

17. Alcohol

January 31, 2010

I believe that the study of the Book of Proverbs has been a tremendous edification for all of us if you've been faithfully following and studying.

There were some areas that caused to cringe because the Word of God was hitting way too close to home. Without a doubt, we know and should change our lifestyles and whatever we've been doing in order to obey the Lord's instructions for us.

This morning study's is no exception. As a matter of fact, it might be more uncomfortable to some of you than any other topics we've been studying the last 16 weeks.

There are a lot of different opinions regarding whether Christians are allowed to drink alcohol or not. Instead of adding my opinion in the midst, let's see what the Lord says in His Word, the Bible, since the Bible has the final authority and absolute truth because it is, after all, the voice of God.

A. WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT DRINKING?

Proverbs 20:1 Wine is a mocker, Strong drink is a brawler, And whoever is led astray by it is not wise.

Proverbs 23:29-35 Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has complaints? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? 30 Those who linger long at the wine, Those who go in search of mixed wine. 31 Do not look on the wine when it is red, When it sparkles in the cup, When it swirls around smoothly; 32 At the last it bites like a serpent, And stings like a viper. 33 Your eyes will see strange things, And your heart will utter perverse things. 34 Yes, you will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea, Or like one who lies at the top of the mast, saying: 35 "They have struck me, but I was not hurt; They have beaten me, but I did not feel it. When shall I awake, that I may seek another drink?"

Isaiah 28:7-8 But they also have erred through wine, And through intoxicating drink are out of the way; The priest and the prophet have erred through intoxicating drink, They are swallowed up by wine, They are out of the way through intoxicating drink; They err in vision, they stumble in judgment. 8 For all tables are full of vomit and filth; No place is clean.

At this point, some of you may want to tell me, "Yo preacher, all of those verses are from the OT. But we are living in the day of God's grace." You know, if I could have a dollar for each comment like that for last twenty three years with the Lord, I would be a millionaire by now. However, since you are thinking that, let's see what the NT says.

Luke 21:34 "But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly.

1 Corinthians 6:10-11 nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

Galatians 5:19-21 Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, 20 idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, 21 envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand,

just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

By now do you get a strong feeling that the Bible is kinda against for Christians to drink alcohol? You got that right, bubba.

B. ISN'T THERE SOMEWHERE IN THE BIBLE THAT IT IS OK TO DRINK?

I can feel that some of you still are thinking that there must be somewhere in the Bible that it is OK to drink wine or beer now and then as long as you do not get drunk as a skunk. And you just remembered, "Oh yeah, didn't Jesus perform His first miracle by turning water to wine? And apostle Paul said to his protégé Timothy that he should drink some wine for his stomach's sake. Yeah, what about that, you dumb preacher?"

Well, I am so glad that you remember those two portions of the NT. Before we go there to study, please allow me to explain about the wine of the first century.

Biblical wine was fermented but diluted 3 to 1. Even Jewish Talmud which is the collection of ancient Rabbinic writings consisting of the Mishnah and the Gemara, constituting the basis of religious authority in Orthodox Judaism, states that Passover wine was 3 parts water to 1 part of wine. In other words, it was pretty much grape juice that they drank as their daily usage. At 3 to 1 ratio it took 22 glasses of NT wine to get drunk!

Since you were thinking about apostle Paul's advice to Timothy in 1 Timothy 5, we should look into the reason for his comment. Don't you think?

1 Timothy 5:23 No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent infirmities.

It was and still is a well known fact that the water from Israel and the place where Timothy pastored – Ephesus, an Ancient Greek City which is located in modern day Turkey, is not good for drinking straight from their fountains or springs, because it is bitter and causes stomach problems. So this aging apostle was giving an advice to his spiritual son Timothy to add some grape paste to make a diluted wine to prevent any future stomach illness. It was basically a means to purify and sweeten water.

Then, I have a question to ask to those who think that the reason why they drink wine or beer is based on 1 Timothy 5:23, we don't have bitter water coming out from our kitchen faucet and we can go buy cases of bottled water from grocery stores any time, "Would you reconsider your reason for drinking alcohol?"

Of course, I still need to talk about the first miracle Jesus did in Canaan:

John 2:9-10 When the master of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and did not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom. 10 And he said to him, "Every man at the beginning sets out the good wine, and when the guests have well drunk, then the inferior. You have kept the good wine until now!"

According to the Jewish custom, the best wine is considered the first portion of the grape liquid that comes out when it was pressed before the fermentation begins. That is what this master of the feast recognized.

C. STILL NOT CONVINCED?

Some of you still think and insist in your heart, "I know what the Bible says. But what is wrong with having a glass of wine or two with my meal or having a cold beer at the end of a hot summer afternoon? What kind of sin is that?" For you, I have 20 additional reasons from the Bible:

- 1) It slows the thinking process. – Prov. 31:4-5
 - 2) It makes one dizzy. – Job. 12:25
 - 3) It is associated with self-centeredness. – Hab. 2:5
 - 4) It causes sickness. – Jer. 25:27
 - 5) It causes forgetfulness. – Prov. 31:6-7
 - 6) It produces delirious dreams. – Prov. 23:33
 - 7) It results in sleepiness. – Gen. 9:20-25
 - 8) It produces complacency and laziness. – Zeph. 1:12
 - 9) It numbs one's feelings. – Prov. 23:31-35
 - 10) It leads to poverty. – Prov. 21:17
 - 11) It leads to brokenness. – Jer. 23:9
 - 12) It results in sadness and depression. – Isa. 16:9-10
 - 13) It causes sorrow. – Prov. 23:29-30
 - 14) It produces blackouts. – Gen. 19:33-35
 - 15) It leads to immorality. – Joel 3:3
 - 16) It encourages sexual perversion. – Hab. 2:15
 - 17) It results in guilt. – Isa. 24:20
 - 18) It causes injuries. – Prov. 23:35
 - 19) It can result in insanity. – Jer. 51:7
 - 20) It makes one vulnerable to his enemies. – 1 Sam. 13:28
- If you'd like, I can give you more.

D. IT IS DEADLY, DANGEROUS, ADDICTIVE, UNHEALTHY AND COSTLY

This time I am going to mention what the drinking alcohol does to individuals and to our society.

Drinking alcohol causes more deaths than any other drug – about 200,000 per year. It is responsible for 70% of drownings and chokings; 30% of all suicides are alcohol related; 20% of all airplane crashes are alcohol related; 50% of all murderers are drunk when they kill; 50% of all fire deaths are alcohol related; It causes about a third of all traffic deaths.

It is involved in both spouse and child abuse, mental and physical diseases. 45% of the homeless are alcoholics. I know this from my inner city homeless ministry experience.

There are 16 million alcohol addicts in the US. 77% of high schoolers have used alcohol; 29% of high schoolers drink heavily and when they go to college, it just gets worse; 44% of 8th graders drink.

1 in 10 social drinkers will become alcoholics! Now I have another question for you: Would you get on an airplane if there was a 10% chance it would crash? It is a little better odd than playing a Russian Roulette with a revolver and one bullet inside.

It is the number three health problem. It causes liver problems, heart attacks, increases the chances of cancer 3-6 times, the number three cause of birth defects.

Total cost of alcohol abuse which comes from medical services, loss of future earnings by death, fires and crimes is over \$184 billion. Tax revenue from alcohol is only \$18 billion. By the way, this stat is from the 2005 US government.

Our children are imitators of us. If you drink, they will learn to drink when they grow up or even before. Would you like that?

E. IT MAKES OTHERS TO STUMBLE

If you consider yourself spiritually mature or involved in any ministry and still drink beer or wine, I suggest you to stop drinking immediately for other people's sake.

Romans 14:21 It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak.

1 Corinthians 8:10-13 For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those things offered to idols? 11 And because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? 12 But when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. 13

Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.

You might be able to handle yourself fine with a couple of bottles of beer or a couple glasses of wine, but a brother or sister who was a former alcoholic cannot. For their sake, you need to give up. That is denying yourself and carrying your cross because you are a follower of Jesus Christ.

F. WHAT DO THE UNBELIEVERS AROUND YOU THINK CHRISTIANS SHOULD DO?

The stereo type of unbelievers' thought for a Christian is no cussing, no smoking, no chewing, no lying and no drinking. Actually, they are right that it is what we should do. You may say, "There is no place in the Bible about no smoking." You are right, but it does not bring honor to the Lord by destroying your body which was given by Him to you with smoking, either. I believe that you know the right answer for that.

G. STILL MORE OBJECTIONS?

Objection 1) It is legalistic to make extra-biblical rules like total abstinence which the Bible does not make.

Answer:

It is not extra-biblical since the Bible condemns "strong drink" as we've learned today. Average beer has 4% alcohol content, wine 11.5%, wine coolers 4-7% and liquor average 40%. All of these are considered as strong drinks according to the Bible. Furthermore, not every extra-biblical rule is legalistic. Any human effort to replace God's grace for our salvation would be legalistic.

Objection 2) What about medical studies which show that regular use of alcohol helps prevent heart disease by increasing good cholesterol?

Answer:

It may be due to antioxidants present, not the alcohol. Besides, the American Heart Association does not recommend it. There are other non-alcoholic methods, such as diet, exercise and non-addictive drugs that can be used. According to another medical study, grape juice has the same effect.

Folks, the end doesn't justify the means. Just admit that you drink alcohol because you want to even though you know that the Bible tells otherwise.

Objection 3) Drinking beer or wine makes me relax and feel better and helps me with my nerves.

Answer:

Don't make your happiness depend on addictive alcohol. It is both deceptive and dangerous. There are non-addictive diets, drugs and exercises that can help your nerves. Go out shooting with me. It will calm your heart.

Better yet, take these two verses and call me in the morning.

Philippians 4:6-7 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 5:18 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit

Some of you didn't like what you just heard and may be thinking, "We are not going to come back to this church, because he speaks the truth." I hope that you are obedient to the Lord more than to your own stubborn heart.

H. APPLICATIONS

1) Total abstinence from any type drinking alcohol is biblically correct.

There is one sober answer. Just say, "NO!"

2) Total abstinence from any tobacco products is also biblically correct.

3) If you must be addicted to something, try Jesus.

4) Some of you might be a secret alcoholic. There is a vicious power and temptation in secrecy. Make yourself accountable to another trusting brother or sister to stay sober. You can do it one day at a time.

1 Corinthians 10:13 No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.