

Ephesians 5:18

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Date: 24 September 2017

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[0 : 00] And my text for tonight is, and we need this 5 verse 18.! And do not get drunk with wine, for that is the votary, but be filled with the Spirit.

This is not a temperance sermon, alright? I think the Bible, when it talks about alcohol, talks about moderation rather than total abstinence. I'm not going to talk about wine or beer tonight.

But there is a contrast here. See what it says? Do not get drunk on wine, but be filled instead. Filled with the Spirit. That is the text.

Steve Jobs was the founder of Apple. And he died 10 years ago this year. He was a creative genius, really. And he said this, he said, when I was 17, I read a quote that went something like this. If you live each day as if it was your last, someday you will almost certainly be right. Well, that was true for him, wasn't it, 10 years ago?

[1 : 03] But it made an impression on me, he said. And since then, since those 33 years, I have looked in the mirror every morning and I have asked myself, if today were the last day of my life, would I want to do what I'm about to do today?

And whenever the answer has been no for too many days in a row, I know I need to change something. Well, what do you need to change tonight? How do you want to live the rest of your life? My question is that Steve Jobs asked. What do you need to change? And how do you want to live your life? Look what it says in these verses.

Look carefully then how you walk. Not as unwise, but as wise. Making the best use of the time because the days are evil. Don't be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit. Two things from the little paragraph. First point is really short. And the second point is very, very long. First thing is a contrast.

[2 : 06] Second thing is a command. So firstly, let's look at the contrast. Verse 18. Do not get drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit. Now there are some people that take him to be saying, and you sometimes hear this in Christian circles.

They take him to be saying that being filled with the Spirit is like being drunk with wine or beer. Or whatever your poison is. But that is not what he's saying.

Paul isn't making a comparison here. Paul isn't making so much of a comparison, but drawing a contrast. And it's a very sharp contrast. Now being drunk and being filled are not the same thing.

There are similarities. There is a comparison. So you remember, don't you, on the day of Pentecost? We're told that the ascended Christ, Jesus Christ, gave the gift of the Holy Spirit.

And we're told about that at the beginning of Acts 2, that they were filled with the Spirit, and people thought that they were drunk. Do you remember? And Peter had to say to them, listen, it's only 9 o'clock in the morning, the pubs aren't even open.

[3 : 14] And we're not drunk. This isn't drunkenness. But the very fact that people could think that they were drunk means that there is some kind of comparison. But it's only very fleeting.

I suppose you could say that both the drunk and the Spirit-filled person are under the influence, aren't they? And that is where the comparison ends.

And the contrast begins. Dr. Martin, I'll tell you in his series on Ephesians, talks about the stimulus of the Spirit. I don't agree with everything he says about the Holy Spirit in those volumes.

But listen to what he says. He's writing both as a doctor and as a pastor. And he compares and he contrasts the two states of drunkenness and being filled with the Spirit. He says wine, alcohol, pharmacologically speaking, is not a stimulant, it's a depressant.

Take up any book on pharmacology and look up alcohol and you'll find it's always classified as amongst the depressants, not the stimulants. First of all, it depresses the highest centres in the

brain.

[4 : 18] They control everything that gives a man self-control, wisdom, understanding, discrimination, judgment, balance, the power to assess everything. In other words, everything that makes a man behave at his best and highest takes away that.

What the Holy Spirit does is the exact opposite. The doctor says, if it were possible to put the Holy Spirit into a textbook on pharmacology, I would put him under the stimulants, for that is where he belongs.

He really does stimulate. He stimulates every faculty. The mind, the intellect, the heart and the will. Now I think you can see that very clearly in this paragraph.

There's so much in this little paragraph. We could put a whole series of sermons on it. But there is, you can see it almost at a glance, this startling contrast between being drunk and being filled with the Spirit.

Just look at these verses in a moment. You see the drunk, he staggers around all over the place. He doesn't know where he is. He can't walk in a straight line. That's what they used to do, didn't they, before random breath testing.

[5 : 24] You were asked to get out of your car. You kind of blew into a bag. And then the policeman said to you, can you walk in a straight line? That drunk person cannot walk in a straight line. But the Spirit-filled person, verse 15, knows exactly where he's going.

He's careful how he walks. It says there in verse 15, literally. And then verse 18, drunkenness leads to debauchery.

It says in our text, it talks about riotous living. We say, don't we, he's wasted. Totally wasted when he's drunk. But the Spirit-filled person, if you look at verse 16, is someone who is not wasted, but at verse 16 he makes the best use of time.

And he makes the most of every opportunity. If one of the researchers, there are about three and a half million working days lost to alcohol and drugs.

Can you see the contrast? There's no staggering all over the place. There's no wasted days for the Spirit-filled person. There's no muddle-headedness. There's a disciplined lifestyle.

[6 : 37] Look at verse 17. There's no hangovers. Alcohol confuses the brain. But the Spirit-filled person understands what the will of the Lord is.

He's not muddling in his thinking. Or look at verse 19. This is what a Spirit-filled church looks like. I don't know if you've ever been in town where the pubs were empty. It doesn't happen. It happens so much in Ealing.

But growing up in South Wales, you'd be in town when the pubs were closing. It used to be at 11 o'clock. And it's the exact opposite of verse 19.

And so in church, we sing to one another, not drunken songs, not slurred speech, but we speak to one another and we sing to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.

And that's what a Spirit-filled church looks like. You notice it in funerals particularly. I've seen loads of funerals. It's the sharpest contrast in the world. You take the funeral of a Christian and a non-Christian.

[7 : 36] And if you have to go to the crematorium where there are no Christians present and you have to press the button and the singing comes on over the CD and I am the only one singing, it's a pretty miserable affair.

It drags you down. But you go into a Christian funeral. You go to the funeral of Tom Chapman, the minister of Surrey Chapel, where the church will be full and it might be a very tragic death in very tragic circumstances.

But the singing of a Christian funeral lifts the Spirit. You've experienced that. There's such a contrast. Between the drunken songs and the Spirit-filled singing of God's people.

And so look at this. You see, amongst the people of God, there's no staggering around. There's no staggering gate. There's no wasted days. There's no muddled heads.

And raucous laughter and discordant songs. And verse 20, there's no regrets. For the drunk, there's always the morning after, the night before. There's the hangover, the hazy memory of what's been said and done.

[8 : 46] You're not quite sure, but the Christian, the man or the woman who's under the influence of the Holy Spirit, has no regrets. Verse 20, they give thanks always. And for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

That's the Christian life. That is the life controlled by the Holy Spirit. It is always giving thanks. For everything. Let me give you an example of this.

I read this week of a Korean businessman. The man was in his 50s. He was obviously very unwell. He stood up to give his testimony. And this was his testimony before a crowd of 27,000 people. He said, I'd like to thank my friend. His speech was unclear. He could only just stand. He was a wreck, this man. He obviously had health problems. And he said, I'd like to thank my friend Parkinson for introducing me to Jesus.

And he wasn't talking about Michael Parkinson. That isn't a superficial praise God whatever happens. No, that is a deep thankfulness. Isn't that? That is the Spirit's work.

[9 : 49] When things are not going right for you, always giving thanks for everything. No regrets because God is in control. The Spirit is at work. And no drunken brawls either.

No bloody noses. No broken jaws. Instead, verse 21, submitting to one another out of reverence, of Christ. Isn't that what church life should be? It's always a sign of the Spirit being at work in church life.

To put others first are not a me first attitude. It's not like kids, me, me, me first. So many churches are like that, isn't it? What can I get out of things?

Staying away from church so people will chase you. But no one said, how can I serve the body submitting to one another? I could go on. No broken homes either because of the way the chapter continues.

Verse 22 and 23. And we get examples, don't we, in the rest of Ephesians 5 of what spiritfulness looks like in the home between husbands and wives, what it looks like between parents and kids, and what it looks like in the workplace.

[10 : 55] When the Spirit is in control, there's no broken homes, there's no domestic violence.

There's no abused children. That's what the, what the chapter is telling us. It's such a difference, isn't it? It's such a contrast between being drunk with wine and being filled with the Spirit.

It's a contrast, not a comparison, and it's sharp. And it's really worth meditating on that this week.

To get a picture of what it means to come under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

But the main point I want to make to you tonight is the command to do not get drunk on wine which leads into debauchery. and say, here's the positive command. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. And I want you to see it's not so much of an experience as a command.

Listen to this testimony. We were in a constant state of worship. They were the happiest days of my life. We were floating, swimming in the feeling that we were about to enter eternity.

We had no doubts. Does that sound like somebody who is filled with the Spirit? They are the words of a Muslim suicide bomber who failed in his mission when the bomb didn't explode.

[12 : 19] He'd been taught that the first drop of blood to be shed during jihad would wash away his sins instantaneously. And he would face no reckoning on the day of judgment. And he was high.

High as a character on such an experience.

But it sounds very similar, doesn't it, the way some Christians talk? Is that what Paul means when he says be filled with the Holy Spirit? Now it's interesting that there are different words used in Acts and Ephesians.

And we don't always appreciate that. The Eskimo has 47 different words in their language for snow. When it snows, it doesn't mean it's snow in Eskimo land.

It snows in lots of different ways. And for us, it's just white and cold is that snow. But for the Eskimo, there are all these different ways of understanding what snow is.

So for example, they might have a word, let's call the word fluff fluff. Which means, you know, that kind of really light, powdery kind of snow that floats softly to earth.

[13 : 26] You know? Christmas card snow. Generally covers everything with a pristine 12-inch blanket of dazzling white. It's perfect for photographs. Or they might have another word for snow called screaming freezer.

which means, you know, the bitter kind of snow. The driven, horizontal, freeze your eyebrows off kind of stuff. That howls for days and buries everything on the suffocating avalanche of white death.

Do you see the difference? You might say, it's snowing today. But you need to know the difference between the two. The words you're going to use if you're going to go out on it.

Isn't it? And so when the Bible speaks about being filled with the Spirit, it does use two different words to describe it. There are two words.

And just because Gethin works for us everything, so I'm starting to use Greek lots. It's not. I've just read Don the Cloud. Alright? One word is pluroo. Pluroo.

[14:33] And the other word is pimleni. They're different words. of being filled with the Spirit. In the Acts of the Apostles, when it describes the church being filled with the Holy Spirit, the word is the pimleni word.

But when Paul speaks here in Ephesians of being filled with the Spirit, he uses the pluroo word, which is a different word. And it carries a different sort of nuance to it.

In the Acts of the Apostles, it was a dramatic coming down of the Spirit. Narrative is not normative. What I mean by that is the book of Acts is a distinct time in redemptive history. We mustn't look at the book of Acts and think, oh, I tell you what, Peter had a handkerchief he sent around the place to heal people. Poor Levy, let's get his handkerchief and set that around.

That's not what it's like. And the words did all kind of dramatic things. And the word that is used there is complaining. And people were empowered for particular acts of ministry and so on.

[15:42] But the word that Paul uses here is a different word altogether. Be filled with the Spirit, he says. Now let's think about what this means. What does Paul mean here? Four really simple points, four Ps.

Number one, it's a passive command. It's a passive command. So, does he say fill with the Spirit? Or does he say be filled? There's a difference. A really important difference. Let's go back 40 years, you know, you wanted to fill up your car, you go to the garage and there's a little man or woman who walks out from the little booth in the garage and you don't even have to get out of your car and you wind your window down and you say fill her up, please.

You sit in your car and somebody would fill your petrol tank for you. It would be wonderful, wouldn't it? Those days are gone. It would do itself now. But in those days it was filled for you.

Well, it is the Holy Spirit who fills you. He is the one who does the filling. Paul is not saying to you tonight fill yourself. He is saying be filled.

[16:52] Can you see the difference? Let me try and illustrate it again in another way. There is a command in the Bible to love. If you are a Christian you are to love your fellow Christians.

You are to love your enemies. And so on. That is a command for something for you to do. But if I say to you be loved that is a different command, isn't it?

That is a passive command. That means there has to be someone out there who is going to love you. And you have to be open to that love and to receive that love.

To be prepared to be on the receiving end of it. And that is what Paul is saying here about the Holy Spirit. He is not saying do this and do that. Do this and do that. Press this button.

Go to this meeting. Attend that conference. And hey, presto, you will have an experience of the Holy Spirit. That's not what he's saying. He's saying be filled with the Spirit. Be open to the Holy Spirit taking control of your life.

[17:58] That's what he's saying. To be on the receiving end. It is passive. And so I want to ask you and myself and us as a church, how open are we to the Holy Spirit?

How willing are we for the Holy Spirit to take over our day-to-day lives? How much do we want that to happen? Jesus said in the Beatitudes, he said, Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for they shall be filled.

Those who hunger. One of the things I began to pray for us as a congregation more than anything else is we would be hungry. And we would be thirsty.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst. So isn't it true, as A.W. Tozer said somewhere, that everyone is as full as they want to be. Everyone is as full as they want to be.

He uses this illustration, he says, you see a Mercedes-Benz or a BMW and you want that. You see the pro-shirt or you watch the advert and you dream about having a Mercedes or a BMW.

[19:16] And then you see the cost or the price. And you forget about it, don't you? I'd love a MacBook, you know, an Apple MacBook. And occasionally I dream about it.

And I see the cost. And you forget about it, don't you? Any sane person would forget about it. I don't want it that much. Do I?

If I wanted it that much, I'd make the sacrifice, I'd make it happen, but I don't. I'm not willing to make the sacrifices to pay the price to have it. It's probably a good thing. But the question is, how badly do you want to be filled with the Holy Spirit?

And so many of us are Christians, we know the jargon, we know what we're supposed to say, but do we really want the Holy Spirit to take control of our lives? Do we want it as badly as we think we do?

Are we prepared to pay the cost of that? Because there is a cost to it. We want it, but do we want it that much? And if we don't want it that much, are we going to settle for getting away with the bare minimum of what we can get away with and still be thought of as Christians?

[20 : 29] That is not being filled with the Spirit. You see what I'm trying to say? I'm saying it imperfectly, but we're as full as we want to be. Not as full as we think we want to be, but as full as we really want to be.

And Paul says, be filled. It's a passive command. Allow the Spirit to fill you, he's saying. It's passive and it's plural. Do you notice it's a corporate command, it's a command for the whole church. Americans would say, yawl, be filled with the Spirit yawl. That is something that happens when Christians get together. The command is a plural command that's addressed to all the Christians. You have to see it in that context, it's when Christians get together, it's when Christians gather in the name of Christ. That is what this little paragraph is describing. It's something that takes place in the context of worship and fellowship.

You are making melody in your heart to the Lord and you're singing chalms and hymns and spiritual songs to one another. And you see it in the context of the meeting for worship and fellowship, that people are filled with the Spirit.

[21 : 34] Now I think that's an important point. When they are submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ, it is in the context of Christians living together and worshipping together and fellowshiping together and speaking the Word of God to one another.

It's in that context that the Spirit of God comes. It's what the old writers called the means of grace. Let the Spirit fill your hearts and lives protecting your imaginations.

And if you want that to happen, you need to use the means of grace which God has given. Use, as someone has said, all the resources of the rich Christian tradition.

It's poems, it's songs, it's liturgy to help you. This old preacher called Dr. Joeet, Joeet was a preacher in London and he tells him how he once went down to the coast of Tainmouth.

He sat by an old sailor, a man who spent many years on a sailing vessel and he said, do you know anything about the wind? He said, yes, I know a lot about the wind. Well, will you explain to me the phenomenon of the wind?

[22 : 40] I don't know what you mean. How do you explain the wind? What do you know about it? Well, actually, I don't know anything about the wind. But I know wind.

I can hoist the sail. And I think that's the point, is it? Do you remember what Jesus said to Nicodemus? He spoke about the Holy Spirit and he says, the wind blows where it wills, you hear the sound of it, but you can't tell where it comes from or where it's going to.

It's a mystery, you can't control the wind. We can't control the Holy Spirit. we can't say the Holy Spirit is coming down now in our meetings. That is horrible when you hear people talk like that.

You can't trick your fingers and say, wind, come here. You can't say, Holy Spirit, come down at this point in the service when the musicians begin to play the softly music in the background, the lights go down and everybody moves to the front.

That is blasphemous nonsense. You cannot control the Holy Spirit. it. The wind blows where it wills, but you can hoist a sail. You can put yourself in the way of the Spirit.

[23 : 50] Under the means of grace. You can gather with God's people. You can put yourself under the preaching of the words. You can come to the Lord's table. You can be at the gathering of God's people to pray.

you can sing songs and hymns and spiritual songs and catch up with one another and speak God's word to one another and submit to one another out of reverence of Christ and the wind will blow.

And you will find that there's wind in your sails in the Christian life and so make use. You want the wind in your sails? Make use of the means of grace. Gather with God's people.

It's a passive command. It's a plural command. It's a present continuous command. It's a present continuous command. Can you see it? Literally go on being filled with the Holy Spirit.

That's what it is. It's not a once and for all experience. Now how do you go on being filled? How do you go on in the Christian life being filled? How do you go on with the wind in your sails?

[24 : 54] Let me say two things. And the New Testament really says two things about this and it couches them both in the negative. Just go back in the previous chapter to chapters 4 and 5 in verse 30 of chapter 4.

Verse 30 chapter 4. First half of Ephesians Paul is broadly describing the gospel. The second half of Ephesians he's describing Christian lifestyle.

And he's explained the gospel but now he's going to show you how to live out the gospel. And so in chapter 4 verse 30 he says do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God with whom he was sealed for the day of redemption.

Do not grieve the Spirit. Let me illustrate this. Jeff Thomas my friend let me quote you. He puts it so well he says our relationship with the Holy Spirit is not like your relationship with a speed camera. Don't you hate speed cameras? That's my words not Jeff Thomas's. That camera is not grieved if you do 35 mile per hour in a 30 mile per hour zone. It might be situated in the most beautiful valley in Wales but it never takes photographs of sunsets or lakes or swans flying across the fields.

[26 : 10] It simply snaps your car breaking the speed limit. It is a pre-programmed machine and he says your relationship with the Holy Spirit is not like that. Then he goes on to use another illustration.

He says your relationship with the Holy Spirit is not like your relationship with a cash dispenser. You feed in your card, you punch in your number and out comes the money. That's all it does. You can be in the foulest of moods imaginable.

You can be muttering and complaining under your breath and shouting at your children to stay still. But the cash point is utterly indifferent. It will simply give you what you want if you sufficient credit. My relationship with the cash point is inert. It's not like that with the Spirit. He is a living person. We saw that in the first thought, didn't we?

That he is a loving person who grounds and loves and prays who can be grieved and blesses. And if I am not maturing and not loving and not praying and not witnessing and not worshipping that I should, then the fault does not lie in the breakdown of the divine machinery.

[27 : 18] It lies in our own failure to maintain a growing living relationship with the Lord who is the Spirit. Spirit. Grieve not the Spirit. You know when you've offended your wife, don't you?

You know when you've offended your mum or your dad. You know when you've offended your friends, don't you? There's a cooling off in the relationship. There's a distance. There's an atmosphere.

Well, it's time to put it right. And Paul is saying, go on being filled with the Spirit. Let your relationship with Jesus, be the same by the Holy Spirit. Be sensitive to what offends him. Don't have a mechanistic view of the Christian life where we plug into this or we plug into that. And then we'll have the power.

Or we think, I am justified. And so it's just all right. And you kind of have a reformed mechanistic view of the Christian life. No, it's a relationship.

[28 : 20] With Jesus through the Holy Spirit. Don't grieve this gracious willing guest who's come to live in your life. Don't offend him. And then the other thing the New Testament says is do not quench the Spirit.

1 Thessalonians 5.19 Do not put on the Spirit's fire. Do not treat prophecies with contempt. He puts those things together. They're related. You ever been in a situation, maybe you've been in a house group, or maybe it's been outside the church altogether, at work, and you've said something in the Bible study, and somebody else has taken a massive jug of cold water and poured it on it.

It's very difficult, isn't it? You don't want to say anything ever again when that happens. You get terrified the next time there's a question asked. It's so discouraging. We need to be careful, don't we, when we speak to each other.

in our Bible studies or at church on a Sunday, that we don't pour cold water on someone else's contribution. But do you see what Paul is saying? Paul is saying we can do that with the Holy Spirit. Don't despise prophecies.

What is prophecy? There's all sorts of madness about what is prophecy. Prophecy is speaking the word of God. That's what I'm doing now. When you share the Bible with someone, you are speaking the word of God to them.

[29 : 36] Don't despise when somebody is sharing the word of God with you. Don't despise prophecies because you might be pouring cold water on the Holy Spirit. And if we do that, well it's

no wonder, is it, that our spiritual ardour and fervency dampens down.

Don't quench the Spirit's fire. So there's a contrast or a comparison. It's a command, it's a passive command, a plural command, a present continuous command. Go on being filled with the Spirit. If you want to come under the influence of the Holy Spirit, then you go to the Bible, not to the bottle. It's very interesting, isn't it? I'm running out of time, but it's really interesting.

Colossians chapter 3, it's really exactly the same passage. But instead, Paul says there, instead of saying being filled with the Spirit, do you remember what he says? He says, let the word of God dwell in you richly with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.

It's really fascinating. Instead of being filled with the Spirit, Ephesians, he tells the Colossians, let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. See what he's doing as you compare those two passages?

[30 : 39] He's saying if you want to come under the influence of the Holy Spirit, if you want the Holy Spirit to come to you, then go to the Bible. That's what you've got. And not to the bottle. Let the word of Christ enrich. That's why we love the Bible.

Let it furnish your meetings. Let it enrich your conversations. You cannot separate the Bible from the Holy Spirit. He is the author of Scripture.

And if you want to be controlled by a person, we might say, he's full of so-and-so. He's always quoting him. He's reading his books. He's reading his articles.

He's influencing his thinking. And if you want to be full of the Spirit, he is not a power to plug into or anything like that. He's not a cash machine to dispense power. If you want to be filled with this person, the third person of the blessed Trinity, then you need to be reading what he's written.

And we ought to be thinking his thoughts after him. So it's passive, it's plural, it's present continuous, and it's powerful. Let me end on this point.

[31 : 41] What does the Holy Spirit fill us with? What does it mean? Do you remember that episode in Isaiah chapter 6, in the year that King Uzziah died? I went into the temple and I saw the Lord.

John tells us in 1241 that it was Jesus he saw. It's a great one for children witnesses. They've missed it. It's very clear in John 1241. But the Lord whom Isaiah saw in Isaiah 6 was Jesus.

And that makes sense to me because you cannot see God except through Jesus. And God makes himself known in Jesus. And in the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord high and lifted up.

On the train of his robe filled the temple. And above him were the seraph, each with six wings, with two wings. And they covered their faces, and with two they covered with their feet. And with two they were flying and they called out to one another, holy, holy, holy is the Lord God almighty.

The whole earth is full of his glory. And that's what we're talking about. God is in his temple. His glory fills the place of his fullness.

[32 : 46] That we have all received. And so go on being filled with the spirit says Paul. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray.