

Booze, Baptists & the Bible

Part 3

Text: Eph. 5:18

Introduction:

1. The aim of this sermon: To present what the Bible teaches on this hotly debated and contentious issue. Remember, the Word of God is the final authority for faith and practice so we must lay aside personal opinion and bias and submit ourselves to where the Scriptures lead on this issue.
2. We are considering this topic under four headings as follows:
 - Some Preliminary Definitions from Scripture.
 - Some Plain Prohibitions of Scripture.
 - Some Powerful Exhortations from Scripture.
 - Some Pertinent Illustrations from Scripture.
 - Some Objections misusing Scripture.
3. We will briefly review what we covered in last lesson and continue with our outline from there.

I. PRELIMINARY DEFINITIONS FROM SCRIPTURE

- A. The Word ‘wine’ is a Generic Term in the Bible
- B. The Context is Key to Determine which Wine is in View

II. PLAIN PROHIBITIONS OF SCRIPTURE

Why should we totally avoid intoxicating liquor? Because of the plain warnings and prohibitions of Scripture. It is of interest how many of these are found in the Book of Proverbs which is the Bible’s manual on godly wisdom.

- A. Don’t Be Deceived by It (Prov. 20:1)
- B. Don’t Even Look at It (Prov 23:29-35)
- C. Don’t Lower Yourself to It (Prov. 31:4-7)
- D. Don’t Be Amongst It (Prov. 23:20-21)
- E. Don’t Be Intoxicated with It (Eph. 5:18)

III. POWERFUL EXHORTATIONS OF SCRIPTURE

There are other Scriptural principles that have a bearing on this subject. While these verses may not make a direct reference to alcoholic wine and the believer, they certainly apply to the issue.

- A. The Exhortation to Sobriety (1 Peter 1:13)
- B. The Exhortation to Watchfulness (1 Thess. 5:6; 1 Pet. 4:7)

IV. PERTINENT ILLUSTRATIONS FROM SCRIPTURE

The Bible makes plain the Divine perspective on alcoholic wine and strong drink by its plain denunciations of it (e.g., Prov. 23) and also by the clear illustrations of the evil effects of intoxicating liquor upon those who drink it. We will survey 10 such examples from Scripture:

A. Wine and Noah's Nakedness (Gen. 9:20-26)

1. The Context of Noah's Drunkenness.
 - a. This is the first occurrence of the Word wine in the Bible. The Holy Spirit is issuing a clear warning early in the Word of God concerning the dangers of fermented wine.
 - b. Noah has been a faithful preacher of righteousness up to this point. He had faithfully built the ark for the greater part of 100 years and gone through the events of the flood. Noah's drunkenness is a sober reminder that a man of God who has had a godly reputation for many years can still act foolishly and dishonour the Lord and discredit his testimony.
 - c. Henry Morris: "The first time 'wine' is mentioned in the Bible occurs here in connection with the drunkenness and shame of Noah. Undoubtedly the nature of wine was well known to the antediluvians, and there is no intimation in Scripture that Noah was not fully cognizant of what he was doing when he made and drank his wine. Scripture does not hesitate to call attention to the failures of even the most saintly of men. Noah, having stood strong against the attacks of evil men for hundreds of years, remaining steadfast in the face of such opposition and discouragement as few men have ever faced, now let down his guard, as it were, when it seemed that all would be peace and victory from now on. After everything he had been through, what harm could there be in a little relaxation and a little provision for the comforts of the flesh? Satan had been unable to corrupt the family of Noah before the Flood, although he had succeeded with all other families; and he now seized his opportunity. The formation of intoxicating wine from the pure, healthful juice of grapes is a perfect symbol of corruption and decay. The process of fermentation is a decay process and the effect of drinking the alcoholic product of this decay is likewise, in several respects, a "breaking down," both physically and morally."
2. The Consequences of Noah's Drunkenness
What were the sad effects of Noah's drunkenness?
 - a. Noah became naked (Vs. 21)
 - i. The Bible draws a direct link between alcoholic wine and nakedness.
 - ii. Hab. 2:15 "Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that putteth thy bottle to *him, and maketh him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness!*"
 - iii. Lam. 4:21 "...the cup also shall pass through unto thee: **thou shalt be drunken, and shalt make thyself naked.**"
 - iv. Alcohol removes the normal restraints and inhibitions that God has given us. Malcomson writes, "Alcohol is not a stimulant but a depressant. Alcohol depresses the brain

and slows down its ability to control the body as well as all its various normal functions. This is why alcohol can be so dangerous. Alcohol acts like a sedative on the brain and as a result slows down muscle coordination, reflexes, movement and speech. Within the alcohol is the power and ability to undermine the natural God-given abilities of thought and action. The alcohol's first target is the front lobe of the brain which is the area that controls every form of wise judgement and social interaction. Even a small amount of alcohol immediately begins to alter the function of the mind."

- v. Illustration: "Research has proven that there is a 5 to 15% decrease in response time after drinking just minimal amounts of alcohol (0.03% alcohol in bloodstream) ... This has also been repeatedly confirmed by various researchers who have recorded this kind of decrease in response time. One such test was carried out on young trainee doctors. They took two separate medical tests but before one of them they drank one glass of wine. All of them thought they had performed better on that particular test but all of them had in fact done far worse. The same happened in the rate of accuracy by typists after just one drink, and young drivers in their reaction/reflex time. All of these tests revealed a dramatic drop in the normal skills of individuals who were not at all aware of it after just one drink." (Malcomson)
- b. Ham became perverted (Vs. 22)
 - i. The word 'saw' in this context implies "gazed at" (Morris).
 - ii. The behaviour of Shem and Japheth stands in direct contrast to that of Ham.
 - iii. Appears that Ham drew some form of mocking pleasure in seeing his father naked. It reveals that Ham was a rebel at heart and probably resented his father's godliness.
- c. Canaan was cursed (Vs. 24-25)
- d. Summary: From this account we can see that intoxicating wine produces the following:
 - i. Nakedness and indecency.
 - ii. Perversion and uncleanness.
 - iii. Division and heartache.

B. Wine and Lot's Immorality (Gen. 19:30-38)

What were the sad effects of Lot's drunkenness?

1. The Wine affected his Mental Powers
 - a. Vs. 33 "and he perceived not when she lay down, nor when she arose."
 - b. Vs. 35 "and he perceived not when she lay down, nor when she arose."
2. The Wine affected his Moral Principles

3. Biblical Illustrator: "The worst effect of the vice of drunkenness is its degrading influence on the conduct and character of men. It robs its victims of self-respect and manliness and sends them to wallow in the mire with swinish obscenity. What they would not dream of stooping to in their sober moments they revel in with shameless ostentation when their brains are clouded with intoxicating drink. It is no excuse to plead that a drunkard is a madman unaccountable for his actions; he is accountable for having put himself in his degraded condition. The man who has been foolish enough to launch his boat on the rapids cannot divert its course when he is startled by the thunder of the falls he is approaching; but he should have thought of that before leaving the safety of the shore." (*W. F. Adeney, M. A.*)
4. Summary: From this account we can see that intoxicating wine produces the following:
 - a. Loss of mental and moral restraint.
 - b. Perversion and immorality.

C. Wine and Nabal's Death (1 Sam. 25:36-38)

What effect did alcoholic wine have on Nabal?

1. It produced a false happiness – "and Nabal's heart was merry within him, for he was very drunken" (Vs. 36).
2. It contributed to his death (Vs. 37).
3. It brought the judgment of God upon him (Vs. 38).

D. Wine and David's Attempted Cover up (2 Sam. 11:13)

What do we learn about intoxicating wine from this account?

1. Wine was used in an attempt to hide David's sin of immorality with Uriah's wife. David hoped that by making Uriah drunk, he would give up on his disciplined stance not to return home to his wife.
Wine is often connected to moral scandals.
2. Wine made Uriah drunk.

E. Wine and Amnon's Murder (2. Sam. 13:28-29)

What do we learn about intoxicating wine from this account?

1. Wine was involved in a sinister plot to murder a man.
2. Wine gave Amnon a false sense of security and mirth so that he didn't discern the danger of the assassin's knife that was about to strike him dead.
3. Biblical Illustrator: "Suppose there were two lines of railroad; on one of them was an accident regularly once a week, sometimes on one day, and sometimes on another; and on the other there never had been an accident. Suppose your only son wanted to go the journey traversed by the respective lines, and he were to come to you saying, "Which road shall I take, father?" would you dare to tell him to take that upon which the accidents were so frequent, because it was the most fashionable? You would say at once, "Take the safe road, my boy." And that is just what we temperance folks say."
(*John B. Gough.*)

F. Wine and King Elah's Assassination (1 Kings 16:8-10)

What do we learn about intoxicating wine from this account?

1. Wine made King Elah vulnerable to attack.
2. Wine directly contributed to his murder at the hands of Zimri.

G. Wine and Benhadad's Defeat (1 Kings 20:12-21)

What do we learn about alcoholic wine from this account?

1. Wine influenced Benhadad to act foolishly and rashly (Vs. 12). It affected his decision-making ability.
2. Wine induced Benhadad to drunkenness which in turn lead to their speedy defeat in battle (Vs. 16).

H. Wine and Ahasuerus' Divorce (Esther 1:5-22)

What can we learn about the destructive influence of alcoholic wine from this account?

1. Wine was connected to the unrestrained indulgence of fleshly appetites (Vs. 7-8).
2. Wine drinking inflamed lustful passions which led to an indecent request and the subsequent break up of the marriage between the king and his queen (Vs. 10-11).
 - a. John Butler: "Ahasuerus wanted Vashti to show off her beautiful body to the lustful, drunken men at his feast. Some Jewish scholars believe...Ahasuerus' demand meant that Vashti was to come nude with only her royal crown on her."
 - b. William Macdonald: "Since Persian modesty required women to be veiled in public, it appears that the king was asking her to degrade herself to satisfy his drunken whim."
3. F.B. Meyer: "Whenever men are overcome with wine, there is grave peril for women. Coarseness, indelicacy, and impurity troop in at the door, which has been unlocked by the excess of wine. Who can tell the anguish which has been caused to women, children, and the dumb creation through the intemperance of man! Here is given a glimpse of a noble woman, who respected herself too highly to yield to a demand, wholly foreign to the customs of the time, which forbade women to appear in public."
4. Parker: "When a man's heart is merry with wine, all that is most sacred in humanity goes out of him."
5. According to Malcomson, "Twice as many marriages end in divorce due to the effects of alcohol as adultery."

I. Wine and the Perversity of Priest and Prophet (Isaiah 28:1-3; 7-8)

What evil influence did wine and strong drink have upon the spiritual leaders of Isaiah's day? Notice that the word 'erred' or 'err' occurs 3 times and the phrase "out of the way" occurs twice.

1. Direction (Vs. 7a)
2. Vision – "they err in vision" (Vs. 7b).
3. Decision – "they stumble in judgment" (Vs. 7c)
4. Further, the vile effects of intoxicating liquor are again highlighted in Verse 8 where it describes the tables being "full of vomit and filthiness".

J. Wine and Belshazzar's Blasphemy (Dan. 5:1-4; 22-23)

Intoxicating substances (i.e., wine and spirits) are central to the world's parties. "Alcohol has been at the heart of man's sinful activities since the fall." (Cloud) This should not be amongst God's blood-washed people! What do we learn about the evil effects of wine in this account?

1. It led to Blasphemy (Vs. 2a; 4)

- a. The command to bring in the sacred vessels came “whiles he tasted the wine”. Under the influence of the wine, the king gave this wicked command to profane the vessels of the temple of the living God.
 - b. Wine is not just a beverage, it comes with an anti-God, rebellious spirit. Think of the countless curses and blasphemies that are hurled at the Lord of glory while men are under the influence of intoxicating liquor.
 - c. Belshazzar’s underlying motivation and purpose for using the temple vessels becomes clear. It was an act of willful rebellion and unbelief against the One True God of Israel.
 - d. The primary desire was not to use these vessels so they could feel they were “drinking in style” from vessels that were precious and valuable. It was to despise and degrade the God of Israel and to elevate and honor the pagan deities. He was trying to demonstrate that his pagan gods were superior to Israel’s God.
2. It encouraged Indecency (Vs. 2b-3)
- a. The presence of women highlights the immoral activities connected with this feast. In Oriental custom, usually only men were present at such feasts.
 - b. Wine dampens the conscience and releases those who drink it from moral inhibitions. People do things under the influence of drink that they would not normally do!

K. Summary: What evils are clearly linked to alcoholic wine in the passages we have just studied?

1. Nakedness and dishonourable behaviour.
2. Family breakdown and division.
3. Incestuous immorality.
4. Loss of mental and moral restraints.
5. Premature death and God’s displeasure.
6. Murder plots, sinister conspiracies and assassinations.
7. Poor, unwise decision making.
8. Immoral, lustful demands.
9. Marriage breakdown and divorce.
10. Deviation from the path of truth into error.
11. Blasphemy and sensuality.

L. Peter Masters describes alcohol as, “Satan’s fermented river of false hopes, false consolation, false happiness, false courage and it is his way of binding millions to the world.”

M. Strauss on the demon of drink: “The demon of drink has continued to dig at all the foundations of civilization, destroying the moral fiber of nations. People outdo themselves in wickedness when they are overpowered by a pseudo boldness and the absence of restraint produced by the alcohol demon. One of the perils of strong drink is that

it too often carries away the drinker to do and say foolish and fatal things, the hidden depths of iniquity being stirred up within him."

N. We have catalogued some of the evil effects of wine in the above Scriptures. The effects of alcohol on society today are no different.

1. According to Pastor Denis Lyle alcohol is:
 - a. The main factor in the death of one thousand children each year.
 - b. The main factor in the death of half of drivers under twenty-five who are killed.
 - c. Implicated in half of all recorded crimes including half of all murders.
 - d. Implicated in half of all child abuse cases.
 - e. Implicated in half of all wife battering.
2. Some Australian Statistics¹
 - a. Each week, on average, more than 100 Australians die and more than 3,000 are hospitalised as a result of excessive alcohol consumption.¹²
 - b. Every year more than 70,000 Australians are the victims of alcohol-related assaults of which 24,000 are victims of domestic violence. In addition, almost 20,000 children across Australia experience substantiated alcohol-related child abuse.¹³
 - c. The total cost to society of alcohol-related problems in 2010 was estimated to be \$14.352b.¹⁴
 - d. The estimated cost of alcohol's negative impacts on others was estimated at \$6.807b.¹⁵ The same year, the Australian Government received an estimated \$7.075b in total alcohol tax revenue.¹⁶
3. Keith Malcomson writes, "If the Church is not alarmed at the facts, how do we ever expect the world to be woken up from its drunken party which is taking it rapidly to an eternal Hell? Multitudes are pouring into Hell aided and speeded on their way by alcohol. They leave this life in a happy stupor only to wake in the next utterly sober realising it is fearfully and eternally too late! While Satan uses this deadly poison to destroy millions and to aid his work in sending nations to Hell, the Church raises her voice and puts forth her efforts to defend her right and liberty to socially drink alcohol." (Pg. 42)

O. Challenge: When you see bottles of wine and spirits, what do you see? Sadly, many Christians see a symbol of their warped concept of Christian liberty; a pleasure to be indulged in in the name of "Christian moderation" so called. But when I see a wine bottle, I see...

- A teenager pregnant, labouring in a birth suite without the support of a

¹ <https://www.surgeons.org/en/about-racs/position-papers/alcohol-related-harm-2016#> Viewed 11/5/21.

responsible husband.

- A man lying in his own vomit in the gutter.
- Stupidity and foolishness of every kind.
- The faces of hungry children whose daddy has spent his earnings on liquor.
- The tears and sobs of a broken-hearted wife or husband whose spouse has committed adultery under the influence of alcohol.
- I see a man brutally beating his wife; I see her face lined with fear and terror and hear her screams and pleas for mercy as blow after blow rains down upon her delicate frame.
- I see an intoxicated wretch abusing an innocent child as it cries and screams in terror.
- I see the murderer's knife cruelly stabbing and lacerating and hear the terrified screams of the perishing victim.
- I see a car smashed up against a tree with battered, bleeding and dead bodies inside.
- I see the murderer's knife and the assassin's bullet.
- I see broken hearts, broken marriages and the divorce courts.
- I see the tears of a child over broken promises and parental irresponsibility.
- I see the unrepentant drunkard engulfed in the flames of hell, weeping and gnashing his teeth.

Conclusion: