Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Be Filled with the Spirit, Part 2
Scripture: Ephesians 5:18-19
Code: 1940

We come again this morning for our study to the 5th chapter of Ephesians. It's taking us a little time to get through verses 18 through 21 because it's so loaded with truth, and we don't want to bypass any of the wonderful things the Spirit of God has for us in this very key passage. If you don't have your Bible with you, there's one near you in the pew, you can look along, and let's look at verses 18 to 21 of Ephesians 5. And you follow with your eyes as I read to you.

"And be not drunk with wine, in which 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."

Now, in our last study, we learned that being filled with the Spirit, as it indicates in verse 18, is living every moment as if you're standing in the presence of Jesus Christ. As we compared Ephesians 5:18 with Colossians 3:16, we noted that letting the Word of Christ dwell in you richly is the same as being filled with the Spirit. We saw from the illustration of the life of Peter that Peter, when he was standing next to Jesus Christ, could do the miraculous, say the miraculous, and had miraculous courage. The same Peter, when filled with the Spirit of God, is seen doing the miraculous, heard saying the miraculous, and seen to have miraculous courage. In other words, the parallel is interesting. When he was near Jesus Christ, in His presence, and when he was filled with the Spirit of God, he got the same kind of results. And see, that is exactly what Ephesians 5:18 and Colossians 3:16 is saying to us. To be filled with the Spirit is not some ecstatic experience. It is not to have some supernatural zap. To be filled with the Spirit is simply to live moment by moment in the conscious presence of Jesus Christ.

That's the heart of the whole of the Spirit-filled life. Christ consciousness. Having your thoughts controlled by the consciousness that Jesus Christ is real and that He's there. That He's present. It's a moment-by-moment-by-moment-by-moment experience. It's a commitment for now, not the future. God is never interested in future commitments. You know that, don't you? In fact, you're not very interested in them, either. If your wife comes to you and says, "Honey, do you love me?" you don't say, "Check with me in a couple of weeks." She's not interested in a couple of weeks. She wants to know now. Well, God is not interested in your future; He's interested in your present. It's the moment, it's the now. It's whether your life is controlled by the Holy Spirit now that is the issue.

And, by the way, did you know you'll only live now, you'll never live in the future? You never will. You keep looking for it but you never get there. It's always the future. And you never live in the past. Some people try awful hard, especially in our society today. Old is good, you know. People want to reach back to the past but you'll never make it. You'll always be right here, and this is the only moment that matters. And what the apostle Paul is saying is: Be being kept continuously filled in this moment, controlled by the Holy Spirit. That's the way to live the Christian life. Not controlled by yourself but by God's Holy Spirit. How? By filling your life with the Word of God so that your thoughts are God's thoughts, your ways are His ways as much as is possible. So that Christ Himself dominates your thinking and that's how you're controlled by His Spirit.

There's a wonderful byproduct of this in 2 Corinthians chapter 3 and verse 18. It says there that as you gaze at the glory of the Lord, as you focus on Christ consciousness, you will be changed into His image by the Holy Spirit. In other words, Christ consciousness leads to Christlikeness, you see. That's the work of the Spirit. As you are filled with the Spirit, you become like Christ. So we say, then, that moment-by-moment, absolute commitment to being filled with the Spirit leads to eventual maturity. You become like Christ as you live in the Spirit, as you walk in the Spirit, as you're filled with the Spirit.

The Christian life is really a movement to be like Christ. And the only time you are moving that direction is when you're filled with the Spirit. When you are working on the function of the flesh, you flatten out and there's no progress. The only progress in your life is during those times when you're filled with the Spirit of God – that's the upward movement. And most Christians, you know, they just go like this – flatten out and go a little – God wants us to move toward Christlikeness. So, as we're filled with the Spirit, gazing on the glory of Christ, we become like Jesus Christ. That's the key to the Christian life. That's where you get the victory, that's where you know the joy. That's where the exhilaration comes and the fruitfulness and the usefulness to God.

Now, we saw there were three things in this text that we wanted to note. First was the contrast in verse 18. Remember that? The apostle Paul says, "Be not drunk with wine, in which is excess" – or astia, dissipation, a hopeless, incurable sickness – "but be filled with the Spirit." And that's the contrast. In other words, we are not like the pagans who get drunk and they induce some sort of a false notion that they're communing with the gods through drunkenness. Our communion with God is through the filling of the Spirit. We are not like the pagans who think that they reach another level of life or they get a greater strength or a greater power or a greater whatever by drunkenness, we gain all of our greatness through the power of the filling of the Spirit of God. So that's the contrast. We aren't like them anymore. Our controlling influence, our resource, our power, our resource to lift us to the consciousness of the presence of God is the filling of the Spirit, not drunkenness.

Following the contrast, we saw the command, didn't we? And the command is at the end of verse 18: "Be being kept continuously filled with the Spirit." It's a way of life. It is not just one zap you get and it's good for the whole life, you know? It's not like Right Guard, one shot and I'm good for the whole day. It's not that at all. The Holy Spirit doesn't function that way. It's a moment-by-moment-by-moment yielding of total control to the Spirit. In fact, it may be best illustrated by the metaphor of walking. It is walking, and walking is one step at a time. It is an even kind of pace as we yield one step at a time to the Spirit of God. It's as simple as every decision in life. Life is a matter of decisions. The alarm goes off in the morning, you have your first decision: Do I get up or stay in bed? Do I call in sick or do I tell the truth? What am I going to do? You go to the closet, you have your second decision: Do I wear the blue shirt or the brown shirt? And that's the way it goes all through life. You go to the kitchen, you have another decision: Are you going to eat Fruit Loops or Captain Crunch? Then you go – whatever, you know, it's a process of decisions. It's just one after the other.

And the Spirit-controlled life is the one that yields every step to the Spirit of God. It's a matter of decision making, one thing at a time. And when you surrender to the Spirit of God, you're just constantly following His track. The only way that'll happen is when you are controlled by the Word of God because you're putting it in every day. You can skip your Captain Crunch if you made sure you got some of the Word. Then you'd have the right information and data going in for the Spirit of God to control your thinking.

Now, walking, then, is a good way to look at it because you just take one step at a time. Let's look at Galatians, one book back, in the 5th chapter and see that this, in fact, is the very illustration the apostle Paul uses in another context. People say, "Well, you know, how come we've built a whole theology on Ephesians 5:18? How did we ever get this whole thing based on that one verse?" It isn't based on that one verse; that is only one way to look at it. This same truth of a Spirit-controlled life is all over the New Testament. It's everyplace in the New Testament. You run into it all the way through the book of Acts, you run into it in Colossians, you run into it in Ephesians, you run into it here in the book of Galatians, you run into it in the 8 chapter of Romans. It's in the gospel of John as Christ talks about the coming of the Spirit. It's all over the place.

But I want you to notice Galatians chapter 5 and verse 16 because this is where he uses the term "walk" to speak of this ministry of the Spirit. He says, "Walk in the Spirit and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh." Now, here's the Spirit-controlled life. It's a walking thing. It's one step at a time. It's just taking one step at a time in the Spirit; that is, under the control of the Spirit. Keep on, literally, in the Greek, keep on walking in the Spirit. Don't deviate from that. And if you do that, you will not fulfill the lust of the flesh. In other words, the way to override your sinfulness and the way to override your evil desires and the way to override the temptations of Satan is simply to walk in the Spirit. Just continue walking in the Spirit.

You see, the positive thing takes care of the negative problem. You know, people say, “Oh, the devil is after me and the demons are after me, I’d better go get somebody to get the demons out of me. I don’t know how to fight the demons – I got to get somebody who’s an expert on that.” Just walk in the Spirit and you’re not going to have a problem, see. It’s the positive that solves the negative. So if you walk in the Spirit, you will not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

Now, you ought to know that there’s a war going on in you. Look at verse 17: “The flesh lusts against the Spirit.” Now, you say, “What is the flesh?” The best way to explain the flesh is the flesh is the beachhead of sin. The flesh is where Satan lands with his temptation. It is that part of our humanness that is exposed to the capability of sin. Even though I’m a redeemed creature, and in Christ all things have become new, and it’s a new I that lives in Christ and Christ lives in me, even though I am a new creation and even though I have a new nature, there is still about me, because I am human and earthy, there is the possibility of sinfulness, and it is that beachhead that Satan lands on when he wants to tempt me. It is that element of man that is opposed to goodness. It is that element of man that wants to do evil. It is that thing in the apostle Paul in Romans 7 that, even when he wanted to do good, kept choking him off so that he didn’t do what he wanted to do and wound up doing what he didn’t want to do.

And we all have that and the way to deal with that is not to stand around fighting it but to just walk in the Spirit. If you walk controlled by the Spirit of God every moment of every day, Christ-conscious because you’re feeding in the Word of God, Christ-conscious because you are thinking of Him and gazing at Him and conscious of Him, then you’re not going to have a problem with the flesh. Two things cannot occupy your mind at the same time. You cannot be concentrating on Jesus Christ and concentrating on temptation and the lust of the flesh at the same time. You have to dispel one or the other for one or the other to happen. So, he says, “Look, there’s a war and the Holy Spirit and your flesh are at each other. They are contrary the one to the other.”

Now, if you give into the flesh what’s going to happen? If you just go the way of easy resistance, you don’t study the Scripture, you don’t spend time in prayer, you don’t walk in the Spirit, you don’t yield control of your life, you do your own thing, what’s going to result is in verse 19: the works of the flesh. And the works of the flesh are these: fornication – some texts include adultery also, fornication would encompass that, sexual sin; uncleanness, which is general impurity of life; lasciviousness, which is the old Bible word wantonness – in other words, it’s a lewd desire that never gets satisfied, that’s all kind of a sexual perversion; then you have idolatry; sorcery, which would have to do with pagan religions – sometimes that word is related to drugs as well; he adds to that hatred; strife; jealousy; wrath; faction; seditions – revolutions, really; heresies; envyings; murders; drunkenness; carousings; et cetera. These are the things produced by the flesh.

And by the way, he says these are things that should characterize those who shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” In other words, that’s the way the non-Christian lives. That’s the furthest thing from

the way we should live. But if you give in to the flesh, if you don't walk in the Spirit, just don't let the Spirit control your life, don't step at a time in His power, that's the stuff that's going to happen in your life. And, by the way, when it happens, you're going to fall under God's chastening. Verse 18 says: "If you be led by the Spirit, you are not under the law." The opposite of that is this: If you are not walking in the Spirit, you will fall under God's law. What does that mean? If you do evil things, God's law will take its retribution, right? It has to.

So if you walk in the Spirit, you will escape the chastening of God. But if you do the things of the flesh, you fall under the consequence of a violation of God's law. So take your choice. You've got the Holy Spirit desiring and the flesh lusting against the Spirit and what happens? You follow the flesh, immediately you're going to see that kind of stuff produced in your life, you're going to come under God's law, and there are consequences. But on the other hand, verse 22. Let's say you walk in the Spirit. Let's say you yield your life to the control of the Spirit. Every day, you taken in the Word of God. Every day, you spend time in prayer with the Lord. Every day, you concentrate on the presence of Jesus Christ. Every day, when one decision comes and the next decision, from morning until night, you yield it to the control of the Spirit of God. What's going to happen as you walk in the Spirit? The fruit of the Spirit will be produced, and this will characterize your life. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and self-control, and against those things there is what? No law. You do that, and you'll never fall under the consequences or condemnation of a broken law, you see. There's no penalty for that kind of living.

You want to live a happy life, you want to live a meaningful life, you want to live a joyous, peaceful life, then there it is, walk in the Spirit. It's that simple. Verse 25 sums it up: If we already live in the Spirit positionally, then let's walk in the Spirit practically, right? What is the sense of living in the Spirit and walking in the flesh? Doesn't make sense at all. If you wanted Christ to begin with, don't you want Him now? If you have begun in the Spirit, are you now going to be made perfect in the flesh? I mean if you live in the Spirit, then walk in the Spirit, fulfill the ultimate capacity and potential of your destiny. And so it's really the same thing, beloved, that Paul says in Ephesians. He's just saying live in the Spirit, walk in the Spirit, be filled with the Spirit, be controlled by the Spirit, let the Word of Christ dwell within you. The whole point is God wants us to be controlled by Him, not by us. You get that?

All right, let's go to the third point, and that's what we're going to talk about this time and next time: the consequences. The contrast, the command, and the consequences. What are the consequences? If you're filled with the Spirit, what happens in your life? Well, really, the consequences stretch clear to the end of the book of Ephesians. All the rest of what happens in this book is consequence. If you're filled with the Spirit, all kinds of things are going to happen. But there are three main ones I want you to notice this morning, and we'll finish these up next time, and then we'll delineate them specifically later on in January after the Christmastime.

Three things happen when you are filled with the Spirit in general. One, singing, verse 19, singing; two, saying thanks, verse 20; three, submitting, verse 21. Three things: singing, saying thanks, submitting. Those are the three things. Those are the general categories. By the way, the third one, submitting, becomes then the basis for everything in chapter 5 verse 22 through chapter 6 verse 9. That entire section is an exposition of verse 21. That entire section explains verse 21. Then, 6:10 and following, the armor of the Christian shows what happens to somebody who lives walking in the Spirit. Satan moves in to try to stop him, and that's how you deal with Satan there. So the whole rest of the thing, really, deals with this response to being filled with the Spirit. This is the locus crucis, this is the hoehepunkt, this is the high point, this is the key, this is the mountain peak of the book of Ephesians, this is where it all comes together. You are walking in the Spirit, controlled by the Spirit, this is what happens.

Now let's take the three of those things. First of all is singing. That is personal, that is toward myself. The result, first of all, of a Spirit-filled life is a certain thing that occurs in me that produces song. Okay? So, the first thing is very personal. That's very beautiful, the way Paul does that, the way the Holy Spirit inspired him to do that. That to live walking in the Spirit, to be filled with the Spirit, first of all, has a result in my life. It produces something in me apart from anybody else. Secondly, saying thanks. That has to do with God. Thirdly, submitting. That has to do with everybody around me, so that every possible relationship is made right by the filling of the Spirit. I am right with me, I am right with God, and I'm right with you, see. Everything comes together.

There's no other way to live, right? To be right inside, to be right with God, and to be right with everybody else is the way to live. And when I'm right with me, I sing. And when I am right with God, I pour out thanks. And I'm right with you, I submit. Beautiful, the way God's Spirit just pulled those three together. All relationships possible are covered in that area, those three simple truths. But it always kind of amazes me that the first result is this very personal thing. How wonderful it is of God, again, to be considering how we respond. It's just like Jesus with the Beatitudes starting out by saying blessed, happy, blessed, happy, blessed, happy is the man, happy is the man, happy is the man. You see, that's always God's first consideration for us as He approaches us is "This is for you." Ah, but there's an element of that which is for Him and that which touches everybody else and they all go together.

But let's look at the first one, that's – we're not even going to get through that this morning, so don't worry. Singing. Now, this is a very personal issue. And it fascinates me, just literally fascinates me, to take a tremendous theological truth like this, "Be filled with the Spirit," and you say, "Oh, boy, if we were filled with the Spirit, what would happen?" You say, "Oh, we could say to that mountain, 'Be removed,' and it would be removed." Boy, we could do wonderful things. Could preach the Word and souls would be saved and mighty things. And you know what it says? Be filled with the Spirit and you can sing. You say, "Well, that seems a little, I don't know – something missing there." That's – you say, "I'm a monotone, you know? I mean is this for me?" Doesn't say you have to sing on tune, I want

you to know that. Great comfort in that. It doesn't even say anybody has to listen to you. You see?

But the first product of the Spirit-filled life is something that happens in my life that is released in a song. Do you see? Singing is the expression of the emotion of the soul. And next week I'm going to show you some things that are just absolutely fantastic. Do you know you can even whistle in the Spirit? Oh, this is terrific. That's for next week. That's right. The root Greek word of the word speaking to yourselves is to chirp like a bird, but we'll get into that next time. Some of you do better to chirp then to sing, frankly. But anyway, this is a tremendous statement of the fact that when a believer walks in the Spirit, there is an inside joy that is released in the music that comes from the soul. God has put music in the soul of man and releases it in its most beautiful form by the filling of the Holy Spirit. Boy, I'll tell you, when somebody's filled with the Holy Spirit and they sing, it doesn't even matter – it doesn't even matter whether they sing very well. It doesn't matter and it doesn't necessarily mean they've got to be on pitch, either.

Last Sunday morning we had a young man in the service who came up and introduced himself, and I never met him. He said, "My name is Randy Mendenhall," and I said, "Oh, yeah, I know your name, Randy, I've written to you many times." And he said, "Yeah." He just got out of Soledad in Vacaville. He's been in prison for nearly three years, or two, two-plus years. And when he first got into prison, somebody gave him a tape of ours and he wrote for some more tapes and got a whole lot of tapes, and he came to Christ and dedicated his life to Christ, and he's been a Bible teacher in the prison. It's incredible and he says that our tapes are all over those prisons and men sit in their cells each day and listen to the tapes and the Lord is doing wonderful work but he said, "I want you to hear my testimony." He said, "You've written and you sent all the tapes, and I want to give you a tape that I made of my testimony." And so I said, "Great, Randy, I'd love to have it." And I took it, and I stuck it in my car, little tape deck, and was driving somewhere and I listened to it, and he started out by saying, "I want to sing first," he said.

He's giving his testimony, his farewell testimony to all the prisoners as he was getting out two weeks ago. And he said, "I want to sing first." He said, "I just feel that I have to sing in my heart." And so he started to sing. And I want to tell you, he covered five different keys in the first measure, trying to find where the thing begins, you know, and trying to find the melody. And he sang that song – was no piano, no guitar, nothing. He was in – he must have been in a solid cement building with a solid concrete floor because it just banged around and echoed, and he just – he sang and he sang and he sang and then he got all done and he said, "I want to sing another song," and he sang – he must have sung for ten or fifteen minutes. And, you know, by the time he was done, I was laughing in my heart, I was so full of joy, and I had tears in my eyes. And, you know, it didn't matter that there wasn't an orchestra and it didn't matter that there wasn't a great big piano or an organ. It didn't matter because the man was singing out of the fullness of the Spirit of God. It didn't even matter that he wasn't on pitch. He was singing filled with the presence of Christ and it was obvious to everybody and to me.

On the other hand, I've heard stuff with all the talent and all the instruments and all of the backgrounds and all of the amplification and all of the everything that didn't sound to me like it was really generated by the Spirit of God. That's what Paul's talking about. There was something in Randy's heart, you see. Something in his heart because of what God was doing in his life. And now he's given his life to go back into those prisons and take Jesus Chris to the men. See, there's something inside of him that gave him a song. It was a new song. The song that only Christ can give. Contrast that with the pagan, wild music of the orgies that would have gone on in the city of Ephesus connected with evil, demonic religion. What a difference would be the sweet song of the Holy Spirit born in the hearts of those under His control. And that's the difference, you see. Paul is saying, "When we come together in our congregations, we sing to ourselves, and it's different than the songs we used to hear."

Beloved, if there is anything that ought to be new in the Christian life, it ought to be the music. If – listen to this – if music really reflects the language of the soul, then ours ought to be different than that of the world's, shouldn't it? Because we're different. Colossians 3:16 says the same thing. It says when you're filled with the Word of Christ, this is what's going to happen: You're going to speak to each other in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs – here it is again – singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. It always starts from the heart and it always goes to the Lord, you see?

In James chapter 5, such a beautiful statement there. It says – verse 13 – "Is any among you afflicted, let him pray. Is any merry, let him sing." Songs are always the expression of the joy of the Holy Spirit. And in Romans, it tells us that the kingdom of God is righteousness and joy and peace in the Holy Spirit. And when the Holy Spirit produces that peace and that righteousness and that joy, it breaks forth in a song. That's a great thing. The Spirit of God has given us that release. Redemption gives us a new song, you see? A new one. And it's not new, neos; that is, new in chronology. It's new, kainos, which is a song that is new because there's never been a song like it before. It's not new in chronology, it's new in kind, it's new in character, it's new in quality. Our song ought to be a different song.

I've heard some songs that are supposed to be Christian songs, and they sound to me exactly like the rest of the songs in the world. And then I hear like we heard this morning, and nothing the world ever does sounds to me like that. It's a new song. And by the way, you have all of the mentions of a new song, and I think there are nine different times that it's mentioned in Scripture, and every time that it's mentioned, it is connected with redemption. It is connected with salvation. So that it is salvation that produces a new song.

I can illustrate that to you so graphically by having you look with me at the Psalms for just a moment. In Psalm 33 and verse 1, it says; "Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous" – we're rejoicing because God has made us righteous – "for praise is befitting to the upright. Praise the Lord with the harp, sing unto

Him with the psaltery and an instrument of ten strings. Sing unto Him a new song." Why? "For the Word of the Lord is right, and all His works are done in truth, and He loves righteousness and justice, and the whole earth is full of His goodness." In other words, it is because of what God has done in making us righteous. It is because of what God has done in redeeming us that we sing a new song. In Psalm 40 and verse 3, the same thing. It says in verse 2, "He brought me up out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, He set my feet on a rock, He established my goings, and as a result of such a glorious salvation, He put a new song in my mouth." You see? You go further into Psalms, into Psalm 96 and verse 1, "Oh sing unto the Lord a new song, sing unto the Lord all the earth, sing unto the Lord, bless His name, show forth His salvation." Again, it is the song of salvation. In verse 1 of chapter 98, Psalm 98, "O sing unto the Lord a new song." Why? Verse 2, "The Lord has made known His salvation."

You find it even at the end of the Psalms. Psalm 144 has it in verse 9: "I will sing a new song unto Thee." Psalm 149 verse 1, "Sing unto the Lord a new song." Always, this song is connected with redemption and that's the whole essence. And, finally, I love it in Revelation 5:9, it says, "And they sang a new song." And what was the new song? "Worthy Is The Lamb," really, "Because He has redeemed us out of every tribe and nation and people and tongue." It is always the song of redemption. Listen, beloved, if there is anything new in the Christian life, it is a new song. It is the song of redemption born out of the indwelling Spirit of God that breaks forth in praise from the joy that is there when we're controlled by His Spirit.

We have been redeemed and that's given us a song, and the Spirit of God when He controls our life causes that song to break forth. Moses' song was a song of redemption. Read it in Exodus 15. God had taken Israel out of Egypt. That's a picture of redemption in a sense, isn't it? Brought them through that sea when it was parted and then drowned Pharaoh's army, and the first thing they did when they got on the other side – Exodus 15 – the whole company of Israel got together and they sang the song of Moses. And then there was the time when God delivered Israel – in Judges chapter 5 – by the hand of those two wonderful people, Deborah and Barak, and you have the first duet in the Bible. Deborah and Barak – Judges chapter 5 – sang a duet. A duet of redemption, how God had spared His people. And so it goes. The song is the song of the redeemed, the song of those whom God has wondrously delivered from bondage, from sin, from trouble.

Beloved, do you know that God just loves music? I mean He just loves it. The angels sang before the fall, and heaven forever in the end is going to be filled with singing. He just loves music. You know, in the Old Testament – just to give you some information about it, in the Old Testament there were 38,000 individuals who ministered in the temple – 38,000. Four thousand of them were musicians. That's almost one out of nine. God loved music. Do you know that in Exodus chapter 15 verses 20 and 21, we have the first women's chorus? That's right. You know who the conductor was? Miriam. She started a women's chorus. Do you know something? Do you know the first men's chorus I could find is in 1 Samuel chapter 10 verse 5, and it was made up by the prophets. The prophets all got

together and had a men's chorus. Boy, would I have loved to hear that. I'll bet the theology in their songs was straight. Can you imagine all the prophets singing?

Listen, I'll tell you something exciting. If you want to hear a group of men sing like no other men ever sing, listen to a bunch of preachers sing. I go to the Moody Pastors Conference and listen to twelve hundred pastors sing and boy, it's exciting. They had a men's chorus. They had a congregational singing. First Chronicles 13 and verse 8 says, "The whole people sang in congregational praise and instruments." And I love this: "And they sang with all their might," it says. Listen, the Bible says God likes it loud. God likes loud music. And sometimes I'm playing music at home and my wife says, "Turn that down." And I say, "Now, honey, don't be non-spiritual." God likes it loud, not raucous, but praises fitting to Him and He likes it that way.

In 1 Chronicles 16:4 and 5, David instituted a choir, and David was a master musician, wasn't he? You can imagine what kind of a choir that was. Do you know that in the Solomon's temple in 1 Chronicles 23:5, it tells us that Solomon had a choir of 4,000 voices? What a choir that must have been. Imagine hearing 4,000 trained people sing. When Ezra talks about rebuilding the temple, you know, and Zerubbabel came back and they had a smaller one and the country had been through the terrible Babylonian captivity, one of the first things they did – Ezra chapter 2 – they got a choir. It had 200 people, but it was choir.

Do you know that the Levites, some of the priests, were trained to be skillful musicians? Listen, people, if you have children that have any propensity toward that, boy, you challenge them in that direction, make them be skillful because they help the rest of us express our praise. Do you see?

In Nehemiah chapter 12, there was antiphonal singing, which apparently is one of God's favorite kinds, where you get one choir over here and one choir over here and they sing at each other. God likes that and I'll show you why in a few minutes.

They had instruments. I'm not an expert in this, but I did find these things in the Bible: stringed instruments and wind instruments and even drums. Some of you are going, "Oh, is that in the Bible?" There are drums in the Bible. There are also – they were membrane – membranophones is what they call them, but membrane kind of drums. And some of them were handheld and they were beaten that way. There are timbrel and bells, other things that fit into the percussion area. But of the string instruments, there was the asor, which was like a harp, there was the dulcimer which was struck rather than plucked. There was the harp itself, there was the sackbut which was a lyre, a large handheld kind of thing. There were wind instruments like we heard this morning, a trumpet, a coronet, a flute, a pipe organ. And for people who weren't too good with the notes, there was a ram's horn, you just stick it in there and blow, see, and there were all of these kinds of things. Because praise to the Lord was fitting, and music was the way that the soul could release its expression, you see.

And when you come to the New Testament, it's a little different. We're going to see next time the New Testament does teach the use of instrumental music. In our next study, we'll see that. But do you know at the Lord's Table, the last thing they did before Jesus went out to be taken and captive and to be tried and crucified? It says the last thing they did after the Lord's Supper, they sang a hymn. See? The disciples got together and sang. In Acts chapter 4, I believe we have one of the early hymns. I believe we have one of the early hymns that the church sang. In fact, I think there's also one, as we'll see probably next week, in Philippians and other places. But in Acts chapter 4, it says that all these believers got together and – verse 24 – they lifted up their voice to God with one accord and they said – and then they take off on this thing. Well, how could a whole group of people all say the same thing unless they knew the words, right? And they all sang, "Lord our God who has made heaven and earth and the sea and all that is in them," and so forth, all the way down through this. So, we even have some texts, no doubt, in the New Testament of hymns they sang. What were Paul and Silas doing in prison? Singing, weren't they? Singing.

In 1 Corinthians 14, the apostle Paul is trying to correct the singing of the Corinthians and he said, "Look, you sing with the spirit but you also sing with" – what? – "the understanding." And he says when you come together, every one of you has a psalm – that's too much. You don't want eight people singing solos all at the same time. That's a little difficult to handle. So you've got to get it all ordered out. But there was music always with God's people.

Now, do you know something? When Jesus comes back, He's going to set up the Millennial kingdom, right? A 1,000-year reign on earth. The curse will be reversed and that's when the angels are going to sing again. And everything in the world is going to be wonderful and He's going to reign as the Prince of Peace, and you know one of the first things He's going to do is construct a temple in the Millennial kingdom. Now, Ezekiel describes the details of this temple in Ezekiel around chapter 40 and following. He gives us a description of the temple the Lord is going to construct to glorify Him in the Millennial period. And one of the most fascinating things about it is this, that in that temple, God is going to build a huge choir loft. Did you know that? Some of the choir members, I can see a big grin on their face. They now have a new joy of anticipation for the coming of the Lord. But in the Millennial temple, there will be a choir. It gives the dimensions, one on one side, one on the other, seems to indicate that it will be an antiphonal choir. There will be one element over here and one element over here, and the thing is described, and it is so huge that it could easily encompass thousands of people in both chambers, singing back and forth. Now, that's how God feels about music.

And I wanted to take the time to go into that just to let you know that God loves music. But He loves music that reflects the new song of redemption, music that comes out of the Spirit-filled life. That's what He loves.

Now, in the future, it tells us all about the singing. If you go all the way over to Revelation chapter 14, and you find that their voices break forth and this wonderful, wonderful choir is the choir, and I want you to see what choir it is. Verse 1, it says, “And I looked, and lo, a Lamb stood on Mount Zion and with Him a hundred forty-four thousand having His Father’s name written in their foreheads and I heard a voice from heaven like the voice of many waters and like the voice of a great thunder, and I heard the voice of the harpers harping with their harps and they sang, as it were, a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders, and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth.”

Listen, they’re going to have a hundred-and-forty-four-thousand-voice choir with heavenly harpers. Man alive, what a song. What a song. Chapter 15 tells about another thing – same thing – chapter 15 verse 3 – again, the same idea. Now, what are we saying? We’re saying God loves music. God loves music that rightly reflects Him, both in the vehicle and in the content.

Now, let’s look back at Ephesians 5. That was all just kind of a digression. But look at Ephesians 5. I’m going to ask some questions. We’ll look at two of them maybe this morning and then finish up next time. Now, when Spirit-filled people come together, this is the way the church functions. When Spirit-filled people come together, first of all, we are to sing. That’s the expression of what’s in us. Among whom do we sing? All right, among whom? Here’s the first answer – I don’t want to push the point, just want to make it. “Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns.” To whom do we sing? To ourselves, among ourselves, and ultimately verse 19 at the end says to the Lord. So our song is directed among ourselves to the Lord.

Now, I want you to notice that. I really feel this is important to just make this mention, that the singing of the saints is always among themselves to God. That’s true all through Scripture. You really don’t ever find evangelistic music as such. Now, I think God can use music to bring somebody to Christ. I think God can use music to reach a tender heart. But I think there’s got to be a presentation of the gospel somewhere along the line, and maybe the music strikes the responsive chord that brings the reaction. I believe that. But music is not primarily designed by God as a tool of evangelism. And yet you are always running into people who say, “Well, we have an evangelistic music group” or “We have a singing group that goes out and” – well, I’m not sure that’s evangelism. Now, you may use your music to get a crowd, but sooner or later you better preach Christ if you want to get a response. Music is primarily the expression of a Spirit-filled life.

And I really don’t think, people, I really don’t think that it’s for unsaved people to sing our music. I don’t think it’s for us to use people who don’t know the Spirit of God, who don’t know the Christ that is the source of our music to express our music. I think that’s our music and it comes from our hearts.

So we are to have it among ourselves, directed toward the Lord. That’s the primary use of music. It is to be used in our worship, in our corporate sharing, in the celebration of our life together in Christ and

as a praise to Him. It's really not music for the world. They're on the outside. And I think sometimes it's kind of sad when we want so much to sing our songs to the world that we take our songs and we put them in the world's vernacular, and then we think that's going to be evangelistic when, really, that's not the point for music in the Scripture. So we are to sing among ourselves.

You know, it's a sad thing when a church doesn't sing. Do you know that the Roman Catholic Church robbed the church of music for 15 hundred years? They took the music away from the people. Completely. And it wasn't until the Reformation that music came back. You know, the Reformers themselves were some of the greatest hymn writers that ever lived? One of the first things the great Reformers did was put music back in the church, music back for the people to sing, because they had been left without that. So when we come to Grace Church, we sing, don't we? Because that's what Spirit-filled people do among themselves, they sing. So it's for us to sing together. That's among whom.

Second question: From where? Where does the song generate? What is the point of origination? Well, look in verse 19 again. It says at the end of the verse, "Singing and making melody," and then you see the phrase, "in your heart." Now, the word "in" is not there in the Greek. It is implied by the case in which the noun appears. But there's all kinds of possibilities about that case. I dug out my old Greek text this week and just kind of chased it around a little bit, found out it could be a locative form, for you Greek students, could be instrumental of means or it could be instrumental of cause. In fact, there is a very similar use in the instrumental of cause. If it's used that way, then it is saying singing and making melody caused by our hearts to the Lord. And that's really the heart of the matter, isn't it? Our song is from our heart. Beloved, if it's not in your heart, you can't sing it, can you? You can't sing it the way God wants it sung.

Remember Israel, Israel captured, taken to Babylon, sad, hearts broken? How did they respond to that? Psalm 137:1: "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down. Yea, we wept when we remembered Zion. We hung our harps on the willows for there they had carried us away captive, required of us a song, and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying 'Sing us one of the songs of Zion.' How shall we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?" they said. They hung their harps on the willow. You see, when there was no song in their heart, there was no song in their voice, either. They couldn't sing it. They couldn't entertain the Babylonians; there wasn't anything there. Boy, I have to admire that, don't you? They weren't going to be hypocrites. They weren't going to perform. They weren't going to be show biz. If there wasn't any song in their hearts, there wasn't any song on their lips. If there wasn't any music to play, there weren't any harps. They hung them on the willows.

If you don't have a song in your heart, you can't really sing one with much credibility from your lips. There are people who will sing for money. There are people who will sing for fame. There are people who will play because of pride. They will sing without the Spirit. They will sing without being Spirit-filled. But that is not the song the Lord wants to hear, do you know that? If that's the kind of song you

sing, don't sing it. If you come to Grace Church in the morning and you sing because everybody sings and you're bitter toward God and you're angry toward God, please don't sing. God doesn't want to hear your song. Or if you have an opportunity to stand up and sing a solo or play a song and your heart's not filled with the Spirit of God, don't do that. Because you don't want to be hypocritical because our song is the song of the redeemed and the song of those filled with the Spirit of God.

And remember the word of Amos, the prophet, who indicted the people of Israel because they kept their singing up, even though their hearts were wrong. And in Amos chapter 5 verse 21, God says to the prophet: "I hate and I despise your feast days, I will not take delight in your solemn assemblies, though you offer Me burnt offerings and meal offerings, I'll not accept them, neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts, take away from Me the noise of your songs, I will not hear the melody of your harps but let justice run down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream." In other words, "Until you get justice and righteousness, I'm not interested in your music." God wants to hear the song of the redeemed and the song that comes from a Spirit-filled life.

Oh, what a high priority God has given to song. Because it is a release of the heart. And, beloved, that's why our music has to be different. Because the Spirit of God is so unique, ours can't be like the rest of the world. Ours can't be what theirs is. It can't be. Because God is not like the system.

I'll never forget, and I'll close with this, wandering through a little town, high up in the Andes in the South American land of Ecuador. We had driven along in a four-wheel drive Travel-all with the Schuberts and we had seen the llamas grazing all over the sides of the mountains and Indians all over the road, dirt road. Came to a little village, Ken said, "I want to show you the village," so I said, "Okay." So we got out and we walked through the little – all the little houses were made out of mud, just little mud places. And down the middle, the little walk – the street was like this out of mud and all the sewage ran right down the middle. It was kind of a depressing place, very, very primitive. And they had nothing except animals and just what they could grow in the land there, way up in the Andes, 15,000 feet.

And so we walked through this little village and we saw the people, and they eat little guinea hens that are crawling all over every place. They just grab them and snap off their necks and throw them in the pot and keep the pot boiling all the time, and when you're hungry, you eat. And as we got to the end of the little village, and there was nothing more than mud huts, that was all there was, all of sudden I heard some singing. And it was amazing because I recognized the tune was "What A Friend We Have In Jesus." But I didn't understand the words too well. And we got closer and closer, and we came to a little tiny building with no windows, made out of mud with a thatched roof, and Ken said, "Come around to the front." We went around to the front and there were – no one was sitting down. Everyone was standing because that's the only way they could all get in.

They were standing like this, with – just like in a sardine can. And they were spilling out the door and sitting all around, and they were singing, loud as they could, “What A Friend We Have In Jesus,” in their own language. And I thought to myself, you know, “How interesting.” Because that’s Western music, that’s not music born out of the native Indians of the Andes Mountains, they don’t know that music. But you know, it was amazing to me, what had happened there was some people had been there for years and years and years and nothing ever happened, they never had any results, nothing ever happened, and finally the Spirit of God broke through, and those Indians became Christians just rapidly, just a wholesale revival broke out, and Indians were being saved all over the place, and they just – they built a little church and finally they had to stand in it, just like this, the whole time. And they stood there and sang one hymn after another, after another, after another. And I thought to myself, you know, there’s one thing Christians have in common. We all have a new song when we come to Christ, don’t we? That wasn’t the song the rest of the people in their village sang. It was a new song. It expressed a new dimension of living.

Well, that’s one of the first things that happens in a Christian’s life. Something happens inside of me that gives me a new song. I’m so glad that God has given us that opportunity to express ourselves. And I’m so thankful that the Lord has kind of made that first little thought there, that when we’re filled with the Spirit, the first result is to us. I’m glad for that kind of graciousness. And next time, we’re going to see how it affects our relationship to Him and to everybody else. Let’s pray.

Thank You, Father, again this morning for just the joy of being together, the joy of singing the song of the redeemed with the redeemed. I want to thank you especially today for the gifted musicians you’ve given us, for Jack Coleman and for Reggie and so many others, Mary Jane and Steve and so many, Father, who sing and minister to us. Father, how important they are in your plan, how wonderfully important they are as they give direction and they give coordination and leadership to the song that’s in our hearts. Thank You for all those who’ve written the great songs in years past and even today. Thank You, L ord, for singing. Most of all, for Your Holy Spirit that lives in us and fills us as we yield to Him. Oh, God, help us to walk in the Spirit so that no matter what happens in life, even if we’re persecuted, even if it all falls apart, as we walk in Your Spirit, there will be always a song to sing. We thank You in Christ’s name. Amen.

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