



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Ephesians 5:15-21

Ephesians

"Redeem the Time"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] We're continuing our studies in the book of Ephesians, and so turn your Bibles to Ephesians chapter 5 and we will look this morning at verses 15 through 21.

Paul begins, "Therefore, be careful how you walk" - now, that is the third time that Paul has used that word "therefore" in this chapter. He began verse 1, "Therefore, be imitators of God" and then in verse 7, "Therefore, do not be partakers with them," referring to those who are disobedient, the sons of disobedience, and here he says, "Therefore, be careful how you walk," and each one of those "therefores" is a kind of link in the chain of Paul's thought as he develops this thought. He comes to a "therefore" and is drawing a conclusion or an inference from what went before.

Now, what he said before the "therefore" of verse 15 is that the Ephesians, the believers in Jesus Christ, are light and so they're to walk as children of light. They're not only to do that but they're to awake, they're to be alert. That's what he said in verse 14, "Awake, sleeper; arise from the dead and Christ will shine on you," and so he says "therefore." In other words, in light of this, in view of what you are and who you are, don't be asleep, don't be indolent, be active, walk.

And be careful how you walk, "not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. So then do not be foolish, but understand what the Will of the Lord is. Do not

get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord."

It's difficult to distinguish between these different aspects of singing, psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, but the psalms would seem to refer to Old Testament psalms, which were recited or sung in the meetings of the church, and possibly, some think that there is a reference to musical accompaniment with the psalms. We see that in the psalms of the Old Testament, how the instruments that are to be played with them.

The hymns that are referred to probably refer to hymns that were composed by Christians, much like we have in our hymnals, and then some think that the spiritual songs that are mentioned are perhaps erratic songs that were given during the meeting of a church through the ministry of the Spirit.

It's difficult to know how to distinguish those, but that is one way they can be distinguished. He continues on, "making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ."

May the Lord bless this reading of His Word and our time of study together. Let's bow in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Gracious God and Heavenly Father, we do thank you for the privilege that we have to come together to meet around the Word of God and to study it, to study the revelation that you have given to us, and we are reminded of some very important things in our text this morning. We are to be a people who walk wisely, that we are to redeem the time, that we are to seize the opportunities for good that you have given to us. We are to live in the power and the obedience to the Spirit of God. So, Father, we pray that you would impress these things upon us and give us incentive to live lives of obedience, lives of yielded submission to the Holy Spirit and lives in which we are using our time wisely for your service.

So easy, Father, to let time slip by and to become engaged in things that are really, in the eternal scheme of things, not very important at all. Give us clear perspective on life and give us a genuine enthusiasm for that which is pleasing to you. We ask that you would bless us with that this morning. Give us an understanding of the text. May we think clearly through it and may the Spirit of God use it properly to convict us and direct us.

We thank you for this time together when we can do that, when we as your people can come together as the body of Christ and think together and worship together. What a privilege it is, and part of that is coming before you as we are now, coming to the throne of grace, asking for mercy and help in time of need, and we do that.

Bless us spiritually but bless us also, Lord, in the material things of life. We pray for the sick. We ask your healing for them. We pray that you would give encouragement to those who are in great difficulty. I think of Kelly Fleming and ask that you would work in a special way with her and you would give healing. Pray the same for Sarah Syrian, we pray the same for so many others, Father, whose names are listed who have requested our prayers, we pray that you would bless.

We pray that you would give encouragement to them, to those who are suffering grief at this time, to those who are discouraged because of a lack of employment. We pray that you would open doors, pray that you would remedy situations, and yet, Father, we know that it's not your Will to do that in the way that we often desire, and yet you do things well and you do things wisely, and so we pray, Father, for submission to your providential Will and rejoicing in the midst of it, being thankful in the midst of it.

We have much to be thankful for, Father. You have given us much, far more than we deserve. In fact, all that we have is undeserved. Thank you for your grace most of all, the grace that you've extended in the cross to save sinners such as us. May our lives

be lived in genuine worship as a result and may we be instructed in that this morning.

Bless us now, bless us this evening as we return to worship you and give thanks for the mission and ministry of your Son and His crucifixion. We praise you and thank you that He was raised up and is now seated at your right hand and is interceding for us until the day He comes back to establish His kingdom upon this earth. We look forward to that day, Father. May we live in light of it.

And now we pray, Father, that you would prepare our hearts as we sing our final hymn and guide us in our thinking as we study together. We pray these things in our Savior's name. Amen.

[Message] A number of years ago, there was a series of newsreels that appeared weekly in movie theaters around the country called "The March of Time." I have to confess it was before my time, but some of the older members of the congregation, after the first service, told me they remembered those newsreels. You can watch them on video cassette now, but I wasn't there when they were showing them. But they recorded events of the day, events in the time of the Great Depression or in the Second World War and afterwards and they were narrated and recounted, those things that went on, and titled it "The March of Time."

Now, that title is what got my attention because it describes the way that we think of time. It seems like an army relentlessly marching on. It never stops. You can rewind the film but you can't turn back the clock. We did that last night but we really didn't do it. You really can't arrest time, time just continues to march on. And yet many people live as though time was standing still, as though there is no tomorrow and nothing very urgent about today, and the tragedy is when they finally wake up, much of life has passed them by. We all have that problem to some extent, even when we are busy, because so often we give ourselves fully to temporal concerns and neglect things eternal.

So in verse 16, Paul urges us to redeem the time, to make the most of our time and use it well. That's the wise life, and Paul was very concerned that the Ephesians – in fact, that all of the church of God down through the ages – live wisely. That's how he begins, with the general advice to be wise, live wisely, verse 15, be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise. Earlier in verse 8, Paul said that as believers in Jesus Christ, we are light, and so we are to walk as children of light and that means we can't sleep, we can't be indolent, we can't be indifferent, and so he then goes on to urge us to awake, to be alert, to be active. We are to walk and be careful how we walk.

Literally, Paul says look carefully how you are walking. A Christian walks through this world much like soldiers walk through a minefield. Temptations are everywhere and they're dangerous, and so we're to walk with our eyes wide open. This idea of a careful walk is one of the great themes of John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. You know, the allegory that he wrote about Christian on his way, on the path to the Celestial City, and it's a story about the Christian life and our passage through this world, and yet it's been said that that allegory, that story of Bunyan's, is as much about Christian getting off the path as it is about him staying on.

Early on, he gets off the path to go to Mr. Legality's house and ends up next to Mount Sinai, which is threatening to fall on him. Now, later on he and Hopeful take a shortcut and they end up in Doubting Castle. All along the way, there are tempters. Demas stands at the side of the road beckoning him and Hopeful to come to his silver mine and dig for riches. Well, that's the way the Christian life is, it's filled with temptations, filled with dangers, and so we need to walk carefully. Everything worth doing takes care, takes time, it takes attention. If it's doing school work, it takes time and attention. If it is training for a sport, it takes time and effort.

And that is certainly true of the Christian life. A wise walk takes discipline and careful attention, and one of the marks of wisdom

is a good use of time. That's the point that Paul takes up in verse 16. Walk wisely, he says, making the most of your time. The Authorized Version translates that "redeeming the time," and that's actually what Paul says. It's a good translation. It's an unusual way of referring to time because it means buy or buy up the time, redeem it.

Redemption is a word of both warfare and the marketplace. It was used in antiquity of paying a sum of money for the release of captives that had been captured in battle. It was also used of the slave market and of paying a price to free a slave, and it came to be used of our salvation, of the work of our Savior. Christ has paid the price for our freedom from sin and judgment in His death. The blood that He shed on the cross was the ransom price, the payment that completely satisfied God's justice, and when that payment was made, He redeemed us. He freed us. That's where it was obtained.

He purchased our salvation at the cross, He made it certain, and then in time, the Spirit of God applies that blood and brings us to a saving knowledge of Him. But the purchase was made, the redemption was accomplished, on the cross when Jesus Christ died for His people.

Well, here the word is applied to a different subject, it's applied to time and we are the redeemers, we are the buyers, we are to be buying up time, we are to be like shrewd merchants who see something valuable and buy it. It is a way of saying that time is precious – it's not to be wasted. There are only 60 minutes in every hour and there are only 24 hours in a day. We can't make more time, we can't stretch out time, but we can use well the time that we have. We can be making the most of our opportunities, and that's what Paul is saying, make the most of the opportunities that you have, and the reason we are to do that, Paul says, is because the days are evil.

Now, what does that mean? Redeeming the time because the days are evil. We might have thought that Paul would have said make the most of your time because your days are numbered or time is short, and that is certainly true. We find that point made throughout

the Scriptures, but that's not what Paul says. He doesn't say your days are short, he says they are evil. And by that, he probably means that because the days are so evil, it is good for Christians to take every opportunity to do good. To use our time to relieve the distress that we see around us and to serve God and to proclaim the Word of God and the gospel.

Also, the fact that the days are evil means that the opportunities to do good are few. If we lived in good days and wonderful times there'd be many opportunities, but the fact that the days are evil means that there are few good days, few days to do that, and so when they come, we are to seize them because time is relentless, it moves on.

This description of the days in which Paul was living as being evil I think are very aptly descriptive of the days in which we live, and I was impressed by that this week - maybe you were, too - with a number of things, but one thing that stood out in my mind immediately was this abduction that occurred Thursday, I believe it was, in North Dallas when a couple was taken from their own garage and the woman was brutally assaulted. You hear that kind of thing, which is becoming common nowadays, and you wonder, "Where are we safe?" or "What is going on?" and what is going on is the very fabric of this nation is coming apart.

We are in fundamental trouble, and the problem is sin. We are, to put it kindly, a sick society but the reality is it's worse than that. We are a dead and dying society, and so the natural thing for us to do, I think, is to seek remedies, seek remedies in politics, for example. Politics are important and they have a vital place in our nation and should be a concern of Christians, but I am convinced that politics are not the answer, that if you are a republican and conservative, that is not going to be the solution. If you're a democrat, that is not going to be the solution. It hasn't been the solution, it cannot be the solution because the problem is not essentially political, the problem is

spiritual. It is a problem with sin and it has deeply affected our nation.

The _____ has waxed great in this land, and the point that that brings us to in our passage is we are light. Paul would say to us – and I think he's saying to the Ephesians – that you have the answers. It's not the politicians, it's not the kings, it's not the senators, it's not those in political power that can solve the problems, it is the Christian, and it's not in political movement, it is being light. It is bearing the truth and it is doing good where you have the opportunities to do it and ultimately the reason, of course, is not to make this a better society. What do we have, really, if we have a good society?

Our goal is to be light, that men and women might enter into the kingdom of God. And the byproduct of that will be a change in society, but we are to seize the opportunities that we have to do good and to be light wherever we are, in the marketplace, in the neighborhood, in our homes, wherever it might be, seize those opportunities because once opportunities are lost, they are gone forever.

There was an ancient Greek statue which depicted a man with wings on his feet and a large lock of hair on the front of his head and no hair at all in the back, and beneath the statue was the inscription, "Who made you? Lysippus made me. What is your name? My name is Opportunity. Why do you have wings on your feet? That I may fly swiftly. Why do you have a great forelock? That men may seize me when I come. Why are you bald in back? That when I am gone by, no one can lay hold of me." Once opportunities are gone, they're gone forever, and so the wise man, the wise woman redeems the time.

Jonathan Edwards was such a man. He was one of America's greatest theologians, some would say the greatest theologian and philosopher that America has ever produced, and the man that God used to start the Great Awakening here in America in the 18th century.

Shortly after he became a Christian, he drew up a list of 70 resolutions. He wrote them all while he was a student at Yale before his 20th birthday. Two of those resolutions were: "Resolved, never to lose one moment of time but to improve it in the most profitable way I possibly can," and "Resolved, to live with all my might while I do live."

Pretty ambitious resolutions, but they weren't just pious sentiments. Edwards was a man who had disciplined himself and redeemed the time. He commonly spent 13 hours every day in his study, which convicts me. He was also a very good family man, had a wonderful home, a warm family. You'd think with 13 hours a day in the study, that would be hard to do, but he did it. He redeemed the time and was used greatly of the Lord in fruitful service. Fruitful service in the church among God's people. Served the Lord faithfully.

I'm sure he didn't fulfill his resolutions to his complete satisfaction, but he certainly made a consistent lifelong effort to do so, and it's a good resolution to never lose one moment of time. It's what we should all be striving to do. How do we do that? We live in a fast-paced age. Everyone is busy. We have all kinds of demands on our time. How can we make the most of our time?

Paul answers the question in verses 17 and 18 where he instructs us first to "not be foolish but understand what the Will of the Lord is." Now, that's a basic principle. That's a basic principle that will guide us in redeeming the time and in living wisely, doing the Lord's Will. How do we find God's Will? That's one of the great questions that Christians have, and it's a good question because the answer to it is the key to a wise and a fruitful life. In one sense, the answer is very simple. We find God's Will in God's Word. As we study the Scriptures, we learn about God. We learn about His character, we learn about what He wants us to be, we learn about what pleases Him.

We see that in our Lord's life, His example. See the way we are to live, what life is to be for us and we find the general principles of conduct all through the Scriptures. But discerning the special Will of

God for us in particular circumstances in everyday life, that's a little different. That involves applying the principles of Scripture to the various circumstances that we face, and that calls for prayer, that calls for a great deal of study. It's based on study. Calls for careful consideration of the Word of God and the circumstances that we are in, but to have the principles that we apply to the various circumstances of life, we must know God's Word. It's fundamental.

Christians wonder why their lives are so hectic and so full of confusion. They wonder why and we might wonder why so many Christians are just like the world and struggling with the same things that the world struggles with, and I think at least in part the problem is many Christians today do not know the Word of God and don't give themselves to the study of it. That takes time. It takes effort. It means to come to a knowledge of the Word of God, you and I have to eliminate certain things from our busy schedule.

Being busy all week long doesn't relieve us of the necessity of feeding upon the Word of God, and so to do that, we have to eliminate some of those things that take time, may be enjoyable but take us away from what's really important. Actually, knowing the Will of God is not all that difficult.

This morning after the first service, one of the men spoke with me and we had a nice brief visit, but he made the point that he really doesn't have a lot of confidence in formulas on how to find the Will of God, and I agree with that, and he said it seems to him that the way that one comes to know the Will of God is through the habit of living obediently to the Word of God, and as we do that, as it becomes the practice of our life, those kinds of decisions become easier. I think he's right, and there's a Scripture that would support that, Hebrews 5:14, where the author of the book of Hebrews is chastising the readers for not knowing the Word of God as they ought to know it.

They should be much more mature than they are. He says they should be using or partaking of solid food, the mature food of the Word of God, and he goes on in verse 14 to say, "But solid food is for the

mature who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil." As we learn the Word of God, as we practice the Word of God, we have much greater facility in knowing what God's Will is for us in the various circumstances of life. It's a way of life. Takes discipline, though. But the rewards are great.

In that way, through study, through prayer, through obedience, we come to know God – not only know about God but know God in a personal way, have a personal knowledge of Him and we develop a living and a vital relationship with Him, and it's in that relationship that He guides us according to the principles of His Word.

Now, Paul doesn't leave us with a general principle, the principle to know God's Will, he gives a specific example of that, one that was probably very timely for the Ephesians. He says in verse 18, "Do not get drunk with wine." Now, that is an inflexible principle of the Word of God. That is one that can never be violated as so many, as we see in the first chapter when he warns against immorality and such things as that, there is no variation on that. Those are inflexible rules of Christian conduct, and this is an inflexible rule. It is an example of the folly that he warns against and was probably a very common one among the Ephesians. A common practice among the Gentiles was to get drunk with wine.

One of the gods of the Greeks was Bacchus or Dionysus, the god of wine, and drunkenness, revelry, debauchery were characteristic of their culture, typical of the Gentile and Ephesian life, and Paul forbids it. He says it's dissipation, it produces a lack of self-control and results in degrading behavior. The Proverbs warn against it. "Wine is a mocker; strong drink, a brawler," and even the Greeks realized that. They had a proverb: "Wine is the mirror of the mind." What they meant by that was too much of it brings a man to the point where he loses control, he can't control his tongue, he begins to express his mind, begins to express his feelings and say things that bring embarrassment to him and to others and turn him and others into victims.

Too much wine leads to destruction, and it's no respecter of persons in that it does that with the beautiful and the not-so-beautiful, it does that with the strong and the weak, it does that with the great and the small alike, and it is a brawler. Excessive drinking was one of the reasons for the early death of Alexander the Great and one of the reasons for some of his reckless behavior. On one occasion, in a drunken quarrel, he took a spear and killed one of his friends, a man who had saved his life in battle. The incident caused him the terrible agony of remorse but he couldn't take it back. He'd slain his friend.

That's what drunkenness leads to, waste, destruction, dissipation, and since the church of Ephesus was a Gentile church, there were probably Christians who had a problem with over-indulgence. When we come to faith, we don't lose all of the bad habits that we developed over years in our unbelief. The work of God is removing those and breaking the power of those in us throughout our life, and the power is broken at the moment of faith and He begins to change us. But no doubt many of them brought those habits in, and so Paul warns against it. He forbids drunkenness and instead says, "Be filled with the Spirit."

Now, that is an important command but what does it mean? What is the filling of the Spirit? Well, first, it's not the same as the baptism of the Spirit. They are two different acts of the Holy Spirit. Some people confuse the two and it's not uncommon to hear people speaking of the need for Christians to be baptized with the Spirit or baptized in the Spirit as a second work of grace, as an experience that is necessary for progress in the Christian life, but that's not so. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is the work of the Holy Spirit that occurs at conversion in which He places us in the body of Christ.

This first occurred on the day of Pentecost. In Acts 1:5, the Lord told his disciples, "John baptized with water but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." And that occurred ten days later on the day of Pentecost when 120 believers received the Holy Spirit. Happened again in Acts chapter 10 when the household of Cornelius, upon believing in Christ, received the Holy Spirit as a result

of Peter's preaching. Now, that was a significant event because it showed Peter and the Jewish Christians that the Spirit had been given to the Gentiles just as He had been given to them and on the same basis, through faith alone. The Gentile believers were equal with the Jewish believers in the body of Christ.

Now, in those examples and others in the book of Acts, we have the baptism of the Spirit described, but in 1 Corinthians 12:13, Paul explains it and there he writes, "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit." Now, notice that when Paul writes that, he writes the event as a past tense and as an experience of all believers. All were baptized, all made to drink of one Spirit. It's not the special experience of some believers; it is the experience of all believers.

It is the work of the Spirit in which at the moment of faith, He places us in the body of Christ, places us in the church, unites all of us together in one body, and joins us in a vital, living relationship with the head of the body, the Lord Jesus Christ. Nowhere in the New Testament are believers commanded to be baptized with the Holy Spirit. The reason is we can't be commanded or urged to seek something that has already taken place. Now, being filled with the Spirit is different. It is commanded and it is an experience that can be repeated.

For example, on the day of Pentecost, the believers were filled with the Spirit and they were speaking with foreign languages, and in those languages they were speaking of the mighty acts of God. Peter then stood up in the temple and he gave the first sermon of the church, and the result of that sermon was 3,000 souls were saved. Later, in chapter 4, before speaking to the Sanhedrin, Peter was filled with the Spirit, spoke in the power of the Spirit to those men. And then again in chapter 4 and verse 31, after a group of believers prayed, Luke writes, they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the Word of God with boldness.

Later on, in Acts chapter 9, after Paul was converted, he was filled with the Spirit and began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues. The thing

that characterizes all of those events of the filling of the Spirit is that men began to proclaim the truth of God. They proclaimed it with boldness, they were bearing witness to Christ. That is the characteristic feature in the book of Acts of the filling of the Spirit, declaring God's truth, His mighty deeds, the work of Christ.

Filling of the Spirit is not getting more of the Spirit. We might think that from the expression, but that's not what it means. We don't gain more of the Spirit than we have received at the moment of salvation. Paul makes that very clear in chapter 1 of Ephesians in verse 3 where he states that God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. Later on in verse 13, we've been sealed with the Spirit. We have the fullness of the Spirit. We don't gain more of the Spirit. What we gain through the fullness of the Spirit is the endowment with power to perform a spiritual task.

We have that power, but it is made manifest in our life when we are filled with the Spirit and as we see in Ephesians chapter 5, it has to do with also Christian living and worship because Paul goes on to add, "speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." After that he'll give instruction on the Christian home and Christian warfare, so being filled with the Spirit is being controlled by the Spirit. That's suggested here by its connection, or perhaps better, its contrast to being drunk with wine. When a man is intoxicated with wine, he is under the influence of the wine. In fact, we speak of intoxication as that, being under the influence, and when a person is filled with the Spirit, he or she is under the influence, under the control of the Spirit.

So there is a similarity between the two, but the similarity is only superficial. Being filled with the Spirit is not spiritual intoxication. There's no such thing as being drunk with the Spirit. Paul doesn't say that. The Spirit doesn't cause us to lose control. Fruit of the Spirit, among other things, is self-control, it's peace. Alcohol doesn't give any of that. Doesn't give peace. Alcohol is a depressant, it's not a stimulant, and doesn't give control, it causes one to lose control and yet the Spirit

does. Does all of that. Stimulates the mind to function clearly and rationally and empowers the will to act obediently and to act boldly.

We see that with the men and women of the early church. Prayed for boldness, God filled them with the Spirit, and they went out and they proclaimed the truth of God. Excessive alcohol does just the opposite. It destroys, it dehumanizes, but the Spirit creates, He makes us increasingly like Christ, so the connection between excessive wine and the Holy Spirit is the idea of influence, it's the idea of control, and Paul commands us to be under the Spirit's control, under His influence.

So how do we do that? Well, if we go back to Acts chapter 4, filling accompanied at times prayer. See that at the end of chapter 4. Now, they don't pray for the filling of the Spirit, they pray for boldness, they pray to be effective servants of God. They pray for boldness and God fills them with the Spirit. But nevertheless, prayer should be a part of our life. We want to be filled with the Spirit. If we want to be obedient to Him and experience the power of the Spirit, we need to be men and women who are praying, to be a people of prayer, confessing our sins, seeking God's blessing, through that growing in our relationship with Him and our personal knowledge of Him.

So it involves prayer but also involves obedience. Back in chapter 4 of Ephesians in verse 30, Paul wrote, "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit." Don't resist Him. We are to yield to Him and to do that, we must be obedient to the Word of God, which is the Word of the Spirit. He is the one who communicated the truth of the Word of God through the apostles and through the prophets of the New Testament and the prophets of the Old. It's His Word and we are to be obedient to it if we are to be filled with the Spirit. That's how we walk by the Spirit, which is what Paul commands in Galatians 5:25.

In fact, really, the predominant description of the Christian life is not being filled with the Spirit but walking by the Spirit. We see it in our passage where he commands us to walk, to walk wisely. There's a course of life and we are to follow it. We are to be diligent in it. See it Romans 8:4 and in verse 14 where those of the Spirit of God are led by

the Spirit of God. That is what is to characterize the Christian life. It's to be a life that is guided by the Spirit. The Spirit prompts us. He leads us in that way according to the Word of God and we are to follow His prompting, we are to follow His direction daily.

And that's indicated here in our passage because Paul's instruction to be filled with the Spirit is in the present tense and it has the force of continue to do this. Go on being filled, continually be yielded to the Holy Spirit and obedient to Him. We will know that we are filled with the Spirit because it will affect us in various ways, will affect our worship. That's what Paul describes in verses 19 through 21. In verse 19 he writes, "speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord." That's a description of public worship, of the life of the church, of the meeting of the church.

Now, I'm sure that that happens in your own life individually and personally when you're filled with the Spirit, you're singing. That comes naturally. But what Paul is describing here is the life of the church and the meeting of the church and it involves singing and singing in a variety of ways. What is clear from what Paul says is that spiritual singing is a natural expression of, it is the outflowing of, the Holy Spirit. Christians are to be a singing people. But notice how Paul puts it. Speaking to one another in psalms. Now, obviously, Paul doesn't mean we're to stop all normal conversation and begin communicating in song so that the church becomes kind of an opera.

Speaking suggests communication, communication of truth, so when we sing, we should sing clearly, we should sing thoughtfully. When we sing our hymns, it should be conscientious singing in an attempt to communicate the words of that hymn to those who are singing it with us. That's what hymns should do. Hymns should communicate. They should instruct us, and that means what is primarily important about psalms and hymns is their content because it is truth that builds up. Music moves our emotions and that's good but only if the music is sung in connection with truth.

Going back to Acts chapter 2, those who were filled with the Spirit were speaking of the mighty deeds of God. Now, that's what the filling of the Spirit does. It produces that in us, we proclaim the mighty deeds of God, and that's what should fill our hymns. If they come from the filling of the Spirit, the mighty acts of our triune God is what we should sing about and that's what we will sing about if our worship is Spirit-filled. When our hearts are filled with the knowledge of God and His grace and His greatness, the hymns will be the natural outflow and characterize the church.

That's what Paul says in Colossians 3:16. It's a parallel passage to this, but there he urges that the Word of Christ dwell richly in their hearts, and the result of that is psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. Well, the early church did that. In fact, it was characterized by that. When the pagans looked at the early Christians, one of the features that stood out was their singing of hymns. Early in the 2nd century, the Roman governor Pliny wrote a famous letter to the emperor Trajan describing the Christians in his province, and in describing them, he wrote that their custom was that of meeting on a fixed day before dawn and reciting a hymn antiphonally to Christ as God.

Now, I think that's interesting. One, it shows that one of the characteristic features of worship in the early church was singing, but their singing was not man-centered, it was not about them, it was about God, it was about Christ, and it was theological. Just from that one statement, Christ is God, it shows that they were theological hymns that they composed and that they sang. A church that is filled with the Spirit, under the control and guiding influence of the Spirit, will be a singing church, and history bears that out. When there were great movements of the Spirit, there were great hymns. We see that during the Reformation.

In fact, we had an example of that in the two hymns that we sang this morning. They're two of my favorite hymns, and they are great hymns, and they came out of great periods in church history. It was Luther and it was Calvin who reintroduced congregational singing in the church meeting. The singing of psalms was very important to the

Huguenots, the Protestants of France, who were greatly persecuted and eventually driven out of France in the 17th and early 18th century. They gained great strength in the midst of persecution through the singing of hymns.

I have an old book on the Reformation in France. Actually, it's two volumes, about 150 years old, and it's been enjoyable reading it because it speaks about the Huguenots and what they experienced and what their life was like, and one of the things, the facts of the book, that stood out in my mind and impressed me was the fact that they sang hymns, and it's frequently mentioned. You see it everywhere. One example was a Huguenot prince who was imprisoned and sentenced to death for his faith because he was a Protestant. He spent his last days in his cell calmly playing his instrument and singing the psalms before going to a very noble death, and he's just one of many.

The fact that the hymns were so influential among the Huguenots moved or caused the kings of France, Louis XIII and Louis XIV, to pass laws forbidding the use of the psalter. Very influential in their life as a church and a vital church. With the Great Awakening, the church was given the hymns of the Wesleys and Toplady. We sang one of Toplady's hymns this morning. Great movements of the Spirit of God produce great hymns to God, so one sign of being filled with the Spirit is singing, making melody with your heart to the Lord in the congregation. When we are filled with the Spirit, we will want to do that.

We will want to be with the saints. We'll want to be with them on Sunday morning, we'll want to be with them on Sunday evening, we'll want to be worshiping with them and singing praise to God. That's an evidence of being filled with the Spirit. That's not all thanksgiving is another sign. Verse 20, always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father. "All things" may need some qualification. As John Stott points out, we cannot thank God for blatant evil. God hates evil and Stott says we cannot praise or thank Him for what he abominates.

But we can thank him for the blessings that He gives us in the midst of an evil age, in the midst of these evil days, and for providing for us at all times and working all things together for our good, even those evil days. There's never a time when we are without something to be thankful about, and we should give thanks. John Chrysostom, the 4th century church father, had as his habitual doxology "Glory be to God for all things." And when he died – and died a painful death – those were the last words that he spoke.

Finally, Paul says be subject to one another in the fear of Christ. How contrary that is to human nature. We want to exalt ourselves. We want to be recognized as the center of the universe, and yet what Paul says is we're to be subject to one another, we're to humble ourselves, we're to serve one another. That attitude, that doesn't follow naturally from human nature; that follows, though, naturally from what he just commanded, being thankful. Those who are thankful, those who understand what they have received in Jesus Christ can be humble or moved to humility and moved to a desire to serve. Thankfulness follows naturally from worship, from understanding who God is and genuinely worshiping Him, and all of these are produced by the Holy Spirit.

That's how we're to live our lives, under the control of the Holy Spirit, being led by the Spirit of God. His influence guides in a walk of wisdom and wisdom involve worship, service, and redeeming the time. We started out talking about time and "The March of Time." I like that title because it suggests that time is going somewhere, it's not going in circles. There's a goal and it is marching toward a great and glorious goal, the goal of God's kingdom on the earth. So what we do in time counts. It counts now and it counts for all eternity, and so the wise person, the wise man, the wise woman, the wise young person, redeems the time, uses every opportunity well for God's service.

That calls for sacrifice. Calls for discipline. That means to live profitably, we must cut some things out of our busy schedules, things that may be enjoyable but also take away from the things that are really important, such as study, prayer, fellowship with the saints, service with others. We're to give ourselves to those things. We're to redeem the time. Christianity calls for sacrifice, but as the Lord told his disciples when they reminded Him that they had left everything for Him, He said, "There is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God who shall not receive many times as much at this time and in the age to come, eternal life.

Is that why we make our sacrifices, because we'll receive much? Is that why we live disciplined lives? Well, notice how Paul ends verse 21. Notice the motivation for being subject to one another – and I think the motivation for everything that he says, for worshiping and redeeming the time, we do it, he says, in the fear of Christ. Out of reverence for Him. Out of love for the one who loved us and gave Himself for us, and it's as we reverence Him, as we seek to know Him and seek to please Him that we are filled with the Spirit, filled with wisdom strength to use our time well and serve Him faithfully and fruitfully.

May God help us to do that. To live in the fear of Christ, to reverence Christ and live in the fullness of the Spirit, walking by the Spirit, walking as wise people, redeeming the time. Time is marching on and soon the end will come. Are you ready for that? Are you ready to meet Christ? Put another way, do you know Christ? Have you trusted in Him for salvation? All men need a Savior and there is only one Savior, that is Jesus Christ, the one who died in the place of sinners. So if you're here this morning without Christ, believe in Him who died to set sinners free.

May God help you to do that, help each of us to live lives characterized by wisdom, redeeming the time, following and walking by the Spirit. Let's stand now for the benediction.

[Prayer] Gracious God and Heavenly Father, we do thank you for the great blessings that you have given us. As we survey this magnificent epistle to the Ephesians, we're reminded that for by grace we have been saved through faith, and that not of ourselves, it is a gift of God. We see that from beginning to end. You chose us for yourself from the foundation of the world, from all eternity, not because there is anything good in us.

It's not of works, it's not of what we do or what's within us, it is your grace and your grace alone, and then in time we were redeemed by the sacrifice of your Son who shed his blood on our behalf and then drawn to a saving knowledge of Him, irresistibly by your Holy Spirit, with whom we have been sealed unto the day of redemption, kept, preserved, protected. We thank you, Father, for that, and we have His life within us. We're joined to your Son, who is the head of the church, and we have the life of your Son and the mind of your Son within us through the Holy Spirit, who empowers us to live lives that are pleasing to you, guides us at every moment.

Father, may we be yielded to Him, obedient men and women, proclaiming the mighty deeds of God to this world and the person and work of your Son. May they see it in our lives and hear it in our words. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.