

A Light in the Valley

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)

October 2019
Volume 5
Issue 10

Alcohol and Gluttony

by: Ryan Hasty

Often when discussing the subject of alcohol, the argument comes up that we also eat unhealthy food. In fact, many are guilty of overeating which leads to a variety of health issues. Therefore since we eat food from, for example, McDonalds, why do we place more emphasis on social drinking? What about the issue of gluttony and how does it compare to alcohol?

First, gluttony is indeed a sin (Prov 23:20-21; 25:16). And if Christians are not spending time addressing this subject, we are not fulfilling the teaching of the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27). It is interesting, however, that those who advocate social drinking are often guilty of the same negligence in that we generally only hear about this subject when the topic of social drinking is being discussed. If we need to talk about gluttony, let's talk about gluttony. Let's encourage one another in our eating to be temperate and restrained so as not to cross unhealthy lines. But let us also

not be guilty of using the subject of gluttony as a red herring and diversionary tactic to avoid dealing with the issues related to social drinking.

Second, since I was very young I have been taught that "two wrongs don't make a right," which is also taught in scripture (Rom 12:17; 1 Thes 5:15; Matt 7:12). But some will bring up gluttony during conversations on social drinking not just to point out inconsistency, but to justify social drinking. The idea is, "Since so many are guilty of gluttony and nobody talks about it, what's to keep me from continuing to drink alcohol?" This is not a valid argument. If both are wrong then both simply need to be refrained from. Attempting to use one to justify the other is not sound reasoning.

Third, food and ethyl alcohol are not the same thing. Food is an essential part of our development and growth as human beings which we cannot live without. However, recreational and social con-

sumption of ethyl alcohol is not essential to our development and growth; it can actually become a great hindrance. Ethyl alcohol alters our sobriety, encumbers the functions of our mind, and diminishes our ability to make rational and sound judgments. While gluttony can lead to a variety of health problems, I have never known of someone who beat their wives, neglected their family, killed someone in a highway accident, etc. because they overate at McDonalds. Long term health issues is one thing, but the consumption of ethyl alcohol can immediately hinder one's ability to make wise decisions and think sensibly.

Thoughts on Consuming Alcohol in Moderation

by: Ryan Hasty

Though drunkenness is condemned in the bible (Gal 5:21; 1 Cor 6:10), many Christians wonder if consumption of modern day alcoholic beverages in moderation is acceptable. Honest Christians who are trying to please God have been trying to answer this question for ages and it certainly deserves an honest and thorough evaluation. The following are some thoughts to consider from a former drinker:

First, drunkenness is not merely a state; it is a process. Eph 5:18 says, “And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit.” According to Young’s Analytical Concordance to the Bible, the verb translated “drunk” means “do not begin to be softened” with wine. Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words defines this verb “drunk” as “to make drunk, or to grow drunk (an inceptive verb, marking the process of the state expressed in μεθύω), to become intoxicated...” In other words, Paul is stating that we should not even begin the process of becoming drunk. A person does not continuously drink unaffected and then at the next sip become drunk; the alcohol takes effect in stages due to the accumulation of alcohol in one’s body. Since the alcohol begins taking effect in our body the moment we begin imbibing, it would logically follow that we should abstain from it altogether.

Second, alcohol absorption in the human body is determined by a variety of factors. These factors are gender, weight, body fat %, mood, medications, health, rate

of consumption, etc. Several of these factors vary from day to day making it impossible to accurately and consistently determine what I deem to be “moderate” consumption. This means that the only way I can know if I’ve consumed too much alcohol on any particular day is to put it to the test. Consider too that alcohol takes time to fully absorb in the blood stream. Even if there is a definitive line where drunkenness is crossed, I may incorrectly assume that I have stopped before that line only to realize later that I have passed it because additional alcohol absorption had not yet taken place. This means that I may never know my limit on any given day until I have exceeded that limit.

Christians must honestly ask themselves if this is truly being “careful how you walk” (Eph 5:15).

Third, consider the irony of claiming we can use sound judgment about when to stop drinking while we are in the process of consuming a beverage that hinders our judgment the moment we begin consuming it. “The higher nerve functions of the forebrain, such as reasoning, judgment, and social restraint are impaired by very low concentrations of alcohol in the blood.” (Encyclopedia Britannica, 1959 ed., “Drunkenness”, by Clarence Weinert Muelberger, p. 683). Alcohol is a depressant that dulls the senses and weakens a person’s power of self-criticism. The fact that there is no definitive amount of ethyl alcohol that we can be sure will keep our judgments sound is evidence of the danger in experimenting with it in the first place.

Finally, even experts throughout our world are divided over how much is too much. In Alabama, the blood/alcohol standard used to determine DUI is 0.08% for drivers over 21 years of age. But in countries such as Australia, Saudi Arabia, Hungary, Israel, the Czech Republic, and others, the standard is 0%. In Sweden, it is 0.02%. In Germany, it is 0.05%. Therefore, even people with greater expertise than us and whose job it is to try and define a line between sobriety and drunkenness to prevent as many highway deaths as possible, cannot agree on a line.

With so many unknowns regarding what is truly moderate and temperate alcohol consumption, I strongly encourage my fellow Christians to abstain. Heaven is just too high a price to be gambled away aiming for subjective lines of “moderation.”

Ephesians 5:18

And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit...

By Grace through Faith

by: Doy Moyer

Grace, faith, and obedience are brothers in the kingdom of God. Some seem to dismiss the need to obey completely because they see grace in a lopsided kind of way. To them, grace means not having to obey, not required to actually do anything lest it gives the impression that they are trying to earn salvation. They reason that we have no part in salvation at all because if we did, it wouldn't be grace. On the other hand, some seem to dismiss grace because they see obedience in a lopsided way. Obedience is everything, and unless we are perfectly doing it all flawlessly, there is no hope. Oh, we can seek forgiveness if we fail, but that's more of last-ditch approach. Grace is the life-saver we grab onto when we are about to drown, but other than that we are swimming on our own.

Neither approach is correct. Grace and obedience are not in antithesis to each other; they are in synthesis with each other. One does not negate the other. In fact, one without the other is incomplete and does not represent God's revealed plans.

Consider Ephesians 2:8-10 and what it means to be saved "by grace through faith." That we are saved "by grace through faith" is undeniable, but let's break it down a bit.

First, "by grace" is not complete without "through faith." Bear in mind that biblical faith is not mere mental assent. It is active, obedient, and trusting. If we are saved by grace through faith, then this passage clearly puts both grace and obedience together, for if we aren't trusting God enough to strive to do what He tells us to do, then we don't have faith. In that case, one cannot say, "by grace through faith." Faith does not just say, "I believe." Faith says, "I trust, and at Your word I will do as You say" (cf. Luke 5:5). Is salvation "by grace"? Without question! Yet, "through faith" means something, and there is no "through faith" without obedience (cf. Heb. 3:18-19).

Second, "through faith" is not complete without "by grace." Faith cannot rightly say, "I'm doing this all on my own." Faith can only say, "I trust God, will do as He says, and will rely on His grace and mercy to save me. Salvation is not of myself; it is God's gift." "Through faith" is not a ticket to self-righteousness; it is a path to submission. The epitome of this spirit is seen in this: "So you also, when you have

done all that you were commanded, say, ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty’” (Luke 17:10). God’s grace is what lights up faith’s path. Grace does not negate duty, but neither does an active faith allow for a self-reliant, works-righteousness. As Daniel recognized in his prayer so long ago, so ought we to have the same spirit: “for we are not presenting our supplications before You on account of any merits of our own, but on account of Your great compassion” (Dan 9:18).

Can we afford to say that either grace or obedience is unnecessary? If we say that grace is unnecessary, then we are only left with ourselves as our own saviors, and miserable saviors are we! If we say that obedience is unnecessary, then we make grace cheap, a mockery of God’s will, for it is by His grace that He revealed what He wants from us. Dare we shun God’s grace by downplaying His revealed will for us?

Jesus didn’t die so that we can do whatever we want. “For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and He died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for Him who for their sake died and was raised” (2 Cor 5:14-15).

We cannot live “for Him” if we aren’t actively seeking to obey Him, and Paul ties this idea directly to the fact that Christ died for us, which is the greatest act of God’s grace. It’s not one or the other; it’s both hand in hand.

Must we have God’s grace? Paul answers:

“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus”
(Rom 3:23-24).

Must we obey? Paul answers:

“He will render to each one according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, He will give eternal life; but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath

Study Opportunities

Sunday Bible Study: 10:00 AM
Sunday Worship Assembly: 11:00 AM

Meeting At

Homewood Suites of Bozeman
1023 E Baxter Ln,
Bozeman, MT 59715

Everyone Welcome!

and fury” (Rom 2:6-8).

How, again, do they fit together? Paul answers:

“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession who are zealous for good works” (Titus 2:11-14).

Passages abound that demonstrate the need for both grace and faith. Let’s not allow ourselves to get lopsided by thinking that one is going to work without the other. We can never merit our salvation, and a biblical understanding of “through faith” will not allow us to think that way. Yet we also cannot afford to take God’s grace for granted, thinking that what we do doesn’t matter. A biblical understanding of God’s grace will not allow us to think that way either.

Thanks be to God who gives grace and mercy, and thanks be to Him who has revealed His plans and desires for us! Be thankful that He has told us what He wants us to do, and be thankful that forgiveness is always available, not just as a last-ditch fail-safe, but as a continual reminder of our daily need to rely on Him.

If We Believed What They Believed

by: Gary Kerr

One of the reference works I usually keep close at hand when studying any part of the New Testament is the paraphrase translation of J.B. Phillips, *The New Testament In Modern English*. I don’t agree with all of Phillips’ suggested wording, but I often find his efforts helpful in clarifying some particular passage or point. The translation was originally produced in sections, with the first, *Letters To Young Churches* (Romans through Colossians), being published in London during World War II (it included a preface and recommendation written by C.S. Lewis).

In his introduction to that book, Phillips writes the following about the New Testament epistles and their authors and recipients:

“Without going into wearisome historical details, we need to remember that these letters were

written, and the lives they indicate were led, against a background of paganism ... Slavery, sexual immorality, cruelty, callousness to human suffering, and a low standard of public opinion, were universal; travelling and communications were chancy and perilous; most people were illiterate. Many Christians today talk about the ‘difficulties of our times’ as though we should have to wait for better ones before the Christian religion can take root. It is heartening to remember that this faith took root and flourished amazingly in conditions that would have killed anything less vital in a matter of weeks. These early Christians were on fire with the conviction that they had become, through Christ, literally sons of God - they were pioneers of a new humanity, founders of a new Kingdom. They still speak to us across the centuries. Perhaps if we believed what they believed, we might achieve what they achieved.”

That final sentence is profound and powerful -- “Perhaps if we believed what they believed, we might achieve what they achieved!”

Within a generation of the establishment of the church, the apostle Paul could write of those who carried the gospel message that “their voice has gone out into all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world” (Romans 10:18). Paul wrote about the gospel that it had been preached “in all the world” and that it had been “proclaimed in all creation under heaven” (Colossians 1:6, 23). This is an incredible achievement -- to begin with a few comparatively unknown and uneducated people (cf. Acts 4:13), and to have a message that did not appeal to the “wise,” the “mighty,” or the “noble” according to the flesh (1 Corinthians 1:26). But they had strong faith and a zeal born of that faith, that caused them to launch out boldly and sacrificially, to the point of being willing to give up their lives for the cause they had taken up. And God gave them amazing success. They were “on fire” for the kingdom, for the gospel, and for the souls of their fellow human beings, believing with all their hearts in the sacrifice and promises of Jesus, the Son of God and Savior of men. Being a Christian and going to heaven meant everything to them, and they wanted “all creation under heaven” to share with them in these blessings.

Do not be deceived into thinking that their achievements were easily accomplished. Right from the start they were opposed and persecuted. When the first of their number was martyred, such a widespread persecution developed that all except the apostles were driven from their homes and scattered abroad (cf. Acts 8:1). But this did not slow them down or dampen their enthusiasm. Wherever they went, they were found “preaching the word” (Acts 8:4). They preached it as they had opportunity, not depending on others (i.e., preachers, elders, etc.) to do the work for them. Each Christian considered him/herself both privileged and responsible to win souls for Christ. Their cause was new -- they were pioneers.

I fear that today we do not appreciate our “spiritual blessings” as they did. It is not our life as it was theirs. We are not spending and being spent for it as they were. To some degree, at least, perhaps we do not “believe what they believed.”

“Perhaps if we believed what they believed, we might achieve what they achieved.” If we did, I am convinced that God would give us success, too.

Daily Bible Reading

November 2019

November 1	Genesis 1-3	November 18	Genesis 29-30
November 4	Genesis 4-5	November 19	Genesis 31
November 5	Genesis 6:1-8:19	November 20	Genesis 32-34
November 6	Genesis 8:20-10:32	November 21	Genesis 35-36
November 7	Genesis 11-14	November 22	Genesis 37-38
November 8	Genesis 15-17	November 25	Genesis 39:1-41:36
November 11	Genesis 18-19	November 26	Genesis 41:37-42:38
November 12	Genesis 20-22	November 27	Genesis 43-44
November 13	Genesis 23-24	November 28	Genesis 45-47
November 14	Genesis 25-26	November 29	Genesis 48-50
November 15	Genesis 27-28		

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