

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

“IT BITES LIKE A SERPENT”

By L.A. Stauffer

Christians who want to social drink occasionally ask: “What’s wrong with just one beer?” The very question by one of God’s servants shows that he either has a poor perception of the evils of drinking or of his responsibility to be seen as a light in the world.

“Even so,” Jesus said, **“let your light shine before men; that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven”** (Matt. 5:16). Paul penned similar remarks to the Philippian brethren to tell them that they are to be **“blameless and harmless, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom they are seen as lights in the world”** (Phil. 2:15).

Social drinking, as a beer or two with some friends is called, involves far more than whether it is right to ingest alcohol into one’s body. Alcohol is frequently used in medicines. And the Bible commends this use of it (1 Tim. 5:23). Social drinking, however, is much more complex than this.

Social drinking involves the use of alcoholic beverages in the presence of family, relatives, friends, business associates, and others with whom one may have occasional company. It is practiced for physical pleasure or relaxation, and for various ulterior motives. The ulterior motives may be to attain sexual ends, reach business goals, escape from reality, or any of many other purposes. These motives may be shared by one or more of the participants.

What should concern Christians is participation in a practice that commends or furthers the goals of Satan in particular and sin in general. Such behavior is, as Jesus and Paul teach, inherently sinful. Surely, it is not necessary to enumerate in detail all the evils that grow out of social drinking.

The fact is that just one beer begins the process of releasing inhibitions, which results in speech and behavior with less restraint. One loses some of the faculty to reason and make sound judgments morally, socially, spiritually, even physically and in secular matters. Lack of full control leads to automobile deaths, unethical business deals, poverty, occasional drunkenness, addictive drinking, malicious speech, child and wife abuse, fornication, adultery, murder, robbery, etc.

Commending social drinking because one does not engage in these immoral practices is naive and myopic. Social drinking encourages and supports others who do these things. Furthermore, one runs the risk that he may influence his wife/husband, child, grandchild, or fellow brother in Christ to practice any one or more of these sinful practices.

These evils are too widespread and so often related to drinking to deny a connection between social drinking and sin. The wisest man, other than Jesus, who ever lived wrote in the proverbs about a relationship between drinking and the woes that grow out of it.

Solomon wrote:

“Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaining? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who tarry long over wine; those who go to try mixed wine. Do not look at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup and goes down smoothly. In the end it bites like a serpent and stings like an adder” (Prov. 23:29-32).

Note what Solomon says about the results of tarrying long at the wine: it creates sorrow and heartache; it stirs up contention and strife; causes dissatisfaction and complaining about life; results in physical injuries, etc. And anyone of us, even Solomon himself, could have extended this list significantly. Make your own list.

But Solomon also offers a “do not” to this list to warn of the subtle, beguiling, dangerous, and destructive power of wine. **“Do not,”** he says, **“look at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup and goes down smoothly. In the end it bites like a serpent and stings like an adder”** (Prov. 23:31-32). **Elsewhere the wise man said: “Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler; and whosoever is led astray by it is not wise”** (Prov. 20:1).

He says man must not approach the drinking of alcoholic beverages casually. No one should take it lightly or view it as an innocent practice. Many agree that it tastes good, that it quenches the thirst, and is a delight to the eyes as it sparkles in its attractive container. But...

But all of that, he says, is deceptive. Wine, beer, or the drink of your choice is a mocker! Its sight and taste give no hint of its destructive power. But when it enters the blood stream, reaches the mind, and alters one’s person, it robs its user of clarity of thought, rational control of emotions, firm command of speech, and restraint of behavior.

In the end the drinker will get hurt. Wine and similar drinks will lead men astray. They do not see or they choose to ignore the “bite” its poisoning effects will inflict. Drinkers do not with that first drink think of the deadly “sting” that results in a few hours when an altered state of mind yields perverted behavior.

I marvel that society, including brethren, gets so worked up over heroin, marijuana, cocaine; that our nation has mounted costly campaigns against the “so-called” hard drugs; and then say so little about the deadly evils that alcoholic drinks inflict on our country. A beer here and a beer there, a sip of wine at noon, and a relaxing social drink at night have lead to the most abused drug in modern society—alcohol.

But what’s totally incomprehensible is that Christians — our brothers in Christ who are dedicated to the eradication of all evil — ask: “What’s wrong with social drinking?” “What’s wrong with an occasional beer?” What’s wrong? It’s addictive and possesses its user. It alters the mind and distorts man as God created him. It impacts and influences others, including family, who lack control. It gives help to Satan who uses it to destroy others. Whoever errs thereby is exceedingly foolish. ■

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“Whoever is led astray by it is not wise”

By Joe R. Price

“29 Judgments are prepared for scoffers, and beatings for the backs of fools. 1 Wine is a mocker, strong drink is a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise” (Prov. 19:29-20:1, NKJV).

Intoxicating beverages lead people astray from the path of sober-mindedness and self-control, to a state of derision and tumult. The **“scoffers”** for which **“judgments are prepared”** (19:29), are none other than those under the influence of wine, which is a **“mocker”** (20:1). The same Hebrews word is used for scoffers and mocker in both verses. Drinking wine (not to mention, strong drink) mocks sobriety, and falls under judgment for doing so. Our passage says the person who is led astray by wine, as well as stronger intoxicating beverages, is **“not wise”** (a fool). God reveals the punishment (**“judgments”**) in verse 29: **“beatings (are prepared) for the backs of fools.”** You cannot consume alcohol without diminishing your sobriety and self-control. That is axiomatic. Inhibitions are lowered as alcoholic intake increases. Be wise, and abstain from the drinking that leads to excess (1 Pet. 4:3). You will avoid the drunkenness that starts with the first drink, as well as the punishment of fools. – **Sword Tips**, November 12, 2017. ■

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

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