

# The Will Of The Lord

Ephesians 5:15-20

15 Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, 16 making the most of your time, because the days are evil. 17 So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. 18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, 19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; 20 always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father. (Ephesians 5:15-20 (NASB))

As we closed the message last week, I mentioned that while we had spent the majority of that message dealing with the human effects of being “drunk with wine”, this week I hoped to spend most of our time studying about the most important response to these words and that is, “What does God think about our becoming drunk with wine”. And we will do that today, beginning with these simple words in verse 17.

So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.  
(Ephesians 5:17 (NASB))

These words would be an appropriate instruction no matter the context that they be given. But here, we find God giving them in a very specific way for a very specific purpose.

. . . As we said in the message last week, there is a special kind of foolishness that takes control within the minds of most men and women when they dare cross over certain boundary limits in the use of alcohol, their senses becoming blinded and confused about the very obvious pitfalls and dangers that will surely befall them as they add one drink upon another.

Here in these words, God has just finished giving stern warnings about the wickedness and the evil that swirls round about us within the darkness of this world, saying to us that, “The days are evil”. And then immediately following those warnings, we find this very specific caution about becoming “drunk with wine”. And the two warnings are very obviously connected, “the days being evil” and our need to take care to not become “drunk with wine”.

As I considered this warning, the thought came to me that there are a thousand, even tens of thousands of other dangers that can befall us each day as we wander our way through this present darkness, but God chose to address this particular one, the “drinking of too much wine”.

Whenever that sort of thing takes place in these scriptures, I like to stop and remind myself of why God does it this way. And each time, I come back to the same answer. It is simply that He is our Father and we are His beloved children. And as a loving Father who can foresee the pitfalls that lie in the path of those who choose habits like this one, He wants to spare us the miseries that will surely become ours. And so He tells us, “My child”,

17 . . . do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. 18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit.  
(Ephesians 5:17-18)

Here, our loving Father has very straightforwardly put this caution right in front of us so that we can't miss it. And He fully expects you and me to just as straightforwardly deal with it.

I shared with you last week some of the miseries that I personally encountered as I faced my own drinking problems back in my younger years of life. And I confessed to you that, for myself, my desire to drink was brought on simply because I did not like myself very well. And although I was outwardly successful in my work and in my family life, the inner conflicts kept winning out. And I chose to deal with my inner conflicts simply by blinding my eyes and blurring my mind with alcohol; and again, no so much as for me to look like a stumbling drunk, but enough to bury my problems for a while.

And here is where God's use of the word “foolish” is so appropriate, because for a long time, I foolishly thought that what I was doing was helping me. But that was never so! My problems would always still be with me. Why would that be so? It was because the enemy that I was combating was “within my own soul”. And you can't drink those enemies away.

And in those days, I also came to realize that I was not unique. The same was true for most all the people I observed with the same kind of drinking habits. They also battled with “enemies from within”.

Right now, I have a close personal friend who, though she is a very committed believer in Christ, still struggles with the pitfalls of excessive drinking, and she has for most of her adult life. Every so often, she foolishly finds herself reaching for a drink to drive away the “enemy within”, to the point that she teeters at the brink of losing her job, her family and her freedom.

May we at this point ask ourselves the question, “What, and who, are those enemies that lurk within and around our souls?” Are they, as the secular world would suggest

just human emotional problems, depression and the like, brought on by past mistreatments and abuse? And also, what is the real role that the alcohol plays within a person's physical body and within their mental and emotional capacities as they begin to add one drink upon another.

I have come to believe without reservation that such personal struggles and difficulties are brought on in almost every case by the same enemy that we have been battling with ever since the beginning of time, those same forces of evil that we have been talking about that lurk within the present darkness that swirls about us. The scripture proofs that confirm that conclusion are found in Ephesians chapter 6. Listen to these words in verse 12,

12 . . . we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. (Ephesians 6:12 (NKJV))

And may I again remind us that these demons spoken about here are not the Hollywood version of demons! These are real, very, very real and they are clever; and they can attack from any direction and can bring damage to any part of our life, physical, mental and emotional . . . our heart, soul, mind and spirit.

We have only to observe the old servant Job to see that that is true. Recall that the devil attacked and killed Job's family through the use of a strong windstorm, he destroyed Job's wealth through pillaging hordes of thieves, he turned Job's friends against him, and even Job's wife told him to curse God and die.

So may I say, convincing you or me that life is a mess, that we ought to be depressed, and that we ought to drink ourselves into oblivion is "no big chore" for the clever demons within the darkness.

And consider their "weapon of choice" spoken about here in our scripture passage, that of "alcohol". As I studied these words of scripture, I began to ponder the secular expression, "Wine and Spirits". That is the familiar wording that we find on signage outside of a liquor store and in liquor advertisements. Have you ever stopped to wonder why the secular world would use that expression for alcohol, that of "spirits"? I have wondered and so I researched the answer.

The etymology of the word "spirits", as it relates to alcohol, comes from an Arabic word "al-kuhl" which was the name of a "body-eating spirit". When the Arab alchemists' who were experimenting with brewing whisky ingested the alcohol, their senses deadened and so they named the substance according to its "body-taking" qualities, calling it

“alcohol”. And it has developed over time that the term "spirits" became synonymous with alcohol.

When we look at the origin and definition of the word “spirit” in our scriptures, we find that it comes from the Greek word “pneuma” which is translated as “wind,” “breath” or “spirit”, depending upon its context. As to man, the word “spirit” means the “essence of who a person is”, not his body nor other physical attributes, but rather the mystical, unseen essence of who a person is.

A question . . . could the alchemists who first discovered the distillation of alcohol have been truly correct in their estimation of what was taking place? Recall the definition, that the alcohol, the "al-kuhl", is a “body-eating spirit”. Could God have chosen to reveal a warning to those who would drink distilled alcohol that a “different spirit” than their own might be introduced into their mind, body and soul?

Am I suggesting that everyone who takes a drink is influenced or even possessed by a demon? Not at all, but I am suggesting that the demonic world can be as close as our “elbow” eager to add their influence into the events of our daily life. And alcohol, as a “weapon of choice” is very effective at influencing and even destroying the lives of those who drink to excess.

Another question . . . can we then blame such behaviors as excessive drinking on the demons that are at work in our lives? Unfortunately, we cannot get off that easily. Yes, those demons will have their own accountability for their misdeeds and they will suffer in hell for the temptations they bring to us. But as for you and me, we are always fully personally accountable for the deeds we do. And that is especially so for you and me who are saved. And do recall that this Book of Ephesians is written to believers. So these words are primarily for us who are already fully saved, but still get caught up under the control of alcohol.

Again, the question that we first began this message with, “what does God think about our surrendering ourselves over to being drunk with wine?” Remember that from the first moment you and I receive Christ as our Savior, we become the temple of God’s Holy Spirit. In the most real sense that we could ever imagine, the Spirit of God really does take up residence within our spirit and our heart, and we become His Temple.

19 do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, 20 for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (ESV))

This is what God thinks about our bringing another “spirit” into our body which is a “temple of God”. Moses’ two sons defiled God’s temple and they were immediately killed. King Uzziah, did a similar thing and he was immediately struck with leprosy. That warning again . . .

19 do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, 20 for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (ESV))

God does not want you or me to bring a defiling spirit, a “body-eating spirit” into His temple in us. There is no wonder that we are almost immediately struck with miseries as we get drunk. And for so many of us who are prone to addiction, our life immediately begins to go from bad to worse.

Folks, as verse 17 commands,

So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. (Ephesians 5:17 (NASB))

And then verse 18,

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

Being “drunk with wine” truly does bring another “spirit” into the temple of God, defiling the holiness that He has put within us. And God will not permit such things to take place. He hates it and it is a wonder that He does not simply strike us down. But true to His character, He is always first a loving Father. And instead of wiping us off the face of the earth, He says to us, “be filled with the Spirit”, be filled with Himself!

Please do also note carefully that this is a command, verse 18

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

When God gives us a command, it means that you and I have some responsibility for the doing of what He is commanding us to do, and here it is to be “filled with His Spirit”. Too often, we think that His filling us with His Spirit is something that He alone must do. And there is truth in that understanding. But these words are clear and plain, you and I also have some of the responsibility. How that works, I confess that I do not know, but the simple truth is that you and I must join with God’s Holy Spirit in His coming into and filling our spirit with His Spirit.

What is it that I must do, that you must do? A few days ago, in one of the devotions given by Oswald Chambers in his book “My Utmost for His Highest”, he used the occasion of Abraham needing to deal with the “natural”, Ishmael, before the “supernatural”, the promise concerning Isaac. In our case, the “natural” being our desire for alcohol, and the “supernatural” being our need to be “filled with the Spirit”.

In that devotion, Oswald Chambers said . . .

Abraham had to offer up Ishmael before he offered up Isaac (see Genesis 21:8-14). Some of us are trying to offer up spiritual sacrifices to God before we have sacrificed the natural. The only way we can offer a spiritual sacrifice to God is to “present [our] bodies a living sacrifice...” (Romans 12:1). Sanctification means more than being freed from sin. It means the deliberate commitment of myself to the God of my salvation, and being willing to pay whatever it may cost.

If we do not sacrifice the natural to the spiritual, the natural life will resist and defy the life of the Son of God in us and will produce continual turmoil. This is always the result of an undisciplined spiritual nature. We go wrong because we stubbornly refuse to discipline ourselves physically, morally, or mentally. We excuse ourselves by saying, “Well, I wasn’t taught to be disciplined when I was a child.” Or some other such excuse.

God seems often to not intervene in our natural life as long as we continue to pamper and to gratify it. But once we are willing to do our part, then God spares nothing in heaven and earth to give us all the help we need.

Folks . . . These are God’s instructions to you and me when we find ourselves giving in to the desire to drink too much alcohol and to become “drunk with wine”. We are to sacrifice those desires to God. And no . . . sacrifice is never easy nor is it painless. In fact sacrifice is ruthlessly painful. Sacrifice means putting to death the thing that we are sacrificing up to God, in this case, our desire to drink. But you and I must, at all costs, keep that “other spirit” out of the temple of God.

So then, this is the answer to the question we first asked our self, that of “what does God think about our drinking”. This is the response He expects and even demand of us. Are you willing to make that sacrifice? If you are a child of God, then your body is His Holy Temple, and you really have no choice in this matter. May we surrender ourselves to Him and

17 . . . understand what the will of the Lord is. 18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, (Ephesians 5:17-18)