

THE PROBLEM WITH SOCIAL DRINKING

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Strong drink (alcohol) is clearly condemned in scripture (**Deuteronomy 21:20-21; Proverbs 20:1; 23:29-35; Isaiah 5:11-12; Hosea 4:11; Luke 21:34; Romans 13:11-14; Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:6-10**). However, many believe they can take moderate amounts of alcohol and come away unscathed. Some doctors tell us that a “toddy” a day is healthy, but how many in our culture can handle this? Paul warns, “Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall” (**1 Corinthians 10:12**). Traffic crashes are the number one cause of death for people ages 6 to 28; almost half are alcohol related.

Many contend that “social drinking” is an innocent and harmless activity, just kicking back and enjoying friends and family. Interestingly, I have personally never met a non-Christian who tried to defend drinking alcohol as fitting conduct for Christians; only Christians do.

Two passages are routinely used by Christians to defend social drinking. The first, **John 2:1-11**, is of the marriage feast Jesus attended in Cana. When the host ran out of wine for his guests Jesus’ mother came to Him, asking Him to resolve the problem. Jesus turned water into wine and the host was saved from an embarrassing situation. Is this passage implying the safe use of alcohol? To begin with, what Jesus did was not sinful. He did not give “drink to his neighbor” (**Habakkuk 2:15**) which would be a direct violation of Old Testament teaching. The answer is actually very simple: Jesus turned the water into non-intoxicating wine, or what we would call “grape juice.” Strong drink in Bible times had 5 - 8% alcoholic content, comparable to beer (6 –9% alcoholic content) in our modern world.

The other passage is **1 Timothy 5:23** where Paul tells Timothy to “*No longer drink only water but use a little wine for your stomach’s sake and your frequent infirmities.*” Timothy had been taught and grounded in the word of God from childhood and would not even so much as touch wine, even as a medicine. Most doctors admit that better medicines with fewer and less dangerous side effects are available today. Even though alcohol can be used medicinally, it does not justify social drinking.

What’s the big deal? Alcohol harms one’s influence for righteousness. Note, we are not talking about personal reputation, but one’s ability to lead souls to Christ. Peter warns, “*For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles -- when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries. In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you. They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead*” (**1 Peter 4:3-5**). This passage covers the entire gambit from complete drunkenness to revelries (celebrations involving alcohol) to drinking parties, in which it might be presumed that not very many, if any, become completely drunk. All these are sinful and contrary to the will of God.

Those who want to honor and glorify God with their bodies will not take that first drink, for alcohol is dangerous for many reasons:

- ◆ It weakens one’s inhibitions (**Genesis 9:20-21; 19:32-35**). How many have given in to temptation they would never have, had it not been for a few social drinks?
- ◆ Solomon said it increases lust (**Proverbs 23:29-35**).
- ◆ It takes one’s heart away from God (**Hosea 4:11**). Alcohol makes one brutish, boastful, so as to be ridiculous in many situations.
- ◆ It removes good judgment (**Leviticus 10:8-11; Isaiah 28:7**).
- ◆ It is deceptive (**Proverbs 20:1**).
- ◆ Finally, and most important of all, alcohol will keep one out of heaven (**Galatians 5:19-21**). Note that Paul said, “*...drunkenness, revelries, and the like.*”

Is there some trace amount of alcohol one can consume and not be affected, and thus, not sin? Probably, but please listen to the warnings of God and avoid the heartache and regret you may experience if you make alcohol a routine part of life.

