

Lesson 6 – ALCOHOL: DRUNKENNESS AND DRINKING

Introduction

- A. Strong drink is a social menace - the most prevalent source of drug abuse in the country.
- B. Chief concern with alcohol consumption is the spiritual ruin it works.

I. Drunkenness is Sinful - a Work of the Flesh.

A. Evil Effects:

1. What does Solomon say about the effects of wine and strong drink? Prov. 20:1
2. What is wine's physical effect? Prov. 23:29-35 Isa. 19:14,28:7 Ps. 107:27
3. What are wine's mental effects? Hosea 4:11 Lev. 10:9,10
4. What are wine's moral and spiritual effects? Isa. 5:11,12 and 22,23; Eph. 5:18 Prov. 23:33
Note cases of Noah (Gen. 9:20 and Lot (Gen. 19:32).

B. Therefore Strongly Condemned by Scripture

1. Drunkenness is prohibited along with what things which tend to keep it company? Rom. 13:13
2. What temporal penalty is assigned to drunkenness? 1 Cor. 5:11
3. What eternal penalty? 1 Cor. 6:9,10

C. When is One Drunk?

1. Physical indications most usually cited: Slurred speech, staggering and stupor. These are only the most advanced and obvious symptoms.
2. Mental condition is a very significant factor.
 - a. "The consumption of even small amounts causes a loss of judgment, of memory and of the ability to perform tasks which require marked concentration or mental efforts."
(Encyclopedia Americana)
Therefore one tenth of one per cent alcohol in the blood or less in some cases is enough to be charged with drunken driving.
 - b. "Almost immediately after it hits the stomach, alcohol is coursing through the blood stream to the central nervous system, where it starts to slow down, or anesthetize, brain activities. Though it is a depressant, the initial subjective feeling that it creates is just the opposite, as the barriers of self-control and restraint are lifted and the drinker does or says things that his well-trained sober self usually forbids. Only later, after a number of drinks, are the motor centers of the brain overtly affected, causing uncertain steps and hand movements." *Time, 4/22/74*
3. Sober is absolute opposite of drunk. When absolutely sober then absolutely not drunk.

II. Strong Drink is Sinful

- A. Semantic problem: 13 or more Hebrew and Greek words translated "wine" in the Bible.
1. Sometimes suggests intoxicating drink, sometimes not. e.g. Isa. 65:8 Joel 2:24 Prov. 3:10
 2. Seems to have been used as we use word "cider", sometimes hard, sometimes not.
- B. "Wine" both commended and condemned in the Scripture
1. Wine commended as food: (note the context):
 - a. Eccl. 2:24; 9:7
 - b. Ps. 104:14,15
 2. But "strong drink" is condemned.
 - a. Prov. 20:1 23:29-32 31:4,5 Isa. 5:11,22 Hab. 2:15,16
 - b. These passages urge total abstinence from strong drink.
 3. *Question: What was the difference?*
- C. What was this "strong drink"?
1. Maximum alcohol content without distillation around 14%.
 2. Palestinian wines did not reach more than 8%.
 3. In ancient times wine, before it was drunk as a table drink, was always mixed with water (Rev. 14:10). The ratio varied. Homer (Odyssey) refers to 20-1. Pliny (Natural History) says 8-1. Aristophanes mentions 3-2 as a strong mixture. The poet Hesiod, 3-1. The poet Euenos (5th cent. A.D.) 3-1. The Talmud refers to a mixture of 3-1. Plutarch states: "We call a mixture 'wine', although the larger of the component parts is water." Justin Martyr (2nd cent. A.D.), writing of the Lord's Supper, says, "...bread is brought, and wine and water."
 4. "Wine, usually diluted, graced nearly every table; to drink undiluted wine was considered intemperance" (Will Durant, *Caesar and Christ*, p. 71, Vol. III of his *Story of Civilization*).
- D. All modern alcoholic beverages, except beer, exceed 8% alcohol.
1. Distilled beverages are usually 45-50%. Modern fortified wine is 20%. Even ale is 10-14%.
 2. Which of these beverages would classify as "strong drink" by biblical standards?
 3. Beer contains from 4-6% alcohol. *How would it compare with the wine mixed with water of the ancient world?* *Less strong* ___ *a little stronger* ___ *much stronger* ___
- E. Alcohol is a drug.
1. Of alcohol: "even in small amounts it affects speech and balance and impairs judgment....the first thing to be depressed is the power of restraint." Changes in behavior and skill "begins with the beginning of drinking and advances steadily with the continuation of drinking. We know, too, that a vicious cycle is set up. The more we drink, the more our faculties and our judgment are lost (Neil Kessel and Henry Walton in *Alcoholism*, Penguin Books, 1969, p. 26,27). These two authors insist that the very idea of a legal level of alcohol concentration in the blood (in ref. to drinking and driving) is arbitrary and unrealistic since "the truth is that *some* impairment occurs with any drinking, one small whisky, half a pint of beer. The drinker is in the worst possible position to make the decision whether he is sake to drive or not" (p. 28).
 2. The appeal of alcoholic beverages is not in their taste but in their effect as a drug

F. I Peter 4:3 condemns the cocktail party and social drinking.

1. "revellings," Greek *komos*: "of feasts and drinking parties..." - Thayer.
2. "banquetings" or "carousings," Greek *potos*: "a drinking, carousing." - Thayer.

III. Drinking is Wrong

A. *What aspect of drinking is condemned by 1 Cor. 6:19,20?*

"Cocktail party social drinking can cause 'a great deal of damage' to brain cells, an anatomy professor at Medical College of South Carolina said here today." *Courier-Journal* 9-21-68.

B. *What danger in drinking does 1 Cor. 6:12 condemn?*

C. *What circumstance would make even the drinking of innocent (nonintoxicating) wine as a food wrong?* Rom. 14:21

Who is the most likely to cause others to be alcoholics? Other alcoholics? ___ Total abstainers? ___ Those who drink a little? ___

D. *Will social drinking of the merest amount of an alcoholic beverage harmonize with the principle of 1 Cor. 9:22,23?*

Will it pass the test of Phil. 4:8,9?

IV. Objections Made to Above Positions

A. "Jesus made and drank wine." Jn. 2:7-10 Mt. 11:18,19

1. Could not "strong drink" of Proverbs 23, therefore nothing comparable to modern alcoholic beverages.
2. Cannot be *proved* from word "wine" that there was any alcoholic content (Isa. 65:8) or enough to make it an intoxicant. *Would Jesus have given further intoxicants to those who had already "drunk freely"?*
3. Even *if* slight alcoholic content, would Jesus have done the same in our times with their much stronger drink and serious alcohol and drug problem? Consider principles in section III.

B. "Timothy was told to drink a little wine," I Timothy 5:23.

1. Again, nature of wine not known with certainty.
2. Such instruction clearly implies that Timothy usually drank no wine.
3. Likely related to problem of health due to bad water.
4. Better water purifiers and medicines are available today.

V. Summary

Not disputed:

People in Jesus' day and earlier drank intoxicating wine.
People got drunk on intoxicating wine in Jesus' day and before.
These intoxicating drinks were called "wine".

Disputed:

People in Jesus' day had only intoxicating wine available to them.

People in Jesus' day drank only intoxicating wine.

Drinking of non-intoxicating wine was uncommon in Jesus' day and before.

Word "wine" speaks only of intoxicating wine.

It can be shown in the Bible that God approves the consumption of intoxicating drinks for social and pleasurable purposes.

This study has presented evidence that all the above are not true.

Conclusion

- A. Drunkenness, strong drink, and social drinking are wrong, and even drinking of the smallest amount must not cause others to stumble, be a barrier to the gospel, or be contrary to virtuous praiseworthy conduct.
- B. Daniel (Dan. 1:8) and Timothy give us an example of godly conduct for our own imitation.
- C. Total abstinence would appear to be the only way to serve God pleasingly with absolute assurance.