

WINE AND THE BIBLE:
CHRISTIANTY'S SCANLON ERROR
Message 14

INTRO: We are in the process of wrapping up this series on wine in the Bible. I am at present summarizing and giving a number of points that argue against the use of alcohol from all that has been covered in earlier messages.

I mentioned that the Bible does not often clearly condemn the use of alcohol and suggested that the reason is because we can so easily learn from natural revelation how bad it is. However, we saw that there is at least one Scripture that soundly condemns all use of alcohol. I recommended that an accurate translation of a few key words would clear up much of our understanding regarding the use of alcohol in the Bible. We further saw that science clearly informs us that alcohol is both a poison and a drug. And last, we learned that if it were not for alcohol, many emergency departments might well go out of business. We discovered that if it were not for alcohol, many emergency departments might well go out of business. We saw also that it is not the drunk, but the social drinker that is the greatest hazard to life. All of this does not bode well for the view that says God allows for the consumption of alcohol.

So we go on to consider the theological argument.

E. The Theological Argument

I have said in an earlier message that if Bible texts using the word wine always refer to fermented wine, the very character of God is under question. Over the past 30 some years I have been learning to know the God of the Bible. All I have learned about this thrice holy God is pure and clean and good, and I have learned of nothing in His character that would indicate to me that He would condone something with the horrible potential and results of consuming alcohol. As a matter of fact, everything engrained in me from the Word of God militates against the view that God would endorse the use of this poison and drug.

Listen to James 1:13, "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone."

Now if God condones the use of alcohol, and if He condones it to the point where people become merry, how can the Bible then say He does not tempt anyone?

To think that the thrice holy God, the God who does not lead into temptation, the God who is fully and truly good, the God who cannot even come close to sin; that such a God would condone alcohol at all, never mind using it until one becomes merry from it, is so far off from the God I have learned to know that I wonder how Bible believers can even entertain such a thought. May it be that it is because of our sin nature that we are led to think such?

F. The Argument From A Terrifying Doctrine

There is a doctrine, a teaching in the Bible that is so terrifying, it is so horrendous, it is so indescribably painful that many people deny it is actually true. Many who say they believe the Bible, believe that the Bible does not actually teach this horrifying doctrine. Great attempts have been made and are still being made, to do away with this terrifying doctrine. It is the doctrine, we know as the doctrine of hell, the doctrine of eternal destruction. And the Bible teaches in unmistakable language that those overcome by alcohol will go to hell (1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-21).

Would God condone something that you can have a little of, just enough to make you merry? And when you are merry, you start to lose control, but then you must stop? Does God condone something that one in 10 people who try it once will become alcoholics and alcoholics go to hell? Does God condone something that those who try it once will become alcoholics, and 1 in 10 of those will commit suicide? Does God condone something that can get such a hold of you, sometimes in one drink, that it sends you to hell?

Does not the Bible say God does not tempt anyone (James 2:13)? Does God then condone the use of alcohol and say you can drink enough to get merry, but there you must stop, though by now your defenses have been largely overcome by the alcohol that was Okeyed by God?

Story of man or woman who became alcoholic from one drink here?

How does it happen? Too much alcohol. And alcohol is addictive, and the problem is when you have a little alcohol or enough to get happy, your defenses are put down, and yet, when your defenses are down, then you must stop. And yet, if one does not, and ends up being an alcoholic, then one has sold his soul to the devil, for the Bible says the drunkard will not inherit the kingdom of God.

G. The Physical Argument

Put aside all thought of God and man's spiritual well being, and think only about the physical. And let us ask, is it wise to drink alcohol as far as the body is concerned? Well, we know that alcohol is both a poison and a drug. Within moments of having a drink, it will attack every major organ in the body, the liver taking the greatest beating. Alcohol is a food because it has calories. However the calories are empty, and the alcohol is not digested like other foods. Michael P. Dunlap, clinical psychologist says, "Alcohol is not digested like other foods. Instead of being converted and transported to cells and tissues, it avoids the normal digestive process and goes directly to the blood stream. About 20 percent of the alcohol is absorbed directly into the blood stream through the stomach walls and 80 percent is absorbed into the bloodstream through the small intestines." A little later he writes, "The brain, liver, heart, pancreas, lungs, kidneys and every other organ and tissue system are infiltrated by alcohol within minutes after it passes into the blood stream."

As soon as alcohol enters the body, the body fights it like a poison. It seeks to eliminate it as fast as possible and only a small percentage goes out like other waste. The rest comes out a persons breath or hair. The liver, which is the major organ that eliminates poison from the body, suffers the most from alcohol.

However, though the liver suffers the most, the organ that is affected the most is the brain, and it is

damaged irreparably by alcohol. Dunlap says, "Lack of oxygen supply to the brain can kill tens of thousands of brain cells every time a person becomes intoxicated."

Now the problem with that is that brain cells are never replaced. Dunlap further says, "One of the effects of drinking alcohol is 'blood-sludging' where the red blood cells clump together causing the small blood vessels to plug up, starve the tissues of oxygen, and cause cell death. This cell death is most serious, and often unrecognized, in the brain. With this increased pressure, capillaries break, create red eyes in the morning, or the red, blotchy skin seen on the heavy drinkers faces. Blood vessels can also break in the stomach and esophagus leading to hemorrhage, even death."

Well, the lists of damages and dangers of alcohol are long and ugly. We could speak of traffic accidents, murders, drownings, fetal alcohol syndrome and on and on. All of these are the result of alcohol alone. The list is so horrible, that one can hardly imagine how we can entertain the thought that Almighty God approves the consumption of a drop of alcohol, never mind enough to get merry.

Let me quote David Hocking again, who quotes Dr. Anderson Spiekard, a leading medical expert, "Heavy drinking has become almost as American as Super Bowl Sunday. The latest gallop pole on American drinking habits only confirms the suspicion that something is radically amiss. 81% of adults said they considered alcoholism to be a major national problem, and one out of three families reported that alcohol had caused trouble in their families. Concurrent with this seeming epidemic of alcohol-related problems, more and more evangelical Christians who used to oppose it find themselves relaxing their opposition to social drinking and adopting drinking habits that closely resemble that of American society as a whole. The long-range consequences of this trend are unclear. What is certain now is that members of the community who did oppose it are not immune from either the problems of alcohol abuse or the ravages of alcoholism or that of drugs.

"Alcoholism is the third largest health problem in the United States today. It damages directly the lives of one out of every four Americans. Alcoholism is not as rampant in the church, apparently, as it is in society at large, but it is growing seriously in that arena where we once got the strength to resist. There's a growing incident, within churches, of broken families and divorce. From this development alone, I can safely assume that alcoholism and other forms of chemical dependency are playing a much larger role than we commonly believe. There is no doubt about it that all of our studies on alcoholism and drug abuse reveal a direct connection with divorce and the breakup of marriages and families.

"A person who drinks two or three drinks three or more times a week is setting him or herself up for serious trouble and physical damage. The length of time varies from person to person, but generally over a period from seven to ten years this kind of drinking - which is described in America currently as social drinking and harmless - our studies now show will lead a person into direct alcoholism, even in the absence of a genetic pre-disposition. Men and women who are merely abusing alcohol are still in control of their own will, and unlike the average alcoholic, they can usually quit whenever they choose. The alcoholic, on the other hand, is one whose will has been captured by it, who quite literally cannot stop drinking. He or she is in the grips of a progressive and complete destruction of his physical, mental, and spiritual being. Alcohol abuse is a sin, according to the Bible. The Scripture is clear on this point, but once a person is an alcoholic, once he has allowed his will to be captured by alcohol through its abuse, he then becomes sick. He can no longer help himself. To tell an alcoholic to shape up and stop drinking, is like telling a man who has just jumped out of a nine story building to fall only three floors-it just isn't going to happen. The common perception of alcoholics is that they are hopeless cases. I wish it were possible to change the thinking of Americans on this. You could throw statistics at them, and yet seemingly it has little impact. The truth of the matter is that 60 to 70% of all alcoholics who enter treatment programs actually recover. That's a remarkable

statistic for any illness. The alcoholic literally cannot see himself as sick. He can sit in front of you, dead drunk, with a swollen red nose and a liver falling down to his pelvic brim, and he will still deny that his is an alcoholic..

"Alcohol is a mood-altering drunk that directly affects the part of our brain that controls inhibitions. We now know by research that everyone, regardless of religious understanding, has built-in prohibitions against certain kinds of behavior. This might have been granted to them by parental upbringing, or simply what we call the area of conscience alone. When these restraints are lowered through the use of alcohol, we find it much easier to violate our own moral standards. Christians who have any evidence of alcoholism in their family history—father, mother, sister, brother, grandfather, uncle—should never drink at all, not once. Research proves that you will become a chronic drinker. In the presence of a family history of alcoholism, any drinking is absolutely foolish, and may be suicidal..

"Finally, all Christians had better consider seriously the effect that alcohol has on the part of our brains that controls inhibitions. If one wonders why we are in such a moral crisis today, and why so few Christians are having an impact, perhaps we could look at the rise of social drinking among Christians. Some statistics done in evangelical churches prove that over half the membership drinks once or twice in any given week. There are many Christians that become totally outraged when a message is given that implies total abstinence. This is in direct conflict with a generation ago. To say that we have slipped in our feelings about alcoholism is the understatement of the year."

H. The Practical (Financial) Argument

From what I can find, alcohol has no practical value at all. But, on the other hand, there are huge dangers that go along with every drink. To top that off, it is a very expensive habit. I heard a little story of a man who had been converted to Christ out of alcoholism. And someone told him about the miracle where Jesus turned water into wine. He was not at all

impressed. He was much more impressed that Jesus had turned wine into milk. Alcohol had consumed his finances. Because of this, his children went without milk. Then he was converted, and his money now went into milk, instead of alcohol. And he thought that when Jesus turned wine into milk, that was the real miracle.

Wine, that is alcohol, has no physical value that I can find. Some people say they drink alcohol for its health benefits. There is truth to the health benefits in wine, but the facts are it is not in the alcohol, but in the grape juice. I think science has proved that some of the benefits of the grapes are lost in the fermentation process. So whatever benefits may be reaped by drinking wine, there are more benefits by drinking unfermented grape juice. I might add to that, that alcohol is an expensive habit, and a very dangerous one at very best. Practically speaking, in every way, it is a drain at best, and deadly at its worst.

Some people argue that they go to the bar and drink in moderation, and it actually opens up a new avenue for witnessing to people. I have not the slightest doubt that more Christians are lost in the bar than non Christians are won to Christ in the bar. Pastor Bill McLeod in his little booklet on wine says, "I have been preaching now for over fifty years and I have never heard of a sinner being won to Christ in this way. I am not saying it never happened. I am simply saying I have never heard it."

Against any practical value that could possibly be argued, the practical harm of alcohol would outweigh it a million to 1. Augustine said almost 2000 years ago, "Wine-drinking is the mother of all mischief, the root of crimes, the spring of vices, the whirlwind of the brain, the overthrow of the senses, the tempest of the tongue, the ruin of the body, the shame of life, the stain of honesty, and the plague and corruption of the soul". That quote came from Pastor Bill MacLeod in *Wine the Mocker*, pages 5-6.

If we told a few stories to the full of what alcohol has done in families alone, we would condemn it very quickly. Billy Sunday preached against wine. Here is

what he said, "It's raw material was the youth of America and its finished product was harlots, drunkards, thieves and murderers" (MacLeod: Wine the Mocker pg. 5-6).

MacLeod then goes on quoting Billy Sunday in this poem:

"I am the greatest criminal in history.
I have killed more men than have fallen in all the wars of the world.
I have turned men into brute beasts.
I have made millions of homes unhappy.
I have transformed many ambitious youths into hopeless parasites.
I have smoothed the downward path for millions.
I destroy the weak and weaken the strong.
I make a wise man a fool and turn a fool into a sniveling idiot.
I ensnare the innocent in the vilest of immorality.
The abandoned wife knows me.
The parents, whose child has bowed their heads in sorrow, know me.
I have utterly ruined millions and will never be satisfied until I have ruined millions more.
I AM ALCOHOL.

No line in that poem is an exaggeration. If every story of the power of alcohol were told, we would say, "Write a poem that does justice to the truth!" As bad as alcohol is, it leads to worse. In the article in the SOS magazine I picked up in the RCMP office in Fort Vermillion was a poem written by a young lady addicted to Chrystal Meth. She was later released from jail, but found dead not long after and with her they found this poem. This poem is about drugs, but much of it could be written for alcohol, and alcohol is the gateway to such drugs.

I destroy homes, I tear families apart,
I take your children, and that's just the start.
I'm more costly than diamonds, more precious than gold,
The sorrow I bring is a sight to behold.
If you need me, remember I'm easily found,
I live all around you - in schools and in town.
I live with the rich, I live with the poor,

I live down the street, and maybe next door.
I'm made in a lab, but not what you think,
I can be made under the kitchen sink.
In your child's closet, and even in the woods,
If this scares you to death, well it certainly
should.

I have many names, but there's one you know best,
I'm sure you've heard of me, my name's Crystal Meth.
My power is awesome, try me you'll see,
But if you do, you may never break free.
Just try me once and I might let you go,
But try me twice and I'll own your soul.
When I possess you, you'll steal and you'll lie,
You'll do what you have to - just to get high.
The crimes you'll commit for my narcotic charms,
Will be worth the pleasure you feel in my arms.
You'll lie to your mother, you'll steal from your
dad,
When you see their tears, you should feel sad.
But you'll forget your morals and how you were
raised,
I'll be your conscience, I'll teach you my ways.
I'll take kids from parents, and parents from kids,
I turn people from God and separate friends.
I'll take everything from you, your looks and your
pride,
I'll be with you always - right by your side.
You'll give up everything - your family, your home,
Your friends, your money, then you'll be alone.
I'll take and take, till you have nothing to give,
When I'm finished with you, you'll be lucky to live.
If you try me be warned, this is no game,
If given the chance, I'll drive you insane.
I'll ravish your body, I'll control your mind,
I'll own you completely, your soul will be mine.
The nightmare I'll give you while lying in bed,
The voices you'll hear from inside of your head.
The sweats, the shakes, the visions you'll see,
I want you to know, these are all gifts from me.
But then it's too late, and you'll know in your
heart,
That you are mine, and we shall not part.
You'll regret that you tried me, as they always do,
But you came to me, not I to you.
You knew this would happen, many times you were told,
But you challenged my power and chose to be bold.
You could have said no, and just walked away,

If you could live that day over, now what would you say?

I'll be your master, you will be my slave,
I'll even go with you, when you go to your grave.
Now that you have met me, what will you do?
Will you try me or not? It's all up to you.
I can bring you more misery than words can tell,
Come take my hand, let me lead you to hell.

In light of that, how could we conclude that God says, "Well, wine is good. You may drink enough to be merry, but, be sure you stop there." Jesus taught us to pray to the Lord and say, "Lead us not into temptation." If the wine God favors and Jesus made was fermented, then surely He has led us into temptation. I know the god that says, "A little alcohol is perfectly fine". His name is Appolyon, or the destroyer. I know who he is. And when he is all done with those who drink a little, to their surprise, they will meet him in hell.

I. The Demonic Argument

If I were the devil, I would help people as much with the Scriptures as possible, especially such as John 2. I would choose some of my best demons to influence the world and Christians that alcohol is good. I would use arguments of health, and prestige and the Bible to make people think it is OK. I would try to shut up every preacher, not to talk about it. When preachers go against it, I would do everything possible to cause the people to be offended, and give that pastor a rough time. I would seek to protect this little trick, and try to use it to rope as many as possible into the clutches of this vice. And then I would try to cover up, the deaths it causes, and make it look good in the eyes of the public. I would try to get pastors to believe it is OK. And if I couldn't get them to think it was OK, I would try to keep them from studying into it and possibly finding out the truth. Yessiree, this thing is pay dirt for hell. This thing will cause the involvement of many demons but it will bring me millions of otherwise unreachable people. This thing will be a means to bring me people from inside the church. I have a hard time getting into the church, but if I can get alcohol as an acceptable Christian practice, then I

can reach right into that hardest to reach area. If I were the devil, I would do exactly what he is doing; and do it as effectively as he is, if I only could.

J. The humanistic Argument

Let us say that God in the Bible allows for the use of some alcohol. We know that a good many who allow some use for themselves also become alcoholics and it leads to much sin. And here am I, a mere human. My understanding of things is as far lower than Gods as the earth is lower than the third heaven, trillions of light years lower. And here, I, as a mere human, give advice, that if all followed it, there would be a huge reduction of health problems, murders, drownings, car accidents, abuse, sexual sinning and on and on. My advice becomes safer to follow than God's. Can you imagine that? Well, I can't, nor is it true.

You see, let us say that God condones the use of alcohol if it is kept in moderation. We know that those who use it in moderation are always in danger of falling into sin or leading others into sin. And many, say, "God allows the use of some alcohol, but it is not wise to use it." Even many non Christians say it is not wise to drink any. Has man of a sudden become smarter than God? Unthinkable! So, this humanistic argument gives evidence that God does not allow for the consumption of small amounts of alcohol.

CONCL: So we conclude our second to last message. In this seventh and last section I have argued from Scripture, from the use of various words, from science, from the law, from theology, from the physical, from the practical, from the demonic world and from humanistic thinking, that consuming alcohol is anti-Biblical. It is against God. It is wrong. It is sin.