

DEEP IN SCRIPTURE

Verses & Notes April 2, 2008

Ephesians 5:18-21 (Part 2)

- 18: G1 *And 'do not get drunk with wine',
for that is debauchery;*
- G2 *but [let yourselves] be filled with the Spirit,*
- 19: A: *addressing one another
in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,*
- B: *singing and making melody to the Lord
with all your heart,*
- 20: C: *giving thanks always and for everything
in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ
to God the Father,*
- 21: D: *[being] subject to one another
out of reverence for Christ.*

Introduction: Every Sunday, and for many people Saturday evening, millions of Christians around the world gather for worship. We do this partially in obedience to Scripture, for we know that from the beginning we were told to “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.” But sadly far too many seem to gather merely to fulfill this obligation; in other words, “I go because I gotta go,” and then when they leave the church they return to their everyday lives, until the next weekend when once again, they go because they gotta go. But what St. Paul and the Church have always taught is that the gathering for worship is a communion of love between brothers. This is part of what we'll be discussing today on ***Deep in Scripture***.

House cleaning items...

- Today's Special: “The Mass of the Early Christians,” by Mike Aquilina.
- We want your input!!! Phone: On air phone number: 1-800-664-5110
Off air: 1-740-450-1175

Email: marcus@deepinscripture.com

Forum: <http://www.chnetwork.org/forums/forum51>

REVIEW: Today we're continuing our discussion of Ephesians:

- **In the first three chapters**, St. Paul describes the changes that take place in our lives once we have heard, believed, and then were sealed with the Holy Spirit in baptism. Our relationship with God, with other baptized believers, and with ourselves has been changed by grace. By grace we were saved from our old life / nature and made children of God, full members of His family, members of the Body of Christ, the Church.
- **In the second half of Ephesians**, St. Paul exhorts the newly baptized Gentile believers how they must live out this new life, which requires surrender and faithful obedience. They must change how they live in relationship to God, to each other, and to themselves. St. Paul essentially summarized this in 4:22-24,

*22: Put off your old nature
which belongs to your former manner of life
and is corrupt through deceitful lusts,
23: and be renewed in the spirit of your minds,
24: and put on the new nature,
created after the likeness of God
in true righteousness and holiness.*

- **Last week we began looking at verses 18-21 in which St. Paul distinguishes between the lifestyles of two different kinds of gatherings:**

18: G1 And 'do not [let yourselves] get drunk with wine',
 for that is debauchery;

 G2 but [let yourselves] be filled with the Spirit,

19: A: addressing one another
 in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,

 B: singing and making melody to the Lord
 with all your heart,

20: C: giving thanks always and for everything
 In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ
 to God the Father,

21: D: [being] subject to one another
 out of reverence for Christ.

- **Familiar verses often used to preach on the evils of drinking or the need to experience the baptism of the Spirit & the reception of charismatic gifts:**

- This is not the perspective that we are taking with these verses,
 - Not because we don't believe in the need to avoid getting drunk with wine or because we don't believe in the charismatic gifts...
 - Primarily because we do not believe that this was specifically St. Paul's intent: He wasn't focusing a sermon against drunkenness or upon being baptized with the Spirit; rather he was focusing on how they were to live and relate within the community, specifically when they gathered together.
 - Important to see, though, that this verse does not promote abstinence from alcoholic beverages but moderation, which is true of the rest of St. Paul as well as the rest of Scripture:

1 Timothy 5:23, "No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments."

- One of the reasons I recommended Fr. Catantamessa's book, "Sober Intoxication of the Spirit"...

- **Note the layout of this verse:**

- Verse 18 contrasts the two gatherings: G1 & G2;
- Verses 19-21 lists four things that ought to characterize the new gathering.

- **What are these two gatherings?**

- **18a [G1]:** Pagan gatherings, religious or otherwise:
"Do not get drunk with wine' for that is debauchery"
- **Beginning in 18b,** St. Paul describes the new gathering: the Ecclesia (Church).
 - Not merely referring to Christian living in general, as if, as baptized Christians, we are now to always speak to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, etc.
 - Rather, he is describing their gathering for worship / Eucharist, as the Body of Christ.
- **18b [G2]: "But [let yourselves] be filled with the Spirit."**
 - **Note: I added "let yourselves" to the translation of both 18a & b because the Greek verbs in both cases are imperative passives:**
 - When a person gets drunk, they have actively drunk too much wine, but they became "drunk" passively by the action of the wine; therefore, to keep from getting "drunk," we must actively limit our drinking; we must practice moderation, or abstinence if necessary.

- In the same way, we can't actively fill ourselves with the Spirit!
 - Too often enthusiastic people have tried to do this!
 - Rather, being filled with the Spirit is the work of the Holy Spirit; our part is making ourselves receptive, and this St. Paul exhorts us to do, in this case, in the gathering of the Body of Christ.
- **What can we do, in obedience to St. Paul's exhortation, to be filled with the Holy Spirit?**
 - **In general:** By grace, follow ALL of Ephesians; this is why St. Paul wrote!
 - In other words, he's not giving a four step formula for being filled: "Do the four things I list in the next three verses, and thee will be filled!" No, the entire letter describes how we are to live in obedience, how we are to live by grace through faith.
 - **More precisely:** By grace, we are to follow the teaching of Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture as taught to us by the Church.
 - We can easily get off track following Ephesians on our own;
 - Sola Scriptura apart from the guidance of the Church Jesus Christ established, guided by the Holy Spirit, has historically led to thousands of contradictory opinions about what it means or doesn't mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit or how one becomes filled with the Holy Spirit.
 - **Specifically here, four things came to St. Paul's mind (possibly as he considered weaning them from certain aspects of their old gatherings):**
 - Need to emphasize that though St. Paul is focusing on their gatherings for worship, these four characteristics must not end there, but are then to shape how they are to live together in every other aspect of their lives;
 - Our own faith and how we live it out must not be limited to that hour we gather for worship on Sunday or Saturday night; rather the graces we receive and the convictions we express in worship / mass must shape every aspect of the rest of our lives; otherwise our worship is a sham.

(1) The language during the gathering, vs. 19a:

*"addressing one another
in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,"*

- **Psalms:** the traditional OT psalms;
 - **Hymns:** newer, Christ centered hymns;
 - **Spiritual songs:** possibly more spontaneous expressions of praise & worship.
- **Does St. Paul imply that this is literally how they are to talk to one another?**
 - Here's a good example of needing to hear this verse in the context of the Church and the history of the liturgy of the Church!
 - Many independent Christian groups have taken this literally, and not only limited their worship to "psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs," but modeled their everyday speech to speaking in King James language, quoting Scripture in every conversation.
 - Received a good email on this:

Dear Mr. Grodi,

Do you think there is a hint at ancient Christian antiphonal (two choirs, back and forth) singing in verse 19? "Addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs."

In Christ the King,

David Wallace
Director of Religious Education
St. Bernadette Catholic Church

 - I think this is very possible, because there is little doubt that this is the tradition that the Early Christians carried on from their Jewish roots!
 - Nearly every Psalm can easily be recited antiphonally:

Ps 124, 1-2,

*"If it had not been the LORD who was on our side,
let Israel now say --
if it had not been the LORD who was on our side,
when men rose up against us..."*

Ps 136:1-3,

*"O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good,
For his steadfast love endures for ever.
O give thanks to the God of gods,
for his steadfast love endures for ever.
O give thanks to the Lord of lords,
for his steadfast love endures for ever;*

- St. Paul may have been describing exactly what these newly baptised converts will experience in their liturgies.
- On the other hand, St. Paul may have been describing more generally how they are to speak *together* or as *members of one accord*, emphasizing the one voice of their unity; in other words, NOT emphasizing a horizontal focus to one another BUT a horizontal unity focusing upward together.
- Both of these meanings can be seen in the parallel passage in Colossians 3:16-17,
*"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, and **sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs** with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."*
- [Note, that this is in a similar context in colossians, just before discussion of marriage.]

(2) The sincerity of their worship together, vs 19b:

*"singing and making melody to the Lord
with all your heart,"*

- **"making melody"** = "pluck or play" = implies accompanied music!
- **"with all your heart to the Lord"** (the actual order in the Greek)
- Not merely mindless repetition but with sincere gusto!

(3) The attitude of their gathering / worship, vs. 20:

*"giving thanks always and for everything
in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ
to God the Father,"*

- Here St. Paul is exhorting us to detach ourselves from everything that pulls our attention away from God: from the world, from our successes, from our plans, from ourselves;
- **"giving thanks"** = *eucharistountes*; modern Catholics hear the word "eucharist" and recognize it to be the Body & Blood of Christ, but behind this must be this attitude of thanksgiving!
- **"always & for everything"** = a lifestyle, not just on Sundays, but yet especially in worship; we are always to be careful of distractions!
- **"in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father"**
 - **"in the name of"** = long standing biblical heritage meaning recognizing, affirming, claiming, and resting upon the authority of the person in whose name you are doing or saying something.
 - Therefore, all of life is to be under the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father.
 - Much we could say about this phrase, but for now, we see that at this stage St. Paul emphasizes praying through Our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father. In time, as misunderstandings arose within the community, the bishops of the Church would

gather in council to fine tune our understanding of the Trinity and the Divinity of Christ; BUT Scripture *alone* can and has led to much confusion!

(4) Their relationships within the gathering / worship, vs. 21:

*"[being] subject to one another
out of reverence for Christ.*

- In many translations, this verse is combined with what follows, but we've included it in this context because of the parallel tenses of the verbs:
 - **"addressing ... singing ... giving thanks"** are all participles, and so is the verb that begins verse 21, so it seems to be a continuation of St. Paul's thinking.
 - What follows beginning in verse 22 about marriage is a more specific application of his more general thought in verse 21.
- **"[being] subject to one another out of reverence for Christ"** = essentially means that we are to follow Jesus' instructions "to love another as he has loved us," and to not lord it over one another but serve one another.
- **In many ways we can see how these instructions have been carried out in the liturgies that have been passed down to us from the earliest days of the Church;**
 - **Yet, think of all the ways we fall short when we gather for worship?**
 - How often do we digress into common fellowship, gossip, and chatter when we're gathering in the presence of Jesus in the Sacrament? The Creator of the Universe, our Savior who gave himself for us on the cross, is truly present in the Eucharist, yet we act as if there is nothing different about where we are gathered than the local grocery store or even a pub.
 - How often do we merely recite the words and hymns of the liturgy without even thinking about what we are saying? Where is our heart?
 - How thankful are we when we receive the Eucharist (which means be thankful)?! To what extent do we take for granted all that He has done for us?
 - How submissive are we to others in the Church, not just to the leadership, but to one another? How often has bitterness, anger, and the other negative attitudes St. Paul's warns about colored our relationships within the Body?
 - **The answer to these problems is not rewriting or revamping the Mass, but renewing ourselves.**
 - Out of reverence for Christ, and in obedience to the words of St. Paul, let us put off the old, let us set aside the distractions and attachments of life;
 - let us be renewed in the spirit of our minds,
 - and put on the new, intent on living out these instructions whenever we gather to celebrate the Eucharist, "in true righteousness and holiness."