

## Substance Abuse 5-31-15AM

When we approach drinking from the Bible, we have a very clear, consistent message about the use of alcohol. First, when we look at common alcohol use in the Bible, from beginning (Noah) to end (Harlot of Babylon), it is (generally) bad, particularly as it related to aggravating other sins:

- Noah's curse (Genesis 9:21)
- Lot's incest (Genesis 19:32)
- A son's disobedience (Deut. 21:20)
- Nabal's foolishness (I Sam 25:36)
- David's attempt to hide adultery (2 Sam 11:13)
- King Elah's assassination (1 Kings 16:9)
- Madness of the nations (Jeremiah 51:7)
- A servant's wickedness (Luke 12:45)
- To the harlot of Babylon Revelation 17:6)

Second, when we look to the authority and law of the new covenant in the NT, there are multiple sins associated with drinking:

- The sin of drunkenness (I Corinthians 6)
- The sin of too much wine (1 Peter 4:3)
- The sin of reveling/carousals (social drinking) (Galatians 5:21)
- The sin of gathering to drink (I Peter 4:3)
- The sin of witchcraft (Galatians 5:20)

Finally, the Bible condemns on multiple occasions doing things that cause others to sin. Therefore, even if the case could be made that one could drink (socially) without being drunk (which is not the case based on NT teaching), they would still be condemned for causing others to stumble

*Luke 17:1-2 He said to His disciples, "It is inevitable that stumbling blocks come, but woe to him through whom they come! It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea, than that he would cause one of these little ones to stumble."*

*1 Corinthians 8:9 But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak.*

Even a novice Christian can conclude that alcoholic consumption has no place in their life. Most Christians understand, and most who debate this do so from a desire to consume alcohol in an ungodly fashion and do so without regard for others. .

However, the honest question is this: **why does the Bible simple not say: *It is a sin to drink any alcohol?*** The answer may surprise you, especially after we saw the view the bible has to alcohol usage: **Because it is not *of itself*.** Alcohol is NOT sinful of itself, and as we will see, even had a purpose.

For the purpose of this lesson, we are using drunkenness and intoxication uniformly for both alcohol and drugs. The condemnation central to alcohol is intoxication, or the "high" of getting drunk. With drugs, we use words that imply that it is the same thing. Both drugs and alcohol remove inhibitions and induce a mind that lacks self-control and is susceptible to what seems to be demonic influence. Therefore, from a biblical standpoint, alcohol and drugs are effectively the same thing.

First, let us see that the Bible permits substance use. Let us consider these passages:

Romans 14:14a *I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself;*

Proverbs 31:6 *Give strong drink to him who is perishing, And wine to him whose life is bitter.*

1 Timothy 5:23 *Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities.*

Paul's general statement is that "nothing" is unclean of itself. This would include alcohol or drugs (by drugs we mean all drugs of all types). All things had a proper place; the proper place is in the removing of our "senses" for medicinal purposes. In another circumstance, in ancient times, wine was used to sanitize water (probably Paul's admonition). However, today a Christian has NO place to use alcohol in this fashion, since we have other medicines that are more effective. (However, over 56 over-the-counter medicines still use some alcohol <http://www.sdsduip.com/medications-containing-alcohol/> ). So unless you are on a desert island, you need to fix a broken leg, and you have only Rum as anesthesia, you are guilty of dissipation.

Here though, it is our use of drugs that is the matter of debate for our consideration. Today we use pharmaceutical drugs for many purposes. There are drugs used to dull pain or aches (various opioids, muscle relaxants, even marijuana); there are drugs use to render senseless or unconscious (anesthesia, including cocaine); there are drugs used to alter moods or behaviors (such as central nervous system (CNS) depressants for anxiety or depression, stimulants for ADD). ALL of these drugs have a proper use. It is NOT sinful for a Christian to use medicine to remove pain from their life.

Ecclesiastes 11:10 *So, remove grief and anger from your heart and put away pain from your body, because childhood and the prime of life are fleeting.*

1 Corinthians 6:12 *All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything.*

If we can agree that this is true, it is not appropriate for a Christian to say "I believe in taking morphine after surgery, but look down on the man who uses an anti-depressant". Both have an effect on the mind that is useful as well as debatable for the same reasons.

Yet all of these drugs also have an improper use. Paul said "I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified" (1 Corinthians 9:27).

We live in a time where pain is no longer considered something we ought to live with. Many pain pills are available today for a variety of pains, so that many would say that pain need not exist. However, almost all type of pain medications (many of which have illegal counterparts, such as opioids, etc) are susceptible to misuse, or abuse, resulting in intoxication. Why do doctors prescribe medications that have the potential and ease of being abused? As one pain doctor said: "Pain does not have a moral value. Drugs do not have a moral value. Life is good... to be cherished, promoted and supported. We, as physicians, should not be moralizing about pain or its treatments." Dan Brookoff MD, PhD (deceased by suicide). Such thinking seems to strongly contradict Paul's mind when he said "I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified" (1 Corinthians 9:27).

The great problem among brethren is often not alcohol but using medications (legal / illegal) to accomplish the same purpose. This is NOT a conversation about addiction, but about intoxication, which we have seen is not just worldly, but sinful for the sake of itself. We can even accurately use the term the world uses: abuse. The abuse of drugs is the use of these substances for purposes beyond their purpose. The real problem is "how can I know I am abusing substances"?

**First**, understand that just because a doctor prescribed it or it is legal does not mean it is not sinful. As we already pointed out, doctors (or the government) are NOT interested in your moral well-being. **Second**, understand that sometimes we manufacture the need for substances in order to satisfy the flesh. We may even “feel” pain or problems because of our craving for substances. **Third**, we need to acknowledge that there are times that we cannot tell for ourselves we are held sway. This is why we need the church. We need to be open and honest about our use of substances with one another without judgment, so that we can rightly discern if we are going too far. It will NEVER be pleasant to be told we have gone too far, but it may save our soul.

**MAIN POINT:** Using some substances may be appropriate, but understand that this is not something you may be able to discern, and you need to use them understanding they are spiritual dangerous, and you need to make it