Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Be Not Drunk with Wine, Part 1
Scripture: Ephesians 5:18
Code: 1936

INTRODUCTION

Ephesians 5:18-20 describes the Spirit-filled life. It is one of the most important aspects of the Christian walk. Without the constant control of the Spirit of God, the believer cannot live by God's standard. One way to see the book of Ephesians is to view the believer as if he were a high-performance automobile.

A. The Engine

Ephesians 1:1--3:13 describes the believer's inheritance and position in Christ. It is somewhat analogous to the automobile's major source of power--the engine. The believer has been given full power because of his relationship to Christ (Eph. 1:19-21).

B. The Ignition Switch

In Ephesians 3:14-21 Paul describes what can be likened to the ignition switch in the automobile. It does no good to have a high- powered engine if it can't be turned on. As you are controlled by God's Spirit, only then do you begin to understand what it means to live the Christian life. As we mature, God will do "exceedingly, abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us" (3:20). The power of God in our lives allows the believer to live a life that is pleasing to Him.

C. The Road Map

Ephesians 4:1--6:9 describes the spiritual route we're to drive. The believer is commanded to move along the path that is worthy of his calling (4:1). The road to Spirit-controlled living is very different from the world and involves humility versus pride, unity versus discord, love versus hate, light versus darkness, and wisdom versus foolishness.

D. The Roadblocks

As the believer drives his automobile, he comes across many potential roadblocks (6:10-24). If the Christian lives a worthy life, he will inevitably encounter the schemes of Satan (6:11). The battle is

"not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (6:12). The only way to defeat the devil is to put on the full armor of God and pray always (vv. 12-18).

E. The Fuel

1. The energy

The only missing element from the illustration of the automobile is the fuel to run it. You must fill the tank with gas in the tank and this fuel is the Holy Spirit. Paul says, "Be not drunk with wine, in which is excess, but be filled with the Spirit" (5:18). It would do no good to have the automobile if you didn't have the fuel to run it. I once saw a magazine illustration of a farmer who won a car and had it delivered to him. Since he did not know what an automobile was supposed to do, he hooked his horse to the bumper and rode away in style! There are many Christians who do the same thing. They have a vehicle created by God, intended to be empowered by the fuel of the Holy Spirit, but end up pulling it along their own way. In Ephesians 5:18 God is saying each believer is to be energized by the Holy Spirit and not by his own efforts.

2. The effect

From Ephesians 5:18--6:9, the apostle Paul describes how the filling of the Holy Spirit affects the believer himself (vv. 19-20); his relationships with others in general (v. 21); and his relationship with his spouse (vv. 22-33); his children (6:1-4); and his co-workers (6:5-9). Living in the Spirit will affect every relationship you have because it is the fuel that allows your spiritual automobile to run properly. It is utter foolishness not to use all the tremendous resources that God has made available to the believer. It is like owning the highest priced vehicle available yet never bothering to put the fuel in it. Living the Christian life demands that you be controlled by the Holy Spirit.

LESSON

I. THE CONTRAST (v. 18a)

"And be not drunk with wine."

Before we study how to be filled with the Spirit, we must study Paul's contrast of not being drunk with wine. Paul's contrast between drunkenness and being Spirit filled seems simple on the surface, yet presents very profound truths.

A. The Controversy

Drinking alcoholic beverages is a big issue in the church today. Some Christians say, "No Christian should drink because it's a sin." Others say, "It's obviously not a sin to drink because Jesus and others in the Bible drank wine." Still others say, "The only time you should stop drinking is when it offends a weaker Christian brother." There are perspectives on drinking from one end of the spectrum to the other.

B. The Comparison

In Ephesians 5:15 Paul says, "See, then, that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise [men]." He also said, "Be ye not unwise but understanding what the will of the Lord is" (v. 17). In verse 18 he gives the third negative command: "And be not drunk with wine, in which is excess, but be filled with the Spirit." In all three verses he is simply paralleling the same idea. The wisest person is the one who does the will of God. Being filled with the Spirit is using wisdom in determining the will of God, whereas being drunk is being out of God's will and acting foolish.

1. The social issue

The United States has a massive alcohol and drug problem. The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) estimated that there are at least 1O million alcoholics in America and at least 3.3 million teenage alcoholics (That's 19% of all American teenagers.) And statistic are rising rapidly. However drinking has always been portrayed as a glamorous pastime. Whenever alcohol is advertised in the media, it is usually associated with a man of distinction instead of a drunken bum lying in the gutter.

Paul is saying that if you're looking for joy and and comfort, seek it in the Holy Spirit, not at the bottom of a bottle. The Holy Spirit should be your only resource for joy and exhilaration. Everyone wants to be happy and that's ok because God wants everyone to be happy, too. He is not a cosmic- killjoy!

a) The Christian's source of joy

(1) Matthew 5:3-12--When Jesus introduced His great Sermon on the Mount, He began by saying, "Blessed [happy] are they ...."

(2) Ecclesiastes 3:4--Solomon said, "[There is] a time to laugh."

(3) Proverbs 17:22--Solomon said, "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine."

(4) John 15:11--Jesus said, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full."

(5) 1 John 1:4--The apostle John said, "These things write we unto you, that your joy may be full."

(6) Philippians 4:4--Paul said, "Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, Rejoice."

(7) Psalms 5:11; 32:11; 35:27--David said several times, "Shout for joy."

(8) Psalm 16:11--David also said, "In thy presence is fullness of joy."

(9) Luke 2:10--On the day of Jesus' birth an angel said, "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy."

b) The world's source of joy

God wants man to experience real joy but He wants him to find it in the right place. People want to be truly happy, but many times their circumstances make them so miserable, they turn to alcohol. I remember asking a young man with a heavy drug addiction, "Do drugs really answer your questions?" He responded, "No, but at least I no longer have to answer any questions because I can't even remember what they are!" That is the kind of escape the world calls joy. They are trying to seek joy and happiness in an artificial way.

There is a popular liquor called Southern Comfort, but in Ephesians 5:18, the apostle Paul says the real Comforter is the Holy Spirit. First Peter 5:7 says to cast "all your care upon him, for he careth for you." Intoxication is never the remedy for the cares of this life. All it does is add more problems to an already guilt-ridden soul.

The world tries to convince us that alcoholism is a disease, but it's more than that--it is sin. It is simply the manifestation of human depravity. As any other sin, it needs to be dealt with and confessed. Every mention of drunkenness in the Bible shows a disastrous consequence.

(1) Drunkenness destroys

(a) Noah became drunk and in his nakedness acted shamelessly (Gen. 9:21).

(b) Lot became drunk and his daughters committed incest with him (Gen. 19:30-36).

(c) Nabal became drunk and at a crucial time God took his life (1 Sam. 25:36-37).

(d) Elah became drunk and was murdered by Zimri (1 Kings 16:9-10).

(e) Ben-hadad and all his allied kings became drunk and were slaughtered--only Ben-hadad escaped (1 Kings 20:16-21).

(f) Belshazzar became drunk and had his kingdom taken from him (Dan. 5).

(g) The Corinthians got drunk at the Lord's table. Some died as a result (1 Cor. 11:21-34).

In Scripture drunkenness is always associated with immorality, unrestrained living, and reckless behavior.

(2) Drunkenness disqualifies

Drunkenness disqualifies a man from any form of leadership in the church. An elder or deacon must not be "given to wine" (1 Tim. 3:3, 8; Titus 1:7).

(3) Drunkenness discredits

(a) 1 Peter 4:2-3--Peter said we should no longer live "in the flesh to the lusts of men but to the will of God. For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revelings, carousings, and abominable idolatries."

(b) 1 Corinthians 5:11--Paul said, "I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one, no, not to eat." Paul was saying that if a person claims to be a believer and yet is a drunkard, you should not even associate with him. What you need to do is share the gospel message with him.

(c) 1 Corinthians 6:9-10--Paul said, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God."

If a person claims to know Christ yet remains a drunkard, he is deceived and will not inherit the kingdom of God. Paul is not saying that if you get drunk, you will automatically lose your salvation. He is saying that a person whose life is characterized by habitual drunkenness is not a true believer. A true believer is characterized by righteousness--not drunkenness. Only God knows who really belongs to Him and according to His Word, drunkards are not in His kingdom.

If you have a drinking problem, you better examine yourself to see if you are really in the faith (2 Cor. 13:5). Know that God can deliver you from your sinful life. Through the filling of the Holy Spirit, you will find the joy and comfort you seek. If your conversion to Christ is genuine, God will change your life. You will be forgiven of your sins and given a new start. The Lord said, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isa.

1:18).

2. The religious issue

The thrust of Paul's teaching on the filling of the Holy Spirit is religious: he is contrasting paganism with Christianity. Pagans believed that to commune with the gods, you needed to get drunk to reach the highest level of communion. This is part of what are called the "mystery religions," offshoots of the Greek and Roman mythological religious systems. It is not unlike what occurs today. From men like Timothy Leary to Eastern mystics and the occult, people are saying that if you get high on drugs and alcohol, you will reach a greater level of consciousness. Many claim that it is new truth, but is actually derived from ancient pagan religions. During the apostle Paul's ministry, the Ephesian culture was inundated with many pagan religions.

a) Zeus was considered a great god in Greek mythology. It is told that Zeus assumed human form, impregnated a mortal woman named Semele, and produced a son, Dionysus. Semele decided she had the right to see Zeus in his full glory and entered into his divine presence. She was instantly incinerated. Zeus then snatched the body of the unborn baby from her womb and sewed it into his thigh. He carried the baby until its full term and then gave birth. Zeus destined the infant god to become ruler of the planet earth.

According to Greek mythology, there were already sub-gods called Titans who ran the earth and when they heard of the new ruler--Dionysius--they were quite upset. They stole the baby and ate him. Zeus however, rescued his heart, swallowed it, and gave birth to Dionysus once again. Zeus struck the Titans with lightning and they were reduced to ashes. Out of those ashes came the human race. Around Dionysus became centered a religion of ascendancy, where human beings attempted to reach a level of divine consciousness. It was filled with ecstasy, wild music, dancing, and sexual perversion--all induced by drunkenness. With a great conclave of voices the people would call out to Dionysus, "Come thou Savior." Dionysus became known as the god of wine.

So when Paul said "be not drunk with wine," he was not dealing merely with a social problem, but a theological one as well. He was dealing directly with Satan's counterfeit religion. Satan captures minds and bodies through the medium of drunkenness.

b) The Roman counterfeit

The Roman name for Dionysus is Bacchus. He is frequently pictured with nymphs and satyrs. The famous bacchanalian feasts were nothing more than drunken orgies. Among the massive ruins of the ancient Near Eastern city of Baalbek is a temple to Bacchus, the god of wine. It is covered with grapes and vines because that was the thrust of their worship.

Paul was saying to the Ephesian church, "Your background was communing with the gods in a state of drunkenness, but if you want to communicate with the true God, you need to be filled with His Spirit. If you want to be raised to the highest level of consciousness, simply enter the presence of God through the filling of the Holy Spirit."

c) The Corinthian counterfeit

The same problem existed in the Corinthian church. They were never able to cut themselves off from the pagan religious systems and divorce themselves from the world. They were cliquish, litigious, proud, egotistical, and uncaring; they pursued vain philosophies; and were into hero worship.

The Corinthian Christians had problems with meat being offered to idols. They also had problems with the gifts of the Spirit, because the pagan religions had corrupted their meaning. That is why it is impossible to properly interpret 1 Corinthians l2-l4 without understanding the pagan world of New Testament times. Christianity was being counterfeited in the Corinthian church because they were carrying their former pagan practices into the church. They even corrupted one of the most sacred ordinances God has given the church-- Communion.

The Corinthians were so used to communing with the gods through drunkenness that they came to the Lord's Table drunk. Paul told them they couldn't drink the communion cup, which is the cup of the Lord, and the cup of drunkenness, which is the cup of demons (1 Cor. 10:21). Their Communion services were characterized by gluttony and drunkenness (1 Cor. 11:19-22). They were conducting their worship the way they used to do it in paganism.

Paul was contrasting the Satanic counterfeit of worship with true worship. He didn't want anything to come in the way of what the Spirit wanted to do in the lives of the Ephesians.

C. The Context

I believe Paul is dealing with drunkenness as a religious issue because of the context of Ephesians 5:18-21. He contrasts the pagan liturgy of singing, dancing, and wild parties with true Christian liturgy, which involves speaking with "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God" (vv. 19-21).

When Paul said, "Be not drunk with wine, in which is excess, but be filled with the Spirit," he was making a simple contrast. The Greek word for "excess" is asotia, which refers to uncontrolled dissipation or debauchery. Being controlled by alcohol is opposite to being controlled by the Spirit of God.

ConclusionYou are not a man of distinction when you get drunk. I have seen the evils of drunkenness. From the jungles of Ecuador I have watched Indians on the road stagger from side to side from alcohol. I've seen drunkenness in the Arab world and in almost every city I've ever been in. Drunkenness is a part of the curse.

What is controlling your life? Where do you find your joy, exhilaration, and comfort? Do you find it in a bottle? Alcohol is an artificial way of finding those things. If you truly desire to be happy, allow yourself to be controlled and empowered by the Spirit of God. He is the only true source of everlasting joy and comfort.

Focusing on the Facts

1. Without the constant _____ of the Spirit of God, the believer cannot live by God's standard.

2. Describe the illustration used of the book of Ephesians and the different aspects that comprise the illustration.

3. What is one roadblock to living the Spirit-controlled Christian life?

4. What is the effect of living the Spirit-filled life?

5. True or False: Drinking alcoholic beverages is a big issue in the church today.

6. How did Paul reason that being drunk with wine is the antithesis of true wisdom (Eph. 5:15, 17)?

7. How is drinking portrayed in the media and how is it affecting today's society?

8. The Holy Spirit should be your only resource for _____ and _____. Support your answer with Scripture.

9. True or False: Alcoholism is only a disease.

10. How does the Bible portray drunkenness? Give scriptural references to support your answer.

11. What was the main thrust of Paul's teaching on the filling of the Holy Spirit?

12. Give the historical background of Paul's command for the Ephesians to be filled with the Spirit.

13. What problems existed in the Corinthian church that were linked to their former pagan practices?

14. What does true Christian liturgy involve?

15. What is the opposite of being controlled by alcohol?

Pondering the Principles

1. Are you controlled by alcohol? Do you desire liquor or drugs more than reading the Word of God, fellowship, or witnessing? If so, examine yourself to see if you are really a Christian. Study the following passages and if they characterize your life, confess your sin to God and ask Him to give you new life in Christ: 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, Galatians 5:19-21, and Revelation 21:8.

2. One way to determine if a person is living in the Spirit is to evaluate how much time he spends reading and studying the Word of God. How much time do you spend in the Word? Is on a daily basis or seldom if ever? In Scripture, being filled with the Spirit of God and being filled with the Word of God are synonymous. Study the following parallels between the Spirit of God and the Word of God and determine if your life is controlled by the Spirit of God:

Spirit of God Word of God

Ephesians 5:18 Colossians 1:9-12

John 3:5-7 1 Peter 1:22-25

Titus 3:5-6 Ephesians 5:25-27

1 Corinthians 3:16 Colossians 3:16

1 Peter 1:2 John 17:17

Romans 8:2 John 8:31-36

2 Corinthians 3:5-6 2 Timothy 3:14-17

1 John 4:4 1 John 2:14

Romans 15:13 Romans 15:4

Romans 8:27 - Hebrews 4:12

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