

Be Filled with the Spirit

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[0 : 00] With me please to Ephesians chapter 5 and to verse 18 this evening. Ephesians 5 and at verse 18.

And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit. Be filled with the Spirit.

Now surely friends, this tonight is our greatest need as Christians. It's the Church's greatest need, it's our individual need as well.

And for ourselves, for the congregation, for every aspect of the work that we are engaged in, for the preaching of the Gospel, for our outreach, our evangelism, for the work with young folks, for the work with older folks, it doesn't matter what aspect we think about, but this is the greatest need we have, that we be filled with the Spirit of God.

Every single thing that Paul is actually setting out for the Ephesians, that they are to be as Christians, that they are to be in relation to each other, in order to love each other, to be in the right relation to each other, to look after each other and so on.

[1 : 16] Everything they are to be in relation to the world around them, as the world looks in upon them and sees them as the people of God. Every single aspect of that, every single avenue of that, is to be met by being filled with the Spirit of God.

We have to have everything in place for sure. We need to have all the mechanisms, if you like, in place in order to function as individuals or as a congregation.

We need to have our strategy, our planning. We need to have our buildings. We need to have our various meetings. We need to have the structures that we have in the congregation.

We need to have all of these things and more in place. But we can have all of these in place and still lack this. Because this really takes priority and precedence over anything else.

Without being filled with the Spirit, without being moved inwardly by the Spirit of God, none of these other things in themselves will produce the results that we long for.

[2 : 21] And we long for more conversions. We long for more enthusiasm in ourselves, myself included, very much. We long for a lessening of the apathy that's obvious when people don't find it in their hearts to come to church, to come to prayer meetings.

And I'm talking here about people who are of the church, people who themselves maybe at times are professing Christians. Paul is actually writing these terms to Christians, to people who know the Lord.

And yet it is to them that he's saying, don't be drunk with wine, which is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit. Be filled with the Spirit.

I was watching an episode of, the other night of Captain Mannering and his soldiers in Dad's army. And it's not at all to introduce anything that's funny, but it so happened that he had said he was going to be away for the day. And in fact, he came back early.

[3 : 33] And instead of being on parade, the platoon had actually gone down to the pub to play darts with the wardens. With the aeroate wardens. So when he came back, of course there was no sign of him, but a couple of them.

So he asked where they were and he was told. And of course he just became enraged. What on earth were they doing in the pub instead of being on parade? And off he went to try and take them back.

And of course they refused initially to come back. But he sat down and Sergeant Wilson on the other side of the table in one of the aspects of the scene. And he said to Sergeant Wilson, I don't understand it.

I cannot understand why these men don't love to be on parade. When I'm actually at my tea and my dinner, when I come home from work and I sit down at the table and I think of getting dressed with my uniform and marching down the road to the hall where the parade is to be placed, I feel a sense of excitement moving up inside me.

Of course, Wilson didn't think too much of that because I suppose the reason they weren't too keen on the parade was that it was led by the pompous Captain Mangering. But the point is this. What he said about himself is so applicable to ourselves as Christians.

[4 : 53] When did I last myself feel a rising sense of excitement at the thought of preaching the gospel, at the thought of going to visit people in their need?

Did you feel a sense of rising excitement tonight in order to come to the prayer meeting? A sense of really being led into the thought that would thrill your heart to meet with God in this building?

I know these things are hugely challenging, but that's why they're in the Bible. And we're living in times when people find it so easy not to actually follow out the path that God has given us in order to become robust and glowing Christians.

I'm not finding fault with anyone here tonight at all. I'm speaking to myself as much as to anyone else and to you at home as well as you take part in the service. Well, this is our greatest need, friends.

It doesn't matter how much we've been on the road already. It doesn't matter how experienced we may be either in preaching or in witnessing to Christ. But here is God saying to us tonight, do not get drunk with wine for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit.

[6 : 09] What does he mean? Why is he saying this? And if we're convinced of this, are we attending to all that's involved in it? If we're convinced that this is our greatest need, and really it shouldn't take us long to reach that conclusion, because the Bible makes it clear to us that it is the Spirit alone that quickens.

It's the Spirit alone that changes people. It's the Spirit alone that brings life and vigor to the people of God themselves. And we should, of course, notice here that what Paul is saying is something that needs to go on as our Christian life develops.

He's not saying, be filled with the Spirit today, and that'll just last you. No, he's saying, be filled with the Spirit. This is a continuing thing. This is something they need to look for every day, something they need to actually seek from God every day.

So, if we look at verse 18, that should feed into our prayers for ourselves, for the cause of God, for the congregation, for the unconverted, for the young folks, for the community around us, for those in authority.

It doesn't matter where it is, but if we are filled with the Spirit, all will be encompassed within what we're seeking from God. And so there are two things that the verse actually contains for us.

[7 : 37] There are other things as well, but we'll confine it to two things. First of all, Paul is bringing the Ephesians a reminder of a great change.

A reminder of a great change. Why did Paul include this reference to being drunk with wine? What's it doing in the text?

Is it not a little bit strange that he would speak of such a thing and then side by side with that put being filled with the Spirit? Why is Paul actually referring at all to being drunk with wine and then placing that alongside a reference for the need for us to be filled with the Spirit?

Well, as we say, it's a reminder of a great change because it's reminding the Ephesians, I think, from this, that the great change that has taken place in their lives when the Lord took them out of their previous habits and lifestyle involved bringing them to be freed from and saved from the debauchery, including drunken orgies that they were actually involved with.

It was the cult of the idol Dionysus was something that people of Ephesus and the Greek world of the time gave a lot of time to.

[8 : 55] And Dionysus was the god of wine. And to follow Dionysus or to worship, as it were, Dionysus involved being involved in drunken orgies.

That's why the reference to wine is so relevant and why you're saying to them, that's what you've left behind. That's what you've been rescued from. That's what God now wants you to actually put behind you.

It's a great contrast with the life that they had. And it's not just a contrast, but it's a total contrast. And you can see how he picks that up in chapter 4 at verse 20 there where he's talking about how

different they are now to the way the Gentiles walked in the futility and darkness of their mind. They've become callous. They've given themselves up to sensuality. And of course, that's what the Ephesians were. But that is not the way you learned Christ, assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him as the truth is in Jesus.

And in chapter 2, verses 1 to 5, of course, he brings out how they once were, the children of wrath, just as others, following the prince of the power of the air, following the way of the course of this world.

[10:13] But God, being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ. All the way through here in the epistle, you find a reminder given, and this verse 2 in chapter 5 is a reminder that this was what once characterized their lives, this kind of lifestyle was what they lived for and lived in.

Now Paul is reminding them that is no longer the case. Be no longer drunk with wine. You're no longer following Dionysus or any other idol in the ways of the world.

And in fact, that's something that the apostles, Peter included, set before the people in their preaching, in their epistles as well.

You remember Peter in 1 Peter chapter 4. Again, similar to Paul here, just to show that this was common to the preaching of the apostles for the time in which they lived, for the church of the time, just as it must be for ourselves.

He says here, 1 Peter 4 verses 3 to 4, the time that is past is sufficient for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, lawless idolatry.

[11:30] With respect to this, they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery and they malign you. They speak shamefully of you.

So it's a reminder of a great change. And whenever we think of ourselves, our conversion is a great change. It's a reminder of what God has done to bring us into a living relationship with himself.

But the second thing I want to emphasize more or deal with more fully, not only is it a reminder of a great change, it's also an illustration of a spirit-filled life.

The way that he puts things in this verse is an illustration of a spirit-filled life. It's interesting the words that Paul actually uses here, especially the word drunk and the word debauchery.

Do not be drunk with wine. The word drunk literally, in that usage of it, has the idea of being soaked in the treatment of skins, for example, animal skins.

[12:36] In those days, in order to stretch them out and make them supple, they used to soak them for a while. Then they could actually handle them more. So the soaking, or something that's soaked into the skin in the liquid that it was soaked in.

And so there's that idea of being soaked. But this word debauchery, don't be soaked with wine, don't be drunk with wine. The word debauchery is probably not the best translation here in the ESV. The authorized version, you recall, maybe has the word excess. Don't be drunk with wine, wherein is excess. And there's an interesting way in which we can follow that word in the way it's used in Scripture.

For example, in Luke's Gospel, chapter 15, you find the account of the prodigal son. And the prodigal son, in verse 13, we're told that he'd left home, he took the goods that were falling to him, and then he wasted his life in this debauchery.

He wasted his life just flittered it away recklessly. And reckless living, I think is how the ESV puts it.

[13:50] He wasted his life. And nobody, when he went away, took his journey into a far country, he squandered his property in reckless living. That's the idea behind this word in Ephesians as well.

It's reckless. It's a squandering. It's a wastage. It's the opposite of saving something. It's just being reckless in giving it away and spending it unwisely and foolishly.

And so you could say, this is really what Paul means in verse 18. Don't be soaked with wine, for that is just sheer wastage. But be filled with the Spirit.

The opposite to being soaked or drunk with wine. What are the implications of that? What are the implications of that for ourselves? Now, nothing of what I'm saying at all is indicative of lack of sympathy for those who have problems with alcohol or with drug addiction.

Our heart goes out to these people. Davy here shares with us from time to time the challenges of working with that. And we pray for them as we pray for him.

[15:00] Our heart goes out and it's nothing to do with a lack of sympathy. But the Bible, nevertheless, is clear that this is something that is very wrong in human life. And they need all the

help they can, but the Bible brings the spiritual dimension to it as well as the physical or mental.

And the three things that follow on from what we said already from the words that Paul used as an illustration of the Christian life, as an illustration of the Spirit-filled life, there are three things that we can focus on.

First of all, self-control, a word that Paul uses elsewhere in his epistles frequently. Secondly, stewardship, looking after things, looking after oneself.

And thirdly, stimulation. And these three things come into the contrast, if you like, and the comparison that Paul is making between being drunk with wine and being filled with the Spirit.

There is a comparison as well as a contrast, though most of it is to do with contrast. Firstly, self-control. Now you remember the list that we have in Galatians chapter 5, which Paul refers to as the fruit of the Spirit.

[16:16] Galatians chapter 5 and verse 23. The works of the flesh, he says before that, are evident. Sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, and so on, he gives us that list.

Drunkenness is one of them, orgies, and these things, like these. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, self-control.

That's one of the lists of the fruit of the Spirit, of the elements that make up the total fruit of the Spirit in that passage. And that self-control is exactly the same thing you find Paul saying to Timothy as well, where he's giving him advice as he's going to carry on with the work of the Gospel when Paul has gone from the scene of time.

2 Timothy chapter 1, verse 7, this is what he says. For this reason, he says, I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.

For God gave us a spirit not of fear, but of power and love and self-control. Power and love and self-control.

[17:32] This is the contrast. Be not drunk with wine which is wastage, which is debauchery, but be filled with a spirit. When a person is drunk, when a person is under the influence of alcohol, whether it's wine or spirits or drugs have a similar kind of effect, I'm sure, but when a person is drinking under the influence of excessive drink, I mean, one of the things that's obvious from that is a lack of control.

Because the more a person gets drunk, the less control that person has. They lose control of the mind, lose control of the body or certain functions of the body.

Control of movement, control of moods, control of emotions. All of that are affected so drastically, all of these by being drunk by the effect of excessive alcohol.

Sadly, of course, as you well know, many people lose their lives through excess use of alcohol, not just on themselves, but in road accidents.

We hear of that every day. The devastating effects of excessive drinking. But, here is Paul saying, instead of that kind of lifestyle, and it's not just actually being drunk, it's the kind of thing where you lose control, whatever reason it is, instead of being filled with the Spirit.

[19:07] Don't be drunk, don't be, don't lose your self-control, instead be filled with the Spirit. Be under the order that the Spirit brings into your life.

Be under the control that the Spirit brings as the Spirit comes into your life. Be under the direction of the Spirit. Be under the power of the Spirit to take you away from the things that otherwise you would be led by and led into.

So, that's the first thing, the self-control element of being filled with the Spirit. The second thing is stewardship. Again, go back in your mind to the prodigal son in Luke chapter 15, and where it says that he squandered his living, squandered his property recklessly.

The same word as we see here in Ephesians 5.18. Now, that's another thing that makes a big difference between the person that is addicted to alcohol, especially regularly loses control, but also comes to have so much wastage.

One of the really sad things about the grip of alcohol or drugs is the sheer wastage that's involved in that person's life and in the life of their family as well, a waste of energy and a waste of time and a waste of money and a waste of opportunities and a waste of relationships and all of that stuff comes into it.

[20:46] But here is Paul drawing the contrast as well as making the comparison. Don't be drunk with wine. Don't be under the control or influence of alcohol.

Instead, be controlled by the Spirit and be under the stewardship of the Spirit because the wastage and the opposite of the wastage that you have in being drunk, the opposite of that is a life which saves, which cares for things and cares for people.

You look after what you gain when you come to know Christ, what Jesus gives you to enjoy, what Jesus gives you to share out. You don't waste it. You don't set about it carelessly.

You look at it in such a way as saying, this is the most precious thing that I've got. I've got to look after this. I've got to look after myself. I've got to look after my well-being. I've got to look after my mind.

I've got to look after my fellow human beings, my family. Everything's to do with saving, with looking after, with conserving, not with wastage. That's the Christian for you.

[21 : 49] That's the difference between the Christian and the person that is just the sheer worldly person. Don't, on the one hand, be this, on the other hand, but be filled with the Spirit.

How do we live a self-controlled life? Well, not by our own ability. It's not something that we manufacture. It's something that comes from being filled with the Spirit.

How do we actually have the stewardship that looks after ourselves and other things properly, that looks after the life that God has placed in us in his salvation by the Holy Spirit?

It's by being filled with the Spirit. in 2 Peter, again, we have something that's very close to that, 2 Peter 1, verses 5-8.

You find the apostle there saying, for this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith or to add to your faith virtue, virtue with knowledge, knowledge with self-control.

[22 : 54] There it is again, self-control with steadfastness, steadfastness with godliness, godliness with brotherly affection, brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are huge and increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

What is Peter saying? Peter is saying the Christian life is about additions, not subtraction. It's about keeping, it's about conserving, it's about making sure you look after what God has given you, whether it's the working of your faith, your prayer life, your reading of the Bible, your relationship with others, your attendance at church, all of the things that he has given you, you add to them and you keep on seeking that they be increased for you.

Why? So that you will not be unfruitful in the knowledge of God. That's a huge challenge to myself, to yourselves tonight, isn't it?

But this is the way that the Bible argues, the Bible reasons with us, the way that Paul is here setting out a life of growth rather than wastage, a life of conserving and looking after rather than just spreading things out wastefully.

So there's self-control, there's secondly, stewardship, and thirdly, there's stimulation. If you think about alcohol abuse, and again, I'm going to stress that we're actually very mindful of those who have problems with alcohol.

[24 : 30] We don't want in any way speak in such a way that would give the impression that somehow we're just there to criticize and to condemn. It's not what we're about.

But you know very well that alcohol is not a stimulant. Some people make a mistake about this. they think, if I want a good time, I'm going to have to grab myself plenty of alcohol for Friday night or for Saturday or whenever it is.

And of course, that's what the glossy adverts actually set out for you. The glossy adverts don't take you behind the scenes to the many people that have problems of addiction.

Yes, there's a little warning perhaps somewhere in the advert or on the bottle or on the pack, but mostly they're very small compared to the glossy, wonderful atmosphere or environment that's projected in the adversity.

Have a good time. Go down to the beach. Take plenty of booze with you. Take your pals. Live it up. That's your stimulant. It's not a stimulant at all. Alcohol is a depressant.

[25 : 40] It gets to the points of your mind that are most important and instead of stimulation it's depression. It comes to actually affect them in such a way that they don't function the way they should.

And so what Paul is saying is instead of that here is something that stimulates the filling of the spirit the opposite of the effects of being drunk the effects of alcohol excessively it's the spirit of God stimulates.

What is it that lifts our hearts? What is it that lifts our mind? What is it that brings us to think positively of such things as the children's education their well-being their safety all of those things? Where do we really find our hearts being lifted up to consider these things in the magnitude that we should? It's from the filling of the spirit. You see that for example when the reformation took place in Scotland under the leadership of Knox and his companions one of the things they set about doing with conviction was to have a school in every parish in the kingdom.

They were people under the direction of the spirit. They were filled with the spirit. They were seeking that the spirit as he guided them would actually bring about what they were praying for. And one of the things they were praying for and seeking practically to bring about was a school in every parish.

[27 : 12] Why? So that the children of the land could be educated. Not just in the things of the Bible though that was centrally important but in other aspects of education.

Isn't that really where our education system came from? It didn't come from atheism. It didn't come from debauchery. It didn't come from any of the things that you find so much commended nowadays.

It came from Christians. It came from the people of God. It came from the movement of the spirit. It came from the spirit coming to fill people, to bring the conviction, to bring the concern, to bring the energy by which they set about these things.

Whether it was medical care, hospitals, or education, all of these things, ultimately, they came from this. And you can include the joy of salvation in that as well.

Because the joy that we experience in knowing Christ and following Christ is itself related so closely to the working of the spirit of God, to being filled with the spirit.

[28 : 26] There are so many other aspects of this that we could spend time on. We might indeed come back to it, God willing, if God brings us to think of that, to give us that direction of the spirit as we're saying, because there's so much to this.

And indeed, I think I would like to take some time to just look at different aspects of the ministry of the Holy Spirit, not just at our prayer marriage, but on the Lord's Day as well.

That would certainly be very profitable for us. But for the moment, let's think of this in conclusion.

The stimulation that comes from the filling of the spirit, the stimulation that brings such things as joy and rejoicing, even in times of sorrow and times of trial and times of difficulty.

I know it's easy to say these things from pulpits, but it's something I've experienced myself, so I can say it's true, that even in the midst of trials and things that really wrench your heart and wring it out in pain, you still, by God's grace and God's goodness, can experience the joy of being a Christian, the satisfaction of knowing God, and the contrast between you and those who don't have that, or your heart goes out to them.

You express your thankfulness and say, Lord, I'm thankful, I experience even this ingredient of joy, it is a testimony to me that you're in my life.

[29 : 57] And so, be filled with the Spirit. And in conclusion, do notice, friends, that this tonight is an imperative.

He's not saying, if you think it's a good idea, be filled with the Spirit. He's actually saying, in the way of an imperative, which is really the same thing as a command, do not get drunk with wine, for that's debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit.

It's something for which we are responsible. Now, we cannot manufacture the filling of the Spirit.

We can't produce the filling of the Spirit. We can't control the Spirit so that we ourselves can bring it about when we're filled or when we're not.

But it's our responsibility to see to this filling. He is addressing them in such a way as saying, be filled with the Spirit. it.

And so it is for you and for me tonight, for us as a congregation, for us as a group of Christian people. We can't produce the filling, but we can pray for it.

[31 : 11] And we must pray for it. And we must seek it. Because it is, very much, the only thing to help us in our day, in our circumstances, in the need for further conversions, for our increase in holiness for ourselves, in every other aspect that you might think of in your own life, and in the congregation's life, and in your relationship with the world.

The key is the filling of the Spirit. And without that, we're impotent, we're weak. we're at the mercy of the world, to a great extent, but filled with the Spirit.

Well, God is saying, filled with the Spirit, watch this space. Because that's where life is. That's where energy is.

That's where results come from. Don't be drunk with wine, which is excess, which is wastage, but be filled with the Spirit.

Now, there's a challenge for me as the minister tonight. And there's a challenge for yourselves as Christians in the congregation. There's a challenge for the whole congregation, indeed, especially for those who profess the Lord, to seek to be filled with the Spirit and to take it to God until He fills us, realizing that without His filling, we are far short of what we need to be as witnesses to Him.

[33 : 03] May He bless these thoughts on His word to us. Let's him. He Thank you. ■ Praise God. Là it's another ■ year.

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