

Christians And Alcohol

'Drink no wine nor strong drink, you nor your children with you when you go into the Tent of Meeting (in our day; church or Christian meetings) so you do not die (spiritually). It will be a statute forever throughout your generations so you are to make a distinction between the holy and the common (believers and non-believers), and between the unclean (unsaved) and the clean (born-again) (Leviticus 10:9 & 10). 'This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice. He is a glutton and a drunkard. All the men of his city shall stone him to death with stones so you will put away the evil from the midst of you' (Deuteronomy 21:20 & 21). 'Give strong drink to those who are ready to perish (eternally) and wine to the bitter in soul. Let them drink and forget their (spiritual) poverty and remember their misery no more' (Proverbs 31:6 & 7).

Wine and strong drink is the devil's counterfeit for the beautiful infilling of the Holy Spirit. 'Do not be drunk with wine which is debauchery but be filled with the Holy Spirit' (Ephesians 5:18). 'Wine is a mocker and beer is a brawler (or incites rage). Whoever is led astray or deceived by them is not wise' (Proverbs 20:1). Many Christians drink wine or other alcoholic drinks on a regular basis and they think there is nothing wrong with that, yet the Bible reveals, anyone who chooses to be a servant of the Lord and who separates themselves from the world to walk with God, should not drink any alcoholic drinks. The above scriptures infer alcoholic beverages are to be left for non-believers, the unsaved, the unholy, unwise, debauched, stubborn, rebellious, evil people who are bound for the misery of eternal fire. The drinking of alcohol is likened to wicked sin and for those sins, God will destroy the people who participate because, like the rebellious son mentioned above, they refuse to listen to the Lord's Voice.

The following verses reveal the slow decline of a strong, healthy young man who falls into alcoholism and spiritual leaders are not exempt. There are many church leaders who are caught up in their sin, drinking while alone and trying to keep their habit secret. 'Woe to the crown of pride of the drunkards and to the fading flower of his (once) glorious beauty, which is on the head (the responsibility) of the fertile valley (the youth) of those who are overcome with wine! Behold, the Lord has a mighty and strong one (being steadfast and resolute). Like a storm of hail, a destroying storm and like a storm of mighty waters overflowing, He will cast them (the drunkards/alcoholics) down to the earth with His hand. The crown of pride of the drunkards ... will be trodden under foot ... They reel with wine and stagger with strong drink. The priest (pastor, minister) and the prophet (false prophet) reel with strong drink. They are swallowed up by wine. They stagger with strong drink. They err in (spiritual and natural) vision. They stumble in (make wrong) judgment. Tables (the home) are completely full of filthy vomit and filthiness' (Isaiah 28:1 to 3, 7 & 8). 'Wake up you drunkards and weep! Wail all you drinkers of wine, because of the sweet (alcoholic) drink for it will be cut off from your mouth' (Joel 1:5). 'Woe to those who give their neighbour drink, pouring your inflaming wine until they are drunk so you may gaze at their naked bodies! You are filled with shame and not glory. You will drink and be exposed! The cup of God's right hand (ire) will come around to you and disgrace will cover your glory' (Habakkuk 2:15 & 16).

The above verses reveal what the Lord really thinks of alcoholic drinks and the people who indulge. It is not possible for the Lord to be any clearer than this. God's people and alcohol cannot mix any more than pure water can mix with sump oil. If we search the scriptures from Genesis to Revelation we will find the whole tenure of scripture is full of warnings regarding alcohol because of its destructive force. When Noah accidentally became drunk (Genesis 9:20 to 27), it caused division in his family that continues today. Noah cursed his son Ham and grandson Canaan and they became the ancestors of all coloured people and many of them became slaves. Slavery of coloured people continues today in some countries. Noah blessed Shem's bloodline and it is from Shem we have white people; from Shem the Jewish people originated and they brought forth our Messiah. Noah's son Japheth became the ancestor of all Asian peoples. Before Noah's flood, there was no fermentation of liquid. That began after the flood when the earth was changed and the sun's rays were able to penetrate the protective layer now called the Ozone Layer. There was no record of drunkenness prior to the flood.

Part of the Levitical priest's offering was to have wine poured onto it (Leviticus 23:13 and many other verses). Obviously in this context, the 'wine' was only grape juice because alcohol being flammable could have made the offering flare up and scald the priest or set his clothing alight. We also need to understand the reason behind the drink offering. The blood of grapes was used to symbolise the blood of our Saviour Jesus that was poured out for our salvation. The drink offering had to be pure so there would have been no alcohol involved. The same applied to bread eaten at Passover. It had to be unleavened or without yeast. Yeast and alcohol are both symbolic of sin so the 'wine' poured out at the drink offering had to be pure grape juice.

The Lord has revealed through the Bible, He is totally against drunkenness and alcoholism. Not all drunks, binge drinkers or party goers are alcoholics and not all alcoholics are constantly drunk because some stop

drinking altogether, however the Bible is emphatic, no drinker of any persuasion will inherit the Kingdom of Heaven (1 Corinthians 6:10). Christians need to take note of a strong warning from Jesus Himself. If His people, Christians, believers, disciples or occasional church goers drink with companions who are drunks and become aggressive, they will end up in the eternal lake of fire along with their drinking partners. If they were church goers, they will be shattered to pieces at their extreme eternal judgement. The Lord considers drinkers as being hypocrites and evil servants. That is something to think about when you are just about to take your next sip. Notice in this parable, the man is a servant of the Lord or in our day, a Christian. 'If an evil servant says in his heart, "My Lord is delaying His coming," and begins to beat his fellow servants and eat and drink with the drunkards, the Lord of the servants will come in a day when they do not expect it and in an hour when they do not know, and will cut the evil servants in pieces and will appoint their portion (judgement) with the hypocrites. That is where the weeping and gnashing of teeth will be' (Matthew 24:48 to 51).

God is cleansing the church worldwide and there are some areas of our walk with God that need to be considered so our lives can be a good witness for Jesus. The effect of drunkenness is written in the Bible for us to consider. Alcohol is destructive, negative and is never edifying. 'Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaints? Who has bruises and wounds without a known cause? Who has bloodshot eyes? Those who stay long at the wine, those who go to seek out mixed drinks. Do not look at the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it goes down smoothly. In the end it bites like a snake and poisons like a viper' (Proverbs 23:29 to 32). Drink driving is killing and maiming thousands of people worldwide. About half of all homicides are fuelled by alcohol. Many women are raped because their aggressor is drunk. Domestic violence is fuelled by drunkenness. People who drink are more likely to be promiscuous. People lose inhibitions and normal control when they are drunk and do the most stupid of things that can end up ruining their lives. One young man from a well known church became drunk and violently raped a lovely young woman from the same church. That man served time in prison and will always have a police record. He will never be able to obtain a passport. He can never be around children because his record does not allow a sexual predator to work with children. The young woman he raped forgave him but was never able to live a normal life, marry and have children. Alcohol destroys lives in and out of the church.

Alcohol destroys the brain, heart, liver, pancreas and kidneys. It can cause cancer of the mouth, throat, oesophagus, stomach, liver and rectum. Alcohol causes poverty, misery, family breakdown, wretchedness and violence, even in the church. Beer is just as harmful as any stronger alcoholic drink. Church people who drink alcohol will eventually find themselves in association with others who drink, and those people are not edifying the Lord or presenting the Gospel with any life or power. Non-believers may mock teetotalers but they will have more respect for a Christian who stands up for what they claim, rather than for someone who is weak and gives in to peer pressure. We should not associate with drinkers because they will bring us down to their level, and Christians cannot be considered a fellow Christian when they drink. 'Do not associate with anyone who is called a brother who is ... a drunkard ... Do not eat with such a person' (1 Corinthians 5:11). 'Do not be deceived! Evil companions corrupt good morals' (1 Corinthians 15:33).

If a Christian is seen drinking with the drunken, it can forever ruin a previously good reputation. Some weak Christians may think, if a church leader drinks, so can they, and that could lead them into alcoholism so church leaders should never drink and set a bad example. Not everybody can control their drinking. Pregnant women should never touch alcohol. Nobody in their right mind would give alcohol to a young infant, so why do women give their unborn babies alcohol? It is irresponsible and foolish for a pregnant woman to drink. The womb should be the safest place for an unborn child to grow and develop so for a mother to deliberately and knowingly take alcoholic liquid into her body, knowing full well her infant will ingest some of it, and it could end up with Foetal Alcohol Syndrome would prove she already resents the unborn baby and wants to do it harm. Good mothers do not drink alcohol when pregnant, nor do good mothers smoke! Parents may be able to control their intake of alcohol, but you are setting a bad example for your children who cannot control their intake. Parents need to set a Godly example and should abstain because as parents, you are role models and you can stumble your children and 'Woe to you if you make one of your little ones stumble' (Matthew 18:6; Mark 9:42; Luke 17:2).

Some people are born with the weakness of an addictive nature. Dry alcoholics are people who may have never taken a drink but when they do, there is something in them that makes them almost an instant alcoholic. Other dry alcoholics are people who have realised they have a problem and have given up drinking. Those people need to avoid alcohol completely. 'Lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us' (Hebrews 12:1). Using alcohol to 'forget' a problem is a cop-out because once the person sobers up and the hangover finally goes, the problem is still there and may be worse.

Some people give the silly argument, "Jesus drank wine." Or they quote this verse, 'Be no longer a drinker of water only, but use a little wine for your stomach's sake' (1 Timothy 5:23). It is interesting how many

'Christians' are very concerned about their stomachs. Drinking a little juice for the sake of the stomach could be translated as, "Do not drink water only, drink a little grape juice for the sake of taste." Jesus drank grape juice. He would not have drunk strong wine, or if it had been fermented, it would have been watered down because the command of God says not to drink strong drink. Jesus would never have sinned by drinking that which God had commanded His people not to do. Only in recent years has wine been produced with high alcohol content. In the Bible days, it was made to be drunk in all occasions, feasts, celebrations and festivals. In those days, all juice produced by the flesh of vine fruits (grapes, black currants etc) was called wine. It was also called the blood of grapes, or in Hebrew was called 'ein' and it was low in alcohol or non-alcoholic. For forty years the Lord made sure the Children of Israel had no wine or strong alcoholic drinks. 'I (God) have led you forty years in the wilderness ... You have not eaten bread (with yeast), neither have you drunk wine or strong drink so you may know I am the Lord your God' (Deuteronomy 29:5 & 6). Jesus turned vats of water into tasty wine. That does not mean it was strong drink. The story tells us it was the best tasting 'wine' or juice they had (John 2:1 to 10).

We must not cause a weaker Christian to stumble and sin by drinking in front of them or giving them wine. The last thing a reformed alcoholic needs is an unthinking Christian to serve them a glass of wine because that could cause the former alcoholic to stumble and go back to their wretched ways. We must not destroy a person's salvation by serving them alcoholic drinks. Remember the verse, 'Woe to those who give their neighbour drink' (Habakkuk 2:15). The scriptures tell us: 'Each one of us will give account of themselves to God ... Let no one put a stumbling block in their brother (or sister's) way, or an occasion for falling (such as giving a former alcoholic some wine) ... If because of (drink) your brother (or sister in Jesus) is grieved, you no longer walk in love. Do not destroy (a person's salvation) with your food (or alcohol), those for whom Jesus died. Do not let your good works be slandered, for the Kingdom of God is not all about eating and drinking, but is about righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit ... Do not overthrow God's work for the sake of drink ... It is good to not drink wine, nor do anything by which your brother or sister stumbles, is offended or is made weak' (Romans 14:12 to 21).

Some sensible public bar owners are trying to do something about the amount of alcohol people drink. There are bars in Africa where people can go to socialise, play chess and other games, drink soft drinks and eat healthy food. The bars do not sell any alcoholic beverages. The owners are trying to help people give up drinking. Many hundreds of people have had their lives changed by the thoughtful owners of the public bars. We can only hope this catches on and becomes one global solution to the problem.

Although the Bible does not say in a direct way, drinking alcohol is sin, the scriptures make it very clear drinkers will end up damned, people who associate themselves with drinkers will be damned and genuine believers are not to be companions with people who drink. That is very powerful teaching and all Christians should totally abstain or face eternal judgement. It is their choice but if they choose to drink they cannot ever cry out, "Lord, Lord," because you have been warned. Those with spiritual ears, listen to what the Voice of Lord is saying and do not resist the Voice of the Holy Spirit. 'You stiff-necked and uncommitted in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit!' (Acts 7:51). People who choose to drink alcohol are stubborn and in rebellion. It may be subtle rebellion but nonetheless, they are trying to 'get away with' sin by justifying their sin in their own heart but in the end they will suffer the consequences. 'Woe to those who gives a neighbour drink'. 'Every tree (Christian) who does not grow good fruit (good behaviour) is cut down and thrown into the (lake of) fire. By their fruits (behaviour, works) you will know them. Not everyone who says to Me, "Lord, Lord," will enter into the Kingdom of Heaven but those who do the will of My Father Who is in heaven. Many will tell Me in that (Judgement) Day, "Lord, Lord we prophesied in Your name, in Your name we cast out demons and in your name did many mighty works." Then I (Jesus) will tell them, "I never knew you. Depart from Me, you who work iniquity" (Matthew 7:19 to 23).

Amen and God bless you.

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