

# ROCK GROUP BIBLE STUDY

August 15, 2003

## Walk in Wisdom [Part 2]

### Ephesians 5:15-21

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

**Remember:** Ephesians 5:15-6:9 are all one unit. These verses have one flow of thought. In Ephesians 5:15-21 there is the admonition to walk in wisdom. Verse 21 serves as a hinge verse as it aptly describes the particular aspect of being subject to one another. Paul then moves on in 5:22-6:9 to apply that thought and give several illustrations of that subjection. So we will be discussing the idea of walking in wisdom for a few weeks.

**Remember:** After giving the admonition to walk in wisdom and the reason why we are to walk in reason, Paul makes two prohibitions (negative commands) followed immediately by contrasting positive commands.

*· As we looked at last week what was the first prohibition and contrasting positive command? What was the significance of this instruction?*

Paul first gives the prohibition "Do not be foolish!" This prohibition is an admonition not to act like the fool (Proverbs 10:18, 23) who is careless (Proverbs 14:26; 21:20) **lacks understanding** (Proverbs 17:18, and despises wisdom (Proverbs 1:22). Paul's contrasting command is, "but understand what the will of the Lord is." The idea is that we should not be foolish or lacking understanding, but we need to be striving to understand God's will. We understand God's will by understanding God's Word. It is through God's Word that we gain that understanding and are no longer foolish.

*· What is the prohibition that Paul gives the Ephesians in verse 18?*

Paul exhorts the Ephesians not to be drunk with wine. It is possible that Paul had in mind the context in which the believers in Ephesus were living. Paul is not suggesting that the Ephesian believers had a problem of getting drunk. Paul is likely reflecting on the fact that the practice of getting drunk was a common occult practice. Inhabitants of Ephesus often got drunk with wine after offering up their temple sacrifices. Paul likely has this in mind as he is writing the Ephesians.

*What is the significance of Paul's prohibition here? What is his concern?*

Paul is not issuing a command not to drink. He is not saying, "Do Not Drink!" He is saying, "Do Not Be Drunk!" **It is an issue of control!** Paul's concern is that the Ephesians not be controlled by the wine they drink. Paul is concerned about drunkenness. "Drunkenness is the clouding of

disruption by alcohol of any part of a person's mind so that it affects his faculties. A person is drunk to the extent that alcohol has restricted or modified any part of his thinking or acting. Drunkenness has many degrees, but it begins when it starts to interrupt the normal functions of the body and mind." (MacArthur, p. 230)

· *What do the following verses have to say regarding the idea of drunkenness?*

Proverbs 20:1 It is not wise to be drinking wine!

Proverbs 21:17 He that loves wine will not be rich!

Proverbs 23:21 The drunkard shall come to poverty!

Isaiah 5:11 A warning is given to those who rise up to drink early.

Luke 21:34 A warning to take heed to ourselves (drunkenness included).

Romans 13:3 Walking honestly is contrasted to walking in drunkenness.

1 Corinthians 5:11 We are not to associate with a so-called brother who is a drunkard.

1 Corinthians 6:9 Drunkenness is a characteristic of the unsaved.

Galatians 5:19-23 Drunkenness is a deed of the flesh as opposed to a fruit of the Spirit.

Clearly the Scripture teaches against the idea of being drunk with wine. Paul gives a clear admonition here to the believer not to be controlled by wine. The issue of control is Paul's main concern here.

· *How does this prohibition apply to the believer's life today?*

Keep in mind that today's wine is not the same as in Bible times; drinking is extremely habit forming; drinking can be potentially destructive; drinking may offend other Christians; drinking may hurt my testimony; drinking is not necessary.

**Questions that you might consider when faced with the decision to drink:**

· *Is it necessary?*

· *Is it the best choice?*

· *Will it offend other Christians?*

· *Will it harm my testimony?*

· *Why does Paul give the prohibition not to be drunk with wine?*

"For that is dissipation" Drunkenness leads to dissipation. The Greek term ASOTIA literally means, "that which is unable to save." It describes a condition in which a person cannot save or control himself. It describes a reckless and uncontrolled state of living. Keeping in mind that part of the fruit of the Spirit is self-control, drunkenness, which is dissipation describes the unsaved not the saved. We are to be controlled not uncontrolled.

· *What is Paul's contrasting positive command and what is its significance?*

Paul says, "but be filled with the Spirit." It is better to understand the Greek construction as "by the

Spirit." The Spirit is not the content of the filling. Instead the filling is being done by the Spirit. When we are Spirit filled, we are filled by the Spirit or in other words we are controlled by the Spirit. Paul is once again making a contrast. He is insisting that the believer not be controlled by other things or substances such as wine, but instead the believer should be controlled by the Holy Spirit. We are to relinquish our own fleshly and selfish control and allow the Holy Spirit to control our lives. This is in the imperative, so it is a command! As we submit to the control of the Spirit, He will produce His fruit in our lives (see Galatians 5:22-23). A glove gives a good illustration of this. It can do nothing on its own. Only as the hand controls the glove can it accomplish anything. We need to submit ourselves to the Spirit's control in our lives! Filled also carries the connotation of being carried or moved along. It is like a sail, which allows the wind to fill it and carry the ship along. We need to be moved along in our lives by God Himself! Lastly filled carries the idea of permeation. It was used of salt's permeating meat in order to flavor and preserve it. God desires that we allow the Holy Spirit to permeate our lives so that what we think, say and do will reflect Him. (cf.. Galatians 5:16 and Colossians 3:16).

Paul moves on in verses 19-21 to emphasize the results of those who allow their lives to be controlled by the Spirit as opposed to being controlled by other things such as wine.

· *What actions does Paul identify as results of being filled by the Spirit?*

These are five resultant participles. They identify the actions of one who is filled/controlled by the Spirit.

Vs. 19a speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.

Vs. 19b singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.

Vs. 20 always giving thanks for all things in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father.

Vs. 21 and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.

There are three primary actions here: 1) singing to the Lord 2) giving thanks for all things and 3) being subject to one another.

· *Among whom do believers sing?*

Believers are to sing along with other believers. Paul says, "speaking to one another." We are to sing among fellow believers. The term "speaking" (LALEO) is an onomatopoeic word (the naming of a thing or action by a vocal imitation of the sound associated with it) that originated from chatter or babble and may have reference to little children learning to talk (i.e. la la la la la). (cf. MacArthur, p. 258) The term is used in reference to the chirp of birds, or grunts of animals. In Revelation 4:1 it is used of trumpets speaking and in Revelation 10:4 of peals of thunder speaking. It likely refers to any sound offered to God for His glory and in this particular context it really refers to the idea of singing praises to God among one another.

· *What do believers sing?*

The three terms cannot be easily distinguished. They basically speak in general terms of songs used to sing God's praises.

**Psalms** – refers primarily to O.T. psalms put to music, but also might include some N.T. psalms and psalms of the early church.

**Hymns** – refers primarily to songs of praise, which in the early church were probably distinguished from psalms. These hymns specifically exalted God and directly praised the Lord Jesus Christ. Some believe that various N.T. passages were used as Hymns (Ephesians 1:3-14; Colossians 1:12-16).

**Spiritual songs** – were probably songs of testimony that covered a broad category and include any music expressing spiritual truth. (MacArthur, p. 259)

· *How do believers sing?*

"By singing and making melody with your heart." The term singing simply means to sing with the voice and is always used in relation to praising God. The term making melody is related to the term psalm and literally means "to pluck with a stringed instrument." It really refers to the making of instrumental music. So those who are controlled by the Spirit use both vocal and instrumental music in praise. The phrase "with your heart" emphasizes from where the singing and making melody come from. The heart is not a reference to our emotions, but is really used of the mind. The idea is that our hearts cause us to sing and make melody to God.

· *To whom do believers sing?*

Clearly the direction of our singing is to the Lord. It comes from our heart (mind) bursts out in song (psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs) and is directed to God. It is not for the purpose of drawing attention to ourselves. It is not for the purpose of entertaining others. The direction is to rejoice in and praise God. He should be the center of our attention! He should be the focus of our songs! Johann Sebastian Bach said, "**The aim of all music is the glory of God.**"

· *What is significant about the idea of giving thanks highlighted in verse 20?*

We are consistently commanded and instructed in the Scripture to give thanks. We are often told that it is God's will that we give thanks (cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:1:18). But the emphasis here is that we are to give thanks for all things. This means that regardless of our circumstances we are to give thanks. Whether we are going through good times or bad times; easy times or difficult times; fun times or sad times, we are to give thanks to God. In fact we are always to give thanks for all things. If we are healthy or sick; rich or poor; happy or sad we are always to give thanks. If there is new life or death; if we are employed or without a job, we are to always give thanks. The idea is that God is in sovereign control of our circumstances thus regardless of those circumstances we can praise God and give thanks to him. We are to always have an attitude of thanksgiving.

· *How does verse 21 fit in with the rest of the passage and what is its significance?*

"Be subject" is a resultant participle along with the ones from verses 19 and 20. It is not a separate thought! It does not directly connect with what follows, but grammatically connects with the preceding verses. It is not an imperative and is best translated by the KJV and NKJV, "submitting to one another..." As we allow the Holy Spirit to control us, we are led into a spirit of humility that gives us a desire to seek the welfare of others before our own. Verse 21 serves as a hinge verse. Paul decides to elaborate on this one result of being filled by the Spirit. He will expand on what he means by submitting to one another by examining the relationships of husbands and wives; children and parents, and servants and masters. So the rest of chapter 5 and the first part of chapter 6 are an expansion of the idea of submission mentioned in verse 21.

## **SMALL GROUPS**

· *Who or what controls your life?*

· *Is there evidence in your life that you are controlled by the Holy Spirit? If so what is it?*

· *What can you do to relinquish control of your life to the Holy Spirit?*

· *What changes can be made in you life to demonstrate a proper submission to God given authority?*