

Exegetical Notes – Ephesians 5:18-20

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Ephesians 5:18-20

Verses 18-19a

¹⁸ *Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit,* ¹⁹ *speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit.*

- Although this section of Scripture is set out in modern translations as separate from what goes before it, it is, most likely, the conclusion to chapter 5:1-17. Ephesians 5:22, which is marked as the beginning of another new section by modern translators, is clearly not the beginning of a new section of Scripture as will be explained in the exegetical notes for next week. Sometimes, the chapter and verse markings are helpful; sometimes they are not. Remember they are not part of the sacred text.
- Here, Paul is still speaking, as he has been, about how Christians behave. He admonishes them not to get drunk. He does not order them to abstain entirely from strong drink. This would have been very difficult to do in a place where water was often unsafe to drink. Wine was the ordinary beverage served at most meals. The admonition is against getting drunk. Paul says that Christians should not get drunk; that is, they should not allow themselves to lose control of themselves because of drinking too much wine. This could be interpreted to mean that Christians should not use any substance that causes them to get “high.”
- Instead, Christians should be “filled with the Holy Spirit.” He has told us that all believers are “sealed” with the Holy Spirit, (1:13-14, 4:30). But being “filled with the Spirit” refers to being under the control of the Spirit as one is under the control of whatever substance gets him “high.” As one loses control of himself to that substance, so Christians should seek to be under the control of the Holy Spirit.

- This, being “filled with” or “under the control” of the Holy Spirit will cause a Christian to speak to other Christians in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Psalms are poems like those found in the book of Psalms. Hymns are formal songs composed by others that are used by the church to worship God. Some of these are found in the Book of Psalms. Some are found in hymn books. Spiritual songs are new songs written by others or made up by the singer which praise God. What is clear is that the Spirit causes utterance. When filled with the Spirit, one cannot be silent. The utterance is not speech; it is poetic and musical. Being filled with the Spirit causes one to praise God.

Verses 19b-20

Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord,²⁰ always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

- When Christians are filled with the Holy Spirit, they sing and make music. To not allow yourself to sing with the Church is to maintain self-control as opposed to spirit control.
- This music comes from the heart and is to please the Lord.
- It is the sound of thanksgiving to God for everything. Even in the hard times and in the moments of trial, Christians sing to thank God for what He has done.
- This singing is done in “the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is holy and is done to give God glory.

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