

“What About Drinking? Pt. 2”

Eph. 5:17-18 (Pt. 28 in Ephesians’ series)

Scripture Reading (Eph. 5:17-18; 1 Cor. 8, 10:23-33)

Prayer

Intro (be gentle in presentation and emphasize that it is all about our relationship with Christ)

Well, how was your week? Did you wrestle with our topic? Talk to others? I hope so. I have sensed an interesting buzz in the air about this topic of alcohol.

What does the bible say about drinking? Is getting drunk a sin? Are there time and places where it might be OK to drink? Can we have different conviction on this in the body of Christ and both be biblical?

If you weren’t here last week, let me give you a quick review so we are all up to speed:

Review: We began with what the bible is crystal clear on and that is that drinking to the point of drunkenness is sin. Eph. 5:18 and many others passages make that very clear. If we allow ourselves to come under the control of alcohol, then we are not under the control of the Holy Spirit, and this grieves the Lord.

Now where the bible is not as clear is drinking in general. You cannot be a good theologian and conclude that all drinking of alcohol is sin. There are verses in your notes where the Bible seems to condone drinking in some situations.

However, just because the Word of God does not totally condemn the drinking of alcohol, doesn’t mean it is the wisest thing to do. So, what we do with a grey area like drinking, much like Paul does in **1 Cor. 8** and **Rom. 14** with meat sacrificed to an idol is give us sound biblical principles of behavior that we can take and put drinking up to those principles and then come to our own individual convictions, and those convictions might differ from other godly people.

This is so important, folks! We must develop convictions of behavior under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, and not expect all Christians to have those same convictions and not be harsh or critical toward others who may have different convictions than we have. That is clearly what **Rom. 14** tells us.

Quote by Jerry Bridges I want to share this quote with you again because I think it is so powerful!

It is so important that we have convictions based on God’s Word and the leadership of the Holy Spirit rather than personal preferences, tradition, or the opinion of others. It is

much easier to simply follow a list of man-made rules, some find safety in that. It is much more difficult, though much healthier, to prayerfully spend time looking at biblical principles, asking God to lead and direct you, talking to other godly people, and then doing what **Rom. 14:22** says:

Rom 14:20-23

21 It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine, or to do anything by which your brother stumbles. **22 The faith which you have, have as your own conviction before God.** Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. 23 But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin.

NASB

So here are the biblical principles of behavior that we will put alcohol up to, and I am sharing them in the form of questions to make us think through whether or not we drink:

1. Can it be addictive?

1 Cor 6:12

12 "Everything is permissible for me"-but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible for me"-but **I will not be mastered by anything.**

Alcohol is potentially addictive, so we must consider that issue. And the younger one begins to drink the more likelihood of addiction.

Quo Currently, nearly 14 million Americans—1 in every 13 adults-abuse alcohol or are alcoholics. Several million more adults engage in risky drinking patterns that could lead to alcohol problems. In addition, approximately 53 percent of men and women in the United States report that one or more of their close relatives have a drinking problem.

And one's addiction to it can lead to all kinds of other problems such as marital, financial, emotional, and legal.

Stat on prisoners

So, can it be addictive? Yes. Because of this, one must be very careful if they choose to drink, even if in moderation.

TS The next question to ask is this:

2. Can it cause a Christian to stumble?

1 Cor 10:23-24, 31-32 23 "Everything is permissible"-but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible"-but not everything is constructive. 24 **Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others.** 31 So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. 32 **Do not cause anyone to stumble**, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God-

Here the issue is one of looking out for how your actions affect another believer, especially someone younger or weaker in their faith. That is the context of this chapter. It might be allowable, you might have the freedom before God to do it, it may not be a

sin in and of itself, but by doing it you could cause someone else to sin or to struggle, you could send the wrong message to them, thus cause them to stumble.

Here is a situation where the time and place can make a difference. What you do in the privacy of your home can be a different issue than what you do in public, and that is not necessarily being a hypocrite. In 1 Cor. that seems to be some of what Paul is saying about eating meat – nothing unclean in the meat sacrificed to an idol but he wouldn't eat it if he was with someone who thought it was wrong.

1 Cor 8:9-13

9 Be careful, however, that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak. 10 For if anyone with a weak conscience sees you who have this knowledge eating in an idol's temple, won't he be emboldened to eat what has been sacrificed to idols? 11 So this weak brother, for whom Christ died, is destroyed by your knowledge. 12 When you sin against your brothers in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. 13 Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause him to fall.

Look at that last sentence. **This is love.** Love is doing that which is of the greatest good for another, regardless of the cost to self. It takes love and maturity to give up a personal right if it might cause another to stumble. Christian maturity says life is not about me and what I want to do or can do, but rather I am going to live for Christ, putting others before myself. I willingly give up my right to drink in order to not cause another to stumble or give another the wrong impression.

And we can do this because we get our life from Jesus and don't need to drink to give us life or pleasure. Christ is our life and our joy and our peace.

Ps. 16:11 In Thy presence is fullness of joy and at thy right hand are pleasures forevermore.

TS 3rd question:

3. Can it be a poor witness?

1 Cor 10:31-33 31 So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. 32 Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God- 33 even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, **so that they may be saved.**

Here we looked at how drinking in our culture is clearly something associated more with the world and sin than it is with godliness, therefore, what message are we potentially sending if we drink?

So, can drinking alcohol be a poor witness? I would say yes it can, that it is much more likely to be a poor witness than a good witness, and God's Word says we are to be above reproach and to flee even the appearance of evil.

Now, if you are truly seeing godly fruit from drinking with unsaved people, then who am I to say that you are sinning by drinking? I just think all of this can be a very slippery slope.

Another thought on this: **what you win them by you win them to.** If you win them to Christ **by** drinking, you could be winning them **to** drinking and sending the message that coming to Christ really doesn't mean you have to evaluate lifestyle issues.

Now this next quote can apply to question 2 or 3:
New quote from John Piper on Romans 14:15

TS Our 4th question

4. Is it legal?

Rom 13:1-2

13:1 **Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities**, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. 2 Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves.

This was our easiest one last week, because if you are under 21 (the legal drinking age) and you drink then you are breaking the law of WI and therefore, it is sin to do that.

And this is where we stopped last week, so let's pick up with our 5th question:

5. Is it beneficial?

1 Cor 10:23-11:1

23 **"Everything is permissible"-but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible"-but not everything is constructive.** 24 Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others. 25 Eat anything sold in the meat market without raising questions of conscience, 26 for, "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it." 27 If some unbeliever invites you to a meal and you want to go, eat whatever is put before you without raising questions of conscience. 28 But if anyone says to you, "This has been offered in sacrifice," then do not eat it, both for the sake of the man who told you and for conscience' sake- 29 the other man's conscience, I mean, not yours. For why should my freedom be judged by another's conscience? 30 If I take part in the meal with thankfulness, why am I denounced because of something I thank God for? 31 So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. 32 Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God- 33 even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved.

The context of this passage was a disputable area of conduct: is it OK to eat meat that came from an animal that had been sacrificed to an idol and use in pagan worship. Paul is saying here that there is nothing about the meat that is unclean so it is permissible to eat it but you must go deeper than that and ask if it is beneficial. You may but should you?

Here are the verses I asked you to study this week, and as I read them I want you to look for whether or not alcohol is spoken of positively or with more of a concern about the possibly harmful effects:

Prov 20:1

Wine is a mocker and **beer** a brawler; whoever is led astray by them is not wise.

Prov 23:29-35

9 Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaints? Who has needless bruises? Who has **bloodshot eyes**? 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.** 33 Your eyes will see strange sights and your mind imagine confusing things. 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**?"

Prov 31:4-5

4 "It is not for kings, O Lemuel — not for kings to drink **wine**, not for rulers to crave **beer**, 5 lest they drink and forget what the law decrees, and deprive all the oppressed of their rights.

Luke 1:15

15 for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is **never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit** even from birth.

Lev 10:8-11

8 Then the LORD said to Aaron, 9 "You and your sons are **not to drink wine or other fermented drink** whenever you go into the Tent of Meeting, or you will die. This is a lasting ordinance for the generations to come. 10 You must **distinguish between the holy and the common, between the unclean and the clean**, 11 and you must teach the Israelites all the decrees the LORD has given them through Moses."

I think you can see from these verses that drinking is spoken of in a way that doesn't seem to portray it as beneficial. As we consider this question of "Is it beneficial?", let's look at it from many angles. First, is it beneficial mentally?

a. Mentally

Does it benefit you in making decisions? Giving you a clear mind? As a mind and mood-altering drug, alcohol works quickly as a depressant to reduce restraints and the mind can become blurred.

Stats on accidents and sexual activity: I have a survey that shows alcohol use increases greatly one's participation in sex outside of marriage, unprotected sex, violence, child abuse and other harmful behaviors.)

b. Physically

Now here, some would say it does. Some doctors say a little (very little by the way) glass of red wine can be good for the heart and circulation and if one can truly just drink that much and that is their reason, then who am I to judge them.

I would only say this: be sure to look at the whole picture. Do you just drink that much? Are you prone to want more and more? What other affects, if any, is it having on you? Do the positives outweigh the potential negatives?

It is interesting that they tell pregnant women not to drink. That says something doesn't it?

c. **Relationally**

I know of a couple that has a glass of wine often and they sit and talk and they tell me that it is beneficial to their marriage. That is great, as long as it doesn't lead to drinking more and then having negatives effects. The key is the fruit!

If you drink, ask does it benefit my relationships with my spouse, my children, my grandchildren, my friends (saved and unsaved)?

Unfortunately, I have seen far relational damage than relational benefit from those who drink.

Que: How many of you have personally witnessed relational damage done by alcohol? ... this show of hands says a lot.

One more thing on relationships: The bible says a lot about the **sin of the tongue**/our speech and how hard it is to tame the tongue. What often happens when someone drinks? Alcohol decreases a person's inhibitions and thus increased the likelihood of saying the wrong thing, the hurtful thing and thus sinning against another.

Graph: a friend of mine showed me this this week: here is an arithmetic graph: 1 to 1 relationship; Here is a geometric graph: as the x axis goes out the y axis really increases. Here is what often happens with alcohol use...the more one drinks, the greater potential for sin.

3 Graphs

d. **Emotionally**

What affect does it have on you emotionally? Does alcohol benefit you emotionally or bring harm? Now I know some will say, that is exactly why I drink: I feel down and depressed and alcohol makes me forget about my problems and gives me a good buzz. Is that what God wants? We will get to this in a bit but that can be where alcohol is becoming a replacement for God.

e. **Financially**

Here is an interesting one. We must look at how we are spending God's money. It is all His anyway, since we are His disciples and all of it belongs to Him and we are simply stewards of His gifts.

Do you think it is beneficial and wise to spend God's money on alcohol and thus support in that way an industry that is at least partly responsible for so much damage and so much death?

Stat: ½ of the fatal automobile accidents are caused by alcohol impaired drivers. In 1999 drinking and driving killed a human being every 33 minutes. Alcohol related traffic fatalities is the leading cause of death among teenagers.

Quo a man in this church who works for a local hospital, night shift, ER says that alcohol is involved in 90% of the serious traffic accidents that he sees in the ER at night. Nationally, 50% of severely injured trauma patients screen positive for alcohol problems (US Dept. of Health and Human Services)

Quo chaplain at our local jail said that 80% of the inmates have a problem with drinking

One more thing financially, think of the money you could save and give to missions that you used to spend on alcohol.

TS Most importantly, is it benefiting you spiritually?

f. **Spiritually**

How is it affecting your relationship with God?

Rom. 14:17

Pract. I think it would wise for all of us to do a pro-con sheet on this issue: Positives of drinking/potential negatives of drinking. Look at all these areas and do a pro-con sheet:

List all the sub points under beneficial

TS Finally,

6. Is it a substitute for God?

Matt 11:28-30 28 "**Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened**, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Often people drink when they are weary and heavy laden. Often people drink to numb pain or give pleasure. I know this is not always the case but often it is. It is very important that we ask, "*Why am I drinking? What need or want is it meeting? Am I going to the bottle instead of going to God?*"

God wants us to come to Him, to cast all of our cares on Him, to be anxious for nothing but in everything by prayer (**Phil. 4:6-7**) ... To have our mind stayed on Him and have Him keep us in perfect peace (**Isa. 29:3**).

So, here are the 6 questions to ask when it comes to drinking alcohol:

Show all 6 questions without the verses

When one considers all of these, I would say it is best to not drink.

Pers. My personal conviction is to totally abstain! I have not always had this conviction, by the way. If you hold a different conviction, I will not judge or look down on you.

Quo this week I was talking to a friend who asked this question: *“Whose life would not be benefited by totally abstaining?”* Interesting question.

(Quo John Piper is a pastor and theologian that I highly admire, and here is what he says that I totally agree with:

Quote from Piper from last week

(At the same time, I am not the Holy Spirit for you. I am one of your shepherds and am simply seeking to help lead you in the paths of righteousness, but you have to pray, seek God, and develop your convictions about these matters.

Now, **as I wrap this up**, let me address some practical items that I hope will provide further assistance in this tough area:

Practical Items

1. What about working where alcohol is served?

I mentioned how we should not help to benefit the alcohol industry by buying alcohol, but what about working somewhere that serves it? Again, this is an area you have to be very prayerful about and seek godly counsel in, but here is my opinion:

Working at a bar – I could not do this because of how it so directly encourages drinking.

Working where it is simply sold, along with other things, such as a grocery store, restaurant or a Kwik Trip – to me this is different. For one, it is hard to avoid this and that is not as direct to me.

2. What about providing alcohol to others?

Like at a party you are hosting and you provide it for people. I could not do this.

Ex. Recently I was at a funeral and after the funeral the family paid for a buffet dinner, but the way this Christian handled it was to say “the meal is provided by us, and water will be served, but if you want pop or alcohol, you will have to buy it yourself at the bar here.” This way, he was not paying for it and encouraging it, but he was also not coming down hard on those who wanted to drink with their meal.

TS Finally, here is a biggie:

3. What about helping others who have a problem?

Some of you might be married to an alcoholic or are good friends with someone that you are concerned in this area. What do we do? What can we do?

Well, for one, we cannot change another person. Only God can truly change someone's heart.

- a. Therefore, the most powerful thing we can do is **pray**, and to pray against the stronghold of Satan, because often this problem can be directly **demonic**. After all, alcohol is called "spirits" for a reason. Ever thought of that?
- b. Beyond prayer, prayerfully consider **going to the person** and doing what Eph. 4:15 says "speak the truth in love." ... follow the steps in **Mt. 18:15-18**
- c. A **family intervention** might be necessary. Here is how that could work..... Sometimes tough love is called for. So many spouses and friends are well intentioned but end up becoming enablers by just letting it go on and not being willing to say "this is unacceptable, I don't deserve to be treated this way, and this has to stop." This is called tough love but it is sometimes necessary!

Finally, offer the person the truth and hope that is found in Jesus Christ!!! He is the answer. He is what their heart is ultimately longing for, whether they realize it or not. The good news today is this:

- a. Any and all sin that we confess and turn from will be forgiven by God:

1 Jn. 1:9

Ps. 103

Ex. White board – here is what God does with our sin ... and He has the divine pen that can write a whole new message on this board. **Jn. 10:10**

I immediately think of (*use white board*)

- woman in adultery** (neither do I condemn you, go and sin no more);
- thief** on the cross (at the midnight hour ...today you will be with me in paradise);
- prodigal** son (killed the fatted calf and have a party);

This is called GRACE my friends; this is God's heart. He waits for us to admit our sin and wrongdoing, to bring it to Him, to turn from it, and then He forgives and cleanses and changes us!!!! Satan condemns and kills and destroys, but Jesus came to give us life, to give us hope, to give us victory over things like alcohol!

You know what the key was in each of these situations? They were broken, they admitted their sin, and they received God's mercy.

Furthermore,

- b. The power of the Holy Spirit is greater than any other power, including the power of alcohol.

1 Jn. 4:4

Rom. 8 same Spirit that raised Christ ...

c. And God wants to change us from the inside out.

Phil. 2:13 He works in us both to will and to do for His good...

TS And as we begin to yield our lives to God, we discover that:

d. The joy and meaning and life that God wants to give us is far greater than any temporary high that alcohol can bring. Can anyone testify to this?

So, if you are being convicted by God today. If you realize that you have used alcohol in a way that is displeasing to God, you can bring it to the cross today and be forgiven and changed!!!

(Open up to Q and A?)

Let's Pray

What is God saying to you through these last 2 weeks? Let's take some time now and allow God to whisper to us what He specifically wants us to hear from these messages:

Quite time