

The Holy Spirit

Week 12: Living in Step with the Spirit Today -- Ephesians 5:15-21; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-22

Every journey ends with the same quiet question: now what? For eleven weeks we have walked through the Scriptures' testimony about the Holy Spirit, who He is, the divine person who hovered over creation's waters and spoke through the prophets; what He did, anointing the Christ, raising Him, guiding the apostles into all truth, confirming the word with power until the word stood complete; and what He does, dwelling in every baptized believer, growing His fruit, interceding for our wordless prayers. The doctrine is on the table. The errors have been answered. And now comes the question every true doctrine eventually asks of the people who learn it: how then shall we live? Paul answers with a walking word and a watching word: "Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil."

His central command comes wrapped in a contrast no first-century reader could miss: "do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit." Two fillings, two controls. The drunk man is under an influence that loosens his tongue, redirects his steps, and rewrites his behavior. The Spirit-filled man is also under an influence, and Paul tells us exactly what it looks like when it takes hold: "addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ." Singing. Thanking. Submitting. And when Paul wrote the same instructions to Colossae, he named the filling's source: "let the word of Christ dwell in you richly" (Colossians 3:16). The Spirit fills the Christian the way a song fills a house, through the word He wrote, taking up residence in heart after heart, room after room.

But a fire can be neglected, and Paul's word to Thessalonica adds the warning and the balance this study must end on: "Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies, but test everything; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil." Quench is a fire word: the Spirit's work in a heart and a congregation can be doused, by despising His word, by neglected prayer, by ingratitude, by the slow drift this study has named more than once. And "test everything" is the other guardrail: the same church that must not grow cold toward the Spirit's real work must not grow gullible toward counterfeits of it. Cold cynicism on one side, credulous enthusiasm on the other, and between them the steady, singing, testing, thankful church of the New Testament.

So this final week is a portrait of that church, and of the Christian inside it: walking wisely in evil days, filled with the Spirit through the indwelling word, singing to the Lord and to one another, giving thanks always, submitting in reverence, rejoicing, praying without ceasing, testing everything, holding fast the good. Notice, before we begin, what the portrait is made of: not one

brushstroke of spectacle, and not one inch of coldness. Just a people in step with their Helper. We end this study the only way it could rightly end, with gratitude for Him, the Spirit of God, who searched the deep things of God and wrote them down for us, who washed us, dwells in us, helps us, and will one day raise us. Thank God for the Helper. Now let us keep in step.

Group Discussion: After eleven weeks in this study, how has your picture of the Holy Spirit changed? What did you believe, or vaguely assume, about Him three months ago that you now see differently, and what difference has it already begun to make in how you pray, worship, or read the Bible?

Personal Reflection: Paul's two commands frame this final week: "be filled with the Spirit" and "do not quench the Spirit." As you look honestly at your daily life, your time in the word, your singing, your gratitude, your prayer, which command do you most need this season: more filling, or less quenching? What makes you say so?

Read Ephesians 5:15–21; 1 Thessalonians 5:16–22

Study Questions

1. Paul commands, "Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:15–16). How does this watchful, time-redeeming walk summarize everything this study has taught about the Spirit-led life, and why do "evil days" make careful walking urgent rather than optional?
2. "Making the best use of the time" translates a marketplace word: buying up the opportunity like a merchant who knows the window is closing. Audit your last ordinary week honestly: where did your discretionary hours actually go? What is one block of time you will buy back this week for the word, for prayer, or for someone's good?
3. Paul sets two fillings side by side: "do not get drunk with wine... but be filled with the Spirit" (5:18). Comparing this command with its twin in Colossians 3:16 ("let the word of Christ dwell in you richly"), what does it mean to be filled with the Spirit, how does the filling happen, and why is drunkenness its perfect opposite?
4. Whatever fills a person controls a person: his speech, his steps, his reactions under pressure. When your life gets squeezed, by stress, criticism, interruption, loss, what actually spills out,

and what does that reveal about what you have been filled with? What would you need to take in daily for Christ to be what spills?

5. The first overflow of the Spirit-filled life is song: “addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart” (5:19; Colossians 3:16). What do these passages teach about congregational singing, its two audiences, its teaching function, and the instrument God specified, and why is this pattern not merely a tradition but the Spirit’s own design for the church’s music?
6. Be honest about your singing in the assembly: is it full-hearted address to the Lord and to your brethren, or a mumble while your mind wanders? The command is to sing “with your heart,” and somebody near you is supposed to be taught and admonished by your voice. What would change in Sunday’s assembly if you came prepared to sing as ministry?
7. Both passages climax in gratitude: “giving thanks always and for everything” (Ephesians 5:20) and “give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (1 Thessalonians 5:18). Why is thanksgiving so central to the Spirit-filled life, what is the difference between giving thanks “in” all circumstances and “for” all circumstances, and how do rejoicing and unceasing prayer (5:16–17) make such gratitude possible?
8. Ingratitude is quiet quenching: the heart that stops counting gifts soon stops feeling warmth toward the Giver. Name three specific gifts from this past month that you never thanked God for, including, perhaps, truths about the Spirit learned in this study. What daily practice would turn your noticing into thanking?
9. Paul commands, “Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies, but test everything; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil” (1 Thessalonians 5:19–22). In their setting and in ours, how do these commands guard the church on both sides at once, against quenching the Spirit’s real work by despising His word, and against counterfeits by testing every claim, and what does each look like in practice today?

10. Look back across all twelve weeks of this study: the divine person who can be grieved, the Godhead at the Jordan, the Spirit of creation and prophecy, the anointed Christ, the guided apostles, Pentecost, the confirming miracles, the completed word, the indwelling gift, the fruit, the intercession, and now the walk. Name the one truth about the Holy Spirit for which you are most thankful, the one error this study has best equipped you to answer with gentleness, and the one concrete way you will keep in step with the Spirit in the month ahead.

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: Galatians 5:22–25, the fruit of the Spirit and the call to keep in step with Him; Colossians 3:12–17, the word dwelling richly, singing, and everything done in Jesus' name; Acts 17:10–12, the noble Bereans who received eagerly and examined daily; 1 John 4:1–6, testing the spirits by the apostles' word; Romans 8:31–39, the love of God in Christ Jesus from which nothing can separate us