

God's Will for You: Drink but Just Don't Get Drunk?

There is an increasing trend among Christians to teach that the consumption of alcohol in moderation is perfectly acceptable to God. God's law on alcohol, they say, only prohibits the consumption of alcohol to the point of drunkenness and any consumption up to this point is permissible. Is this the correct view of the teachings of Scripture on this subject?

Certainly God's Word condemns drunkenness as a sin that will damn one's soul in Hell. I Corinthians 6:9,10 explicitly states, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither...drunkards...shall inherit the kingdom of God." The text is clear, and few argue, that getting drunk is a violation of God's will for the Christian.

If this is the sum of God's Word on alcohol, however, it places the Christian in a precarious position. Drunkenness will cause one to be lost eternally in Hell and, as a result, is a line no one can afford to cross. But, the problem is determining where the line is! What is drunkenness?

Perhaps a good place to start would be to look at the dictionary to determine the definition of drunkenness. Webster's Dictionary defines drunkenness as "a: having the faculties impaired by alcohol. b: having a level of alcohol in the blood that exceeds a maximum prescribed by law".

Since we're looking for the definite line for drunkenness that we don't want to cross, the second definition appears to be worth examining. It seems to be very concrete, absolute and even scientific! Maybe the answer is here! After all, one might suppose the authorities have done their homework and know when one is drunk and when one isn't. Unfortunately, a quick look at the laws of the land show no uniformity among the states. The state laws vary across a wide range of blood alcohol levels that are used to define when one is driving drunk, so this doesn't help us in determining the where this important line is.

Some might be quick to answer, "I won't get drunk because I know my limits!" But, how does one know his or her limits? The only way to know your limits is to cross the line! For example, you might know your limits when it comes how much weight you can lift. How did you come to know this limit? You learned it when you tried to lift more than you could handle and woke up with a sore back the next day! Are we to believe that God has established a law for His people with regards to alcohol that we can only know we are violating AFTER we have crossed the line and violated it?

What's worse, the "limit" for an individual varies. The effects of alcohol on a person change based upon a number of factors including the type and amount of food that has been consumed before or during imbibing, one's physical condition, and even one's emotional state. So, the line that we're struggling to draw (that will send a soul to Hell) is now moving! Certainly there has to be a better answer!

Fortunately, instead of instructing us not to cross some vague line that is difficult to determine or is impossible to know until you've crossed it, God gives additional instructions about the consumption of alcohol that are more absolute. Repeatedly in the New Testament we are told to be sober. For example, in I Peter 4 we read the familiar condemnation of the Gentiles' use of alcohol ("For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry." I Peter 4:3 NASV). But, God doesn't say, "It is ok for you to go have a few with them, but just know your limits; just don't get drunk with them." Instead, in verse 7 of the context, God instructs His children to be sober ("The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers." I Peter 4:7 NASV). The Greek word translated "sober-minded" here (nephele) is defined by Strong as "to abstain from wine (keep sober), i.e. (figuratively) be discreet:—be sober, watch." Vine defines the word like this: "signifies 'to be free from the influence of intoxicants;'. This instruction about the consumption of alcohol is much more absolute, isn't it?

"But, wait just a minute!" someone might object. "Why would God condemn drunkenness if he really wants Christians to be abstinent?" This is a worthy question and to answer it, it is important to note that other condemnations of sins of actions in excess do not always justify the engaging of the action in moderation. In other words, just because God condemns excessive consumption of alcohol (drunkenness), it does not mean that moderate consumption of alcohol is permitted. For example, the condemnation of "excess of riot" in I Peter 4:4 doesn't mean riot in moderation is permissible. The prohibition of being like the world to the point of conforming to their standards in

Romans 12:1,2 doesn't mean that occasional behavior like the world is acceptable just as long as you don't act like them all the time.

God's law isn't vague. Christians are to be sober, abstaining from alcohol, instead of consuming it and wondering if they've crossed some ambiguous line into drunkenness. Those who abstain won't have to worry if they've "gone too far" and they won't have given any opportunities to Satan to devour them (1 Peter 5:8).

- **Jacob Gwin**

"I'm Just One . . ."

Do you ever think: "I'm just one. I don't have great talents. There are so many others. Someone else can do better than me. My work, my efforts, my contributions aren't that significant?" Have you imagined that no one will notice if you aren't there and don't get involved? If so, you need to spend time remembering some familiar Bible stories.

Consider the importance of one person (or just a few persons) when:

- Noah saved the human race from total annihilation in the global flood.
- Joseph overcame being sold as a slave, rose to high office in Egypt, and ultimately helped his entire family and nation in the midst of a terrible famine.
- Moses stood up to Pharaoh and delivered the children of Israel from bondage.
- Joshua (and Caleb) brought back a good report on the promised land.
- Gideon (and his 300 men) won a battle against a huge army.
- David defeated Goliath, and in the process encouraged the army of Israel to a major victory over the Philistines.
- Elijah withstood the 450 prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel.
- Nehemiah single-handedly motivated and led the people to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.
- Queen Esther saved the Jews from Haman's plot to have them all killed.
- The prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, etc.) steadfastly proclaimed God's word even though they were opposed and persecuted.
- And the ultimate example... Jesus, who suffered and died alone so that you and I could be forgiven of our sins and have the hope of heaven in eternity.

The next time you think, "I'm just one. My work doesn't matter," remember that the history of God's people is the history of a faithful few who did what they could to serve Him. Let's get busy!

- **by Greg Gwin**