

# Extreme Wildfire: Living a Life of Praise

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Ephesians 5: 15-20 *"Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise,<sup>16</sup> making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.<sup>17</sup> Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.<sup>18</sup> Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.<sup>19</sup> Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord,<sup>20</sup> always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

Today we'll talk about living wisely, using time wisely, knowing God's will, being Spirit filled and living with words of hope.

**Live Wisely**-What is one of the most foolish things you have ever done? Go ahead, you can tell me. What is one of the most foolish things you have ever done? I have asked that question of people in the past and one person replied she had foolishly cheated on her college SAT tests and was caught. Took her a long time to get into college.

Another person told me they thought they could bluff the IRS auditors about expenditures on their tax return. Turned out they would have paid about \$ 2,000 in shortages, but since they foolishly lied, cheated, and were caught, they paid a \$10, 000.00 fine. Sometimes people just do unwise things.

I got a new chain saw and was up in a tree trimming branches 15 feet up. I foolishly cut the branch on which I stood. I fell only hurting my pride. An unwise and foolish move.

The human condition is such that people make many choices daily, and some of them are unwise. We live in a tension of wise and foolish choices. That is what the Apostle Paul is speaking of today as he has written a letter to the church people in the town of Ephesus. Paul is telling the church folk to live not as the world lives, but as Christ calls them to live. It was common for the Gentiles of the day, pagan, non-Jews, to live to excess. That was part of the culture. Drunkenness was everywhere, and what we would consider immoral behavior was prevalent. It was not considered by pagans to be a negative behavior. Paul says, live wisely, not foolishly.

**Use Time Wisely**- As a kid in elementary school, I recall the day that we would receive our report cards. In my school, citizenship was marked on one side of the card. "E" for excellent, "S"-for satisfactory, and "X" needs improvement. It was common for me to have the box **Needs to use time more wisely**, checked. Sometimes in our daily lives we fritter away time at work engaged in meaningless conversation or activity. Sometimes at home we sacrifice time talking with our spouse or kids for work, or for watching TV, or for pursuing a hobby that is time consuming. I want to use my time wisely making the most of every opportunity to see my kids, go for a walk with my wife, see my parents, build friendships, learn new things and see new places. I want others to know about the saving grace of Jesus Christ that comes through the power of the Holy Spirit. I don't want to waste lots of time.

Some people's nature is to accomplish little and to coast through life, just getting by, just being comfortable, and taking no risk as if they are waiting. Waiting for what? Life is passing you by and God has called you to work with him in his kingdom. Are you using your time somehow in some way to further the kingdom of God? The word for "time" used here is about redeeming that time for holy use. As Christians, time lost is time lost from God. When people tell me they don't have enough time to read the Bible daily, I tell them, get up 20 minutes earlier, take a lunch break at a different time, or watch 30 minutes to an hour less of TV daily. Time lost for Christian action and time lost with God is time forever lost.

**Know God's Will**-Have any of you ever been a waiter in the food business or maybe a sales person in a clothing store? Wait staff and sales people love the person who knows what they want. "Yes, I will have the dinner salad with ranch dressing, the smothered steak and new potatoes, and the side of green beans with iced tea, no sugar." It is important to know what your job is about. It is important to know the expectations to make an "A" if you are a student. Likewise, God wants us to understand what his will is for us, his people.

God has no hidden agenda. He does not say, "Go ahead Jerry, guess how to live a Spirit filled life." God is specific in speaking to his people. Verse 18 tells the reader and the listener of the letter, don't get drunk. It leads to unwise choices. Like drinking and driving. "Don't get drunk on wine which leads to debauchery. Debauchery means to "excess," that leads to loss of self-control.

**Be Spirit Filled**-There is a key word here, "Instead." "Instead, be filled with the Spirit." The Spirit is the spirit of God, the Holy Spirit. This is not an either "or" option.

As humans, it is difficult for us to be filled with the Holy Spirit and then all of the world's provisions that occur in life. Paul is teaching the gentile Christians, the former pagans, the people who formerly lived lives of revelry, drunkenness, and no moral behavior. From a Christian view. Paul is saying, "does your life honor God in wise choices, in use of time that honors God? Are you Spirit filled?"

The people in Paul's day were living a normal life when they drank to excess and wasted time. That was normal. However, Christ's Spirit has been imparted on these Christians, just as your lives have been Spirit filled when you accepted Jesus Christ.

**Worldly living**- What does loving in a worldly fashion imply or tell us? Living in a worldly fashion in today's society is pursuit of things that draw us away from a relationship with God. What might some of those things be? Nothing wrong with playing a round of golf with friends. However, if it calls you away from spending time with family **all** the time, that does not honor God. If we work 90 hours a week, does that honor God? Probably not. It is good to work and make a living, but with some moderation. The world says success is determined by how we dress, what brand name clothes we do or do not buy, by what type of car we drive, by what vacations we take, by the size of the home we live in, by where we were educated, etc., etc.

Verse 18 in the text is a break over point. We move from the negative to the positive. From **unwise and foolish** to the **wise**. From being a time waster and acting foolishly, to celebrating the time that we can be with God and live out our lives in a Spirit filled manner.

"Instead, be filled with the Spirit." How do we become Spirit filled people? We ask through prayer and fasting, partnering with others that our lives would be filled with the Holy Spirit's presence. Some people receive different gifts of the Spirit, all are unique and special. But praying openly and fully to ask God to fill your life with the Spirit is the key.

Last week we spoke of a dry sponge tossed in the water. At first the hardness and dryness is overwhelming to the sponge. The water cannot penetrate the cellulose fibers. However, as the sponge is resting in the water, it will begin to be saturated with water, finally being completely full and saturated. So saturated that when we take the sponge out of the water it drips and overflows with the element it has been immersed in. That is how God wants our lives to be connected with him. Full of the Spirit, filled with the Spirit.

The "instead" in this text is the dry sponge being cast into the water. Our human selves tell us that we can be filled with the Holy Spirit **AND** the world, but that is incorrect. The tension that exists in our humanity, this battle between what the world says is right and what the Lord God through Christ and the Spirit says is pleasing, can be bothersome.

The Spirit guides you, encourages you, and comes along side of you as advocate, as encourager, as helper, as speaker of God's whispers into your soul.

**Speak words of hope**-Will Rodgers the humorist from Oklahoma told how he "never met a man he didn't like." In addition, of course the funny retort to that is, "well, he never met my mother in law, father in law, sister, wife, husband, boss, etc." Have you ever encountered a person that you just like from the first? A friend who speaks words of trust, encouragement, strength?

This is speaking to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs like in verse 19. That is the encouraging word, the lifting you up by another as they celebrate who you are. That is the person that offers words of life and blessing, not words of anger, hatred, discrimination, or put downs.

Is your life full of evidence of being filled with the Spirit, **or filled with the world?**

Several years ago, I was in Abilene visiting one of my church members in the Taylor County jail. Marie had made a lousy, unwise, and foolish choice. She stole a car and some money, drove to the nearest liquor store, and bought alcohol with money she had stolen from her employer. Marie blows through a DPS radar check at 110 mph, is pursued for 45 miles, and eventually broadsides another car in Abilene. The other driver is not seriously injured, but Marie goes to jail then calls me.

Marie had made foolish choices that did not honor God. The amazing thing was Marie could only give thanks to God that no one had been killed in the wreck. She gave thanks for the kindness of the jail staff, for having decent food, for having someone to look after her and to order the days of her life for her.

Her life changed. Marie was released from jail after serving her sentence and her testimony is about what God through Christ and the Holy Spirit had done in her life. Her life is now Spirit filled and her daily speech full of praise and thanksgiving.

What about you today? Where would you say that your life is? Is your life one in which the world can celebrate your outside success and you see how much you have accomplished? Is your life one that always has to look perfect on the outside, while your interior soul is tormented, broken or in a struggle?

The Lord God makes it clear to us as his people that we are to "always give thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Are you living a life that is Spirit filled, a life glorifying God? Do you constantly speak words of hope, love, encouragement and power into your coworkers, your family, your friends?

Our challenge today is to come before God in prayer, praise and thanksgiving, and to ask for the filling of the Spirit in our lives, to be moved for Christ, and to set aside the ways that only glorify the world.

I invite you now to bow your heads and allow me to guide us through a time of reflection, of meditation, and of listening to God.

"Creator God who is Father, Christ the redeemer, the bringer of our salvation, and Holy Spirit our comforter and encourager." We read your word in Ephesians 5: 15-20, we hear the Word spoken and proclaimed, and there is so much there for us to take in. You challenge us Lord with living wisely and not foolishly. We ask ourselves, what are the ways that I might live more wisely and fully with your Spirit filling me Lord? Nudge me, guide me, impart to me through your Spirit. Lord how I might live more fully in your presence for you?

Lord, you instruct us to not be wasters of your time. To set our hearts and minds on what pleases you in how we live out our daily lives. Is there an area in my daily life that needs to be corrected, changed, re- focused so that my time is spent glorifying and working for you? Lord God, give me guidance this week to alter my life as needed for you.

Finally Lord, let your Holy Spirit speak to me, and through me, to each of us and through each of us as we covenant with you to only speak words of love, hope, encouragement, and words of assurance and truth. Let us sing for the Lord and praise his Holy name. In Jesus name the people said, Amen.

This morning our challenge as we leave this place of worship is for you to do three things this week:

1. Carve out more daily time for God
2. Speak words of truth, kindness, encouragement, strength and power into all of the people that you encounter this week.
3. To call upon the Lord to continue to fill you with His Spirit.

Let's close in prayer:

