

MODERATE AND SOCIAL DRINKING

I. WHAT THE WORD OF GOD HAS TO SAY ON THIS SUBJECT

A. As far as the Old Testament is concerned

1. The Word of God in the O. T. shows us how that wine and other intoxicating beverages were consumed.
 - a. Wine was apparently consumed as a social part of Hebrew life as a cheering beverage and we find it was used on special and festive occasions. (Jud.9:13; Psa. 23:5; 104:15). There is no evidence however to support widespread usage among the common people. It seems to have been a luxury reserved for wealthier individuals.
 - b. We find also that wine and intoxicating beverages were used as an anesthetic for those who were in pain or dying (Prov.31:4-7).
2. Notice while drinking wine was a part of Hebrew social life, we find that over-indulgence or drunkenness was something strickly condemned (Isa.5:11,12; Prov. 20:1).
3. The Word of God shows us how wine and other intoxicating beverages were abused and how they became a great social evil among the Jewish people as well as others.
 - a. Some examples of such abuse can be seen in Noah's life (Gen. 9:21); in Lot's life (Gen. 19:33-35), in David's life as far as Uriah was concerned (II Sam. 11:13); and in the life of Benhadad, King of Syria (I Kings 20:16).
 - b. There is no doubt that drinking had become a great social evil when we look at the way the prophets and others such

as Solomon denounced it (Isa.5: 11,12,22 ; 28:1-8; 56:11; Amos 6 : 6 ; Prov.23:29-33).

4. The Word of God points out certain persons who were strictly forbidden from drinking wine and intoxicating beverages.
 - a . The O.T. priests who ministered about the sanctuary were to abstain from wine and strong drink (Lev.10:9; Ezek.44:21). Failure to observe this was apparently involved in the death of Nadab and Abihu (Lev.10:1 , 2).
 - b. Another group of individuals who were forbidden from drinking wine and strong drink were the Nazirites during the duration of their vows (Num. 6:3; Amos 2:12).
 - c. We also see that wine and intoxicating beverages, were not to be consumed by those such as kings and princes who had to make judgments in different matters (Prov.31 : 4 , 5).

5. The Word of God points out certain persons who abstained from drinking wine or strong drink because of it's potential problems.

- a. Some of these include Daniel and his companions who were taken in the Babylonian captivity (Dan.1:8-16).
- b. The Rechabites are some others who refrained from drinking any kind of intoxicating beverage and they did this simply out of obedience and respect to their father Jonadab's command (Jer.35:5-15).

B. As far as the New Testament is concerned

- 1.The Word of God in the N.T. shows that wine was used in some ways very similar_to those in the O.T.

- a. First of all it seems evident that, while wine and strong drink was a part of social life,it was somewhat reserved for the wealthy and not the common people. It was consumed also at special festive occasions such as weddings (Jn. 2).
- b. Wine was also used for medicinal purposes for everything from cuts and

wounds to stomach trouble (Luke 10:34; I Tim. 5:23).

2. The Word of God in the N.T. also condemns over-indulgence or drunkenness and it is shown to be a grave sin and one of the works of the flesh or sin nature (Lk 21:34; Gal. 5:21; I Cor. 6:10)
3. The Word of God points out certain persons in the N.T. who drank wine and certain persons who did not.
 - a. John the Baptist was one who abstained from wine because he was a Nazirite from birth (Luke 1:15).
 - b. The Lord Jesus on the other hand drank wine on special occasions but this was never to excess or sin. (Matt. 11:19; Jn. 2:10).
 - c. Since the cup for observing the Lord's Supper is referred to as "the fruit of the vine" and not wine, it no doubt refers to the new juice of the grape and not to fermented wine (Matt. 26:29).
4. We also find some instances in the N.T. where drinking was excessive and therefore resulted in sin and judgment (I Cor. 11:21, 30).
5. The Word of God in the N.T. sets forth certain standards concerning wine for those who held positions in the early church.
 - a. The bishop or pastor was not "to be given" to wine or not to drink (I Tim. 3:3; Titus 1:7). The prohibition seems to parallel that concerning those in positions and making judgments in the O.T. If it wasn't good for a king or prince to use it who had to judge in secular matters, it surely wasn't good for one who had to make judgments in spiritual matters.
 - b. The deacons were not to be given to "much" wine (I Tim. 3:8). Here we see the requirements for

the pastor were higher than the deacons as they were to be examples to the flock and more was committed unto them (I Pet. 5:3; Luke 12:48).

6. Rather than condone the moderate consumption of wine however, the N.T. lays down certain principles which call upon Christians to voluntarily abstain from it (Matt. 16:24; Mark 9:42; Rom. 14:13-21; I Cor. 8:9-13).

C. As far as it's overall warnings against wine and strong drink.

1. Drinking can lead to sorrow and poverty (Prov. 21:17; 23:29-32).
2. People can be deceived about drinking (Prov. 20:1).
3. Drinking is often associated with other sinful things (Gen. 9:21).
4. Drinking can lead to excess or brawling kind of attitude (Eph. 5:18) and consequently other sins.
5. Drinking can lead to drunkenness which is a sinful thing in God's sight.

II. WHAT OTHERS HAVE TO SAY ON THIS SUBJECT AND WHAT'S WRONG WITH WHAT THEY SAY.

A. Some contend since the Bible doesn't condemn drinking as long as one doesn't over indulge it's all right for a Christian to drink socially in moderation.

To answer this argument there are several things, we need to understand. First of all, there is a vast difference between the wine drank in Biblical times and that which is drunk today. The alcoholic content of wine in those days was much lower and required much consumption unlike the drinks of today.

A second difference between then and today is the number of those drinking. No longer is it reserved for

the wealthier but it is consumed in large measure by all classes, and therefore poses_a greater problem.

A third thing to be considered are the problems resulting from the masses drinking. Unlike in Biblical times, drinking has posed a problem of enormous magnitude. For example, drinking is responsible for killing more people in highway wrecks than all the wars our Nation has ever fought. For these reasons those who drink are contributing to one of the greatest social problems we have and it would be hard for a Christian to justify drinking in any amount taking today's considerations.

- B. Some still contend to have a few drinks in their homes doesn't hurt anyone and there's nothing wrong with it.

Notice however, that drinking in the home first of all sets a bad example for little children. If adults drink their children are apt to be drinkers and they may become alcoholics because of it. Secondly, how could a Christian go out and buy alcoholic beverages and maintain a proper testimony for the Lord? Then thirdly, no one can give a person a guarantee if he takes the first drink he'll not become an alcoholic. Every alcoholic began as a social drinker and presently there are some ten million alcoholics in America.

- C. Some say, since wine was used for medicinal purposes, _ It is alright to use it in this respect today, after all, most medicines have alcoholic content.

Notice while it may be argued that beer_is an excellent diuretic for those with kidney_ troubles or that whiskey is a useful stimulant for those_with heart trouble , alcohol is a drug which if consumed in regular amounts can become_addictive and lead to more and more dependence upon it . Also with the medicines which we have available today,it is not necessary for us to use alcoholic beverages as they did in Biblical times and in so doing jeopardize our testimonies before the unsaved world. Even unsaved people will tell you that Christians shouldn't drink. In this respect they have more discernment than some professing Christians .

III.WHAT THE CHRISTIAN SHOULD DO IN REGARDS TO THIS SUBJECT

- A. A Christian ought to realize the sinful and harmful things which drinking can lead to and "abstain from all appearances of evil".

- B. A Christian ought to realize that it is impossible to drink in any degree and maintain a good, testimony for the Lord.
- C. Because drinking is assuredly a stumbling block to winning people to Christ, the Christian ought to voluntarily abstain from the use of any and all kinds of alcoholic beverages.
- D. Based upon the fact that alcohol is the number one drug problem in America with some ten million alcoholics, the Christian should steer as far away as he can from drinking in any amount.