

Ephesians 5:18—And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit,

And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, (5:18a)

God's will does not include getting "*drunk with wine*," for such behavior is classified as "*dissipation*." "*Dissipation*" means "wastefulness." Therefore, those who drink excessively waste time (which we are to "*make the most of*"—Ephesians 5:16), lose monetary resources (Proverbs 23:21), forfeit peace (Proverbs 23:29-32), abandon self-control (Proverbs 23:33-34), sacrifice reputation and cease respecting others (Proverbs 23:35), etc. These consequences result because drunkenness deceives a person into believing that his life is in order, when in essence he is playing the fool (Proverbs 20:1).

In Paul's day, drunkenness was a common practice among idol worshipers, for wine was employed to generate fleshly praise to a lifeless entity. These acts of the flesh were of no benefit to the Ephesians, especially while worshipping the true God, Jesus Christ.

Paul contrasts drunkenness (Ephesians 5:18a) with being "*filled with the Spirit*" (Ephesians 5:18b) after contrasting light with darkness (Ephesians 5:7-14) and wisdom with foolishness (Ephesians 5:15-17). Drunkenness is not to be confused with being "*filled with the Spirit*" (Ephesians 5:18), for it is counterfeit at best. It brings a false sense of peace and security while totally wasting the life of its possessor.

but be filled with the Spirit, (5:18b)

In contrasting drunkenness (Ephesians 5:18a) with being "*filled with the Spirit*" (Ephesians 5:18b), Paul was possibly thinking of the day of Pentecost, the birth of the church age—when the believers in Jerusalem were filled with the Holy Spirit, yet accused of being filled with "*sweet wine*" (Acts 2:5-13). At that time, of course, Paul was not a believer; but everyone in Jerusalem (including Paul) was very much aware of what had transpired.

At the point of salvation, New Testament believers not only receive the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9), but are also "*baptized*" (1Corinthians 12:13) and "*sealed*" (Ephesians 1:13) in Christ through the Person of the Spirit. Thus, by writing, "*be filled with the Spirit*" (Ephesians 5:18b), Paul is not encouraging his readers to accept Christ for salvation. They were already saved. He is exhorting them, rather, to allow the Spirit to control every aspect of their being. In fact, "*be filled*" means "to influence fully, possess fully, to flood, to diffuse throughout." The use of the present passive imperative, in fact, confirms that the New Testament believer is to continually live in a state of "being filled." Consequently, to be filled with the Spirit is to be empowered by the Spirit much like a ship is enabled by the wind in its sail. Hence, saints filled with the Spirit will not carry out the deeds of "*the flesh*" (Romans 8:5-7, 12-13). They will exhibit "*the fruit of the Spirit*" (Galatians 5:22-23, 25-26) and really live (Romans 8:13).

What must we do on our part to consistently experience the Spirit's filling? The answer is found in Colossians 3:16-22, where Paul essentially covers the same topics addressed in Ephesians 5:18-6:9—that of worship, giving thanks, and submission. The one variance is that Colossians 3:16-22 begins by stating, "*Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you*," while Ephesians 5:18-6:9 begins with, "*be filled with the Spirit*." Therefore, if we desire that the Spirit fill us to overflowing, we start by filling our minds with truth. Stephen confirms my point, for he, being "*full of the Holy Spirit*" (Acts 6:5; 7:55), spoke with breathtaking authority from the Scriptures while being condemned to death (Acts 7:1-60). God's Word generates remarkable results when etched on a mind committed to godliness and holiness. It allows the Spirit to fill such persons with "*love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control*" (Galatians 5:22-23), every fruit needed to endorse Whom they serve (as was the case with Stephen).

Clearly, the Spirit leads us to walk in the middle of God's "*will*" (Ephesians 5:17). The choice is ours as

to whether we will do so!