

*Social Drinking:
Opinion or Conviction?*

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

A pastor must preach the Word of God in season and out of season. That means he must deal with trends on the basis of truth, no matter the strength of the opposition that may come against him. The Bible is true, and a pastor cannot compromise himself on this point.

Today's Christianity is deep with half-truths and practices that are rooted in opinions that have a partial scriptural foundation. One such trend is social drinking and the idea that one can take wine or strong drink in moderation and still consider himself to be obedient to the Word of God.

This is a very pointed booklet. Jesus Christ was a friend of publicans and sinners, yet the Scriptures show that He never compromised His obedience to the plan of the Father. When a cultural practice comes in conflict with the Word of God, one needs to weigh heavily the importance of obeying God.

A servant of God reflects the One Whom he serves. What is pleasing to God should be the only issue. You will see in these pages that to obey is better than sacrifice and that to refuse social drinking is a small price to pay for not offending God.

Chapter One

WHAT THE SCRIPTURES SAY
ABOUT WINE AND
STRONG DRINK

“Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes?”

“They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine.

“Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright.

“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” (Proverbs 23:29-33).

“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" (Habakkuk 2:15).

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

Let's do away with some of the arguments developed regarding social drinking. Look carefully at the Scriptures and take them to heart.

The verses are clear. According to Proverbs 23:31, not only should we not drink the wine, but also we should not look upon it. Will you argue with that point? Do you want to start cutting things out of the Bible? People who drink socially make good evil and evil good. This is what the Bible says.

There is a difference between the fruit of the vine and fermented wine. According to isagogics, which is a study of the historical frame of reference, there was the most fantastic fruit of the vine, and it wasn't allowed to ferment.

Fermentation is a process of enzymes breaking down, causing naturally sweet, harmless juices, for instance, to become alcoholic beverages. Often, yeast, which is leaven, is used to promote the chemical breakdown. Unless the fermentation process is controlled, the substance ultimately becomes extremely bitter and un-

palatable.

What Christians refer to as the Lord's Supper was a Passover meal (Luke 22:15-20). Nothing in the Passover meal could be fermented. No leaven was allowed. Where, then, do people get the idea that drinking fermented wine and other alcoholic beverages is all right, when the Word of God says dogmatically that it is *not* all right?

Zephaniah spoke of Jerusalem as a city that did not obey the voice of God, a city that did not receive His correction, and a city that would not draw near to Him (see Zephaniah 3:1-5). Turn this around to God's people today. If we are His people—or if, at least, we desire to be His people—we must observe these things: Obey the Word of God, receive instruction, trust the Lord, and draw near to Him.

That is all that God asks. He isn't asking us to be perfect. He asks that we would be willing to be corrected. We need to be willing to be corrected in every area of our lives.

Stay in Tune with the Word

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

“That the man of God may be perfect, thor-

oughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

The Great Commission is in the Bible. The last thing Christ said before He ascended to the right hand of the Father was "Go!" Go into all the world, starting in Jerusalem then Judea and Samaria (see Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:15-16; John 20:20-22; Acts 1:8).

Why? Because our God is looking for fruit—not just at home but all over the world. But first, He is looking for fruit in our own lives. We have to learn obedience. If we fail, we are not to quit—we are to rebound by confessing our sin to God, isolating it, getting up, and walking on with God. We make a conscious decision to be willing and obedient.

Be Ye Filled with the Spirit

"For [John the Baptist] shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy [Spirit] even from his mother's womb" (Luke 1:15).

Why would the Bible make this point about John the Baptist? Of all the things that could have been said about him, the fact that he did not drink was number one on the list.

Do you find it strange that God would say this? John was one of the greatest men born among women, and the thing that characterized him is that he would not drink wine or strong drink. You cannot argue this point without arguing against the Bible.

It is better to obey God than people. If someone offers you a drink socially, tell them right out that you have a conviction against it (Acts 5:29).

Why is this issue so important? God wants obedience from His children. A pastor is required to preach the whole counsel, and this trend in His Church is one that God wants to end today. Many people drink, supposedly in private, but they are doing something privately against the Truth. There are dear people who do it at home, alone and in quiet, but they have a real problem and end up missing church often.

Does this seem as though I am plucking corn on your Sabbath? Well, I can tell you that it is better that you are confronted with the issue now rather than at the Bema Seat of Christ. Would you rather that it not be mentioned at all and then have it brought up when you stand before the Lord?

Wouldn't you rather a pastor and a church take the best approach against possible evil?

Face it, if no one ever took a drink there would be no alcoholics and no drunken drivers killing people on the highways. As a pastor, I have to lead people into the best possible choices for their lives. I am not going to gamble with people's lives and take risks with interpretations.

I must present the Word of God as it is. If, because of our obedience, some have made the right decision to stop this practice, then we have made a great effect for the Kingdom of God.

Chapter Two

OBEDIENCE PRODUCES FRUIT IN OUR LIVES

“Consider the work of God: for who can make that straight, which he hath made crooked?” (Ecclesiastes 7:13).

In Mark 11:12-13, Jesus was looking for fruit from the fig tree, and He didn’t see fruit. He saw only leaves, and He cursed it. The next day the disciples saw the same tree and it was cursed, withered to its roots.

Dear friend, it is only normal for the Lord Jesus Christ to look for fruit in our lives. “Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

“Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

“A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

“Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit

is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

“Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them”
(Matthew 7:16-20).

The good tree cannot continually bring forth evil fruit; neither can the corrupt or evil tree continually bring forth good fruit. What does God do with the tree—not the person, but the tree? He takes it up and casts it into the fire.

“Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is.

“If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.

“If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire” (1 Corinthians 3:13-15).

Consider the amazing work of God. The whole key to our lives is obedience to the will of God. Obedience brings fruit to our lives.

When I was young, our family planted gardens every single year, and we took good care of them. We raised every kind of vegetable, such as corn, string beans, cucumbers, and peas, for the local factory. But every once in a while, animals would attack the garden and destroy the fruit. At other times, it wouldn’t rain; and even though

we worked so hard, no fruit was produced.

Every Christian will be tested for fruit. The day will declare it, and the Holy Spirit will reveal it. What isn't fruit shall be cast into the fire. For what is fruit, we shall receive rewards—gold, silver, and precious stones. But even if we suffer loss, we are still saved, if by fire.

Obey from the Heart

What is God after? Fruit. This does not mean that you have to get so many souls saved, but that there has to be fruit from your life. In Romans 6:17, Paul thanked God for those who “were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.” He went on to say that these people *were* servants of sin but having obeyed, are now servants of righteousness. They bring forth fruit unto holiness and everlasting life (Romans 6:18-22).

God is looking for fruit from every single Christian—the fruit of the Holy Spirit, which is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and temperance.

Every parent should look for fruit in their children without legislating righteousness. There should be fruit unto holiness and ever-

lasting life.

“But if thou shalt indeed obey his voice, and do all that I speak; then I will be an enemy unto thine enemies, and an adversary unto thine adversaries” (Exodus 23:22). If God is acting on your behalf, you will last a long time.

Chapter Three

REVENGING DISOBEDIENCE

“If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land” (Isaiah 1:19).

If we will obey God and His Word, we shall spend our days in prosperity. But if we do not, we will die without experiencing knowledge (see Job 36:11-12).

“(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds;)

“Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

“And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled” (2 Corinthians 10:4-6).

Jesus, in His humanity, learned obedience by the things He allowed the Father to work in His life. Therefore, we can also learn obedience. Do

not be occupied with failure if you have disobeyed God. Do not be condemned if you have disobeyed. Just purpose in your heart to learn obedience.

We are to revenge disobedience with obedience. Revenge it. Have you ever seen anyone who is revengeful? Though we are not to practice revenge toward people, that is how we are to act towards disobedience. We are to come against disobedience with a forceful, purposeful attitude.

Purpose to honor every Word of God and learn obedience. Obedience to God's Word is the thing that pleases God. It pleases Him when we are willing and obedient. When we fail, we are to use rebound.

In other words, if you go through a hard time, use the principle of rebound (Proverbs 24:16). Mean business, and sincerely commit the matter to God (Proverbs 16:3). Rebound instantly and turn your back on your sin, even if it requires a process of discipline for a season. And remember that our faith obedience brings glory to God.

Risky Positions

“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven;

but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

“Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

“And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matthew 7:21-23).

The Word makes it clear that this will happen. No one wants to risk being in this position. The Bible tells us in Mark 12:30-31 to “love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind, soul and body [(meaning strength)] and love thy neighbor as thyself.” In this passage, “love” speaks of unconditional love toward the will of God—whether you understand it or not.

When we make God Almighty the object of our lives, then we are filled with His subjective love through the Holy Spirit. Obedience to His desires will be our desire. God’s power in us always causes us to triumph.

CONCLUSION

Obedience means yielding and serving (Romans 6:16-17). There is no rebellion in obedience (1 Samuel 12:14). Obedience purifies the soul like no other thing can (1 Peter 1:22).

Obedience is not a works program. In Romans 1:5, it is a grace program through faith, which ends up taking the Gospel to all nations. Obedience is a grace program. It is receiving grace in the living Word of God through the filling of the Spirit. It is not difficult. It is fun, because you have no guilt or shame. If you are going through a process of transformation, a pastor should not condemn you. He is there to help, not to legislate righteousness, but to point out how to receive righteousness.

“And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever.

“And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet

resting places” (Isaiah 32:17-18).

Obedience is not performing works such as keeping Saturday as the Sabbath or doing something to earn a blessing. Obedience is receiving God’s life and having it become abundant; bearing fruit in your own soul and having it produce fruit in others through you. That is obedience: the progressive sanctification of the Holy Spirit (1 Peter 1:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:13).

May God give us the understanding to stand against trends such as social drinking as He gives us the power to live moment by moment in complete agreement to His Holy Word.

The following is a list of scriptures that relate to the issue of wine, strong drink, and drinking:

Genesis 9:20-24: Noah became drunk and was found uncovered in his tent.

Genesis 19:30-38: Lot was made to drink wine and then had sex with his daughters, which produced the Amorites and the Moabites—two rebellious groups of people.

Genesis 27:25: Isaac drank wine and then was open to deception. As a result, he gave away his firstborn's blessing.

Exodus 32:6: Drinking leads to partying and idolatry (also see 1 Corinthians 10:7).

Leviticus 10:9: Conduct prescribed for priests: do not drink wine.

Numbers 6:3: Law of the Nazarite was to stay separate from wine and strong drink.

Deuteronomy 21:20: A rebellious son compared to a drunkard.

Deuteronomy 29:2-6: Children of Israel did not drink wine or similar drink.

Deuteronomy 32:14: Drink the pure blood of the grape (grape juice).

Judges 13:4, 7, 14: Drink no wine or similar drink.

1 Samuel 1:14-15: Hannah did not drink wine or strong drink.

1 Samuel 25:32-38: Nabal was drunk.

2 Samuel 11:13: David got Uriah drunk in an effort to cover his sin with Bathsheba.

2 Samuel 13:28-29: Amnon became drunk, and then he was killed by Absalom.

1 Kings 16:8-10: Zimri was drunk and killed a man.

1 Kings 20:12-21: Ben Haddad and the kings were drinking.

Esther 1:5-22: King Ahasuerus was drinking.

Job 1:13, 18: Job's children were drinking wine before they were killed.

Psalms 107:27: Drunkards can't walk right.

Proverbs 4:14-17: Wicked men "drink the wine of violence."

Proverbs 20:1: Wine is called a mocker, strong drink a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise.

Proverbs 21:17: He who loves pleasure is called a poor man. He who loves wine and oil will not be rich.

Proverbs 23:21, 29-33; 26:9: The sorrowful consequences of drinking.

Proverbs 31:4-5: It is not for kings and princes to drink wine.

Ecclesiastes 2:3: Giving oneself to wine is folly to the wise.

Ecclesiastes 10:17-18: Drunkenness causes decay.

Isaiah 5:11-12: Woe to those who drink early in the morning and throughout the day.

Isaiah 5:22-23: Woe to strong men who drink.

Isaiah 19:14: A drunken man staggers in his vomit.

Isaiah 22:13: Folly of a life filled with eating and drinking.

Isaiah 24:9, 11, 20: Bitterness comes to those who drink and are left crying for wine in the streets as punishment.

Isaiah 28:1, 3, 7: Wine makes glory become as a fading flower, becomes a crown for pride, causes those who take it to err in vision and stumble in judgment.

Isaiah 29:8: Drinking results in an empty, faint soul.

Isaiah 56:10-12: The blind watchmen only slumber and drink strong drink.

Jeremiah 23:9: Wine overcomes a drunken man.

Jeremiah 35:5, 6, 8, 14: Rebellion related to drinking of wine.

Jeremiah 48:26: Drunkenness is related to magnifying self against God.

Lamentations 4:21: Drunkenness leads to nakedness.

Ezekiel 44:21: Priests were told not to drink wine before they entered the inner court.

Daniel 1:5, 8, 16: Better youth and health for those who avoid wine.

Daniel 5:1-31: Mocking of God and judgment results from drinking wine.

Daniel 5: 23: Drinking wine leads to idolatry.

Hosea 3:1: Wine associated with idolatry and whoredoms.

Hosea 4:11: Wine and whoredoms steal away the heart.

Hosea 7:5: Wine associated with scorners.

Joel 1:5: Animal desire for wine.

Joel 3:3: Girl sold for wine so that others might drink.

Amos 2:8, 12: Wine linked with idolatry.

Amos 4:1: Drunkards oppress the poor, crush the needy.

Amos 6:6: Those who drink are insensitive in identifying with those in distress.

Micah 2:11: False prophets speak of wine and strong drink.

Nahum 1:10: Drunkards are devoured.

Habakkuk 2:5, 15-16: Wine related to the proud, the enlarged desire of hell, and to nakedness.

Habakkuk 2:15: Warnings against those who give their neighbor strong drink.

Matthew 24:48-51: Wine associated with violence and with those

who have portion with hypocrites.

Matthew 26:29 Jesus drank of the fruit of the vine, which is grape juice.

Mark 15:23: Jesus did not drink wine.

Luke 1:15: Jesus Christ would not drink wine or strong drink.

Luke 12:45: Wine again associated with violence.

Luke 21:34: Warning against being out of control under the influence of wine.

Acts 2:15: The disciples were not drunk.

Romans 13:13: Need to walk soberly and stay aware of the needs of men and of God.

Romans 14:21: Wisdom involves staying away from wine so as not to cause a brother to stumble.

1 Corinthians 5:11: Christians cannot keep company with drunkards.

1 Corinthians 6:10: Drunkards "shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

1 Corinthians 11:21, 29: Drunkenness at the Lord's table is sin.

Galatians 5:21: Drunkards will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Ephesians 5:18: Be filled with the Spirit rather than be drunk with wine.

1 Thessalonians 5:5-7: People drink in darkness because their works are evil.

1 Timothy 3:3, 8, 11, 12: Elders, deacons, women, and leaders in church should not be given to drinking wine.