

1 Peter 4:3 and 'Social Drinking'

Three words are used in I Peter 4:3 which have a bearing on modern drinking practices. All three words describe the life style of the old man, dead in sin — living "in the flesh to the lusts of men." Peter pleads with those who are alive "to the will of God" to leave buried in the shameful past such practices as the OINOPHLUGIA, KOMOS, and POTOS.

1. OINOPHLUGIA. The KJV translates this "excess of wine." The word METHE (drunkenness, Gal. 5:21) refers to habitual intoxication, deep drinking, drunken bouts. No one respects the down-and-out drunk, the sickening wino. Such extreme indulgence and debauchery is universally a shame. The gutter drunk "may induce permanent mischief on the body" by his habitual, senseless excesses. The body, mind, and soul are deadened and finally destroyed.

But, "excess of wine" (OINOPHLUGIA) while indicating intoxication, "marks a step in advance of METHE." In other words, it is a level of drinking that is less than that indicated by habitual "drunkenness" (METHE). The fatal debauch of Alexander the Great, for instance, is signified by OINOPHLUGIA in ancient records.

2. KOMOS. This word appears as "revelings" in KJV. There is a descent or digression in the strength of our three words. There is a level of drinking in KOMOS which is distinguishable from "excess of wine."

The one who practices OINOPHLUGIA staggers, stumbles, or even sleeps in his stupor. If he swings his fist, he is the one likely to get hurt. If he drives, he is more danger to himself than to others; he will likely to drive right up a tree, but other drivers can see him a mile away and get out of the way.

But the one who practices KOMOS is a "live wire." He is intoxicated, but not so debauched as to miss all the fun. "He's flying high." KOMOS combines intoxication with merrymaking. It suggests shouting, singing, dancing, and generally stirring wanton desires with merry companions — all with the help of intoxicants. "Take one down, pass it around, 49 bottles of beer on the wall," and the songs go on. "Wine, women, and song" is the modern way of saying KOMOS.

Where do we go from here? What's the next level down?

3. POTOS. This word is translated "banquetings," which is obscure to the modern reader. Or, worse, he may confuse this word with our practice of a social meal with speakers, awards, or entertainment.

Today's English Version and the New American Standard translates POTOS as "drinking parties"; be careful not to read that "drunken parties," which would be KOMOS. Rotherham has "drinking bouts" — not necessarily drunken bouts. The New English Bible says "tippling" — drinking, especially continuously in small amounts.

Literally, POTOS is "a drinking," without reference to amount. The verb form is POTTZO, "to give to drink," without regard to amount (as Matt. 10:42 — "give to drink... a cup of cold water"). R. C. Trench says concerning POTOS, "not of necessity excessive" (Synonyms of the N. T., p. 211). He further explains that POTOS is related to words of excess in that it gives "opportunity for excess." This, then, is the cocktail party drinking, sipping the wine, "having a few drinks with the boys," social drinking.

Rather than excusing our sins, let us cease from them (I Pet. 4). Let us put off the old man and put on the new man (Col. 3). "Ye are the salt of the earth. ... Ye are the light of the world" (Matt. 6). Let us live so as to bring men to Christ and glory to God.

- by Ron Halbrook (edited for length)
Searching The Scriptures, June, 1973

Add to Your Faith

When one becomes a child of God, he is born again spiritually (John 3:1-5) becoming a spiritual babe who is to grow (1 Pet. 2:1-2; 2 Pet. 3:18). One grows spiritually by feeding upon the word of God (Acts 20:32), developing a spiritual appetite in order to hunger and thirst after righteousness (Matt. 5:6).

2 Peter 1:5-11 tells of the necessity and nature of such growth. "But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

"Virtue" is the determination to do right. "Knowledge" is knowledge of God's word because it is the only source which tells what is right. "Self control" is the application of that knowledge in your life using it to govern your thoughts and actions. "Perseverance" is remaining steadfast to the Lord and His cause. "Godliness" is being like God, as He would have you to be. "Brotherly kindness" is tender affection toward brethren in Christ. "Love" is devotion to God, Christ, and your fellowman which is expressed in obedience to God and service to man.

If you are to be fruitful in your service to Christ, these things must abound in your life. If you lack them, you are blind as to what your life in Christ should be.

- by Gene Taylor

Is Today's Bible Like The Original?

It is obvious that we do not have any of the original autographs of the Bible writings. (By "autographs" we mean the actual letters written by the hand of Matthew, Luke, Paul, Moses, Isaiah, etc.) Therefore, the question arises as to the accuracy of our copies. How do we know that they are like the original?

Textual criticism is the field of study which is devoted to examining this issue. Thousands of volumes have been written about this scholarly area of investigation. At the risk of oversimplification, let us illustrate how the process works:

1. Joe writes a letter to Sam.
2. Sam decides that others need to read Joe's message.
3. Having no copy machine available, Sam sends hand-written copies to Tom, Dick, and Harry while keeping the original himself.
4. Later, Joe (the original letter-writer) dies and the original letter is inadvertently destroyed by Sam.
5. At this point, how can Tom be sure that his copy of the letter is true to the one originally written by Joe?
6. There is only one way: He can compare his copy to the ones held by Dick and Harry. If all three are identical, then Jack can conclude with a high degree of certainty that his copy is accurate. Obviously, the level of confidence increases with the number of copies available for comparison.

This is how textual criticism works. We should be impressed that here are thousands of manuscripts and early versions of the Bible which are available for the kind of comparison we have just explained. (Manuscripts are copies written in the same language as the original letters, and versions are the translations of the original text into other languages.) Concerning the New Testament alone, there are over 5,000 manuscripts and 10,000 documents of versions. These provide abundant evidence for the purposes of textual criticism. Some of these date to the second century A.D., reducing the time period when any errors might have crept into the text.

- by Greg Gwin