

**Ephesians 5: 17 & 18; “Understand the Will of the Lord”, Message # 44 in a series entitled – “The Greatness of His Power”, a Bible Study prepared by Pastor Paul Rendall for February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023.**

We are in this section of Paul’s letter where he is instructing us to walk circumspectly and to redeem the time. In order for you, the Christian, to do this, he says that you must 1<sup>st</sup> of all – Not be unwise, but understand God’s will is, he says in verse 17. Then, 2<sup>nd</sup> – You must not be drunk with wine which is dissipation, he says in verse 18a. And 3<sup>rd</sup> – You must be filled with the Spirit, he says in verse 18b. Following these instructions is not a thing that you automatically do perfectly when you first enter the Christian life. But you will by grace, grow in respect to your obedience and faithfulness to God as you understand and learn to do the will of the Lord. It is this concept that we want to understand better through this message.

**1<sup>st</sup> of all – You must not be unwise but understand God’s will.**

We saw in our last study that the definitions of wise and unwise as they are found in the Bible are related first of all to whether you are a believer or an unbeliever. It is the fool who has said in his heart that there is no God. And the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. So every Christian is wise in this sense, that they have believed in Christ. They have received the wisdom which leads to salvation in believing in the gospel. The gospel tells them that they are a sinner and they must needs be saved from their sins, and have the eyes of their heart, the eyes of their understanding opened to see that they need. They need all of the wisdom which the Scriptures have to offer if they would learn to be wise in all of their thoughts and all of their behavior.

Turn with me over to 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 3, verses 13-17. “But evil men and imposters will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.” “But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which in Christ Jesus.” “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” So we see here that unbelievers, including evil men and imposters will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.

Why is this? It is because they do not know the Lord. It is the nature of sin working in the heart and the soul of a person, to grow worse and worse if there is no opposing principle of grace there in their thoughts. It is God who by the Spirit shines light into man’s darkened understanding which leads to their being wise. Those who are unbelieving have not been made wise unto salvation. They either do not understand what God’s will is, because they do not study the Scriptures. Or they reject them or them want to twist them so that they can continue on in some sin or error that they are holding to.

But Timothy is told here that he must continue in the things that he had learned and been assured of from his childhood. From when he was a young person he had heard the Scriptures read to him. The Holy Scriptures define what is true about God. And what God’s will is, is only found by reading them or hearing them read to us. All of Scripture is given by inspiration of God. The word “inspiration” in the original Greek is *theopneustos* (θεοπνευστος). The word *Theo* meaning God and the word *pneustos* meaning breathed. The Scriptures are the breath of God, the word of God. They are not simply the words of men. But it was God, directly by His Holy Spirit, giving the wisdom of His will to men, to their minds and hearts as they wrote them.

The Scriptures are profitable for giving us doctrinal truth, the truth about God Himself, about Christ Himself, about the sending of the Only-Begotten Son by the Father into this fallen world of

sinner in order to save a people by grace through faith in Him. The reason that the Scriptures were given is also told us here. It is that the man of God (all those who teach and preach the Scriptures, and thus also, all those who hear and listen to them and want to be godly) may be complete. The intention of God's giving of the Scriptures is that every person who would be mature in their faith, would become discerning and wise and obedient to Him. And their growth in wisdom and obedience to God would come through their using the means of meditating upon the truth of the Scriptures being preached to them and shared with them.

In this wonderful way all those who are faithful people among the godly will be perfectly equipped for every good work; that is, to learn to do the will of God in every particular. Psalm 19, verses 7-11 show us how this wonderful transformation takes place in the heart of every believer in God and in Christ. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether." "More to be desired are they than gold, Yea than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb." "Moreover by them is Your servant warned, and in keeping them there is great reward."

When it says that the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul, in verse 7, the word "law" here is being used in the sense of the rule which the Lord would have us to live by. The Holy Scriptures are God's perfect rule for life. All of God's moral law is perfect for us to consider and to do. The Scriptures are perfect in they were given by God through holy men of old. And in believing in the truth of them, our soul will be converted to consider God and His ways. And we will learn them to do what He is commanding. Obeying the Scriptures by faith in Christ will restore us to be the kind of people who can be pleasing to God through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

This is what conversion is; the soul being saved by grace through faith in the gospel of Christ. The sinner who reads or hears the word obeys the gospel. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. Conversion is the beginning of a life of faith in God and Christ; of learning to understand what the will of the Lord is. In this regard, the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. Reading, believing, and learning to obey the Scriptures is the way to become wise and holy in all of our behavior.

What is particularly encouraging about this process of sanctification in living our Christian life, are the words of verse 8 – "The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart." "The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes." There is in the heart of every true Christian, a rejoicing that is taking place in their heart when they read the Bible. And in reading and receiving the truth of it they see and appreciate God's great mercy to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light and from the kingdom of Satan to Himself. There is a spiritual light inherently built into the Scriptures. God's word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path.

We see that to fear the Lord is a very clean thing. It is a very cleansing thing to our heart and mind, the effects of which will endure forever. We see that God's judgments, all of what He has set down in His word as being true and righteous. We see that all that He has done and will do in relation to judging all men, judging all and every sin, in regard to them, is righteous altogether. We see the great mercy and love for unworthy sinful men through His sending His Son to fulfill His law on their behalf, and then to suffer their punishment on the cross as their surety. We see the great need was for Him to pay their great debt of sin. This is a wonderful thing indeed!

We find that the Lord's way of looking at things is to be desired by us more than all riches; more than gold and much fine gold, and sweeter also than the honey and the honeycomb. Doing the Lord's will becomes a greater source of strength and encouragement, even more than our

necessary food. Jesus said – I have food to eat of which you do not know. John 4: 32. And so we also find in verse 11, that it is a great thing for God to warn us, even, of our many dangers in relation to our being unwise by nature in ourselves. When we are warned in the Scriptures that there we are under God’s wrath by nature, it is also a great encouragement then, to realize that there is, in keeping His commandments, great reward.

The reward is in knowing God better, and being blessed with the blessings that He gives both spiritually and materially to those who are obedient to Him. Proverbs 10: 22 – “The blessing of the Lord makes rich, and He adds no sorrow to it.” And also Romans 14: 17 – “The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.” This leads us to our 2<sup>nd</sup> point in understanding the will of the Lord.

**2<sup>nd</sup> – You must not be drunk with wine which is dissipation, he says in verse 18a.**

“And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation...” Here is an apostolic command not to be drunk with wine. To drink wine, according to the Scriptures is not something which is always condemned. For instance in Psalm 104: 14 and 15. “God causes the grass to grow for the cattle, and vegetation for the service of man, that he may bring forth food from the earth, and wine that makes glad the heart of man, oil that make his face shine, and bread which strengthens man’s heart.” There is every evidence here that God gives man the ability to make wine and to righteously enjoy it. If used in smaller amounts which do not cause drunkenness, it makes his heart glad, and there is no sin in drinking it.

It is well known too, that our Lord Jesus turned the water into wine, for the refreshment of the guests at the wedding in Cana of Galilee. But the Bible everywhere condemns drunkenness. A good example of verses which tell us this can be found in Proverbs 31: 4-7. “It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine, nor for princes intoxicating drink; lest they drink and forget the law, and pervert the justice of all the afflicted.” “Give strong drink to him who is perishing, and wine to those who are bitter of heart.” “Let him drink and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more.”

And also Proverbs 23: 29-35 – “Who has woe?” “Who has sorrow?” “Who has contentions?” “Who has complaints?” “Who has wounds without cause?” “Who has redness of eyes?” “Those who linger long at the wine, those who go in search of mixed wine.” “Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it swirls around smoothly; at the last it bites like a serpent, and stings like a viper.” “Your eyes will see strange things, and your heart will utter perverse things.” “Yes, you will be like who lies down in the midst of the sea, or like one who lies at the top of the mast, saying: but I was not hurt; they have beaten me, but I did not feel it.” “When shall I awake, that I may take another drink?”

So, what is wrong with being drunk with wine is told us here in our verse in Ephesians. It is dissipation. In the King James Version – It is excess. In the ESV – That is debauchery. (Which means excessive indulgence) The word dissipation according to Webster’s 1828 Dictionary means – Scattered attention; or that which diverts and calls off the mind from any subject. In other words, you can’t really focus on what you should be doing when you are drunk with wine. There is a good example of a bad men which is given to us in the Bible in regard to this sin. Nabal in 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 25.

He had refused to give David and his men food and drink when they really needed it, when they were fleeing from Saul. Even though David and his men had been a wall against Nabal’s enemies, he said in verses 10 & 11 – “Then Nabal answered David’s servants, and said, ‘Who is David, and who is the son of Jesse?’ “There are many servants nowadays who break away each one from his master.” “Shall I then take my bread and my water and my meat that I have killed

for my shearers, and give it to men who I do not know whether they are from?” You will remember that David’s men reported back to him that Nabal had spoken this way, and he told his men to gird on their swords. They were going to go kill him. Abigail, his wife, found out about it and intervened and took food and went quickly to David to plead for mercy from him. Afterwards, Abigail went to Nabal, and there he was, it says in verse 36, holding a feast in his house, like the feast of a king. And Nabal’s heart was merry within him, for he was very drunk; therefore she told him nothing, little or much, until morning light.

So it was, in the morning, when the wine had gone from Nabal, and his wife had told him these things, that his heart died within him, and he became like a stone. Then it happened, after about ten days, that the Lord struck Nabal, and he died.” You can see from the way that Nabal proceeded was from bad to worse. He had no thought of how he could love his neighbor David as himself. In the process of rejecting the idea that he needed to help David, then, he throws a party for himself, making himself merry with wine. He was acting like he was some kind of king and getting drunk trying to forget about his responsibility to show mercy and do good works. And thus he perished in his sins. Let none of us ever think that excessive wine drinking is a good thing.

**3<sup>rd</sup> – You must be filled with the Spirit, he says in verse 18b.**

“And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit. Now, I will only be able to introduce this subject this evening. I will speak much more of it in the next message. But I want to use the brief time remaining to show you what it meant for the apostles to be filled with the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, on the Day when the New Testament Church was founded. Acts chapter 2, verses 1-21. “When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.” “And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.” “Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each one of them.” “And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”

“And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven.” “And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language.” “Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, ‘Look, are not all these who speak Galileans?’ “And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born?” “Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoined Cyrene, visitors from Rom, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs – We hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God.” “So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, ‘Whatever could this mean?’”

Others mocking said, ‘They are full of new wine.’ “But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, ‘Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words.’ “For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day.” “But this is what was spoken of by the prophet Joel. Now, I haven’t time to go any farther in the reading of this Scripture than this.

And so let me explain for you something about the filling of the Holy Spirit. On this Day, it meant the giving of the Holy Spirit, the pouring forth of the Holy Spirit on the New Testament Church gathered there that day; the 11 apostles, and the 120 gathered. They preached and bore witness to thousands from many parts of world concerning the Lord Jesus Christ and the greatness of the grace that is in Him. This is what it means for ourselves today as well. Not being high on wine, but being filled with gifts and graces that lead to obedience and to witness to Christ.

