

## A CALL TO WORSHIP: WE SING! (pt 4)

Ephesians 5:18-20



March 24, 2019 | DAVID ANDERSON

Different groups have different defining characteristics. You might join the rotary club and your gatherings would be characterized by networking conversations. You might join a special interest group and the meetings would revolve around planning, spreadsheets and growth charts. You might be a part of a family that is known for playing games, competing in sports, or telling jokes.

When Christians get together, when the Body of Christ unites, what do we do? For 2000 years we have been characterized by this: WE SING! Why?

- Because the reality of God, Christ, redemption, heaven, hell, grace and the mystery of the incarnation and the indwelling Holy Spirit are so great, so profound, so majestic and glorious, that simply speaking them is not enough. They must be sung.
- Because the way, the truth and the life must be proclaimed. *He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love. In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins* (Col. 1:13-14). Jesus says if we keep silent about this, the stones will cry out (Luke 19:40).
- Because there are depths and heights and intensities and emotion that can only be expressed in the beautiful poetry of song. *Oh the depth of the riches both of wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments . . . For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen* (Rom. 11:33, 36).

At the beginning of Ephesians 5, Paul tell us to be imitators of God as dearly loved children. He tells us to live in love, just as Christ also loved us and gave Himself for us (5:1-2). He goes on to describe our calling to be a people of light in a world of darkness. Paul says: *Walk as children of the light—for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness, and truth* (v. 8-9). In a foolish world, God calls us to live not as unwise but as wise, taking advantage of every opportunity, because the days are evil (vs. 16).

In verse 17, Paul says: *be wise by understanding what the Lord's will is*. According to Paul in Ephesians, the great will of God is this: *For by grace you are saved by faith, that not of yourself it is a gift of God, not of works lest anyone should boast. For you are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works that God prepared ahead of time that you should walk in them.* (Eph. 2:8-10) In light of all of this, starting in vs. 18, Paul describes what our worship should look like:

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*And do not get drunk with wine, which is debauchery, but be filled by the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making music in your hearts to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for each other in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.* Ephesians 5:18-20

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### **Genuine worship is spirit-filled, heartfelt and grateful.**

**SPIRIT-FILLED:** At the time Paul wrote this letter to the Ephesians, there were bars and brothels every mile in the Roman Empire. Drunkenness was as much of a problem back then as it is today. He says, "Don't be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation." This word dissipation is the word *asotia*, which comes from the word for savior or salvation. In this case it is the inability to restrain or save oneself. The same word is used of the prodigal son in Luke 15:13.

Why must we be careful with our alcohol consumption? Why do we not get drunk? Because the Christian life is hard enough to live sober; let's not make it harder on ourselves. Paul says don't fill our guts with Jack Daniels; instead fill ourselves with Someone else. There is another party God wants us to attend. Instead, Paul says to "be filled with the Spirit!" and it's in the present, passive, imperative. Most commands are in the active, where we are commanded to take action and be the instrument of that action. Paul is saying, allow the Holy Spirit to fill you. You cannot transform yourself; it doesn't work. Instead, cooperate and open yourself to the Holy Spirit and His desire to be the subject of your life.

How are we filled with the Holy Spirit? Well, how do you get drunk? By drinking a lot of it. So it is with the Holy Spirit.

Paul's prayer is that we would be strengthened with power through God's Spirit in the inner person. That we would be rooted and grounded in love, able to truly comprehend and experience the breadth, length, height and depth of God love. He says *to be filled up to all the fullness of God*. We don't think it is possible, but Paul says--*Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us.* (3:16-20).

**HEARTFELT:** Spirit filled life leads to spirit filled, heartfelt worship. What we experience in our singing is an expression of the fullness of the Holy Spirit where we speak to one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in our hearts to the Lord (vs. 19). This isn't something we do in solitude. God calls us to speak these songs, sing these songs to one another. "Making melody with your heart" signifies a genuine, humble interaction between your spirit, the Holy Spirit and the Word of God (John 4:22-24).

Making melody in your heart doesn't always involve times of consolation and warm-fuzzies. A huge part of Israel's worship is what is called laments. These Lament Psalms describe how life really feels when life is not going as planned or tragedy has struck or pain and darkness has surrounded my family. We worship together in the pain and tragedy of life because we need to be reminded that God is still working, that He isn't finished, that what's true in the light is still true in the dark.

Especially when a church is divided on what acceptable worship is, there's a lot of emphasis on what Paul means when he says "psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs". Psalms might be patterned after the OT Psalms. Hymns might be longer compositions like the early Christian hymns we find in Philippians 2 and 1 Corinthians 15. Spiritual songs might refer to spontaneous praise inspired by the Holy Spirit. But the truth is, it is almost impossible to interpret what Paul means. All the scholars say that we are just guessing. Every generation thinks the songs of their generation are found in this list. The truth is that it describes the full range of singing which the Spirit prompts.

Our worship and thanksgiving is to God. We are not just worshiping about God, we are worshiping God. We are in the very presence of God; God is hearing and seeing it. We want Him to delight in what is happening here today. We should want to linger in the presence of the Lord, speaking to the Lord about what we think and feel in response to who He is and what He has done. That's what "to the Lord" means in verse 19 and to God here in verse 20.

**GRATEFUL:** In verse 20 it says we worship, "giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Just as every aspect of Israel's worship involved gratitude, so must our worship.

For an Israelite, the day started with a sacrifice at sunrise and a sacrifice at twilight (Ex. 29:38-42). What's the point? The point is that God has given us another day to live. Every week, on the Sabbath, you are going to do nothing. Every week God is going to remind you that you don't keep this world moving forward, He does. Everything comes from Him. The Jews had strategic feasts to celebrate God's miraculous provision: Feast of Passover (Ex. 12:1-4), Feast of Pentecost (Lev 23:15-21), Day of Atonement (Lev 16:1-34), Feast of Tabernacles (Lev 23:33-38). They had a thank offering for everything. Thank you God for your crops and blessing--A meal offering (Lev 2). Thank you God for unexpected blessing--A thank offering (Lev 3). Thank you God for deliverance--A vow offering (Lev 3). Thank you God for all your blessings--A freewill offering (Lev 22:18-30). Every 7 years, they had a sabbatical year where they released every one of their debts (Lev 25). Every 50 years, a year of Jubilee, all land went back to the original owners (Lev 25).

Every aspect of our worship must be permeated with gratitude. Why? Because, like the Israelites, we created nothing and own nothing; every gift is a gift from God. We are to give thanks for everything. He works in everything for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose.

How can gratitude permeate our worship?

