

Alcohol Consumption

I. Introduction:

We desire that believers seek to glorify God by ordering their lives according to Biblical principles. It is our prayer that whatever we do will be for the glory of God. We write these guidelines not for the purpose of passing judgment on the opinions of others (Romans 14:1) but to seek for harmony and unity in the body of Christ, to the glory of God. We must all give account of ourselves before God (Romans 14:12). While there are many facets to this issue, we'll focus our attention on five primary concerns.

II. Related Scriptures:

Proverbs 23:29-35; Romans 6:1, 13:1, 13:13, 14:1-23; 1 Corinthians 10:31-33; Ephesians 5:18; Colossians 3:21.

III. Discussion

A. Drunkenness

Ephesians 5:18 *"Do not get drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit"*

Proverbs 23:29-35 *"Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has complaining? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who linger long over wine, those who go to taste mixed wine. Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it goes down smoothly; at the last it bites like a serpent and stings like a viper. Your eyes will see strange things and your mind will utter perverse things. And you will be like one who lies down in the middle of the sea, or like one who lies down on the top of a mast. They struck me but I did not become ill; they beat me but I did not know it. When shall I awake? I will seek another drink."*

The Scriptures do not prohibit drinking alcohol, but they clearly prohibit being controlled by it. The problem and question comes in with where to draw the line. When does a person, in his consumption of alcohol, become drunk by it, being then controlled by it?

B. Causing a brother to stumble

Romans 14:1-23. Romans 14:21 *"It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine, or to do anything by which your brother stumbles."*

The decision to drink alcohol can lead to both drunkenness and causing brothers to stumble. Therefore, in matters of conscience such as this, the good of the whole must come before the good of the individual and the glory of God must be our primary focus. Believers are to voluntarily restrain their freedom in Christ for the sake of others. Who knows who may be led into alcoholism as a result of unwise decisions of fellow believers? Insisting on one's freedoms to the detriment of the community of believers is dangerous.

C. Licentiousness

Colossians 3:21, *"Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father."* Romans 14:22-23 *"The faith that you have, have as your own conviction before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin."* Romans 6:1-2 *"What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?"*

Sinning so that grace might increase is forbidden in Scripture. Doing whatever we want because we want to do it or because we can do it (since it is not prohibited) without regard for God or our brother is to be avoided. As with any self-centered action, some believers drink alcohol for selfish reasons with no thought of God. The prevalent mindset among many is to walk as close to the line between good and evil as one can. It may indicate a heart that is hardened towards God's standards of righteousness. Because this becomes very subjective in practice, we must guard against the extremes of both legalism and license.

D. Obeying the Law

Romans 13:1 *"Every person is to obey the governing authorities. For there is not authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God."*

We are to "obey the governing authorities". If drinkers are underage it is outright disobedience of the law and therefore an outright refusal to obey God's Word. It is rebelliousness. Extreme care must also be taken when drinking alcohol in the presence of underage minors.

E. The glory of God

1 Corinthians 10:31-33 *"Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God; just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit but the profit of many, so that they may be saved."*

Romans 13:13 *"Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regards to its lusts."*

God's glory must be our primary concern and focus. We do not want what is a good thing to be spoken of as evil and we do not want to engage in evil. No matter what the topic, the glory of God should be our goal, not the pleasing of our own selfish desires.

IV. Conclusion

While the Bible does not directly prohibit drinking alcohol, it does not make a concerted effort to encourage it either. This is an area where there is difference of opinion. There are more prohibitions on the abuse of alcohol than on the wise use of it in Scripture, seeming to indicate that in Bible times, as well as today, there is more of an issue with people abusing it than of using it wisely. Therefore, we suggest that extreme caution be taken by believers as to their practice of alcohol consumption, making sure that they do not cross the line into any of the errors outlined in Scripture.

Moderation and self-control must govern the wise use of alcohol. In the case of those who are given to excess (or have a propensity towards it); of being in the presence of those who may be stumbled; or of those whose convictions are such that they want to abstain, abstinence would be the wisest course of action.