

Ephesians 14-12-07a

This is December 7th, 2014, Pearl Harbor Day. We're reminded on this day of events that took place a generation or two ago and yet were definitional, transformational in the life of our nation. Those who are now called the greatest generation went to war, some willingly, some unwillingly.

So many gave their lives in defense of our country and of our way of life. And for many decades afterward, we enjoyed perhaps the pinnacle of the history of the United States as a result of the sacrifices of so many. We have largely seen that day and those memories recede.

There are practically no World War II veterans left now. And as that memory fades, so does our national appreciation for the value of our freedom and the structure that is necessary to preserve it. Freedom is like a great canvas.

And when it is stretched over the structure of authority and responsibility, it provides an enormous shelter and place of safe dwelling for those beneath. But as misguided, misinformed, and spiritually bankrupt forces deconstruct that which supports and upholds the canvas, it is rapidly collapsing. And there is no return.

There is no recapturing of that freedom without, first of all, rebuilding the structure. And the structure rests in Christ. It rests in biblical faith.

It rests in recognizing the absolute divine values that we've been talking about this morning. We return to our study in Ephesians chapter 5 where we see this structure outlined. And it is so important to see that as you look at the structure, people say, well, I don't see the freedom in that.

Well, you can't always appreciate the canvas when you're busy looking at the undercarriage, at the sticks and the structure that hold it up. You've got to be sure you've got the tent poles, and you've got the stakes, and you've got the lines in order to understand how the canvas is spread. And many times people think it's an either-or.

Well, I can either have structure or I can have freedom. And they don't recognize that both are required. We're going to see that in our passage this morning.

So as we approach our study, resuming in verse 21 of Ephesians 5, let's take a moment to go to the Lord in prayer, and then we'll begin. Father, we thank you that as the holiday season progresses and approaches the hectic times of gift-giving and of travel and of celebration, to remember that our lives and our days are defined uniformly by the presence and power of your Holy Spirit and the light of your Word. We thank you that in that presence and in that illumination, we see revealed the Lord Jesus Christ, His merit, His value.

Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive glory and honor. Nowhere more appropriately and pertinently than in the church, we who represent Him on this earth as He even now resides at

your right hand, representing us, interceding for us, awaiting the day when He receives the marching order to return and take us to Himself. And we will see the unfolding and consummation of your plan and purpose at the end of these times.

We thank you for the privilege we enjoy being called by your name through Christ. We thank you for our adoption as your children, for our privileges in being able to come directly to your throne. We do not need an intermediate human priest.

We come based on the righteousness and the sacrifice of our great High Priest, the Lord Jesus, who has qualified us and sanctified us and allowed us to reside in your presence, in the light, to grow in knowledge, to be prepared for future service. We thank you for all of these things and we ask your blessing on us now as we seek a better understanding and a fuller application of what we learn from your Word so that God the Holy Spirit can guide us, can keep us squarely in the center of the narrow road that leads through the straight gate of life. We pray that in all things the Lord Jesus will be glorified as we spend this time in assembly, in worship, in recognition of your grace and your faithfulness toward us.

We pray that we too can be reflective of your righteousness and your faithfulness and your grace as we express love toward one another and participation in and perpetuation of the structures that you have ordained for our lives on this earth. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

We saw last time in Ephesians chapter 5, See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, easily said, much more difficult to do. I thought about asking for a show of hands of everybody that has not done something dumb in the last week. And then a further show of hands of those who are paragons of humility or even truthfulness.

It's easy for us to mess up. We know what's right, but we don't always do it. We're forgetful.

We have a great ambition, but we seldom achieve it. So we want to walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time because the days are evil. And it's interesting there when you look at verses 15 and 16 which introduce this section, there is the command, there is the exhortation to walk watchfully.

And then there is a concomitant, there is a condition, there is a modifier there, there is a participle that says this is how it's done. So walking circumspectly, not foolishly, but wisely, redeeming the time. Notice the ING there.

Walking circumspectly, not being foolish, being wise, this redeems the time. This is how you invest time in eternity. God gives us the capital.

He gives us the hours. He gives us the minutes. He gives us the days.

And we spend them. This is why we call it spending time. I'm spending time with relatives.

I'm spending time watching TV. I'm spending time reading a book. I'm spending time on chores.

I'm spending time in fellowship or in prayer or in Bible study or in reflection and meditation and in devotions, we used to call it. By the way, talking about spending time watching television, I have a personal non-spiritual recommendation. I recently, I told you I'm fixing to unplug the whole cable thing.

But at the last moment, and I haven't changed that decision, but ironically enough, I found a really great source of news on, if you have Verizon, Fios, I think it's on ATT, U-verse, and a few other things. But there is a news outlet that is really what some of the others pretend to be or allege to be or tried to be. And it is One America News Network, OANN.

It's like Channel 116 maybe on Verizon Fios or 616 if you do the high-def version. But it's OANN. They also have a website.

And when you want to talk about Jack Webb, just the facts, not a lot of spin, not a lot of, hey, we're so conservative, we can only turn right, I would suggest that. It is news. There's a lot of international news.

It is very objective. They're so no spin, they don't even talk about no spin. They just do the news.

It is a great objective source of news from all over the world. They don't editorialize. They don't sit around in their dresses trying to look pretty.

They just give you the news. And I watched it for a couple of hours yesterday while I was working on a computer, and I was very impressed. So I recommend it.

Give it a try and see if you don't feel a great sense of relief from the burden of somebody trying to tell you what to think. It's just information that you can think whatever you want to about. OANN.

There's a website. They have a channel. If you've got Verizon or AT&T, I don't know where else they might be.

But it's important to have information and then to have the ability to think with it. And this is what Paul is encouraging the Laodiceans to do here in Ephesians 5. See then that you walk circumspectly not as fools but as wise. You can't be wise if you don't have information.

You can't formulate good opinions if you don't even know the facts. So get the facts and then be wise in applying, in operating. And he is going to give us the environment, the attitude, the way to do this, and then he's going to give us some specifics with which to do it.

Therefore do not be unwise but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not be drunk with wine in which is asotia. Sotia comes from the sozo, saving, delivering, up-building.

This is better because once I was blind, now I see. Once I was in the ditch, now I'm in the inn healing up. Sozo, sotia, asotia is the alpha privative.

This does not save. This does not deliver. This does not build up.

This does not cure and strengthen and improve. This is entropy. This is downward.

This is broken and not getting fixed. This is down and getting worse. This deconstructs.

Asotia, in which is translated here dissipation, but it doesn't begin to catch it. It is disintegration, in which is destruction, in which is corruption, a death. But be filled with the Spirit.

Now, if you notice, beginning in verse 19, we have some ING words. Just as we had in verses 15 and 16, walk circumspectly, redeeming. Here we have be filled with the Spirit and we've got five participles now.

Five ING words that characterize and are a part of being filled with the Spirit. Is it the means of being filled with the Spirit? No, it is the expression. This is what accompanies.

If you are walking circumspectly, you are redeeming the time. You can't say, well, I'm going to redeem some time and that will be walking circumspectly. One is an expression and a result of the other.

These are results and expressions of being filled with the Spirit. Now, another thing as we look at this, there is a lot of misunderstanding, I think, with regard to what it means to be filled with the Spirit. If you go over to Acts 7 and you look at Stephen, remember the martyr Stephen? Keep your finger here in Ephesians and turn back to Acts 7. You have Stephen actually beginning back in chapter 6, verse 8. Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people.

There arose some from what is called the synagogue of the freedmen, Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and those from Cilicia and Asia, disputing with Stephen. These are like doctrinal disputes. They are arguing with what he is teaching.

And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spoke. So they bring false accusations. They stirred up the people, they came and seized him and brought him to the council.

They set up false witnesses who said, This man does not cease to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the law, much as they did against the Lord Jesus. We have heard him say that Jesus will destroy this place and change the customs which Moses delivered to us. You remember that was part of the accusation against Jesus.

He has said he will tear down the temple. All who sat in the council looking steadfastly at him saw

his face as the face of an angel. Well, Stephen is said to be full of, in verse 8 of chapter 6, full of faith and power.

Some texts say full of grace. But this is the filling of the Holy Spirit. But he is also full of, he is plerao, grace or faith or power.

And it is the same idea. If you are full of faith in the same way that you are full of the Holy Spirit, there is this misunderstanding that the filling of the Spirit is control. Well, 1 John 1, 9, I confess my sins and I am filled with the Spirit and He will control me until I sin.

If the Spirit was truly in control, we would never sin. Right? If He was controlling, if I'm sitting in the driver's seat of the car, I am pretty much in control of the car. I turn the wheel left, it goes left.

I turn it right, it goes right. I hit the brakes, it stops. I hit the gas, it goes.

I am controlling the car. That's not what the filling of the Spirit is. It is not control.

And even as wise and great heads as Kenneth Wiest, who has done just incalculably great work on bringing the Greek meaning into English, he gets this wrong. Wiest's word studies, when he talks about pleirao, he ends up using the word control. And you see this over and over again, being controlled by the Spirit.

It is not control. If it was control, we would be giving up our choice and our will. And I'm sorry, but you can be as filled with the Holy Spirit as you want to and he is not controlling.

In the same way that if he says full of faith, it doesn't mean that faith controls. What does it mean to be full of faith? It means you are expressing it. It is definitional.

It is visible. It is characteristic of. If I am full of enthusiasm for the Statesman Quartet, my love for the Statesman does not control me.

I don't find it impossible to walk past a stack of vinyl albums without picking one up and saying, I must play the Statesman. I must hear Jake Hess and Doyat and Hovey Lister and the Big Chief and whoever sing. It doesn't control me.

It may be very characteristic. Everybody who knows me may know that I really appreciate that music and I think that it's a wonderful expression of love for the Lord Jesus or whatever, but it doesn't control me. It may almost define me.

Everybody who knows me will know that sooner or later. If you play an instrument well and you love it, that may be a prominent part of your personality and what people know about you and you play it a lot and you do it. This is what the filling of the Spirit is.

It is not control. It is something that exudes. It defines.

It expresses. It is visible and obvious. It is influential and effective.

It affects all different areas of life, right? That's what the filling is. So when you look at Stephen full of faith, it just means he's known for it. It defines him.

To me, he expresses it all the time. This is what the filling of the Spirit is. In other words, the filling of the Spirit, hear me now, the filling of the Spirit is not something the Spirit does to us.

The filling of the Spirit is something we express, we choose, we manifest. The actor in the filling of the Spirit is us. Did you catch that? The actor, the responsible subject of the sentence is us.

God doesn't say, Holy Spirit, go fill my people. God says, you, my people, be filled. So who's the actor? Who is the chooser and the effective worker of this filling of the Spirit? It's us.

If God had said, be filled with faith, it would be real obvious, right? But the difference is, faith is a concept where the Holy Spirit is a person. And so we tend to slough off responsibility to the Spirit. Well, if I wasn't faithful, if I wasn't effective, if I wasn't righteous, somehow the Spirit just didn't really get a hold of the controls enough to help me do that.

It needs to be clear to us that the filling of the Spirit, notice the imperative, you are the one who pours wine down your neck to be drunk with wine. And you are the one who lays hold of the Spirit to be filled with Him. He is available.

He is God. He is unchanging. There is no darkness or shadow of turning with Him.

He is co-equal, co-existent with God the Father and God the Son. There's nothing wrong with the Holy Spirit. But in the aspect of being filled with the Spirit, He is not the agent that brings it about.

We are. That's why we receive the command. And it seems like a fairly simple distinction.

But when you think about it, a lot of times I think we sort of wait passively for the Spirit to do something to us. He's already there. He indwells us.

He seals us. He has gifted us. He has regenerated us.

He is our constant companion. Jesus gave Him to us. He's here all the time.

But the extent to which He is an influence, the extent to which He is expressed in everything we say and do and think, is entirely up to us. Be filled with the Spirit. And it's not like, okay, Holy Spirit, take over.

I used to do this when I was a child because I didn't know any better. They would tell us this in Sunday school. But you've got to be controlled by the Spirit.

So I would say, okay, Lord, I'm taking my hands off the controls. Look, I just want You to take

hold of me. I had sort of the sock puppet idea of the filling of the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit, just operate my mouth, give me courage, give me strength. If I need to witness to somebody, if I need to give money, if I need to do some sacrificial thing, be a missionary to some far-off place, just take over. I yield myself completely to You.

There used to be a big emphasis on yieldedness. Yield yourself to God. Well, this is a cop-out.

This is a divestiture of personal responsibility. Because I don't have to think. I'm just going to empty myself and let God fill me.

Nonsense. The Bible never says that. Don't be led into a convenient passivity.

The filling of the Spirit is not passive. It's active. You don't wait for faith to take control.

And we don't wait for the Spirit to take control. This is a conscious fulfillment of command on our part. The presence of the Spirit ought to be manifest because we choose it.

Because we lay hold of it. Because we exploit it. We take advantage of it.

I've got a big V8 engine under the hood of my car. I'm going to press the gas pedal and I'm going to make that thing speed me up, pull a load, get me somewhere. The engine itself is very powerful.

But it's not going to do anything if I don't operate it, if I don't channel it, if I don't use it for effective purposes. We have the Holy Spirit, but God has enjoined us to take responsibility for the application of that power. The presence of the Spirit is available power.

But you don't just turn on your car, get on the highway, and take your hands off the wheel and say, Okay, car, go! You've got a V8, I've sped you up to 60, I'm just going to take my hands off and see where we go. God has given us the power of His Spirit for us to direct, to apply, to invest. And that's what the filling of the Spirit is.

Now notice, with this we have these five ING words. When we are doing this properly, when we understand it and avail ourselves of it, the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, this is what will accompany. Look back up at 15, if you are walking circumspectly in verse 16, you will be redeeming the time.

You will look back and say, You know what, that was a really great use of time. I didn't much feel like going to church, but I went, and it was so uplifting. I think we had a really productive time.

I think the Lord Jesus was honored. I think it made a difference. In being blessed, and being a blessing, making a contribution.

I feel like I was a part of something bigger than myself. I think that was time well spent. That

investment in a conversation, that investment in prayer, that investment in praising God and expressing appreciation to Him for the Lord Jesus, and for the Holy Spirit, and for His Word, and for all of the things that lift my life out of the miry clay and give it eternal significance.

I'm grateful for that. I don't regret that time at all. I think that time counts on eternity.

It was well spent. I'm redeeming the time. It is because we chose to walk circumspectly, to step over the obstacles to keep us from fellowship, and to keep us from prayer, and to keep us from intake of the Word of God, and all of these other valuable things.

We walk circumspectly. Redeeming the time is a concomitant. It is an expression.

Same thing here. If we are now filling ourselves with the Spirit, ensuring that the presence of the Spirit isn't just a presence, but it is an overflow. It is visible.

It is manifest. It is an expression. Here's what is going to be going on.

I-N-G. Going on. Five things.

Number one, speaking. Speaking to one another. We will not be closeted.

We will not be hermits. We will not be ingrown. We will not be sitting, soaking, and souring.

We will be speaking. You can speak in all different kinds of ways in this day of technology, but speaking to one another. There is a necessary and vital connection between believers.

If you have some part of your body, let's say the tip of your little finger, how long is that going to last if it is separate from the rest of the body? Get a little too close to the bandsaw, now the tip of your finger is laying on the floor of the shop. How long is that going to last by itself? We are all members of the body of Christ, and severing ourselves from contact with the rest of the body is fatal. Do not forsake the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some is.

Do not do it. Stay connected. Find a way to be connected.

Many of us have been in situations where we are flying solo. We are Lindbergh over the Atlantic. We are in the military.

We are off in a geographic area. Maybe it is just us and our wife or us and our family. It is remote.

We have tried the available local churches. Nobody has really got a grip on biblical Christianity. It does more harm than good.

It is more of a tribulation and a test of relaxed mental attitude than it is a mutual up-building and edification to assemble with any of the available groups. So you are flying solo. Fine.

You have still got to find a way to connect. Now we have got all kinds of things that draw people

together. You have got the Internet.

You have got online communities. You have got the ability to worship as many do with us remotely. And that is great.

That counts. That is fellowship. Be sure that it is two-way.

Be sure that there is some connection there. There are veins and arteries. Blood flows in.

Blood flows out. If it all flows one way, not good. If all the blood drains out, not good.

If all the blood drains in and does not leave, not good. Circulation is the model. Even in our own families, where two or three are gathered, there am I in the midst.

It doesn't take two or three dozen. It doesn't take two or three hundred. It does not take and probably can't even work in two or three thousand.

Two is enough. It is the name of the capital of the Cherokee Nation, Tahlequah. Two is enough.

Two is enough. Where two are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst. And that makes a third.

Where three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst. That makes four. But gather, assemble.

Speaking. You cannot speak to one another if there is no other. Right? Find a way to get it done.

Canvas the earth. There is no excuse in this day of technology for not finding other believers. But first and foremost, it is going to be in our local periphery.

If you go to God and say, Lord, I want to fulfill this command for fellowship. I need it. I need the contribution it makes to me as much as there may be a contribution that I can make to others.

Lord, I need that. I recognize your command. I want to fulfill it.

Please give me the opportunity for fellowship. Do you seriously think God is going to say, Nope. Not going to do it.

You sit there in splendid solitude and isolation. You're incarcerated in solitary confinement. And I'm going to keep you there for the rest of your natural life.

God's not going to do it. He's not going to give us a command and then not give us the ability to fulfill it. Be alert.

Be watchful. Look around. There may be another believer two doors down who is hungry for fellowship.

And we've been too ingrown and too self-centered to see that there is an opportunity to speak the truth to someone else in love. To have an assembly where the Lord can be in the midst. An assembly of two.

An assembly of three. If you're married, it's your spouse. It's your kids.

It's your family. It's your parents. It's your extended family.

Forsake not the assembly. Speaking to one another is a concomitant of being filled with the Spirit. And you cannot be fully and truly filled if you're not finding these avenues of expression.

That's the first one. Speaking to one another. Psalms, hymns, spiritual songs.

These are three different avenues, all of which involve music. Speaking in psalms. Why isn't it speaking in verses or speaking in platitudes or speaking in aphorisms or speaking in catchy phrases? Speaking in encouragement or speaking in poetry.

Why is it music? There is a well-known historic association between joy and positive feeling and music. There was no such thing as the blues in ancient Israel. There was no such thing as the dirge in ancient Israel.

Now, there are plenty of psalms in the book, penitential psalms, psalms crying out in distress. But they are always looking to God, even the ones that seem negative or seem downcast. Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why is my soul depressed within me? I will turn to the Lord.

I will cry out. I have an alternative. I have an option.

I have an outlet. I have a deliverer. I have a Savior.

I will arise and go to Jesus. He will embrace me in His arms. In the arms of my dear Savior, there are 10,000 comforts.

There are 10,000 charms. Even in my distress, I will look to the Lord. I will lift up my voice.

I will cry out because I have that option. It isn't hopeless. It isn't that I am helpless.

And these expressions are ultimately expressions of appreciation. And many of them turn to expressions of joy, celebration. In the great defeats of the armies of Israel in the Old Testament, do you ever see anybody saying, Well, let's get together and heist a tune.

Break out the accordion. Let's sing about all the dead slain on the battlefield. But when Pharaoh sends his armies after the Israelites and the armies are drowned in the Reed Sea, Miriam strikes up a tune.

When Hannah finds out that she's going to have a son, she composes a song. When Mary finds

out that she's going to be the mother of the Lord Jesus, she composes a song. Moses has a song.

David's got dozens and dozens and dozens of songs. They are expressions of hope. They are expressions of appreciation.

They are expressions of knowing where to go even when the chips are down. Songs, hymns, spiritual songs. Singing is our second I-N-G word.

And the third one where it says making melody, that's really one word. It's psalming. Singing and psalming.

Speaking, singing, and psalming with one another. These are expressions of the filling of the spirit. This is what accompanies it.

If you are not speaking with one another in terms of looking to God in appreciation or in dependence, you're not filled with the spirit. Because this is what accompanies the filling of the spirit. You can say, well, but I've confessed all my sins.

I've been reading verses. I've been praying. I've been doing a lot of things.

If you are not speaking to other believers in expressions of appreciation for what God is doing, what God has done, if it doesn't overflow and come out in conversation, we're not going to force this. We're not going to say, well, let me find somebody and say, hey, hold still a minute. I want to tell you something about God.

This is a natural outgrowth. The influence and the presence and the power of God in our lives is going to be a part of our conversation. We will be speaking.

It accompanies the filling of the spirit. And if you don't ever find God on your mind when you're talking to your fellow believers, if you don't really notice the effect that He's having in life or the option that He offers that unbelievers don't have, if it doesn't come out in conversation, I can tell you from the Word of God, you are not filled with the spirit. You're not, because this is an inevitable outworking and outgrowth of it.

In the same way that you may think you're living a smart life, but if you are not redeeming the time, if you're not converting time into eternal things, you're not wise. You're a fool. You're not walking circumspectly.

You're wasting time. You're profligate. You're feeding swine.

Speaking to one another. Songs, hymns, and spiritual songs. And this just means there's a variety of ways.

People have said, well, are these three different categories? Are some of them accompanied and

some of them not? Is some of it spoken word? Songs, hymns, and spiritual songs just means there is a multitude of ways and forms, small and great. It might be a ditty. It might be an oratorio.

It might be a one-page song. It might be a symphony or a sonata. It might be any number of different expressions.

Songs, hymns, spiritual songs. This just means every different kind. Some of them may be a song in the night when we're discouraged.

And we say, you know, I know that I should feel and do and be and act, but I'm really struggling. And this can come out. This is an expression.

A lot of great music is in a minor key. But that is what sets in contrast the songs of praise and celebration is, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will ultimately sit at the table prepared in the presence of mine enemies, and my head will be anointed with oil, and my cup will run over. I was just in the valley, but that's not where my table is set.

My cup's not running over as I'm trying to struggle through the valley of the shadow of death. There are phases. There are times.

But it's always expressed poetically and musically in this way. Singing and psalming. Notice, speaking, singing, and psalming are three of the five ways of expressing the filling of the spirit.

It is first and foremost attitude, approach, perspective. This is how we see our lives. Gene Kelly, I'm singing in the rain.

People don't like the rain. I love the rain. I'm out here splashing around in it because it isn't going to rain forever.

I'll enjoy the rain while it's here. When the sun breaks out, it's a bright, sunshiny day. I can see clearly now.

I sing in the rain. I sing in the sunshine. Walking in the sunshine.

Sing a little sunshine song. Whatever it is, I found whatever state I find myself therewith to be content, therewith to find the song. Speaking, singing, psalming in your hearts to the Lord.

Well, verses 20 and 21 give us the next two ING words. And that's what we'll see when we come back from our break.