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Sermon Notes

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No Drunkenness, but Spirit-Filled Joy

Scripture: Ephesians 5:18

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Introduction

Amen. Well, this journey in Ephesians has been for me amazing and marvelous. It's been very rich. It's really been a journey of worship for me to see the greatness of the salvation that God has been working and continues to work in our hearts, and in the world. Now, we've been learning for many, many weeks of the life of magnificent, new life of holiness and righteousness to which God calls us now that we have been born again, now that we are Christians. As Christians we were chosen, we're instructed in the book of Ephesians, "from before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless in God's sight." We're taught right there in Ephesians 1 that "*in love, God predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ.*" And what this means is that we were to be conformed to the family image and likeness, we're to be conformed to Christ. And so, this life of holiness is a life of conformity to Christ's likeness, and it's a beautiful thing. And we're told from the very beginning of our Christian life that all of our sins past, present and future have been atoned for by the blood of Christ. "*In Him,*" [*in Christ*] *we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins*" and how lavish a gift that is I think all of us infinitely underestimates. But we'll know on Judgment Day just how rich, and fully our sins have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ, and we'll spend eternity thanking Him for it. And we're also instructed in Ephesians 1 that "when we heard the word of truth, the Gospel of our salvation, having believed, we were marked in Christ with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit. And that that Holy Spirit that sealing of the Spirit is a deposit, guaranteeing our full inheritance until the day of redemption, until the end of all things." Now we know without a doubt as Christians that we are going to Heaven when we die. And how at the end of Ephesians 1, Paul prays for the ministry of God to be on the Ephesian Christians, and then through them we can read for us that we would have a sense of the power, the sovereign power of God at work in us to bring us to that rich inheritance we have in Christ. And that we would have absolute certainty that Jesus reigns over heaven and earth, over all powers, visible and invisible to complete our salvation, and what a rich thing that is.

Imitate God in Love

Now, we're in a section in Ephesians where we're told practically how we are to live out this faith that we have. How we are to live out this salvation. And I just, again and again, want to lay that foundation, which I've just been doing for you over the last few minutes, of "*justification by faith in Christ apart from works of the Law.*" That we are forgiven by faith not by works. We are redeemed by faith in Christ not by works. And we just need to go back to that again and again because the life of holiness is a challenging life. It's a searching life, it's an infinite journey in which we can ever increasingly see sin and weakness in our lives and we know how far we are from perfect conformity to Christ, and we need the power of the Holy Spirit. And so in Ephesians 4:1, he begins that ethical section, "*As a prisoner for the Lord then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.*" These things I've been talking about since I began. This is the life of holiness in imitation of God. A life of love Ephesians 5:1 it says, "*Be imitators of God therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love.*"

And so we're called to walk in love, to "walk in the light as He is in the light," to walk in holiness. We're told in Ephesians 5:8-10, *"For you were once darkness but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of the light, for the fruit of light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth. And find out what pleases the Lord."* So this is a life, this life of holiness is a life, a daily walk of wisdom. Not of foolishness. As we saw last week in verse 15 of chapter 5. Be very careful then, be meticulous, be rigorous in how you live, not as foolish, but as wise. This is a life of redeeming the time, of not wasting resources that have been given us, precious days, and money, and energy squandered on sin. That we would not live that kind of a life. This is a beautiful new life of holiness that is ours and it's both negative and positive. We've been seeing that rhythm again and again in Ephesians 4 and 5. There are some things that we must put off, that must not be part of our lives, and there are some things that we must put on. And so, we are actually putting even the negative part very positively, we have been set free from soul killing sins. We've been set free from things that are destroying the world, and ruining families. We've been set free from these sin patterns. It says in Romans 6:21-22, *"What benefit, [what fruit, what harvest] did you reap at that time from those things of which you are now ashamed? Those things result in death, but now that you've been set free from sin and have become slaves to God the benefit you reap, [the harvest you reap] leads to holiness and the result is eternal life."* So Paul teaches the new life in Christ, both negatively and positively. Things we must not do that must never be part of the Christian life, and then those things that we must do. We are taught in verse 19-21 of Ephesians 4, "that we are to put off the old self to be made new in the spirit of our minds and to put on the new self created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness." And so, that is the life that leads to Heaven and no other. Do not be deceived. That life of putting off being made new in the heart and putting on, that's the life that leads to Heaven, the other life is a life of deception, self deception.

So we've seen again and again, specific aspects of this putting off putting on. So we're told to put off lying, and then put on speaking the truth. And so there's this one-to-one correspondence of what we're told put off, put on. We're to put off stealing, and instead work hard with our own hands, so we may have something to share with those in need. And put off anger and instead put on compassion and mercy and forgiveness like God's been merciful to you. Put off sexual immorality, and put on the beauty of a Christian marriage which we're going to be talking about in a few weeks. Put off, as last week, foolish squandering of time, and instead redeem the time by wisdom and finding out what pleases the Lord.

Clear Prohibition: Do Not Get Drunk on Wine

Personal Context

Now we come to the topic of drunkenness, and we are commanded here, clearly, to put off drunkenness. And again, in that corresponding way that he's been speaking instead "be being filled with the Spirit." And so we're looking at this clear commandment, this prohibition, *"Do not get drunk on wine,"* verse 18, *"which leads to debauchery but instead be filled with the Spirit."* Now, let me just speak personally, just to lay my cards on the table. I have not had an alcoholic drink since I became a Christian. I haven't drunk any. My wife occasionally uses wine in cooking, but I've been told the alcohol is gone within a few moments of that. I've had some interesting moments buying single cans of beer for a recipe she had for barbecue once. Felt like I was smuggling drugs across the state line, that was kind of my feeling, I was glad that was in Louisville, glad to get out of there before anyone saw me. Conscience was clear but I wasn't acting like my conscience was clear, so that was kind of interesting.

Actually, I gave up drinking any alcoholic beverage a couple of years before I became a Christian. You may ask, "why?" Well, some of it had to do with just my own family upbringing, and I'm not going to go into detail about that, just for my own reasons. But I've seen personally the effect that alcohol can have in destroying a family, and I'm not going to go into any more detail on that. So my heart here is the heart of a pastor. I'm very concerned about assuming that none of you, that there is no one here listening to me now that needs to hear a warning about alcohol, that may be a couple of negatives. Let me say it again. I think it would be foolish for me to assume that all of you are fine with wine or alcohol. That would be foolish for me as a pastor. And it's not just a matter of now but in the future as well, that there may be habits and patterns

that are being laid now that can lead some of you into trouble. And so I think about 1 Corinthians 10:12 where it says, *"Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall."*

So I want to issue from the text and in faithfulness to the text, a warning to any of you who feel that it's well within your Christian freedoms to drink alcohol, which I will say that it is, but half of this sermon is going to be exactly what I think Paul wanted when he penned this command years ago, and that is a clear warning or prohibition against drunkenness. A warning that this sin has the power to blow up your family, blow up your marriage, blow up everything you care about if you are not careful, if you don't heed the warning. I'm willing as I preach this sermon to risk being labeled as legalistic. I'm going to talk about legalism and license in the sermon, but I'm willing to risk that. I hope you'll hear a pastor's heart in this sermon, as I seek to teach accurately what the Bible says about wine and be faithful to Paul's warning here. I also want to very positively contrast the drunkenness caused by wine with the overwhelmingly pure and free and clear joy caused by being filled with the Spirit. Now I'm intending to preach, God willing, a full sermon on what it means to be being filled with the Spirit next week. So the only thing I'm going to say this week will be in contrast to the wine just fitting into the verse itself. Next week, I'm going to give more of a kind of a big picture New Covenant view of what it means to be filled with the Spirit.

Long History of Christians Battling Over This Issue

Now, when we come to the issue of fermented beverages: alcohol, wine, or whatever you want to say, you must know we step into a long history of Christians battling on this issue. Christians have been battling this from the beginning of the Church. There have been movements of both very strong prohibition and even bordering or even crossing the line into legalism, some would argue. And then issues of license as well, this is the kind of thing that is going on. Modern Christians are often surprised to learn that Martin Luther brewed beer in his own basement, and apparently it was very good for those that like that kind of beer. I don't know, what would I know. I feel a little bit like a lifelong celibate speaking about marriage here, but the Bible says that wine and beer are a blessing, and we'll talk about all that. And then people that bought it said he brewed good beer. The pilgrims drank beer when they crossed the Atlantic, and that John Calvin was paid by the city of Geneva, with I think 250 bottles or casks of wine, which he either used or sold for his own benefit. Jonathan Edwards drank wine regularly without any record of him ever getting drunk.

But then on the other side, as I mentioned a few weeks ago, John Wesley and his Methodist movement in England identified gin houses as one of the major corrupting influences of London and indeed of the entire nation of England, and they led a major crusade against drunkenness, and against gin in their country. Denominations and mission agencies, seminaries, local churches, have had heated debates and have instituted policies that have offended the convictions of Christians, and as some have believed violated their freedoms. Many church covenants in our denomination, Baptist Church covenants, had battles over the language, the actual verbiage of alcohol. So church covenants were saying a bunch of things we're pledging to do and be for each other. And originally, the covenant would read something like this, "To combat the use of alcohol." And then you have war and debate, war and debate, war and debate and it gets moved over and they just add two little letters A, B, "To combat the abuse of alcohol." there's a world of difference between fighting the use of alcohol and the abuse of alcohol, but lots of debates on them.

South Eastern Seminary, where I am an adjunct professor, has a policy of complete abstinence from alcohol, which has engendered a great deal of debate and discussion. Of course in our nation's history, there's the era of prohibition, and maybe you don't know how powerfully active evangelicals were in getting prohibition to be ratified and passed. The temperance movements were led by Evangelical Christians, many of them women, who saw the devastation in their family lives caused by drunk husbands, who were abandoning their responsibility to their wives and children. And so it led to the 18th amendment which made illegal the production, sale, importation and transportation of all alcoholic beverages, that one from 1920-1933.

Well, as I mentioned the battle, this battle always seems to come down to two opposite extremes of legalism on the one side and license on the other. And I think Tim Keller wisely said, "If you really think that one of those two is the biggest danger in the church, you're almost certainly involved in the opposite." So if you

really think the pastor has to be really, really careful about legalism, I would say be aware of license, and then the opposite would be true. So it's just that we have to drive a wise road between these two extremes.

Understanding the Prohibition

Well, let's dig in and try to understand what Paul's warning here or commanding. He says simply, "Do not get drunk on wine." Now for us, for law enforcement officials, etcetera, drunkenness is pretty scientific at this point. We have actual detection devices that can tell if you're legally drunk. There's a billboard right there in North Durham that shows some young guy blowing into a breathalyzer and said, "You just blew." just humorous, I guess, "\$10,000". Like if your blood alcohol level is over a certain level on the breathalyzer, it's a \$10,000 fine. So they would define the blood alcohol concentration, BAC is that's a percentage of alcohol in the blood compared to the volume of blood, 0.1% is legally drunk. So that means for every 1,000 milliliters of blood the body would contain 1 milliliter of alcohol. Also most states practice a zero tolerance policy when it comes to underage drinking. So if you have any evidence of alcohol and you're below the age of 21, it's against the law. More specifics, apparently the faster you drink alcohol in a given occasion, the higher the BAC is. It's probably just physiological, it's hard to process the alcohol, and the more dangerous the drinking becomes.

A BAC of 0.37% to 0.40% can be fatal. Along with that comes the journey and here's where it gets interesting even for the purpose of this text. At 0.02%, that's like one-fifth of the way to legally drunk, drinkers can begin to feel moderate effects. At 0.04%, that's two-fifths of the way to legally drunk, drinkers can begin to feel relaxed, mildly euphoric, sociable and talkative. At 0.05%, that's halfway to legally drunk, judgment, attention and control are somewhat impaired. The ability to drive safely begins to be limited. Sensory, motor and finer performance issues are impaired. People are less able to make wise decisions about their capabilities, for example, about driving itself, they can think that they're able to do it when they really aren't. Then at 0.08% which actually is legally drunk in many states though not all, a clear deterioration of reaction time and control occurs. By 0.12 to 0.15% vomiting usually occurs. Drinkers are drowsy, emotionally unstable, have lost critical judgment, perception, memory, motor coordination all severely impaired. So that's all technical scientific. Somewhere long before that level, Christians will have violated Paul's command here.

Now, of course, people's body weight and other biological factors significantly impact this. But I think for us in terms of the issue of wisdom, the question is not how close to the line can I skirt and not go over it. And therein lies some of the problem with alcohol, is it becomes somewhat of a slippery slope. And it's hard to know, "Have I crossed the line? Am I sinning now based on Ephesians 5:18?" So biblically, then drunkenness in that they didn't have breathalyzers and BAC reading devices, etcetera, it would be the drinking of fermented beverages to the point of impairment of judgment and motor skills, so that outside observers note, and can tell that you've been drinking wine, because it affects your behavior and your speech. Now, the Bible consistently condemns drunkenness. Obviously, the first example is right after the flood, Noah planted a vineyard and he got drunk on the wine and lay shamefully exposed. After the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, we have the story of Lot in a cave with his daughters and they got their father drunk, and had children by their own father which led to the Ammonites and the Moabites.

There's some evidence in the text that Nadab and Abihu, Aaron's sons, were drunk when they offered the illegal offerings by fire that the Lord killed them for, because in the same chapter a few verses later, he warns priests never to be drunk in approaching the altar. And it seems that some of the Corinthians were drunk at the Lord's Supper. In 1 Corinthians 11:21, it says clearly that some were drunk. And in verse 30, it says because of just the way they were dealing with the Lord's Supper, a number had fallen asleep. In other words, had died. So we could imagine wouldn't be surprising that if you came drunk to the Lord's Supper in Corinth that the Lord might strike you dead. Now, the book of Proverbs has many warnings about wine and Proverbs 20:1 it says, "*Wine is a mocker and beer a brawler; whoever is led astray by them is not wise.*" Proverbs 23:19-21 says, "*Listen my son and be wise and keep your heart on the right path. Do not join those who drink too much wine or gorge themselves on meat, for drunkards and gluttons become poor and drowsiness clothes them in rags.*"

Later in that exact same chapter, in Proverbs 23:29-35, the proverb says this, *"Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaints? Who has needless bruises? Who has bloodshot eyes? Those who linger over wine. Who go to sample bowls of mixed wine. Do not gaze at wine when it is red. When it's sparkles in the cup, when it goes down smoothly, in the end it bites like a snake and poisons like a viper. Your eyes will see strange sights and your mind will imagine confusing things. You'll be like one sleeping on the high seas, lying on the top of rigging. 'They hit me, you'll say, but I'm not hurt. They beat me but I don't feel it. When will I wake up so I can find another drink?'"* That's a pretty clear warning against the dangers of alcohol, in the end it bites like a viper. Interestingly, in between those two clear warnings in Proverbs 23, is a very strong warning against sexual immorality with prostitutes. It's almost as though the life of wine is linked in some way to a life of sexual immorality. Many of you that are involved in college ministry know how often this happens, there can be parties and whatever and because of alcohol or drugs, you can do things that you would ordinarily never do with people you don't even know, and it can really lead to a terrible level of shame. God makes it clear that those who are unrepentant drunks will not inherit the kingdom of God, as it says in 1st Corinthians 6:9-10, "Do not be deceived, drunkards will not inherit the kingdom of God."

The Pagan Background: Drunken Worship

Now, there is a pagan background concerning worship that becomes relevant even for the verse we're looking at here. All around the pagan world drunkenness was part of idolatrous polytheistic worship. And the idea went that as you would drink the gods and goddesses, would kind of take over your body, and make you do things or act out things that they wanted you to act out, including immorality, gross immorality, and other things like that. I think for this reason, alcohol has frequently been called 'spirits.' Like back in the Colonial days, you knew that spirits meant fermented beverages, and so there was a link to the pagan or that world of the gods and goddesses. So pagan worship frequently involved drunkenness combined with alluring music, wild dancing, revelry, and sexual immorality.

I think this is part of what Paul means when he talks about debauchery, he says in verse 18, *"Do not get drunk with wine for that is debauchery, but be being filled with the Spirit."* So pagan worship like this would have been very familiar to the people of Ephesus, they would have seen it regularly in connection with the temple of Artemis. Paul is presenting a different kind of worship here. An infinitely better kind of worship and an infinitely better kind of life. Look again at the text, verses 18 through 20. Let's look at that, it says, *"Do not get drunk with wine for that is debauchery but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."* It's a whole different kind of worship. An infinitely better kind of worship than that of the pagans.

Some Thoughtful Questions About Wine

So what I want to do now is stop and just ask some questions, I think, I hope will be thoughtful and helpful for you concerning wine.

Question 1: Is Wine Use Universally Forbidden?

Question number one; is wine use universally forbidden? Well, the answer obviously, biblically, must be no. There's no universal prohibition against the drinking of wine in the Bible, actually quite the opposite. Wine is often presented as a blessing from God in the Bible. In Deuteronomy 7, the Lord talking about the blessings of the Promised Land and all of the rich blessings He would give them, He said this, *"The Lord will love you and bless you and increase your numbers, He will bless the fruit of your womb, the crops of your land, your grain, new wine and oil, the calves of your herds, the lambs of your flocks in the land which He swore to your forefathers to give you."* Again, Psalm 104:15, it says that "God gives wine that gladdens the heart of man, oil to make his face shine and bread that sustains his heart." Amos 9:13 speaks about the glories of the restoration of Israel, the post-exilic and ultimately eschatological restoration of the people of God. And it says this in Amos 9:13, *"Lavish blessings will come on you. The days are coming when the reaper will be overtaken by the plowman and the planter by the one treading grapes. New wine will drip from the*

mountains and flow from all the hills."

The book of Proverbs itself has many passages that speak of the blessings of wine. In Proverbs 3:10, *"Then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine."* And then in Proverbs 9 Lady Wisdom is personified, and so Lady Wisdom is going to spread a banquet and a feast for any that will partake. And it says this, Proverbs 9:1-2, *"Wisdom has built her house. She has hewn out its seven pillars, she has prepared her meat, mixed her wine, she has also set her table."* Wine is among the things that God commanded to be offered on the altar to Him. Of course most famously you're saying when is the pastor going to mention Jesus changing water into wine. Well there you go, I have now mentioned it. Jesus changed water into wine, and said, "None of you are to drink it now. No one drink it, but isn't it beautiful to look at." Well, you know that didn't happen. It was sampled and said to be high quality wine. A sense of instant aging that came on it, but no permission toward drunkenness, not at all. You shouldn't think because there's a large quantity of it he would have counseled drunkenness.

Frankly, Jesus Himself is the key on this question, is wine drinking universally forbidden? We have the example of John the Baptist contrasted with that of Jesus, and here I think there are two godly responses to alcohol. The Angel Gabriel when he came to Zechariah, spoke to Zechariah saying that John the Baptist, He didn't say his name at that point, but this boy would be effectively a Nazirite from birth, he was not to drink any alcoholic beverage or anything, any fermented or strong drink. For he will be filled with the Spirit from birth. So there's a strong link to even the text we're looking at here. But then Jesus in teaching about John the Baptist, he said this amazing thing, He said, *"John the Baptist came neither eating nor drinking, and they said he had a demon. The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners, but wisdom is proved right [or justified] by her actions."* Jesus was no drunkard and He was no glutton, but He drank wine. And I don't know how you could come to any other conclusion from a simple exegesis "of the Son of Man came drinking" in context.

So here we have, I think, two godly examples of what to do about wine. Some are just going to say, it's not for me for my whole life. I'm just not going to do it. I'm not going to drink, I have my own reasons. Could be that you think physiologically in terms of family heritage, whatever you might be prone to alcoholism, for whatever reason, you don't need to give a reason. You can just say, "I'm just not going to drink." and that's fine. We'll talk about judgmentalism, we'll talk about that, but I'm just saying on the issue itself, you're free to decide to never drink wine, and no one should judge you for that. But conversely in Jesus' case, you're free to also drink wine just as long as you're as holy about it as Jesus and never get drunk. So that's the first question.

Question 2: Is Today's Wine the Same as the Wine in the Bible?

Secondly, is today's wine the same as the wine of the days of the Bible? Now that's a question I don't think we can finally answer. We need a baseline on which to compare it with. We don't really have any accurate measurement of the alcohol level of the wine that was served at banquets back then. John McArthur has done a careful study of it. He says it's much lower, especially because of dilution. There was a lot of dilution with water that would happen, etcetera. And you can read what he wrote and I find it somewhat compelling. In any case, we're not really sure there is some evidence, however that it was of a much lower alcohol content. If it was much lower alcohol content, you had a lot longer run up to drunkenness. It became much more of a willful decision on the part of the drinker to get drunk. And I think there's some evidence in the text in Acts 2. You remember how they having been filled with the spirit had just been exuberantly preaching the Gospel and ministering and joyful and all that? And they said "they must be drunk." You remember what Peter said? "It's impossible." He didn't say that, but in effect he said, "It's only nine in the morning. There's not been enough time. We were just up a few hours ago and there just isn't enough time." It implies then low alcohol content at least.

Now modern wines, McArthur says probably ancient wine alcohol at 3% or less content, modern wines much higher and apparently growing ever higher. I want you to notice, if I can just borrow a verb and just bring it out to just in general, the distillation principle of pleasure going on in front of us. There's a law of

diminishing returns, since you have to have more and more of the thing that brings you pleasure in order to get the same kick, and it just keeps going higher and higher and higher all the time. You look at any area of pleasure, you're going to see that that's what's happening. There's more and more concentration. An in-flight movie is not enough, now we need 50 of them. And we need to be able to choose. Is that a sin? No, but just watch what's happening, it's like more and more of the thing you love. Same thing with music, you can just zero in and make your own playlist and just drown yourself in your own favorite songs, until they're not your favorite songs any more, because you've heard them into the ground. It's happened to me. I used to like that song. I've heard it 10,000 times now I don't like it anymore. But there's that distillation thing. Well, same thing with alcohol. The content is very high. 10-21% in wines, gin would be 35-40%, vodka 35-46%, whiskey 40-60%. For me, I must assume to drink a small glass of whiskey would be a decision to get drunk. I just look at it that way, sides on the fact I have no desire to do it. I don't know if that's true, but I just think the alcohol is extremely high.

Question 3: Is Wine Drinking Required?

Third question, is wine drinking required? Are there any commands that say that you must drink wine? Well, clearly there aren't, because we have Nazirites that take vows and they don't drink, we have the Rechabites in Jeremiah who swore off alcohol and drank nothing. We have the case of John the Baptist as I already mentioned. We also have the statement made in 1 Timothy 5:23, "*Stop drinking only water and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses.*" So that implies that one of the reasons for drinking wine would be just the sanitary nature of it. So wells of water back then were dirty things. Animals used them, and there are other issues as well. Now, we're very aware, post Louis Pasteur, of the microbes and the dangers. And so beverage bottling companies are meticulous in their cleanliness with an amazingly wide array of safe, non-alcoholic beverages that are available. Fruit drinks galore. How many are there? I don't know if anybody's geeky enough to do this, but go into an average, well stocked convenience store, and count the different number of non-alcoholic products there are available and come back and tell me that number. Jenny thought it might have been in the 300 range. I think it's somewhere in the 150 range. You're like, "Well, how do we know?" are there like seven or eight refrigerator doors. Maybe you could go per refrigerator door how many non-alcoholic beverages are there. My point is, you have a wide array of choices that they didn't have back then.

Beyond that, drinking is not necessary to being a witness. Just because you're at an office party, a Christmas party and everyone's drinking, you don't have to do it, especially post AA. Most people are aware that some just swear off alcohol their whole lives, it's not even a religious commitment, it's just something they've done themselves, and generally it won't pressure them. Even the alcohol bottling companies are making the designated driver a hero, man or woman, this guy's a hero or girl's a hero, because they're not drinking anything at all. They would like them to drink next time and be it on a rotating basis I think, but I don't know that for sure. So I think you have the ability in this day and age to say, "No, I'm not drinking." You don't have to preach about it at that moment but you can say it. So it's not required to be a witness. Now, some may ask, yes it's not required, but is it permitted? Well, I already covered that. Yes, it's permitted but it's not required either.

Question 4: Is Wine Habit-Forming?

Fourthly, is wine habit forming? Is it addictive? It is the devastating testimony of many, not of all but of many, how addictive alcohol can be. People become enslaved to the bottle, unable to get through a single day without drinking. Alcohol clouds the brain and it affects bodily functions chemically. Beyond that, just the mental habit of turning to alcohol to solve problems, the saying "drown your troubles." Well they actually don't get drowned. You actually end up having a bigger overriding trouble that has conquered all the others, and that's alcohol, for those that get addicted. There are an estimated 18 million alcoholics in the United States today, 18 million, estimated, one out of every 12 adults. That includes, tragically, between three to four million teenagers. Ministries that work with people, so enslaved, say plainly that the hardest day for them is they have broken away from this enslavement is the first day, just getting through the first 24 hours of not drinking. So yes, for some people, not for everybody, but for some people wine is habit-forming, it is enslaving. Either way, even if it's a matter of Christian freedom for you and something that you do just

beware, beware. Paul said this in 1 Corinthians 6:12, *"Everything is permissible for me but not everything is beneficial. Everything is permissible for me, but I will not be enslaved by anything."*

Question 5: Is Wine Drinking Potentially Destructive?

Fifthly, is wine drinking potentially destructive? Well, Paul mentions the word debauchery here, debauchery means literally, "that which is incapable of being saved." That's what the Greek word means, it speaks of a person who is dying of an illness that can't be cured. It also the word implies wild living profligates, like the prodigal son. Debauchery is a form of self-destruction. Now medically, alcohol has a long track record of killing people who drink it unrestrained. It leads to cirrhosis of the liver, long-term damage, it destroys brain cells, causes multiple other diseases. Then alcohol is directly involved in over 40% of all violent crimes in our country, and over 50% of all traffic fatalities. It's the number one killer of teenagers, alcohol connected traffic fatalities. Beyond that it's just the damage done to families. And I don't know how you can even talk about this. Most of this is just anecdotal, but just what happens, even if the individual manages his or her drinking and they can hold down a job, there's still damage done everyday to the relationships.

Story of Spurgeon

Some time ago I read this account and it never left me, Charles Spurgeon talked about this of a man he led to Christ, he was addicted to gin, this man destroyed his family by his addiction, he spent every available coin on drink, he stole money to feed his habit. He worked, but spent all of his wages on his own alcohol addiction. His family was slowly starving to death, his wife was begging in London to have enough money to feed their children. His daughter had a dangerous, but curable illness, and this man drank away the money that would have been used for her medicine and she died. It's one of the saddest stories I've ever read in my life. Well, the neighbors basically passed the hat to buy a coffin and a dress, a beautiful dress for this little girl to be buried in. This wretch broke into the undertaker's shop the night before the funeral, opened the casket, stole the dress off the dead girl, closed the casket, sold the dress, drank the money. Confessed all of this Spurgeon after he was converted, conscience ripped to shreds. Can I be forgiven? Is it even possible? Well, thanks be to God. The grace of God is infinitely greater than any wretchedness, any alcohol or drug has ever produced in any life. Yes, he can be forgiven so can you. But I'm just wanting you to note the danger that comes from this debauchery that Paul mentions here.

Question 6: Is Wine Drinking Potentially Offensive to Other Christians?

Is wine drinking potentially offensive to other Christians? Can it cause other Christians to stumble? Yes, it can. First Corinthians 8, Paul talks about a weak brother for whom Christ died is offended by your eating of meat sacrificed to idols. *"He said when you sin against your brothers in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother to fall into sin, I'll never eat meat again so I'll not cause him to fall."* Well, he takes the same argument and applies it to alcohol in Romans 14:21. He says it's better not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything else that will cause your brother to fall.

Question 7: Is Wine Drinking Potentially Harmful to my Witness?

Next question, is wine drinking potentially harmful to my witness as a Christian? A moment ago I was asking is it offensive to other Christians, now I'm asking, could it affect other non-Christians who are watching you drink? And the answer is it could. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10:31-33, *"So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God. Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews or Greeks or the Church of God. Even as I try to please everyone in every way, for I'm not seeking my own good but the good of many so that they may be saved."* So yes, you can impair your witness by what you do with alcohol if you sin with it. So then the question comes, is it wise to drink wine at all? And that's where I just want to give you those examples of John the Baptist and Jesus. You have to make your own decision. If you want to celebrate as many passages do the gift of wine and drink it, just be sure that you are not violating Paul's clear prohibition here. Be clear that you can drink wine in as holy a manner as Jesus did, or be like John the Baptist.

Question 8: Is It Right to Judge Other Christians?

Now, the final question, is it right to judge other Christians on what they do with this? The answer must be no. It is not right. As long as they're not getting drunk, they've not sinned. Romans 14:4, *"Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls, and he will stand for the Lord is able to make him stand."* So churches I think are wrong to set up legalistic covenants or rules saying that none of their members may drink any alcohol at all. But having said that let me ask a corollary question, is it right to give counsel or advice to other Christians? Yes, and that's different than judging. I think you should come to your own convictions about this, and then talk about them with each other, and give and receive grace and mercy to each other. But my desire is to just protect this church from sin, that's my desire, and the sin here is drunkenness.

A Clear Contrast: Be Filled with the Spirit

The Joy and Celebration the Spirit

Now, for the few minutes that we have left, I want to give you the clear contrast with being filled with the Spirit. Like I said, we're going to do this much more fully next week. Look again at the text, *"Do not get drunk with wine for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms, hymns, spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ."* So like I said, next week we're going to talk much more about the Spirit-filled life and what that means. But here, I just want to focus on the joy, and the elation, and the celebration in these verses. Just the sheer happiness of being a Christian.

The fact that it just flows out in worship. Our hearts are just so elevated and so saturated with the good news of the Gospel that we can't help speaking about what we've seen and heard, and we can't help singing about it, and speaking to one another about it, we can't stop talking about it, because the good news about Jesus is so joyous that it just must take over the whole world as it's already taken over our whole hearts. You think about how when Jesus was born the angels were just celebrating, a great choir of angels just celebrating and praising God from the heavens, Luke 2:13. And then how much more Jesus' resurrection victory. Where it says in 1 Corinthians 15, *"Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?"* It says, *"Thanks be to God, He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."*

The Joy of the Spirit is Supernatural

So it's just so much joy and celebration, this joy is supernatural. It does come from the outside in. Like wine, it's similar in that way. It comes from the outside in, and we can drink the Holy Spirit, it says that in Corinthians 12:13, it says, *"we have all been given the one Spirit to drink."* So drink up of the Spirit. The Spirit in the Old Testament is often linked to or likened to a liquid, boy that was hard to say. Likened to a liquid. But we can drink in like the earth drinking in the rain and producing fruit, so it is the ministry of the Spirit. The Spirit is poured out like a liquid and we can just drink in, and He fills our hearts with joy. You look again at Ephesians 3:17-19. Just listen, I don't have time to look there now, but remember the prayer there, I pray that you being rooted and established in love may have power together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ. And that you would know that love that surpasses knowledge, listen to this, so that you will be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Super saturated with God.

Now, that's something the world will sit up and take notice of. They did on the Day of Pentecost, they thought they were drunk. There's no other explanation for this joyful behavior, and this joy just bubbles out to others. Look at verse 19, *"Speak to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs."* You may say it said, speak to one another I'm not really good at singing. So maybe for you, you should just speak the psalms. Others like I've said before, I sing best corporately with really loud people singing around me. I actually don't have a bad voice. You can talk to Rick Lesh afterwards, because I was singing right in your ear so just ask him how I sounded. But we can just enjoy singing psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs. And just include one another, O magnify the Lord with me, let us exalt His name together. But it comes from hearts filled with joy, with singing in our hearts, and giving thanks from our heart. So it's coming from inside

out, and it's just so contagious and so beautiful, and it's something that we just want to do by the power of the Spirit.

Let the Joy Flow Out of You

Now, psalms, hymns, spiritual songs. I don't really know the difference between them. Maybe some people would have to be meticulous, and I don't know that we can differentiate to some degree, but I think all of them involve a meticulous high level of intellectual endeavor. Where individuals are capturing deep theological themes in poetic language. And when you write poetry, you're constraining yourself in rhythm and verse. And so you have to be really efficient and sharp, you think about every word. And so these brothers and sister hymn writers have served the whole Body of Christ, by writing magnificent psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, and then we come together and sing them, and it's so intelligent and so thoughtful and so theological, it's so different from the debauchery of drunkenness, when somebody's drooling and stammering. We are singing truth and it just makes us joyful. That's better than drinking. There's no hangover, there's no sin, there's no financial cost. There's just the joy of the Holy Spirit.

Application

Repent and Believe

So briefly, application. First and foremost, I just want to appeal to any of you who are enslaved right now to sin. Any that there might be, it might be alcohol, it might be drugs, it might be any sin at all might have nothing to do with alcohol or drugs, but you know you're a slave to sin, you know you're not a Christian. And you came here today, maybe somebody invited you here I just want to point you to the cross. I want to point you to Jesus who is crucified on the cross and shed his blood for sinners like you and me. And all of us have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and if you will just trust in Him, all of your sins, no matter how dire and how repulsive can be, will be, forgiven. And then if you are genuinely converted, you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit will come in and show you that your chains are broken. And He'll teach you that you're already free from sin. And that you never need to sin again, and He'll begin to lead you in new habits of holiness and righteousness. So come to Christ.

Evaluate Your Heart

Secondly, to my Christian brothers and sisters, concerning wine, just start with this, just simply obey the command here. Don't ever, ever get drunk on wine because it leads to debauchery. Start with that. But then secondly, if you believe that wine is going to continue to be part of your Christian freedom in your life, you're certainly free to do that. I think I've made that case, in the pattern of Jesus. I'm just saying beware, the slippery slope. How do you know when you've gone too far? How do you know? How do you know when alcohol, wine has too great a grip on your life? I think, ask people around you? Are they worried about your drinking? Look in your own heart, if you can't live without it, it's gone too far. Any created thing you can't live without is an idol. If you turn to it more and more when you're having problems, it's probably too great in your life already. Turn to the Holy Spirit to solve your problem, if you need wine to feel friendly, outgoing, and loving at a gathering, can I commend the fruit of the Spirit instead, be filled with the Spirit and go reach out to people. Stop thinking about yourself and how you look and all that, don't worry about nobody cares about you. Well they do, but just move out and be friendly and minister and forget what people are thinking about you. You don't need alcohol to do that. If you've ever been drunk before, and especially if you've been drunk recently, then clearly wine is a dangerous place for you. Does that mean you should turn to total abstinence? Maybe, maybe, maybe not. But I'm just saying beware. If wine dominates you're thinking, you just can't imagine life without it then that's how you know.

Drink in the Spirit

And then finally, and we'll talk much more about this next week. Just drink the Spirit, be being filled with the Spirit. Sing to one another, speak to one another, speak God's word to each other, be happy, be evidently happy and joyful and hopeful in this sad world that we live in. People might wonder if you're drunk, you'll be able to speak very rationally that you're not. But you're filled with the Spirit. Close with me in prayer.

Prayer

Lord, thank you for the time we've had to study today. We thank you for the word of God and how it speaks the truth to us. Father, I want to pray right now for any brother or sister in Christ, who needed to hear this sermon, perhaps they have been hiding drinking patterns, hiding addictions. Oh God, I pray that you would give them help, the help that they need. Set them free. And Lord, I pray for others who have already openly identified these things, and are in various programs, and are making progress. Lord, give them strength for the journey help them to know the good work that they've already done by putting distance between them and the last time that they were sinfully drunk. And God, I pray for any that are addicted to drugs in a similar way, though they're not mentioned in the text, they're implied, Oh Lord set them free. Lord give us the wisdom to know what to do about this, help us not to judge another servant, but to be wise. And God fill us oh Lord, all of us with the Holy Spirit, we pray in Jesus name, amen.