**Social Drinking, Drunkenness, and the Christian**

*by Jeremiah Cox*

The consumption of alcohol is commonplace throughout the world, and especially in this country. At one point in time the dangers alcohol consumption posed led to its prohibition. Yet the desires of the flesh overwhelmed the moral compass of the masses and the sale and consumption of alcohol were re-implemented and continue to this day. The church during the prohibition surely wouldn’t have suffered lobbying for the legalization of such, much less the participation in the act of consuming the beverage. Why then has this become acceptable for Christians today? Truth be told: social drinking, drunkenness, and drinking in general have never been scriptural and never will be. Are we so audacious to allow emendation of God’s standard to conform to the world’s (cf. Romans 12:1-2)?

*“Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: …****drunkenness****, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God”* (Galatians 5:19-21). Drunkenness is defined as intoxication (Strong’s). This is something of which the majority will agree is sinful. Elsewhere Paul exhorts brethren to *“walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and* ***drunkenness****”* (Romans 13:13). Jesus warned, *“but take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing,* ***drunkenness****, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly”* (Luke 21:34). One who *“linger[s] long at the wine”* (becomes drunk) is described as one who has woe, sorrow, contentions, complaints, wounds without cause, and redness of eyes (cf. Proverbs 23:29-30). Drunkenness is overtly condemned in scripture.

What about drinking socially, but not to get drunk? This is a significant problem in the church. A tolerance has grown due to the assimilation of worldly social activities with those of Christians. If you go out to eat you will likely see several tables with beer bottles and wine glasses. It isn’t illegal. It isn’t frowned upon. Why can’t a Christian have a beer with his or her steak dinner? Like with most sins, just because it is ubiquitously accepted does not mean it is accepted of God. *“But as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, ‘Be holy, for I am holy’”* (1 Peter 1:15-16). Inspired scripture says, *“Wine is a mocker, strong drink is a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise”* (Proverbs 20:1). God is infinitely wise and has untainted moral character. He would not be associated with such an activity and neither should His people. This should be the end to all dispute. However, many do not accept this logic as sufficient. Surely an appeal to specific scriptures prohibiting the act of social drinking would do the trick. Fortunately, our loving God has revealed the truth on this subject as well.

*“For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles – when we walked in lewdness, lusts,* ***drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties****, and abominable idolatries”* (1 Peter 4:3). Once again drunkenness is unequivocally condemned by an inspired writer. However, included in the list of sins are **revelries** and **drinking parties**. Consider these terms:

* **Revelries** – *kōmos* – a carousal (as if a letting loose). (Strong’s) Vine describes reveling as “the concomitant and consequence of drunkenness.” Thayer says of this word, “a nocturnal and riotous procession of half-drunken and frolicsome fellows who after supper parade through the streets.” Drunkenness and “half-drunkenness” are both condemned.
* **Drinking parties** – *potos* – a drinking bout or carousal. (Strong’s) The term does not necessarily involve excess but is a social gathering with the consumption of alcoholic beverage lowering the inhibitions. Again, not drunkenness, yet prohibited by our holy God.

Excess of wine, behavior consequential of an excess of wine, and drinking at social gatherings are condemned, not condoned, in scripture. Should one take a single drink of alcohol? Consider the words of Christ concerning an unwise steward – *“But if that servant says in his heart, ‘My master is delaying his coming,’ and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers”* (Luke 12:45-46). The injustice performed while the master was gone has an interesting logical implication: When did the servant begin beating the other servants? When he initiated the first blow. When did he begin to eat? At the first bite. **When did his drunkenness begin? Likewise, at the first drink. No one can argue one drink is harmless.** The government says an individual is drunk at a blood alcohol concentration of .08%. The Bible never makes such a distinction. Inebriation must begin at the point alcohol enters the blood. Who can claim otherwise? We argue against the pro-choice movement saying life begins at conception. Sperm and egg join to begin life. If this is not when life begins then when does it begin? If it is not at the point of conception then it is mere speculation. The same logic follows. Alcohol enters the blood stream to begin intoxication.

At the root of the problem is the desire to be like the world. James wrote, *“Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God”* (James 4:4). Paul wrote, *“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God”* (Romans 12:2). Let us desire to live holy lives before our holy God. This cannot be done while tolerating and participating in the consumption of alcohol.

**Cleanse, Purify, and Humble**

*by Jeremiah Cox*

By inspiration, James calls the sinner to draw near to God. Those who have transgressed God’s law have become His enemy, yet He is the only One Who can repair their brokenness. The way to receive favor from God is to follow the formula given by the Holy Spirit:

* *“****Cleanse*** *your hands, you sinners”* (James 4:8). Sin must be repented of. The practice of sin must come to an end. The scripture reveals, *“by their fruits you will know them”* (Matthew 7:20). *“Whoever has been born of God does not sin”* (1 John 3:9).
* *“****Purify*** *your hearts, you double-minded”* (4:8). The heart is the seat of our motivation leading to action. We must *“keep [our] heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life”* (Proverbs 4:23). It is imperative we think only on that which is godly (cf. Philippians 4:8-9) so our following actions will be godly (cf. Matthew 12:35).
* *“****Humble*** *yourselves in the sight of the Lord”* (4:10). We must be filled with godly sorrow for our sins (cf. 2 Corinthians 7:8-11). It takes humility to admit our wrongs and recognize our need for help. We must lower ourselves in submission to the Almighty as it is our designed purpose (cf. Ecclesiastes 12:13). If we do so *“He will lift [us] up”* (4:10).

Drawing near to God requires change, for He is holy (cf. 1 Peter 1:16). We must cease from sin and completely change our mindset toward it. We cannot expect to successfully approach God with our noses in the air and our hearts elsewhere. Are you seeking to become nearer to God?