

Should Christians Consume Alcoholic beverages

Part III: Addressing the “Christian liberty” argument of the modern church (edited Feb 2022)

- This teaching (Part 1-3) is not just for people who struggle or have struggled with alcohol, but for all Christians to know what the word of God teaches on the subject of alcohol consumption, what the Lord would have you to do and to help you secure your own convictions on the subject.
- The climate in church today is one of permissiveness on this subject, that has resulted in many individuals who struggle with alcohol use, within the church and within church leadership; I have heard that this is especially true among youth leaders, youth groups who follow the youth leaders example and young adults. This is very sad indeed!
- **Some review to lead into this last message:**

I. In Part I

- A. We saw that three things are clearly condemned as sin according to the word of God:
 - 1. Drunkenness (Based on the clear commands of God)
 - 2. Any use of “strong drink” (Based on the clear commands of God)
 - 3. Hanging out in bars (Based on the proper application of the clear commands of God)
- B. Some new info on “strong drink”
 - 1. I continue to find credible information, from historians and Bible scholars, stating that “wine” in biblical times was considerably watered down from what we call wine today and was non-intoxicating unless consumed in very large quantities.
 - 2. The first known production of whiskey was in 1494, nearly 1450 years after the time of Christ.
 - a. This information (1 & 2 above) leads me to the inclination that biblically condemned “strong drink” was not what we call “whiskey” but probably equivalent in alcohol content to what we call “wine” today. (*See the statement by Mark E Moore pg. 4*)

II. In Part 2: (Some review of that message)

- A. Social drinking for my purposes is defined as: drinking in moderation without the intention or the result of intoxication, in a setting where no one else becomes, or intends to become, intoxicated.
 - 1. Based on our study of the Word of God, this is the only ***potentially*** justifiable use of alcohol left.
- B. Some reasons given for acceptance of social drinking by Christians: (*One should consider that often a “reason” is actually and subtly ***an excuse*** to do what one wants to do*).
 - 1. Drinking to fit in. (Because your family or friends are doing it and you want to fit in)
 - a. I find that a clearly unbiblical approach to the subject, or to Christian living in general.
 - 2. “Redeeming” your past sin: Attempting to use your past sin for “good”, in your Christian life, as a means to spend time with and “reach the lost”.
 - a. I contend that many, if not most, lost people would consider a Christian who drank socially to be a hypocrite and his / her effectiveness in witnessing would be diminished.
 - b. This is unbiblical fellowship for the believer & therefore an unjustifiable reason (or excuse) to drink
 - (1) Pro 13:20 He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed
 - (2) 1 Cor 15:33 Be not deceived: evil communications ***fellowship*** corrupt good manners.
 - c. If you have abused alcohol in your past, you are living dangerously by trying to “redeem” alcohol use in your Christian life.
 - (1) **Abusing alcohol is not defined as the world defines it; it means one got tipsy or drunk.**
 - (a) It’s not just alcoholism that is sin in God’s eyes; but drunkenness.
 - (2) I contend: If you used alcohol for sin in the past; you should not use alcohol at all in your present
 - (3) If you haven’t abused alcohol in the past, (you have never been drunk) it is still wise to never take a drink.

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(a) My experience in 40 + years of Christian living & 35 years of ministry (*as of Jan 2021*):
Most people who **attempt** to drink in moderation, wind up sinning & often backsliding.

3. Simply because it is “my Christian liberty” to do so... Many Christians today feel they have a “liberty” to drink a beer or glass of wine socially or with a meal, if they can control it. They often further insist that they should take advantage of this “liberty”.
 - a. We covered this argument for social drinking quickly in the end of Part II. We will now discuss it in more depth.

III. So, let’s address this issue of “Christian liberty” with regard to alcohol consumption:

- Keep in mind that we live in a **time & culture of alcohol abuse & addiction**, which is clearly worse than at any other time in history, and this is certainly a far different culture from biblical times.
 - I intend to show that, **if** there is any validity to the “Christian liberty” argument, **to take advantage of this “liberty” in our culture of alcohol abuse and addiction, is the absolute epitome of selfishness and self-centered living and a total lack of Christian love.**
 - love = a concern for the well-being of others; coupled with a willingness to sacrifice for the good of another.
 - I contend that, in this culture, even if we assume a “liberty” to drink socially, that liberty should be sacrificed for the good of others; based on the commands of God.
- A. **We are commanded not to live as we please but, rather, with the needs of others in the forefront of our minds.**
Rom 15:1 We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, & not to please ourselves.
- B. **We are commanded not to be involved in anything that will make us a stumbling block to another.**
- Read Rom Chapter 14
 - Rom 14:13 Let us not therefore judge one another anymore: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.
1. The context here deals with some who feel it is wrong to eat meat. Paul makes it clear that eating meat is not sin, yet if your brother is “grieved” (caused grief) (vs 15) by your food, you don’t walk in love if you choose to eat meat around them.
 - a. In that context he also addresses an even deeper issue. What if someone is not just caused grief by you doing something they esteem to be sin, but actually caused to sin by following your example and actions? (vs 13).
 - b. **Stumbling block** = (*lit*) an obstacle in the way which if one strikes his foot against he stumbles or falls; ie that over which a soul stumbles (by which one is caused to sin)
 - c. **Occasion to fall** = [lit. a trap-stick (bent sapling), i.e. snare]; a trap, a snare; Any impediment placed in the way and causing one to stumble or fall. Anything by which one is entrapped. (drawn into error or sin).
 - Rom 14:21 It is good neither to eat flesh, **nor to drink wine**, (*emphasis mine*) nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak. (*Paul adds drinking of wine here, even though this is not the subject in question*)
 - a. **Stumbleth** = to trip up
 - b. **Offended** = entrapped, tripped up or enticed to sin.
 - c. **Made weak** = to be without strength, to be powerless

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- Clearly, it is possible, even likely, that your weaker brother or sister could stumble, be offended, or be made weak, by seeing your choice and / or by following your example, should you choose to drink socially. Under such circumstances; it is “not good” to drink wine.

D. Similarly, we are commanded not to take any liberty that would lead a weaker brother to sin.

1. And in fact, to do so is called a “sin” against them and against Christ.
2. So, to those who feel they have a biblical liberty to drink socially, you need to consider what Paul said about the liberty to eat meat sacrificed to idols, even though one is not worshipping the idol themselves. The same would apply to a situation where you feel you can handle social drinking without falling into sin yourself, and yet you set an example that clearly may destroy another.

1 Cor 8:9-13 But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak. 10 For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol’s temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols; 11 And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish (*die spiritually; lose ones soul for eternity*), for whom Christ died? 12 But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. 13 Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend (*to be entrapped, tripped up; enticed to sin; to fall away*), I will eat no flesh while the world standeth (*i.e. forever*), lest I make my brother to offend.

a. The question here is not really “can I” but rather “should I”.

3. **I contend that to drink alcohol at all, in this culture, is to sin against weaker brethren, by setting an example that will certainly destroy some weaker brethren, and therefore it is a sin against Christ.**

a. There are a total of 17.6 million alcoholics and millions more caught in the sin of drunkenness; I do not want my example to cause one more to be added to the rolls! Or to cause one who comes to Christ to go back to sin!

➤ **As a Christian you are automatically an example to someone. Am I my brother’s keeper? YES!**

- This is my statement concerning casual alcohol use for Christians who feel they have a “liberty” to drink:
“To set the example that casual, social drinking is acceptable, in this culture, while simultaneously working to set men and women free from the very common bondage of alcohol addiction, and in light of the devastation and destruction that alcohol addiction has brought into people’s lives and families, simply makes NO sense! It is antithetical to our calling as soul-winners and counterproductive to our efforts to bring freedom. The very thought of it is repugnant and repulsive to me. And I believe it is completely contrary to the very heart of God”.
- Antithetical = being in direct and unequivocal opposition:
- Focus on the Family takes a far less conservative stand on this issue than I do; yet in a write-up on the topic, this is how they closed: (*I am more conservative on a host of issues than Focus on the Family*)
*“Finally, the advice Paul gives regarding ... "stumbling-blocks" in I Corinthians 10:23-33, bears special application here. The question should always be not what might or might not be "permissible" for me - a self-centered approach - but how my choice (and especially how I *communicate* my perspective) might impact other people (Philippians 2:3-4). To put it another way, Christians have a responsibility to regulate all of their behavior in every area of life according to the royal law of love (James 2:8) ---*Focus on the Family*.*
- *James 2:8 Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself*
- *Philippians 2:3-4 Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. ⁴ Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others*

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- IV. *In closing this series:* 3 simple reasons for Christians to never consume alcohol: **If you do not drink...**
- A. You’ll never struggle with alcoholism
 - B. You’ll never sin against God through drunkenness
 - C. You will never lead others, by your example, to sin or fall through alcohol consumption.
- A few other things related to this study
- Among all the reasons not to consume alcohol, can one really come up with any legitimate reason **to** consume alcohol?
 - There are many examples in scripture of those who completely abstained from the use of any alcohol, such as John the Baptist; this is always set forth as something positive.
 - **The example of the Rechabites: Jer 35**
 - A. Jer 35:1-8 The scenario to examine
 - B. Jer 35:12-14 The example to Israel
 - C. Jer 35:18-19 The blessing to Jonadab

(As an interesting side thought: they have found a tribe claiming to be descendants of Jonadab in Arabia, near Mecca; as well as a Bedouin tribe near the Dead Sea who also professes to be descendants of the same Kenite chief).
 - (Mark E Moore Ph. D, Biblical historian, professor of the New Testament at Ozark Christian College; in *The Chronological Life of Christ*) When the *(Ruler of the feast)* drank the water *(turned wine)* he found it delicious. Its goodness was not in *(any)* intoxicating ability but in its taste. In fact, Palestinian wine was significantly watered down. Although a person could become drunk with it, there were far more effective liquors *(for that purpose)*. *(He further indicates that this watered-down wine was used as a table drink, and not specifically intended for the purpose of intoxication)*
- Evangelical Christians claiming, and sometimes even flaunting, a “liberty” to consume alcohol has increased dramatically with the rise of the self-centered brand of American Christianity that is so prevalent today. What ever happened to “Deny your self, take up the cross and follow Jesus”?