Opening Words

God provides many incentives to live for him, but this is the greatest incentive of all! God Himself has come to live in us.

179 Eph Live Obediently By the Spirit 1

Today, I get to share verses with you that I have thought about frequently in my life. They are important for us for many reasons. As you know, we have been covering a section in Ephesians where Paul has been giving us reasons to live obediently to Christ. This is what we want. We want to please our Lord and we want to be a testimony to the world.

We have seen in recent broadcasts how we can live obediently to the Lord because it is the wise thing to do. Paul tells us in 5:15-17 to walk with wisdom and not with foolishness, not to waste our precious time but to buy up the opportunities for service and to make the most of our lives.

In 5:8-14 Paul appealed to our sense of identity. We were darkness. Now we are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light. And in 5:4-7 Paul reminded us that the God of love and grace is also the God of judgment and he will judge those men and women in the world who continue to reject His word and persist in a life of immorality, impurity, and idolatry.

These three truths – walking in wisdom, walking in light, and walking in purity are incentives for us to continue pursuing Christ and not to participate in the dark practices of the pagan world.

To these three powerful truths, Paul adds one more incentive to live obediently and we find it in verses 18-21. Follow along as I read.

> 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.

Here is the greatest incentive of all! God Himself has come to live in us. The Holy Spirit indwells us and we are to be continually filled with the Spirit of God. We should live obediently because we are in the most intimate relationship possible with the God of the universe! Remember 4:30 where Paul said, "Do not grieve the Spirit of God" by the way you behave? None of us likes to disappoint another. We don't like to bring grief to others through our behavior. I'm afraid, though, we sometimes forget that our poor behavior grieves God as well as our fellow humans. We forget that God has emotions. And God is saddened by our sin. But in the verses before us today, we see the flip side to this. Paul tells us to be filled with the Spirit.

What does it mean to be filled with the Spirit? Well, what does it mean to be filled up with anyone in a positive way? I have told my family on numerous occasions that some of my happiest moments have been when Kathy and I have had the grandkids over and we have gone for walks with them to a playground. It's such a simple thing, but as Kathy and I walk in peace with one another, as we see

our two grandsons growing up, and as we spend time with them and enjoy them, my heart has been so filled with joy that I was afraid it was going to burst! All of this points to healthy relationships.

God wants us to have a healthy relationship with him, and we will have times where we are filled with joy. I am afraid sometimes we forget that. Sometimes we get so caught up in what we are doing, or the principles we are obeying that we forget the primary truth that we are in a relationship and God himself has come to live within us and bring us joy.

This is what God wanted all along. Since the Garden of Eden, when Adam ruptured our relationship with him, God's great goal has been to restore us to himself so that he could come to live among us and in us. What God has wanted more than anything has been to dwell among his people. Do you remember the statements he made repeatedly to Israel?

> Exodus 29:45 - I will dwell among the sons of Israel and will be their God.
>
> Leviticus 26:11-12 Moreover, I will make My dwelling among you, and My soul will not reject you. **12** I will also walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people.
>
> Ezekiel 37:27 - My dwelling place also will be with them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people.

But the greatest promise of all God's promises to dwell among his people, is the prophecy of Joel. Listen to Joel's words from 2:28-29:

> "It will come about after this
> That I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind;
> And your sons and daughters will prophesy,
> Your old men will dream dreams,
> Your young men will see visions.
> **29** "Even on the male and female servants
> I will pour out My Spirit in those days.

The coming of the Spirit of God! That is what the prophets pointed to as one of the great blessings of the last days. Do you remember what John the Baptist preached? Do you remember what he said was the great climax of his preaching? He said he was preparing the way for the Messiah and that when the Messiah came, he would bestow the Spirit of God upon all his people!

Listen to John's words: "John answered and said to them all, "As for me, I baptize you with water; but One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove the sandals from his feet. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." John said, "Get ready for the Messiah because he will pour out the Spirit upon you in fulfillment of the prophecies of old," and here is the great news – the Spirit is coming upon all of God's people!

In Old Testament times, before the coming of Christ, the Spirit of God came only to some of God's people – usually the leaders such as the kings, the prophets, and the judges. He would come to empower his leaders to do great works for him, and then, sometimes leave when the work was finished. But the promise of Joel was that he would come upon all God's people and that he would

come to stay. This is why Joel's prophecy states that the Spirit comes upon all mankind, that both sons and daughter, old and young men, would receive the Spirit and even male and female servants would receive the Spirit of God.

One day, Jesus was teaching on prayer and finished his lesson with these words:

> 9 "So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be
> opened to you. 10 For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who
> knocks, it will be opened. 11 Now suppose one of you fathers is asked by his son for a fish; he will
> not give him a snake instead of a fish, will he? 12 Or *if* he is asked for an egg, he will not give him
> a scorpion, will he? 13 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how
> much more will *your* heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?"

On another occasion, during the Feast of the Tabernacles, Jesus stood in the temple and said

> "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. 38 He who believes in Me, as the Scripture
> said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'" 39 But this He spoke of the
> Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet *given*,
> because Jesus was not yet glorified.

Notice Jesus' reference to rivers of living water. This was his way of referring to the Holy Spirit that he would give once he was exalted and glorified. So, in this passage we find Jesus looking forward to this day of glorification when he would pour out his Spirit. And as we know, on his last night with his disciples he talked extensively to them about the Spirit. Listen to his words:

> 16 I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever;
> 17 *that is* the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or
> know Him, *but* you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.

Then, right before he ascended to the right hand of God he told the disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the Spirit: "you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

Ten days after he ascended into heaven he poured out the Spirit of God upon his people in fulfillment of all these promises and prophecies. When Peter preached on that great day when the Spirit came, among his first words were, "this (that you are seeing and hearing) is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel."

Then Peter went on to preach about how the prophecies pointed to the coming of Messiah who would give the Spirit of God to all his people. He quoted from Joel, from Psalm 16 and from Psalm 110 and said that this gift of the Spirit was proof that Jesus was Messiah and that he had been exalted as King over Israel and over the nations.

The Spirit of God is one of the great marks that we are the people of God, that Jesus is Lord, that prophecy has been fulfilled, and that God has fulfilled his promises to his people. The Spirit of God is

the empowerment to become men and women who will walk in wisdom, who will walk in light, and who will practice their faith and shine their light in the darkness of paganism.

Thus, Paul says, Paul *commands*, "don't be drunk with wine, but be continually filled with the Spirit of God." And then he tells us how in the following phrases. We'll be looking at those in the next broadcasts and I hope you'll be here for everyone.