you can't see it in your text, but if you look at the original Greek text, this is written in the plural, that we should all be filled with the spirit if you know Jesus Christ. Now, why that's important is that means this is not just for the pastors and the super holy people that are in seminary. This is for all of us. All of us are called to be filled with the spirit.

Lastly, it's in the passive tense, so the Holy Spirit is trying to do these things in your life. You don't even have to try to work and grasp these things. It's just about being obedient, not rebelling and not being apathetic. He will fill your life. Now, why this is so beautiful being filled with the spirit is because I think Psalm chapter 4 says it best, in verse 7. You'll see this on the screen, but it says, "You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and wine abound." Grain is your livelihood. Wine is your luxury. He's saying, "With your spirit within me, I have more joy than those that have all this money and have all this luxury." No matter what the circumstance is, whether it was good or bad, he still has more joy than others who don't have the spirit. If we want to flourish in this life, then we must have the spirit within us, filling us. We must have the wisdom of God that we would walk wisely.

The last thing I want us to see is that we need to be a part of the church if we want to flourish in life. We need to be a part of the church and part of community to flourish in life. Look at God's word with me again. Look at verse 19. It says, "Addressing one another in psalms and in hymns and in spiritual songs and singing, making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always for everything to God the father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ."

You'll see in verse 19 and in verse 21 this term "one another." One another, this is used 59 times in the New Testament. It's this picture that we're connected, that we're part of community, that the church needs to be connected. You can't be alone. If you look at God's word, his design was never for us to be segregated and alone, to be separated from others. He designed for us to do life in community all the way back to creation. Think about it. God's making all of these things and he's saying, "Okay, the heavens and the earth, like that's good, made that. Light and darkness, that's good, made that. Animals, made that. Humans, I made that. All of this is good," and then he gets to the point where he looks at Adam and he says, "It's not good for you to be alone. It's not good for you to be alone."

This was not God's design for us to do this alone. Here's the reason why. We go through different circumstances in life. The Bible talks about the devil and says, "He's like a lion that's looking for someone to devour." Someone, not some groups people, but he's looking for someone, someone who's isolated, someone who's alone, and he wants to attack that person. It's no different for us. He's still doing the same thing for us. He's looking at us to devour us when we're separated, when we're away from the church, when we're away from community. It matters that we're in this room this morning. It absolutely matters because the devil is a lion looking for someone to devour.

Some of you guys might have seen this. You might be part of the 80 million people that have viewed this no YouTube. It's called the Battle of Kruger. It's an amazing video, and, every time I've watched it, we can't show it this morning because it's eight minutes long, but it's worth every bit of the eight minutes, all right, but it's this home video that ... These people basically are on a tour bus that are doing a safari, and this guy's recording as they see these water buffalo kind of come up over this hill, and then there is a lion that they see crouched and it's waiting to pick off one of the water buffalo. It's amazing, so you have to go watch the whole thing, but what happens is he does, the lion leaps and he pulls away one of the calves, one of the weak ones that are kind of isolated from the group and he pulls it away.

There's a lot that happens in between this and where it gets to at the end, but what's amazing about it is the water buffalo don't sit back and basically be spectators and say, "Man, I really hate it for that water buffalo. Like, man, that stinks for him." No. Instead, what they do, they rally and they come back, and it looks like this. They come back to get the water buffalo. There's not just one lion here. There's multiple lions now, and these water buffalo encircle them and push them towards the water. I'm not kidding. It's amazing. They throw one lion like eight feet in the air, and these lions, like, they scatter. They run, and then this water buffalo gets up and walks back into the herd.

I mean, it's fascinating, but the same is true for us. We can't sit back and be spectators. The church is called to be a community. It's not an event that we go to. It's a community that we're a part of and, as we do this, what we find is support and encouragement and strength to thrive no matter what the circumstances are, to flourish. That's what God's design is. He put together this community to live on mission for him and to share the gospel to the glory of his name. God built that for a purpose for you and I.

What I love about this text is we don't have to wonder what it looks like. He hashes out three things in this text as to what this community, what this church should look like. In verse 19, it says, "Addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs and in singing, making melody to the Lord with our heart," so, one of the things that we do as a church, we sing. We don't come up here and sing so we can lead a concert on a Sunday morning, so you can be spectators and watch.

That's not the goal of why we do this. I mean, there's a reason why we put the karaoke words on the screen, so that we can sing to the Lord. We want to sing of God's greatness and his goodness, and, yes, there's a vertical point to our worship that we're singing to God and his goodness and his greatness, but what I love about this text is it talks about there's a horizontal level as well. As we sing, we're actually singing to one another.

Now, what does that look like practically? I mean, there's weeks you can come in here and you're struggling with sin all week, and you're struggling with darkness all week, and you wonder, "Can God forgive me of that?" and we wonder, "Is God still good in this moment?" and we can listen to other people singing of God's goodness and his faithfulness and his mercy to forgive us, and it reminds us. It reminds us.

I'll never forget on a Sunday morning I got to stand beside a guy that I knew had had a crazy, difficult week, a lot of suffering and a lot of pain in his life, and as I'm watching him sing and hearing him sing to the Lord, it's moving my heart and it's stirring me to sing. Like he's singing so loud in the midst of his suffering. Why can I not sing?

When you have to be a part of community, you have to know one another in order to celebrate those moments. I mean, there's times where I come in and I just listen for a moment. I just listen as you all sing to the Lord to remind me I'm not alone. We're doing this together as a group. Paul points this out. We should sing to one another, and I love how he tells us how to sing. Verse 16, he says ... or in verse 19, he says, "Make a melody to the Lord with your heart."

Some of us don't sing because we can't really sing, right? I mean, you know why I'm always standing by myself up here is because everybody knows how I sing, and they don't want to stand beside me because I'm that terrible, but the good news is it's not about what our mouths can do and what our voices can do. It's we're singing to the Lord with our heart. We're making a joyful noise to the Lord. We're singing to him.

That's not the only thing he mentions here. We also give thanks. We give thanks. I think it's so interesting that, when we read the pages of scripture, God has to continue to remind us to give thanks. Why in the world do we have to always be reminded to be thankful? Like even if we just got the beginning where God created us and gave us life, that would have been enough to be thankful for, but page after page, he continues to bless and he continues to say, "Be thankful. Be thankful," and I think the reason why is because what ingratitude does is it blinds us to all the blessings in our lives. Ingratitude blinds us to all the blessings in our lives.

I'll never forget, not long ago, I called up a friend who loves the Lord and I just vented to him. I'm just complaining about everything you can imagine, from weather to work, from family to finances. I'm just like complaining and complaining and complaining and, at one point, he just stops me. He's like, "Ryan, what are you thank for?" I stopped and I was like, "Man, I don't know," and he just starts naming things to be thankful for in my life. You got see how God's blessed you this way. See how God's blessed that way. He just starts naming these things, but because of my ingratitude, I was blinded to all those things that God had blessed me in my life.

That's why we need community. That's why we need the church to help us in those dark moments, to remember to give thanks to the Lord because, ultimately, ingratitude is just ... It's not only just blinding us. I mean, it's ranked with unbelief, because all the things that we have is from the Lord, every bit of it. The Bible says that, "All the silver and gold is mine, declares the Lord." Every penny in your bank account and my bank account is God's anyway. He's given it to us. His word says that he exalts and he brings love, so God is the one that's given you those things.

Psalm 1:39 says that, “Before you were born, he fashioned every day for you.” God has fashioned this day for you. God has given us all these things and it comes from his hand, and so that we might look at ingratitude and think, “This is a respectable sin. It’s really not that bad.” What we need to see is that ingratitude is one of the reasons that Christ hung on the cross and died for our ingratitude and our unbelief so that we realize that everything we have comes from God, every bit of it.

I know some of us are sitting here right now and you’re thinking, “Well, I’d like to give thanks, but right now is just not the best time in my life to give thanks,” but look what the text says in verse 20, “Giving thanks.” When? Always. Always giving thanks. Your life might not be what you hoped it would be right now. Your job might be demanding and not what you ... not fulfilling, but God says to still give thanks. Your health might be exactly what you hoped it would be [inaudible 00:46:23] in a way, but God says, “Still give thanks always.”

“Okay, for what, God? I don’t see anything to be thankful for. For what?” For everything. That’s what verse 20 says, “For everything, to God the father.” We should be thankful for all things to the Lord,” so as we should sing as a church together, we should be thankful. We should also submit. It’s what verse 21 says, the thing that seems so oppressive in our culture today, to think about submitting, but God’s word talks about it in a positive light because, when you look at verse 21, you see, “Submit to one another,” we immediately think of like the negativity behind submission, that if I submit to somebody, that’s means I’m less than them, but our identity is being created in the image of God and it’s found as we look through the pages of scripture.

This is who we are, and so, when we submit to others, what we’re doing is we’re really modeling Christ’s design. It’s not that we’re less than people. We’re reflecting Jesus Christ and what he did. It’s funny because we struggle with submitting to one another. I think it’s our culture. We struggle to submit to one another, but it’s what Christ did.

As we close, I just want you to turn one page in your Bible [inaudible 00:47:42] to Philippians, because in Ephesians chapter 5 it says, “Submit to one another in reverence to Christ.” Why would he point to Christ right there? Because Christ submitted to the father. Look at Ephesians chapter 2 starting in verse 3. It says, “Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but, in humility, count others as more significant than yourselves.”

It says, “Let each of you look out not only for his own interest, but also to the interest of others. Have this mind in yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though being in the form of God, did not count equality with God something to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men, and being found in human form, he humbled himself. He became obedient,” this is submitting to the will of the father. “He was obedient to to the point of death, even death on the cross.”

Now, why would Jesus do all this? Why would he submit his life in this way, that he would leave his glory of heaven behind and come to earth, took down a cross and be obedient to the Father's will? Jesus says in the gospel of John, he said, "I have come, came that you may have life and that you'd have it to the full." Why did Jesus come? That we might flourish in this life and for all of eternity to the glory of his name. Let's pray for that end.

Father, we come now and just pray, thanking you for Jesus. His life shows us what it means to walk wisely and to make the best use of our time. Lord, we thank you that through your death and your resurrection that the Holy Spirit can now fill us with your presence and, lastly, Lord, we thank you for one another, for this gift of the church, God, how it strengthens us and sustains us. Lord, help us to treasure all these things that we might walk wisely through the glory of your name. It's in Christ's name we pray. Amen.



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