



INSIGHT

to biblical TEXTS

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Slide #1

Introduction to Text

The *Introduction* article for *Critical Concepts in Christian Living* discussed two diametrically opposed viewpoints dealing with the Christian life. It would be helpful to read that introduction article prior to considering any of the four *Critical Concepts*. The article *Critical Concept #3* addresses the content of Ephesians 5:1-21, *walking wisely and being filled by the Spirit*.

New Testament Context

The central passage for the filling by the Spirit is found in Ephesians 5:15-18. But before we delve into the text we need to address an issue that causes confusion. Filling refers to the Spirit's work in the believer for ministry and living. Involuntary fillings differ from voluntary fillings [see article, *Involuntary Fillings differ from Voluntary Fillings by the Spirit*].

Involuntary fillings are limited to certain believers whom God empowers for ministry and service. On the other hand, voluntary fillings are universally available to all believers based on obedience to God's Word. The former relates to service, while the latter concerns the walk or character of the believer. Of the fourteen times Luke used the expression *filled with/by the Spirit*, the phrase emphasized either service/ministry (involuntary filling) nine times in both Luke and Acts or character/walk (voluntary filling) five times in Acts. Yet, Luke never explained how voluntary filling took place, only that it occurred. This phrase *filled with/by the Spirit* is used one other time by Paul in Ephesians 5:18, referring to voluntary filling. There Paul clarified *being filled by the Spirit* in reference to the Christian's walk.

Insight to Ephesians 5:1-21

Walking Wisely

Being Filled by the Spirit

(CRITICAL CONCEPT #3)

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Slides #2

The Ephesians 5:1-21 text (NASB) is present on slide #2 (vv 1-14) and slide #3 (vv 15-21). Later slides use the translation of Harold Hoehner in his commentary on Ephesians.

BEING FILLED BY THE SPIRIT Ephesians 5:1-14

5 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children;
2 and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.
3 But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints
4 and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks
5 For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.
6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience
7 Therefore do not be partakers with them;
8 for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light
9 (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth),
10 trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.
11 Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them;
12 for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret.
13 But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light.
14 For this reason it says,
“Awake, sleeper,
And arise from the dead,
And Christ will shine on you.”

NASB

2

Slides #3

The Ephesians 5:1-21 text (NASB) is present on slide #2 (vv 1-14) and slide #3 (vv 15-21). Later slides use the translation of Harold Hoehner in his commentary on Ephesians.

BEING FILLED BY THE SPIRIT Ephesians 5:15-21

15 Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise,
16 making the most of your time, because the days are evil.
17 So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.
18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit,
19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord;
20 always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father;
21 and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.

NASB

3

Slide #4

The outline of Ephesians 5:1-21 is broken down into three segments, as follows:

- Walking in Love 5:1-5
- Walking in the Light 5:6-14
- Walking Wisely 5:15-21

As Paul penned Ephesians 5:1-21, he gave believers a behavioral blueprint. Three times he addressed believers' conduct.

OUTLINE
Ephesians 5:1-21

Walking in Love	5:1-5
Walking in the Light	5:6-14
Walking Wisely	5:15-21

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Slide #5

Paul *first* addressed *walking in love* (Eph 5:1-5). “As beloved children” who have experienced the love expressed by their heavenly Father, Paul exhorts believers to pursue two things. *First*, “they are to develop continuously into imitators of God,”¹ increasingly evidencing the character qualities of the One who has shown them unconditional love (v 1). Love being expressed by seeking the highest good for another, not expecting anything in return. *Second*, they are to “walk in love” in the same way Christ loved them, even sacrificing Himself for our sins (v 2). Christ’s life and ministry is our model, the pattern we should strive to replicate. Paul then turns to behavior that is the opposite of love. In verses 3-4, inappropriate conduct and conversation engaged by believers is addressed. Instead, Paul reminds them to keep their focus on thankfulness to God for His love toward them.

In verse 5, the reason for avoiding improper conduct and conversation is put in perspective. Those whose life is characterized by immorality, impurity, and greed will not have “an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.” At this point, one’s theological position becomes evident in the answers to the following questions: (1) Who does Paul address?; (2) To what does inheritance refer?; and (3) What nullifies inheritance?

WALKING IN LOVE
Ephesians 5:1-5

1	Therefore, as beloved children (you) become imitators of God	<i>Do's #1a</i>
2	and (you) walk in love , just as Christ also loved us and just as Christ also gave himself up for us, as an offering and as a sacrifice to God for a fragrant aroma.	<i>Do's #1b</i>
3	But among you do not let sexual immorality . . . even be mentioned and impurity of any kind or greed, as is appropriate for the saints.	<i>Don'ts #2a</i>
4	and [let there be no] obscenity and foolish talk nor sarcastic ridicule, which are inappropriate,	<i>Don'ts #2b</i>
5	but rather [let there be] thanksgiving. For you certainly know this that no immoral person has an inheritance or no impure person or no greedy person, who is an idolater in the kingdom of Christ and of God.	<i>Do's #2c</i> <i>Reason</i>

5

Who does Paul Address?

It is uncontested that the people described in Galatians 5:5 have no inheritance in the kingdom. Addressing behavior from which believers should abstain (immorality, impurity and greed), Paul emphatically wrote, “Do no let [this type of conduct] be present among you” (see v 3). Then in verse 5 he indicates that these believers were already aware “that no immoral, impure, and greedy person has an inheritance in the kingdom.” The question: was Paul referring to those selfsame believers who were to abstain from immorality, impurity, and greed (in both v 3 and v 5) or was he actually addressing non-believers in verse 5, those who evidenced that type lifestyle? Additionally an author pointed out that Paul could be warning “those whose lives are characterized by immorality, impurity, and greed, even though they may *claim to be Christians*, are not included in the kingdom of God.”² Consequently, three alternatives are inevitably given as possibilities for the “persons” described in Galatians 5:5: (1) genuine believers, (2) non-believers, or (3) false believers.

Many with the Reformed view turn to the parallel text of Galatians 5:19-21 that addresses the “deeds of the flesh,” which includes “immorality” and “impurity,” to support the third alternative—false believers [see *Critical Concept #2* that addresses Galatians 5:16-25]. Writing to believers Paul exhorts, “Just as I have *forewarned you*, that those who practice such things [deeds of the flesh] will not inherit the kingdom of God” (Gal 5:21b, italics added). Now compare Galatians 5:21b to Ephesians 5:5: “For *you certainly know this* that no person [doing such things, which likewise includes “immorality” and “impurity”] has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God” (italics added). In both texts Paul *first* asserts they are *presently aware* of that which follows. *Second*, both texts address the *deeds of the flesh*. And, *finally*, in each case kingdom *inheritance is nullified* by such conduct. Since the false-believer position understands “inheritance of the kingdom” to be synonymous with “salvation,”³ those who *claim to be believers* and yet manifest the “deeds of the flesh” give evidence that they are not believers after all.

Nevertheless a problem arises with the false-believer view. What do you do with believers who sin, since that represents *all* believers? Does it mean that all believers do not inherit the kingdom? In response, they turn to the use of the present tense in the phrase “those *who practice* such things” (Gal 5:21, italicized participle) and in the phrase “*do not let* [these things]” (Eph 5:3, italicized verbs added) to support the idea of habitual action. If a person *habitually practices* the deeds of the flesh, they say it means that person is a false believer, having never believed. However, the progressive-present-tense position lacks biblical support in these particular contexts. Rather than a habitual present tense being in view, an iterative present tense is preferred.⁴ The context concerns action repeated but with interruptions, rather than action regularly occurring or action in a continuous progress.

An illustration sheds some insight. Parents tell their daughter, “You must make your bed.” That instruction was given not because the child was to “continually keep on making her bed,” but because she had not made her bed. She had a choice each day: make the bed or not make the bed. However if she did not make her bed two days in row, would that be habitual? Five days, three weeks from now? See the problem? Who is to determine how many lapses and for how long? How long and how much disobedience to an earthly father is needed before it is evident that his daughter is no longer his child? In fact if a daughter neglected to make her bed for two years, she would continue to be the father’s child. Certainly they would experience a severe disruption in their intimacy. Yet, the bond between an earthly father and child can never be nullified. The same thing occurs when believers are disobedient to their heavenly Father. Their connection never changes but their fellowship, their intimacy, can fluctuate.

Each day the daughter is to make her bed. That is also the intent of both Galatians 5:21 and Ephesians 5:3. Believers are to be watchful over-and-over daily to avoid the deeds of the flesh. At the same time they should over-and-over daily strive to evidence the fruit of the Spirit. Those who espouse that a habitual-behavior pattern proves salvation never occurred, are unable to separate salvation *through* Christ from fellowship *with* Christ. This false-believer view places those who hold it in an indefensible theological corner.

Additionally, the idea of a “false” believer is biblically unsupportable unless James 2:18-26 is misrepresented to teach that works are an evidence of genuine faith and thus a “genuine” or “true” believer. Instead, James 2:18-26 actually teach that works are an evidence of a believer’s maturity in Christ—a fellowship issue rather than salvation. James only addresses believers [see Myths 4 and 11 in *Hold Fast*].

Taking into account this critical distinction, we are left with only two alternatives—whether believers or non-believers are being addressed in Ephesians 5:5. Notice Paul addressed believers (“you”) in verse 3, who were to abstain from “immorality, impurity, and greed.” He also addressed the same “you” in verse 5 and indicated that a “person” who does not abstain from “immorality, impurity, and greed” forfeits an inheritance of some type. We should conclude: only believers will experience an inheritance in the kingdom based on obedience to the Father. Conformity to the God’s will has consequences.

To what does Inheritance Refer?

An inheritance is a bequeathed or endowed “possession.”⁵ In this context that possession concerns the believer’s inheritance in the future, earthly kingdom of God that is inaugurated at Christ’s return.

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Slide #6

A clear distinction must be made between entering the kingdom of God and inheriting the kingdom. In John 3 we clearly see that “entering the kingdom” is synonymous with “entering eternal life,” both being the result of faith in Christ [see chapter 4 of *Choose to Live*]. Jesus told Nicodemus that unless he was born a second time by the Spirit (v 8) he could not enter the kingdom of God (v 5). All are spiritually dead in their sins (Eph 2:3) and desperately need life, spiritual life. Without the work of God providing the life-gift (v 5) through our faith in Christ (v 8), we would never enter into life. Since each believer possesses eternal life, he or she will enter into the future kingdom of God. We have *come into* the experience of spiritual life and in the future we will *come into* His very presence.⁶

If “entering” is defined as *coming into something*,⁷ “inheriting” differs since it refers to *acquiring, obtaining, coming into possession of something*.⁸ While entering the kingdom concerns receiving salvation as a gift, inheriting the kingdom has to do with rewards for obedient service.

ENTER & INHERIT the KINGDOM New Testament

ENTERING THE KINGDOM

BOOK	CH	VS	TEXT	GIFT	REWARD
MATT	5	20	ENTER THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN	X ¹	
	7	21	ENTER THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN	X ¹	
	18	3	ENTER THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN	X	
MARK	19	23-24	ENTER THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN	XX	
	9	47	ENTER THE KINGDOM OF GOD	X	
	10	15	ENTER IT (KINGDOM OF GOD)	X	
LUKE	23-25		ENTER THE KINGDOM OF GOD	XXX	
	18	17	ENTER IT (KINGDOM OF GOD)	X	
JOHN	24-25		ENTER THE KINGDOM OF GOD	XX	
	3	5	ENTER INTO THE KINGDOM OF GOD	X	
ACTS	14	22	ENTER THE KINGDOM OF GOD	X	

INHERITING THE KINGDOM

BOOK	CH	VS	TEXT	GIFT	REWARD
MATT	25	34	INHERIT THE KINGDOM		X
1 COR	6	9-10	INHERIT THE KINGDOM OF GOD		XX
	15	50	INHERIT THE KINGDOM OF GOD		X
GAL	5	21	INHERIT THE KINGDOM OF GOD		X
EPH	5	5	INHERITANCE (N) IN THE KINGDOM		X

1 = texts concern "positional" righteousness through faith in Christ rather than "practical" righteousness as illustrated by Abraham in James 2:21-24 in reference to Genesis 15:6.

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Slide #7

A study of the word *inherit* shows that the word is used either as a reward for meritorious behavior (e.g., Matt 25:34) or, conversely forfeiting a reward for non-meritorious behavior (e.g., Gal 5:21). The underlined words on the slide indicate what is inherited. The majority of the times it refers to “the kingdom” (5 times) and “eternal life” (four times). In the remaining usages, inherit involves “promises” and “blessings.” As discussed from the previous slide #6, inheriting the kingdom was a reward earned through obedience, concurring with the current slide #7. However, in the previous discussion entering the kingdom and entering into eternal life were interchangeable ideas. Yet, here we show inheriting the kingdom (Matt 25:34; 1 Cor 6:9-10; Gal 5:21) is synonymous with inheriting eternal life (Matt 19:29; Mark 10:17; Luke 10:25, 18:18), earning heaven by works. This presents a problem!

The solution to this perceived contradiction is resolved when we address the particular question asked Jesus: “What shall I do to inherit eternal life” (Mark 10:17; Luke 10:25, 18:18). The question was posed by the Rich Young Ruler, seemingly with a genuine motive (Mark 10 and Luke 18) and by a lawyer of the law in order to test Jesus (Luke 10). In both instances their questions were based

TO INHERIT New Testament

BOOK	CH	VS	TEXT	GIFT	EARNED
MATT	5	5	INHERIT THE <u>EARTH</u>		X
	19	29	INHERIT <u>ETERNAL LIFE</u> ¹		X
	25	34	INHERIT THE <u>KINGDOM</u>		X
MARK	10	17	DO TO INHERIT <u>ETERNAL LIFE</u> ¹		X
LUKE	10	25	DO TO INHERIT <u>ETERNAL LIFE</u> ¹		X
	18	18	DO TO INHERIT <u>ETERNAL LIFE</u> ¹		X
1 COR	6	9-10	INHERIT THE <u>KINGDOM OF GOD</u>		XX
	15	50	INHERIT THE <u>KINGDOM OF GOD</u>		X
GAL	5	21	INHERIT THE <u>KINGDOM OF GOD</u>		X
HEB	1	4	INHERITED A MORE EXCELLENT <u>NAME</u>		X
	6	12	WHO WILL INHERIT <u>DELIVERANCE</u>		X
	12	17	INHERIT THE <u>PROMISES</u>		X
	12	17	INHERIT THE <u>BLESSING</u>		X
1 PET	3	9	INHERIT A <u>BLESSING</u>		X
REV	21	7	WHO <u>OVERCOMES</u> SHALL INHERIT		X

1 Questions both by the Rich Young Ruler (Mark 10:17; Luke 18:18) and the Lawyer (Luke 10:25) were erroneous, being based on the rabbinical understanding that eternal life (positional righteousness) was obtain by works and therefore earned.
Responding to Peter's question concerning what was the benefit for following Christ (Matt 19:27), Jesus said, "[you] shall inherit eternal life" (v 29), assuring Peter that obedience (practical righteousness) of the already saved, as compared to the RYR, leads to rewards.

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upon the erroneous, rabbinical understanding that eternal life was obtained by works and therefore earned. Consequently, they had confused inheriting eternal life with obtaining eternal life by faith in Christ alone.

Nevertheless, more problematic following Matthew’s account of Jesus’ interaction with the Rich Young Ruler (Matt 19:16-30) was His response to Peter’s follow-up question [see *Choose to Live*, 52-55, 87-90, 115-17, 126-128]. First, in Matthew the RYR initially asked, “What good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?” (v 16). Same question except Matthew used the word *obtain*, which is a different word from *inherit* used by Mark and Luke. During their interaction, Jesus tells the RYR to “go and sell your possessions and give” them away (a salvation issue—trusting in Christ, not wealth) and “come and follow Me” (a discipleship issue—growing fellowship with Christ). As the RYR left dejected, “Jesus said to His disciples, ‘It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of the needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God,’” (vv 23-24, italics added). Obviously, the RYR went away continuing to place his trust in his worldly goods rather than in Christ for eternal life. Then speaking for the disciples as the ruler departs, Peter asks, “We have left everything and followed You; what then will there be for us?” (v 27). Remember Jesus had brought up the idea of “following Him” (discipleship) subsequent to “trusting Him” (salvation). Now Peter wanted to be encouraged since the disciples had left everything to follow Jesus. Jesus tells them they “will receive many times as much and will inherit eternal life” (v 29). In so doing, He assures Peter that obedience by those who are saved leads to rewards. Here Jesus teaches that to *inherit the kingdom* is equivalent to *inheriting eternal life*, elevating *inheriting eternal life* (v 29) in this Matthew text to being rewarded in the kingdom and contrasting it from *obtaining eternal life* (v 16), which has to do with salvation.

Slide #8

What nullifies Inheritance?

If possessing an inheritance in the kingdom refers to rewarded obedience by those who are saved and thus those who will likewise enter the kingdom, the non-believer is not in view in Ephesians 5:5. Rather believers are reminded—“For you certainly know this”—that disobedience nullifies rewards in the kingdom but not entrance in the kingdom. No wonder Paul exhorts believers to become imitators of God (v 1) and walk in love (v 2). If not, they miss out on what could be their experience in the kingdom.

WALKING IN LOVE
Ephesians 5:1-5

1	Therefore, as beloved children (you) become imitators of God	<i>Dos #1a</i>
2	and (you) walk in love , just as Christ also loved us and just as Christ also gave himself up for us, as an offering and as a sacrifice to God for a fragrant aroma.	<i>Dos #1b</i>
3	But among you do not let sexual immorality . . . even be mentioned and impurity of any kind or greed, as is appropriate for the saints.	<i>Don'ts #2a</i>
4	and [let there be no] obscenity and foolish talk nor scarcastic ridicule, which are inappropriate.	<i>Don'ts #2b</i>
5	but rather [let there be] thanksgiving. For you certainly know this that no immoral person has an inheritance or no impure person or no greedy person, who is an idolater in the kingdom of Christ and of God.	<i>Dos #2c</i> <i>Reason</i>

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Slide #9

In the *second* segment of Ephesians 5:1-21, Paul addressed *walking in the light* (Eph 5:6-14). He warns believers to be careful that they are not “misled”⁹ by “empty”¹⁰ or meaningless words regarding Paul’s preceding teaching in verses 3-5. They should remember the truth that God’s judgment is directed toward non-believers, “the sons of disobedience” (2:2), who live in the manner that was just discussed. Paul directed this instruction to “believers who falsely think that worldly living is of no consequence” and therefore they “might easily slide into a similar mode of life.”¹¹ Consequently, he introduces the *first* set of contracts (5:7-10): “do not become participants with those in darkness” but rather “walk as children of light.” Using the contrasting imagery of light and darkness, believers should not live like non-believers and imitate their worldly lifestyle because they “now are light in the Lord” (v 8). “Since God is light (1 John 1:5) and believers are the children of God (Eph 5:1), they are to walk as children of God or light.”¹² Believers’ conduct, the product of light, should in fact match and reflect their position in Christ (v 9). Such an appropriate lifestyle will prove “what is pleasing to the Lord” (v 10). This is the identical concept found in Romans 12:2: “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is.” “Proving the will of God” (Rom 12:2) and “[proving]¹³ what is pleasing to the Lord” (Eph 5:10) are the result of making correct choices in one’s life. The believer’s conduct should evidence intimacy with Christ that comes from fellowship with Him and conformity to His will.

Paul then moves to the *second* set of contrasts (vv 11-13): “do not participate in unfruitful works of darkness” but rather “expose them.” Since believers can choose to walk in darkness, Paul warns them not to do so. Even though children of light (v 1), their choices determine if their lifestyle will expose the darkness. Being diametrically opposed to one another, light cannot coexist with darkness, which is the absence of light. Only as the believer’s walk results in the “fruit of light” or the “fruit of the Spirit” (Gal 5:22-23a), will the “works of darkness” or the “works of the flesh” (Gal 5:19-21a), be shown as “unfruitful.”¹⁴ Notice the play on words: the “unfruitful (*akarpos*) works of darkness” are exposed by the “fruit (*karpos*) of light.” The “product or outcome” of the fruit of the light is beneficial in dissipating the works of darkness, proving them to be unproductive.¹⁵

Paul concludes this section of chapter 5 with a wake-up call. “Paul is addressing believers who had fallen in with the unfruitful works of darkness” and he proclaims, “Wake up from your spiritual laziness.”¹⁶ He exhorts them to arise from their spiritual slumber and dead lifestyle resulting from taking part in the works of darkness. Rather he encourages them to walk as children of light, reflecting the author of light.

WALKING IN THE LIGHT Ephesians 5:6-14

6	Let no one deceive you with empty words; for God’s wrath comes on the sons of disobedience because of these things	
7	Therefore (you) do not become fellow participants with them;	<i>Don’ts #3</i>
8	for you were formerly darkness, but you now are light in the Lord;	<i>Dos #3</i>
9	(you) walk as children of light —for the fruit consists in all goodness of light and righteousness and truth—	
10	approving what is pleasing to the Lord.	
11	(you) do not participate in unfruitful works but instead of darkness,	<i>Don’ts #4</i>
12	(you) expose them .	<i>Dos #4</i>
13	For the things done in secret are shameful to mention, but everything exposed becomes visible, by the light for everything that becomes visible is light.	
14	Therefore it says, “Wake up, O Sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”	<i>Reason</i>

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Slide #10

We now come to the *third* segment of Ephesians 5:1-21. Verses 1-5 addressed *walking in love* and were followed by *walking in the light* (vv 6-14). Now, Paul addresses *walking wisely* (vv 15-21). As before, in this section he uses different sets of contrasts to develop his argument.

Based on the warning Paul had just given, he writes, “Therefore, look how carefully you are walking” (v 15). However the translation “Therefore, *take notice* how accurately you are walking” properly emphasizes the intent of the text (italics added).¹⁷ Remember he had already exhorted them to *walk in love* and *walk in the light* and explained the manner in which each could be accomplished. Providing the *first* set of contrasts (v 15), he informs them they can pursue an “*unwise*” walk or a “*wise*” one.¹⁸ Why? Because one’s life can exhibit either wisdom or folly. This unwise-wise contrast mimics verses 8-11 as well as

1 John 1:6-7. To walk unwisely is to walk in darkness and to walk wisely is to walk in the light. A wise walk in conformity to the Word of God leads to experiencing close fellowship with Christ and living skillfully, making the most of the opportunities to reflect Christ in the lost world (e.g., Col 4:5). On the other hand a believer can have fellowship with darkness (Eph 5:11) as the result of worldly choices, yielding lost opportunities in this life and future heavenly rewards.

Paul now turns to the reason for walking wisely. *First*, he gave two commands: one negative and the other positive. “Do not be foolish...but understand” (v 17). The emphasis is on the will of God to which the believer can be either dismissive, “lacking good judgment,” or attentive, “comprehending the importance” there of.¹⁹ This verse is an echo of verses 8b-10, “Walk as children of light...[proving] what is pleasing to the Lord.” An obedient walk results in living out Christ’s will in the believer’s life, while foolish living dismisses God’s Word. Notice from this context the parallels in verses 15 and 17. Being “unwise” (*asophos*) refers to flawed discernment of information (v 15), while being “foolish” (*aphron*) involves misapplication of information (v 17). On the other hand, being “wise” (*sophos*) concerns “insight into the true nature of God’s plan” through the Word (v 15),²⁰ while “understanding” (*suniemī*) has to do with applying “discernment in practical living”²¹ (v 17) and thus “approving what is pleasing to the Lord” (v 10), the “will of the Lord” (v 17).

In verse 18 again using a negative command followed by a positive one, Paul provides an illustration through a vivid picture of exactly what the contrast between foolishly walking unwisely and discernibly walking wisely looks like. He wrote, “Do not get drunk... but be filled.”²² When someone drinks an alcoholic beverage, each glass brings him closer to being intoxicated, “not in control of his faculties and thereby act foolishly.”²³ This depends on the poor choices someone makes. Instead, the right decision is to be filled by the Spirit.

Since “being drunk with wine” is associated with an unwise walk and “being filled by the Spirit” is linked to a wise walk, exactly how do these two contrasting images go together? What is the significance? There have been numerous attempts to answer those questions.

WALKING WISELY Ephesians 5:15-21

15	Therefore (you) look how carefully you are walking, not as unwise but as wise,	Don'ts #5
16	taking advantage of every opportunity, because the days are evil.	Dos #5
17	On account of this (you) do not become foolish, but	Don'ts #6
18	(you) understand what the Lord's will is. And (you) do not get drunk with wine , in which there is dissipation, but (you) be filled	Dos #6 Don'ts #7 Dos #7
19	by the Spirit , speaking to one another by means of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing songs and psalms to the Lord with your hearts.	Result #1 Result #2
20	giving thanks always to God, the Father for all things in our Lord Jesus Christ's name,	Result #3
21	submitting to one another in the fear of Christ.	Result #4

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Slide #11

The contrast between “drunk with wine” and “filled by the Spirit” has led many to clutch to a believer being either emptied or filled—a *contents* idea. Thinking the connection is between increased consumption of wine (spirits) versus increased consumption of the Spirit, it is taught we need to get more of the Spirit in order to be increasingly filled by the Spirit. The noun “wine” (in the dative case) is thus translated as the prepositional phrase *with wine*. Likewise the prepositional phrase “by the Spirit” (*en* + object in dative case) is assumed to indicate the contents of filling and translated *with the Spirit*.

This approach is problematic for three reasons. *First*, following the verb “filling” a noun in the genitive case is normally used to indicate content; rarely is the dative case so used.²⁴ *Second*, there is a lack of examples in the New Testament in which *en* + the dative indicates

content.²⁵ *Third*, “filled by the Spirit” is not related to gaining more of the Spirit or losing some of the Spirit, as if He could leak out. Believers do not get any more or less of the Spirit than when He indwelt them the moment they were saved (e.g., 1 Cor 6:19). He is our seal, the guarantee of our salvation (e.g., Eph 1:13; 4:30).

Others’ understand this verse’s focus is *control*. In this case the noun “wine” is understood as a dative of means, indicating “the means by which something is done”²⁶ and translated as the prepositional phrase *with or by wine*. In turn the prepositional phrase *en* + *Spirit* (object in dative case) is taken to indicate the means by which filling takes place and be translated *with or by the Spirit*. Just as wine consumption is the means by which one becomes intoxicated, the Spirit is the means by which filling is accomplished leading to Christian maturity. In each case, wine (by means of alcohol content) or the Spirit (by means of the Spirit’s power) is allowed to control and produce behavioral changes in and through the person.

This perspective is likewise problematic. Ephesians 5 does not include or even suggest that a supposed “power of the Spirit” is involved in the Christian walk. In fact, the entire “how-to-live” section of Ephesians (chapters 4–6) excludes any mention of the term *power* except for the one instance in Ephesians 6:12, which references demonic beings who are at work in the world to thwart God’s purposes. Consequently, this is not only an argument *from* silence, but is in fact an argument *about* silence. The absence of the term *power* was intentional in the “how-to-live” section of Ephesians, as well as in the “how-to-live” section of Romans 5–8 (see *Insight to Romans 8:1-14, Critical Concept #1*).

Note: neither the alleged “power of sin” nor the assumed “power of the Spirit” to live the Christian life are biblically supportable. It isn’t the purpose of this *Article* to address these two errors. However, they are addressed in the *Introduction of Critical Concepts in Christian Living*.

Finally, others *combine* both concepts of *contents* and *control* to conclude that the greater degree either wine or the Spirit is allowed to impact a person results in wine or the Spirit altering or producing behavioral changes. This combo approach, however, compounds the flaws of each view.

Each of these teachings has become prevalent in the Church because the context of Ephesians 5 is not properly taken into account.

PREDOMINANT INTERPRETATIONS
Ephesians 5:18

OPTION	FOCUS	ILLUSTRATION
Contents	Quantity of Wine	
	Quantity of Spirit	
Control	Wine Controlled	
	Spirit Controlled	

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Slide #12

The grammatical construction of verse 18 assists in gaining insight to the proper understanding of this verse in the context of Ephesians 5.

First, the construction of “do not get drunk with wine” is made up of a present-passive-imperative verb (*do get drunk*), a negative (*not*), and noun (*wine*) in the dative case. While the imperative form sets forth a command the individual either chooses to obey or not, the passive voice indicates the subject (an assumed “you” or “believer”) receives the action performed through an agent.²⁷ The noun *wine* is translated as a prepositional phrase *with or by wine*, being understood as the dative of agency by which drunkenness is accomplished.²⁸ Consequently Paul implores, “You [believer] do not allow yourself to be drunk [one’s choice] with wine [agent of intoxication].”

Second, the construction of “be filled by the Spirit” also contains a present-passive-imperative verb (*be filled*) and a prepositional phrase (*by* [preposition, *en*] + *Spirit* [object, noun in dative case]). Again the subject (an assumed “you” or “believer”) is commanded to choose to obey and thus “be filled,” with the passive voice indicating the agent of being filled is the Spirit.²⁹ The actual construction of the prepositional phrase “by the Spirit” (*en* + object in dative case) is likewise understood to reference agency, indicating that “being filled” is accomplished “with the help of” the Spirit.³⁰ The resulting translation: “You [believer] are to allow yourself to be filled [one’s choice] by the Spirit [agent of filling].”

Slide #13

Having identified the agents of both drunkenness and filling, it should be understood that “agency” does *not clarify the manner* in which either occurs. The key to understanding both is found in the context of the passage under consideration or from parallel texts.

You are probably thinking, “Why didn’t Paul just tell us exactly what he was thinking? In what way does drunkenness and filling occur? Let me suggest we should step back and observe the word picture Paul paints for us in vivid colors. This particular text has historically been churned into the theological product we desired to see (see slide #11). We have missed that which was staring us right in our face. Lets actually observe the brushstrokes of the text.

First, as we consider the *manner in which one becomes drunk*, we need to remember drinking wine (*oinos*) was the normal practice in New Testament times. When the

GRAMMATICAL CONSTRUCTION
Ephesians 5:18

(BELIEVER) DO NOT BE DRUNK BY WINE

Subject (2nd pers, pl)	Verb (pres, pass, imper)	Agent (dative)
----------------------------------	------------------------------------	--------------------------

(BELIEVER) BE FILLED BY THE SPIRIT

Subject (2nd pers, pl)	Verb (pres, pass, imper)	Agent (dative)
----------------------------------	------------------------------------	--------------------------

12

MISSING ITEMS IN THE TEXT
Ephesians 5:18

RESULT	MANNER	AGENT
Drunk	[]	Wine
Filled	[]	Spirit

13

mother of Jesus at the wedding in Cana informed Him, “They have no wine” (John 2:3), Jesus understood it to be a request to provide wine in order to alleviate any embarrassment on the part of the hosts. The response of the wedding’s headwaiter confirmed that wine was the result of Jesus’ miracle (v 9). In fact the headwaiter informed the bridegroom that this new wine was even a better quality than that which was previously provided (v 10). Consequently the issue in Ephesians 5:18 is not if believers can drink wine or not since Jesus himself drank wine. Rather the issue concerns the manner in which wine consumption leads to drunkenness. Differing from mere quantity of wine, drunkenness is a state of intoxication due to excessive alcohol levels.

Paul addressed this very topic when he wrote to Timothy and Titus concerning the list of qualifications for those in local church leadership. In both letters he states, “An overseer, then, must be...not *addicted to wine*” (1 Tim 3:2-3, NASB, italics added) and “For the overseer must be...not *addicted to wine*” (Titus 1:7, NASB, italics added).³¹ In each case the word used *paroinos* (*par + oinos*) can also be translated “given to wine” (NKJV) or “given to drunkenness” (NIV). Again notice that drinking wine was not the issue, but consuming it in excess certainly was. This also applies to all believers since the noun *drunkenness* (*methe*, Gal 5:21) of the verb *be drunk* (*methusko*, Eph 5:18) is in the list of the “deeds (works) of the flesh” found in Galatians 5:19-21.

With this in mind in the first portion of Ephesians 5:18, the agent of becoming intoxicated is wine. Choosing to drink too much increases one’s alcohol level. Consequently the increasing level of alcohol is the *manner* in which one becomes drunk, leading to ruinous living (dissipation). *Receptiveness is a choice!*

Second, we turn from the customary to the unfamiliar in the second portion of verse 18 where Paul explains the *manner in which filling is experienced*. Remember in the immediate context of verses 15-17, Paul exhorted the believer to walk as a wise person, increasingly gaining insight to the nature of things through the Word of God (v 15). As a result, the wise person will apply that which was comprehended into practical living (v 17), “approving what is pleasing to the Lord” (v 10), the “will of the Lord” (v 17).

Rather than the usual “contents” or “control” approaches, Paul explained that only when believers walk in conformity to the Word of God are they walking wisely. Why? It is because God’s Word, which was given through the Spirit (2 Pet 1:21), was given so that we would be prepared for every situation (2 Tim 3:16-17). Further Paul explained that comprehending the “will of the Lord” or “Christ’s will” has to do with biblical discernment in everyday practical living—not only knowing truth from the Word but also putting it into practice in real-life experiences. “Christ’s will” corresponds to “law of Christ” (Gal 6:2; Jam 1:25) given in the commands of Christ and his Apostles (2 Peter 3:2) and should not be confused with the Law of Moses (see chapters 12 and 13 of *Escape*). Consequently, Paul informs us the *manner* in which we can be filled is by choosing to be conformed with Christ’s will, leading to joyous living. Again, *receptiveness is a choice!*

Slide #14

We have identified “wine” and the “Spirit” as the *agents* in verse 18 with their corresponding *manners* in which “being drunk” and “being filled” become a reality. In each case, the present-passive-imperative form of the verb clarifies Paul’s instruction. The present tense in this particular verse should be understood to point out repeated action with the probability of interruptions,³² bringing to mind and is consistent with the earlier example of the daughter who makes or doesn’t make her bed. The passive voice indicates believers are acted upon, receiving the action expressed by the verb.³³ In fact, “the passive voice suggests that believers cannot fill themselves.”³⁴ Lastly, “the imperative mood places the responsibility on the believers.”³⁵ Consequently “believers are exhorted to be filled repeatedly by the Holy Spirit.”³⁶ They are to pursue allowing themselves to be filled by the Spirit.

ITEMS ASSUMED FROM THE TEXT
Ephesians 5:18

RESULT	MANNER	AGENT
Drunk	Alcohol	Wine
Filled	Christ’s Will	Spirit

14

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Paul exhorts believers *first*:

(Believer) do not be drunk (with alcohol) *by* wine
(Subject) (Manner) (Agent)

Drunkenness being the process of choosing to be increasingly *receptive* to alcohol through wine; it is a *willingness to allow* “alcohol” to increasingly influence one’s thinking and behavior provided by wine and translated:

(Believer) do not be influence (with alcohol) by wine
(Subject) (Manner) (Agent)

Then in contrast, Paul exhorts believers *secondly*:

(Believer) be filled (with Christ’s will) *by* the Spirit
(Subject) (Manner) (Agent)

Filling being the process of choosing to be increasingly *receptive* to Christ’s will found in God’s Word through the Spirit; it is a *willingness to allow* “Christ’s will” to increasingly influence one’s thinking and behavior provided by the Spirit through the Word and translated:

(Believer) be influenced (with Christ’s will) by the Spirit
(Subject) (Manner) (Agent)

In *Critical Concepts #1* and *#2* that concerned “leading,” we used an illustration of a basketball coach and his team to clarify the concept of “agency.” In reference to “filling” here in *Critical Concept #3*, the identical illustration is repeated to clarify “agency” from a different perspective. The change stems from the imperative verb form of “be filled” in Ephesians 5:18, making it the responsibility of the believer to be filled.

Previously we explained that “being led” in basketball was the result of each player allowing himself to be influenced with the playbook (manner) provided by the coach (agent). Applying this to the Christian life, “being led” is having one’s walk aligned with and influenced by the Word of God (manner) provided by the Spirit (agent). The parallels between (1) the playbook and the Word and (2) the coach and the Spirit are obvious. As a believer walks in harmony with the Word from the Spirit, he/she is “being led” by the Spirit.

When we consider “being filled” in basketball, each player is responsible to experience “filling.” As before, the playbook (manner) and the coach (agent) remain the same. The required accountability of each player has to do with the acquisition and internalization of the playbook content so that it becomes instilled within him, knowing the coach’s will for every condition and situation. The emphasis is on the internalization of the coach’s will rather than execution of the plays. Likewise in the Christian life, the prerequisite for knowing how to live is the internalization of Christ’s will (manner) in the Word of God provided by the Spirit (agent). In order for believers to live in harmony with God and express the life of Christ to the world, the will of Christ must first be firmly established within them. Only then is the process of “being filled” through study of the Scriptures a reality, making it possible to walk obediently, which is the evidence of “being led.”

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Slide #15

The preferred translation of Ephesians 5:18 includes the *manner* of “being drunk” is *with alcohol* and the *manner* of “being filled” is *with Christ’s will*. Consequently, the verse could be translated:

*Do not get drunk [with alcohol]
by wine,
in which there is dissipation,
but be filled [with Christ’s will]
by the Spirit.*

PREFERRED INCLUSIVE TRANSLATION
Ephesians 5:18

Do not get drunk [with alcohol] by wine,
in which there is dissipation,
but
be filled [with Christ’s will] by the Spirit.

15

Slide #16

The case could be made that the contrast between “wine” and “Spirit” in Ephesians 5:18 was actually between “flesh” and “Spirit.” In Paul’s writings he frequently makes the contrast between *good* and *evil* in the Christian life. In Ephesians 5 alone, we have seen this contrast between walking *wisely* or *unwisely* and walking in the *light* or in *darkness*. Paul contrasts between the behavior of the *old man* and the *new man* in both Ephesians 4 and Colossians 3. In the important how-to-live texts of Romans 8 and Galatians 5, Paul sets forth the contrast between the *Spirit* and *flesh*. In Romans he taught to “walk in relation to the Spirit” rather than “walk in relation to the flesh” (8:4). In Galatians he taught to “walk with the Spirit” rather than to “walk with the flesh” (5:16-17).

Keep in mind Paul previously implored believers not to be engaged in the behavior cited in

Ephesians 5:3 (see slide 5). There he addressed the necessity of believers not participating in *immorality* and *impurity* that are included in the list of the “deeds of the flesh” (Gal 5:19-21). Then Paul addressed *drunkenness* in Ephesians 5:18, which is again included in the “deeds of the flesh.” Consequently, the readers of this letter could naturally conclude from Paul’s other teachings on Christian living that the underlying *agent* that leads to ruinous living is their sinful *flesh*, their propensity to sin.

GRAMMATICAL CONSTRUCTION
ADDRESSING FLESH-SPIRIT CONTRAST
Ephesians 5:18

(Believer) do not be drunk (with alcohol) by the flesh

Subject
Manner
Agent

(Believer) be filled (with Christ’s will) by the Spirit

Subject
Manner
Agent

16

Taken in this way, intoxication produces a disoriented lifestyle when one's propensity to sin is allowed to influence the believer's choices with increasing alcohol levels. The contrast between flesh and Spirit would be shown in the following way:

(Believer) do not be drunk (with alcohol) *by* flesh
 (Subject) (Manner) (Agent)

but rather

(Believer) be filled (with Christ's will) *by* the Spirit
 (Subject) (Manner) (Agent)

Slide #17

When seen from the flesh-Spirit perspective, one would conclude from Ephesians 5:18 the following *biblical principle*:

(Believer) do not be influenced
 (with "any stimulus"
 from the world system)
 by one's propensity to sin,
 but rather

(Believer) be influenced
 (with Christ's will
 from the Word of God)
 by the Spirit

**BIBLICAL PRINCIPLE
 FLESH-SPIRIT PERSPECTIVE
 Ephesians 5:18**

Do not be influenced [with "any stimulus" from
 the world's system] by one's propensity to sin,
 but
 be influenced [with Christ's will from
 the Word of God] by the Spirit.

17

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Slide #18

A summary of the three contrasts in Ephesians 5:15-18 are shown. The contrast in verse 15 is between walking unwisely and wisely. That context relates to the believer's proper discernment of the *Word of God*. In order to walk wisely, biblical discernment must be correctly applied to life experiences. Putting that information into practice demonstrates an understanding and application of the *will of God* rather than a foolish disregard for it (v 17). Then in verse 18 Paul provides a visual illustration. He connects drunkenness with a lack of good judgment and then contrasts drunkenness with being filled by the *Spirit of God* through a proper alignment with the will of God.

THE CONTRASTS
Ephesians 5:15-18

VERSE	"DO NOT BE"	CONTRAST	"BE"	RELATES TO
15	Unwise	"BUT"	Wise	Word of God
17	Foolish	"BUT"	Understand	Will of God
18	Drunk	"BUT"	Filled	Spirit of God

18

Slide #19

The red arrows indicate that the *Word of God* in verse 15 is the source for both understanding and application of the *will of God* (v 17). Finally in verse 18, it is the will of God with which the believer is filled through the agency of the *Spirit of God*.

In verses 15-18, Paul explained living wisely depends on the believer allowing the Spirit to influence his thoughts and actions through the Word. If the believer walks in obedience to the Word of God, he is walking wisely (vv 15-16), living out the will of Christ (v 17) as he allows the Spirit to influence his god-oriented lifestyle (v 18). On the other hand, if the believer walks in disobedience, he is walking unwisely (vv 15-16), dismissing the will of Christ (v 17) and experiencing a disoriented lifestyle as illustrated through drunkenness (v 18).

THE CONTRASTS
Ephesians 5:15-18

VERSE	"DO NOT BE"	CONTRAST	"BE"	RELATES TO
15	Unwise	"BUT"	Wise	Word of God
17	Foolish	"BUT"	Understand	Will of God
18	Drunk	"BUT"	Filled	Spirit of God

19

Slide #20

Returning to the section on walking wisely (Eph 5:15-21), notice in verse 18 the insertions of the manner in which both drunkenness and filling become a reality.

Then in verses 19-21, Paul gave four characteristics that are the result of being “filled with Christ’s will by the Spirit.” Remember Paul had already indicted the characteristic of intoxicated people, those “in which there is dissipation”—a lifestyle which is “reckless”³⁷ or “ruinous.”³⁸ Rather than a disoriented lifestyle of the drunkard, the believer who is “filled with Christ’s will” manifests a god-oriented lifestyle, choosing to align one’s life with Christ’s will.

The results from living according to God’s Word are:

Speaking—“The means by which believers are to communicate with one another is psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.”³⁹

Singing—“Music is the means by which believers minister to each other and worship the Lord.”⁴⁰

Thanksgiving—“Giving thanks... primarily for thanksgiving to God.”⁴¹

Submitting—“Mutual submission to one another.”⁴²

Colossians 3:5-17 is a parallel text addressing the contrast between the behavior of the *old man* (corresponding to the “deeds of the flesh,” Gal 5:19-21), which believers were to avoid, and the behavior of the *new man* (corresponding to the “fruit of the Spirit,” Gal 5:22-3), which believers should embrace. Encouraging those who desire to be obedient to the Word, Paul states:

Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God (Col 3:16).

Two similar themes produce identical results. Whether stated as “letting the word of Christ dwell within” (Col 3:16) or as “choosing to be filled with the will of Christ” (Eph 5:18), each result in a godly way of life.

WALKING WISELY Ephesians 5:15-21

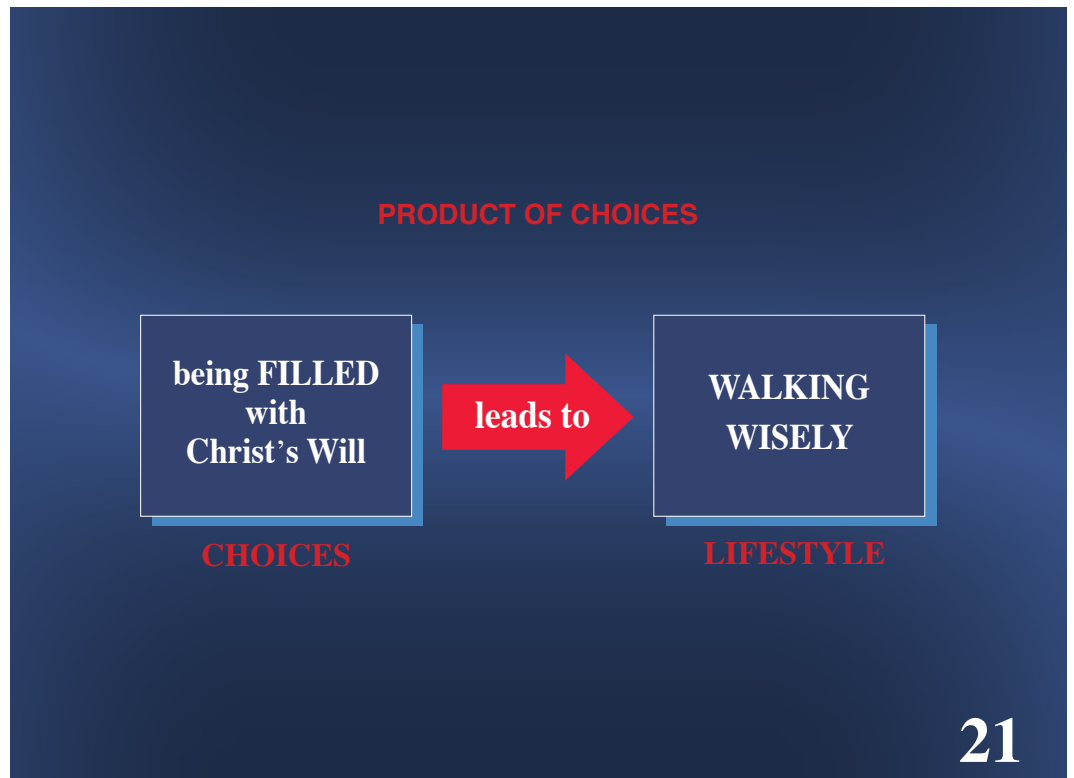
15	Therefore (you) look how carefully you are walking, not as unwise but as wise,	<i>Don'ts #5</i> <i>Dos #5</i>
16	taking advantage of every opportunity, because the days are evil.	
17	On account of this (you) do not become foolish, but (you) understand what the Lord's will is.	<i>Don'ts #6</i> <i>Dos #6</i>
18	And (you) do not get drunk [with alcohol] by wine, in which there is dissipation, but (you) be filled [with Christ's will] by the Spirit,	<i>Don'ts #7</i> <i>Dos #7</i> <i>Result #1</i>
19	speaking to one another by means of psalms hymns, and spiritual songs, singing songs and psalms to the Lord with your hearts,	<i>Result #2</i> <i>Result #3</i>
20	giving thanks always to God, the Father for all things in our Lord Jesus Christ's name,	<i>Result #4</i>
21	submitting to one another in the fear of Christ.	

20

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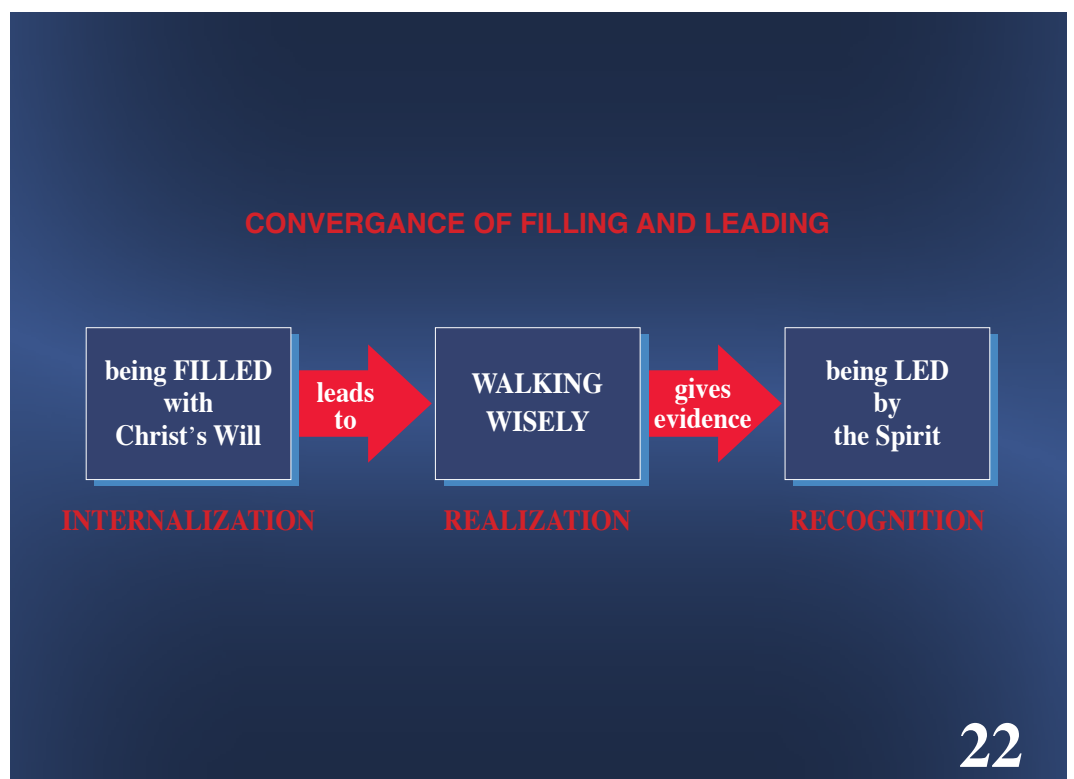
Slide #21

Ephesians 5:1-21 explains that living is a product of the choices from the daily decisions we make. If we choose to *walk wisely* in conformity to the will of God in His Word, we will experience filling by the Spirit. Our *lifestyle* will give evidence that we are indeed “being filled by the Spirit.”



Slide #22

The emphases of the Spirit's filling (Eph 5:18) and leading (Rom 8:14; Gal 5:18) differ in reference to “walking wisely” (Eph 5:18) or “walking with the Spirit” (Rom 8:4; Gal 5:16). Filling refers to the internalization of Christ's will that leads to the actual realization of a godly walk, as His will is applied in life experiences. Filling is the prerequisite for a wise walk. On the other hand, being led by the Spirit is the recognition of a wise walk. It is the consequence of a wise walk, giving evidence that the Spirit is indeed leading the Christian.



Endnotes

1. Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 644.
The verb is a “present imperative ‘to become’ rather than ‘to be.’” Hoehner translates the present imperatives in 5:1, 7, and 17 “to become” since he understands them to “denote (in this context) the ingressive-progressive force to begin and continue” (668).
2. *Ibid.*, 662 (italics added).
3. *Ibid.*, 661.
4. Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 518-522.
While different Greek-grammar sources have different classifications for present tense verbs, the following concern the distinction being made in Ephesians 5. With occurrence shown in relation to time, Wallace distinguishes *progressive*, *habitual* and *iterative* present tense verbs as follows:

Progressive—“The present tense may be used to describe a scene in progress...involves *continuous* action” (518):

<u>Past</u>	<u>Present</u>	<u>Future</u>

Habitual—“The customary present is used to signal either an action that *regularly* occurs...but not without interruption” (521-22, italics his):

<u>Past</u>	<u>Present</u>	<u>Future</u>
	

Iterative—“The present tense may be used to describe an event that *repeatedly* happens...different from the [habitual] present in terms of time frame and regularity...less regular” (520-21, italics his):

<u>Past</u>	<u>Present</u>	<u>Future</u>
	

5. [BDAG–Bauer, Danker, Arndt, and Gingrich] Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (BDAG), 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 548.
See definition 2.
6. Both Matthew 5:20 and 7:21 concern “positional” righteousness (salvation) through faith in Christ rather than “practical” righteousness (obedience) as illustrated by Abraham in James 2:21-24 and as addressed in Genesis 15:6 [see chapter 4 of *Choose to Live*, 64-65].
7. BDAG, 294, definition 2.
To enter means “to come into something.”
8. *Ibid.*, 547, definition 2.
To inherit means to “acquire, obtain, come into possession of something.”
9. *Ibid.*, 98, definition 1.
10. *Ibid.*, 540.
11. Hoehner, 663.
12. *Ibid.*, 671-72.
13. BDAG, 255, definition 1.
Means “to make a critical examination of something, to determine genuineness, *put to the test, examine.*”
14. *Ibid.*, 35, definition 2.
In figurative manner, means “to being useless, *useless, unproductive.*”
15. *Ibid.*, 510, definition 1, b.
In figurative manner, means the “*result, outcome, product.*”
16. Hoehner, 687.
17. The verb *blepo* means “to process information by giving thought, *direct one’s attention to something, consider, note*” [BDAG, 179, definition 6, c], while *akribos* is an adverb “pertaining to strict conformity to a standard or norm, with focus on careful attention, *accurately, carefully, well* [BDAG, 39].
18. The adjective *asophos* means “one who lacks...proper discernment, *unwise, foolish*” [BDAG, 144], while the adjective *sophos* means “the capacity to understand and function accordingly, *wisdom* [BDAG, 934, definition 1].
19. The adjective *aphron* “pertains to lack of prudence or good judgment, *foolish, ignorant*” [BDAG, 159], while the participle form of *sunermi* means “to have intelligent grasp of something that challenges one’s thinking or practice, *understand, comprehend* [BDAG, 972].
20. Hoehner, 691.
21. *Ibid.*, 696.
22. Rather than a habitual present tense being in view, an iterative present tense is preferred. The context concerns action repeated over-and-over again with interruptions, rather than action regularly occurring without interruptions or action in progress.
23. Hoehner, 700.
24. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 374.
“Normally, a verb of filling takes a genitive of content; rarely, a simple dative of content.”
25. *Ibid.*, 375.
“There are no other examples in biblical Greek in which *en* + the dative after [to fill] indicates content.”

26. Philip R. Williams, *Grammar Notes* (Tacoma, WA: Northwest Baptist Seminary Greek class notes, 1988), 15 (italics added).
“The noun in the dative denotes the means by which something is done.”
27. H. E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (Toronto, Ontario, Canada: The Macmillan Company, 1957), 161.
“The passive voice is that use of the verb which denotes the subject as *receiving the action*” (italics theirs).
28. Williams, *Grammar Notes*, 16.
A noun in the dative form, denoting the agency (personal) by which something is done, is a *dative of agency* and typically indicated with “by.”
29. In this presentation, we pointed out that the “Spirit” in Ephesians 5:18 (“Believers be filled by the Spirit”) should be understood as a *dative of agency*. Others, however, disagree and indicate that the “Spirit” is a *dative of means*. That distinction is critical since the verb *be filled* is in the passive voice, indicating that believers cannot fill themselves. So, it is very important to understand biblically in what way believers are to be filled. In this presentation, we indicated that the acquisition of biblical truth with Christ’s will from the Word by the Spirit results in “the filling” (the Agency Approach). On the other hand, others believe the power of the Spirit produces “the filling” (the Means Approach). The former is the *manner* in which something is *obtained*, with believers allowing the Word from the Spirit (agent) to inform and influence them. On the other hand, the latter is the *means* by which something is *produced*, with believers allowing the Spirit to energize them.

Which approach should be chosen—Agency or Means? Unfortunately many select the Means Approach, being swayed by the typical understanding that the “power of the Spirit” for “Christian living” causes and produces obedience through the Christian. That in fact is not true! It cannot be biblically supported! Of course, the Spirit empowers believers for ministry, but that is not the case for “Christian living” (see article *Introduction to Critical Concepts in Christian Living*, 1-2). Yet, that is the bases for selecting the Means Approach in reference to the “Spirit” in Ephesians 5:18.

Below we reveal the way the Agency Approach differs from the Means Approach. Even though there are similarities in grammatical layout, the critical distinction is the *error of empowerment by the Spirit for Christian living in the Means Approach*.

AGENCY APPROACH

A noun in the dative form, denoting the agency (personal) by which something is accomplished, is a *dative of agency* and typically indicated with “by” (see endnote #28) Using Ephesians 5:18 (“Believers be filled by the Spirit”) as an illustration, we will show the way the verse is addressed via the “dative of agency” as understood by Philip Williams. [Philip R. Williams, *Grammar Notes* (Tacoma, WA: Northwest Baptist Seminary Greek class notes, 1988), 16.]

The grammatical construction of Ephesians 5:18 with a *dative of agency* is understood as follows:

Believers	be filled	by	the Spirit
Subject	Verb		Agent
(2nd pers, pl)	(pres, pass, imper)		(dative)

Within a sentence with a dative of agency, the subject receives the action of a passive voice verb. However, the manner in which that action is accomplished must be determined from the context. In this case, the “manner” is *with Christ’s will* (see v 17). The *Agency Approach* for Ephesians 5:18 follows:

Believers be filled	[with Christ’s will]	by the Spirit
(Subject)	(Manner)	(Agent)

MEANS APPROACH

Others understand the “Spirit” in Galatians 5:18 to be a *dative of means*. In comparison and again using Ephesians 5:18 (“Believers be filled by the Spirit”) as an illustration, we will show the way the verse is addressed when the “Spirit” is understood as a “dative of means.”

First Example by Daniel Wallace

[Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*
(Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 158, 162, 375.]

Wallace understands the “Spirit” in Galatians 5:18 “to indicate the means or instrument by which the verbal action is accomplished” (162). Consequently, the grammatical construction of Ephesians 5:18 with a *dative of means* is understood as follows:

Believers	be filled	by means of	the Spirit
Subject	Verb		Means
(2nd pers, pl)	(pres, pass, imper)		(dative)

Rejecting the dative of agency approach, Wallace’s translation of Ephesians 5:18 is “Believers are to be filled... *by means of the Spirit with the content of the fullness of God*” (375, italics his). As such, the *Means Approach* for Ephesians 5:18 follows:

Believers be filled [with the fullness of God] *by means of* the Spirit
(Subject) (Content) (Means)

Notice:

First, when compared to the agency approach, the “content” in the “means approach” and the “manner” in the “agency approach” refer to a similar concept.

Second, while not stating the means of filling is by the “power of the Spirit,” that is in fact his position as illustrated in his discussion on “walk by the Spirit” (Gal 5:16). He wrote, “the *empowering of the Spirit*...enables one to resist the flesh” (158, italics his).

Second Example by Harold Hoehner

[Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 699, 704.]

Citing Daniel Wallace (see footnote #2, 704) for support, the grammatical construction of Ephesians 5:18 with a *dative of means* is again understood as follows:

Believers be filled *by means of* the Spirit
Subject Verb Means
(2nd pers, pl) (pres, pass, imper) (dative)

Coming essentially to the same conclusion as Wallace, Hoehner’s translation of Ephesians 5:18 is “the Holy Spirit is the means by which believers are filled with Christ and his will” (704). Consequently, the verse rendered by the *Means Approach* follows:

Believers be filled [with Christ and his will] *by means of* the Spirit
(Subject) (Content) (Means)

Notice:

First, when again compared to the agency approach, the “content” in the “means approach” and the “manner” in the “agency approach” refer to a similar concept.

Second, while also not addressing the means of filling is by the “power of the Spirit,” that is in fact his position: “The will of the Lord...is carried out by the *power of God’s Spirit*” (699, italics added).

30. BDAG, 329.
See marker 6, the marker of “agency” for an *en* + object (in the dative case) construction indicates something is accomplished “with the help of” the object in the dative case.
Even without the preceding preposition *en*, “the noun in the dative denotes the agent by whom something is done” [Williams, *Grammar Notes*, 16.]
31. *Ibid.*, 780.
32. Hoehner, 704; See Endnote 4—The present-tense verbs in Ephesians 5:18 have to do with action repeated over-and-over again with interruptions (*iterative*), rather than action regularly occurring with infrequent interruptions (*habitual*) or continuous action in progress (*progressive*).
33. Wallace, 431.
34. Hoehner, 704.
35. *Ibid.*
36. *Ibid.*
37. BDAG, 148.
38. Hoehner, 701.
39. *Ibid.*, 709.
40. *Ibid.*, 713.
41. *Ibid.*, 714.
42. *Ibid.*, 717.