

Do Not Get Drunk

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[0 : 00] Now, I want you to take your Bibles and turn in them to Ephesians 5, verse 18.

One of the clear advantages of expositional preaching, and how many of you know what I mean by expositional preaching?

Wave at me or smile so I can see front and lower teeth. Okay. Okay, there are enough of you that, yeah.

Now, probably I'll explain just for a moment. One of the clear advantages of expositional preaching is that the preacher is committed by the work of exposition, or explaining the Word of God, and in doing so in the order in which God has given us His Word, that the preacher is limited from avoiding hard things or from choosing those things that would be His preference.

What it means is that God, who has revealed His Word, expects that it be explained to His people for their blessing, for their good.

[1 : 45] And expositional preaching means that the preacher is responsible to begin where God begins and to work through the text in such a fashion that people at the end of a sermon, or at the end of a series, or at the end of a man's ministry can say, He explained the Word of God.

One of the things that I have been a little struck by lately is the number of times I've had people who have visited our fellowship and have made comment to me, your preaching is different.

And I would expect that because God uses all kinds of people in the pulpit, that there are certain aspects to which there's a lot of different preaching out there. In that preaching involves the person and the text.

But the thing that I found most striking, as I've heard people comment on the difference of preaching here, whether it's Pastor Saul or me or whoever stands in the pulpit, is that the central theme or the activity in which preaching really is engaged in is dealing with the text.

And it's the thing. I mean, the Bible is not the launching point for me to kind of go off on some kind of little storyline, but at the end of the day, you should walk away saying, Yeah, we covered these verses, and here's what that means.

[3 : 29] Now, listen to me. Preaching really is a Spirit-enabled heralding of what God thinks.

You got that? It's what God has to say. And one of the difficulties, honestly, of preaching is that it comes wrapped in skin.

And there are many days when I go home and I wish that there'd been less skin and more text. I work at that. And I'm very thankful for your prayers regarding that.

Because when it's all said and done, the one thing that I want you to remember is, this is what God says. Now, I bring that up because if I were not committed to exposition of the Scriptures, the first half of this verse, where I'd skip, I'd just gloss over it.

But I am committed to being faithful to the text. And I'll say that again. I am committed to be faithful to the text.

[4 : 43] And I've got to tell you, honestly, as I was praying, and I've been praying about this passage for weeks. I study in advance, and I knew we were coming to this, and I remember thinking to myself, there's a high probability that I'm going to make most of you in here irritated.

I mean, there are some days that I know I managed to irritate some of you, but I don't often think that I'm going to irritate most of you. And this is probably one of those days where when it's all said and done, there are going to be some of you who wish I'd said something else, and others of you wish that I hadn't said what I did.

And so it's like, it's all right. I mean that. I am, who knows, 20 years from checkout, and when that happens, I want to hear Jesus say, good job.

So let's look at the passage. Ephesians chapter 5, verse 18, it says, and do not get drunk with wine.

I am going to preach this morning on drinking. So the first point is this, the Bible on drunkenness, because that's what the text says.

[6 : 00] Do you see it? Right there it is. Ephesians 5, 18a, that's the way it's actually in my computer so I can find it again. Ephesians 5, 18a, that means the first half of the verse, do not get drunk with wine.

I do think it's appropriate for us to remember that when we deal with the Scriptures, we always are instructed to handle the context. And so I want to say up front that this passage is not primarily a proof text for the abstinence of alcoholic consumption.

It is actually in the larger frame of things a command to live a Spirit-filled Christian life. And I got to tell you, living a Spirit-filled Christian life is supremely important.

It is far more important than I think many people who profess to know Christ today really understand. And so after having called believers to live their lives for the glory of Christ and for the sake of others, Paul now comes to a fundamental and blessed truth of Christian living.

We are to live out our faith through the power of the Spirit of God who indwells us. In fact, a central tenet or principle of our salvation is that we're not in our salvation just given another set of rules to work off of.

[7 : 40] We are brought into personal relationship with the Lord of glory and with the Lord Jesus Christ in particular. And we who have salvation have the indwelling Spirit.

I got to tell you, that is a whole lot better than you may think. It's fantastic. Salvation makes us new. And it places us in a divine relationship with the triune God. And Christian living, and I want you to think about this with me, Christian living, is for the glory of God in union with Christ through the enabling of the Spirit.

For the glory of God in union with Christ through the enabling of the Spirit. I want you to stop just for a moment and recognize that, listen, the Bible is very, very clear on this, that salvation is something that doesn't happen in the power of the flesh.

What I mean by that is that if you are sitting here this morning and you know the Lord Jesus Christ is your personal Savior, it's not like it all happened just because you figured it out.

[8 : 54] Now, it is true that your mind and your heart were engaged in that, but the Scriptures tell us that prior to our conversion, we were dead in trespasses and sin.

And how do the dead come to life? Does anybody know? Dead people come to life only by the power of the Spirit of God.

I love, I love Ezekiel and the vision in the valley of dry bones. There's a song that goes with that, you know, and I'm not going to sing it this morning, but, you know, dim bones, dim bones, gonna, it's got a rock to it, so I like that.

You know, and here, anyway, let's get back to the text, you know, stay with the Bible, not the other, here, God asked the prophet a question, he says, can these bones live again?

What was Ezekiel's answer? If you do the King James, it's thou knowest, O Lord. He's saying, here's what he's saying, it's up to you, right?

[10 : 01] Salvation is of the Lord. One of the things that we're going to learn as we work our way through the passage is that it's not just salvation that's of the Lord, it's also Christian living.

It's also Christian living. You know, as I get older, and that's happening, as I get older, I am reminded more and more often of just how absolutely dependent I am upon the Spirit.

And when I don't rely on the Spirit, it's not real pretty. And what Paul is going to do later in the passage is he's going to encourage us, and we're going to deal with that next time, he says, but be filled with the Spirit.

So, what we're looking at here in the first part of this verse is a comparison to help us understand something. don't be drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit.

However, I want to make this clear. God does not intend this little statement, don't be drunk with wine, to be taken merely or exclusively for the sake of comparison.

[11 : 22] It is instruction as well. Spoken to those who are believers. In the church in Ephesus, and by extension, the Spirit of God intends for this passage to inform the lives of believers today, here, now.

And the reason I say that is because Paul chooses to use the imperative when he says, do not be drunk with wine. I do want you to understand that evidently, drunkenness was a problem not only in the city of Ephesus, but it was a challenge in the early church.

There are many illustrations of that, and I will not go into all of them, but just a reminder, the fact that he says it implies that it was something that needed to be said. The truth of the matter is that drunkenness has been a problem since the fall, and it has contributed incredible heartache and suffering on mankind.

I am far too well acquainted with the effect of drunkenness on people, and over the years of life, I have seen what alcohol does to families and to individuals, and its absolute, horrible impact on people's well-being.

The Bible always speaks of drunkenness as something that's negative. I'm not going to list all the texts for you this morning because we have one right here in verse 18 where it says, do not be drunk with, it's an imperative, it's a command, this is not what the believer is to be doing.

[13:13] Now, in case you're wondering, alcohol is a depressant. How many of you realize that? Alcohol is a depressant, and what it depresses from the very moment that it is taken in, it depresses a man's ability to reason and to react.

In our culture, that really is not thinking biblically at the moment, and I don't mean that in a negative way, but I'm just saying our culture has all kinds of limitations on the consumption of alcohol.

Do you understand that? I mean, there are laws against it for those who are under 21. Should a believer drink at all if they're under 21, and what's the answer?

Now, listen to me, because some of you are out here thinking, yeah, right. Romans 13 says that we are to obey those who God has put in authority over us.

So, he's the one who has ordained civil law. And so, understand this, the issue of drunkenness, from the very moment you take in alcohol, it begins to depress your ability to think and react appropriately.

[14:34] In fact, as you look at the passage in verse 18, it says, do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery or dissipation or excess, depending on your translation.

the idea in the Greek is not simply that drunkenness is going to end up in excessive behavior, but it's really talking about the fact that in broad terms, alcohol, what it does is it dulls or desensitizes your ability to think properly and clearly, and the judgments that follow are proportionate.

one of the things I was thinking about this week is that I anticipate in a couple weeks or so, well, this is November 17th, so there's a while to go, but about a week or so before Christmas and then right around New Year's Day, there will be a flurry of articles in the papers and on the web about drunken behavior at parties.

Do you know why they send those out? Does anybody know? it's because so many people do incredibly stupid things at company parties and some people actually, well, suffice it to say, there are little warnings that you could lose your job if you act like an absolute ignoramus.

You know, alcohol, remember what it is? It's a depressant. It depresses your ability to think clearly and so the attitude you've had towards your boss all along.

[16:15] The Christmas party, three sheets to the wind and it's time for you to tell the truth. Okay? The Bible condemns drunkenness.

The Bible clearly prohibits it. And you look at a number of different passages in relationship to it and recognize the Bible has no support at all for a believer ever being drunk.

By the way, question, just so that you are aware of this. I did some research just to kind of check and I think, Greg, you can help me with this, Officer Bernard.

I think you have to blow .08 alcohol to be drunk. Is that the case? Okay. That's when you're over the line. I don't know by personal experience, but I understand that it depends on body weight and anywhere between two and three beers or two or three little shots and you're over the line.

And when you're over the line and you're caught driving in that state, that state referring, not the state of Ohio, but in that condition, guess what the consequences are? I don't want to ask you to tell me from experience, but I can tell you this, that it doesn't go well with you.

[17:39] Our culture is concerned. But let's come to a second question. The Bible's against drunkenness. Let's talk about the Bible on drinking.

Let me start with a statement and then support it with the Scripture. The Bible does not condemn all drinking. The Bible does not condemn all drinking. And I have no doubt that hearing me say that may irritate some of you and cause others of you to say, see, I told you so.

You know, Moody Bible Institute this year decided that it would take a different stance than it had historically on the matter of the drinking of its staff members and those who were above the age, et

cetera.

And it caused quite a flurry. And I seldom make comments on Facebook and I didn't make any comments in this case. I'm not here this morning to talk about Moody Bible Institute.

I do want you to understand that their premise that it is not something that's prohibited in the Bible is accurate. There's undeniable proof that believers drank alcohol in the Old Testament and the New Testament and I cannot support the principle of complete abstinence from the text itself.

[19:10] There was wine that was drunk and I want you to understand that I have heard the arguments that the wine that was drunk was so watered down that it really would take you drinking several gallons for you to become inebriated.

I don't buy that argument and I'll tell you why. When Noah got drunk in Genesis chapter 9 verse 21 it uses the Hebrew word yayin and it's the same word that is used over in Leviticus chapter 10 verse 9.

I want you to look at this one. You're in Ephesians but turn back to Leviticus chapter 10 verse 9. I think the by the way you go G-E-L-N-D how many of you heard me?

G-E-L-N-D Genesis Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy.

Okay I just wanted to coach you there a little bit and I got mixed up. Anyway Leviticus chapter 9 this is God giving imperatives or commands explicitly to the priests.

[20:27] 10 verse 9 drink no wine or strong drink you or your sons with you. What's the next word? Put your finger on it. Put your finger on it.

Drink no wine or strong drink you or your sons with you. What's the next word? What is it? When you go into the tent of meeting lest you die.

It shall be a statute forever throughout your generation. Let me give you a comparison so you understand this. I read this week that FBI agents are not allowed to take a single drink 10 hours before they go on duty.

Do you have an idea why they would say something like that? I would imagine it has something to do with blood chemistry and the fact that your blood purges itself or your body kind of purges out the alcoholic effect over a certain amount of time.

So anyway, any of you here that are FBI agents, you're 10 hours before you can step onto the clock. Abstinence. The priest, when he was going in to do his priestly duty, the imperative, the command of God was don't you be touching that stuff at all when you go on duty.

[21:46] Do you follow that? Does that make sense? Nod your head if you can see it in the Bible. I'm not asking you if you agree, I'm just asking you can you see it in the Bible? Okay. Well, it was the same word, it is the same word that is used to refer to the Nazarite vows.

How many of you here are familiar with the vows that Nazarites took? Nazarite vow, among those different particulars, was that you didn't touch wine, or anything that was made from grapes, including raisins.

Can you imagine oatmeal without raisins? If you're a Nazarite, no raisins. Okay, now, turn in your Bible, you don't need to go to Numbers passage, but I want you to go to the Amos text, Amos chapter 2.

Amos, Obadiah, you know how it goes, right? It's nice to have Joel and Andrea here, and Joel comes right before Amos.

Amos chapter 2, verse 12. Here is what was going on in the nation of Israel. Listen, this is interesting. The Israelites didn't like the fact that the Nazarites were keeping to their vows and were abstaining from wine, and so the Israelites, any time a Nazarite would come walking around and say, hey, we want you to drink.

[23:25] No, no, I'm a Nazarite. Big deal. And they would force the Nazarites to drink. What would they ask the Nazarites to drink? Guess what? Wine. Verse 12, But you made the Nazarites drink wine and commanded the prophets saying, you shall not prophesy.

The Nazarites were being forced to violate their oath of abstinence. Now, look at another passage in Amos. Amos chapter 9, verse 14.

And what chapter 9 is really talking about, first is the destruction of the nation of Israel, and then it's talking about the restoration that is going to come.

God is going to bless these people after he gives them a very firm hand in discipline. And there in verse 14 it says, I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel, and they shall rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them.

They shall plant vineyards and drink their wine. Same word that we found previously in reference to Nazarites being forced to drink.

[24 : 36] It is evident that John the Baptist in the New Testament took a Nazarite vow, and the reason we know that, if you are there in Amos, you go forward to the book of Luke, and in Luke chapter 1, we read a very interesting statement.

Luke chapter 1, verse 15, it says, For he will be great before the Lord, and he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Spirit even from his mother's womb.

Talk about Jesus. I'm talking about John the Baptist. On the other side of it, we understand that when Jesus came to the wedding feast at Cana, do you know what he did?

He turned ordinary agua purificada into oinos. Let me do that in English. He turned water into wine. Okay? It is clear that if a Nazarite vow was to complete abstinence, that the same stipulation, I want you to understand this and follow and track with me, it would have been very easy for the Holy Spirit to be just as clear saying, y'all, you all, all of you, if you are a believer, are not to drink wine, period, just like a Nazarite.

[26 : 01] My point is, God could have made it undeniably clear regarding this subject. Okay? So now, let's come to the last point. Let's do a little bit of review here, and I trust that you'll bear with me if I go over a couple minutes things.

First point is, drunkenness is what? Prohibited. God doesn't want believers to be drunk with wine. Ever.

Drinking, we're not talking about being inebriated, we're not talking about being under the influence, drinking is not prohibited in Scripture. Let's talk about the Bible now on Christian living. Scripture clearly prohibits drunkenness, Scripture does not prohibit all drinking, but that brings us back to set our question in the larger context of Paul's instruction to the Ephesian church.

And so, go back in your Bible, if you will, and we're going to keep referencing this to instruct or inform our thinking. Okay, let me read for you Ephesians chapter 5, beginning there in verse 15 and through to verse 17, it says this, Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time because the days are evil.

Therefore, do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. Being wise and making the most of our brief time in this darkened world calls for us to think carefully about several things.

[27 : 48] For one, what is God's will for wise living in this dark world? It says be wise, well, what does that mean? Immediately following that statement, Paul makes this strong statement, and I would broaden the context to encourage you to realize this, that my liberty as a believer is not a cause for others to stumble.

Look in your Bible at Romans chapter 14 verse 13 through 23. Go back a little bit to Romans chapter 14 verse 13 through 23.

3. Therefore, let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother.

other. I have a responsibility as a believer to other believers in particular that I am not to cause them to stumble in any manner, fashion, or form.

Now, you may be surprised at this, but there are far more than you think in our fellowship that at one time or another have struggled very seriously with the matter of alcohol.

[29 : 11] Would it be right for me to engage in doing something that would harm them and cause them to stumble? And what's the answer from this passage?

Help me out. What's the answer from this passage? No. No. Do I have a right of saying, well, that's their problem? No.

I do want you to understand that that I think it's not merely or only the matter of my effect upon my fellow believer that struggles with the consumption of alcohol, but it's also my effect on unbelievers that know of my walk and life and pay attention to my testimony.

I've got to tell you something. I've lived long enough where I live that everybody in my neighborhood knows that I'm a Baptist pastor. I was incognito for the first six or eight months.

And during that time, I worked very, very hard to be the neighbor exceptional. You know, I mean, people needed their lawns raised, I helped them. People needed to snowball or run, I helped them.

[30 : 29] And it was after the fact that they discovered this exceptionally friendly and helpful guy was actually a Baptist pastor. And I got to tell you, my neighborhood is probably a lot like your neighborhood in that the people, we have a really interesting mix of the dark world that we live in,

okay?

I remember when my neighbor a couple weeks ago came home from a football game and he was so drunk that he couldn't get out of his car. I actually remember two weeks prior to that where he told me, yeah, we're getting married.

You know why he was laughing? Because they'd been living together for a year. I mean, it was like he was a little embarrassed. Remember, I'm a Baptist pastor. He was a little embarrassed to tell me that we're finally going to get married.

And I have been over to their homes and, you know, the courtesy is to say, well, here, have one.

Oh, you're a pastor. Sorry.

It's not like I went, no. EpiPen. You know. Listen to me.

[31 : 59] They assume. They assume. This is what I ought to do because I profess that Jesus is my Lord.

I've never once heard from anybody's lips that you have harmed the testimony of Christ by your unwillingness to imbibe.

Never. And folks, I worked for three years in the armpit of the world in international harvester. Well, I am sensitive, and when I think about what Bible encourages me to think about in relationship to Christian living, I think it's appropriate for me to recognize that I have to be sensitive to the community he put me in.

several illustrations of that. One would be in the passage in Jeremiah chapter 35 verse 1 through 14. How many of you are familiar with the Rachabites?

Wave your hand at me if you are Rachabite identifiers. The Rachabites, I'm going to tell the story. Jeremiah, and by the way, he did not have a very enthusiastic or he didn't have the kind of pastoral ministry that anybody would want.

[33 : 28] Do you know what it was? He was going around telling people that God was tired of their sin and he was going to give them a lick and they wouldn't forget. He was called the weeping prophet.

Anyway, God tells Jeremiah, bring in the Rachabites. This is a tribe or a clan of one of the tribes of Israel, and their father.

Now listen to this because we have young people today who have problems following their parents' instructions after they're 18. When I'm out of the house, I'm doing what I want.

Hear that? The Rachabites had their, I don't know, their great, great, great, just add greats on top of that because it was 240 years prior to the day that Jeremiah calls the Rachabites into a room and he asks them to sit down and then he walks out and he puts little jars of wine in front of them.

Wine. Oinos. Yayin. Clunk, clunk, clunk. And this is the prophet, the pastor, says, drink it.

[34 : 42] And they said, no. Our father, Rachab, told us not to do this and we're not.

240 years, this particular group, community, family, followed their father's mandate.

The reason I bring that to you is that we find in scripture, remember, were there other people in Israel at this time that drank wine and did not receive God's thunderous curse?

No. They could do it. Jeremiah says, hey, you guys drink this. They said, no, no, no. Our great, great, great, whatever, grandfather said, don't do it and we're not.

Here's what God said. You guys are an illustration of a people that are willing to submit. And by the way, when all the rest of the people in Israel are being butchered and mistreated, you guys are going to miraculously survive and there will never lack for a man to stand in my presence from this small group of people.

[36 : 03] Let's look at another point, passage. Acts chapter 15. And here's the point that I'm making, is that we find in Scripture that while wine was generally something was accepted, there are illustrations of communities that chose to not engage in it, and we understand that there are times, we find in Scripture, where communities chose to not do certain things so that they didn't compromise the effectiveness of their testimony.

Let's look now, if we would, at Acts chapter 15. Acts chapter 15, verse 20. Now, this is the church in Jerusalem.

I'm getting hot, so bear with me. The church in Jerusalem was meeting to discuss the matter of Gentiles being brought into the church.

And by the way, the Jews wanted the Gentiles to keep all of the Old Testament law, circumcision, the whole nine yards, Sabbath worship, etc. And they said, no.

But we are going to ask you to do four things. Look at the verse in verse 20. We should write to them to abstain from the things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, and from the thing that has been strangled, and from blood.

[37 : 21] Of that list, three of the four are then reversed. And we know that they're reversed because in 1 Corinthians, let me double check my text, in 1 Corinthians 8, remember that lengthy discussion about the matter of meat offered to idols?

Paul says, hey, you can go for it. Here, it says, three of the four things that are on that four list, that list of four things, are really reflective of the fact that the early church had its genesis, or its starting point, in the Jewish community, and in the Jewish community, these things were just too much to stomach.

And so, the early church says, you Gentiles, don't be involved in immorality, that's a permanent no-no. But the other things that we want you to kind of decide you're not going to do, is you're not going to give offense to your Jewish brethren.

You're not going to hurt them. And so, we have an illustration of believers choosing to submit to the well-being of the community in which they were placed.

And I think that abstaining helps a Christian's testimony in our day. I really do. I really do. That brings me to one more point.

[38 : 46] Our fellowship has a set of standards of service for those who are called as models and humbly serve as leaders in our fellowship.

Very interesting what it says in Proverbs chapter 31 verse 4. It says, listen, it is not for kings and those who rule, King Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink and be engaged in strong drink.

And the reason that it is given there is that those who engage in it lose some of their ability to make wise judgments. I was not here, some of you are thinking I've been here forever, but I was not here when this church had its first meeting, nor was I here when the Constitutional Committee formed and went through and actually did something that at that time was atypical.

Characteristic back in the 60s, 50s, was that all churches had a church covenant. How many of you remember a church that had a church covenant? Furthermore, we will forswear that blah, blah, blah, you know, and you generally went on about a whole page and I know some churches have it written in the Constitution that you must recite the church covenant at least once a month.

I have a pastor friend that lost his job because he didn't do it. This church has never had a church covenant that I know of, but it has standards of service, and the standards of service indicate that those who serve as leaders and examples and models are to be exemplary in their walk, and that includes the area of abstinence.

[40 : 46] So can I say with unqualified confidence that your pastors and leaders, deacons, teachers, etc., practice abstinence? I can tell you with a clear conscience, I know of no one who is in that role that does not abstain from alcohol not because of a biblical prohibition against wine, but because of their sensitivity to the testimony of Christ and the well-being of the bride.

Listen. Do I wish that all of God's people desired first and foremost to have glorious testimonies of the glory of Christ and His salvation and would be willing to live sacrificial lives for the kingdom?

That's my desire. I think gospel impact is enhanced by personal and private pursuit of holiness and humility.

And so let me kind of bring it all together this way. because God has placed me as a believer in a community, I think it is important that all I do reflect glory to His name and draw others to Christ.

Let me give you an illustration from the passage. 1 Corinthians chapter 10 31 through 33 and I'm just going to recite the center part of it. It says whatever you do, whether you eat or drink, what's it say?

[42 : 38] Do all to the glory of Christ. Am I going to make Jesus look good? So let me close with one more passage and go back if you would to Ephesians chapter 5 verse 16.

Ephesians chapter 5 verse 16. Here's what it says. It says, make the best use. Make the best use of the time because the days are evil.

I remember a week or two ago saying, hey listen, getting saved means being a candle. And it means keep putting in dark places, right? I don't want anything to cast a shadow across the clearness of the light of my life or yours.

Do you know why? Mark chapter 10 verse 45, for the son of man came not to be ministered unto, can you cite it with me? But to minister and to give his life a ransom for many.

I want to be careful that the way I live in no way casts a shadow upon the power of the gospel to save and change people's lives.

[43 : 54] Let's close. with prayer. Father, your word is a lamp unto my feet and a light always.

And I and many here can confess that we were once darkness and we are now light. And our hearts resonate with the passage in 2 Corinthians chapter 5 where it says, and we thus judge that if all were dead, that we now who live because of Christ live not unto ourselves, but unto him who died and rose again.

give us a passion to live exemplary lives in a dark world.

And I ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Thank you.