

A Study Of Moral Issues: Drinking

Introduction. Alcohol consumption is a tough topic because it is associated with both joyful and tragic situations. People go to weddings and special events and see those in attendance lifting glasses of champagne in celebration. People unwind by drinking a glass of wine at home. Try finding a Super Bowl party where alcohol is not a part of the festivities. Commercials, advertisements, social media, movies, and TV heavily promote beer, wine, and liquor as a means to having a fun and active social life.

On the other hand, everyone listening to this sermon most likely knows someone who has been hurt in some way because of alcohol. You may live with an alcoholic or know someone who does. You may know a family whose relative has died in an accident caused by the consumption of alcohol.

A generation ago, people in the religious world stood opposed to drinking, even in moderation. In this generation, people have changed their view on drinking. Did it change because of worldly friends? Did it change because of family? Did it change because of the media? We cannot trust the world and our own feelings instead of being certain of what the Bible says. The Bible warns against the dangers of alcohol, whether in the form of wine or strong drink, and we have to constantly remind each other that this is a tool of Satan to destroy our souls (Hebrews 3:13).

I. Drinking In The Old Testament

A. Alcohol is deceptive.

1. Proverbs 20:1 does not say “intoxication” will mock you, but that the use of wine will mock you.
 - a) It may mock you by making you say something foolish.
 - b) It may mock you by corrupting your family.
 - c) It may mock you by addicting you.
 - d) It may mock you by ruining your health.
 - e) It may mock you by harming your influence.
 - f) It may mock you by costing you the fellowship of God’s people.
 - g) It may mock you by costing you your soul.
2. If you claim that wine will not mock you, then you have already been fooled by Satan enough to go against God’s direct statement.

B. Alcohol leads to poverty.

1. A warning against those who love wine (Proverbs 21:17).
2. A warning against spending time with winebibbers and drunkards (Proverbs 23:20-21).

C. Alcohol destroys lives.

1. It leads to woe and sorrow, contentions and complaints, needless bruises, and redness of eyes (Proverbs 23:29-30).
2. It is seductive, destroying one just like the seductress (Proverbs 23:31-32).
3. It will alter your senses, leading you to say something you will regret, e.g., “office parties” (Proverbs 23:33).
4. It gives a false sense of security, exposing you to great danger, e.g., “driving drunk” (Proverbs 23:34-35).

- D. Alcohol impairs judgment.
1. This is why kings and princes were to abstain (Proverbs 31:4-5).
 2. It is better reserved for the dying and devastated (Proverbs 31:6-7).
 3. People act when drunk in a way that they would never do sober (Isaiah 28:7).
 - a) Noah (Genesis 9:20-23).
 - b) Lot (Genesis 19:30-38).

II. *Drinking In The New Testament*

- A. Drunkenness is also condemned in the New Testament.
1. It is a work of darkness, not an element of the armor of light (Romans 13:11-14).
 2. It will keep one out of the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Galatians 5:19-21).
 3. It is conduct suitable for church discipline (1 Corinthians 5:11-13).
- B. The New Testament speaks against drinking in less of a quantity of drunkenness too. Can one socially drink or have a few drinks in the seclusion of their home?
1. We are to dedicate ourselves to doing the will of God, not the lusts of men (1 Peter 4:1-2). Therefore, we are to abstain from “excess of wine,” “revellings,” and “banquetings” in v. 3.
 - a) “Excess of wine” is *oinophlygiais* which is drunkenness.
 - b) “Revellings” is *komos* and it is a drinking party involving unrestrained indulgence (“rioting,” Romans 13:13; Galatians 5:21).
 - c) “Banquetings” is *potos* which means “a drinking bout; a carousal.” Trench tells us that this word is “not of necessity excessive, but giving opportunity for excess” (p. 225).
 - (1) This was the ancient practice of social drinking without any reference to quantity (cp. Matthew 10:41-42).
 - (2) Peter condemns “excess of wine,” “revellings,” and “banquetings.” He made a specific reference to three levels of drinking and condemned all of them — regardless of quantity!
 - (3) In v. 4, we should expect others to think negatively of us for abstaining; we cannot be spiritual cowards (Revelation 21:8).
 2. There are several Greek words that are translated by our word “sober.” These words carry the idea of being sound in mind, well-balanced, and self-controlled.
 - a) However, *nepho* originally referred to the abstinence of intoxicants as shown by the following Greek authorities.
 - (1) Rienecker — “To be sober, not to be under the influence of drink.”
 - (2) Strong — “To abstain from wine (keep sober).”
 - (3) Kittel — “The opposite of intoxication.”
 - (4) Vine — “Signifies to be free from the influences of intoxicants.”
 - b) There are four New Testament verses in which *nepho* is translated as “sober” (1 Thessalonians 5:6, 8; 1 Peter 1:13; 5:8).
 - (1) It has been medically proven that alcohol affects the mind after the first drink. Thus, abstinence from intoxicating drink is demanded in order to fulfill the command to be “sober.”

- (2) *Nepho* is also translated as “watch” in two places (2 Timothy 4:5; 1 Peter 4:7). *Nepho* is used mainly in a figurative way in the New Testament; however, we must blend the literal and the figurative because the figurative cannot make sense without the literal definition.
- (a) For instance, one is not watchful if their mind is not clear. One cannot be “sober” in judgment unless one knows the literal meaning of the word “sober.”
- (b) Another example would be in 2 Corinthians 11:2-3, where one is to be a “chaste virgin.” In order to fulfill this command, one must recognize the literal meaning of “chaste virgin.”
- (3) At what point does one become not vigilant, or uninfluenced by alcohol? What kind of influence does it produce? The kind that moves one away from self-control, being and remaining sober and vigilant!
- c) Abstinence from alcohol is the standard of great and godly men (Daniel 1:8; Luke 1:15). It should be our standard too (Ephesians 5:18).
- C. Some would claim that Paul told Timothy to drink intoxicants in 1 Timothy 5:23, thereby making it acceptable for us to do so moderately. Yet, we understand by apostolic example that we too must refrain from drinking alcohol (1 Corinthians 11:1). Why would Paul give these instructions to Timothy? There are two possibilities which should be examined.
1. Paul told Timothy to drink pure grape juice for his health or he told him to drink intoxicants for some type of ailment. In either case it was a health issue.
 2. Alcohol is used today in medicines just as it was during the first century (Proverbs 31:6-7; Luke 10:34; cp. Matthew 27:48; Mark 15:23).
 3. Paul’s prescription for Timothy is not a general rule of moderate or casual use for all occasions. Biblical rules still apply (Habakkuk 2:5, 15).
- D. Furthermore, in the New Testament, purity has always been a major aspect of a Christian’s life (Matthew 5:8; Romans 12:1; Ephesians 1:4; 1 Timothy 4:12; 5:22; 2 Timothy 2:22). Do you really believe that having a loose attitude about social drinking would meet God’s requirements for purity and holiness?
- E. Finally, two statements in Jesus’ sermon on the mount are worthy of reflection.
1. In Matthew 5:21-22, Jesus not only condemned murder but He went beyond the overt crime of killing and stated that anyone who has a malicious and wicked attitude is a murderer.
 2. In Matthew 5:27-28, Jesus not only condemned adultery but He went to the heart of the problem and stated that someone commits adultery even if they look at a woman and lust.
 3. Considering the way Jesus taught on these two subjects, how do you think He would feel about social drinking?

Conclusion. These lessons may sound “old-fashioned,” but they are based on biblical teaching designed to keep you godly and righteous (Romans 14:21).

What will be your attitude toward the use of alcohol? Will you defend it and those who practice it? Abraham Lincoln said, “Alcohol has many defenders, but no defense.”