

Booze, Baptists & the Bible

Part 2

Text: Eph. 5:18

Introduction:

1. The aim of this sermon: To present what the Bible teaches on this hotly debated and contentious issue. Remember, the Word of God is the final authority for faith and practice so we must lay aside personal opinion and bias and submit ourselves to where the Scriptures lead on this issue.
2. We are considering this topic under four headings as follows:
 - Some Preliminary Definitions from Scripture.
 - Some Plain Prohibitions of Scripture.
 - Some Powerful Exhortations from Scripture.
 - Some Pertinent Illustrations from Scripture.
 - Some Objections misusing Scripture.
3. We will briefly review what we covered in last lesson and continue with our outline from there.

I. PRELIMINARY DEFINITIONS FROM SCRIPTURE

- A. The Word 'wine' is a Generic Term in the Bible**
- B. Some Key Words in the Old & New Testaments**
- C. The Context is Key to Determine which Wine is in View**
- D. The Principle of Comparing Scripture with Scripture Vital**

II. PLAIN PROHIBITIONS OF SCRIPTURE

Why should we totally avoid intoxicating liquor? Because of the plain warnings and prohibitions of Scripture. It is of interest how many of these are found in the Book of Proverbs which is the Bible's manual on godly wisdom.

- A. Don't Be Deceived by It (Prov. 20:1)**
- B. Don't Even Look at It (Prov 23:29-35)**
- C. Don't Lower Yourself to It (Prov. 31:4-7)**

1. Who Wine is NOT for (Vs. 4-5)
 - a. **F.B. Meyer:** "In these words of King Lemuel, we notice a mother's influence in the education of her son. A woman is never more nobly occupied than in warning her son against the seductions of pleasure and in giving him a high sense of that which is right. The sins of the flesh have been the peculiar snare of royal personages, preventing them from pleading the cause of the desolate and ministering judgment to the poor and needy. What a contrast to the glory of the sovereignty of Jesus!"
 - b. These verses contain another clear warning to those in leadership concerning the danger of intoxicating wine.

- c. “Lest they drink, and forget the law” = wine has the potential to cause one to forget the commandments of God’s Word.
 - d. “pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted” = wine has the potential to cause one to make serious errors in judgment.
 - e. Lev. 10:8-10 – God’s command to Aaron and his sons.
 - f. Note: As New Testament saints, we have been made kings and priests unto God. Therefore, intoxicating liquor should have no part in our lives.
 - i. 1 Peter 2:9 “But ye *are* a chosen generation, **a royal priesthood**, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:”
 - ii. Rev. 1:5-6 “And from Jesus Christ, *who is* the faithful witness, *and* the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, **And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father;** to him *be* glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”
2. Who Wine IS for (Vs. 6-7)
- a. “him that is ready to perish” = this would be for the purposes of deadening the pain and suffering associated with dying. The “strong drink” would function like an ancient pain killer.
 - b. “wine unto those that be of heavy hearts” = remember context. Wine is **not** for kings or princes. Therefore, the picture is of wine being given to those beneath that position. As kings and priests in Christ (New Testament Saints), we do not fall into this category!

D. Don’t Be Amongst It (Prov. 23:20-21)

- 1. The word ‘winebibber’ is made up of two words ‘wine’ and ‘bibber’ which means “A tippler; a man given to drinking; chiefly used in composition, as winebibber.” (Webster) So very simply, we are not to be in the company of those who are wine drinkers.
- 2. Note: It is interesting to note that gluttony is linked here with the practice of wine drinking.
- 3. Practically speaking this means avoiding the end of year Christmas parties, the work outings to the pub, wedding receptions where alcohol is served and compromised family functions where alcohol will be present. Avoiding these scenes is a part of our separation from the world as believers.

E. Don’t Be Intoxicated with It (Eph. 5:18)

The Bible warns repeatedly and unambiguously on the sin of drunkenness. For example:

- 1. Drunkards will not inherit the kingdom of God – 1 Cor. 6:9-10 “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor **drunkards**, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.” Make no mistake about it. The bottle has the power to take a man all the way to hell fire except he repent!

2. Drunkenness is a cause for church discipline – 1 Cor. 5:11 “But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.”
3. Drunkenness has a Divine Woe pronounced against it - Isaiah 5:11-12, 22 “Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, *that* they may follow **strong drink**; that continue until night, *till* **wine inflame them!** (12) And the harp, and the viol, the tabret, and pipe, and **wine**, are in their feasts: but they regard not the work of the LORD, neither consider the operation of his hands. (22) Woe unto *them that are mighty to drink wine*, and men of strength to **mingle strong drink:**” Isaiah 28:1 “Woe to the crown of pride, to **the drunkards of Ephraim**, whose glorious beauty *is* a fading flower, which *are* on the head of the fat valleys of them that are overcome with wine!”
4. Drunkenness is to have **no part** in the believer’s conduct – Rom. 13:13 “Let us walk **honestly**, as in the day; not in rioting and **drunkenness**, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.”
5. Drunkenness is a work of the flesh, not the Spirit – Gal. 5:19-21 “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, **drunkenness, revellings** (partying, carousing), and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told *you* in time past, that they which do such things **shall not inherit the kingdom of God.**” In contrast to walking after the flesh, we are to:
 - a. Walk in the Spirit – Gal. 5:16 “This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.”
 - b. Bear fruit in the Spirit – “Gal. 5:22-23” But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, **temperance**: against such there is no law.”
6. Objection: “I drink but don’t get drunk so I am ok.”
 - a. Challenge: Modern research on the effects of even small amounts of alcohol refute this argument.
 - i. Keith Malcomson notes, “The pathway to drunkenness begins with one drink and the effect is almost immediate with the very first intake. This is true even if the effect is totally unnoticed by all. **Medical science tells us that the effect of alcohol reaches the brain within one minute of consumption...**When taken, alcohol passes from the stomach into the small intestine, where it is rapidly absorbed into the blood. As a result, it can be detected in the blood within three minutes of the first intake.”
 - ii. The Australian Government Department of Health confirms that alcohol only takes “a few minutes to reach

- the brain in an average, healthy person.”¹ (See screenshot)
- iii. Secular research outlines several stages of intoxication² (Refer screenshots).
 - iv. Drug and Alcohol Services South Australia Paper on BAC and legal limits.³
 - “One standard drink per hour will raise your BAC by approximately 0.01–0.03g%.”
 - How alcohol affects driving and similar skills (refer PowerPoint).
 - Laws on BAC in South Australia (refer PowerPoint).
 - v. Illustration: “Research has proven that there is a 5 to 15% decrease in response time after drinking just minimal amounts of alcohol (0.03% alcohol in bloodstream). This is indeed serious when we take note that the legal limit in the United States and the United Kingdom is 0.08% (80mg), in Germany and France is 0.05% (50mg), and in Norway and Sweden is 0.02% (20mg). This means that in most countries you can drive within the legal limit yet with a greatly lowered response time. This has also been repeatedly confirmed by various researchers who have recorded this kind of decrease in response time. One such test was carried out on young trainee doctors. They took two separate medical tests but before one of them they drank one glass of wine. All of them thought they had performed better on that particular test but all of them had in fact done far worse. The same happened in the rate of accuracy by typists after just one drink, and young drivers in their reaction/reflex time. All of these tests revealed a dramatic drop in the normal skills of individuals who were not at all aware of it after just one drink.” (Malcomson)
 - vi. There is an interesting study published by “The Lancet” Vol 392, September 22, 2018 entitled “No level of alcohol consumption improves health” where they cite “the Global Burden of Diseases, Injuries, and Risk Factors Study (GBD) 2016 for 195 countries and territories, 1990–2016” They claim that it “is the most comprehensive estimate of the global burden of alcohol use to date.” They state: “The conclusions of the study are clear and unambiguous: alcohol is a colossal global health issue

¹ <https://www.health.gov.au/health-topics/alcohol/about-alcohol/what-are-the-effects-of-alcohol> Viewed 6/5/21.

² <https://www.nm.org/healthbeat/healthy-tips/alcohol-and-the-brain> Viewed 6/5/21.

³ <https://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au> Viewed 6/5/21.

and small reductions in health-related harms at low levels of alcohol intake are outweighed by the increased risk of other health-related harms, including cancer. There is strong support here for the guideline published by the Chief Medical Officer of the UK who found that there is “no safe level of alcohol consumption.”⁴

- b. Challenge: Are you puffed up in pride? David Wilkerson in his book “Sipping Saints” warns, “I see in all these sipping saints a kind of condescending pride...They look down from their high place of “responsible moderation” on those...poor weaklings who were “alcohol prone.” They seem to be saying, “The stuff in my glass is different. My drink doesn’t have any habituating power in it. I’m master over my glass – it will never hook me!” It is almost as if they think Jesus turned their wine into water. Every time a Christian lifts the glass to his lips, he is saying, “Millions have been destroyed by this! The world is filled with terror and destruction it has caused! Men die on the streets, held by its power! But it can never touch me! I’m too responsible! I’m too strong! I’m too much in control! Millions of others were weak and fell under its power – but me? – never!” What pride! What arrogance to set oneself above the human frailties of multiplied millions!”
- c. Challenge: The Bible warns not only against sin but against embarking on the path that leads to it.
 - i. Prov. 4:14 “Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil *men*. **Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away.**”
 - ii. We pray “And **lead us not** into temptation, but deliver us from evil” (Matt. 6:13). Even a glass or two well and truly starts you places you in the grips of temptation. That is why we are exhorted to “Look not...upon the wine” (Prov. 23:31). We are not to even lust after it with our eyes, let alone indulge in a glass or two!
 - iii. Illustration: The young man void of understanding (Prov. 7:6-23) – “And beheld among the simple ones, I discerned among the youths, a young man void of understanding, **Passing through the street near her corner; and he went the way to her house,** In the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night:” (Vs. 7-9)
 - iv. Wilkerson: “The regular, moderate drinker is constantly kindling a small flame that can break forth at any time into

⁴ [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(18\)31571-X/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(18)31571-X/fulltext). Viewed 2/5/21.

a raging river of desire. At any moment, the tippler can be touched by the hand of terror and the habituating process can be accelerated. Alcoholism is never more than just one more drink away.”

- d. Challenge: How drunk do you have to be before you have crossed the line? Wilkerson asks some searching questions on this point: “The questions that really hound me are these: At what point will the church condemn drinking? At what point does it become sinful for Christians to drink? Where is the line between responsible and irresponsible drinking? Does one first have to stagger down the street like a maniac? Is it between light-headedness and silliness? Is it all right if it causes one to be talkative and loose, but wrong if it goes a step further and turns to violence and cursing? Is drinking good if it causes a depressed person to relax, but wrong if it causes him to gossip? Is it right or wrong only by the way a person reacts to its power? Can two men sit side by side, drinking the same amount of alcohol – react differently – and one be right, the other wrong? One man becomes happy and kind – the other, mean and violent. Do we justify the kind drinker and condemn the violent one? Is a Christian justified in drinking to the point he is able to handle it with dignity? Does it suddenly become sinful at the point he makes a fool of himself? Is he a responsible drinker if he can hold down three or four cocktails, irresponsible if he vomits?”
- e. Illustration: Daniel a godly example of a total abstainer (Dan. 1:8). If the ‘wine’ was just grape juice, there would not have been any O.T. law prohibiting Daniel and his friends drinking it. Clearly it was intoxicating, hence why Daniel and his friends abstained from it. Interestingly, Daniel and his three friends ended up being intellectually superior to the other students (Vs. 19-20). Could it be that their minds were clearer and sharper than the other students who indulged in Babylon’s Booze?

III. POWERFUL EXHORTATIONS OF SCRIPTURE

There are other Scriptural principles that have a bearing on this subject. While these verses may not make a direct reference to alcoholic wine and the believer, they certainly apply to the issue.

A. The Exhortation to Sobriety (1 Peter 1:13)

1. There are at least 12 references to the believer and sobriety in the New Testament (2 Cor. 5:13; 1 Thess. 5:6, 8; 1 Tim. 3:2, 11; Titus 1:8, 2:2, 4, 6; 1 Peter 1:13, 4:7, 5:8).
2. Definition of the word ‘sober’. It literally means ‘wineless’, not under the influence of intoxicating liquor. Vines Expository dictionary defines the Greek word ‘nepho’ (sober) as follows: “signifies to be

- free from the influence of intoxicants.”
3. Everyone in the church is exhorted to soberness.
 - a. Pastors are exhorted to be sober (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8)
 - b. Deacons’ wives are exhorted to be sober (1 Tim. 3:11)
 - c. Older men are exhorted to be sober (Titus 2:2)
 - d. Older women are exhorted to teach the younger women to be sober (Titus 2:3-4)
 - e. Young men are exhorted to be sober (Titus 2:6)
 4. Other exhortations to soberness
 - a. 1 Thess. 5:6 Therefore let us not sleep, as *do* others; but let us watch and be **sober**.
 - b. 1 Thess. 5:8 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.
 - c. 1 Peter 1:13 Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be **sober**, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;
 - d. 1 Peter 4:7 But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore **sober**, and watch unto prayer.
 - a. 1 Peter 5:8 Be **sober**, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:
 5. Challenge: How can you as a believer be obedient to the command of God’s Word to be sober with a glass of mind-altering alcoholic beverage in your hand? The only way to obey this command properly is to abstain from it entirely.
- B. The Exhortation to Watchfulness (1 Thess. 5:6; 1 Pet. 4:7)**
1. 1 Thess. 5:6 “Therefore let us not sleep, as *do* others; but let us **watch** and be **sober**.”
 2. 1 Peter 4:7 “But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore **sober**, and **watch** unto prayer.”
 3. The believer is called upon to be awake and alert spiritually and mentally. To have my mind brought under the influence of intoxicating liquor, even in the early stages of intoxication, is surely inconsistent with the sober, vigilant and watchful mindset I am called to as a believer.

Conclusion: Ryan McGrath Testimony