

Total Abstinence From Alcohol

(Part 3)

¹⁴ *This is why it is said: “Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”* ¹⁵ *Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise,* ¹⁶ *making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.* ¹⁷ *Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is.* ¹⁸ *Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.”* (Ephesians 5:14-18)

Drunkness, according to Scripture, is a sin. But what about such references in the Old Testament that tells that wine makes you happy. Like as we read here: *“But the vine answered, ‘Should I give up my wine, which cheers both gods and humans, to hold sway over the trees?’* (Judges 9:13) As well as, *“Wine that gladdens human hearts, oil to make their faces shine, and bread that sustains their hearts.”* (Psalm 104:15)? These references are most likely are accommodations to human weakness and hardness of heart as we can read in *Matthew 19:8* *“Jesus replied, ‘Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning.’* When Christ mentioned that divorced entered human life due to hardening of the heart, most likely the same for the matter of drinking wine. The Holy Spirit and intent of Scripture emphasize the evil consequences of alcohol.

A Little Alcohol Is Too Much: The Christian who advocates or condones "drinking in moderation" is providing Satan an opening he would not have with an individual committed to total abstinence. By medical definition, alcohol is a drug. The moderate drinker is naive if he does not recognize the peril of eventually becoming addicted himself.

The condition of the drunkard is tragic; and God's Word gives clear warning of the final tragedy. The individual who refuses to have anything to do with such a dangerous taskmaster is wise indeed. No alcoholic ever intended to become an alcoholic when he/she took the first drink. And no individual who persistently refused to take the first drink ever became an alcoholic. The church of Jesus Christ must take a bold stand against this evil, ³⁰*Those who linger over wine, who go to sample bowls of mixed wine.* ³¹ *Do not gaze at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it goes down smoothly!* ³² *In the end it bites like a snake and poisons like a viper. In the end it bites like a snake and poisons like a viper.”* (Proverbs 23:30-32) Therefore drinking alcohol is like swallowing a snake. To those who say that we can drink little and we will be fine. We can tell them, then can you swallow a small snake and still you are fine? How if it will bite you, then what you can do?

The effects of alcohol are vividly described in Proverbs 23. There is a physical and emotional impact. *“Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaints? Who has needless bruises? Who has bloodshot eyes?”* (Proverbs 23:29) The answer is obvious: *“Those who linger over wine, who go to sample bowls of mixed wine.”* (Proverbs 23:30) Just like every other temptation of Satan, the drinking of alcoholic beverages has its attraction. Hence the warning of Holy Scripture: ³¹ *Do not gaze at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it goes down smoothly!”* (Proverbs 23:31) The warning is so strong because the attraction of the temptation soon turns the pleasure seeker into apathetic embarrassment to the human race: ³³ *Your eyes will see strange sights, and your mind will imagine confusing things.”* (23:33, NKJV) Even the normal physical protection systems of pain and caution are defeated by alcohol, ³⁴ *You will be like one sleeping on the high seas, lying on top of the*

rigging. ³⁵ *“They hit me,” you will say, “but I’m not hurt! They beat me, but I don’t feel it! When will I wake up so I can find another drink?”* (Proverbs 23:34-35) *“Wine is a mocker, intoxicating drink arouses brawling, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise.”* (Proverbs 20:1) God's will is for His people to abstain from this deceitful betrayer that mocks and destroys the basic dignity of mankind.

God Calls His People to Holiness: The standard for God's people is no less in the New Testament than in the Old. The Old Testament warnings about the abuses and excesses of alcohol become in the New Testament a call to holy living through the power of the Holy Spirit. Our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit, *“Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own.”* (1 Corinthians 6:19) We need to cleanse them from all profane habits, including alcohol. Opening up the human temple to the possible influence and control of alcohol is absolutely contrary to the Biblical admonition to keep those temples filled with the Holy Spirit, *“Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.”* (Ephesians 5:18) The only safe way is to leave alcoholic beverages alone.

1 Timothy 3:1-3 states, *“This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work. ² A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; ³ not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous.”* A bishop must be one *“not given to wine.”* A spiritual leader should set the highest example for all Christians to follow. The apostle Paul willingly invited his fellow believers to follow his example, even as he followed the example of Christ *“Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.”* (1 Corinthians 11:1) A minister who drinks alcohol risks disobedience to the Word of God.

Some may say then the pastor or the minister should not drink but the other can do because they are not ministers. That is not the truth, every man and woman who has family is a minister of God to lead the family and to lead their children the way of the Lord. Every man and woman in the society is a minister for Christ to lead others from darkness into the light. We are called to be the light for others to lead them in the right way of living as Christ said about us, *“In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”* (Matthew 5:16)

My Dear and Beloved: The call to holy living and to total abstinence is most appropriate for a church that looks with expectation for the soon return of Jesus Christ and the eventual inauguration of His kingdom on earth. Jesus warned His disciples, as well as all who would live between their time and the end time, *“Take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life . . . Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.”* (Luke 21:34, 36, NKJV) As we watch and pray for the return of Jesus, our senses should be as sharp and clear as they can possibly be.

My Prayer: *Father God I come before you in the name of Jesus who died on the cross for my sins and rose again from the death to give me eternal life. Lord I commit myself for total abstinence from alcohol and to teach my family and the people around me the same. I commit myself to pray and to teach those who drink to stop drinking. This is my prayer in Jesus name, Amen.*