

Russell Kelfer
Be Not
Drunk...
Be Filled

915-B

Series: Living Lessons From Proverbs

dtm DISCIPLESHIP TAPE MINISTRIES, INC.
INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

10602 Mossbank, San Antonio, TX 78230 • (210) 226-0000 / 1-800-375-7778 • www.dtm.org • dtm@dtm.org

Be Not Drunk...Be Filled

Mirror, mirror on the wall,
What's the touchiest subject of all?
Would about adultery learning
Start the greatest fires a-burning?

Oh, no, any fool can see
You stay away from gluttony.
Find someone in hunger's mood,
And he'll kill to get to food.

These subjects seem to stir up strife
(And make more brief a teacher's life.)
They cause less stouter hearts to fail,
But as the worst, they don't prevail.

Redraw life's explosive curves,
These are not our rawest nerves.
Beware, says mirror on the wall,
Do not teach on alcohol!

It's true! Nothing seems to build more tension or create more apprehension than this time bomb I hold in my hand this morning. It is not a hobbyhorse. I have never taught a whole lesson on it before (and may never again). And it has been addressed in any detail as a part of a lesson only twice, to my knowledge, in the last five years in this class. It's not a hobbyhorse (and mustn't become one). But it is impossible to pass through Proverbs and deal with such issues as fear, envy, adultery, and gluttony and overlook a problem of self-control that Proverbs describes in such devastating detail. If we are to be true to the whole counsel of God, it must be addressed. And if we are to honestly assess the church's responsibility in the light of a present day epidemic of addiction that now reaches its fingers of destruction even into the grade schools of our nation, it must be addressed.

This rampant epidemic is threatening to rip away the last shreds of moral fiber left in our country, a country fast becoming morally bankrupt at the very doorsteps of the greatest concentration of

Christian outreaches in the history of the world.

We are spending billions to send missionaries from this “Christianized” nation of ours to other parts of the world, while the foundations of the citadel from which we send them are subtly decaying; being eroded by the tenacious termites of immorality, compromise, and a level of addiction to mind-controlling substances never even imagined a decade ago.

If the church is to ignore the issues of intoxication and addiction (to alcohol and drugs), if the church of America is to fiddle while the America it reaches for burns, then the church as we know it may soon see its candlestick removed, its power wane, its message cease to be heard. It is a difficult subject to address, as I said last week. Just mention alcohol, and hearts beat faster, blood pressures rise, lips quiver, and mature men begin to divide themselves over theological gnats. But while we’re straining at those gnats, we’re swallowing camels, arguing over what we can or can’t do instead of honestly addressing together the perils of abuse and intoxication.

In our last lesson, we approached Part I of our subject with three basic objectives. I asked you to please draw no conclusions till we were concluded. Those three objectives were (1) to explore the issue of spiritual freedom; (2) to define drunkenness; and (3) to see what Proverbs had to say about the subject.

On issue 1, we determined that freedom is the absence of bondage. In Christ we have been set free: free from bondage and the penalties of sin; free from bondage and the pressures of sin; and free from bondage to the power of sin.

God, in Christ, set us free when Jesus entered our lives. We were born free, and when the Son set us free, we became free indeed! Free to recognize God’s personal perfect will for us, and free at last from being shackled into bondage by anything Satan contrives. Free, in His power, both to choose and to do whatever most will glorify Him. We are in Christ free at last.

Our second objective was to define drunkenness. The dictionary did it for us. It said drunkenness is “to be intoxicated to the point of impairment,” impairment being defined as “that which weakens or diminishes in strength, value, quantity, or quality.” The word “impair” comes from a Latin root meaning “less effective.” So to be drunk, then, is to become intoxicated to the point of becoming less effective.

Be Not Drunk...Be Filled

The word “intoxication,” meanwhile, carries this definition: “to induce (especially, but not exclusively, by the effect of alcohol) any of a series of progressively deteriorating states ranging from exhilaration to stupefaction.”

So drunkenness, then, is a process, a progressively deteriorating process, that impairs or makes one less effective. And in any stage of that process that you become less effective, you are to that degree intoxicated. So at any point that any drug, legal or illegal, or any form of liquid intoxicant affects your effectiveness physically, mentally, morally, emotionally, or spiritually, you are to that degree “drunk.” A drunk, the dictionary goes on, is one who becomes habitually intoxicated.

So the issue is intoxication, not the act of drinking. The act of drinking, however, becomes the sub-issue because it is the act of drinking that leads to drunkenness. But our issue is intoxication, and Proverbs is plentiful in its pursuit of principles on the subject. We obviously cannot reread them all, but the nineteen or so verses we covered in the last lesson left us these foundation stones to build on. Remember? They were:

- 1) Alcohol affects your personality
- 2) Alcohol affects your judgment
- 3) Alcohol affects your ability to know your own limits
- 4) Alcohol generates false ambition
- 5) Alcohol ultimately robs you of reaching those ambitions
- 6) Drunkards and gluttons are two kinds of people to avoid as friends.
- 7) Drunkenness carries with it certain guarantees.

It guarantees you:

- | | |
|--------------------|------------------------------|
| a) misery, | g) lustful imaginations, |
| b) remorse, | h) stupid remarks, |
| c) contention, | i) idiotic behavior, |
| d) murmuring, | j) unknowing abuse, |
| e) bruises, | k) uncontrollable addiction. |
| f) bloodshot eyes, | |

Principle #8: A child, given to God, must be warned of the dangers of immorality and alcohol.

Principle #9: Alcohol is a dangerous detour that sidetracks

Be Not Drunk...Be Filled

leaders from demonstrating judgment and justice; it is a way for cowards to drown their sorrows, not for leaders to make their mark.

Proverbs is plain. Drunkenness is a sad commentary of a life out of control. If God's man or God's woman is to exercise self-control, the issue of alcohol is a subject that must be reckoned with.

So, this lesson, part 2 of our cautious consideration of this sensitive subject will precariously proceed in the following fashion.

I- Issues and Answers on Intoxication

II- Six Questions

- 1) Who says I can't drink? Does the Bible say so?
- 2) Who's in control of my life? (And how is that control affected by intoxication?)
- 3) Who's watching what I do? And to what degree am I my brother's keeper?
- 4) What kind of fruit is my life producing? And how can I detect bad apples?
- 5) What is the issue of the hour? For the church? What's our responsibility? As a body? As a believer?
- 6) What are my options as a Christian? (What will be my response?)

Now question 1- Does the Bible say, "Thou shalt not drink"? If it does, the issue is closed, and we don't have to consider any more principles to help us govern our choices. If the Bible says we can't drink, we can't drink.

Now hear me please. The Bible condemns drunkenness. It says,

Be not drunk with wine...

(Ephesians 5:18)

It is final. Thou shalt not become intoxicated. Thou shalt not become to any degree less effective through partaking of intoxicants. The Bible says, thou shalt not become drunk, period. But does it say, thou shalt not drink?

I don't think so. There are too many passages you have to erase to conclude that, but for starters we will begin with these verses in Matthew:

Be Not Drunk...Be Filled

(Jesus speaking) For John came neither eating nor drinking and they say, 'He hath a devil.'

The Son of Man came eating and drinking and they say, Behold a man gluttonous and a wine- bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners.
(Matthew 11:18-19)

Does that mean Jesus took a drink? Possibly. Was He ever drunk? Definitely not. Was He condoning drinking? Probably not. But the passage is there, and if we are to honestly approach the subject, we have to reckon with that verse. We have to ask, if Jesus drank, what He drank, and why He drank. And the answers to those questions set seminaries ablaze, so far be it for us to be dogmatic. One thing we know, though: Jesus came to destroy the legalistic landslide the Pharisees had dumped on God's people in the name of religion. He intentionally healed on the Sabbath, not because that's our commission (to heal on the Sabbath), but to elevate people to their rightful role of value in God's scheme of things. The man in need was the issue. That's why we have the law in the first place.

In the same way, Jesus wasn't drinking (if indeed He was) to teach us to drink, but to demonstrate that He ate and drank with whomever had a need. The verse says He was a friend of publicans and sinners. As to the kind of alcohol available in Jesus' day, Bible scholars are as divided as the Grand Canyon on that one, too. If you just interview the men who have graced this pulpit in the last year—leaders of some of the largest seminaries and Bible schools and Christian organizations in the world—the answers you'll get will run from infinity to infinity. Most of the commentaries I consulted argued that the wine referred to here was unfermented. But to be honest, we can't prove that. It isn't really the issue anyhow.

You have to reckon with John, chapter 2 also where Jesus' first public miracle took place at a wedding in Cana of Galilee. The people wanted wine, but the host ran out. So Mary, Jesus' mother, complained to the Master and Jesus responded that His hour to act had not yet come. Then, in deference to His mother, Jesus turned the water into wine. Some theologians say Jesus only purified the water with just enough alcohol to make it drinkable. That's possible, but not probable. The master of ceremonies, remember, commended the host for saving the best wine till last.

Young's Analytical Concordance meanwhile, translates the Greek word used here as 'grape juice,' indicating it was not fully

Be Not Drunk...Be Filled

fermented, thus not highly intoxicating (if at all). Was it? We don't know. (Again, that's really not the issue.)

You say, well, what about the passage on tea-totaling bishops?

A bishop must be blameless, a one-wife man, vigilant sober, well-behaved, hospitable, able to teach, not given to wine.

(I Timothy 3:3)

But in verse 8, it says, "Likewise, a deacon must be not given to much wine." Is this a spiritual status-system separating the leaders from the servers by way of total abstinence? Well, it would be nice, but it really doesn't say that. The Greek word used here, *parainos*, literally does not mean, "not touching," but "not tarrying." It says a bishop must be one who "does not tarry long at the wine." "One not addicted to wine" is another translation.

You say, well, whose side are you on? God's side, I hope.

I'm not saying it's okay to drink. I told you in the last lesson it's not okay for me. And I'm going to argue here that it's probably not okay for you, but I don't want to bend the Scripture. Let's say what it says, and let the Holy Spirit be responsible for the outcome. Another passage we have to reckon with is in I Timothy.

This is the passage that presents Paul's prescription for Timmy's tummy. Paul says,

Tim, you don't need to drink only water. You can take a little bit of wine, too, for your ailing stomach and your frequent infirmities.

(I Timothy 5:23)

In other words, Timothy was sick a lot. That ought to comfort some of us that chronic illness doesn't mean you're living in sin and under God's judgment. Paul had a similar problem. He was sympathetic. So he said, "Tim, take just enough wine to cure your ailments."

Let's remember three things about this passage:

1) Drugs or prescriptions that contain intoxicants may be a necessity to heal your body. You simply must be careful that you do not make the medicine a crutch nor the side-effects an acceptable way of life to pursue.

2) This verse doesn't teach that drinking was a common practice among New Testament church leaders. It probably indicates the

opposite. If Timothy had no qualms about a little alcohol, he wouldn't have needed Paul's urging that it was okay. Apparently he was hesitant, and Paul was encouraging him, not to a life of drinking, but to accept the wine as necessary medicine, even if he couldn't accept it for any other reason.

3) The evil wasn't in the wine itself. The evil was in the use thereof. More about that later.

But I want to make it clear that these passages are in the Bible. And on the strength of these passages, you must find it difficult to dogmatically affirm that the Bible says, "Thou shalt not even take a drink."

Well, then, does that mean you should drink? I don't believe it means you should. In fact, I personally believe I shouldn't, and I won't. And for reasons I believe are grounded in the Scriptures, but don't misuse the Scriptures, I believe the issue of drinking and drunkenness is more complex than a "thou shalt not." God doesn't say, "Don't play on the freeway" either. Does that mean we ought to? I believe God wants us to make a choice, not based on a legalistic commandment, but rather based on thought-through spiritual principles of how our lives affect others and how alcohol affects our lives. Does the Scripture say you can't take a drink? Probably not. Then should you? Probably not. Let's go on!

Now, if the Scripture does not dogmatically say we cannot drink, how then do we decide? We decide by evaluating Scriptural principles and asking ourselves some questions.

Question #1 is the question of control. The subject we are pursuing in Proverbs is self-control, the will responding to the Word over the objections of outside influences. The question is, "does the influence of alcohol change who controls my life?" Now we have determined that we have been "born free." We are now free to choose. "To drink or not to drink"—that's the question. The power now rests within us to make that choice, that's self-control.

The issue, however, is not whether or not we have the right to choose, but whether or not the choice we make will guarantee us continued control and thus continued freedom. The minute that you, operating in your new freedom, choose to do anything that makes you captive to your choice, you're no longer free, because in your freedom, you chose bondage, thus bartering away the very freedom that let you choose.

Be Not Drunk...Be Filled

In other words, if Scripture said, “thou shalt not drink,” the decision would be made for you. Your only choice would be whether or not to obey, but if the Scripture leaves you room to choose, then you must weigh the choices you have against the consequences of those choices. The first question is always one of control. If I make this choice, will I lose control? Will I become increasingly unable to think for myself and to continue to choose God’s best, or will I begin to relinquish my ability to be sober? (The Greek word for “sober” is “so’ *phron*”. It means “that soundness of mind that maintains control.”)

In I Timothy 3:2, a church leader is said to need to be a man who is “*sophron*”—sober—sound of mind and in control of his choices. Another New Testament word translated “sober” or “soberly” in the New Testament is the verb “*ne’ pho*,” which translates to be “free of intoxicants, thus still in control.” We read this:

Ye are all children of light, and the children of the day; we are not of the night nor of the darkness. Therefore, let us not sleep, as do others, but let us watch and be sober. [Be alert-*nepho*]

For they that sleep [are not alert] in the night and they that be drunken [under the influence of intoxicants] are drunken in the night.

But let us, who are of the day, be sober [*nepho*], putting on the breastplate of love and for an helmet, the hope of salvation
(I Thessalonians 5:5-8)

In other words, Paul is saying, if the Christian is going to walk in the light and demonstrate the Light, two things must characterize his life:

1) He must be alert, because anything that dulls his senses causes him to miss the subtle nuances of the battle that’s going on around him. a soldier who is not alert most likely will fall. The enemy will be able to blindside him.

2) He must be sober. His life must be free from intoxicants. He must have control of his reflexes. When the enemy approaches, he must not hesitate for a moment or the battle will be lost.

So the question isn’t, “Do you have the right to drink?” The question is, can you drink today’s drink and still be alert? Can you drink and still be sober? Remember, at any time you become intoxicated, less effective to any degree, you begin to lose control.

Be Not Drunk...Be Filled

And when you begin to lose control, Satan's army of demonic hosts will rush in to fill that void and cause you to say and do things you never would say or do if you were in perfect control.

Intoxicants wrestle control from you in two ways. The first is in the area of temporary behavior. Your mind functions without its normal restraints; your personality begins to change; moral choices become emotional rather than rational. Proverbs says you won't even know what hit you.

My wife and I were at a musical presentation a few weeks ago, and by virtue of the tickets I bought, we were miles away from the orchestra. In fact, I couldn't even see the stage, but I heard the music and that's why I went. At the next table was a young couple, and their behavior through the evening painted a stark reminder for me of how alcohol affects behavior. (Since we couldn't see the orchestra, we watched them.) When they arrived, they were the essence of dignity, properly dressed, courteous and considerate of those about them, somewhat reserved in their conduct. (The epitome of the Izod generation!) But one of the options at this function were pitchers of wine that you could sip and nip while the band played on. So this young couple begin sipping (little finger held out), still dignified, still considerate. But they seemed to like the wine more than the music, and before long the two of them had polished off the pitcher and the young man had found his way to the grapevine for Round Two.

As the evening progressed, their behavior became radically altered. They became loud, crude, and inconsiderate; then each began to become increasingly familiar, until they long passed the boundaries of morally acceptable behavior for such a time and place. The music played on, but they were oblivious. They were intoxicated, and they were behaving like fools. They had lost control. And once a person loses control, he can no longer exercise control of his behavior. I'm convinced that if I had asked that couple as they left to go home, "Are you drunk?" they would have said emphatically, even belligerently, "No. I can walk. I can drive. I'm having a ball." I'm also convinced that if I had videotaped their behavior and played it back when they were sober, they would have stared in disbelief! Who's in control? You're not, when intoxicants wrestle control away from you and change the very way you act.

Secondly, intoxicants wrestle control through addiction. To be sober means to be able to make your own choices. But even if you

Be Not Drunk...Be Filled

don't see or sense a behavioral change, if you are driven to return to that intoxicant, or if you demand or desire a larger portion or greater quantity or greater strength, you are "becoming addicted." Addiction is Satan's objective for intoxication. That's real bondage. Now you can no longer control your desire for that intoxicant. It begins to lure you, then drive you, then dominate you.

A few years ago, I was suffering from a problem of chronic pain, and there seemed to be no medical solution. So a well-meaning doctor friend prescribed an addicting drug so I could sleep. For a few weeks I slept; then the problem returned. "Double the number of pills," the doctor said, so I did, and I slept for a few weeks.

"Take three," he suggested a little later. Before long my life became a nightmare. I needed something else to wake me up and now still more to make me sleep. I didn't take them because I chose to. Now I took them because I had to, and the more I took, the more I wanted. One day I awakened in startled amazement to the fact that my life was out of control. It took weeks of suffering and not sleeping at all before I regained the capacity to control my life. In the meantime, spiritually, my life went down the tube. Physically, I couldn't function well. Emotionally, I was a wreck. The pain was awful; but the pain was ten times better than the cure.

God says, "Be sober. Stay in control of your choices. Don't let intoxicants gain control of your behavior. They ultimately will take you captive and control your very life."

I believe that's why so often God called on special men chosen for a special service to abstain totally from strong drink. Read Leviticus 10:9, Numbers 6, Deuteronomy 29, Judges 13, and Luke 1; all these are passages where God called men to be different, to be totally free, to be totally under His control. You'll see the commands, and you'll see the patterns.

To drink or not to drink. If the Scripture gives you the right to choose, then ask yourself

Who's in control when you do?

Who's watching when you do?

The second principle that affects our choice is the principle of how our life affects others. In Romans, chapter 14, Paul addresses this issue with startling clarity. The prevalent problem was the conflict in the church over whether or not it was morally acceptable to eat meat being sold in the marketplace which had

Be Not Drunk...Be Filled

been once offered to idols. Now the meat was not an intoxicant, so it's potential for evil was not the equivalent of alcohol. It's potential for evil, however, rested solely in the effect that those who felt free to eat had on those who felt that to eat this meat was sin. Paul saw it as a potentially divisive problem in the church. But he didn't ignore it...he addressed it! In verse 2, Paul outlines the problem, and in verse 3, he delineates the first principle. The Living Bible paraphrases it like this:

Those who think it is all right to eat such meat must not look down on those who won't. And if you are one of those who won't, don't find fault with those who do. For God has accepted them as His children. (Romans 14:3 TLB)

Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand. (Romans 14:4)

In other words, Principle #1: Everything is not cut and dried. Depending on your stage of growth and the life you've lived, you may or may not at this time in your life find drinking acceptable. You may take one position; someone else may take another. It's not your job to condemn the one who drinks, and it's not your job to condemn the one who doesn't. You may fight for your position, but don't reject the other person. Each must stand before their Master, and He alone knows where they are in their pilgrimage. God is not only capable of judging, He's capable of holding them up. He'll support them and set their feet on the right path.

Then, in verse 5 he takes issue #2, the issue of observing certain holy days, not necessarily Christian in nature. Paul says one man sees them like any other day, the other guy sees that day as special. Who's right? Both of them are, Paul says. The key is in the heart. Verse 7:

No man lives to himself, and no man dies to himself. (Romans 14:7)

Is his motive to honor the Lord? Then God is pleased with his position and will in time, if need be, teach him otherwise.

Let everyone give account of himself to God. Let us not therefore judge one another any more. (Romans 14:12)

In other words, what the other guy does is in the hand of His Master. The other guy's problem is between Him and God, Paul says. But there is something, Paul says, that may make all the

Be Not Drunk...Be Filled

difference in whether or not you choose to do what you feel free to do. He goes on, as for you,

Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way. (Romans 14:13)

Here's your new criteria: not what am I free to do, but what I am free to do that will not cause another to fall. Then Paul adds,

I'm persuaded that nothing is unclean of itself. This meat is not in itself dangerous. But to him that esteemeth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. (Romans 14:14)

If your bother is being pained or his feelings hurt or if he is being injured by what you eat, then [you] are no longer walking in love. Do not let what you eat hurt or cause the ruin of one for whom Christ died.

After all, the kingdom of God is not a matter of getting the food and drink one likes but instead it is righteousness—that state which makes a person acceptable to God—and heart peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

You must not, for the sake of food, undo and break down and destroy the work of God. Everything is (ceremonially) clean and pure, but it is wrong for anyone to hurt the conscience of others or to make them fall by what he eats.

The right thing to do is to eat no meat or drink no wine [at all] or [do anything else] if it [hurts your brother's conscience or] makes him stumble or offends or weakens him.

(Romans 14:15,17,20,21 Amplified)

Now eating meat offered to idols is not a problem today for the American Christian community, nor is the celebration of Holy Days a source of great division in the church. But my friends, the issue of alcohol has supplanted both of them for obvious reasons. And it makes whether or not you choose to drink at all an issue not only of choice; but also of conscience. Three groups of people may stand to be hurt if you drink, even if you are Scripturally free to do so.

The first group is the children:

But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble and sin, that is, who entices him, or hinders him in right conduct or thought, It would be better (more expedient and profitable or advantageous) for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be sunk in the depth of the sea. (Matthew 18:6 Amplified)

Be Not Drunk...Be Filled

You see, maybe you can drink with freedom, but maybe your children can't. Maybe you have the capacity to control it; maybe they, in a moment of youth, following only what you deemed acceptable begin to drink, only to find they lacked the maturity, or they physically and emotionally are unable to stop. They may destroy their life by copying yours. Or perhaps their friends' parents cannot handle it. They rush to defend you, so your conduct as a Christian brings division and hurt unnecessarily. My friend, when you walk, you leave big footprints for some little child to follow, maybe yours—maybe a neighbor's. If through your freedom, they enter into bondage, is that freedom?

The second group you stand to stumble are the weaker brothers addressed in this passage—the young Christians, the newborn babes who are convicted at conversion to give up drink, only to see their spiritual leaders condone what God had convicted them was wrong. And as yet, they have not the maturity to tell the difference. Maybe you are free to drink, but if by drinking, they stumble, is it worth it?

The third class you may cause to stumble are those who have been specifically in bondage to drugs or alcohol in the past and have been set free by God's grace. You tempt their spirit every time they see you enjoying what once held them captive. To them, it was hell on earth, to you it is freedom. Should you entice them back into bondage, are you not accountable? Paul says, "I'm mature; I can handle it. I'm free. But if one solitary person will be wounded by my choice, I have no choice at all. So now I'm free to say 'no.' My kingdom," Paul says, "is spiritual." So it's not what I have the right to do; it's what I have the responsibility to do that governs, in effect, what I choose to do.

Who's in control? That's question #1. Who may be hurt? That's question #2. Question #3 is this: At any given time, what kind of fruit is being produced in my life?

In Ephesians Paul makes this remarkable statement:

Do not be vague and thoughtless and foolish but understanding and firmly grasping what the will of the Lord is:

And do not get drunk with wine; for that is debauchery; but ever be filled and stimulated with the Holy Spirit.

(Ephesians 5:17,18)

Be not drunk... but be filled. Wuest reminds us that to be filled means to be controlled by. The real meaning of this passage simply

Be Not Drunk...Be Filled

boils down to this, being drunk with wine (which means being under its control) or being filled with the Spirit (which means being under His control) are not compatible. You cannot be controlled by an intoxicant and God at the same time. In fact, Galatians 5 lists drunkenness as one of the evidences you are under Satan's control, and self-control as evidence you are under God's control. So then under the Spirit's control, God in you produces the following:

Love,	Goodness,
Joy,	Faithfulness,
Peace,	Meekness,
Patience,	Self-control.
Kindness,	

It's interesting to note that Satan has a counterfeit for every quality that the Spirit produces, and it is under the control of intoxicants that he best manifests his worthless counterfeits. God produces love; Satan produces lust. We read in our last lesson in Proverbs how alcohol causes a man's mind to reel with lustful thoughts. God produces joy, inner excitement, that is unaffected by external circumstances or agents. Satan, using alcohol and drugs, produces euphoria that responds to circumstances and avoids reality. God produces peace—a quiet confidence that rests in God despite external experiences and thus confidently confronts reality. Satan uses alcohol and drugs to produce an artificial tranquility, an emotional numbness that tries to escape reality and rests its confidence in a physical inability to grasp or cope with life.

God always confronts and conquers. Satan, through intoxication, escapes and hides. Patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness... Satan has counterfeits of the real things, and alcohol and drugs are his vehicle to release these ungodly copies in our lives, and of course, self-control. God wants the Christian in control of his life. Satan uses intoxicants, as we learned earlier, to wrestle control of the life away from God.

The question is, what kind of fruit is my life producing? Under the control of the Spirit, it is producing the fruit of the Spirit. Under the control of alcohol or drugs, it is producing dangerous counterfeits.

You say, at what stage of intoxication do these phony satanic attributes begin to emerge? The moment you become in any way "less effective," "impaired at all," because through intoxicants, the

enemy has gained a stronghold in your life.

The last question we will ask is #4. What is the most crucial social issue facing the church of Jesus Christ in the United States today? Is it abortion? That's a crucial issue, but not the most crucial. Is it prayer in public schools? Hardly. Is it the rise of divorce and the fall of the family? That's a biggie! But even the secular media has recently awakened to the startling reality that the moral decline of our nation is snowballing at an unprecedented speed. And the catalyst that has accelerated our downfall is the acceptance and availability of mind-controlling narcotics and intoxicants which are literally inhaled by a generation of young Americans who cannot stand prosperity and cannot live with themselves.

A recent three-hour television broadcast during prime time devoted just to this issue brought forth these startling facts. Last year in our city alone there were:

- 1600 arrests for drunken driving
- 2700 accidents involving alcohol
- 2100 resulting in personal injury
- 101 deaths
- \$39.5 million in damages in our city.

(And that's just those that were reported.)

Quote from a secular doctor:

“The drug you should fear the most in terms of damage, death and frequency of use is alcohol. Nothing else even comes close.”

Another quote (every doctor interviewed agreed):

“We need to call alcohol a drug. If it were being introduced on the market today, it would be labeled a Class II narcotic and sold by prescription only.”

By number of users and volume consumed, no other drug compares to alcohol.

Researchers (secular researchers) claimed these statistics:

- 90% of all high school kids in America have had a drink
- 2/3 are regular drinkers (High school!)
- most began in elementary or junior high

Be Not Drunk...Be Filled

- 1 in 6 get drunk or nearly drunk once or more/week
- There are 3.3 million full-blown high school alcoholics, and the number is escalating so fast the statistics are obsolete every day.

While death rates for every other age are declining, death rates for youth are rising. Traffic accidents are the #1 cause of death in adolescents; the #1 cause of traffic accidents is alcohol.

Americans consume 35 gallons of beer, wine, and whiskey for every man, woman, and child over 14 years of age every year. It has doubled since 1942.

Another doctor said this,

“Alcohol is far more toxic to the body and in terms of damage to this society than all of the other forms of drug abuse combined.”

It is, (though statistics may be submerged) even now the third leading cause of death in America, and may soon pass cancer and heart disease to become our #1 killer. And one more fact: Sixty percent of all convicted felons were drinking at the time they committed the crime.

A whole generation is going down the tube, and you and I have the answer. Yet as nit-picking evangelicals we cling to our two or three pet verses that give us the “freedom to choose” and remain deadly silent on the real issues. One of those issues is that Christian parents clutch their bottles and quote their verses while they deplore the mention of marijuana, cocaine, and heroin. And yet the only difference is that alcohol is legal, and legally profitable, and even fashionable. But it’s just as much a drug; it’s just as addicting. And even the secular press tells us it is much more widespread.

Because it is so acceptable, we never even flinch at its fury. You don’t see people smoking pot or sniffing coke on situation comedies on channel 5, but every show you turn to shows someone with a glass or a bottle. Then you see why—the guys who make the stuff are paying the bills. The commercials merely reinforce the message the programs have already subtly sold, that “the good life comes in a bottle.” And the church of Jesus Christ, recoiling from an over-legalistic tee-totaling past, has taped its mouth shut and its ears closed. We don’t raise our voices to object. We watch the

Be Not Drunk...Be Filled

programs; we patronize the sponsors; we chuckle at the comedians who stagger across the stage imitating a helpless drunk; and all we say is, "Sure I drink. I don't want to offend my non-Christian brothers. I want them to accept me, so they'll accept my Jesus."

Be careful; that argument is dangerous. Where does it stop? My daughter related to me yesterday a story that proves my point. She shared how several years later after a ball a young man thanked her for graciously refusing to drink while not condemning him for doing so. God used it to convict him, and now he has gone back to his friends and said, "Hey, guys, I want to be your friend. I don't judge you for what you do, but I simply won't drink any more." They just respect him more. And if they didn't? Read I Peter 4:1-10 when you have time. If you offend them by lovingly demonstrating a new joy, a real peace, a perfect love that does not need alcohol to overflow, then the problem becomes theirs!

It's time the church of Jesus Christ arose again in love, but also in righteous anger, and said, "We won't support an industry that's responsible for thousands of deaths every day." My soul! Thousands of Americans dumped bottles of Tylenol in the trash because less than 1% of the bottles contained poison. What righteous indignation! But will you leave in your refrigerator or in your pantry bottles that do contain poison that taken in sufficient quantity will destroy you, your family, and your home?

Let me ask you one more question: Do you think it's okay to take pot? Cocaine? Heroin? Pot is no worse than alcohol. You say, "No! It's addicting; it's mind-bending; it's debilitating." The Bible doesn't say you can't. It doesn't say, "Thou shalt not take drugs," does it? You're free. But you would never use your freedom to risk that kind of bondage. Then what's the difference?

I believe that if Jesus came to earth today, I don't believe He would take a drink, and I don't believe He would condone it. That's a personal opinion, because today we're not in bondage to the Law. Today, we're in bondage to our freedom, and our freedom is killing us.

But you do have the right to drink. The Bible doesn't say you can't. God has given you that freedom, but if you determine that you have that freedom and are still not sure how to use it, I ask you to do two things.

Number 1: Take two pieces of paper. On one piece write all of

Be Not Drunk...Be Filled

the benefits you and your family derive or will derive from using alcohol. On the second, list all of the problems you and your family and others you affect can expect from alcohol. That's the procedure you ought to use to make any wise decision where you feel you have the freedom to decide. List the pro's; list the cons. Find principles to substantiate the principles involved, and then make an intelligent decision based on the facts.

Number 2: Then on another sheet of paper answer these questions:

- 1) Does the Bible say I can't drink?
- 2) How does drinking affect who controls my life?
- 3) Who is affected besides myself by whether or not I drink?
- 4) Whose fruit does drinking produce in my life?
- 5) What is the greatest single moral issue facing America today?
- 6) What ought the church to do?
- 7) What ought I to do?

I realize that this lesson may have offended some of you. I did not do so intentionally. But beloved, some of us are offended and have been so for years at the silent acceptance by the church of an evil so obviously satanic that even unbelievers describe it that way. I've watched loved ones suffer. I've seen families collapse, innocent children die and through it all I've agonized: why is the church silent? If we knew a convicted killer was in our midst, would we not report him and have him put away before he continued his reign of terror?

My friend, a convicted killer is in our midst. His name is alcohol. He has a good lawyer, and he's all dressed up to be acceptable to society, but he is a killer. By God's grace, isn't it time that the church of Jesus Christ pronounced the sentence "Guilty as charged"?

Be Not Drunk...Be Filled

GUILTY AS CHARGED!

“Guilty as charged!” cried the jury.
“Condemned!” the judge concurred.
The facts were so clear there was no doubt,
That the murder had occurred.

So the jury read the sentence,
And later they wondered why,
Even tho’ guilty, they let him go.
He was such a likeable guy!

Now doesn’t that seem a bit foolish,
A trifle unjust at its best,
That someone known to take innocent lives
Would be turned out with all of the rest.

But what about alcohol, Christian?
It’s a killer; don’t you wonder why
That even in courts of Christendom
It’s not been condemned to die?

We know it destroys our marriages,
Our families, our children, our friends.
We know that its dread reign of terror
Apparently never ends.

Then why not be honest, Christians,
The way in a courtroom we would,
And simply pronounce the verdict
And put it away for good.

dtm DISCIPLESHIP TAPE MINISTRIES, INC.

10602 Mossbank, San Antonio, TX 78230
210-226-0000 or 1-800-375-7778
www.dtm.org • dtm@dtm.org • © Russell Kelfer

(11.17.21)