

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)

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Alcohol & Christian Influence

by: Ryan Hasty

Influence is a two-edged sword. On one hand, a good influence can be one of the most powerful weapons at our disposal to lead another to Christ (Matt 5:16). But a bad influence can cause another to stumble and even lose their soul. It is for this reason that Jesus uses some of the strongest language in the gospels to talk about stumbling blocks. Matt 18:6-7 – “Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe to the world because of its stumbling blocks! For it is inevitable that stumbling blocks come; but woe to that man through whom the stumbling block comes!” What does our influence have to do with our decision of whether or not to consume modern day alcoholic beverages?

First, it is inevitable that we will influence others by our actions whether we intend to or not. Sometimes profes-

sional athletes or celebrities will get in trouble and then when they’re chastised by others for the fact that people look up to them, they will say, “I never asked to be anyone’s hero or role model.” But that’s irrelevant. They chose to step into the lime light and have their face plastered all over the media and therefore cannot ignore the fact that people are watching them and looking up to them. In many ways, Christians are in the same boat. When we choose to put on Christ, people start watching us and, in many cases, look up to us. Therefore every decision we make must be guided by our potential to influence another individual, even if that decision falls into the realm of a perceived liberty. The painful truth about influence is that it is hard to correct a bad one and the consequences can be severe.

Second, when we consider the torrential damage that alcohol has created throughout society, I am deeply disturbed by those who develop a cavalier

attitude surrounding their so-called right to drink. How am I possibly influencing anyone for good when I parade around my alleged liberty to consume a depressant and narcotic that has led so many of God's creation to violence, misery, and self-destruction? Rom 14:21 – "It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine, or to do anything by which your brother stumbles." Even if I privately believed that consuming modern day alcoholic beverages was a liberty, I would never tell someone that I thought so not knowing whether I could be causing that person's future downfall. Christians cannot afford to be so haughty regarding alcohol with the millions of lives that have been destroyed in its wake.

Third, there are a multitude of scenarios that we need to consider in regards to Christian influence. Even if a Christian only consumes a "moderate" amount of strong drink, what about the example you set for potential alcoholics? Dr. A.C. Ivy said, "When a person starts to drink occasionally, he or she takes a 1 in 9 chance of becoming a heavy or addicted drinker and chronic alcoholic. There is no way of telling in advance which drinker will become an alcoholic." These are very dangerous odds. Social drinkers never make it their purpose to become alcoholics, and yet it happens every day. If you become the facilitator for another person's drunkenness, could you then in good conscience reprove that same individual while continuing to defend your right to drink socially? If your neighbor learns that you consume alcohol socially, will that enhance or diminish your godliness in their sight? What about non-Christians who see the dangers in even moderate alcohol consumption? Will your insistence on the legitimacy of moderate alcohol consumption increase or decrease your chances of converting them? The scenarios are endless. Christians are stewards who must be found faithful (1 Cor 4:2). Let us strive to be godly influences, not "under the influence."

Some quotes worth pondering . . .

"If you haven't received everything you deserve – be thankful!"

"It's not whether you get knocked down, it's whether you get up." - Vince Lombardi

"In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity." - Albert Einstein

"Life is like baseball; it's 95% mental and the other half is physical." - Yogi Berra

"Man is the only known creature who can reshape and remold himself by altering his attitude."

Alcohol & Christian Liberty

by: Ryan Hasty

Some Christians today are referring to the social and recreational consumption of modern day alcoholic beverages as a Christian liberty. By referring to it as such, it is said that there is justification for modern consumption. What is the liberty that Christians enjoy in Christ and how does it relate to modern day alcoholic beverages?

First, Christian liberty is not our ticket to live as we please. It is defined in the New Testament as the “perfect law” which one can look intently at, listen to, and abide by (Jas 1:22-25). That Christian liberty is a “law” should not surprise us since any action that is given liberty by God is considered “lawful.” It includes laws such as loving our neighbor, not showing partiality, not committing adultery or murder, etc. (Jas 2:8-13). It is also a law of truth in that it sets us free as long as we are willing to continue in Christ’s word (John 8:31-32) and stand firm (Gal 5:1) in the faith. Therefore, since Christian liberty is a law, there are restrictions in how it can be applied, for “whatever you do in word or deed” we must do “all in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Col 3:17).

Second, understanding that there are limitations to what falls under the scope of Christian liberty is crucial to bringing clarity to some of our religious differences. There are too many ad hominem allegations of “legalism” and “Phariseeism” thrown around against those who are trying hard to understand and reason God’s will from scripture on subjects such as the modern day recreational consumption of alcohol. We cannot honor Jesus’ prayer for the unity of all believers (John 17:20-23) with such careless name-calling. If some are truly being legalistic in their thinking, running to the opposite extreme by irresponsibly claiming “license” will not solve the problem. “License,” the root word for “licentiousness,” is the idea in mind that anything not explicitly forbidden in scripture is acceptable. It is the idea that as long as your own personal conscience isn’t offended, you can then act as you please. Christian liberty, however, is never a license to do whatever we want to do. And even if it can be proven that we are free to do something, we may need to avoid that action anyway because of its potential to lead others to sin. 1 Pet 2:16 – “Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God.”

Third, with the wealth of evidence we have in the bible as well as collaborating historical references that demonstrate why it is wise for a Christian to abstain from the modern day recreational consumption of alcoholic beverages, my deep fear is that some are using the phrase “Christian liberty” merely as a proverbial catch-all to justify their fleshly desire to consume alcohol. We owe Jesus so much more than that. My sincerest desire is that we not turn a blind eye to the evidence and that we continue to seek God’s authority for any action we deem falls within the scope of Christian liberty. Let our liberty in Christ be an influencing factor that truly sets men free rather than posing the threat of further enslaving men to bondage as a result of their consumption of recreational intoxicants, depressants, and narcotics.

You May Be Surprised To Learn...

by: Doy Moyer

Have you ever taken for granted certain things and believed them, just because that is what you have been told? Perhaps you find yourself in that situation now, believing and doing things because that is what you were told. Religious people sometimes believe and practice something because a preacher said it, or because that is what their parents have always taught them. This can also be true of those who do not believe in God and do not accept the Bible. They have been told that He does not exist and that the Bible is not true, but have not personally looked into the matter themselves. Regardless of what one believes or practices, it is a shame when he does so only on the word of others.

We wish to briefly challenge your thinking here, hoping to create in you a desire to study on your own and learn more about God’s way as found in the Scriptures. With this in mind, you may be surprised to learn:

1. That the Bible does not approve of denominationalism. There are hundreds of different denominations that exist today. Each denomination has its own peculiar name and faith. This goes against the Scriptural teaching that there is “one faith” (Ephesians 4:4-6), “one body” which is the church (Ephesians 1:22-23), and that believers are to be joined together “in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Corinthians 1:10-13; John 17:20-21). In the first century, disciples were called “Christians,” and they were not to be divided by the wearing of different doctrines.

If you've been told otherwise, we plead with you to go to the Bible and find exactly what it teaches.

2. *That the Bible can be understood by all.* Many people do not study the Bible because they do not believe that it can be understood. However, God tells us not to be foolish, but "understand the will of the Lord" (Ephesians 5:17). God does not tell us to do something that cannot be done. Therefore, by reading and studying, we can understand the Bible and handle it accurately (Ephesians 3:3-4; 2 Timothy 2:15). If you have been told that we cannot understand the Bible, think again; God commands it.

3. *That revelation is complete.* Many teach that they are still receiving revelations from God. They assert that God told them to do certain things, apart from the Bible. Yet, the Bible itself says that this is not so. Jesus promised His apostles that the Holy Spirit, through them, would reveal all truth (John 16:13). The two alternatives are either that this happened or it did not. If it did not, then Jesus was a liar; if it did, then all truth was given by the time the last apostle died. According to Jude 3, the faith has been "once for all delivered" to the saints. This means that what was revealed was of perpetual validity and never needs repetition. In other words, revelation is complete. The Bible is complete, and we need not look for further revelations from God. His will is already made known. If you have been taught otherwise, we ask that you search the Scriptures to see if this is what the Bible teaches.

4. *That miracles and spiritual gifts worked through men have ceased.* Many claim the ability to work miracles and speak in tongues. However, their claims fall far short of what the Bible teaches. The Scriptures teach that miracles were done for the purpose of proving who Christ was and for confirming the word that was spoken (John 20:30-31; Mark 16:20; Hebrews 2:1-4). For example, when the apostles went about preaching the gospel, they needed some way to prove that what they said was from God. Thus, God worked with them

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!

confirming the word through accompanying signs. Yet, the Bible also teaches that the time would come when those spiritual gifts would cease (1 Corinthians 13:8-13). They were to cease when revelation was completed. When all truth promised by Jesus was revealed, then there would be no more need for accompanying signs. The word was confirmed, and we have the result today in the Bible. If you have been taught otherwise, search the Scriptures to see what they say about miracles and spiritual gifts. You may be surprised at what you learn.

5. That you can have your sins forgiven and be saved. Some teach that salvation is only for a few who have already been unconditionally chosen by God. However, the Bible teaches that Christ died for everyone, and that God's desire is for everyone to come to a knowledge of the truth and be saved (1 John 2:2; John 12:32; 1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9). This includes you. Many do not believe they can be forgiven of their sins. They think they have done such terrible things that God cannot forgive them. This is not true. No matter what you have done in the past, you can have your sins forgiven. God promised rest to all who are weary and heavy laden (Matthew 11:28-30). Jesus Christ died on the cross for all sin; His blood is powerful enough to cover any and every sin that you may have committed. We must learn to trust in the promises of God.

6. That salvation is conditional. The Bible teaches that we are saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8). Yet grace, even though something that we cannot earn, is accessed by meeting the conditions laid down by God in His word. In other words, we must obey the gospel (Romans 10:16; 6:17; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). Christ is the author of eternal salvation to all that obey Him (Hebrews 5:9). Without obedience to God's commands, our faith is dead and we cannot be saved (James 2:14-26).

7. That heaven and hell are real places. Many do not believe in the reality of heaven and hell. Others believe that heaven is real but that hell is not a real place. However, the Bible teaches the reality of both. Heaven is a place of rest for those who were righteous before God. It is a place of everlasting life (see Hebrews 4:1-11; Revelation 21-22). But as real as heaven is, hell is also. Hell is a place of eternal punishment for those who have rejected God, a place where the worm does not die and fire is not quenched (Mark 9:48).

There is a day of judgment coming (Acts 17:30-31). We will all give an account of ourselves to God (2 Corinthians 5:10). Are you ready for this day? The Bible teaches us to repent of our sins, confess Christ, and be baptized for the remission of our

sins (Acts 2:38; Romans 10:9,10). We plead with you to search the Scriptures daily, and find out whether the things you have been taught are true (Acts 17:11). Take only God's word as the final authority. This is the only safe course of salvation.

Thus Says the Lord

by: Chadwick Brewer

“And he said to him, “I also am a prophet as you are, and an angel spoke to me by the word of the LORD, saying, ‘Bring him back with you into your house that he may eat bread and drink water.’” But he lied to him.” - 1 Kings 13:18

Here in Kings, the prophet that confronted Jeroboam, was told by God not to eat bread or drink water in that land. While resting, an older prophet came to offer him food and drink and to come and rest at his house. With seemingly good intentions, the older prophet lied about what God had told him, and the younger prophet heeded him. The consequences were devastating. For his disobedience, the younger prophet was killed by a lion after his final meal.

This may sound severe, but that is a reality for every one of us! We have the revelation from God (the Bible). There will be many false prophets and false teachers (2 Pet. 2:1) that will try to tempt us off the narrow path. If we listen to men, and not to God, the Devil is a prowling lion that will devour us (1 Pet. 5:8). We need to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12) and we are held accountable for listening to men and not to God.

For those who proclaim “thus says the Lord,” never be false with the word. Never teach what God does not teach. Never change or alter God's perfect message. Never, even out of good intentions, fail to declare the whole council of God. Don't twist things to make a good point. The word of God is powerful; you are not. The revelation of Jesus is wisdom from God; not you. If you misunderstand this, you will get someone killed.

Daily Bible Reading

February 2020

February 3	Hebrews 1	February 17	Hebrews 9:11-28
February 4	Hebrews 2	February 18	Hebrews 10:1-18
February 5	Hebrews 3	February 19	Hebrews 10:19-25
February 6	Hebrews 4:1-13	February 20	Hebrews 10:26-39
February 7	Hebrews 4:14-5:10	February 21	Hebrews 11:1-14
February 10	Hebrews 5:11-6:12	February 24	Hebrews 11:15-23
February 11	Hebrews 6:13-20	February 25	Hebrews 11:24-40
February 12	Hebrews 7:1-10	February 26	Hebrews 12:1-17
February 13	Hebrews 7:11-28	February 27	Hebrews 12:18-29
February 14	Hebrews 8:1-9:10	February 28	Hebrews 13

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