

Under the Influence

Sermon by Andy Sochor

Text: Ephesians 5:18

Being “under the influence” typically refers to the use of alcohol. In our text, Paul mentioned alcohol, but he also mentioned another influence that can affect our behavior – the Spirit. Paul contrasted them because they both affect our behavior, but in different ways. Alcohol influences us toward the direction of “debauchery” (NIV, ESV). What is this? And what behavior is classified as this?

Under the Influence of the Spirit

- We are to be led by the Spirit (Romans 8:14; Galatians 5:18, 22-23, 25) – this is done through the word that the Spirit revealed (1 Corinthians 2:10-13; 2 Timothy 3:16-17)
- We are to glorify God in our bodies (1 Corinthians 6:19-20) – our bodies are a temple of the Spirit; we glorify God through obedience and carrying out His will (John 17:4)

Under the Influence of Alcohol

- We set our minds on fleshly desires (Romans 8:5-6) – we fulfill the lusts of the flesh (Ephesians 2:3); alcohol loosens our inhibitions (Proverbs 23:33)
- We act in a way that is an insult to God (cf. Hebrews 10:29) – through this behavior, our bodies are dishonored (cf. Romans 1:24)

Producing the Same Effect

- It is possible to live AS IF we are under the influence of alcohol (lusts of the flesh, insult to God, bodies dishonored) without alcohol – context of verses above (Hebrews 10:29; Romans 1:24) do not mention alcohol
- Being drunk LEADS TO dissipation (NASB, NKJV), debauchery (NIV, ESV), reckless living (CSB) – what does this look like?

The Behavior of the World

- Peter contrasted two different mindsets (1 Peter 4:1-2) – one fulfills “the will of God”; the other fulfills “the lusts of men”
- The world pursues the “excesses of dissipation” (1 Peter 4:4) – what are these?
 - Sensuality and lusts – “lasciviousness” (KJV); using or presenting our bodies in an unbecoming way; we are to possess our bodies in sanctification and honor (1 Thessalonians 4:3-5); avoid immodest dress, most forms of dancing, suggestive or filthy language, etc.
 - Drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties – all refer to alcohol consumption; covers the spectrum from complete intoxication, wild behavior, and casual

consumption of alcohol; the NT authorizes the medicinal use of alcohol (1 Timothy 5:23); otherwise, it is to be avoided

- Abominable idolatries – pagan religious practices (2 Corinthians 6:16); avoid man-made religious practices (Colossians 2:20-23; Matthew 15:8-9)
- Christians do not engage in these behaviors – the time is “already past” for us to do these things; non-Christians notice the difference; do people notice that we are different?

Conclusion

- As Christians, we are to be filled with the Spirit, led by the Spirit, and walk by the Spirit – this happens as we live our lives according to the word of God (inspired by the Spirit)
- This means we need to avoid living as the world – under the influence of fleshly desires; our conduct needs to be different from the world; if this is not noticeable, why not?