



Chalmette Church of Christ

July 25, 2010

“Drink But Don’t Get Drunk?”

Alcoholic beverages have been a part of human culture for a long, long time. The bible’s earliest mention of it is in Genesis 9:20-21, where it tells of Noah’s vineyard and consequent drunkenness after drinking the wine he had made. Since at least that time, men have found more and more ways to manufacture intoxicating drinks, and people consume those drinks in huge quantities. According to the website of the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, nearly 7.7 billion gallons of beer, wine and distilled spirits were consumed in the United States in 2007 alone.¹ That is a little over 25.5 gallons for every man, woman, and child in America.

With such large amounts of alcohol consumption come serious problems. In 2004, there were 16,919 alcohol-related traffic crash fatalities, which was 39.5% of all fatalities in traffic crashes.² Alcoholics Anonymous, one well-known alcoholism treatment program, estimates their membership in the U. S. to be nearly 1.25 million people.³ Many other alcoholism treatment programs exist, and many alcoholics never seek any formal treatment.

It would be hard to imagine that anyone would deny that alcohol use can lead to devastating problems for those who drink, for those who associate with them, and for society in general. However, there remains a strongly-held belief that drinking in moderation or drinking “responsibly” is socially and morally acceptable and may be done without putting anyone in danger of the kinds of mentioned above. Sadly many Christians must be included in that number. The reasoning often is given this way: “The Bible condemns drunkenness, but it does not condemn drinking. Therefore, it is acceptable to drink, but not to get drunk.” Such reasoning is flawed and the result of deception.

Before any Christian considers drinking any amount of alcohol, he should contemplate Solomon’s wise advice: “Wine is a mocker, Strong drink is a brawler, And whoever is led astray by it is not wise” (Prov. 20:1). To argue that drinking is not sinful unless the drinker becomes drunk demands that there be a standard by which “drunkenness” may be determined. What is that standard and where can it be found? The Bible offers no help in defining a difference between innocent drinking and sinful drunkenness. The legislatures of the various states have established guidelines for the purpose of enforcing laws against drunk driving, but those are not consistent from one state to another, and surely no one would argue that human government could establish the standard by which the Lord will judge His people. Does the individual decide for himself? Should the churches decide? Exactly how does one know when he has crossed the line from innocent drinking to sinful drunkenness if such a distinction does not exist? There is no way to determine it.

Why then, will people not accept the fact that drinking any amount is sinful? Perhaps they have been deceived by the wine. People offer many arguments to support their contention that they may drink without sinning so long as they do not get drunk. These arguments do not stand up to scrutiny.

Some see the word “wine” in the Bible and automatically assume that the word always refers to a fermented beverage, since that is the way the word is used today. However, the Bible was not written in English. The Hebrew and Greek words that are translated with the English word “wine” did not always refer to fermented drinks. For example, it referred to that which was treaded out in the winepress (Jer. 48:33) and that which was found in the cluster of grapes (Isa. 65:8).

Though the grape juice still in the grape and that which was immediately expressed from the grape was not fermented, the word "wine" was used to describe it. The context of the word must be considered when determining whether the drink under consideration is fermented or not. With that understanding, then, we should be able to ascertain why it is that "wine" is sometimes described as that which brings cheer (Psa. 104:15) and that which causes woe (Prov. 23:29-35). There were not only different ways to use the wine, there were different types of wine altogether: some contained alcohol and others did not.

Failing to recognize this distinction, some have tried to find justification for moderate or "social" drinking in Jesus' miracle at the wedding in Cana (John 2:1-10). If Jesus provided wine for the celebration then, surely there is nothing wrong with drinking today. There is an important fact to consider in determining the nature of the wine Jesus provided: the amount. Remember, the argument is that drinking "in moderation" is allowable. With that as a starting point, the amount of wine already consumed and the amount of wine Jesus made become very significant pieces of information.

First, consider the fact that they had run out of wine. How much of a supply had they started with? There is no way to know. The Bible does not supply that information; but is it not significant that the guests had consumed all of what had been originally provided?

Second, notice the statement made by the mast of the feast; "Every man at the beginning sets out the good wine, and when the guests have well drunk, then the inferior" (John 2:10). The accepted practice was to supply inferior wine after the guests had "well drunk." The Greek word that phrase translates refers merely to the amount of something that has been drunk, or the idea of being saturated. A. T. Robertson, in his reference work, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, said,

The verb does not mean that these guests are now drunk, but that this is a common custom to put "the worse" (...the less, the inferior) wine last.

So, the guests had drunk a lot of wine. If it were fermented wine the guests would have been well on their way to being "drunk" by any definition, if not already there. Providing such

a crowd with more wine would not fit the definition of moderate or "social" drinking.

Third, how much wine did Jesus make? The text says He had the servants fill six waterpots with water, which He then transformed into wine. These six water pots contained "twenty or thirty gallons apiece" (John 2:6). That means Jesus made around 150 gallons of wine for a group of people who had already exhausted the original supply of wine and thus had "well drunk." When we consider the amount of wine already consumed as well as the amount of wine Jesus made, it cannot be argued that Jesus was participating in anything we would call moderate or "social" drinking.

Another passage often cited when looking for justification for moderate drinking is 1 Timothy 5:23, where Paul told Timothy, "No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent infirmities." While Paul does give Timothy permission to drink a little wine, two important facts must not be overlooked. First, Paul's permission was for Timothy to address some kind of stomach ailment with the wine, not for Timothy to drink wine for pleasure. There are many substances that have medicinal qualities that a Christian may use to alleviate sickness or other health problems. However, the legitimate medicinal usage does not also authorize an illegitimate pleasure usage. Second, the fact that Paul had to tell Timothy to begin to use a little wine for his ailment implies that Timothy was not in the habit of using wine prior to this. If drinking had been the common practice of the day even for Christians, why would Timothy need apostolic permission to begin to use it for his stomach?

Proponents of moderate drinking offer many arguments to support their position; yet none of them will stand up to close scrutiny. Christians who want more than anything else to be like their Savior and to please Him in everything they do will see the danger in drinking, regardless of the amount they might consume. Alcohol deceives. There is a proverb that says, "First the man takes a drink; then the drink takes a drink; then the drink takes a man." Why risk your soul for the pleasures of drinking?

By: Kevin Beard

Butch Snyder came forward this past Sunday asking for prayers of the Church. We want to keep him in our prayers and also those that may be traveling during the summer.

Olan Mills will be here August 11th to take family portraits for our new directories. There is more information about times on the bulletin board in the foyer. Make sure you and your family set aside some time to come take pictures for the directory. You can also order pictures if you wish.



Helping Those In Need

Pantry Item's of the week: Blue Runner Red Beans & Rice

Upcoming Events

August 11- Olan Mills taking family portraits

August 15- Singing and Fellowship Meal

July Birthdays

30 Mark Lance



Prayer List



Mary Jo Lance
Alice Riley
Sherry Towle
Betty Grisham
Burnell Rogers
Margo
Jessica Lance
Patricia Rodney
Donny Vick
Judy Hennessee
Charlie Whitley

*All of our brethren scattered across
the United States & our troops in
Iraq



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Services of The Church Sunday

Bible Classes 9:00 am
AM Worship 10:00 am
PM Worship 6:00 pm

Wednesday

Bible Classes 7:00 pm

Elders

Mark Lance 504-250-8492

J. V. Russell 504-277-0251

Charles Whitley 504-277-4717

Evangelist

Mark Lance 504- 250-8492

gospelpr@cox.net

Deacons

Scott Russell 504-232-4120

Wayne Schulz 504-392-3999

Butch Snyder 504-682-0051

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