



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Ephesians 5:3-21

“Purity in the Christian Life” – TRANSCRIPT

Let’s bow together in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the privilege of the study of Thy word. And we do ask Thy blessing upon us as we turn again to the Scriptures. Give direction and guidance and blessing as we listen to the words that the Apostle has given to us and the comments that are made upon them.

And we pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

[Sermon] Our subject is purity in the Christian life, as we continue our series of studies in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians. So if you have your New Testaments or your Bibles with you, turn with me to Ephesians chapter 5, and the subject for the message will be verse 3 through verse 21. Later on I hope to lay a little bit of stress upon the filling of the Holy Spirit, but essentially the passage has to do with the Apostle’s exhortations to purity in the Christian life.

Paul and James are often thought to be at odds. But one thing about which they both agree is that conduct should match creed. The Apostle whose writings we are reading about here now is one who stands for that just as much as James the brother of our Lord. When we think of the idea that conduct should match creed, we think, rather, of James than Paul. But I think you will see from our studies in Ephesians chapter 5 that

the Apostle believes that just as much as the brother of our Lord. Many years ago I read a book on James by a Guy King. It was entitled, *A Belief that Behaves*. Well, that is something that is applicable to the 5<sup>th</sup> chapter of Ephesians also.

Failure to do the truth produces a number of unfortunate results. In the first place, God’s name is blasphemed among the unbelievers. The Apostle writes of that in Romans chapter 2 and verse 24, when in that section of the Epistle to the Romans has to do with the Pauline of condemnation of all men on account of sin, he writes in that 24<sup>th</sup> verse: “For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles on account of you, as it is written.” He was speaking of the Jews, and he considered the fact that their unbelief and disobedience was so well known, that it was a reproach of the name of the Lord for whom they stood, and whom they were regarded as representing. So, God’s name is blasphemed among the unbelievers, when believers do not do the truth to which they supposedly hold.

Furthermore, the world is deprived of an illustration of the truth. It is, surely, one of the important things that results from faithful obedience, the fact that men obtain an illustration of what it is to walk in the light of God. For example, in the case of Noah, by faith, Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith. One learns from this passage of Noah’s conduct, in his preparation of the ark, after he had announced that the flood was coming, was a testimony to the world, and condemned the world’s failure to believe the message that Noah had given to it. So, when believers do not do the truth, which they know, and to which they are supposed to hold, the world is deprived of an illustration of that truth.

Excuses also for substandard life are made. I can remember years ago in Birmingham, Alabama, when a well-known Bible teacher in that city fell into what was regarded by almost all of the believers in that city as a substandard Christian life. In fact, immorality. Moral sin. And it was not long before the indiscretion of this Bible teacher

was used as the excuse of some to come to the knowledge of the Lord. Certain ones began to blame it on the fact that this particular individual had been unfaithful, and that because of his unfaithfulness, others were therefore not believing the truth that they might have otherwise. Well, they’re probably was some truth in that, but at the same time that’s not our ultimate responsibility. We do, however, have a responsibility to give a true testimony of the life that we have derived through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now we look at this rather lengthy passage beginning at verse 3, and particularly at verse 3 through 10, and notice that the Apostle begins with emphasis on the negative side. Essentially, he says that believers are to refuse impurity. Let me read verses 3 and 4 in which the Apostle tells us what we must refuse. He says,

“But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not fitting: but rather giving of thanks.”

Now let’s notice the first thing. It would be nice to emphasize, incidentally, all of these things, but it’s impossible for me to do that in the time at our disposal. So we have to concentrate on a few of the things. Notice in verse 3 he says, “But fornication and all uncleanness, or covetousness.” It’s rather striking that covetousness assumes such an importance in the sins to which we are liable. In fact, in the Apostle’s writings, it’s rather surprising to notice the importance the Apostle places upon covetousness. Here, he ranks it with sexual uncleanness. We, in our society, probably would not think of it as ranked that way.

On the other hand, covetousness is sometimes linked in our talk with uncleanness of a sexual nature, because sometimes we call covetousness, so far as money is concerned, a desire for filthy lucre. So in that very expression, there is a linking of money with that which is unclean.

A number of years ago, reading a commentary on Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, it was rather striking to read that a Roman Catholic priest commented on the sin of covetousness this way. He said that during his long years of service, all kinds of sins and overt crimes were confessed to him in the confessional. But no member of his church ever confessed himself as being covetous. I think we’re inclined to think that envying and covetousness really aren’t sins at all, but simply weaknesses. But the Apostle says, “fornication and uncleanness, or covetousness,” linking it with some sins that we know to be sins of a high degree.”

Now the Apostle goes on to say “neither filthiness nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.” Filthiness nor foolish talking, nor jesting. That last word is an interesting word because it is a word that only occurs here in the New Testament as I remember. It is a word that refers to what is indecent or silly or spicy talk. It’s the kind of thing in which we use a word that is commonly used, but we use it with a double force.

When I was going through Theological Seminary, some of the students in Theological Seminary used to say, if they were going out on a date, that they were going out to do some “Personal Work.” They didn’t mean anything really harmful by that, but it was the use of a term in a double sense. We all know that terms are used in a double sense in a rather foolish way, and in a jesting way that results in some indecent or spicy talk that is really not the kind of talk that Christians ought to be using.

Well, the Apostle says these are the things that we must refuse, but he also speaks in this passage of why we must refuse them. And you’ll notice in the verses that follow, as well as the two that we have just mentioned, there is a great deal of stress of what is fitting for believers, and a great deal of stress on the noun “light.” I want you to notice, first of all, the reasons that he gives for refusing the kind of talk and walk that is displeasing to the Lord. We’ll just pick out the things he uses as reasons.

In verse 3, for example, he says, “But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, *as becometh saints.*” Now saints, of course, is just a term for Christians. All Christians are set apart ones. They are saints. They belong to the Lord. So, the Apostle states here that certain kinds of life, fornication, uncleanness, covetousness, should not be characteristic of Christians, should not be taking place among them, as becometh saints. That is, it’s not characteristic of Christians to be guilty of those sins. Christians are saints and holy ones, and therefore it does not become them to be guilty of these sins.

In the next verse, the fourth verse, he says “neither filthiness nor foolish talk, nor jesting, which are not fitting.” Now these things, he says, are just simply not fitting. He doesn’t say not fitting for saints, but they are just not fitting at all.

And then he goes on the fifth verse to say,

“For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.”

So, a believing man should not be guilty of these sins of impurity, because this type of person is not a person in the inheritance in the kingdom of Christ in God. This ye know, no fornicator, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

That raises a rather interesting question. That raises this question: Is it possible that the Apostle is saying that if an individual is guilty of fornication, if he is guilty of uncleanness, if he guilty of covetousness at all, then he does not have salvation? Well, that is one possibility. That’s very unlikely to be the true meaning of this text, because it’s plain that there are individuals in Scripture who have been guilty of these things who are said to belong to the Lord.

And said to belong to the Lord afterwards, too. Let us take David, for example. David was guilty of a very, very evil act. But nevertheless, we know that David was a man after God's own heart, and that David was one of those who are in the presence of the Lord God. He was guilty of a sin which he later confessed after one year of struggling over it. So it's unlikely that that is the meaning of the text.

On the other hand, some have said this does not have to do with salvation at all. Does not the Apostle say, "For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God?" What the Apostle is speaking about, so these say, is not salvation, but rewards. And those who are fornicators or unclean persons or covetous individuals who are believers, well, they will lose their rewards. They will lose their rewards; they will not have inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

Well, there are some texts in the Bible that point out quite plainly that a certain lifestyle, persisted in, will be the kind of lifestyle that will prevent believers from attaining, or obtaining the rewards that they would probably want to have. But it's unlikely again that that is the meaning of the text because the Apostle does not really say rewards are lost by such people, he says they don't have any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. And that certainly seems to say very plainly they are not going to be in that kingdom at all.

So what I'm inclined to think the Apostle is thinking about is not an occasional act, a single act, but what he's talking about is a certain kind of lifestyle characterized by these things. In other words, the person whose lifestyle is characterized by fornication, he is a fornicator who continually commits the sin of fornication, or an unclean person, if that characterizes his life, or a covetous man, if that characterizes his life, then Paul is saying, he doesn't have any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God because the fact that his life is totally characterized by these things is an evidence that he doesn't really have salvation at all.

Because you see, one of the products of genuine salvation is that we are delivered from the lifestyle that we formerly had. We are new creatures in Christ Jesus. And so, when the Apostle writes here he does not have any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God, he seems to me to be saying this person is a lost person. But he’s not lost because of the commission of one act, but he’s lost if these things characterize him, if this is the bent of his life.

We know that for those who have committed acts of covetousness, or other acts of sin, who are also believers, the way to restoration is confession of one’s sin to the Lord God. Confession, and also a turning from sin as a result as God gives enablement. So the Apostle says, “for this ye know,”—that’s another reason why we should do away with impurity in our lives, because that impurity that characterizes the individual is evidence that he is really not a true believer.

The Apostle says in the sixth verse,

“Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience.”

So, someone might come and say, “Well, I don’t really think it’s quite as serious as that.” Paul says, “Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience.” Now that makes it very plain, does it not, that “hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God” has to do with no salvation. For here he says that because of these things comes the wrath of God on the sons of disobedience. And the wrath of God surely pertains to those who are not believers at all.

So that’s four reasons, but the Apostle gives a fifth reason why we must refuse impurity. In the eighth verse, he says,

“For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord:  
walk as children of light.”

So, turning to the positive side of things, Paul says, we believers are children are light, and we ought to walk as children of light. Now isn’t that interesting: we are children of light?

Now, the Bible of course, speaks of the fact that we are light in the Lord. Right here: now are ye light in the Lord. And the world should expect to see some light, if we represent the Lord Jesus Christ. We are light in the Lord. In Matthew chapter 5, the Lord Jesus has some things to say about this that I think would be worthwhile for us to read right at this moment. Verse 14 through verse 16 of the Sermon on the Mount. The Lord says,

“Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.  
Neither do men light a lamp, and put it under a bushel, but on a lampstand;  
and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before  
men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is  
in heaven.”

In other words, men are to see the light. We are light in the Lord, and our light is something that is to be seen. They’re not to see the lamp; we are light-bearers. They want to see the light, and they are to see the light. The light is our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Apostle continues in verse 9 and 10,

“For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and in truth.”

That statement, for the fruit of the Spirit, is interesting, isn’t it? That is the fruit, the product of the Spirit, it’s presences and activity in the life of the believer is in all

goodness, and righteousness and truth. That buttresses these other reasons, because it tells us that the true product of the presence of the Holy Spirit, who indwells all believers, the true product is goodness, righteousness and truth, proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. That is, the Holy Spirit and the Lord examine these things and determine that they are acceptable to them. It’s the answer to the question that we often have, is this wrong, or is this right? Or is this or that alright? Well, here is the answer to that particular question.

When we ask the question what is right or what is wrong, some will say, “Well, what will bring me earthly gain or honor, what will bring me pleasure, bring me ease? What will others say of what I do? What would others advise me to do? What would others do themselves?” But in the final analysis, what is the Lord’s will is the prominent thing, or the most significant thing, and also, as he puts it here, what will be in accord with the product of the Holy Spirit, and that is goodness and righteousness and truth.

Now turning to the positive side of things in the 11<sup>th</sup> verse, the Apostle tells the believers that they are to rebuke impurity. He says,

“And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness,  
but rather reprove them.”

This morning, my wife and I were reading in 2 Timothy chapter 4, in our Scripture reading which we do after breakfast, and we were reading the first eight verses of chapter 4. The Apostle was exhorting young Timothy, “And I charge you, therefore, in the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing in his kingdom, preach the word, in season, out of season. Reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.” And so Timothy is told here to reprove, rebuke, and to exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.

Now, we could talk a long time about why the Apostle says rebuke with doctrine. But that, in effect, is what he’s doing here in Ephesians chapter 5, verse 11. He says don’t have any fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. But, reprove them, for it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret. So here, the Apostle tells the believers that they are not only to refuse impurity, but they are to rebuke impurity.

He says in the 13<sup>th</sup> verse,

“but all things that are reprov’d are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light.”

Incidentally, the Apostle is probably talking about oral rebuking, and the sense of the 13<sup>th</sup> verse, where he speaks of the things that are reprov’d, and that they are made manifest by the light, is light when it enters, dispels darkness. The Apostle says, “all things that are reprov’d are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light.” That which manifests the wickedness of the sinful acts of darkness is the light of the word of God. So in that sense, what we have here is light. Paul, telling Christians to rebuke others, and in such, they are making manifest through light, the unfruitful works of darkness.

In the 14<sup>th</sup> verse, he says,

“Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.”

That’s a rather interesting text, and it would be nice to expound it in some detail, but I don’t have the time to do that. I would like to say simply this, that it is likely that this is a

text that is addressed to believers. It is a summons to them. “Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.”

This, of course, is a text taken from the Old Testament, but it is applied by the Apostle to the believers. He is telling them that if their lives are not characterized by this purity of which he is talking, they are sleeping morally, and they should awake, and they should arise from the dead and Christ will give them light. The Apostle, in his letter to the Corinthians, in the third chapter – in his first letter, in the third chapter – and the third verse speaks about the fact that it is possible for believers who are not walking according to the word of God to walk as men. In other words to walk in such a way that when the world looks at them, they appear to be unbelievers.

Well, he’s addressing such. Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. It’s a promise that as we, by the grace of God and the enablement of God, get down upon our knees and ask him to deliver us from the failures of our Christian life, well we have the assurance that God will undertake for us and we shall be given light.

Well now we come to the exhortation, and that consumes verse 15 through verse 21. And the essence of the Apostle’s exhortation is that we are to walk in wisdom. So after admonitions comes exhortation. And the general wisdom that the Apostle speaks of first, is that we are to walk circumspectly. The special wisdom that he wants to impart to the believers is that they are to be filled with the Spirit. But we’ll look at verses 15 through 17 first, in which he speaks of general wisdom, urging them to walk circumspectly. Verse 15 of Ephesians chapter 5 reads:

“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.”

Let’s look for a moment at that expression in verse 15, “See then that ye walk circumspectly.” Circumspectly means to walk picking your way through hazardous things that might cause you to fall. It refers to the care that we walk, the care that we use when we walk. If we’re walking in rocky ground or jagged ground, or ground in which there are different levels, we walk circumspectly.

In Australia, people build high brick walls with soft cement on top around their property. And before the cement dries, broken bottles and other pieces of glass are stuck in them, so that when it dries, the sharp edges protrude, preventing an intruder from climbing over it. If you see a cat walking on the top of that kind of wall, they kind of walk very slowly, picking their way through the pieces of glass, trying to be sure that they are not cut by the glass.

Well, she’s doing what we’re to be doing when we walk through life’s pilgrimage. We are to walk circumspectly. Not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time because the days are evil. Don’t be unwise; understand what the will of God is. Through the hazards of life and through the difficulties of life and through those possibilities of stubbing our toes that exist in our life constantly, we are to walk with the word of God as our guide, understanding that expression of his will that is found in it. Understanding what the Lord’s will is. Not concerned about earthly gain, earthly honor, earthly pleasure; the ideas and opinions of others, as I mentioned a few minutes back. But rather, what is the will of God. That is the important thing. Or as verse 10 has put it, proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.

Now we come to the special wisdom. And the special wisdom has to do with the filling of the Holy Spirit. Let’s read verse 18 through verse 21. The Apostle writes,

“And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things

unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.

Well, almost all believers in the word of God are interested in what it means to be filled with the Spirit.

What is meant by the expression, “Be filled with the Spirit?” Let me just, for a moment, point to the significance of the term “filled” first of all. The term “filled” is a term that means simply to be controlled, to be possessed, in this case by the Spirit. To be controlled or to be filled or to be possessed all mean the same thing. When people are filled with rage, they are possessed by that rage. This is confirmed in a most interesting way by noting three places in which reference is made to this filling.

In Luke chapter 1 and verse 15, there is an interesting expression, and I’m going to read it now. It’s a reference to John the Baptist. And we read, “For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and he shall drink neither wine nor strong drink, but he shall be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb.”

Now notice in this prophecy that is given about John the Baptist, the same contrast that is found in Ephesians 5 is also found. It says, “He shall drink neither wine nor strong drink but he shall be filled with the Holy Spirit. Well over here in Ephesians 5:18 we have “and be not drunk with wine, which is excess, but be filled with the Spirit.” Now that gives us just a little bit of the clue of what it means to be filled, because here it’s associated with the opposite of being filled with whiskey.

Now coming to Acts chapter two, we read in Acts chapter 2 of the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, and then we read in verse 12 of Acts 2, “And they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, ‘What meaneth this? Others mocking, saying, ‘These men are filled with new wine.’” Notice the reference to the spirits. “But Peter, standing up with the Eleven, lifted up his voice and said unto them: ‘Ye men of Judea, and all you who dwell in Jerusalem, be this known unto and harken to

my words. For these are not drunk as you suppose, seeing as it is the third hour of the day, but this is that which was spoken through the Prophet Joel: “And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy.”” Again, you see, Peter has taken the same kind of contrast. The people said these people are full of new wine, he says no, no, these are full of the Holy Spirit.

So it would appear, then, that what is meant by the filling of the Holy Spirit is to be controlled, or possessed because when a person is controlled by the spirit, the alcoholic spirits, he is an individual who’s possessed by them. Or when a person is filled with whiskey, he becomes so filled and possessed by the spirits, that he’s under their control; he’s drunk with either wine or whiskey. Now, the Apostle, using the same contrast, says be not drunk with wine, that is, be not possessed by the spirits, but be filled with the Spirit. So it would seem clear from the meaning of the expression “filled” and this contrast three times in the word of God, between “filling with the spirits” and “filled with the Spirit,” that what is meant by the filling of the Holy Spirit is simply the control of the Holy Spirit.

My old theology professor used to say to be filled is not the problem of getting more of the Spirit, it’s rather the problem of the Spirit getting more of Christians. He meant, coming more under the control of the Holy Spirit. He used to say that the Holy Spirit desires to be not only resident in our lives but also president in our lives. That is, to have true control of us.

Now Paul says be filled in the Spirit. In the Greek text, it is simply “in Spirit.” It is possible for this to be reference to the human spirit, to be filled in your human spirit. But that’s unlikely, and this is why. In the other occurrences of this expression, *en pneumate*, in the Epistle to the Ephesians, the reference to the word *pneumate* is probably to the Holy Spirit; chapter 2 verse 22, chapter 3 verse 5, chapter 6 verse 18. Those instances are

probably instances where the Holy Spirit is being referred to. And so, I think that what Paul is referring to is I want you to be filled or under the control of the Holy Spirit.

Now let me make one thing plain here. Occasionally, Christians are told that the one thing that characterizes a believer’s life when it’s pleasing to the Lord, is that it is filled with the Holy Spirit. I’d like to suggest to you that the Apostle does not make that the primary, normative thing of the Christian life. In fact, this is the only place in the Apostle’s writings where he uses the expression, “Be filled with the Holy Spirit.” He’s much more commonly using the expression, “walk;” “walk in this way,” “walk by the Spirit.”

And so the standard of the believer’s life is not the filling of the Spirit. The standard of the believer’s life is walking by the Spirit. That’s the human standpoint. Now, from the divine standpoint, it is the work of the Holy Spirit in sanctification to enable us to walk in accordance with the holy God. And he works sovereignly, the Holy Spirit does, to bring us into conformity to the word of God as long as we are Christians. He’s working toward the end of making us more like Christ. So, it seems to be that from the overall study of the Apostle’s writings that it would be much better for us to say that the true standard of Christian life is to walk by the Holy Spirit.

But now it is true, someone might say, that he does say here to be filled with the Spirit, or to be filled by the Spirit. What does he mean in this one place where he uses the expression? Well, in the original text he gives us a clue. He lets us know what it is to be filled by the Spirit. For he goes on to say, in verses 19 through 21:

“Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things [unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;] Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.”

Now, I say to you, and I suggest to you without any sense of dogmatism, that the Apostle, in the light of the context of these expressions, is talking about the corporate life of the local church. First of all, he says, be filled with the Spirit, speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. Well, that’s characteristic not so much of an individual but of corporate life.

Incidentally, you’ll notice, that when you come under the control of the Spirit, it’s just as when you come under the control of the spirits. When a man has a little too much to drink, one of the characteristic things is his tongue is loosened, and he begins to talk. And a lot of people who are under the influence of whiskey, they’re a little high, their tongue just goes and goes so much that they become a trial to their friends and the people with whom they are. That’s characteristic.

Well, it’s characteristic of those who are under the control of the Holy Spirit to want to express the relationship that they are now describing and to express the relationship that they are now enjoying. So they speak to themselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in their hearts to the Lord, giving thanks, submitting themselves one to another in the fear of God. These expressions: speaking, singing and making melody, giving thanks, submitting, are in the Greek text participles that modify the subject: you be filled with the Holy Spirit. So there are things that describe what it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

They set forth the manner in which individuals are filled with the Spirit. They are controlled by the Spirit. And these are the manifestations of them: the speaking, the singing, the thanksgiving, the submission. And I suggest to you, then, that this is a reference, primarily, to the corporate life of a local church. And a local church in which the word of God is preached with power and conviction, and in which the word of God is really expounded and which there is good response to it, is a local church in which people coming under the control of the Holy Spirit by the sovereign working of the Holy Spirit through the word of God, and by their believing response to the messages, there

will be manifest in that church life, psalms, hymns, spiritual songs, melody; in their hearts to the Lord there will thanksgiving for all things to God the Father; there will be submission of themselves, one to another, in the fear of the Lord God. These are things that will characterize a happy, joyous, responsive congregation of believers that meet regularly together when they are filled with the Holy Spirit.

Now then, speaking, singing and making melody. Incidentally, what are these psalms? Well these psalms were sacred songs sung to musical accompaniment. That term psalm is derived from a Greek word, *psalo* which means to twitch or twang. And so, it was the singing that was the expression of the life within. Now some of the churches have singing, but they don’t have any twitching or twanging or any musical instruments at all.

I remember many years ago when I went over to Scotland to do some study over there, I preached around in several of the churches there. And I went out to one of the churches that had asked me to come speak to them and preach the Gospel to them. And I came in early, and there were a couple of men standing there, and I noticed they didn’t have any piano. And knowing that there were certain churches, particularly over there, that did not believe in the use of musical instruments, I asked them, where was the piano?

And they went on to say why they did not have a piano, and finally one of them put it this way—he referred to the piano, incidentally, as the “wooden brother”—he said we believe that wooden brother should come into the meeting—and by that he means join the local church and become a part of it—we believe that the wooden brother should come into the meeting the same way we come into the meeting: through water. And by that, of course, he meant that the way into the fellowship of the local church was through confession of your faith in Christ and water baptism. And he was just saying that if you’re going to have musical instruments in the worship of the Lord, you ought to bring that piano in through the baptistry. Well, that was just his humorous way of saying you shouldn’t have musical instruments at all; they detract from the pure worship of God.

Well, I don’t think that is really true, but that it the way they felt about it. Over in the United States, particularly, we have a rather large denomination that does not believe in the use of musical instruments.

Luther, on the other hand, who is responsible for congregational singing throughout the Western world, thought that music was exceedingly good. He said, “Music drives the devil away.” One of my friends has said modern music, such as rock n’ roll, brings him back. But, whether that’s true or not, so far as Paul is concerned, he does say, that characteristic of a spirit-controlled congregation are these four things: speaking to themselves in psalms and hymns, thanksgiving, and mutual submission, one to another.

The giving of thanks is interesting because he says we are to give thanks for all things. That’s rather startling that all things are worth giving thanks for, because all things come to the believer, ultimately, through the hands of a loving God.

Now of course, he speaks primarily of the blessings of our lives. John Chrisistum, who lived in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century, said we are to thank God for hell. Well, we should thank God for hell because there are some very good reasons why there must be a hell. We cannot go into those reasons now, but I’m sure most of you are cognizant of the reasons why there must be a hell. In fact, someone said, “There may be a heaven; there must be a hell.” Logic so clearly demands the existence of hell. But what logic demands the Bible states plainly.

We should thank God for all our blessings, but we should thank God for all of the experiences of life, even our sufferings, because the frowning Providence, he hides a smiling face. And, ultimately, all of the things that come into our experience are designed to enable us to grow. Well, that’s the perfect guarantee for purity: the control of the Holy Spirit.

And it’s not something just for some people. I know that on the Day of Pentecost, that when the Holy Spirit came, the filling of the Holy Spirit took place then, but only eleven, eleven of Pentecost’s 120 were Apostles, so that the filling of the Holy Spirit was

something that came to those ordinary believers. That is something that is to be the experience of all of the saints of God: the control of the Holy Spirit. Expressed in the Apostle’s exhortation it is: walk by the Holy Spirit that we not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. From the divine side the Holy Spirit is working to sanctify us to that end. Constantly working in us, he never stops from the day that we are spiritually born to the day that we are like Christ.

In the meantime, be responsive to the word of God. Be responsive to the truths of the word of God. Give yourself over to the control of the Holy Spirit, and allow him to form you and to make you into an instrument of praise and thanksgiving to our great God who loved us and gave himself for us in the Lord Jesus Christ.

If you’re here listening to my words, and you have never believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, we remind you that he has given himself an atoning sacrifice for sinners. And if the Holy Spirit has convinced you of your sin, you may come, believing in him who died for sinners and receiving as a free gift, eternal life. May God help you to do it. For by grace are we saved through faith. And that not of ourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works lest anyone should boast. Come to God, right now. Let’s bow together in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for the privilege of the study of Thy word. Bless the exposition of this truth to the salvation of the unsaved and to the edification of the believers.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.