

I Timothy 5, Sermon #8

I Timothy 5 – We are going to cover 1 little verse, but 1 major problem: ALCOHOL

Alcohol is the #1 drug problem in America:

- Alcohol has ruined countless lives.
- It is reported that nearly half of the murders, suicides, and accidental deaths in America are alcohol related.

The misery and heartbreak that alcoholism has caused families is beyond imagination.

This is a moral and spiritual problem of the greatest magnitude.

- Does God approve of the use of any alcoholic beverage?
- From the Bible, I want to answer that question for us this morning

I've entitled today's message "Is It Wrong to Drink Alcoholic Beverages? The Bible's Position on Total Abstinence"

I Timothy 5:23

Let us stand for the reading of God's Holy Word

I Timothy 5:23

Let us pray

You may be seated

Is It Wrong to Drink Alcoholic Beverages? -- The Bible's Position on Total Abstinence

From verse 17 down to verse 25 – the subject is the elders, the spiritual leaders of the church – God talks about providing for them, disciplining them, selecting, and appointing them – that is the context of our passage

In this passage, Paul inserts a piece of personal advice about a medical problem and alcohol.

Paul had just told Pastor Timothy in verse 22e – *keep thyself pure*.

Then he spoke to Timothy on an area that Timothy needed guidance in.

Four things in verse 23:

1. This verse indicates Timothy was a total abstainer of wine. Paul has to order Timothy to partake because evidently he wasn't.
2. The water was bad. Even today people are warned not to drink the water in many places. Timothy was sick in his stomach.
3. Use how much? A little wine, literally, a puny amount
4. The purpose of that wine was what? Medicinal – we certainly cannot use this verse to teach moderation or social drinking
Obviously, the wine is not being used as a beverage but as a medicine – and in a very small amount

Do we ever use alcohol medically?

Probably every one of us, in our medicine cabinet at home, has medicine that includes alcohol.

- Even cough syrup with alcoholic content has a warning on it about how it impairs.

- Some prisons don't allow the inmates to have mouthwash – because of the alcoholic content

How many of us rinsed with mouthwash in the last month?

There is nothing inherently evil with alcohol.

Verse 23 deals with a medical issue not social drinking.

When people use this verse to say that they can drink beer – that is unbiblical

- The Bible's mention of wine here is not an endorsement of the alcohol industry.
- Using wine for medicinal reasons is not an encouragement for social drinking.

Now, we already know the Bible denounces drunkenness – “Be not drunk with wine” (Eph. 5:18)

- “The works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, drunkenness, reveling,” (Gal. 5:17-21).
- The Bible is clear on drunkenness – it is sin!

Clearly, no one argues this, but what is argued is: “Can I drink in moderation?”

★For the majority of U.S. history, Christians have been of the same mind when it comes to alcohol—total abstinence.

But in the midst of our day, minds and practices are changing in the evangelical circles, and the argument for the right to drink moderately has grown and is being practiced broadly.

Why do people drink the wines and other alcoholic drinks of today?

Is it purely for the taste, or is it not also for the sense, however slight, of relaxation or well-being which the drink provides?

- Is it to be “warmed up inside” on a cold day, or “a little cheered” on a dull day?
- Is it to “brighten” a meal?
- Is it to be part of the crowd?

Modern alcoholic drinks undoubtedly affect the mind and mood, even when taken in moderate amounts.

As Christians, we do not obtain or sustain our joy from a bottle
Instead, the joy of the Lord is our strength.

Let's look for a moment at the medical and chemical facts.

- In definition drunkenness means “To be intoxicated to the point of impairment... [being defined as] that which weakens, diminishes, or lessens in strength, value, quantity, and quality” – Russell Kelfer.

When does this occur? On the very first drink!

- “It is a process, a progressively deteriorating process that impairs or makes one less effective.
- And in any stage of that process that we become less effective, we are to that degree intoxicated” – Kelfer.

Do we understand what he is saying?

The first drink has an affect – we don't get drunk on the fifth drink; we are on our way after the first drink.

Any man who drinks alcohol has some alcohol content in the blood that affects his nerve reaction, his muscular co-ordination, his mind, his disposition.

***And so the man is in some measure intoxicated.

It does not take eight glasses of beer to make you drunk.

- When you drink the first glass, you are one-eighth drunk.
- And that first glass goes to your head.

Ethyl alcohol, when taken into the body, goes almost immediately into the bloodstream and up to the brain.

It begins to affect the cortex of the brain, the location of higher brain centers that have to do with memory, conscience, and judgment.

Ethyl alcohol is commonly known as Ethanol – that's right, you put it in your gas tank:

- Flammable, colorless, and it is slightly toxic and people drink it.

The first drink – alcohol goes to your brain.

- The last glass may make your legs wobble.
- The last glass may put you to sleep in a drunken stupor.

But the first glass is the part that begins to destroy the fine appreciation, the inhibition that keeps us from doing wrong, the sense of responsibility that makes us bring home our paycheck, makes us take care of our children.

That part that makes us respect virtue, that makes us tell the truth, that keeps us out of crime—that part is dead first, doped first, cursed first.

One out of ten young men will become a drunkard after his first drink.

- Every drunkard intended to be a moderate drinker.
- Alcoholism starts with the social drinking of alcoholic beverages
- Addiction starts with social drinking.

Pressure is constantly put upon people to drink in order to be sociable.

The liquor industry spends billions of dollars a year in advertising.

- ★More money is spent promoting the use of alcohol than any other product on the face of the earth.★
- Their purpose is to cloak their product with some semblance of respectability and to foster the notion that successful social occasions call for alcohol.

Their propaganda campaign has been very successful through the years.

More and more evangelical Christians find themselves relaxing their opposition to social drinking and are adopting drinking habits that closely resemble those of American society in general.

The believer is becoming like the unbeliever

Let me show you what the Bible says will result from drinking:

(Turn to Proverbs 23:29-35)

- Alcohol has a train of evil attached to it.
- Alcohol is having a devastating impact upon the world.

Look at the results of drinking

Emotional problems, vs. 29a – Who hath woe? Those who drink.

- Misery for the family, misery for the individual – lowers his inhibitions, vomiting, headaches, hangovers.

How many men of good position have, because of drink, come to want and to where they couldn't hold a job, couldn't take care of their families and who came to abject poverty.

Yes, "the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty" Proverbs 23:21.

Vs. 29 – Who hath sorrow? The one who drinks and the family of the one who drinks.

Sorrow – eight out of ten high school students said alcohol was involved in sexual activity. Booze promises good cheer but sends sorrow.

Young ladies have told me over the years, "I never intended"

Social problems (vs. 29) – Who hath contentions? Who hath babbling?

- Contentions – strife – makes one argumentative, belligerent.
- Babblings – delirious – slurred speech

Fortified by liquor, the timid man becomes bold.

- The wallflower becomes, she thinks, the wittiest conversationalist!
- After a few drinks, every joke is funny, every remark is brilliant, the casual stranger becomes a bosom friend.

- Sorrows are forgotten for the moment. Conscience troubles no more.
- Marriage ties, holy vows, honest responsibilities—these all lose their hold under the influence of alcohol.

So, one seems to be more carefree -- People seem friendlier, life seems gayer.

Satan offers many attractions in alcoholic drink.

What I am saying is that liquor stirs the sexual appetite and leads people to do what they would not do otherwise.

- And that is why liquor and immorality go regularly together then and now.

Exodus 32:25, *“And when Moses saw that the people were naked”*

You know why they were naked when Moses came down off the mountain?

They were drinking.

Why is it when a person gets drunk, they lose inhibition?

Physical problems (vs. 29) – Who hath wounds without a cause? Who hath redness of eyes?

- Wounds without a cause.
- Fights for no reason, state of dizziness, staggering.
- He is falling down drunk.

He gets all these wounds and doesn't know where they come from.

Vs. 30

Vs. 31 – Warning: Wine looks attractive, status symbol, I look like everybody else.

Vs. 32 – But in the end, alcohol is as devastating and painful as a snake bite.

Not too many of us want to get bit by a snake – when we mess with alcohol, that's what happens.

Verse 33a

- Behold strange women – things, hallucinations. Gets behind the wheel, car coming at him and he sees three of them. Which one is he to dodge?

Alcohol is involved in 40% of all driving fatalities.

- The anesthetic effect of alcohol slows man's reactions measurably.
- It decreases his ability to judge distances and to tell the difference between visual and auditory stimuli.

Vs. 33b

- Utter perverse things.
- Foolish and inappropriate remarks, distasteful words, incoherent

Verse 34 – idiotic behavior – he makes a fool out of himself and then he has no memory of it.

Verse 35 – Alcohol is addictive.

Even after all this, a person will foolishly do it all over again.

★One of the most pitiful things is a man who drinks and drinks cannot quit.

All alcoholic beverages – wine, beer, or whiskey – contain ethyl alcohol, a habit-forming drug. It doesn't matter which carrying agent is used or what kind of container it comes in.

But Preacher - The Bible seems to okay alcohol as long as one does not get drunk.

- I admit confusion among Christians exists and I have wrestled with those passages as well.
- Many believers say, the Bible attacks and commends the use of wine.
- The Bible seems to be inconsistent.

Proverbs 20:1 condemns alcohol and Psalm 104 says that wine is a gift from God.

- Which is it, Preacher?

Proverbs 20:1 – How much wine?

- Note that this is an **indictment by God on the beverage itself, not merely the drinking of it.**
- The text specifically indicates that wine itself is a “mocker” without mention of how much one drinks.

Wine is a mocker.

- Alcohol affects the personality. It changes the way people behave.
- It will make a fool out of them.

Alcohol affects judgment – decisions.

- This is why guys like for girls to drink at the parties.
- It changes the way they behave – loosens them up.
- Alcohol generates false ambition. High as a kite – three sheets in the wind

Verse 1 – strong drink is what? Raging

Beer makes him aggressive. Try things they don't normally try.

Proverbs 20:1 says, whoever does not believe this is deceiving himself.

God want us to be sober minded, self controlled, under the influence of the Holy Spirit of God and His Bible.

- God wants us to stay away from alcohol.
- Do not let its deceiving looks fool us.

The question that has bothered believers is:

- How can the Bible both totally and unreservedly condemn wine for man's use and totally and unreservedly recommend wine for man's use?
- How can one drink be both commended and condemned—be both good and evil?"

Is it a question of how much? Too much is bad and a little is okay in moderation.

When the Bible refers to wine, that wine is not always alcoholic.

- “Wine” is a generic term that covers everything from what we would call grape juice—Welch’s—to strong wine

God is totally consistent in both the Old and New Testament:

- He never disapproves of grape juice and He never approves of wine.
- Juice is fine, while fermentation is sinful.

How can we tell when the Bible says “wine” if it is referring to the nonalcoholic or the alcoholic kind?

You can know from the text whether it refers to the alcoholic beverage or not.

- The vineyard was blessed by God for the use of providing food and drink for the family.
- But men perverted the gift of God.

In any amount, wine is condemned and drinking it is disobedience.

- Whenever the word “wine” occurs in the Bible and it is in a context of divine approval, it is referring to grape juice.
- However, whenever it is mentioned in a context of disapproval, it is speaking of fermented wine.

Therefore, these passages must be read with careful thought so that one never interprets the text in such a way as to make God inconsistent.

God always approves of juice; He never recognized wine as anything good, but only as a perversion of His gift to man.

Proverbs 31:4-6

Vs. 4-5

Kings and princes were commanded (in the Scriptures) to be abstainers, partly because of their high responsibilities, and also to provide an example to their people.

The intent of the verses is irony; thus, in reality, the verse states that the only possible benefit would be for those who are dying in misery—sedative.

If you remember Jesus was offered this on the Cross.

In Luke 10:3 – Good Samaritan poured wine on the man's wounds – it was used as an antiseptic.

The priests also were forbidden strong drink when officiating in the tabernacle and when ministering to the people (Leviticus 10.9-10).

- God gives the reason to being able to make good judgments, decisions.
- The penalty for the priest for drinking was death!

Proverbs 31 and I Timothy 5

If a person wants to justify the medical use of alcohol, these passages would lend Biblical support.

John 2

- Many people try to condone alcohol by pointing to the miracle of John 2 – when Jesus turned the water into wine.
- The text implies that the beverage which the Lord made out of water in this wedding emergency was given to guests who had already had much wine to drink (note v. 10).

Therefore, these guests would have already become intoxicated if they were drinking wine rather than grape juice.

Therefore, if Jesus Christ had given them even more wine, He would have deliberately caused the marriage guests to become even more what? Drunk

- Would Jesus do that if it was a sin?
- Since all Scripture is united in condemning drunkenness as a sin, this kind of harmful miracle is an impossibility for the One “who knew no sin.”
- Jesus would not have done that.

If God’s Word forbids it, why would Jesus condone it?

Instead, the Bible indicates the surprise of the master of the feast at the freshness of the good grape juice.

The best fruit juice is the freshest fruit juice.

What is fermentation? It is the rotting, breaking down.

The fermentation process is also called brewing.

Jesus simply replenished their exhausted supply of grape juice.

The wedding host said that this quality was better

If he had been drinking – under the influence – for a period of time, would his senses be able to tell him that?

And nothing could be plainer than the emphatic command of Proverbs 23:19-20a,

Don't be around people who are drinkers

- *“Be not among winebibbers,”* which is plainly an absolute prohibition from going into drinking establishments (taverns and bars), and

The Bible teaches us to avoid evil company – Evil associations corrupt good morals.

- Winebibbing friends can cause one to join in on the consumption.

We are to remove ourselves from people who love to drink.

Neither should we go to a place where they are located.

1 Thessalonians 5:6-8, *“Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep, sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.”*

The word “sober” means to be free from anything that would dull one’s senses or mental alertness

- It means – total abstinence from alcohol and anything else that dulls the senses.
- Alcohol, even in limited amounts, is not conducive to either mental or spiritual alertness, which is the aim of God's Word.

What about the use of wine in the Lord's Supper? (in the four Gospels and in I Corinthians 11).

Many churches use alcoholic beverages during the Communion service

Is this in accordance with God's Word?

- The clear implication is that this was grape juice, not wine.

#1 The Bible never says wine. It says the cup or fruit of the vine.

#2 Drunk – old drunk but he got saved and he has overcome his sinful habit.

- The body is craving it. Why would you give him a drink from the Communion table?

#3 Children, saved and baptized

- Why should their first drink of alcohol come at church? God forbid.

Again we repeat the questions which arise from I Corinthians 6.12 and 10.23

- Is it expedient (fitting or appropriate)?
- Does it bring me under its power? Does it edify?

And the questions arising from Philippians 4.8

- Is it honest, and just, and pure, and lovely, and of good report, and virtuous
- Is it worthy of praise?

We need to heed the warnings of the Bible. (Is. 5:11-12, 20-22)

1 Peter 2:11 says to abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul.

“A convicted killer is in our midst.”

- It's called beer, wine, liquor, champagne, wine coolers, and hard lemonade.
- You can put it in any way you want. Dress it up in any clothing, but it is a destroyer.

The moment we have decided to drink we have made a bad decision.

Alcohol consumption is a problem – it was a problem in Noah, Lot (ever think how wine got into the cave?), and David's lives.

Belshazzar (Dan. 5) threw a big party.

- He decided to use the Temple cups to drink his alcohol in.
- God took His finger and wrote on the wall and that night he died.

Drunkenness is a sin, and we ought to avoid alcohol beverages all together.

- The Bible clearly speaks to its consequences and its ultimate destruction.

Folks, it is a poor testimony. As a Christian, drinking alcohol is not wise.

- Not only will it damage our testimony and make witnessing difficult to unbelievers, it can lead to great failures in life of which some cannot be recovered .

Alcohol is one of Satan's devices. We ought not be deceived.

We ought to abstain from this plague or our society. We ought to fight against it.

Every year Budweiser, Coors, Miller, and the whole lot of them are stealing from this great country – they are robbing us blind.

- They are stealing our work force, stealing from our families, stealing from employers, stealing from children, and stealing from wives.

The seller is guilty of all the harm liquor does.

- The bar owners, beer companies, distillers get the money while the beer and whisky fill our land with misery, poverty, wretchedness, disease, death, and damnation and it is being authorized by the will of the sovereign people.
- We ought not to add one penny to the alcohol industry.

We need to rid our great land of this plague of drinking.

- Who is the foe of the beer and liquor business in America today?
- It's not the church anymore, it's not the preachers, it's not the congregations.

The Bible clearly teaches us to abstain from all appearance of evil.

How many of you are going to say, "Preacher, I'm going to stay away from it. I'm more determined than ever not to let Satan's juices cross my lips."

Young people, if I can help keep one of you away from it, it's been a successful morning.

I am a prohibitionist – teetotaler – total abstinence

From the evidence of the Bible, I believe alcohol is forbidden for the Christian

Let us stand for closing invitation

Believer, are you playing with alcohol?

It's not wise

Drinking alcohol leads to all kinds of problems – spiritual, moral, physical, emotional,
financial, social

My dad was an alcoholic

The only Person that saved him out of alcoholism was the Lord Jesus Christ

He is the only Savior of the world

Have you asked Him to save you from your sins?

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“It is worth noting also that Paul’s list of qualifications for eldership includes (twice) the terse phrase: *Not given to wine** (literally: *not at wine, or not beside wine, or not lingering at wine*).

Genesis 9:21 and 19:30-38 refer to intoxicating wine, of which God does not approve.

Genesis 19

The wicked city of Sodom was destroyed and Lot and his two daughters were taken out of the city and dwelt in a cave in the mountains.

Lot had wine in the cave.

And his two daughters talked among themselves and said, ‘It looks as if all the men in the world are killed, all the boys we knew, and we are going to turn out to be old maids, and not have a family. So let’s make Dad drunk.

And they got the old man to drink wine and then, under the influence of the wine, they each lay with their father and conceived through this wicked incest.

And both of them became unmarried mothers.

That tragic story is an eternal indictment against liquor.

Don’t tell me that wine is better than whisky, when wine is the kind of drink that will make a man like Lot so that he hasn’t any sensibility, so his conscience is seared, so the sense of his own decency is gone.

Now, drunken and committing incest with his own daughters. Wine does that!

The argument of lower content of alcohol is hogwash. Plenty a man was drunk in the Bible.

Instead, the two admonitions relate to *not consorting with the wrong kind of company* (3:3) and to being *temperate* even in one's use of grape juice (3:8) as a testimony and example to a society which was so lacking in self-control in all areas.

Drinking alcohol leads to all kinds of harmful consequences, spiritual, moral, physical, emotional, even financial.