

An Atmosphere of Truth, Part 3

Ephesians 5:19-21

Let's turn back to Ephesians chapter 5. Ephesians chapter 5. We're going to continue with the passage we looked at last time. I also want you to turn over a couple of books toward the end, the book of Colossians. Go to Colossians chapter 3 as well. Stick a finger in there, and look at, we're going to look at both passages. You, member, remember from last week, Ephesians 5:18 and Colossians 3:16, they're parallel to one another. I'm going to draw from both passages to talk about how we reinforce the truth with one another, and as we begin, let me read those passages; set them before our eyes.

Ephesians 5:18-21, Paul writes, "do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name

of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.”

Now flip over quickly to Colossians 3:16. Colossians 3:16 parallel, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing 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.”

Now if, as we said last week, if the Spirit fills us with the Word of Christ, and if we are to attend to the filling work of the Holy Spirit regularly, putting ourselves under the teaching ministry of the local church so the truth dwells in us richly, what’s the result? What’s the result? The effect of God’s Word in our church is nothing short of dynamic, dynamic, lively. Look at the participles, there, in verses 16-17, teaching, admonishing, singing, thanksgiving.

Flip back over to Ephesians 5:18-21, look at the participles there, addressing (or many translations say speaking); Addressing, speaking, singing, making melody or even, making music, giving thanks, and submitting.

Listen, wherever the truth is pervasive in a church, whenever the atmosphere is super-saturated with truth, there is a corresponding vibrancy, excitement, joy. The church is filled with life. It's bursting with activity; it's abounding in productivity. Take the truth away, like a tree without water, everything dies.

But with the truth, with the truth permeating the church's atmosphere, filling every room, echoing down the hallway, there's life, health, growth, productivity. There's teaching and admonishing. There's singing and making music. There's thanksgiving and submitting. Can I give you just one word that sums all that up? One word. A truth-saturated church is filled with worship. Worship. Vibrant, joyful, life-giving, transformative worship. That's where I want to be, don't you? That's where I want to raise my family. That's where I want to invest my resources, my time, my money, my energy, laying up

treasure for heaven that will yield eternal dividends, heavenly reward.

So what's our part in reinforcing the truth to one another? We reinforce the truth when we teach the truth, sing the truth, give thanks for the truth, and obey the truth, and when we do all that, together with one another. Let's take a look at the first point in the outline: We reinforce the truth when we, number one, teach the truth to one another, when we teach the truth to one another.

As Colossians 3:16 says, we're to be "teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom." The Greek text actually emphasizes that final phrase in our translations, it puts it up in front of the sentence. That is, "In all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another." You know what that means? You know what this represents? Every single member of the congregation makes it their personal, individual responsibility to make sure the Word of Christ is richly indwelling them so that every single member is growing, is thriving.

Teaching, teaching is imparting the truth. It's doing what I'm doing right now. It's disseminating the truth of the Bible, explaining, helping others to understand. Whether you're teaching biblical passages or principles from Scripture or explaining doctrine and theology, or even teaching the applications of those things in some form of discipleship teaching, or evangelism training. Whatever it is, at some level, we are all to be striving for maturity so we can teach others. So as you learn, share it with somebody else. Maybe you're not an official teacher in the church; maybe it's not your gifting. But at some level, we're all teachers. We're all priests to this culture. We get to bring them to God. As you learn, share it with somebody. Verbalize it. Discuss what you're learning through listening to preaching.

What about admonishing, what does that mean? To admonish means we are to correct others; sometimes strictly. Contrary to the tolerant, judge not spirit, that has pervaded the evangelical movement over the past 50 or 100 years, we are responsible to correct professing Christians when they're wrong. As Paul said, it's not our responsibility to judge the world.

God has already judged the world. They're already under his condemnation and wrath just as we were before God saved us.

So we're not to judge the world, but we are to judge one another in the church. You say, Prove that, biblically. Okay. Go to 1 Corinthians chapter 5. Thanks for asking; I wanted to read this anyway. 1 Corinthians chapter 5 verse 9, Paul says there, "I wrote you in my letter," that's a previous letter, not, not this one here, but he says, I wrote you in my letter "not to associate with sexually immoral people, not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world or the greedy or swindlers or idolaters since then you would need to go out of the world.

"But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone," get this, "who bears the name of brother." What's that? A fellow professing Christian. You're not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother, "if he's guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reveler, drunkard, or swindler, not even to eat with such a one." "For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge. God judges those outside. Purge the evil person from among you."

Now listen, we're not talking about nitpicking people on every point of doctrine, picking apart every little issue that you think you see. That's contrary to wisdom. That's not mature. But when someone is characterized by a pattern of sin, characterized by sinful habits, when someone is going off the rails in some aspect of their life, if someone is in significant error on some key point of doctrine, you know what? It is loving to correct them. It's loving to admonish them.

Letting sin and error continue unchecked in a fellow brother or sister in Christ just to avoid a conflict, that's the height of selfishness, beloved. If you're unwilling to help somebody out of their error, you might as well push them over the cliff all the way, just speed them on their journey to the rocks below. Because that's what's going to happen, same thing. Folks, we need to love one another.

So we reinforce the truth, point one, by teaching the truth to one another. Teaching it. That is, teach and admonish. A lot more we could say, but we need to keep moving. Second point: We

reinforce the truth when we sing the truth to one another. When we sing the truth with one another. Now Paul emphasizes this aspect of reinforcing the truth in both Ephesians and Colossians, but let's focus our attention on Ephesians 5:19. Okay? Take a look. We're to be addressing, or I said, speaking, "Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs," we're to be "singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart." Three of the five participles in Ephesians 5:19-21, three of the five, the results of the Spirit's ministry to fill us with truth, three of those effects are right here in this verse. Addressing one another in elevated, exalted language of music, singing and making melody, this is talking about the vital role of music in the corporate body life of the church.

Notice, first of all, that the target audience in the corporate music of the church is two-fold. Two-fold: On the one hand, we're addressing one another in song; and on the other hand, we're singing and making music to the Lord. One another and the Lord.

As we sing, we need to be mindful of both audiences. There are two recipients of our ministry in song: other Christians



around you, and the Lord. And I know this is a strong statement, beloved, but you are sinning if you take either one of those for granted. Your singing in church is not about making you feel good, feel better, more connected to God, closer to him, or whatever. That may be the result of your singing in church but it's not the goal.

The goal is exactly what Ephesians 5:19 says, to address others with the truth. Firstly, you're addressing the human audience in the seats around you. Secondly, you're addressing the God who watches over the worship service. Addressing one another with truth in this way, there's something special about that. This isn't just quoting Bible verses to each other though we could do that. It's not just quoting Bible verses, but this is elevated language. It's exalted language. We take the revealed truths of Scripture, we put them in the form of poetic, rhythmic verse, we accompany those words with fitting, appropriate music, and we join our voices together in unison, singing loudly. And when we sing, we're to sing robustly, exultantly, jubilantly.

We're to sing, as it says there, "Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs." Let me break that down for you. Psalms are essentially divinely inspired poetry, poetic verse breathed out by God himself, okay. That's what you see in the book of Psalms, the psalter, many of them penned by David. The Greek word *psalmos* translates a Hebrew word, *mitzmor*, or it's from the word *zamar*, the verb *zamar*, which basically means to play a musical instrument in the context of a worship service.

If a psalm puts God's words to music, a hymn puts biblical theology to music. The word, hymn, comes from the Greek word *hymnos*. It's a more general word than psalm, and it refers broadly to a song with religious content, especially a song of praise to a deity, a god; Christian context, we're obviously talking about a song to our deity, our God, our triune God, a song of praise to him. So a psalm is divinely inspired poetic verse, we're to put to music and sing. A hymn is the theology of the Bible, the doctrines of the Bible, that we sing to musical accompaniment.

Third word, the word *ōdais*, from which we get the word English word, *ode*; *ode* like a song. You can find the word *ōdais*

in classical Greek tragedy as a song of mourning or lamentation on the one hand, or on the other side of the emotional spectrum, it's a song of joy or praise.

There's a deeply emotional aspect to this word *ōdai*, song, which gives expression to the full range of human emotion. Both sadness and mourning are appropriate in church, as well as joyful celebration and praise. It's okay to sing both. Sometimes very appropriate to sing either one depending on the occasions, plenty of examples in Scripture, but notice that Paul adds an adjective to the word song. We're to sing spiritual songs. We're to put boundaries around our emotion. The songs we sing are to reinforce spiritual things: truth.

Whether it's a psalm, a hymn, or spiritual song, whether we're singing words of divinely inspired poetry, words of biblical theology, or words of human emotion that are informed and bounded by the truth, what we sing is meant to speak truth to one another, to each other. We're reinforcing the truth that way. Not only that, but Paul pivots our attention from the human audience in the first part, verse 19 to the divine audience in

the second half of the verse. And we've become mindful that the manner of our singing is noted by God. The way we sing.

Folks, as we sing, as we speak, as we live, the Lord is watching. He's listening. When we sing, we worship him collectively. We praise him together. The Spirit fills us with divine truth, and we sing that truth back to God, honoring his word by singing it back to him in elevated language. Our expressions of creativity, they reflect the excellence and the beauty of our Creator. Our songs, our music, like everything else we do is to glorify God.

We need to be thoughtful about that over-arching purpose of music when we come into the church. As Christians, we participate with God's Spirit to bring glory to God in everything we say and do, and that includes our music; what we play on our instruments, how we play it, why we play it. The goal in ministering to our human audience is to communicate the truth in excellent, transcendent, memorable ways. The goal of ministering to our divine audience is worship, singing, making music out of our love for God. We worship him in spirit and in

truth: heart, soul, mind, and strength, all invested to bring praise to him.

Teaching and singing the truth to one another, two ways we reinforce the truth. Third point, third point in your outline: We reinforce the truth when we give thanks for the truth with one another. When we give thanks with one another for the truth. Ephesians 5:20 says we're to be "always be giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father." Colossians 3:17 says, "giving thanks to God the Father through him."

Having a sincere heart of gratitude toward God is one of the clearest dividing lines between a believer and an unbeliever. God's indictment of humanity in Romans begins with this, "For even though they knew God, they didn't honor him as God or give thanks." Romans 1:21. Listen, it is very serious to fail to give thanks, either ignoring divine grace in your life, taking credit for what you don't deserve; or on the other hand, to complain and grumble about things you don't like, forgetting that, "God ordains all things for our good and his glory."

Romans 8:28, right?

So that's why Ephesians 5:20 says we're to "give thanks always for all things." Do you give thanks always, for all things? Or do complaints slip out of your soul? True Christian gratitude is expressed when things are going well, but also when things seem to not go so well. Anyone can express thanks and praise when everything's going well, right? Only Christians can praise God sincerely, deeply, meaningfully when they go through trials, when they lose a loved one, when they lose a job, when they can't find a job, when things are tight, and they're looking at kids to feed and they don't have money, when they're persecuted for doing what's right. Gratitude in those circumstances, evidence of true conversion.

And that's why thanksgiving plays such an important role in reinforcing the truth with one another. You know why? It sets a tone. It creates an environment in which bitterness and rancor and grumbling and complaining and all those other sins of the heart and the tongue, when thanksgiving is the dominant tone in the church, those sins of thought and speech are utterly out of place. They stand out as unfitting and even as immoral.

When we give thanks to God, our sovereign Creator, when we give thanks to our Father, our Redeemer, and our merciful Savior, you know something? When we are giving thanks to God, we cannot be at the same time and in the same moment grumbling, and complaining, and self-centered, and discontented, and conflicted, and restless, we're content in him. Quite the contrary, right? When we express thanksgiving to God, we're humble, we're satisfied in God, we're content in God, we're at peace with him, we're pleased in him, we're joyful in him. And reinforcing those truths with one another that changes things in the church, doesn't it? It changes things; it sets the right tone.

All right, reinforce the truth. We reinforce the truth when we teach each other the truth, when we sing the truth, we give thanks for the truth. Lastly, point four, we reinforce the truth with each other when we obey the truth with one another, when we obey it. Colossians 3:17, Paul says, "Whatever you do in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus." To do something in the name of somebody else, that means to conduct yourself in a manner that's consistent with that name, consistent with that person.

What is consistent with the name of the Lord Jesus? We'll keep it really simple. Jesus said, John 4:34, "My food," what feeds me, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work." John 5:30, "I seek not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me." John 6:38, "I've come down from heaven not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me." To do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ is to do what he did. "Whatever you do in word or deed," your life is to be lived in obedience to God, to do his will.

Notice, Ephesians 5:21 in your Bible, last participle coming out of the Spirit's filling work in our lives is this: "submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ." Submitting to one another. How do we do that? Paul doesn't leave us guessing. He goes right into the next section, Ephesians 5:22-24 "Wives are to submit to their husbands as to the Lord in everything." Ephesians 5:25-33: "Husbands are to love their wives as their own bodies, just as Christ loved the church and sacrificed himself." How do we submit to one another? "Children are to obey their parents," Ephesians 6:1-3. "Parents are to raise their children in the discipline and instruction of the



Lord.” Ephesians 6:4. Ephesians 6:5-9 Employees are to obey their bosses, not with eye service as men pleasers, but doing the will of God from the heart. Ephesians 6:10 or 6:9, Bosses are to treat their employees with dignity and respect. Finally, Ephesians 6:10-20, All of us are to “be strong in the Lord, put on the whole armor of God, stand firm against the schemes of the devil.” We’re to pursue holiness and spiritual growth.

And we grow in the experience of the truth, which is what strengthens us and brings us to maturity. As we mature, we become even more effective in teaching others in wisdom to obey the truth and that takes us right back to point one, doesn’t it? Teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom. Cycle continues, right? Reinforcing the truth over and over through teaching, singing, giving thanks, obeying. Then right back to teaching and singing and thanks and obeying, right?

So much more to say, but we have so much to learn about the church. Such a beautiful institution of the Lord revealed from heaven. This is unlike anything on earth. We’re not to be like anything on earth, either. We practice a revealed culture right here in this church. It’s not like any other culture you’ve

known. We have to learn it; we have to practice it. And that's our joy and pleasure to put into practice what we've learned right here, right? Bow with me in a word of prayer.

Heavenly Father, we just want to thank you again for your truth. We'd be at lost without it, and not just lost in the sense of stumbling in the darkness, though that's true. We'd be eternally lost. We'd be drowning in our sins along with the world around us. We'd be, have only the certain expectation of judgment ahead of us. And we ask, Father, that you reinforce these truths to us.

Help us to remind one and another day after day after day after day "as long as it's called today." Let us "encourage one another toward love and good deeds." We love you, and we give thanks to you in the name of Jesus Christ. He's the Savior of our souls. He's the Lord of our lives, and we want to honor him glorify him. In Jesus' name, amen.