

"Thou Shalt Not..." Drink?

by Bruce Turner

Of course, you won't find the above commandment in your Bible. But though it is our nature to want all our rules and instructions in such "black and white" language, in God's revealed will to us, this is not always the case. Sometimes we must come to conclusions on specific issues based on principles stated in other scriptures and derived from seeking with all our hearts to determine His will for us in our daily walk. "Blessed are those who keep His testimonies, who seek Him with the whole heart" (Ps. 119:2)!

One such specific issue, especially at this time of year, is whether "social" or "light" drinking is something a Christian should engage in. Passages such as I Tim. 3:3,8, 5:23 and Titus 2:3 have long been used, along with John 2, where Jesus turned the water into wine, to justify it. In opposition, there are many good and widely used arguments that point out that wine generally in that day contained a much lower percentage of alcohol than that of today. It is also highly unlikely that Jesus would have come along and created something (in large volume incidentally) for this social gathering that was intoxicating to the extent wines are today and by doing so, encourage folks to disregard all the condemnations of drunkenness in the Old and the New Testaments.

However, aside from those points, which though valid, admittedly can't be proven from "black and white" scripture alone, the question we must ask ourselves is should we as Christians today participate, even in a limited way, in something that even the world admits has caused the killing and maiming of so many innocent people by drunk drivers, the committing of many other crimes that would not have taken place if the perpetrators had remained sober, and has done so much damage to otherwise responsible and even moral men and women and their families.

The reply always comes that it's not inherently wrong and that it's only a matter of exercising self-control and drinking "responsibly." Let's assume you could always do just that (in spite of the fact that your good judgment as to what constitutes "responsibly" begins to fade after the first drink). Think about a possibly "weaker" brother or sister seeing you make the purchase without you being aware. It's doubtful they would approach you, but would likely go away thinking you will probably be getting inebriated, and either assuming you are a hypocrite, or just as serious, that it is acceptable and thereby be influenced by your behavior to do the same.

In Romans 14:21-23, Paul says, "It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak. Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin."

And brethren, don't think you aren't being watched by new babes in Christ. More than one questionable incident has been related to me by just such new Christians, leaving me to try and explain possible misinterpretation or misunderstanding. Our young children as well as non-Christians who may know us could be included as well.

Let's try and do our very best to please our loving God in every way, whether explicitly expressed in scripture or not. I end with this quote from brother Sewell Hall regarding so-called legalism: "So it is if we truly love God. Since His only communication with us is His word, we study it carefully. Knowing that His ways are not our ways (Is.55:8,9) we refrain from anything that we are not sure would please Him..." (Biblical Insights, June, 2012).