

INTRODUCTION

Today I’m going to be talking about “Don’t Be Drunk With Wine.” If you happened to have just stumbled into this church for the first time in years, you probably think every Baptist stands up and preaches every Sunday against drinking. I have to confess to you that in the 25 years I have been preaching, this is the first entire message that I have ever preached on this subject. Why today? Most of you know I preach through the Bible, verse after verse after verse and I don’t practice kangaroo exegesis, where you hop over all the tough passages of scripture. We have come to Ephesians 5:18, today and we are not going to dodge it. We are going to look at the first side of it and then in the subsequent weeks I’ll be talking about what it means to be filled with the Spirit.

Look at what the Bible says in Ephesians 5:18. Beginning in verse 15 Paul is saying, “Don’t be foolish, but walk wisely.” In verse 17 he says, “Don’t be foolish, but understand the will of the Lord.” You could put a colon after verse 17. Here’s what the will of the Lord is for your life. “Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.”

Some time ago I got on an American commuter plane out here at Pounds Field on my way over to DFW and I was on the very front seat. I was almost knee-to-knee with the flight attendant. As we were taking off she inevitably asked me what I did for a living and I was proud to tell her I was a Baptist pastor. She was a delightful Christian. She was one of those ladies you can just see Jesus shine out of their eyes when they talk about the Lord. She shared with me that several months before, she had a stillborn child and how the Lord had just sustained her and her husband through that time, and that was a great testimony. I happened to ask her where she went to church. Oh, she said, “I’m not a Baptist. I like Baptists, and I love to listen to Charles Stanley on television, but I’m not a Baptist, because I like to have a glass of wine every now and then with a meal and I know you Baptists don’t drink.” I said, “Some Baptists don’t drink, but a lot of Baptists do.” She thought every Baptist was a teetotaler. What is the truth about that? How many Baptists do drink? There have been several national surveys, the most recent Gallup Poll pointed out that 50% (half of all Baptists) drink in some form or fashion. That compares with 67% Methodists and Lutherans our Episcopalian friends 78% of them imbibe. The interesting thing about that survey was they asked a lot of other questions, but of the people who tithed, only 15% of them drink, so it’s like you made the choice tithe or drink. When I read that number, 50%, I was a little bit surprised but then I thought, “No wonder, because out of 16 million Southern Baptists in America, you have heard me say about half of those folks are non-resident. They never give anything, they never show up. I wondered what the practice and the attitude of the people who do come to church? So many of you remember about a month ago I distributed a survey in Sunday School asking for adult attitudes and practices about alcohol. It was totally anonymous. I wanted the truth. I received 517 responses and that’s a pretty good sample. This is what we discovered in Green Acres Baptist Church. Of adults who come to church, 22% of you said, “I don’t drink, and I think all drinking is a sin.” but 38% said, “I don’t drink, but I don’t think taking an occasional drink is a sin.” That means about 60% of those present in our Sunday School that morning said, “I don’t drink.” That means fully 40% said, “I either drink privately or I drink socially.” I asked the question, “How many of you are occasionally too drunk to drive or meaning how many of you are ever drunk?” It’s interesting only 4 people, less than 1% admitted they were ever drunk. When I read that, I said, “That’s what we call the king or queen of denial.”

I think a lot of them probably are they just don't call themselves drunk at times.

When you look at the age division, it changes. 60% said "I don't drink." 40% said "I do drink." When you look at age 40 and under, it is completely reversed. Of those in our church under the age of 40 who were asked that question, 57% said, "Yes, I do drink occasionally" and a little bit over 40% said, "No, I don't." When you look at the oldest group in our church (I think probably the most experienced, the wisest and perhaps those who grew up during a time when there was stronger teaching about this) those 60 years old and older, less than 20% of those said they ever drink. There was one question we all agreed on. I said, "Do you believe getting drunk is a sin?" 95% of the folks in our church said, "Yes, getting drunk is a sin." Then, when I asked, "How many of you have had or have right now a family member who is a victim of alcoholic abuse?" Answer: 1 out of 4, 25% of you. Why did I do that survey? Is it so that we can develop a morality by majority? Absolutely not! So that we can get a background and understanding of so many confused attitudes about alcohol.

That's like the Sunday School who was trying to teach her kids not to drink. So she took two glasses and filled one with water and she dropped an earthworm in and the worm squiggled around happily. Then she poured vodka in the other glass and dropped an earthworm in the glass of vodka. That earthworm squiggled a little bit, then froze up, died and sank to the bottom of that glass. She said, "Boys and girls, what's the lesson here?" One little boy raised his hand and said, "Teacher if you drink vodka, you won't ever have worms."

There are a lot of confused attitudes about drinking. I approach this sermon fully aware that most of you are not going to like what I have to say. On one hand, some of you think all drinking is a sin and you want me to stand up here and rant and rail against the dangers of taking one drop of alcohol—I'm not going to do that. On the other hand, there are others of you who drink occasionally, and you want me to say something today to justify that practice and make you feel good about it—I'm not going to do that either. In fact, I'm going to give you my conclusion of this message first so you can know where I am going. Here it is in a nutshell: The Bible does not expressly forbid the use of alcohol or wine, because they didn't have alcohol as we know it today. But I think total abstinence is the wisest choice for a mature Christian. That's where I am going.

I. THE BIBLE DOESN'T CONDEMN THE USE OF WINE

Three statements. Statement number one. The Bible does not condemn the use of wine. Some groups of Christians say, "I'm a Christian. I love Jesus, and I would never let a drop of alcohol touch my tongue and I feel good about that." Also you have a lot of born-again Christians who when they die they will be just as much in heaven as you are who say, "I love Jesus. Jesus is in my heart, but I drink in moderation. Jesus drank wine and I feel good about that." You cannot read the Bible without understanding that the Bible does talk about the use of wine. I looked it up. The Bible uses the word "wine" 231 times. Most of those are very positive as wine being a blessing from God. One instance is Proverbs 3:9-10 where the Bible says, "Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats of wine will brim over with new wine." In the Old Testament one of the daily offerings they brought to the temple was a wine offering, so you cannot read the Bible without

knowing that it talks about wine. What about Jesus? He turned water into wine. In Luke 7, Jesus contrasted his lifestyle to John the Baptist, who was a teetotaler. Jesus said, "John came neither eating nor drinking, but," Jesus said "as the bridegroom I came eating and drinking." Jesus the night before he died, took a cup of wine and said, "This cup is the new testament of my blood." Paul wrote to Timothy and said, "Timothy, drink a little wine for your stomach's sake." Anybody who has a lick of sense reads the Bible and understands that it doesn't condemn the use of wine.

II. THE BIBLE CLEARLY CONDEMNS DRUNKENNESS

The second statement is, the Bible clearly condemns drunkenness as a sin. We just read it in Ephesians 5:18, "Do not get drunk on wine." To be honest I was a little bit intrigued by the 40% of you who said, "I drink sometimes," but only 4 people said, "I am occasionally drunk." I think the problem is we don't have a really good standard for what being drunk is. After the first service, somebody asked, "Do you know what the definition of drunkenness is when you are in the armed services? If you can raise your arm to take another drink, you are not drunk, but if you are so out of it you can't even take another drink, that's drunk." Some of you think, "I've never been falling down drunk so no, I haven't." But what is being drunk? Is it a slight buzz or just being a little happy and giddy is that being drunk? In most states 100 milligrams of alcohol in 100 milliliters of blood is the legal definition of being drunk. For many, it's where you lose your self-control, where you arrive at a state where you would do or say things that without alcohol you would not have done or said.

The Bible addresses drunkenness very clearly. In Proverbs 23:29, the Bible describes some of the dangers and symptoms of drunkenness. Solomon, who according to Ecclesiastes had a long history of drunkenness and drinking, realized the dangers. "Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaints? Who has needless bruises? Who has bloodshot eyes?" Here's the answer "Those who linger over wine, who go to sample bowls of mixed wine. Do not gaze at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it goes down smoothly!" Notice the Bible is saying there may be a kind of wine that is not dangerous, but there is a kind of wine with certain characteristics that can be dangerous. Verse 32 say, "In the end it bites like a snake and poisons like a viper." Here are some of the symptoms of drunkenness "Your eyes will see strange sights and your mind imagine confusing things. You will be like one sleeping on the high seas, lying on top of the rigging." In other words, you will lose your equilibrium. You also lose all feeling. Verse 35, "'They hit me,' you will 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?'" This speaks of that vicious cycle of the alcoholic of losing all feeling and living from drink to drink to drink that terrible, vicious cycle. The Bible condemns drunkenness.

In the Bible drunkenness is always associated with tragedy. The first guy recorded in the Bible to get drunk was Noah. Noah built the ark, loaded up his family and the animals, but what happened *after* the flood? The Bible says he built a vineyard, made some wine, drank his wine and got so drunk that he exposed himself sexually, cursed his sons, and alcohol and that drunkenness ended up splitting his family. The tragedy today is thousands of families and marriages are destroyed by one who has an alcohol problem. Noah was the first, but he certainly wasn't the last. In the Bible Lot got drunk and one night in his drunken stupor he had an

incestuous experience with his daughters. He never would have done that if he had been sober, so being drunk causes you to do things you never would do if you were sober and we all agree on that. 95% of us said, “Yes, drunkenness is a sin.” The problem is you think maybe falling down drunk is drunk, but when you get to that point that you would do things that you ordinarily would not do that’s drunkenness and the Bible says it’s a sin.

III. “WINE” IN THE BIBLE ISN’T ALWAYS THE “WINE” OF TODAY

Here’s the third statement: Wine in the Bible isn’t always the wine of today. In other words sure, Jesus drank wine, he changed water into wine, but here’s the question we have to ask ourselves. “Was what Jesus drank and was what he converted the water into was it the same thing as the wine we have today?” Today when I say the word “wine” you know what I am talking about. We’re talking about an alcoholic beverage with a 10 to 12% alcoholic content. That is the largest alcoholic content that can occur from natural fermentation. Back in Bible times, that was the only way to do it. Things fermented naturally. We’re not even talking about what we call “hard liquor” today, because they didn’t have distilling technology we have today and wine can become up to 12% alcoholic. Today when somebody says to you, “Would you like a glass of wine?” That’s what they are talking about, a 12% alcoholic beverage.

1. *Sikera* strong intoxicating drink
2. *Gleukos* new wine
3. *Oinos* mixed wine

In Bible times there are all different words for wine and they mean different things. I always have to say this. Somebody says, “Why are you giving us the Greek words for wine? Why don’t you give us the Spanish words or the German words?” Because the original Bible was written in Greek and the reason we study Greek is so we can understand the true meanings of the words because words change. For instance, Jesus told that man, “Take up your bed and walk” is there anybody in this room who could take up your bed and walk that big, old four poster mattress and box springs? No, when you read that word “bed” you say, “Oh, he’s talking about a pallet there different than my bed.” The same is true with the word “wine.” In the Bible the word “wine” doesn’t mean what the word “wine” means today. Notice the three words for “wine” that the New Testament uses. The first one is *sikera*, which means “a strong, intoxicating drink”, and it is used in Luke 1:15 where it says John the Baptist never drank strong drink or wine. The second word is *gleukos*. We get our word *glucose* from it, because this was “new wine, very sweet like glucose.” It was highly intoxicating. New wine fermented rapidly if wasn’t boiled down. In Acts 2:13 on the Day of Pentecost, the disciples were so enthusiastic and so giddy, the people said, “These guys have had too much *gleukos*.” The word that is used most often is the word *oinos*, which means we would call it “mixed wine.” When it says Jesus changed water into wine it was *oinos*, the wine Jesus used at the Last Supper is the word *oinos*.

In Bible times, they would mash grapes and make wine, if they didn’t boil the water off, the wine would naturally ferment, but most often with *oinos*. They would boil the water off and what was left would be sort of a grape paste, almost like grape jam. They would put that jam in leather wineskins (they didn’t have airtight bottles back then). It would not ferment in that state. Then when they wanted to drink it, they would take some of it and mix it with water. We would call it

"reconstituted grape juice." That's why Jesus said, "If you take new wine, this *gleukos*, fermented and you put it in old wineskins, it's going to burst the seams of those leather wineskins" and indeed it would. That's the truth. I'm not just saying that so you won't drink. There is plenty of extra-biblical evidence that that's what wine was. Let me give you some quotes that aren't even in the Bible.

In Homers seventh book of the Odyssey, he wrote. "Ulysses took in a boat a goatskin of thick, black wine and when it was drunk it was mixed with 20 parts water. The wine of Arcadia was so thick, it was necessary to scrape it from the skin bottles in which it was stored and dissolve the scrapings into water." Virgil writing in 30 B.C., 30 years before Jesus was born, "Wine was boiled down to the luscious juice and preserved. So in the New Testament the word "wine" doesn't always mean an intoxicating drink. You might not have known that. That's why, for instance, when the New Testament is talking about the requirements for pastors and deacons it says, "Not given to much wine." Some folks would say, "I wish it would say not given to *any* wine." This was this mixed wine you could get intoxicated on, but you had to drink an awful lot of it. In fact Robert Stein writing in *Christianity Today* says, "Most of the wine in the Bible times was mixed 3 parts water and 1 part wine. To consume the amount of alcohol in 2 martinis by drinking wine mixed 3 to 1 you would have to drink 22 glasses." Two martinis equals 22 glasses of *oinos*. "It is possible," (I like what he says here) "to become intoxicated from wine mixed with 3 parts water, but one's drinking would affect the bladder long before it would affect the mind." That's why the Bible says you don't linger over that kind of wine.

Wine today is about 10 to 12% alcohol; beer is about 5% alcohol; sherry or brandy, which is artificially distilled, is about 20%; what we call hard liquor is 50% and up. The Nyquil you teetotalers sip is 10% alcohol if you want to know. Wine mixed 3 parts to one is 2.5% alcohol. In America today for a drink to be considered an alcoholic beverage, it has to be 3.25%. If you are going to justify your drinking wine by saying Jesus drank wine, you can't be absolutely certain it is the same kind of wine Jesus drank. When Jesus said, "This cup is the New Testament of my blood," do you think it was intoxicating wine, fermenting because fermentation is decay. Do you think Jesus would compare his life-giving blood to a decaying, fermenting, alcoholic beverage? So here's what you all are faced with: Am I going to drink? Am I not going to drink? Am I going to drink in moderation? Am I going to avoid drunkenness? You have to make a choice. The Bible does not expressly forbid the use of wine but I think it is the wisest choice for a mature Christian.

1. Ask yourself, "Is it potentially destructive?"

Ask yourself these four questions. Number one. Is it potentially destructive for me and for others? Of course, the answer to that question is "Yes." You say, "I drink moderately, but I never get drunk." Are you sure? The American Council on Alcoholic Problems states that of any person whoever takes any kind of a drink 90% of those people will be drunk at some time. So, maybe you are in that 10% of people who drink but never are drunk ever in your life. I can throw out another statistic as the flip side of that. Of those who never take a drink, I guarantee you zero per cent are ever drunk. You can be sure of that. There are 25 million alcoholics in America. Do you know what is scary about that? That means 1 out of every 12 Americans has a problem with alcohol. That means about 1 out of the 12 people on your pew on the average have a problem

with alcoholism. That’s a scary statistic. If you knew that 1 out of 12 jets were going to crash, would you ever fly by air? Absolutely not! That’s a terrible statistic. There are 3.3 million teenage alcoholics. Every year 36,000 people are killed by drunk drivers and I think everybody in this room knows someone who lost their life because of drinking and driving. Is it potentially destructive? Absolutely! And we all have horror stories of those who suffer with alcohol problems. One out of four of you have somebody in your family with that problem. If you are an alcoholic you are struggling with alcohol abuse no alcoholic is truly anonymous. God knows you God loves you he cares for you he wants to help you with your problem and he can help you with your problem. One of my high school friends from south Alabama spent almost twenty years in prison in Huntsville, Texas, because one night in a drunken stupor he committed a crime that he wrote to me and told me that sober he would never in a million years have done. Out of every 12 people who take a drink 1 of those is going to become a problem alcoholic. It is potentially destructive.

2. Ask yourself, “Could it cause someone to stumble?”

Here’s the second question. Could it cause someone to stumble? You say, “I drink in moderation and that’s no problem.” It may not be a problem for you, but it really could be a problem for someone else, because there are only two kinds of people we interact with: Christians and non-Christians. If a non-Christian sees you drinking, what you are doing in essence is putting your stamp of approval on their lifestyle. You are not holding up the light of Jesus. You are losing your witness. But for a non-Christian it could have an even more damaging impact. I believe everyone in this room is probably admired by someone. It may be our children our grandchildren, somebody we work with but they know you are a Christian and when they look at you, Christian, and they see you doing that, they are going to think, “It’s okay for me to do that.” You may not be the 1 out of 12, but they may be one of those 1 out of 12 people who will have a problem with alcohol. Here’s the principle. Paul says in Romans 14:21, “It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother to fall.” Paul says, “In my own mind there is nothing wrong with eating meat offered to idols, I can do that.” He says, “In my mind there is nothing wrong with drinking wine, but if it is going to cause another brother to stumble, I just won’t do it.” Here’s the basic choice. You are either going to say, “I’m going to do what I want to do it’s my right to do it it’s not a sin and I will do it.” OR you will say, “I’m going to let my behavior be dictated by what kind of impact positively or negatively it’s going to have on other people.” This is basically a selfish attitude vs. an unselfish attitude. Is it going to cause someone to stumble?

3. Ask yourself, “Is it necessary?”

Here’s the third question. Is it necessary? Is there anybody in this room who says, “I *have* to drink”? There may be some of you that the doctor has prescribed a glass of wine every night because of blood pressure problems or something like that and for you yes you may say it is necessary. Paul wrote to Timothy and said, “You need to drink some wine for your stomach’s sake.” and you know why. They didn’t have a clean water supply. They had amoebic dysentery from the water, and he says, “You need to drink wine instead of water, because even mixed 3 to 1 the wine would have a cleansing and a purifying effect on the water. There may be parts of the world where there is not a clean source of water and wine may be the only choice. What about

here in America? We have all kinds of soft drinks and purified water. Is it really necessary? You may be saying, “It’s necessary for my job. I have to do it in my job.” Do you really? The majority of Americans, Christians and non-Christians alike, respect a person who chooses to abstain out of conviction when they do it in a non-judgmental kind of way. You’re not flaunting that you are “holier than thou,” you are not judging them and condemning them you are just choosing not to do it out of conviction. The majority of people respect that choice. Paul said, “It may be okay, but is it the wisest thing?” Look what he wrote there in 1 Corinthians 10:23. “‘Everything is permissible’—but not everything is beneficial.” Can you say your drinking is beneficial? “Everything is permissible, but not everything is constructive” Is it building yourself and others up?

4. Ask yourself, “Is it wise?”

Fourth and final question. Is it wise? You notice I did not ask the question, “Is it right or wrong?” because there is a bigger issue here and that *is it wise?* The whole context of Ephesians 5, is “Don’t be foolish, be wise.” and I think it’s the wisest choice to just say, “No.” Why? Because the Bible says in Proverbs 20:1 “Wine is a mocker and beer a brawler; whoever is led astray by them is not wise.” You may be saying, “I’ll never be led astray by them.” Can you be certain of that? God has always demanded higher standards for those who are fully and totally committed to him. I love playing in benefit golf tournaments around our area, because I like to get to know some people who are not in our church. I always enjoy the reaction of people when they find out I’m a Baptist preacher. Not long ago I was at one of these tournaments and they had beer flowing almost like water and this guy in my group didn’t know I was a preacher and he had already had two or three and he brought me one and said, “Here, have a beer.” I said, “No thanks, I don’t want one.” He said, “Man, how are you going to have any fun?” I thought, “Here’s a guy who feels like he has to have a few beers in him to have some fun.” I just shared with him I said, “I don’t need it to have fun. In fact,” I said, “about 25 years ago I took a drink and I haven’t been thirsty since.” He said, “What was that?” I said, “living water. That’s what Jesus said he said, ‘I can offer you living water and you will never thirst again.’” The bottom line is what’s the source of your joy? Are you trying to get the source of joy out of a bottle or any other drug or any other artificial source? Are you trying to use alcohol or any other kind of drug to escape reality? A Christian can face reality without fear. Those of you who have problems with alcohol I think the real problem is you have a hole in your heart and you think it is shaped like a bottle, but it is not. You have tried filling that void in your life with everything else, but it’s like trying to put a square peg in a round hole—it doesn’t fit. The emptiness you are trying to fill with alcohol or any other kind of substitute that emptiness is shaped like Jesus and only Jesus can satisfy your soul.

CONCLUSION

Have you ever heard of Mel Trotter? He was a derelict alcoholic living on the streets of Chicago. He had lost his job and abused his family. When his daughter died and was laying in the funeral home, he was craving a drink so badly and was out of money, he went into the funeral home and stole the shoes off her corpse. He went into a bar he frequented and laid those shoes down and told the bartender, “I don’t have any money, but would you trade me a drink for these shoes?” The bartender knew the situation and said, “Take those shoes back. Here’s a drink!” That’s how

desperate Mel Trotter had become. One day he went into a rescue mission on the streets of Chicago and he met Jesus Christ and was changed. He became a great evangelist and this is his testimony: “I tried everything. There wasn’t any program I hadn’t gone through. I had taken cure after cure; I had made resolution after resolution but just one glimpse of Jesus Christ and I have never wanted another drink from that instant to this. I was trying to fill that emptiness with something else and I discovered that Jesus is the only one who truly satisfies.”

OUTLINE

I. THE BIBLE DOESN’T CONDEMN THE USE OF WINE

II. THE BIBLE CLEARLY CONDEMNS DRUNKENNESS

III. “WINE” IN THE BIBLE ISN’T ALWAYS THE “WINE” OF TODAY

1. *Sikera* strong intoxicating drink
2. *Gleukos* new wine
3. *Oinos* mixed wine

Questions to guide your choice:

1. Is it potentially destructive?

2. Could it cause someone to stumble?

“It is better not to eat meat or drink or to do anything else that will cause your brother to fall.”
Romans 14:21

3. Is it necessary?

“Everything is permissible”—but not everything is beneficial. “Everything is permissible”—but not everything is constructive.” *1 Corinthians 10:23*

4. Is it wise?

“Wine is a mocker and beer a brawler; whoever is led astray by them is not wise.” *Proverbs 20:1*



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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes