

## **How are commands directed toward us good news? (5/8/22)**

Sermon Description: The bible has SO. MANY. COMMANDS. Maybe your experience with church boiled down to “do all this and avoid all that.” That sounds exhausting...because it is. So how should we read such passages? Is it even possible to read them as good news? Yes! We'll consider how this Sunday.

Main Passage: Ephesians 5:15-21

Title: How are commands directed toward us good news?

Topics: God>Attributes of>God as Superior

Tags: wise, foolish, filled, Spirit, submit, limits

Questions to consider:

- Can you see that our worthwhile efforts, at best, bring partial order?
- Amidst our limits, do you see Christ as the only one who brings order at the fullest level to our chaotic, sinful souls?

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Week #16

Introduction: Happy Mother's Day

When Mother's Day Hurts

### **Ephesians**

Where we've been

#### **Ephesians 5:15–21**

<sup>15</sup>Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, <sup>16</sup>making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. <sup>17</sup>Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. <sup>18</sup>And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, <sup>19</sup>addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, <sup>20</sup>giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>21</sup>submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

#### **Unwise and Wise / Foolish and Understand / Get drunk on wine and Be filled with the Spirit**

It's not hard to understand within each pair which is to be preferred. It reminds me of an old dieting book, “Eat This Not That!” And if it were only as difficult as deciding between two items

– one which is obviously good and the other not – then life would be easy. But we know life’s decisions are more difficult than that. But, even if we could discern, there is still a problem. Where? With what? With God? No. With God’s law? No. With us!

Do you remember mathematical limits? As your x-values increase, your y-value approaches a certain number, or limit. Do you remember this? Friends, it doesn’t matter how great the x-values increase in my life, I hit a limit. That limit comes well before God’s law is exhausted. I reach my limits long before I’m able to meet all the demands and commands I hear from this book. So, I say again, is that God’s fault? No! It’s mine.

### **So, how can these words, or any commands, be Good News for us?**

I want to quote my brother-in-law. He gives some important words on how to interpret wisdom literature. Wisdom literature is often seen within the Old Testament in books like Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, and Job. Consider Proverbs. Within it are a bunch of sayings intended to point out a better option. An example would be, “It is not good to eat much honey, nor is it glorious to seek one’s own glory” (Prov. 25:27). We can hear the “Do this not that” within these words. We can hear the command. That is comparable to the words we have in our passage for today. Be wise not foolish. Be filled with the Spirit and not drunk on wine.

Consider these words which help us:

*One of the larger biblical themes to understand here, as we get our bearings, is the idea that wisdom and order are closely related. At this point in the story we’re still in the process of moving from chaos to order that is partially attainable through proverbial wisdom, but not fully attainable until Christ comes. For Christ is the ultimate man of wisdom (Matt 12:42) who brings order at the highest level to our chaotic, sinful souls. So here’s some of the best interpretational advice on Proverbs I can give off the cuff: **Proverbs are glimpses of partial order, and are therefore prophecies of Jesus Christ, hope for the true and better Solomonic-order-bringer who was to come.***

Chris Wachter  
Hiawatha Church Lead Pastor

I want us to hear that. Partial order. *Partial*. You and I have capacity to bring a partial order to our lives. Are the commands bad? NO! The issue is with us. We have limits. In our minds, in our hearts, in our relationships, in our decisions. This is to say, we can bring partial order to our world, to our chaotic sinful souls...but there is one who can bring complete order, complete fulfillment to our lives. Christ! That’s how these commands get us to good news. Not that we’d be able to do every one. We won’t. Not that in doing them, God owes us a certain stand of life. He doesn’t. These commands are proverbial. They indicate a way of life that will *tend* to go better for you. But we have our limits. This world has its limits. Only Christ overcomes our limitations!

**<sup>15</sup>Look carefully then how you walk.**

We've seen the verb "walk" two other times already within the second half of this book.

### **Ephesians 4:1**

<sup>1</sup>I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to **walk** in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called..

### **Ephesians 5:2**

...<sup>2</sup>and **walk** in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Have you ever played that game where you pick a word and see how many movie titles or song titles have that word within it? Walk would be a worthwhile candidate for such a game. Here's just a short sampling. (I tried to grab a variety)

'Walk Like an Egyptian' by The Bangles  
'I'm Gonna Be' (500 Miles) by The Proclaimers  
'Walk On The Wild Side' by Lou Reed  
'Walking On Broken Glass' by Annie Lennox  
'I Walk the Line' by Johnny Cash  
'I Shall Not Walk Alone' by Ben Harper  
'Walkin' the Dog' by The Rolling Stones  
'Walking in Memphis' by Marc Cohn  
'Walk On By' by Dionne Warwick  
'Walk This Way' by Run DMC ft. Aerosmith  
'Walking on Sunshine' by Katrina & the Waves  
'These Boots are Made for Walking' by Nancy Sinatra  
'Walk' by Foo Fighters  
'Jesus Walks' by Kanye West

I want to be honest. Prior to this week I didn't know one Kanye West song title. So when this song title came up on a search, I looked up the lyrics. FRIENDS! Have you heard this song?

To the hustlers, killers, murderers, drug dealers even the strippers

(Jesus walks for them)

To the victims of welfare for we living in hell here, hell yeah

(Jesus walks for them)

Now, hear ye, hear ye, want to see Thee more clearly

I know He hear me when my feet get weary

Now, on Mother's Day, I had no idea that I'd be quoting Kanye West nor did I know I'd be saying "hell yeah." But do you hear these words? Jesus walks for them. Not Jesus tells them they better walk better. Not they better quicken their pace, they've fallen behind everyone else. Not more mistake and I'm out. It says, "Jesus walks for them." Jesus walks for those who cannot do it, for those who recognize their need, who at their best fall woefully short, people who understand their limits. Is that you?

**...not as unwise but as wise, <sup>16</sup>making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. <sup>17</sup>Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.**

Two items to discuss here: the will of the Lord and the days being evil.

What is the will of the Lord? Piece of cake. That's a joke. There are hundreds of books written on the topic. So how, in a couple minutes, can we possibly break this down? Start with the closest context – the book of Ephesians. Let me take you back to chapter 1 where the writer mentions God's will three times within 7 verses.

### **Ephesians 1:5, 9, 11**

In love <sup>5</sup>he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will... With all wisdom and understanding, <sup>9</sup>he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ... <sup>11</sup>In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will...

So here we see his will is connected to three different items:

1. Adoption: God adopts us into his family through Christ.
2. Mystery: His will was made known, was revealed, through Christ.
3. Unity: God is working his plan to bring conformity consistent with his will.

Is there more than that? For sure. But this is enough for us to understand Paul's meaning in today's passage. Foolishness is contrasted with understanding the Lord's will. And the Lord's will, amongst other realities, is the word of Christ to adopt us, make known God's mystery, and to bring unity to all things.

The days are evil? What does that mean?

At a base level, this serves as a warning to all who trust in "tomorrow." I'll do it tomorrow. We'll have time tomorrow. I don't want to think about that right now.

When the bible speaks of consequential matters, it prioritizes always today.

### **2 Corinthians 6:1–2**

<sup>1</sup>As God's co-workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain. <sup>2</sup>For he says, "In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you." I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation.

In parts of Hebrews, there is a repeated expression, "Today, if you hear his voice, don't harden your hearts." In other words, don't expect God to repeat himself tomorrow. Hear him today. Take note today. Heed him today.

**<sup>18</sup>And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, <sup>19</sup>addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, <sup>20</sup>giving thanks always and for everything to God the**

**Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>21</sup>submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.**

Have you ever journeyed with someone who had an addiction? Drugs? Alcohol? Sex? Or maybe that's been your addiction, that's been your struggle?

If you have, you know what a controlling reality this can be. So much of life becomes unmanageable. Can't get work done, maybe to the point of being fired. Can't make relationships work amidst broken promises. All of life becomes centered around the next hit, or high, or drink.

Of the two – sobriety or drunkenness – choose sobriety. But, again, there are limits. There are limits to our capacity to bring order to our lives. Getting ahead on sobriety leaves hundreds of issues untouched. It brings only partial order to our lives and souls. We need Christ. We need the Holy Spirit. We need to be filled with the things of God by God.

So, what does it mean to be filled with the Spirit? I think what we have heard is a partial list. It's a list of possibilities, perhaps, that Paul utilized to connect with God and be filled. But it's not a promise, or 4 steps to being filled list. They're ideas. In fact there are many ways to be filled by God's Spirit.

A couple questions I tend to ask people when they ask me what does it mean to be filled by God's Spirit:

- When was the last time you felt really close to the Lord?
- Are you able to engage with him in any similar ways?

The ways listed in our passage are great. They're just incomplete. So be filled. Explore what that might be in your life. It doesn't have to look like the others in your small group (though it might.)

We're coming to the end of our time. But I want to introduce next week's topic. Why? Because the last verse today's passage connects with next week's.

**Ephesians 5:18–22**

<sup>18</sup>And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit,  
<sup>19</sup>addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, <sup>20</sup>giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>21</sup>**submitting** to one another out of reverence for Christ.

**Wives and Husbands**

<sup>22</sup>Wives, **submit yourselves** to your own husbands as you do to the Lord.

In verse 22, there is no verb. "Submit yourselves" is not present in the original manuscripts. Rather it is assumed from verse 21.

Consider this quote:

Referring to the submission of wives to their husbands, Ephesians 5:22 does not begin a new section, contra many of the Bible versions. In fact, Ephesians 5:22 does not have a main verb or even participle of its own, relying instead on the participle “submitting” (Eph 5:21). So it reads more like, “be filled with the Spirit ... submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ; wives, to your husbands, as to the Lord.”

Powell, Claire M.

M.A. Former Lecturer in New Testament, All Nations Christian College, Ware, England.

Catherine Kroeger, Mary Evans, and Elizabeth Elliot, [\*The IVP Women's Bible Commentary: An Indispensable Resource for All Who Want to View Scripture through Different Eyes\*](#) (InterVarsity Press, 2002), xxvi.

What is more, consider how varied this verb is throughout the New Testament. The people or things to the right of the slash indicate the one(s) who are to “submit” or “be subject to” the one left of the slash.

### **The uses of “submit” or “be subject to”**

- Joseph and Mary / Jesus
- Disciples / Demons (2)
- – God’s Law / Hostile Mind
- God / Creation’s Frustrations
- – God’s righteousness / Israel
- Government or Authorities / Everyone (4)
- Prophets/ Spirits of the Prophet
- – God the Son / God the Father
- God the Father / God the Son and everything else (3)
- God the Son /Everything else (4)
- You/Me, Me/You, Us/Them, Them/Us
- Husbands / Wives (5)
- Master / Servant (2)
- – Angels / World to Come
- Older / Younger

More on that next week.

Questions to consider:

- Can you see that our worthwhile efforts, at best, bring partial order?
- Amidst our limits, do you see Christ as the only one who brings order at the fullest level to our chaotic, sinful souls?

If these notes have been helpful or you’d ask for adjustments to be made to future notes, please let me know by emailing me (cor@hopec.com). Thanks!



HAPPY  
*Mother's Day*



WHEN  
MOTHER'S DAY  
HURTS



*Ephesians*

## Ephesians 5:15–21

<sup>15</sup>Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, <sup>16</sup>making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. <sup>17</sup>Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. <sup>18</sup>And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, <sup>19</sup>addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, <sup>20</sup>giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>21</sup>submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

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# The Best (& Worst) Foods in America!

Your ultimate restaurant and  
supermarket survival guide that could  
help you lose 10, 20, 30 pounds—or more!

# EAT THIS



*Cheesecake Factory  
Chicken and Avocado Salad  
1,830 calories, 130 g fat*



**Big Mac®**  
540 calories,  
29 g fat

Save  
1,290 calories  
and 101 grams  
of fat!

# NOT THAT!

DAVID ZINCZENKO

$$\lim_{\underbrace{x \rightarrow a}_{\text{"As you approach } a \text{ along the x-axis"}}} \underbrace{f(x)}_{\text{function}} = \underbrace{L}_{\text{"What is the y-value getting closer to?"}}$$

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## Ephesians 1:5, 9, 11

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I got so much procrastinating  
done today.



i'm not a procrastinator



i just prefer doing  
all my work in a  
deadline-induced panic

This is a perfect time  
to get some work done.

Nope!





## 2 Corinthians 6:1-2

<sup>1</sup>As God's co-workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain. <sup>2</sup>For he says, "In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you." I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation.

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When was the last time you felt  
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Are you able to engage with him  
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# Introduction to next week

## Ephesians 5:18-22

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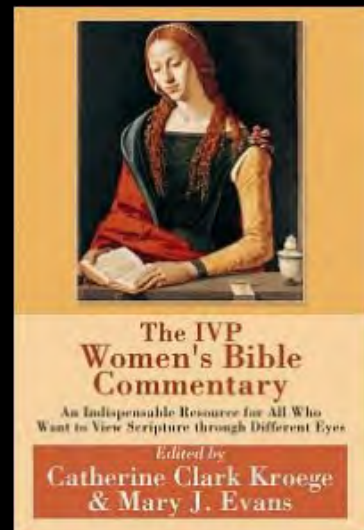
## Wives and Husbands

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# The uses of “submit” or “be subject to”

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God / Creation’s Frustrations

→ God’s righteousness / Israel

Government or Authorities /  
Everyone (4)

Prophets/ Spirits of the Prophets

→ God the Son / God the Father

God the Father / God the Son and  
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Them/Us

Husbands / Wives (5)

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→ Angels / World to Come

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