

What is Spiritual Drunkenness?

by Tony Warren

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hat is spiritual drunkenness? People can be drunk in many different ways, not merely through wine or strong drink. For example, we can be drunk with giddiness, ambition, passion, fame, grief, life, desire, vanity, success or power. But the question we are dealing with today is, "what is spiritual Drunkenness as it relates to Christianity?" It most certainly is not the nonsense of some churches purporting to be drunk or slain in the Spirit. That unbiblical phenomenon of Charismatic or Pentecostal teaching has no place within orthodox Christianity. What we are going to address in this article is the definition of spiritual drunkenness, which is the result of sin. In scripture, God often likens false doctrines and teachings to wine because they cause people to lack sound judgment, impair their ability to think clearly or act righteously. If you've ever been intoxicated from drinking wine or strong drinks, then the parallels between the mind under the influence (*of Satan*) likened to being spiritually drunk makes perfect sense. Because like wine, unrighteousness may make you feel good for the moment, but ultimately it has severe consequences. By contrast, spiritual sobriety is the state of the mind ruled by Christ's spirit, and it brings eternal pleasure in the truth, as opposed to what makes us feel good ([1st Kings 22:8](#); [Isaiah 30:10](#)) for the moment. Those who choose to drink the wine of spiritual corruption, may joy for the moment but the wrath of God abides upon them. So drunkenness, as it relates to Christianity, is often cryptic language painting a portrait of the delusion brought about by sin.

Revelation 17:1-2

- "And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters:
- With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication."

This wine that makes kings drunk is the seduction of false teachings. In the spirit of disobedience ([Ephesians 5:5-7](#)), denial and compromise, they are impaired, unable to make sound judgments.

As a result they forsake the living God for the false gods that will condone their debauchery. This seduction by the false church is cryptically spoken

of as the kings committing fornication through spiritual wine that impairs their judgment. Her wine or doctrines cause them to stumble, as they are enamored with vain philosophies and worldly ideas. God equates this attachment to her by those who reign as kings to fornication and idolatry because in essence they have forsaken their God for the affection of another ruler. Doctrine that is false, and yet is professed to be from Christ, must obviously be from a false Christ (*idolatry*) of a false church. Kings who go after another church are likened to practicing fornication. For that which is joined to an harlot is one body ([1st Corinthians 6:15-17](#)), not two. Thus there can be no agreement of God's people with the false church. We are either one, or the other. This joining with unbelievers who profess to be of God, is nothing short of spiritual harlotry, which the church has been warned against time and time again. It is a confusion of spirits.



2nd Corinthians 6:14-17

- "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?"
- And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?
- And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.
- Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,"

Believers are to separate themselves from infidels or non-believers, because they should not exist in the same body or building, nor serve or worship the same God. What agreement, understanding or compact does the Temple of the living God have with a house of idolatry? There simply cannot be any. Throughout scripture (*including the Old Testament*) God equates this seduction of His people by the unsaved, to spiritual fornication or harlotry.

Isaiah 1:20-21

- "But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.
- How is the faithful city become an harlot! it was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers."

Here God speaks of the rebellion of the great Holy city Jerusalem, which as a wife was covenanted/promised to be faithful to her husband, becoming a harlot and given to meaningless tributes and vain offerings in iniquity ([Isaiah 1:13](#)). They are rebuked and told to do well, seek sound judgment and relieve the oppressed. The word harlot there

means they were committing spiritual fornication or whoredoms by their iniquity and refusal to hold onto sound judgment in God's word. Likewise today, the doctrines wherein Christians are deceived and seduced by the unsaved in an idolatrous church, is the wine or source of her fornication. This wine is what makes those kings seduced by her, spiritually inebriated.

One of the biggest draws of some of the modern liberal churches is what is euphemistically called their "powerful worship experiences." But it is really nothing more than a "feel-good" religion that unapologetically compromises the gospel by leaving off judgment and allowing exceptions for every law that God has instituted. As a result, many of these church services are packed with people who merely want to feel good in their carnal living. They feature lively, rhythmic and worldly music, great stirring philosophical sermons and promises of God's unrequited love to all. The majority of people leave these services self-justified and feeling spiritually high, being intoxicated and under the influence of the spirit of delusion. The true purpose of the Christian ministry is not to justify unrighteousness, it is to sound judgment and a call to repentance, faith and holy living. It is not to proclaim peace, where there is no peace.

Jeremiah 8:11-12

- "For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace.
- Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore shall they fall among them that fall: in the time of their visitation they shall be cast down, saith the LORD."

There was no peace with God as these ministers had claimed, and that holds true today as well. It is the spiritual warfare they experience, where they are offended by the true Christ and enamored with the false one. The point being, the deception of the evil one is so great that many will be impaired and deceived. Because they cannot remain spiritually sober in the Spirit of obedience, when they freely drink of the wine of deception. We have been warned before of the virtue of faithfulness, and the strong delusion.

Matthew 24:24-25

- "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.
- Behold, I have told you before."

What is Spiritual Drunkenness? It is this deception, this deceitful handling of the word wherein many justify their actions. I think it can best be described as a disjointed mind-set of lawlessness, the lack of spiritual stability, focus and direction. The similitude of physical drunkenness, as when their words become unclear, obtuse, confused and disjointed. They may be in a spiritual stupor, unaware and deluded to think that what they are declaring is logical and should be understood. Their eyes become heavy where they are weary or sleepy. Their ability to think rationally and coherently is seriously impaired. They have little stability on their feet so that they stagger out of balance, without spiritual equilibrium. For example, see how God characterizes spiritual drunkenness in Isaiah chapter nineteen.

Isaiah 19:13-14

- "The princes of Zoan are become fools, the princes of Noph **are deceived; they have also seduced Egypt**, even they that are the stay of the tribes thereof.
- The LORD hath mingled **a perverse spirit** in the midst thereof: and they have **caused Egypt to err in every work thereof, as a drunken man** staggereth in his vomit."

This perverse spirit (*the spirit of antichrist*) among them have made them as fools or simple-minded to err or be deceived. They are seduced or caused to go astray as by a wanton woman and made drunken that they stagger oblivious to their error. Note that it is God that is sending a strong delusion where what people perceive is not the truth. Of God's Spirit the elect know the truth and they reject the error of the wine of false doctrines. This is spoken of as "Spiritual Sobriety." The Christian is commanded to have a sober mind ([Titus 2:6-7](#)) revealing a pattern of uncorrupt, unadulterated doctrine. The opposite of spiritual sobriety or judiciousness is spiritual drunkenness or foolishness. To be sober minded is characterized by being spiritually wide awake that they may observe what is in the light of the day. But drunkenness is characterized by being spiritually blind or asleep in the irrational somnolence of the darkness of night. In fact God equates this spiritual drunkenness to the drunken who sleep at night.

1st Thessalonians 5:5-8

- "Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.
- Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.
- For they that sleep **sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night.**
- But let us, **who are of the day, be sober**, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation."

The night is the time when people cease work and sleep, and also when they usually get drunk. It is the time when there is little clarity or labor because there is no light. Consequently, God equates those of the night with the unsaved, and Christians as children of the day who work in spiritual clarity and sobriety.

Occasion	Effect	Equated With	Context	Result
Day	Light	➔	Spiritually Awake	Spiritually Sober
Night	Darkness	➔	Spiritually Asleep	Spiritually Drunk

So what is Spiritual Sobriety? Well, it is the exact opposite of spiritual drunkenness. It is manifested in those who have the Spirit to see things in the divine light revealing their true nature. God's children are not governed by our own carnality or the pleasures of worldliness, but by the law of God in selflessness, denial, modesty, and mortification of the flesh. True spiritual sobriety in the child of God reveals stability and soundness of mind. This illustrated in their walk in the light, while spiritual drunkenness is illustrated in those who stumble in the night to find constancy or steadiness. This unsteadiness and blindness is what characterizes those without the light of Christ.

Job 12:25

- "They grope in the dark without light, and he maketh them to stagger like a

drunken man."

Spiritual drunkenness characterizes the vacillation, insecurity, uncertainty and instability of those consumed with the cares and lusts of this world so that they are grasping at straws in their refusal to receive the truth. The evil spirit rules in the lives of those deceived so that their desire is to serve themselves, justify wrongdoing and walk in the path of the world. In their state of spiritual bewilderment, disorientation and confusion, they are duped to believe that they can have both the world, and Christ. In 2nd Thessalonians we are encouraged against this by putting on the armor of God for protection, and that is directly attributed to our spiritual sobriety ([2nd Corinthians 6:7](#), [Ephesians 11:11-13](#)) wherein (*of the Spirit*) we are made "aware" and cognizant of the truth over false teachings. It is only in the armor of Christ that we have knowledge of darkness, and are conscious of the wiles of the Devil, that we are not deceived.

Romans 13:11-14

- "And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.
- The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.
- Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.
- ***But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.***

The truth, revealed in spiritual sobriety, is secured by the Spirit of God's armor, that God's people are kept from the power of darkness in spiritual drunkenness. In God's vernacular, Spiritual sobriety is the quality of being wise, serious and thoughtful concerning scriptures, that we not fulfill the carnal lusts of this world. By contrast, the spiritual drunken are foolish and believe that they have the truth, and that is precisely because they have been seduced, that they are under the influence to believe that lie.

2nd Thessalonians 2:9-12

- "Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,
- And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.
- And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:
- That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

This strong delusion that results from the straying from orthodoxy is spiritual drunkenness. It is brought about by professing Christians accepting lies, as the truth. Just as a drunk is deluded to believe what is not true of himself, his behavior and the world around him, so those who are spiritually drunk are deluded to have pleasure in what is unrighteous. They are seduced of the evil spirit to believe what is unlawful, is lawful. They ultimately do not have the Spirit of truth to guide them or reveal the snares of the Devil.

John 16:13-15

- "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for

he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.

- He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.
- All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you."

We do not discern deception of ourselves, but because of the Spirit of truth within us. This is the Spirit of the soberness mind, the awareness in Christ Jesus wherein we do not fall into the snare of spiritual darkness. Without this Spirit, evil "reigns" and causes worldly intoxication, where the unfaithful hold the truth in unrighteousness ([Romans 1:18](#)) because the word is systematically degraded and obstructed. Spiritual sobriety keeps God's word because it is a Spirit led way of living wherein we are lawful, self-aware, humble and personally accountable to preach the whole counsel of God to all nations. It manifests itself in truth and power revealing what it takes to be a disciple of Christ. This in stark contrast to the benign and anemic spirit that pervades the church today. The mind that has pleasure in unrighteousness is of the flesh or carnal, whether in the church or out of it. It results in the darkened mind of spiritual drunkenness that leads to death.

Romans 8:5-8

- "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.
- For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.
- Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.
- So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God."

Christians are obligated not to indulge in the intoxicating wine of sin, because it induces spiritual drunkenness. It causes a lack of vision, unsteadiness, uncertainty of life and a mind scattered and inebriated with the world view. To be sober (*sound*) of mind is to have spiritual control of oneself, one's impulses and desires, so that they accept the path of lawfulness and repentance.

Isaiah 28:7

- "But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink ***are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink***, they are swallowed up of wine, ***they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment.***"

Again the wine is equated with sin, and drunkenness equated to the results thereof. Sin causes man to go out of the way, to stagger and wander out of the path of righteousness. To reel back and forth (*or to and fro*) characterizes the inability to find stability or to walk a straight path because of that sin. So then, whom shall one teach knowledge, and to whom shall one make to understand doctrine? In spiritual sobriety we hold fast to the truth that we turn away from the inebriating nature of wine. God seals us that we remain spiritually aware and watchful at all times, that we are not overcome of the Devil.

1st Peter 5:8-9

- "***Be sober, be vigilant***; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour;

- Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world."

Peter encourages us to remain faithful, vigilant in holding to sound Christian teachings, even in the face of the conflict with the spirit of this world. Because in Christ, we are more than conquerors and possess the fruit of the Holy Spirit in sobriety. It manifests itself in a spiritual control over our natural desire for worldliness. As contrasted with the works of the spirit of this world, which reveals itself in the exact opposite, which is spiritual drunkenness. God's people are called to be filled with the Holy Spirit of God ([Ephesians 5:18](#)) as opposed to wine, and thus be under His influence that we walk in spiritual sobriety (*spiritual self-restraint*) that we will not live carnally ([Galatians 5:16-17](#)), but according to the will of God. This sobriety is of the Spirit of Christ that we are not overcome of the allurements of the world. The unsound mind that is ruled by the body is in spiritual drunkenness, which is the plague of those who are unsaved.

Psalms 107:27-28

- "They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits' end.
- Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses."

Here drunkenness is seen as those who are unstable upon their legs, and in their anxiety they are unable to use their minds properly, just as an intoxicated man. In this spiritually drunken state, their minds and reasoning fail them. They are at their wits end, without understanding, knowledge and all sagacity gone, they are compelled to confess God alone as their deliverer. The point in this Psalm being, this drunkenness is equated to being unsound spiritually and unable to find relief anywhere but the Lord God. It is only in Him that we find spiritual sobriety.

1st Peter 1:13

- "Wherefore gird up ***the loins of your mind, be sober***, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;"

Girding ([Luke 12:35-36](#)) represents our earnest clothing or dressing, the preparedness of our thoughts that we exercise our minds (*mental prowess*) to be resolute, constantly prepared in spiritual sobriety (*awake, attentive, steadfast*) in His hope, even unto the end. The faithful Christian views his circumstances in light of the truth of the word of faith, and therefore he sees the world differently than those who do not take this sober approach.

Isaiah 24:20-21

- "The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall, and not rise again.
- And it shall come to pass in that day, that the LORD shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth."

When Isaiah speaks of the earth, he refers to the inhabitants thereof and their unsettled position with God that they have no firm foundation. In their transgression they have no command of themselves, just as a person that is drunk with wine. But they are intoxicated with sin that they do the will of man rather than the will of God. We are told that they shall be punished for it.

One might ask, "What is the difference between the two?" Well, one of the characteristics of a genuinely healthy, sober spiritual life is temperance. This of course cultivates direction and soundness of mind, and it nourishes an intimate relationship with God. Thus we transfer everything of value so that even our entire meaning and existence revolves around God. By contrast, Spiritual Drunkenness is the cultivation of selfishness and unsoundness of mind, and it is the revelation of a relationship with the spirit of evil that brings the wrath of God. The addicting, mind boggling inebriating power of sin will not go away without Christ being resident within you.

Having this knowledge of the nature of the seductive wine of sin, let us go forth as resolute, to be spiritually sober or awake, rather than drunken and asleep. Let us be spiritually lit as a light in the world, rather than groping around in darkness, turned by every wind of doctrine and unable to find the sure way. Let us not be intoxicated with worldly priorities, but clear headed to wait upon the Lord in realization that this is not our home, we are strangers and pilgrims ([Hebrews 11:13](#); [1st Peter 2:11](#)) just passing through. Let us be sober and clear minded enough to understand that in the real sense we are foreigners here, and our true home is in heaven ([Ephesians 2:5-6](#)). The soberness of sound, orthodox worship brings a clarity and security that you just won't find in unfaithful doctrines. The call of 1st Peter 5:8 is to be of sober Spirit, that we are not influenced by the spirit of lawlessness, worldliness or carnality. If we are not spiritually attentive, our ability to discern the truth is greatly impaired. While with spiritual sobriety, we find profound insight into the human mind and heart that is worth more than gold, opening doors that you didn't even know existed. We pray that the merciful Lord be gracious to keep us in spiritual sobriety, that we are always moving toward a grace filled, Spirit empowered Christian life.

Amen!

Peace,

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