

How To Correct It

Ephesians 5:14-21

Pastor John Miller

I want to read the passage beginning in verse 14. Paul says, "Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise..." my King James has circumspectly which literally means to look around as you're walking, to be careful, to be wise, walking in wisdom. "...Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is." That is exactly what Paul is going to tell us here, he will tell us what God's will is in our marriage, in our parenting and on the job. We are going to focus on marriage. Now, in verse 18, he says, "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess..." or debauchery, "...but be filled with the Spirit;" there is the command, "...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;" and here it is in verse 21, "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God." Wives are to submit unto their husbands in verse 24. In verse 25, husbands are to love their wives.

Now we've seen marriage as God created it. Ever since I taught that several weeks ago, I've continued to meditate and study that. I think it's glorious that God having made Adam said, "Not good, man's aloneness. I will make a helper suitable for him." I was thinking today about the fact that God actually told Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply. I don't want to get sidetracked again, but it would have been hard for Adam to do that without Eve. It would be hard for Eve to do that without Adam. So, God made man and God made woman and said, "Be fruitful and multiply." I think part of the idea when God said, "I will make a helper suitable for him," the idea was, "Adam, she's going to help you be fruitful and multiply the earth." So, God designed the man and the woman to be able to procreate, and that's part of the marriage union and marriage covenant, "Be fruitful and multiply." That was just a little footnote. It's not in my notes. I didn't plan on saying that, but I wanted to get that recorded for the record, okay.

We've seen how God created it, and then we've seen how Satan has corrupted it. Now, I want to talk about how to correct it. Now we finally start on the positive. This is where you can go, "Sigh, this is fresh, this is nice, a breath of fresh air." We can look at how we can correct the trouble in marriage. Marriage is in trouble today, I think because of selfishness. The root of sin is selfishness, and when you get married you're two selfish, self-centered people. I love what Tim Keller says in his excellent book *The Meaning of Marriage*. He said it's like, "Two vacuums put together." What do you have when you put two vacuums together? You have just a lot of sucking. You have one big sucking noise. That's kind of what marriage is like. You put two vacuums together, and they are just trying to suck everything up. Me me me me me me, and very little is giving giving giving.

I believe that tonight's the secret—that the Holy Spirit can fill our lives so that we can have the

resources, so that we can have the ability, so that we can have the strength to stop being a big vacuum and to start giving out, amen? To be able to think not of ourselves but of others. Remember in Philippians 2, Paul said that we should think of others as more important than ourselves. What a great verse for the marriage relationship. It is impossible to do unless you are filled with the Holy Spirit. We need to be filled with the Holy Spirit. So in verse 18, we have that command. Now, he tells us in verse 14 that we need to be awakened in the Spirit. So, the first ingredient you might say, although it's not our focus tonight, is that if you're going to have a blessed marriage, if you're going to have a happy marriage, if you're going to have a marriage as God designed it, you need to be born again. Very simple, right? You need to be born again.

Whenever a couple comes to me for marriage counseling, the first thing I want to ascertain is, are you a Christian? Have you been born again? Do you have the Holy Spirit? Where are you at in your walk in relationship to God? I can promise you the problem is spiritual. It's a spiritual problem. "No, it's a money problem. It's a problem about intimacy." No, it's a spiritual problem, because if God fills us with His Holy Spirit, then and only then can we have the ability to be able to live Christlike outpoured for a wife to be able to submit to her husband and a husband to submit to his wife, in that he dies to himself and he loves his wife, and he gives himself to his wife. But, did you notice there in verse 21, before wives are told to submit to their husbands and husbands are told to love their wives, what did he say? He said, be subject or "submitted one to another..." don't miss this phrase, "...in the fear of God," in the reverential fear of God. We will talk more about that in just a moment. So, before he tells us what our roles, duties and responsibilities are, and we so much associate that with gender roles, the wife and for the husband, he tells us that we are both to be submitted in our marriage one to another. And in the church tonight, we are to be submitted one to another in the reverence and fear of God. So, first be born again, and second be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Now, there are four things that I want to look at in light of this reference here in verse 18 to be filled. I want to look at the contrast briefly. I want to look at the command to be filled. I want to look at the conditions, what we need to do to be filled, and I want to look at the consequences of what happens when we are filled with the Holy Spirit. Now, look at first of all the command in verse 18. "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit." First, actually, there is the contrast, be not drunk with wine. The Bible here, very clearly, forbids drunkenness. You are not to be intoxicated with wine. Whenever I read this verse when I do a wedding, I hit it hard because I know that many of them are going to the reception, and they are looking forward to that, and the preacher just squelches everything. Do you know that alcohol has ruined a lot of lives. Alcohol has ruined a lot of marriages. Now, I realize the Bible doesn't say, "Thou shalt not drink alcohol," or "Thou shalt not have a glass of wine." I wish it did, but it doesn't. There is no place where it says you can't have a glass of wine. I don't recommend it. I don't do it. I don't touch it with a 10-foot pole in any shape or form. I don't personally think you need alcohol. There's plenty of things to drink out there, you don't need alcohol. "Oh, well, wine is good for you. You'll live longer," and all that stuff. Whatever. Chocolate is good for you too, so eat chocolate and reap its benefits. Many a relationship has been ruined by alcohol and strong drink. Be careful. Be very, very careful. So, the command is not given first, it's the contrast. When you're under the influence of the Holy Spirit, unlike alcohol, He will bless your

life, and you will gain self control.

I want to focus now on the command, which is the second, in verse 18. He says, "...but be filled with the Spirit." This is a command. That's what I want to emphasize more than anything else. It's what is called an imperative in the Greek, and it's in the present tense. That means, we are commanded to an ongoing continuous filling with the Holy Spirit. Now, what does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit? It's not the same as being indwelt. It's not the same as being sealed. It's not the same as being baptized. None of these are commanded the believer. It's not getting more of the Spirit. What I share about this being filled may be a little unconventional to some of you, or new to some of you. I want you to just listen to me with an open mind and hear what I have to say. This is not getting more of the Holy Spirit. I actually believe the moment you are born again you get the Holy Spirit. How much of Him do you get? He doesn't come in halves, three-quarters or semi. He comes in His fullness. Paul, in writing to the Colossians said, "You are complete in Him." That means you have everything you need. So, when you are filled with the Holy Spirit, it's not that you are getting more of the Spirit. I like to put it like this, the Spirit is getting more of you. We used to sing, "I want more of Jesus, more, more, more. I want more of Jesus than I've ever had before. I want more of His great love so rich and full and free, I want more of Jesus so I'll give Him more of me." When you have all of Jesus, you have all of the Holy Spirit, but He doesn't have all of you. Simply stated, I believe that to be filled with the Holy Spirit is surrendering, yielding, it means being controlled by.

Billy Graham has actually written a really great book on the Holy Spirit, titled *The Holy Spirit*. He says this, "We Christians are to be progressively sanctified or made righteous in holiness as we daily abide in Christ and obey His Word. Abiding and obedience are the keys to a successful spirit-dominated life. We are as much sanctified as we are possessed by the Holy Spirit. It is never a question of how much you have of the Spirit but how much the Spirit has you." I love that. It's not getting a greater dose of the ghost. It's the Holy Spirit getting more of you as you surrender to Him. So, simply stated, what it means is that you are being controlled by the Holy Spirit. That is what the word "filled" means. The minute we hear the word "filled," we get the idea of quantity. "Fill me up. Fill me to overflowing." The word "filled" actually conveys the idea of controlled by. Unbelievers are referred to in the Bible as being "filled with anger" or "filled with wrath." What does that mean? They get more wrath? No. It means that it is controlling them. It means they are out of control, and they are being controlled by their anger. So, when I am controlled or filled by the Holy Spirit, it means that He is controlling my attitudes, my actions, my words, my conduct.

Now, what could be more important in a marriage relationship than being Spirit filled, amen? That He controls my heart, my mind, my attitude, my words, my conduct. That He makes me sensitive to the needs of others, my spouse, and that He makes me humble. He gives me a servant's heart. He gives me victory over my sin and my attitude, that I would be a Spirit-filled husband, that you would be a Spirit-filled wife. If you want to be what God wants you to be in your marriage then you need to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

I want to break it down for you, as I already have mentioned, this is an imperative, so it's an

obligation. It is not optional. The Spirit-filled life is not optional. Again, let me say this so that I make the distinction clear. Not all Christians are Spirit-filled. All Christians have the Holy Spirit, and they have all of the Spirit they need, but they are not all filled with the Spirit for two quick reasons. First, God would not command us to be filled if it was automatic, if we didn't need to be filled. When they were picking out the elders of the church in Acts 6, they said, "Choose men that are full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom." They could have just said, "Choose men that are born again. That's all you need to do." No. We want not only born again people, we want Spirit-filled people to be the leaders of our church. So not just men who know the Lord, but men and women who are filled with the Holy Spirit. I don't believe all Christians are living the Spirit-filled life. So it's commanded us. It is the normal Christian life. Secondly, the verb "be filled" is plural, so what that means is everyone is commanded to be filled. Thirdly, it is in what is called the passive voice, which is really important in the Greek. This means that we yield ourselves and let the Spirit fill us. It means the object has something acting upon it. Let the Spirit fill you. You can't fill yourself. You yield and the Spirit takes control of your life. Fourthly, as I already mentioned, it is in what is called the present tense. It's hard to translate into the English, but it would be like this, "Be being filled with the Holy Spirit." Again, a very important point on the subject is that it is not just one filling. It is an ongoing, continual, moment-by-moment yielding and obedience to the Spirit of God and the Word of God, walking in a surrendered life to the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit filling you and empowering you. If you are walking filled with the Spirit in the morning, you could actually be in the flesh by the afternoon.

I remember coming home from the office when we had all the kids in the house, crazy and noisy. I would pull into the driveway and turn off the car. I would actually sit there for a few minutes saying, "Lord, fill me with your Holy Spirit because when I open that door, I don't know what I'm going to find. I don't know what has gone on around here today, Lord, I need Your filling." You pray as you drive, and you pray as you go on. Before I get into the pulpit I ask God to fill me with the Holy Spirit. Before I talk to somebody about the things of God, I say, "God, fill me with the Holy Spirit." It's something that you pray throughout the day, every day, moment by moment, ongoing and continually. This isn't just one experience that you had back in your Christian life. It is an ongoing, continual filling of the Holy Spirit. This is so very important.

Now, what are the conditions for being filled? Let me give them to you. They are not drawn directly from this text, but I want you to know this is not a formula. These are some ideas about how to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Again, this is so apropos for husbands and wives. First of all, desire to be filled. God is not going to control you if you don't want Him to control your life. Jesus said in John 7, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink and out of his belly will flow torrents of living water." So we come to Jesus and we drink. It starts with the desire. Secondly, it moves to denouncing sin in your life. God will not fill a "dirty" vessel, to use a metaphor. So, if there is sin in your life, you need to confess it and forsake it. The Bible says that if we confess our sin, God is faithful and just to forgive us of our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Maybe you're a married or single person having a problem with alcohol. You need to confess your sin and forsake it. Maybe you're having a problem with pornography, or a problem with anger, or maybe you're having a problem with lust, or greed, or maybe you have bitterness in your heart. If you want God to bless your marriage, you need to

confess your sin to Him and you need to forsake it. You need to desire God, "I want that, God. I want that Spirit-filled life. I want the fruit of your Spirit, Your love and Your joy, Your peace and Your gentleness, Your goodness and Your self control in my marriage, in my life. And, Lord, these sins that are causing strife in my marriage, I confess them to You and I ask You to forgive me and I forsake them."

Look at Ephesians 4:29. Paul says, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth..." man, we need that in our marriages, "...but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." Now you don't have to ask for the sealing of the Holy Spirit, it is something that happens to you the moment you are saved. But, because the Holy Spirit is in you, sin and bad speech or words that are displeasing to God, they grieve the Holy Spirit. So, don't grieve the Holy Spirit. He describes things that will grieve Him in verse 31; bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, evil speaking, let it be put away from you with all malice, slander or hatred. And verse 32, "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." I love those verses as they apply to the marriage relationship. So, denounce sin.

The third step in being filled with the Holy Spirit is to dedicate yourself fully to Christ. Dedicate yourself fully to Christ. The more spiritual you are, the better your marriage will be, amen? It's that simple. It's not necessarily about having the chemistry and being attracted, you know, that animal attraction, the spark and all that stuff that everybody talks about. It's about being spiritual. There are Christians whose marriage ends in divorce. I don't know what the stats are. I don't know that we can know the stats. I don't believe they are as high as the secular world is or the nonChristians. I have never believed that, and I still don't believe that. I don't think anyone has the stats. I think Christian marriages statistically stay together more than nonbelievers, but let me tell you something else. Spirit-filled Christians stay together. Carnal Christians divorce. Spirit-filled Christians stay together. Do you want to know why? Because they have the fruit of the Holy Spirit. They die to themselves. They have learned how to give of themselves. Instead of being a vacuum, they are a bank that is full, and they can write checks to other people. They can give to other people. You are not going to have the resources to have a great marriage if you are not first of all born again and filled with the Holy Spirit. It is so very important.

I want to say something else. In Colossians 3:16, Paul exhorts us to let the word of Christ dwell in us. Then he goes on to speak of the consequences of God's Word dwelling in us. They are identical to the consequences of the Spirit filling us. What does that mean? It means that you cannot be a Spirit-filled Christian if you don't read and obey your Bible. It's not about coming to church and getting a dose of the Ghost then shaking and jumping up and down. It's not how high you jump when the Spirit touches you, it is how straight you walk when you hit the ground. It's not just tooting your horn in the power of the Holy Spirit. You know the old steam trains? Toot, toot! You can pull the thing, and they can toot their steam horn. "I didn't know what the steam was for!" It's to drive the train down the track. A lot of people think the Holy Spirit is so that they can toot. I guess that's not the best word to use, is it? You know what I mean. We're

talking trains and horns. (This is what happens when I get up too early in the morning. I got up real early this morning.)

A lot of people come to meetings like tonight, "Oh, I love You, Jesus. Oh, Praise the Lord," they can sing and shout. Okay, but what happens when you get home? What happens when your wife says, "Can you change the diaper? Can you take the trash out?" How does the wife respond to the husband's needs? It's easy to praise the Lord on Wednesday night in the sanctuary, but do you walk in the Spirit and walk in obedience to the Word in the hustle and hassle of your daily lives at home? So, I believe that in order to be Spirit filled you must be filled with God's Word. In other words, if you neglect your Bible, you are not a Spirit-filled Christian. You can't go without reading the Bible and praying and expect to be a Spirit-filled Christian.

My fourth point to being filled with the Holy Spirit is to depend daily on the Spirit. Pray and surrender and read God's Word, and allow God's Word to fill your life. Now, last but not least, the consequences. What are the consequences of being filled? In verses 19-21 we are going to have described what a Spirit-filled marriage looks like. This is not exhaustive, we could go to the fruit of the Holy Spirit, and by the way, the greatest evidence of the Spirit-filled life is fruit, not gifts, which I believe in and they are wonderful, but it is fruit. If you don't have the fruit of the Holy Spirit, you are not Spirit filled no matter how many gifts you have and how you exercise those gifts. Fruit is an indication that you are being controlled by the Holy Spirit.

So what are the evidences? What are the consequences? What does a Spirit-filled marriage look like? First, verse 19, it is joyful. What a cool thought to think there is actually joy in your home. That you actually enjoy your marriage. You enjoy your spouse. Notice Ephesians 5:19, "Speaking to yourselves in..." in the Greek it's actually to one another, "...psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." You know what happens in a Spirit-filled marriage? They actually sing in their house. I didn't say they sing good, but they sing! There is joy. Joy is the flag flown high from the castle of my heart when the King is in residence there. In your marriage relationship, when the Holy Spirit fills your heart, there is going to be joy in that relationship. What a blessing that is! It's inward, joy in our hearts; it is outward, one to another; and it is upward, to the Lord. So, it involves myself in my heart; it involves others, one to another, and it involves that upward worship and that upward praise to the Lord. What a wonderful thing when a husband and wife are both loving and worshiping God, singing to God and praising the Lord, talking to God, and they are both looking up. As you are both drawing near to God, you are drawing near to one another in your relationship. That's a blessed thing! There will be joy in your hearts.

Secondly, there will be thankfulness. Notice verse 20, "Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 5:18, "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." Now, I want you to stop. I want you to think about your marriage and ask yourself, "Am I truly thankful for my wife? Am I truly thankful for my husband? Maybe, if he'd put his socks in the hamper!" The other day I had about three pairs of socks on the floor in the bedroom, and I thought, "I probably should put those in the hamper. My wife would probably appreciate that." So, being

full of the Holy Ghost that I am, I picked up my socks. Praise God! That's being mindful of others. "Well, if she don't like it she can lump it!" That's not the filling of the Holy Spirit. We will truly be thankful with a thankful heart, instead of griping and complaining taking each other for granted. When I do a wedding, I hit these verses and I talk about the importance of being thankful for each other, really being thankful, saying, "Lord, thank you for my wife. Thank you for the blessing." The Bible says, "He that finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the Lord." So, you will be joyful and you will be thankful.

Here's the biggie in verse 21, you will be submissive. Did you know this is all one long sentence in the Greek? The Bible, originally written, didn't have verses, and it didn't have chapters. Oftentimes, we have problems when we break it up into verses and sometimes don't really see the flow. In the Greek, sentences can run on for long distances. It goes from verse 14 all the way down to verse 21. It is one long sentence with verse 21 as part of this whole package. "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ will give thee light. See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise..." there are a lot of fools in their marriages, "...don't be 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..." this is literally one big Greek word which means you'll be plucking the strings of your heart. It pictures your heart as a stringed instrument with the Holy Spirit plucking the strings of your heart and joy comes out. You are thankful, you are joyful and you are submissive.

What does it mean submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God? Let's start with the fear of God. You take a wife, you take a husband, and you have two individuals who fear the Lord. It means they reverence God. They respect God. They love God. They want to obey and do what pleases God. It is not about what I want, how I want it, what pleases me. It is all about what pleases God. You say, "Well, that's not very nice, you know, can't we have our way?" The Bible says that if you delight yourself in the Lord, He gives you the desires of your heart. You put God first in your life. It's as simple as saying, put God first in your marriage. Put God first in your life. The reason you're having problems in your marriage is because you're carnal, you're self-centered, you're self-focused. "Well, she doesn't meet my needs when she does that and he does that." You know, we're thinking of ourself. We're not thinking of others as more important than ourselves. We haven't died to ourself. We don't have the same mind which is in Christ Jesus who though equal with God thought equality with God was not something to hold on to, but He emptied Himself and gave Himself in the form of a servant and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. And what did God the Father do? He highly exalted Him because of his humility. I believe that God will bless any husband, God will bless any wife, God will bless any couple that puts God first in their relationship. It only takes one. You say, "Well, what if my husband doesn't do this?" It doesn't matter. You don't focus on what your husband is doing. You don't focus on what the other person is doing. You focus on your relationship to God. "Well, they this...and they do that....and they do this!" You have to focus on your relationship to God. You will answer to God when you get to heaven. You are not going to be able to point to your spouse. You answer to God for what you did in your marriage. So, you have to have a fear or a reverence of God. This submission comes out of

and is born out of a love for God. I like to think of the fear of the Lord as loving God so much you don't want to do anything to disappoint Him, to grieve Him or to dishonor Him. If I am a Christian married to a woman that's Christian or even a non-Christian woman, it would be dishonoring to God, it would grieve God for me not to love my wife as Christ loved the church, not to be committed to, faithful, and devoted to her, till death do us part. I would grieve God. That would dishonor God. What helps you to stay committed in that covenant marriage relationship is the fear of the Lord.

Dealing with several, pastors even, that I've known over the years in my mind today, I was kind of playing through the reel in my mind, and so many of the men that I've known in ministry have crashed and burned, committing adultery, and their marriages were destroyed because they didn't maintain that fear of the Lord, that real commitment that I want to honor God, I want to obey God, and no matter what, I want to do what is pleasing to God. That is what it means to fear the Lord and then to submit to one another. I believe that when a husband loves his wife as Christ loved the church, it is every bit as much submission and dying to self as the wife submitting to her husband. Now, I'm not talking about a reversal of roles, we start that next Wednesday night. We are going to talk next Wednesday night about the wife's role. The following two Wednesday nights we will go into the husband's role. I do believe that the wife submits to her husband as unto the Lord, notice the motivation and the intention. I'm doing it as unto the Lord, in the fear of the Lord. The husband loves his wife as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it. All of this is basically saying that when you are filled with the Holy Spirit, you actually die to yourself and you are able then to live a sacrificial, self-denying committed life for your spouse. You focus not on your needs, but on their needs.

Everything we're hearing about marriage in our culture today is what makes you feel good, what you need, your need, if the marriage is no good for you anymore, you bail out, you go find someone else, you do what you need to do for yourself. That is so contrary to what the Bible teaches, and it is self destructive. It doesn't accomplish what you are trying to find. Jesus said it like this, I am always quoting this statement of Jesus, and it ties in so perfectly right here. Jesus said, "If you seek to find your life, you will lose it." How many married people wanted to "find" their life and they end up losing it? But, if you lose your life for My sake and the Gospel, you will find it. I believe that applies to your marriage. All these basic spiritual principles apply in the marriage relationship. If you try to find your life, you put yourself first, think and focus only on your own needs, you're going to lose life, but if you die to yourself and you live for Christ, you will find what life is all about.

So, what is the role of the wife? Submission. What is the role of the husband? Love his wife as Christ loved the church. What is the resource? What is the power? What is the strength that we have to do what God has called us to do? It is tied right in, be filled with the Holy Spirit. That's what it is, and without that, it isn't going to happen. It's that simple, Spirit-filled life. Do you desire that? Then, tell God tonight. "God, I desire to be filled with Your Holy Spirit." And then when you go home tonight, "God, I desire to be filled with Your Holy Spirit. God, I thirst for You. I hunger for You." And then, if God reveals things in your life that need to be confessed and forsaken, you do that before you leave here. You say, "God, forgive me for the way I've

been thinking. Forgive me for the way I've been acting. Forgive me for the way I've been talking. Fill me with Your Holy Spirit." Then, you pick up your Bible, you get on your knees, you read and obey God's Word, and ask God to fill you and put it into practice. It's that simple. It's that simple.