

Alcohol

TEXT: “Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise” (Proverbs 20:1).

THESIS: To emphasize that sin, though approved by society and allowed by civil law, is no less sin before God, the consequence of which is (spiritual) death, Rom. 6:23.

INTRODUCTION:

1. We know that civil government is ordained of God (Rom. 13:1-7), but He does not authorize a particular kind of government (Roman Empire, Democracy), nor does God authorize specific laws of any government.
 - a. So, during the first century, the apostles found it necessary to disregard civil government on occasion when it became unlawful to God’s law (Acts 4:18-20).
 - b. However, they only disregarded civil law when they were asked to violate God’s law.
 - i. Otherwise, the apostles were still bound by the balance of man’s law under which they lived.
2. Now, when civil government allows, tolerates, legalizes, taxes or sponsors sin, Christians must resort to the higher law of God over man’s law because unfortunately, governments legalize sin such as: abortion, prostitution, immodesty, unscriptural remarriage, gambling, alcohol, etc . . .
 - a. Christians therefore, must persevere ourselves in righteousness in spite of what a government does because we do not want to be tempted to commit sin.
3. Now, as we consider alcohol, I would like to observe the following:
 - a. Alcohol and government.
 - b. Alcohol and the Bible.
 - c. Objections to alcohol.

DISCUSSION:

I. ALCOHOL AND GOVERNMENT

- A. Liquor was once outlawed, but today it is big business for manufacturers, retailers and government.
 1. With the exception of some dry counties and age restrictions, alcohol is legal throughout our nation.
- B. However, alcohol has been labeled as the worst abused drug in our nation costing nearly 200 billion annually.
 1. And, governments certainly do not want to address the abuse of alcohol seeing that it cost 5 times more to address abuse than for people to consume it.
- C. When we look at crime, it has been documented that alcohol is associated with:
 1. Murders, assaults, rapes, sex crimes against children, fights and assaults in homes, suicides and arrests.
- D. Alcohol has also been known as a safety hazard because it is involved in:

1. Fatal accidents, fire deaths, pedestrian accidents, home accidents, drownings, skiing accidents, traffic accidents (killing 18,000 and seriously injuring 1,000,000 annually) and is the #1 killer of people 25 and under and is the #3 killer overall in America.
- E. Alcohol is known as being a poison because with less than 1% (.5%) of alcohol in the blood, it results in death, not to mention that one or two drinks damages brain cells, the stomach, liver, kidney, causes cancer, heart disease, birth defects, and fatigue.
- F. Now, about 71% of Americans 18 and up use alcohol.
 1. Children drink it (500,000 between 9 and 12), most restaurants serve it, grocery stores sell it, and it is used for social and sporting events, leaders and heroes and as a hospitality in homes.
 2. It is so widely used that even some religious leaders have condoned its use and the Roman Catholic church uses it in their worship service.
- G. Alcoholism is said to be the only disease that is taxed by governments, that can be fined for having too much of, that employs people for its manufacture, is regulated by government, allowed or disallowed in a community by popular vote, and is the only disease bottled and sold.
- H. But all these facts, must take a back seat and we must hear and obey what God says concerning alcohol.

II. Alcohol and the Bible.

- A. Conservative religious people have always regarded alcohol as sinful and some have even gone so far as to oppose the selling of alcoholic beverages close to their buildings.
 1. Some churches will distribute literature opposing the pleasurable consumption of alcoholic beverages.
 2. And, many elders, preachers and congregations throughout the churches of Christ oppose alcohol based on biblical grounds.
 3. But, when we consider the pleasurable consumption of alcohol, we must break it down into two sections: drinking alcohol and being drunk with alcohol so that we know by the Word of God that it is or is not condemned.
- B. When we look at being drunk, under the Old Testament:
 1. Drunkenness was punishable by death (Deut. 21:20-21).
 2. Drunkenness also deprives a person, making him poor (Prov. 23:21).
 3. And so, just by these two things, we can see it is no great mystery that being drunk is condemned in the Old Testament, but what about just drinking alcohol once in a while?
- C. When considering drinking alcohol, Under the Old Testament:
 1. Priests were forbidden to consume alcohol while serving in the tabernacle.
 - a. In Lev. 10:8-11, "the LORD spake unto Aaron, saying, Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye

go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations: And that ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean; And that ye may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the LORD hath spoken unto them by the hand of Moses.”

- (1) So, not only were the priest not allowed to drink alcohol while in the tabernacle, God also made reference here between holy and unholy, between clean and unclean.
 - (2) Now, if God would not allow the Aaronic priesthood to have intoxicating wine, why would it be O.K. for the Christian priesthood (1 Pet. 2:9) to have some?
 - (a) And if so, on what basis do you make such determination?
2. Now, not only were priest forbidden in the tabernacle to drink, civil leaders were told, “. . . it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink: Lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted.” (Prov. 31:4-5).
 - a. Simply drinking wine was enough to make ones judgment poor to where they are not effective and therefore, these leaders could not continue to serve as they are ordained of God (Rom. 13).
 3. Furthermore, faithful Jew were required to, “Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright.” (Prov. 23:31)
 - a. So, not only was it advised not to use, the children of Israel, God’s chose people, were not even to look upon it.
 4. In addition, Solomon said in Prov. 23:29-35, “. . . who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine . . . At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things. Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast. They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again.”
 - a. Drinking alcohol makes one to make bad choices.
 - b. Solomon said it causes one to have sex with unknown women and that even if one gets in a fight because they have been drinking, they will wake up and want more alcohol because they are addicted to it.
 - c. This is why Paul would not be under the power of it (1 Cor. 6:12).
 5. Isaiah said that drinking alcohol causes one to err in vision and judgment. (Isa. 28:7)
 - a. Alcohol is damaging to the functions of the mind and it hinders people from deciding between good and evil even when a small

amount is consumed because we are not talking about being drunk, but drinking and who knows how much drinking it takes.

- b. Today, doctors state that it takes only one drink to impair your thinking, seeing and judgment.
 6. Now, when we look at drinking alcohol, while it does not say how much it takes to make one drunk, they were still told not to consume it, not to look at it because it makes you do strange things when you drink it.
- D. Well, then what was alcohol used for during the days of the prophets?
1. Let's look at Prov. 31:6, "Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts."
 - a. Alcohol has certainly been used as medicine which might give some ease from his last moments of pain.
 - b. But the word perish, may shed a different light.
 - (1) Earlier, a wise woman warned that alcohol was not for kings or princess' but, strong drink seems fit for one who is ready to perish.
 - (2) Basically, if the individual, who is filled with anguish, is about to perish, lost in sin and bound for torment, drinking alcohol fits his condition in that it is the blow that kills him
 2. You know, people in Bible times may not have known exactly what we know today regarding alcohol as to the brain and nervous system, but, they were keen observers of how people acted when they were under the influence of alcohol.
- E. The fact is:
1. Drinking alcohol demonstrates a lack of wisdom (Prov. 20:1).
 2. And, not only does the Bible warn against the evil influences which are connected with the use of alcohol, it also warned Jews to not even associate with those who drink alcohol.
 - a. It states, "Be not among winebibbers . . ." (Prov. 23:20).
 3. This is because alcohol leads to immorality and hazardous health.
 4. On top of all that, it was a crime to give alcoholic beverages to another person.
 - a. For, "Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that putteth thy bottle to him, and makest him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness!" (Hab. 2:15)
 5. There is just too much against alcohol (Prov. 4:17) and drinking any amount of it, is as bad as being fully drunk with it.
 - a. How do we know that drinking was not drunk under the Old Law?
 - (1) Both seem to be just as bad.
 - b. Perhaps this is why total abstinence from alcohol was praised by God in Jer. 35:2-19.
 6. But hey, this was the Old Testament, the Old Law and Christians are under the New Law, the law of Liberty and perhaps alcohol has been given freer

reign?

- a. Let's find out.
- F. What does the New Testament tell us about being drunk with alcohol:
1. Well, first of all, we must understand that, "whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." (Rom. 15:4).
 - a. This means that we need to go back to the Old Testament and learn what not to do.
 - b. That includes the issues that surround alcohol.
 2. Second, drunkenness we know is a sin because the Bible states it keeps one from Heaven. (1 Cor. 6:9-11).
 - a. In fact Paul tells us that drunkenness is unrighteousness.
 - b. It is a work of the flesh that wars against the spirit of man (Gal. 5:19-21).
 3. Third, being drunk is associated with other sins.
 - a. Paul said, "Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying." (Rom. 13:13)
- G. So, while being drunk is a sin just as it was under the Old Law, what does the New Testament tell us about drinking alcohol:
1. Well, aged women are cautioned against the use of alcohol, ". . . not given to much wine . . ." (Titus 2:3).
 - a. But then, if we cannot have much wine, how much is much?
 2. In addition to this, we are told that we cannot even have it.
 - a. It can be applied that where Old Testament priests were forbidden to drink alcohol, Christians should be forbidden. After all, both are priest (1 Pet. 2:5, 9).
 - b. But, leaders of the church are especially forbidden the use of alcohol, ". . . sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; Not given to wine . . ." (1 Tim. 3:2-3, 8).
- H. So, when we see not much wine, what was it used for? Enjoyment?
1. Paul shows that it was restricted to medical purposes.
 2. He told Timothy, "Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities." (1 Tim. 5:23)
- I. Alas, just as in the Old, the pleasurable consumption of alcohol is condemned in the New Testament.
1. Now some may say, what about Eph. 5:18?
 2. Well, what about it? It states, "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;" (Eph. 5:18).
 - a. It is good to point out in this verse that some attempt to justify social drinking by saying that you can drink as long as it is not in excess.
 - b. However, the word excess means a riot so basically, "be not drunk

with wine wherein is a riot.”

- c. The NAS states the word dissipation instead of excess, and that word means wasteful.
 - (1) So, “do not get drunk with wine, for that is wasteful . . .”
- d. Another definition of dissipation is “having no hope of safety” and obviously, there is no safety when one is consuming alcohol.
- 3. So, if Christians are exhorted to avoid every type of evil (1 Thess. 5:22), why would Christians want to be around alcohol?
- 4. Furthermore, Christians are exhorted to be sober which is mentioned to us in many verses (1 Thess. 5:6, 8; 1 Tim. 3:2-3, 8; 1 Pet. 1:13).
- J. We know that alcohol harms the body and we as Christians are suppose to be glorifying God with our bodies (1 Cor. 6:19-20).
 - 1. And, God nor I can see, how one can drink alcohol and glorify God at the same time?
 - 2. That is like bring a 40 ounce of beer to worship service with you and drinking it while you worshiped God singing praises to Him.
 - 3. That makes no sense.

III. Objections to alcohol.

- A. It is without doubt that Jesus turned water into wine at a marriage feast (John 2:1-11).
 - 1. But, this word wine can also mean grape vine, the grape, grape juice, grape juice concentrate, grape juice mixed with other flavors or alcoholic wine.
 - 2. Therefore, we must look at the context in which the word is used.
 - 3. And, knowing that Jesus lived under the Old Law which prohibited drinking alcohol and prohibited giving another alcohol if you had it, why would Jesus make alcoholic wine and give it to so many men?
 - a. Remember the Scripture, “Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that putteth thy bottle to him, and makest him drunken also . . .” (Hab. 2:15)
 - b. If Jesus made alcoholic wine, he would have disobeyed the Old Law and would have sinned, not being the perfect sacrifice.
- B. Another objection that people have to alcohol is that the Bible condemns drunkenness, not drinking alcohol.
 - 1. O.K., what is drunk?
 - 2. Medically, drunkenness is a matter of degrees; one drink deposits alcohol in the blood stream and additional drinks increases the concentration.
 - 3. The word drunk is defined as, “under the influence of alcohol” and this can be done by one sip.
 - a. Now, besides the fact that God said in the former law, “Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright.” (Prov. 23:31)
 - b. The Gospel of Jesus Christ still commands soberness which means,

- “to abstain from wine or be free from the influence of intoxicants.”
- c. “Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober . . . 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.” (1 Thess. 5:6, 8)
 - d. We are told to, “watch thou in all things . . .” (2 Tim. 4:5).
 - e. We are told to be sober (1 Pet. 1:13).
- C. Another objection to alcohol was that Paul told Timothy to drink wine for his stomach (1 Tim. 5:23).
1. Some attempt to reason with this saying that it cannot be 100% proven that wine here refers to alcohol.
 2. I believe that it does refer to alcohol, but what is used as medicine does not give us the right to pleasurable consumption of alcohol.
- D. In conjunction with this is that while elders are not to drink alcohol, an objection is further made that deacons are permitted some alcohol (1 Tim. 3:3, 8).
1. Both passages equally condemn a disposition which is attributed to drinking alcohol.
 2. Compare the inclusion of the word much in verse 8 to Eccl. 7:17, “Be not over much wicked . . .” (Ecc. 7:17)
 - a. Wicked is still wicked in any amount.
- E. Some say that there is nothing wrong with alcohol and that the word alcohol is used many different ways in the Bible where its use by the children of God is not condemned.
1. No doubt there are 13 different words for wine.
 2. Sometimes wine means first-fruits which are ripe first (Num. 18:12-13).
 3. It can mean the cluster of grapes (Isa. 65:8).
 4. Wine can refer to a raisins (Hos. 3:1) ASV
 5. Sometimes wine equals the winepress (Neh. 13:15)
 6. Wine can be the pure juice of the grape (Prov. 3:10).
 7. And, it can refer to alcoholic wine (Gen. 9:21).
 8. The context is the overriding factor determining the definition of both Greek and English words for wine and just because the Bible tells us on occasion where the children of Israel was around wine, that word does not have to automatically mean alcohol.
- F. Others cry out, the apostles in Acts 2, and Jesus in Luke 7:34, were respectively accused of being drunken and a winebibber; both accusations suggest that Jews drank alcohol.
1. First off, the Jews were mocking the apostles in Acts and the Bible does not argue for either alcoholic or nonalcoholic wine in view of the mocking.
 - a. It says, “Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine” (Acts 2:13).
 - b. Now, whether any Jews were in the habit of drinking alcoholic

- wine does not affect whether God approved of it.
2. Second, in the context of Luke 7:29-35, Jesus was accused of being a winebibber.
 - a. But, just because Jesus was accused does not make him one.
 - b. Our Lord, if you remember, was also accused of being a glutton, demon possessed (Mark 3:22), crazy (Mark 3:21) and a Samaritan (John 8:48).
 - (1) But, this does not make him one.
 3. Under Judaism during which Jesus lived, gluttons and winebibbers were sentenced to death and we have already looked at this in Deut. 21:20-21.
 4. So, are the enemies of Jesus credible, to be believed?
 - a. Of course not.
 - b. Christ, nor his apostles were to consume alcohol and they did not give others permission to.
 - c. For if they had, they would have been double minded and we know that, “A double minded man is unstable in all his ways” (Jam. 1:8).
- G. Another objection to forbidding alcohol is that Jesus used an illustration in a parable about wine and new and old bottles (skins) which shows the Jews customarily drank alcoholic wine in Luke 5:37-39.
1. On the contrary, new skins were used to keep the grape juice from fermenting.
 2. Emptied old skins would develop yeast, which if transmitted to a new batch of grape juice, it would ferment and the skins would expand and burst.
 3. Further, the preference for older wine in verse 39 does not prove it was alcoholic; something aged is not necessarily fermented.
 4. Besides the fact, the passage really has nothing to do with alcohol, but with the differences between the Old Law and the Gospel of Christ.
 5. Jesus was simply saying, you could not take the New Law and put it into the Old neither could the Old Law be brought over into the New Law.

CONCLUSION:

1. Drunkenness has always been sinful.
 - a. Any way you slice it, dice it, or try to tip toe around the Word of God, it is sill sin.
 - b. No law of man can override God’s law on any topic, including alcohol.
2. Now, state and federal laws may condone drinking.
 - a. Although they know it is dangerous, associated with crimes, is a poison and is harmful to one’s health, God still announces to the world that consuming alcohol is sinful.
 - b. There is no defense for consuming alcoholic beverages and therefore, Christians must not consume it.
3. We as well as the church as a whole must oppose this evil to whatever extent possible.
 - a. “have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove

- them” (Eph. 5:11)
 - b. “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” (Jam. 4:7).
- 4. Alcohol will destroy a person internally, externally and eternally!
- 5. Invitation:
 - a. We must listen exclusively to the law of God on all subjects addressed by God in the Bible and we must obey it.
 - b. And, if you are a non-Christian today, make that change to be baptized into Christ.
 - c. If an erring Christian, you can express your repentance through prayer.
 - d. Do you need to come forward?