

Understanding The Will Of The Lord

Ephesians 5:17-21



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FOCAL Read Responsively Ephesians 5:17-21

Wherefore be ye not unwise¹, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. **(18) And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; (19) Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; (20) Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; (21) Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.**^{KJV}

What is the **will of the Lord** for my life? This should be the primary concern of every Christian in the Church today. In fact, this should be the *foremost thought and desire* in the heart of every person today. If you fail to find the **will of the Lord** for your life, the King James Bible calls this unwise. That's not really a good translation of the Greek word. This word actually means *to be stupid, mindless, or foolish*. The **New American Standard** version puts it this way:

Ephesians 5:17 So then **do not be foolish**, but understand what the will of the Lord is.^{NASB}

The **Amplified Bible** says:

Ephesians 5:17 Therefore **do not be vague and**

¹ G878, ἄφρον, *aphrōn, af'-rone*, From G1 (as a negative particle) and G5424; properly *mindless*, that is, *stupid*, (by implication) *ignorant*, (specifically) *egotistic*, (practically) *rash*, or (morally) *unbelieving*: - fool (-ish), unwise.

KJV All texts are King James Version (Authorized), unless otherwise noted
NASB New American Standard Version of the Scripture

thoughtless and foolish, but understanding and firmly grasping what the will of the Lord is.^{AMP}

When you fail to grasp the **will of the Lord, of the One Who made you** for your life, then you are – at the least – robbing yourselves of the best life possible. At the most you are possibly *bringing certain destruction on yourselves*. It is foolish to tempt God, as our Lord Jesus tells us:

Luke 4:12 ... Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

Those who tempted God drowned under the great Flood of Noah's day. Can't you hear Noah preaching now - "Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (**2 Corinthians 6:2**)? God has promised that judgment is coming. Those who do not believe in the Lord are reserved unto the day of destruction (**Job 21:30**). You do not have tomorrow to make up your minds - once this boat is sealed, your fate is sealed (**James 4:14**). Those who tempted God died wandering in the wilderness, when they could have entered the Promised Land. Those who tempted God found themselves enslaved by strange nations, taken from their homeland, displaced until they returned to the will of the Lord. Those who tempted God saw their Temple fall under Roman attack in 70 AD – a Temple which, to this day, has not been rebuilt.

An interesting account of one who tempted God to the

point of no return is found in **Acts chapter 12**. In the first part of this chapter we see a man called **Herod** attacking the Church of God. Though **Herod was a king, he was not the King of Kings and Lord of Lords**. He confused himself with God, though, and set himself up *as god*. He killed **James**, the **pastor of the Church at Jerusalem**. He imprisoned **Peter**, that blessed Apostle, and would have killed him if he had been able. While **Peter** was locked away awaiting execution Herod gave himself to all manner of pleasure. "I am god, worship me, there is no other!" The True God sent an angel into the prison that very night. Peter was released, his handcuffs opened though he was chained to two guards, and he walked out through a locked gate between two other guards to find his freedom. **Peter was trusting in the will of God and was blessed. But what of Herod?** The next morning Herod found Peter gone, and was much displeased. Yet he still elevated himself above God. What happened? The Bible tells us:

Acts 12:23 And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.

This is not a good death! Oh, how important it is to know the Will of God for your life! How important it is to remember that He is God, and He knows what is best for our lives. What does God want of us? He warns us to understand the will of the Lord.

FOCAL **Ephesians 5:17 Wherefore be ye not**

unwise, but **understanding² what the will of the Lord is.**

The text literally states that we are to **keep on understanding** what the Will of the Lord is. What is the *primary will* of God? The Scripture tells us:

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

God's first will for your life is that *all be saved by faith in Jesus*. This Infinite and All Powerful God so loved the world that He came and gave Himself for us (John 3:16). If you believe in Jesus, believe that He has died for your sins, you are saved (John 10:28). This is His first will for your life – but He requires even more after He saves you. What does God require of us? Does He want us to rename Him as some confused professors have tried to do? Does He want us to modify Him, to recreate Him into our image? Does He want us to twist His Word? Does He want us to doubt Him?

No, My Beloved, if you have accepted Christ as Savior the Lord want you to understand that you are now on a journey of love. The calling of the True Christian is to

2 Present Active Participle of G4920, *συνιημι*, *suniēmi*, *soon-ee'-ay-mee*, From G4862 and *ημι* *hiēmi* (to *send*); to *put together*, that is, (mentally) to *comprehend*; by implication to *act piously*: - consider, understand, be wise.

love God and to love one another. The calling of the True Christian is not to chase after baubles and toys. He who dies with the most earthly toys is not rich, but he who dies honoring the Lord who saved him is rich indeed. Focus your hearts on Him live for Him, surrender to Him while there is yet time. **Keep on understanding the will of the Lord** for your lives and you will be blessed.

What can we see of the **will of the Lord** in this passage?

1. The Lord Commands That You Not Be Drunk With Wine

FOCAL Ephesians 5:18 **And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;**

The Lord commands those who are saved “**AND be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess**”. The word **AND** ties this verse with the statement which preceded it, “**keep on understanding what the will of the Lord is**”. God's will commands that we NOT be DRUNK with wine, BUT be filled with the Spirit. Let's talk about the first thing before we talk about the second.

Drunkenness is state brought on a person when they imbibe alcoholic beverages. **Webster's Dictionary³** defines the word *drunk* as:

“Intoxicated; inebriated; overwhelmed or overpowered by spirituous liquor; stupefied or

3 1828 version

inflamed by the action of spirit on the stomach and brain. It is brutish to be drunk.”

Someone becomes drunk by taking something like wine into their bodies, over and over again, until their blood alcohol levels begin to effect their judgment.

A person *starts out to get drunk* when he or she sees the intake of this alcohol as a solution to some problem in their lives.

For instance, I know of those who got off work on Friday and went home to drink alcohol *so they could – as they put it – unwind*, or to relax. There are others who drink or *partake of intoxicating and mind altering drugs* because they think it will make them better in some way or the other. They believe that drinking or drugging will cure depression, solve financial woes, make them prettier or more handsome, cure loneliness, and so on.

Drunkenness is not a natural state, but it is a state that you enter into when you take a *foreign substance* into your body. Once you enter a state of drunkenness you will say and do things that you would not normally do. **Drunkenness is destructive** – it is a human solution to our problems, which in reality cures no ills. The *first recorded example* of drunkenness in the Scripture is found in:

Genesis 9:20-22 And Noah began [to be] an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard: (21)

And he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent. (22) And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without.

What is the *first instance* of recorded drunkenness in the Bible? What can I learn from this example?

Here you see a man of faith, a great saint, **Noah, drunken and naked** for all the world to see. This is the same man that God used in a mighty way to preach to the pre-flood world. If it were not for Noah and his love for the Lord none of us would be here now. While his eyes were on God he did great things, but while his eyes were on himself and his own satisfaction he lay naked and in shame.

Why did God say:

FOCAL Ephesians 5:18 **And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess;**

and not list another type of sin? Because the drunkard is no longer like himself. If drunken all restrictions are removed, and a person will fall to the lowest level possible. It is true that God regards *all sin* as abhorrent. The Bible teaches us:

James 2:10 For whosoever shall keep the

whole law, and yet offend in one [point], he is guilty of all.

The sin of drunkenness is every bit as sinful as *self righteousness, or blasphemy, or lying, or thievery, or adultery, or fornication*. The Lord says:

Ezekiel 18:20 The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.

Is drunkenness or drug abuse a *greater sin* than the other sins mentioned in the Bible? Why is drunkenness forbidden by God?

Sin brings with it **the wages of death (Romans 6:23)**.

Drunkenness, however, brings with it a *loss of the senses, a numbing of the common sense, and a foolhardiness* that may lead to death much quicker than many of the other sins.

Those who get inebriated and drive their cars may not only kill themselves, but they may kill other innocents as well. A *professional person* such as a *doctor, a pharmacist, or a health care giver* may bring death to their patients. A *ruler or politician* will make bad decisions. **Darius the Meadian** overthrew the kingdom

of Babylon because **Belshazzar the King** and all his army was drunken when it should have been sober. Drunkenness brings with it *extreme selfishness acted out by rioting and bad behavior*. The Bible tells us:

Romans 13:13-14 Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. (14) But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to [fulfill] the lusts [thereof].

Drunkenness and drug abuse are, according to the Scripture, **making provision for the flesh**. The Christian is encouraged to get away from this type of behavior and to instead **put on the Lord Jesus Christ**. The *will of the Lord* was always done *by the Lord Jesus Christ*. The Devil has tricked many people into surrendering their minds to the bottle, be it alcohol or drug, and has destroyed many otherwise lovely people and their families by these abuses. Those who are saved are *saved out of this lifestyle*:

1 Corinthians 6:10-11 Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. (11) And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

If you are saved, you are no longer to be in this state. **Such may have been some of you, you are now washed, you are sanctified, you are declared innocent – justified in the Name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.**

God's will for the saved is *not* that they revert back to their old unsaved ways – but He calls us to a *walk of power in the Spirit of God.*

Look further at this text:

2. The Will of God For Your Life Is That You Be FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT

FOCAL Ephesians 5:18 **And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled⁴ with the Spirit;**

The Greek word that we translate **be filled** is better translated as **keep on being filled**. Instead of being controlled by alcohol or drug, **keep on being filled with the Spirit**.

4 Present Passive Imperative of G4137, πληρόω, plēroō, *play-ro'-o*, From G4134; to *make replete*, that is, (literally) to *cram* (a net), *level up* (a hollow), or (figuratively) to *furnish* (or *imbue, diffuse, influence*), *satisfy, execute* (an office), *finish* (a period or task), *verify* (or *coincide* with a prediction), etc.: - accomplish, X after, (be) complete, end, expire, fill (up), fulfil, (be, make) full (come), fully preach, perfect, supply.

The Greek *tense and mood* of the verb “**be filled**” emphasizes that this is *first of all a command from God* – not a suggestion, but *a command*. **Keep on being filled with the Spirit** is that which your Savior and Lord requires of you.

The **Amplified Version** puts it this way:

Ephesians 5:18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but ever be filled and stimulated with the [Holy] Spirit.^{AMP}

This, dear friends, is a *command from God!* It is something that *we must do if we are to be obedient.*

When *filled with wine* you are under control of that wine. When *filled with the Spirit of God* you are under control of God. When *filled with wine* you will do *destructive* things that you would not normally do like *rioting and adultery*. When *filled with the Spirit* you will do *constructive things that glorify your Savior and Lord*. When *filled with wine* you are shortening your lifespan and your usefulness to the Lord. When *filled with the Spirit* you are satisfying your Heavenly Father Who loves you so.

The **filling of the Spirit** is not only commanded to the Christian, it is the *natural state that we should all be walking in and seeking at all times*. How then shall we be filled *or empowered* by the Spirit of God?

- **Turn away from sin, and toward God.** This is found in our focal text:

FOCAL Ephesians 5:18 **And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;**

Two states are mentioned here, a *state of sin* or a *state of Filling*. You make a conscious effort to turn away from sin and serve the Lord. We are not talking about being *saved* here, for

Galatians 3:11 But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, [it is] evident: for, The just shall live by faith.

Salvation is by faith in Christ – but *sanctification*, that is, *living for God after you have been born again* – is something that you do in partnership with God.

The *early Gnostic cults like Dan Brown espouses* taught that once saved, the Christian was freed to sin with impunity. This is not what the Scripture teaches. **Do not be drunk with wine – turn away from sin.** This is the first step to God's empowering Spirit controlling your life. Are you saved, and yet in sin? Then remember what He has promised:

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, {God} is faithful and just to forgive us [our] sins, and to cleanse us from all

unrighteousness.

As that joyous song says:

The blood that Jesus once shed for me,
As my Redeemer, upon the tree;
The blood that setteth the pris'ner free,
Will never lose its pow'r.
It will never lose its pow'r;
The blood that cleanses from all sin
Will never lose its pow'r.⁵

The Blood of Christ that saved you will save you still. The Blood of Christ that washed you will cleanse you still! If you have surrendered to the **and** of sin, such as our text says, repent of that and turn to the Spirit of God. Trust God, return – like the Prodigal – unto Him Who loves you still.

- **Turn Away From Self, and Serve God:** We read in the next verse:

FOCAL Ephesians 5:18b-19 ... **be filled with the Spirit; (19) Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;**

Do you wish to be **filled with the Spirit**? Then worship **the Lord** through **psalms, and hymns, and spiritual**

⁵ *The Blood Will Never Lose It's Power* by Civilla D. Martin, 1912., Music: Walter S. Martin

songs, singing and making melody in your hearts TO THE LORD. Praise God for what He has done in your lives. Your life and my life might not be perfect, but you are *saved by faith in Him*. You have His promise of eternal life, His promise that you shall be with Him both now and into eternity.

Sometimes we as humans are *so selfish* and *so self absorbed* that the slightest discomfort becomes the greatest of evils. The early Church suffered terribly for the Lord, yet they understood that *this life is not all there is*. We as Christians are commanded to *praise the Lord*, to lift up our hearts to Him, to bless His Holy Name for saving us and promising us eternity.

How would you feel if you offered someone a thing of great value, and they took that thing of great value, then *devalued it* by their actions. What if you gave someone a great thing and they responded by taking it then saying, “yeah – right – now what *else* do you have?”

What if that which you gave to someone cost you *the most Precious thing you owned*. Would you be happy if it were received flippantly, or even with ingratitude? No you wouldn't! As a matter of fact, you would be greatly offended by the ingrate who took from you and yet showed so little love in return for what you in love did.

Now consider what God has done for you.

God your Father gave up His dear Son for you and for

me. He wants us to *be grateful for what He has done*. He wants us to worship Him, to praise Him, to lift Him up among the Children of Men and among the Church of God. You love it when your child *gives you heartfelt thanks* for whatever gift you give them. I love it when my children remember to love me periodically, thanking me for what I have done in their lives. God wants your love.

If you walk around with a bitter, thankless, hateful disposition, God the Holy Spirit will not fill your heart.

The Holy Spirit, when He descended on Christ, descended *in the form of a dove* (**Matthew 3:16**). This is significant, because the *dove is a clean animal*, one that was used even by the poorest of people in sacrifice to the Lord on the Old Testament Altar. Do not fill your lives with either sin nor bitterness, but with praise for Him Who loved you and gave Himself for you. Be like the Psalmist David who said:

Psalms 57:7-10 My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise. (8) Awake up, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp: I [myself] will awake early. (9) I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people: I will sing unto thee among the nations. (10) For thy mercy [is] great unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds.

If we will spend our time on this earth singing and praising Him, He will fill our lives, He will empower us to walk in the midst of this present evil world. **Do as Mary did**, and praise the Lord even if no one else will. *Sit at His feet in study, worship Him with all your heart, make this the purpose of your life.*

Try singing instead of complaining. Remember the proverb:

Proverbs 17:22 A merry heart doeth good [like] a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones.

- **Thank God For What You DO Have:** Rather than complaining about what you DON'T have, let's thank God for what we DO have. Our text says:

FOCAL Ephesians 5:20 Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;

Misery is like mud – if you keep wallowing in it, before long you'll be covered with it. Thank God for what you DO have.

I don't know of anyone in this Church today who will go hungry. If you need something to eat, the Church has a pantry, and you can always come home and eat with us.

Thank the Good Lord for what you have! A thankful heart is conducive to the Filling of the Spirit, but a depressed or hard heart will always find fault. Our **Lord Jesus Christ took a few little fishes and seven loaves of bread:**

Matthew 15:36 ... and gave thanks, and brake [them], and gave to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.

And fed **a multitude**. Jesus did not go to God and *complain over what little He had*. He thanked God for that which He had – and God gave the increase! As He was about to *sacrifice Himself for us* the Bible says:

Matthew 26:27 {Jesus} took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave [it] to them, saying, Drink ye all of it;

He thanked His Father for this opportunity of service. Listen Beloved, if you have nothing else then you can say:

2 Corinthians 9:15 Thanks [be] unto God for his unspeakable gift.

Thank God for what you have, and the Spirit of God will fill your life. And finally,

- **If You Want To Be Filled By The Spirit, Practice Loving Submission:** Do what the

Scripture tells you, which is to...

FOCAL Ephesians 5:21 **Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.**

The Filling of the Spirit is the *empowerment of God in every believer to the benefit of the Church of God.*

The Spiritual gifts are not given to you just for yourself, but are given so that you can **submit yourselves to one another** in love. The **fruit of the Spirit** is:

Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, (23) Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

If you will not do these things, the Spirit of God will not empower your life. But if you will do these things:

- Turn away from sin, and toward God,
- Turn Away From Self, and Serve God
- Thank God For What You DO Have, and
- Practice Loving Submission To God and To One Another

God will empower your life to live victoriously for Him both now and into eternity.. May God touch your hearts with these words.



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