



# Ephesians

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**And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit,**  
Ephesians 5:18

This verse, unfortunately, has been taken to amazingly absurd extremes by some. From one poor handling of the issue of drinking to another, the doctrine of total abstinence from alcohol arises. Neither this verse, nor any verse in Scripture, can be used to justify this stand.

The words begin with, "And do not be drunk with wine." Being drunk is something which has happened since the earliest times of man on earth. The Bible is full of stories of people drinking to excess. What was probably most on Paul's mind was the custom at that time of the orgies held to Bacchus, the "god of wine." In festivals such as this one, and others as well, one thing led to another and it is noted that people would go from heavy drinking to running wildly in the streets and committing all kinds of sexual sins. This is why he writes, "in which is dissipation."

The words refer to "be drunk," not "with wine." It is evident that wine itself does not necessarily lead to dissipation. The Lord's first miracle was to make wine, and yes, it certainly had alcohol content. The consumption of alcohol is condoned by Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:22, and Timothy is instructed to drink wine as a type of stomach medicine in 1 Timothy 5:23. These, and countless other examples, show that the drinking of alcohol is not forbidden in Scripture.

Throughout the Bible, there is acceptable drinking, and there is unacceptable drinking. The same is true with acceptable eating, and unacceptable eating. People can have money, but

they are not to be greedy with money. People are not to engage in illicit sex, but not all sex is illicit. Reason and a proper use of Scripture clearly shows that drinking is not forbidden in the Bible, but dissipation which results from drinking is.

One is not to drink to the point of excess. Instead, they are to “be filled with the Spirit.” As has been seen elsewhere, the term “be filled” is passive in the Greek, just as “be drunk” is in the first clause. A person drinks wine, and the wine makes them drunk. A person likewise needs to do something in order to be filled with the Spirit, they need to yield themselves.

The believer has all of the Spirit he will ever receive the moment he calls on Christ, but the Spirit can get more of the person. On the day of a person’s marriage, they are now married and will never get more married, but the spouse can get more of the other spouse as yielding takes place.

The same is true with the Spirit. In order to be so filled, the Christian is to sing praises, pray, worship, fellowship, read the Bible, talk on the things of the Lord, etc. In doing these things, they are “filled with the Spirit.” Paul’s heart is that believers would so yield themselves to the Spirit that they would become revelers in God’s goodness at all times, not revelers in dissipation, even for a moment.

Life application: The Bible needs to be handled carefully and without regard to presuppositions or biases. We are not to insert our desires, pet peeves, or insecurities into our interpretation of Scripture. Instead, we are to accept that there are things we may or may not indulge in which are permitted by the Bible. If we do not participate in them, whether drinking of alcohol, eating of certain foods, or whatever else, we are not to impose our weakness in that area on others.

**...speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, Ephesians 5:19**

Paul’s words of the last verse ended with, “be filled with the Spirit.” This is immediately followed with the words of this verse, which is a continuation of the same thought. In being so filled, we are to “speak to one another” in ways which are wholesome and edifying. He then explains what that means by using three categories –

“Psalms” refers, without a doubt, to the Old Testament psalms. What Paul is saying is that our speech is to be interlaced with words, right from Scripture, which will build others up. They are to remind others of the words of Scripture as well, providing a spiritual connection between us and them. To understand this from a worldly perspective, if two people attended the same college, they would have their school fight song. From time to time, in order to inspire one another, they might take the words of that song and speak them (or sing them) out. “Go the distance you men of Noble College; stand firm on your education, on that great body of

knowledge.” In so doing, they would be building one another up in something that is already written and useful for such a purpose. No greater source of such edification can be found for the Christian than the words of Scripture themselves, especially from the psalms.

Though it is not entirely sure, “hymns” may be referring to songs which are based on Scripture, and which relate scriptural truths. The word used for “hymn” in Matthew 26:30 is derived from the word Paul uses now. It is known that at the Passover Seder, certain Psalms were sung each year. Therefore, this term can be referring to psalms as well as songs not directly coming from the Bible, but probably quoting parts of it.

“Spiritual songs” may be even broader in nature than “hymns.” They may simply be songs that speak of the Lord and His goodness without actually quoting anything directly from Scripture. However, they are pure, edifying, and will fill others with the goodness of God.

Although the meaning of the second two words is not fully known, this seems to be a logical explanation of what Paul is referring to. From these types of songs, he then says, “singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.” The word for “making melody” here is a verb which corresponds to the noun translated as “psalms” above.

What Paul is saying here is that not only should we outwardly sing and share music, but we should do it in our hearts as well. We are not to let a root of bitterness creep into our hearts as we ponder the wicked world around us. Instead, we are to have wonderful words of glorifying God in our hearts at all times, welling up in us so that we are not overcome by the world around us. In this, we are to do it “to the Lord.” This then is truly being “filled with the Spirit” as was noted in the previous verse. We are actively contemplating His goodness, and are thus passively filled with the Spirit. As we yield, the Spirit fills.

This same set of words is almost repeated in Colossians 3:16 –

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”

There is a noted difference between the two. In Colossians, it says that we are to use these in order to teach and admonish one another. It is an active instruction based on these things. In this verse it is more a way of letting emotion be drawn out of us in order to edify others and glorify God.

Life application: How can we overcome the world, especially when it is draining us of joy and taking away our ability to act in a godly manner? The answer is given in this verse. We can do so by speaking and singing words of Scripture, or words based on what the Bible teaches. This is our fount of blessing, instruction, and joy as we wait on the return of the Lord. Let us use it

often, drawing from it as if we are drawing out water from a well in a dry and thirsty land. Let us allow our souls to be filled with the beauty of the word, even until it then flows back out of us for the edification of others.

**...giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,**  
Ephesians 5:20

These words are logically tied to the preceding verse –

“...speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, <sup>20</sup> giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ...”

As we are making melody in our hearts to the Lord, we are to be “giving thanks always.” One of the great errors of humanity is ingratitude. When we fail to give thanks for each and every kind blessing bestowed upon us, we fall into error. This is then reflected in a degradation of our relationship with God. Eventually, our hearts become darkened to the things of God –

“For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, <sup>21</sup> because, although they knew God, they did not glorify *Him* as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.” Romans 1:20, 21

It is so easy to ask for blessings, but we then often fail in being grateful for those things we receive. Instead of this, we need to continuously be thankful for what we have, and pour out our hearts concerning those things we lack. And our thanks are to be “to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

There is a strong emphasis here in both expressions. God the Father is the Fount of all blessing, and He is rightfully exalted through the thanks that we return to Him. But, each of these thanks is to be given “in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” It is Christ who makes the path back to God the Father for us.

The ingratitude mentioned in Romans 1 is an ingratitude which is directed towards “His eternal power and Godhead.” In order to truly be grateful for those things we enjoy, we are to be thankful to God though the One who caused these things to come into existence, and who continues to sustain them even now. This is Jesus Christ (see John 1:1 & Hebrews 1:3, for example). Further, in Jesus Christ, we are brought into son-ship with God the Father. Therefore, He is to be the One named in all of our thanks and praises to Him. This sentiment is found again in Colossians 3:17 –

“And whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”

A portion of it is expanded upon in 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 as well –

“Rejoice always, <sup>17</sup> pray without ceasing, <sup>18</sup> in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”

Life application: Being grateful to God for our many blessings is not to be overlooked. Even in times of distress – of heart or of body – we should continue to demonstrate thankfulness. In so doing, we are acknowledging His sovereign hand on us in all circumstances.

**...submitting to one another in the fear of God.** Ephesians 5:21

This verse continues to explain “what the will of the Lord is” from verse 16. It is an admonishment which is grammatically tied into that thought, and yet it also is a lead into what will next be exhorted concerning the duties of wives, husbands, children, and slaves. Those exhortations are given to show what “submitting to one another in the fear of God” means.

But, just from these words, we can deduce that “submitting,” or humbling ourselves, before others is what is expected. Pride puts up walls between people and God, and between people and people. However, humility leaves open a way for people to meet the needs of others. It is not demanding, and it shows no arrogance. This is what we should do when interacting with others.

As noted Paul’s specific examples are forthcoming, but it is not to be limited only to those he explains. We should have an attitude of submission to all those around us in order to bring down walls of animosity and strife. And this is to be done “in the fear of God.” Christ Jesus came in the most humble circumstances of all. From His birth in a manger, to His death on the cross, He demonstrated the humility which all of us should likewise demonstrate.

And yet, we need to remember that Jesus never let doctrine falter, nor did He flee in a cowardly manner from His enemies or the enemies of God. There is to be a balance in our lives where we demonstrate humility on one hand, and a firm resolve on the other. In all ways, He did exactly as His Father expected, and we are to do so as well. Let us never allow the forces of moral perversion or enmity with God assume that they can use us as punching bags without facing rebuke and correction. Evil must be addressed, or we are not demonstrating all the Christ-like attributes that we should.

Life application: When we interact with the world, we are to demonstrate humility, submitting to others as Christ would. And yet, we are also to be firm, fixed, and resolved in our attitude

towards the wickedness which surrounds us. Let us never give an inch on our firm stand to uphold God's word.

**But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,**  
Galatians 5:22

Beginning with "But..." Paul now contrasts the deeds of the flesh of the previous verses with the fruits of the Spirit. One can understand the contrast when considering that "works of the flesh" stem from the natural, earthly man. He is fallen, and his works produce that which is unfit for the kingdom of God. To contrast this, that which stems from "the Spirit" is given to show that these do not flow from our own nature, but rather from God.

It should be noted that each of these fruits appear to be things which any person can possess, even if they have never come to Christ. However, this is incorrect. Only through the Spirit are our actions acceptable to God. Without Christ's covering, our works are tainted with sin, and any fruit we have is already corrupted. Further, the use of some of these words is only in relation to that which is of divine origin. This fruit of the Spirit includes:

Love - This is love which is expressed to our Creator and to other humans which is pure and undefiled. It follows the description given by Paul in 1 Corinthians 13, and it is a volitional act of the will. It is, in particular, love directed to God more than anything else. The reason for this is that this, as a fruit, is set in contrast to the works of the flesh which are carnal and earthly. This is uniting; that is divisive.

Joy - This word is etymologically linked to words meaning "rejoice because of grace," "joy because of grace," and "grace." Therefore, it signifies the knowledge and understanding of God's grace and favor. In essence, it is the recognition of His grace in our lives... something to be truly joyous about.

Peace - This word indicates "peace of mind." It is comparable to the Jewish word "shalom" which indicates more than just calm, but wholeness and completion when all the essential parts are joined together. It is God's gift of wholeness.

Longsuffering - Patience is the short definition here. But it is a bit fuller than that. It is a divinely regulated endurance which even is used by God of Himself to show that He is truly able to endure our waywardness in order to reveal His character to us. It demonstrates the ability to wait a sufficient time before expressing anger. Thus, it withholds any premature use of force concerning offense.

Kindness - This word is described as that which is well-suited for use. It is the ability to meet real needs in the way that God would meet them, and in the timing He would meet them. As it

is a divinely generated type of kindness, it is rightly known as a fruit of the Spirit. The Spirit produces in us a goodness which meets the needs of others while avoiding natural, carnal harshness.

Goodness - This speaks of goodness which is intrinsic in nature. It is a quality or condition which is related to believers because its source is found in God. It is revealed in both moral and spiritual excellence.

Faithfulness - The word here is noted by HELPS Word Studies as always being a gift from God; never that which can be produced by people. It is "God's *divine persuasion*" – and therefore distinct from human belief (confidence), yet involving it. The Lord continuously *births faith* in the yielded believer so they can know what He prefers, i.e. the *persuasion of His will* (1 Jn 5:4)."

Life application: In a cursory reading of these fruits of the Spirit, one might think that they possessed them apart from coming to Christ. This is not the case. The gifts that God offers, through His Spirit, are unique to believers. Further, they are not automatically obtained. Rather, they develop as we yield ourselves to Christ. This can be done through prayer, praise, fellowship, study of the word, etc. Be well rounded in your walk and yield your life daily to the Lord. As you do, He will continue to fill you with His Holy Spirit.