

How To Correct It

Ephesians 5:14-21

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Let's back up to Ephesians 5:14. We're going to get a running start to verse 21. By the way, for you Bible students, this is one long sentence in the Greek text. Paul says, "Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. 15 See then that ye walk circumspectly,"—which means carefully, the word literally means to be looking around—"not as fools, but as wise,"—and we don't want to be fools, we want to be wise—"Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. 17 Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is." He's going to tell us what God's will is in the text.

Verse 18, "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess,"—or debauchery—"but be filled with the Spirit; 19 Speaking to yourselves,"—or literally one another—"in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; 20 Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,"—then notice verse 21—"Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God."

We've looked at the marriage relationship as God created it. If you haven't listened to that, go back to our website and listen to the first of the series where God created it, "For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh." Jesus commenting on that in Matthew 19 says, "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." Marriage is severance, it's unity, it's permanence, cleave, and it's intimacy, "And they were both naked...and were not ashamed." We saw how God created marriage, and it was a divine institution.

In Genesis 3 we saw how marriage was corrupted by the fall—Satan tempting Adam and Eve and sin came into the world—and since sin came into the world, nothing has been the same since. Marriage has been a difficult and hard challenge. Then we looked at the conditions of the culture at the end of time last week. The passage tonight is so apropos as it transitions from verses 14-18 into being filled with the Spirit, that we're to be wise and walk circumspectly because of the times and the day and age in which we live.

Before I begin to breakdown the text beginning in verse 18, let me lay down first of all the first and paramount, the most important thing that you need to make marriage right, that is, you must be born again. That's not to say that you can't have a good marriage without being born again, but you want a great marriage, you want a Spirit-filled marriage, you want God a part of your relationship. The Bible says, "...a threefold cord is not quickly broken," so it's not just the husband and the wife, it needs to be Christ the center of that relationship, so you must be born again to see the Kingdom of God. The first thing I do whenever I counsel a couple in a marriage counseling situation, I want to know, "Are you born again? Do you know Christ as your Lord and Savior? Have you been born of the Spirit?"

When that happens, the Spirit of God comes to live inside of you. It's called indwelling. This is

super basic but super important, every Christian has the Holy Spirit living inside of them. The moment you are saved, you're what's called regenerated, which means given new life, that comes from the Spirit, and you are indwelt; so you are regenerated, you're indwelt as well as being justified, and that is something all Christians have equally the same. No Christian is more justified, no Christian is possessed and another one is not. If someone says to you as a Christian, "Are you a Christian?" "Yes." "Do you have the Holy Spirit?" What's the answer? Yes. The moment you were born again the Spirit of God took up residence in your heart and your life. In Ephesians it says that you were sealed with the Spirit unto the day of redemption. That's not our focus tonight, but it's the first step. You can't be a Spirit-filled Christian if you're not a Christian that's been born of the Spirit and has the Holy Spirit to begin with.

The second thing that you need, an ingredient in your marriage, is you need to be filled with the Spirit. We could probably do two or three weeks on this subject of the filling of the Spirit, but I want to stick to this one text and keep it as simple as I can: Not all Christians are filled with the Spirit. Let me give you one of many reasons why we know this, because this passage, verse 18, is a command to Christians to be filled. God would not command Christians to be filled if they were already filled. The Bible doesn't command us to be indwelt, it doesn't command us to be sealed, it doesn't command us to be baptized by the Spirit into Christ, that happens the moment you believe without you praying for it, tarrying for it, seeking it. It just happens to you automatically.

In Acts 6, when they were appointing deacons to oversee the distribution of food to the widows in the church, they said to choose seven men full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom. Why would they give that qualification if all Christians were full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom? They wouldn't have. They would have just said, "Just get seven Christian men and everything is going to be cool."

We all know Christians who struggle in their marriage and many times they even, sadly, end in divorce. It doesn't need to happen. I don't believe that a Christian couple that has the Holy Spirit filling them would ever end in a divorce court. If you're a Spirit-filled Christian, it's actually contrary to the concept of a Spirit-filled life that you would end in divorce when you're being Spirit-filled. I can only attribute it, and we're going to spend a whole night on divorce, to what Jesus said, "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it wasn't God's plan." One or both harden their hearts against the Holy Spirit. This is why I always warn a couple before they get married, "Never harden your heart or resist or grieve or quench the Spirit of God. Always be obedient to the Spirit's leading in your life so that you can have a blessed and fruitful marriage relationship." Not all believers are filled with the Spirit, that's why in verse 18 we have a command, "...be filled with the Spirit."

There are four things that I want to look at in our text together about being filled with the Holy Spirit. We'll just rip them off to give you them, and then we'll go back over them. We're going to look at the contrast of being filled with the Spirit; the command; thirdly, the conditions; and fourthly, the consequences of being filled with the Holy Spirit. The points will appear on the screen, but I want you to see them in your Bible. If you're taking notes, we first see the contrast

that Paul gave us in verse 18. Look at it with me. He says, “And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but,”—here’s the contrast—“be filled with the Spirit.” The contrast is not being intoxicated on wine.

I don’t want to get into the whole subject on whether Christians should drink wine or alcohol. My personal conviction is it’s foolish, it’s unnecessary, and it’s better to abstain completely from any alcoholic beverages at all. There’s no reason for them. There’s plenty of good beverages to drink. The Bible clearly condemns drunkenness, and how do you get drunk? By drinking alcohol, so don’t even start down that road.

Many times when I’m officiating a wedding ceremony, I read these verses. They’re thinking about the reception, “Yeah! Open bar! This is going to be awesome! I can’t wait. Get this wedding over, preacher boy!” And then I read the words, “And be not drunk with wine,” and they look at me like, “Bummer! Leave it to the preacher to spoil the party!” This is what not to do. This is the negative. Before he tells us what to do...but I will say this, alcohol is not good for you, your relationship to God, or your marriage relationship. Do you know how many marriages have been destroyed by alcohol? Do you know how many lives have been destroyed by alcohol? It’s so dangerous. It’s so detrimental, not to mention the fact that it actually destroys your brain and your brain cells, and we all need all the help we can get, right? so be careful and watch out.

Here we see that negatively we are not to be drunk on wine, but then the command, secondly, if you’re taking notes, “...but be filled with the Spirit.” What does it mean to be filled with the Spirit? First of all, it’s not the same, and here’s the list and it could be longer, as being indwelt, it’s not the same as being sealed, it’s not the same as being baptized in the Spirit, it’s the command to, “...be filled with the Spirit.” None of these—indwelt, sealed, baptized—are commanded in Scripture. There’s a whole lot of other things I could say about that, but I’ll stop there. Being filled with the Spirit is a command.

If you’re taking notes, being filled with the Spirit is not—listen to me carefully, and you may disagree with me, but that’s okay, just quietly listen and hear me out—getting more of the Spirit. Write that down even if you haven’t kind of thought about it. You’re not getting more of the Holy Spirit. When you are born again, how much of the Holy Spirit do you get? And, how do you get more when you’re filled? When we think of the word “filled,” and this is our problem with this word “filled,” we think of an empty vessel and more quantity being poured into it until it overflows. We use that as a picture, “I’m a vessel. Fill me, Lord. Overflow my life.” I understand those concepts, but technically it’s not consistent with what the Scripture teaches. This can revolutionize your understanding of the Spirit-filled life: It’s not getting more of the Holy Spirit; simply stated, it’s the Spirit getting more of you. It’s not more of the Holy Spirit, it’s the Holy Spirit getting more of you—surrendering completely to the power of the Holy Spirit.

Let me read Billy Graham at length. I know that some people might say, “Well, Billy Graham is not a Bible scholar,” but I believe his book on the Holy Spirit is one of the best that I’ve ever read. I highly recommend it. He says, “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." A lot of times the Christian says, "Give me more of Thee, Give me more of Thee." We used to sing a song, I want more of Jesus, More and more and more, I want more of Jesus, Than I've ever had before. I want more of His great love, So rich, so full and free. I want more of Jesus, So I'll give Him more of me. That's so true. Do you want more of Jesus? Surrender your life more fully and completely to Him.

To be Spirit-filled is to be controlled, that's the key to understanding the Spirit-filled life. I believe the word "filled" itself actually means controlled by. If you just took the word "filled" and translated it into controlled by, you would get the significance of the meaning. It's actually used in Luke 4:28 for unbelievers who were filled with wrath. Do you know what that meant? It meant that they were so angry that it took control of their life. Have you ever seen somebody just out of their mind crazy, angry, and they're out of control, right?, so they're being filled with wrath. In Acts 13:45 it says the Jews, "...were filled with envy," the same word used there for "filled."

There are four truths we need to know about this filling, this controlling of the Spirit of our lives. When the Spirit of God controls us, then we're being more sanctified and more like Jesus; and the more like Jesus we are, the better we're going to do in our marriage relationships. Write these four facts down about this command. First, it is an imperative. It's in the imperative mode, so it's not an option, it's obligatory. It's a command. It's not just if you're bored and you feel like it, you're not doing anything else and you want to be a deeper-life Christian, then let the Spirit fill you. No, it's a command. This is the normal Christian life. This isn't the deeper life for the super saints or for just pastors or evangelists or worship leaders, this is for every Christian, and it's a command that we're supposed to obey.

Secondly, the verb be filled is plural in its form, so the idea is that it's all believers—every single individual. It's the same as, "...be not drunk with wine," is plural, it's for all Christians, so "...be filled with the Spirit," is for every Christian. Don't push it off and say, "Well, it's not for me. I don't need it." We all need to be filled with the Spirit. Thirdly, it's in what's called the passive voice. What does that mean? It means that the object has something acting upon it, so it would be translated: Let the Spirit fill you, let the Spirit control you. You can't fill yourself. You can't psyche yourself into being filled with the Spirit, it's a letting or a yielding or a surrendering to the Spirit and letting Him control your mind, your emotions, your will, and your body. Fourthly, it's in the present tense, that is, continually, ongoingly being filled with the Spirit. Again, let the Spirit continually, habitually, ongoingly fill you and control your life. It's so very important.

There are many fillings in the life of the believer. In Acts 2, Peter, with the other apostles on the Day of Pentecost, was filled with the Holy Spirit. Then again in Acts 4:8, Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit again, and then in Acts 4:31 Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit. There are some that like to emphasize the baptism of the Holy Spirit, that it's some kind of an experience that will take you up to a new higher level of spirituality and that you'll walk on this plane with no

defeat and super spirituality. That's not the sanctified life. The sanctified life is a series of new beginnings and re-surrendering and recommitting and obedience to God's Word as you constantly, continually, ongoingly yield to the Spirit. Did you know that you as a Christian can be one minute walking in the Spirit, controlled by the Spirit, and then something goes wrong or something happens and you get in the flesh and freak out? You can be driving home from work.

I used to come home from the church office and had been at church all day studying my Bible, sweating real hard turning Bible pages all day. My wife had four little ones in diapers and craziness and things going on in the house. I would pull in the driveway and stop for a minute and say, "Lord, as I go into the home, I know not what awaits me." My wife may say, "Here, change a diaper; give the kids a bath," which often happened, or "take out the trash," and I would say, "These hands are sanctified, they just turn Bible pages." No, that isn't what I would do. I would actually pray before I go in the house and say, "Lord, fill me with your Holy Spirit. Help me to think of my wife and her needs, and help me to help with the children. Help me to be home and to be focused. Lord, I'm going to go into that house and it's going to be crazy, fill me with Your Holy Spirit." It's not just when I come into the pulpit I ask God to fill me with the Holy Spirit, when I do some counseling I may, "God, fill me with Your Spirit," but it's on a domestic level with my wife, with my kids, with my home, with the issues or pressures of home and work. When you go to work, ask God to fill you with His Holy Spirit. It's so very, very

important.

Let me move to my third point in the text, that is, the conditions for being filled with the Holy Spirit. These points do not come from my text. This is kind of a logical outlay, not from the text, but I want you to write them down. They're the four Ds. The first is the desire to be filled with the Spirit. Jesus said in John 7, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink," and when you do, out of your innermost being shall gush forth torrents of living water, right? You're not going to be controlled by the Spirit if you don't want to be controlled by the Holy Spirit. God's not going to violate your free will. He's going to answer the petition of your heart, "Lord, I desire to be filled or controlled by You." In Matthew 5, Jesus said blessed are they who are filled with the Spirit and humble.

Secondly, you are to denounce sin in your life. This is not some formula taken from a text of Scripture, these are just concepts that I believe are systematic and logical, biblical, on how to be filled: Desire to be filled and denounce sin in your life. God's not going to fill you with the Holy Spirit if you're living in willful, deliberate disobedience. Amen? You can't go headlong into sin and at the same time say, "God, help me be filled with the Spirit."

I want you to hold your place here in Ephesians, even though my points don't come from this text, flip to Ephesians 4:29. I've always felt like this is so applicable to marriage. It's not talking about marriage yet in the book of Ephesians, but these are the things you need to denounce, you need to repent of, you need to confess and forsake, if you're going to be filled with the Spirit in your marriage. "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers."

This whole passage, which ends with forgiving one another, has an emphasis on the words of your mouth. It's interesting because when your heart is full of the Spirit and you're under the Spirit's control, then gracious words come out. We all know that marriage suffers when there are unkind words spoken. A lot of times there's what's called verbal abuse in a marriage relationship. Maybe some of you are experiencing being verbally abused in a marriage relationship, that would never happen in a Spirit-filled home. If it's in the heart, it comes out of the mouth; but if the heart is controlled by the Spirit, then there's no corrupt communication, verse 29, proceeding out of your mouth, "but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers."

Notice, verse 30, "And grieve not the holy Spirit of God," so the Holy Spirit can be grieved because He's a Person, the third Person of the Godhead, "whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption," so don't communicate words that are evil and grieve the Spirit. Verse 31, "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you," this is what I mean by denouncing and forsaking your sin, let it "...be put away from you, with all malice," which is hatred or anger. Verse 32, "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Amen? That's a great verse for your marriage relationship. Even if your marriage partner, your spouse, does not do it, you need to put it into practice. "Well, I'll do it when they do it." "Well, I'll do it when she does it." No, you do what God has called you to do and watch God transform you and transform your marriage relationship. God has forgiven you, you ought to also forgive others.

Going back to the text...first, desire to be filled, under conditions for being filled; secondly, denounce sin in your life or repent of sin; thirdly, dedicate yourself fully to Christ. This is consecration. The text would be Romans 12:1, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice," right?, so present your bodies to God. Colossians 3:16 says, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly," so the power of the Word of God transforming our lives and obedience to it.

Here's step four: Depend daily on the Spirit's power and help. So, desire to be filled, denounce sin in your life, dedicate or consecrate your life fully to Christ, and fourthly, depend daily on the Spirit of God by prayer and surrender—confession, cleansing, prayer, surrender. I know that people think their problems are bigger and deeper than that, but if this doesn't fix your marriage, I don't know what will. I honestly don't. If being born again, having the Holy Spirit living inside of you, "...old things are passed away; behold, all things are become,"—brand—"new," being filled with the Spirit, walking in the Spirit, praying, obedient to God's Word doesn't transform your life and your marriage, I don't know what else to tell you, and I don't have anything else to give you other than God's Word, which I believe is able to change your heart and your life.

By the way, write down Colossians 3:16. It's interesting where it says, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly," then, the very same consequences, which we're going to look at in just a moment in Ephesians, are found in Colossians 3. When you are filled with the Word of God and the Word of Christ, then the same consequences are going to happen in your heart and life

and in your marriage as being filled with the Spirit; and I have a theory (I think it's a good one, I think it's biblical), you cannot be Spirit-filled without being obedient to the Word of God. You cannot neglect the Bible and the knowledge of God in His Word and hiding God's Word in your heart and expect to be a Spirit-filled Christian.

When a couple comes to me with a problem I say, "Are you reading your Bible?" "Well, no, we don't read our Bible." "Do you pray?" "No, we don't pray." "Do you go to church?" "No, we don't go to church." "Have you been born again?" "No, we're not born again." Well, then, you need to get started. Get saved first. You can't just put a bandaid on your marriage, you have to get saved—you have to be filled with the Spirit, you have to open your Bibles, you have to pray, you have to do what God has called you to do. Those things, though they sound simple, are not simplistic. They are absolutely profound. So, you can't be Spirit-filled without being filled with the Word of God.

Here are the consequences of being filled in this passage, and I never tire of this marvelous text that we all know so well, verses 19-21, the three consequences of the Spirit-filled life or, as Paul goes into marriage in verse 22, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands," verse 25, "Husbands, love your wives," we're going to spend several weeks on that, he first tells them this is the home, the heart, where the Spirit has filled the individual. Verse 19, "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; 20 Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; 21 Submitting," so speaking, giving, and submitting.

Three things will result in a Spirit-filled marriage. First, a new joyfulness. What a wonderful thing it is to have a marriage where the husband and wife are singing praise to God. Amen? Now, it doesn't say sing well, but it says that we make a joyful noise to the Lord. This phrase actually, "...singing and making melody in your heart," has the concept of the Spirit of God plucking the strings of our hearts. It's actually a word picture that our hearts are a stringed instrument, and that the Holy Spirit is plucking the strings of our hearts.

You know, one of the many indications that you're being filled with the Spirit, that He's controlling you, is the song in your heart—you want to sing to the Lord. I don't know how you can come to church on Sunday or Wednesday and just not sing if you're filled with the Spirit. How can you not sing in the shower at home when you're filled with the Spirit. By the way, that's a great place to sing and worship the Lord. Your voice kind of echoes in there, and the nozzle can serve as a microphone. You're usually alone, I think, and you can just sing to the Lord and worship the Lord, or driving in a car or wherever it might be. A Spirit-filled home is a happy home. It's a joyful home. It's a home where there's worship and praise unto the Lord.

Notice the aspect of this worship is inward, "...in your heart," it's outward, "...one to another," and it's upward, "...to the Lord." So, it's inward, "...in your heart," it deals with your own walk and relationship to God; outward, "...one to another," singing to one another, "...in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs;" and then it's upward, "...to the Lord," worship is always directed to God.

The second evident result or consequences of the Spirit-filled marriage is a new thankfulness. Again, I hit this when I do a marriage ceremony is that you want joy in your marriage? Be Spirit-filled. Do you want to be thankful for your marriage? Look at verse 20, "Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." One of the problems in a marriage is taking your spouse for granted—not valuing them, not appreciating them, not being thankful to God for them. I want you to pause, just individually and personally, if you are a married individual tonight, make yourself a note, am I thankful for my spouse? If you have a hard time writing that down, then you need to pray to be filled with the Spirit. Am I really thankful? "Well, I'd be more thankful if he'd pick up his socks."

A couple of years ago I was preaching this very same verse, and I was getting ready to come to church to preach this very same passage. I was headed out the door when I saw some of my socks on the floor of the bedroom. I thought, I better pick those suckers up, I gotta preach tonight. My wife will appreciate it if they go from the floor to the hamper. Sometimes she'll say, "You know, we do have a hamper that you can put dirty clothes in." "I know," but I just kind of take them off, and wherever they go, they go. They're just hanging all over the house.

Just say, "Lord, I thank You for my wife," or to tell your wife, guys, "I thank the Lord for you," that'll do wonders for your marriage, "I thank God for you. I thank God for you in my life." Or, I know it's going to be challenging and difficult, ladies, but to tell your husband, "I'm thankful for you and would be even more thankful if you picked up your socks." Being thankful is the evidence of being filled with the Spirit. Write down 1 Thessalonians 5:18, "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." It's God's will for your life to be thankful and joyful.

Thirdly, and lastly, a new submissiveness, verse 21, "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God." This is mutual submission. Before wives are instructed in verse 22 to submit to their husbands, before husbands in verse 25 are told to love their wives as Christ loved the church, there is a mutual submission to one another in the reverential fear of God. Here are the elements that you need: Born again of the Spirit of God and indwelt by His Spirit, filled with the Spirit of God and obedient to the Word of God, and walking in the fear of the Lord. What does that mean? It means that you don't want to do anything to dishonor God, to grieve God, or to disappoint God. "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom," this is a solid foundation for a healthy marriage relationship, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom." Amen?