

# More than a Tradition

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## SPEAKERS

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15 Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, 16 making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is. 18 Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. 19 Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, 20 always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. 21 Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. I read an article in the Wall Street Journal this This week about how to help keep Thanksgiving traditions alive with aging parents. And it was all about how family dynamics change. And so how do you keep the celebration of thanksgiving going? But what caught my attention was the opening line in the article, which said this. Thanksgiving is all about families and traditions. Now I got thinking about that and thought, if that is absolutely 100% true, that Thanksgiving is just about families and traditions. And I disagree with that. Because what that would mean Then what about people who have faced changes in their family this past year? What about people like some of you who have lost parents and loved ones or maybe because of circumstances outside of your control, your family no longer exists in the sense of a true family. It’s been broken. It’s been shattered. Does that mean you have no Thanksgiving now? Because based on this article, Thanksgiving is about families, and traditions. So I want to take us to Ephesians five, where I believe Paul tells us Thanksgiving is much more than that. For the believer in Christ, it’s much more than families and it’s much more than traditions. As I want to take a few minutes to look at Ephesians chapter five, and verses 15 through 21. You notice that Paul gives a series of exhortations here, and you sometimes see this in Paul’s letters you get towards the end, and he just kind of puts a bunch of expectations or instructions together. Not necessarily connected to one another. But just saying,

here are some things I want to make sure I tell you to do. So it begins a new section in the letter. But in particular what catches my attention here is Paul's talking about walking in wisdom now. And he's going to take chapter five, verse 15, all the way through chapter six, verse 10. And that's what he's going to talk about, what does it mean to walk in wisdom. And what we end up finding out is in this midst of the series of exhortations, there's something that binds all of them together. And that is Thanksgiving. And so let's take a few moments to look at this. And I'm just going to touch briefly on verses 15 through 18, because it's 19 through 21 that we're going to zero in on but if you look at verse 15, Paul says to walk wisely You must understand the urgency. And the need to do this simply says, Be very careful which emphasizes like an urgency to this. The way you live your life is very important to keep in mind as a believer in Christ says how should you live not as unwise but as wise? And then goes on and verse 16, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. So you notice in verse 15, the urgency walking in wisdom. And I don't think any of us would question that the older you get, the more you realize you probably have a lot more life behind you than ahead of you. And so that sense of living wisely as a believer, investing in meaningful relationships and activities kind of resonates more, but then you notice in verse 16, he talks about making the most of every opportunity that would go with walking wisely. Some of you may be more familiar with some translations that render that redeeming the time, because the days are evil. And that's exactly what Paul means he uses a very strong term out of the marketplace to buy back. Not saying you can ever buy time back but but make the best use of it. Buy it up intensively every day. cherish the time that God has given you. And isn't that related when we think of being thankful? Whether you're sitting down with family, friends, and a couple of days, will you reflect on your life in general? how you've used your time, maybe with some regrets, but then maybe also looking ahead and saying, I want to in God, make the next year. have impact and influence to walking wisely. Then you notice in verse 17, Paul simply says, Don't know, be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. I just to add this thought here, you know, the when we speak of God's will, you can often see when you say this to someone like a Christian, you said, What do you think God's will is? That they almost get like this glazed look on their eyes. It's almost like you hear the music for Twilight Zone playing in the background. Like when you think of God's will think of it on a daily basis. What is God's desire for you? And then it's revealed to us in the scriptures. We don't have to guess at what is God's will for me, what attitudes I should have, what my action should reflect that's revealed to us in the scriptures. And I think sometimes when we think about I want to know God's will. We're almost asking God for something that he's never said. He'll tell us and that is the secret well, like, what will my life look like next year? Where am I going to settle down and live? You know, who will God bring into my life to establish a family or things like that? That's God's secret well, yet we are to know his will, as Paul says here, every day. Now notice how that ties into how do you redeem the time you walk according to God's revealed? Well, you understand the urgency of that, according to verse 15. But then you notice verse 18. Again, Paul loves contrast. He says, you know, don't get drunk on wine. instead be filled with the Spirit. You want to walk wisely to live in an attitude of thankfulness. Learn to yield and surrender more and more to the control of the Holy Spirit. In other words, for

each of us in Christ, we should be living under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Who is to take only what Christ has revealed and make it known to us. So you have scripture, you have the Holy Spirit in us to guide us and direct us. And so far throughout this letter in chapter one, three and four, Paul has referred to this fullness that is ours in Christ, that He wants us to have the full understanding of what is ours in Christ. So in a sense, Paul's not introducing anything new, just expanding it even further. But I said I wanted to look in particular verses 19 through 21. Because in these verses, you have four parts of speech that show us what a Christ centered Thanksgiving looks like. In other words, if you want thanksgiving to be a part of your life and you're saying, you know what, there's every reason it should be as a Christian, based on everything each of you have shared. God's mercy never changes. His love never changes. His faithfulness never changes. Well, how should that look? And so you notice in verses 19 through 21, there's four parts of speech or participles, that Paul presents, and we're just going to walk through each of these briefly. Notice in verse 19, the first one he says, speak to one another, with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. So the first reality of living in an attitude of Thanksgiving is talking about or God is doing in your life. Does that describe you does describe me that we talk about what God is doing in our lives? He's writing to a church and he saying, you need to speak to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, not just telling people which we would assume. Yeah, they talked to each other. Paul wasn't writing to a church of mutes, you know, they talk but he's saying you know it, go deeper than that. Talk about what God is doing in your life. And sometimes we get more focused on the phrase that follows here in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. So if you've ever tried to research that a little bit more, you have some people saying, you know, these are each distinct things. Others saying really, they're all very similar. You can maybe show some slight shades of meaning. I think we missed the point where we try to parse these three. He's just simply saying these are means for us to speak and tell others about what God is doing. Have you thought about When we come to church, what we're engaging in is spiritual conversations. But not just spiritual conversations with God, which which is a primary focus. But aren't we supposed to also be engaging in spiritual conversations with one another? speaking to one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs? So let's assume if we took a poll, we just sang some worship songs. And I said to you, how many of you was at your like your favorite song? Maybe a couple of you might say, yeah, that's one of my favorites. I don't think it would hit on everyone's favorite. But then let me ask you, why did you sing it then? It's not really your favorite. Why didn't you just be like, No, I'll pass. You know, I don't really care for this one. are we singing it not just because we're singing it because it's about God. But are we also seeing it for each one around you? Hear You praising God does say I'm not embarrassed to praise God. Every once in a while, Tony or Ashley will remind me, if I forget to turn off my mic, and I start singing. They will politely say to me afterwards, you know, we make a kind of hear you on the on the broadcast there. Whether we're kind of saying to me is, you know, we appreciate you singing, but could you turn off your mic? You know that but the thought being there we should think about the singing is a way that we minister to one another. For like telling each other I love God and God's working in my life and I want to sing about that. Even if I don't have the greatest voice. I still want to sing. And so when a perspective that Paul

presents here because worship has both a vertical and a horizontal And I don't think we often think of that. We think of worship as directed toward God. But, but Paul implies your speak to one another. This is I speak to God, I think because he assumes that's what you know, you should be doing. So that's the first participle that he mentioned. This is even further underlined, we think in the book of Hebrews, where it says the importance of getting together so that we can spur one another on that would fit perfectly with what Paul's writing here, that then in our worship, we are talking about God to one another. And that should move outside of just a formal worship setting to discussions and Bible studies, discussions with one another about house. How are things going in your life? How are you feeling that somehow we're always bringing stuff back to what can God do here? How can I be praying for you? What's God doing in your life, and also what's he doing in my life. But now go again in verse 19, he continues with the second part of several, and this one is sing and make music in your heart to the Lord. In other words, express joy in knowing and trusting in Christ. One of the ways we express that is through the vehicle of music. We don't just have music in our worship service because we're blessed that we have Tony and Ashley with us. We don't have it because I don't know how to speak for longer than 30 minutes. I can speak for an hour. We have a because it's a vehicle for us to express to God with so many others have written that we could not articulate that way but we share in what They're saying and we're often repeating key trues to Christianity and the scriptures as we sing. So Paul says here, singing make music in your heart. So Lord, I don't know about some of you, I'm not always behind you on the highway. But are you the kind of person who sings in your car or you have your radio on you're singing along. We can carry the joy of Christ with us wherever we go. And the reminder here is this expressing of Joy has to be genuine, has to be in the heart. And that's true whether we're singing a chorus or we sing it with true joy. excited about it, what it's telling us and so notice the second participle is all about participation in worship in the Quran. Christian life, from the heart, our affections and our will our evidence in our worship, and in our just conversations about Christ. Then you get to verse 20. And in verse 20, Paul says, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Display things at all times. And in all circumstances. Paul says, you want, you want to live wisely. You want to live a life centered around an appropriate response to God's goodness. then learn how to display thanks at all times. And in all situations. I don't know about you, but I think we do a pretty good job at displaying things when things are good. So easy for us to do that. Paul's saying that that's not the only time because then what it is, is your Thanksgiving is tied to your circumstances. Much like the concept that Thanksgiving is all about families and traditions. you're tying it to something that it's way more than that. And just kind of think about Paul's own life. Did he? Did he live this out? That he practices that he gave thanks at all times, and always think we could answer that and say, I'm sure he didn't perfectly because he was still a sinner. Paul talks about how he hadn't arrived yet at the completion of his salvation, but he certainly provides a model for us and gives you me a little hint at how does God cultivate this in us as children? I think we all know the answer, but we don't want to say The way cultivates Thanksgiving in all situations, is by taking you through difficult situations by presenting great needs in your life where you do not have the resources, or the

ability, in and of yourself to display thankfulness. And yet it is through that that Paul would say in phillipians, that's how I have learned to be content. That is how I have learned Thanksgiving. And so as you you listen to what Paul's saying here. Again, you can think of job in the Old Testament, very beginning of the book where he's going to go through all of these trials. Job says, Lord, what gives? Lord takes away, bless it be the name of the Lord. In other words, my Thanksgiving isn't tied to my immediate circumstances, but it's tied to who I am in my relationship with God. That's wise living. And that's what we all need. Because Thanksgiving is more than families and traditions. But there's one last participle there and it's in verse 21. And we might almost read this and think either verse 21, goes to the next section of the letter, but but it actually fits with this and then Paul will expand on that in specific relationships. But it's simply submit to one another, out of reverence for Christ. You realize that a thankful attitude changes how you relate to God and others are thankful attitude changes how you relate to God and others. Word submit here is not an oppressive term it means to, to orderly arrange yourself under. And so for Paul's listeners are restructuring the church that they needed to arrange themselves under their structures in society. And Paul saying, you know, what makes a person live wisely and be able to do that is they're centered on Thanksgiving. They look at these people around them and they're like God's put them in my life for a reason. Just like we can say with assurance, God's gathered this congregation together from all different aspects. We can say the same about the people you have in your workplace. God has brought them around you according to his sovereign will, and according to whatever timetable that might be. So these four parts of speech in particular verses 19 through 21 challenge us to think about what is Thanksgiving, all about and to strip away the things that are nice to enjoy, but are not really the heart of Thanksgiving. It's these four participles that are at the heart of what Thanksgiving should be for every follower of Jesus Christ. Let's pray together. Our gracious God, thank you for making very clear to us that we should always be a grateful people, a thankful people. At the same time, we know that this is a work we cannot do on our own. But I pray that we would rely upon your Holy Spirit and your word for each one of us, whatever our circumstances and situation may be were either right now, or perhaps in the days or months to come, that we would be able to read this again and say we are living and walking wisely. I pray this in Jesus name Amen