

- ***READ Ephesians 5:15-20*** As we noted in a recent lesson, it is not within man himself to direct his own footsteps. (**Jeremiah 10:23**) We also considered from **Psalms 119:105** that it is God's Word that gives us the ability to be directed in the ways in which we should go in this life. It is through His Spirit that God has taught, is teaching, and will continue to teach man the desires of God and how man ought to go. (**II Peter 1:20,21**) You might say that we are Spirit lead if we are willing to submit and walk by the Spirit's will.
- In **Galatians 5:16-25**, we read of what it means to truly live by the Spirit and to have the fruit of the Spirit evident in our lives. You might say that we see what it means to live a Spirit-filled life. Now, I know that some people get a little uneasy when we start using language that involves the Spirit because there are some who have taken the Holy Spirit, His means of working, and His manifestations and have gone crazy and taken great liberties with the teachings of Scripture to create for themselves a Holy Spirit that still operates today as He did in the earliest days of the church and even beyond what He did at that time. I understand how it can sound weird, but I'd like to suggest that just because some others have distorted the truth of the Spirit doesn't mean that we must shy away from acknowledging that we are to live our lives by the Spirit, and we are to walk by the Spirit, exactly as Paul talks about here in **Galatians 5:25**.
- Our efforts to walk by the Spirit ought to influence every portion of our lives. This includes what we read just a few minutes ago from **Ephesians 5:15-20**. Notice that Paul states that we are not to live our lives under the influence of foolishness or alcohol, but we are live lives that are Spirit-filled. We are to live lives that have been shaped by the influence of the Spirit that is impressed upon us through the reading, meditating, comprehension, and application of God's Word which was inspired by the Holy Spirit. These are the types of lives that we are to live. We are to live Spirit-filled lives.
- Would you notice, though, the first thing that Paul mentions is present in a Spirit-filled life? The Apostle Paul states that a Spirit-filled life is a life that is filled with speaking to one another through psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. A Spirit-filled life is a life where singing is ever present. This morning, I want to talk with you about Spirit-Filled Singing. What does this look like? What does the disciple look like who is living life that involves much singing that is Spirit-filled? Let's consider the Spirit-inspired words of the Bible to see what all is involved in singing that is lead by the Spirit and pleasing to our great God.

I. Singing with the heart.

- A. We actually see that very quickly here in our **Ephesians** text. Notice that we speak to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, and we are to do so while making melody in our hearts. We often will really emphasize that portion of the text because in our minds this is the portion that shows the music is in our voices and not done with instruments. Sure I guess that is something we can take away from it, but I think that focus misses the true point of what Paul is meaning when he says that we must sing and make melody in our hearts. To make melody in our hearts is to sing from the heart.
- B. I truly don't believe that the most pressing danger in our singing to the Lord is that we will one day bust out an instrument of some sort. Instead, I believe the real danger lies in our unwillingness to truly offer up our hearts to God when we sing together. The danger is in us coming together and singing out of compulsion, out of habit, or simply just not singing at all. Remember when we talked recently about prayer problems? One of the problems that we sometimes face is the temptation to say prayers that are done completely from muscle memory. Those prayers are not requiring any sort of effort or pouring out of our hearts to God, but they are simply done because we "know we should pray" or we've been asked to pray so we rattle off something without giving it a second thought. This ought not be so in our prayers or in our singing of praises to our God.
- C. Instead, our hearts should be fully engaged into the songs that we are singing. Our hearts should be in tune with the tune, meaning that the words we are singing are not just being sung from muscle memory, but they are being sung as a true exclamation of the thoughts they are trying to convey. They are powerful expressions of the beliefs that we hold so dearly from the very core of who we are as individuals. I sing "*Exalted*" to my King because I truly believe that He is King. I sing "*Our God, He Is Alive*" because I believe from my very soul that there is a God, and He is alive. I sing "*Jesus, Draw Me Ever Nearer*" because I believe in my heart that this life is journey to heaven, and I am only ever going to be there one day if Jesus walks with me.

- D. But this can only be done if our hearts are what they ought to be already. The only way we can sing with the Spirit is if the word of Christ already dwells within us. (**Colossians 3:16**) I might be struggling with singing, and I might feel as if something just isn't right with it. It might be that what is not right is my heart. If I am not walking by the Spirit each day and conforming my heart to be as God would have it to be then I am not going to be able to sing with the Spirit. If Spirit-filled singing is something that I want to be a part of in this life, then I must be sure to create within myself a heart for God and then sing from the very depths of it.

II. Singing with the understanding.

- A. Additionally, Spirit-filled singing from the heart can be done when the singing is done with the understanding of what is being sung. When I think about worship that is done by the Spirit and lead by the Spirit, I think of what Paul writes to the Corinthians in **I Corinthians 14**. We know the issue at hand in **I Corinthians 12-14** is the issue of the use of miraculous spiritual gifts, abilities that were only done through the miraculous power of the Spirit. One of the issues seems to have been that some were not using their gifts in a way that allowed for those who were present to actually understand what was going on so that they could benefit and worship from a place of understanding.
- B. **vv.2-9** speak to the need for their tongues and prophecies to be done in such a way that people could actually understand and gain something from what was being said. Then in **vv.10-15** Paul goes on to explain that whatever is done, needs to be done in such way that those who are participating can engage their minds and understand what is going on. If someone was to speak in tongues, then there needed to be someone there who could interpret what was being said. Everything was to be done for the "edification of the church." (**v.12**)
- C. So how does this relate to our discussion of Spirit-Filled singing? Notice in **v.15**, that Paul says that the outcome or his goal was for him and all Christians to pray and sing with the spirit and the mind. This captures the essence of these first two points we are addressing. Spirit-filled singing that glorifies God is singing that demands that our spirit (our heart) and mind (our understanding) are fully engaged in what is being done. So what does this look like practically?
- D. Let's be honest, there are some songs that we sing that use language that might not make the greatest of sense to us upon a first glance. What songs come to your mind when I say that? What comes to my mind before anything else is "Night With Ebon Pinion." The language and some of the words used in that song can be very strange to us because we don't use them. If I want to be a person who sings with the Spirit, then I might need to put forth some effort to understand what is meant when that song or others are sung so that I can sing them with a heart full of understanding. Hopefully, in the coming months, we will examine some songs like this in lessons so that our minds can be more fully engaged as we sing. Spirit-filled singing demands singing that is done with our heart and minds fully participating in what we are doing. It demands that we are engaged intellectually.

III. Singing with joy.

- A. Spirit-filled singing doesn't only demand much from us on an intellectual level, but it also demands much from us on an emotional level. Throughout the Scriptures and especially in the Psalms, we see two strong emotions almost always associated with our singing unto God, and the first one is that of joy.
1. *"But let all who take refuge in You be glad, let them ever sing for joy; and may You shelter them, that those who love Your name may exult in you."* (**Psalms 5:11**)
 2. *"Sing for joy in the Lord, O you righteous ones; praise is becoming to the upright."* (**Psalms 33:1**)
 3. *"O come, let us sing for joy to the Lord, let us shout joyfully to the rock of our salvation."* (**Psalms 95:1**)
 4. *"Shout joyfully to the Lord, all the earth. Serve the Lord with gladness; come before Him with joyful singing. Know that the Lord Himself is God; It is he who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture."* (**Psalms 100:1-3**)

- B. Spirit-filling singing is an outpouring of the overflowing joy that disciples should have in their hearts for God, who He is, and everything that He has done for us. Notice just in the last Psalm we read **Psalm 100:1-3**, notice all of the reasons for which we come to God and sing with joy in our hearts. We are joyous because we are able to sing to the God of heaven Himself. He hears our offerings coming up to Him. We sing for joy because we are his people. If we recognize these things as being true then how could we but sing so passionately and lift up praises of joy to Him when we are together? Spirit-filled singing is a natural result of the heart of a disciple who recognizes how blessed he or she is in this life.

IV. Singing with gratitude.

- A. Lastly, Spirit-filled singing is done from a heart that is not only filled with joy, but gratitude. This is also stressed greatly throughout Scripture and often we find joy and thankfulness joined together in God glorifying song.
1. *"O come, let us sing for joy to the Lord, let us shout joyfully to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving, let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms For the Lord is a great God and a great King above all gods. " (Psalm 95:1-3)*
 2. *"Shout joyfully to the Lord, all the earth. Serve the Lord with gladness; come before Him with joyful singing. Know that the Lord Himself is God; It is he who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture. Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him, bless His name. For the Lord is good; His lovingkindness is everlasting and His faithfulness to all generations." (Psalm 100:1-5)*
- B. Then of course we know the verses in the New Testament that we have already hinted at. In **Ephesians 5:19,20**, we see Paul teaching that Spirit-filled disciples speak to one another in song and they do so while giving thanks to God for all things. **Colossians 3:16** tells us that when we are teaching and admonishing one another through song that we are doing so with thankfulness in our hearts to God. Then the Hebrew writer says in **Hebrews 13:15** that we are to continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God which is the fruit of our lips and we do so by giving thanks to His name.
- C. I'll be very straight forward with you. I have a very hard time understanding how a disciple can have the opportunity to lift up his or her voice to God with this great of a number of people...and yet not actually sing out or not even sing at all! How can a joyful and thankful disciple not take advantage of such an opportunity. I am left scratching my head when I see Christians flat out make the choice not to sing to God.
- D. I wonder what the issue is in those cases? Are we not joyful? Are we not thankful? Are we not living lives that allow us to sing the words of hymns honestly? I can't answer those questions for those who find themselves in this place, but I do sincerely hope that they will allow the Spirit to influence them through God's word to see the importance of being involved in the worship of Him through song. We have far too many things to be joyous and thankful for, and I hope that each of us will lift up strong voice of praise to God when we are together in this place or in any place where we have opportunity to participate in Spirit-filled singing.

I will tell you that some of my greatest memories of being with God's people are those times where we have been able to push everything else to the side and just sing of and to our mighty God. He has blessed us with the ability to sing and make melody in our hearts, and I hope that each of us sees the importance of singing. Not just any singing, but Spirit-filled singing that matches the singing that glorifies God in the Bible. May God bless each of us as we bless His name in Spirit-filled song. ***PRAYER***