

A Response to A Brother's Remarks
About a Scriptural Sermon on Teaching our Children not to Drink
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Introduction

- A. A Brother's words and actions are fanning the flames of several issues, including:
 - 1. Is 21st Century "Drinking" endorsed by Scripture? (including these side issues)
 - a. Did Jesus "drink" alcoholic beverages, and if so, under what circumstances?
 - b. If it can be shown that Jesus "drank" alcoholic beverages, is a Christian at liberty to "drink" today?
 - c. Is it in anyone's best interest for a Christian to drink today?
 - 2. Is it "child abuse" to raise a child in a home where drinking occurs, either in the home or by parents/family-members under any circumstances?
- B. Recovering the sources of information on *drinking* has been time consuming.
 - 1. This author generally works 70+ hours a week, so this was written in bits and pieces as time permits, but without neglecting genuine needs of other people, since he will not tell the sick and troubled he is "too busy to be with them."
 - 2. It is one thing to know right answers after a lifetime of accurate study, but it is another to find and present the research for those conclusions, and yet another to present them in a manner which cannot be *rationaly* disputed.
 - 3. Yet this *careful, cautious and rational presentation process* offers the only hope for preserving the UNITY OF THE SPIRIT *on His terms*.
- C. Therefore, in seeking to respond as a NT Evangelist, the author strives for a balanced response to this onslaught.
 - 1. When possible, Principle not Personality is the focus of the discussion..
 - 2. All principles of the NT must be followed *as taught by the NT*.
 - a. We must pursue the unity of the Spirit in peace. (Eph. 4:1-3; cp. Tit. 3:9ff)
 - b. An evangelist must teach only sound doctrine. (II Tim. 1:13f; 2:15, 22-26; 4:1-3ff)
 - c. These two principles must combine in an evangelist. (**Tit. 2:15**, 7-8, 11)

I. Our Brother alleges that since Jesus "drank," therefore "drinking" is permitted today.

- A. There seems to be at least 4 possible conclusions about DRINKING AND THE NT.
 - 1. The NT neither says or implies anything about a Christian and drinking today. (Thus Christians may drink or not drink, but they must not insist on standards for others.)
 - 2. The NT endorses drinking.
 - 3. The NT endorses drinking, but only in moderation.
 - 4. The NT endorses abstinence.
 - a. This is the position which defended in the Sermon at issue.
 - b. This is the historic position of the Restoration Movement, so this evangelist stands right with those men that built the 20th Century portion of the Lord's Church.

- B. Our Brother *alleges* Christ “drank,” (according to his statements and papers) therefore he charges:
1. To say “it is wrong to drink” is to accuse Jesus of sin.
 2. Christians who drink (and our Brother asserts some do at 16TH) are rightfully offended if it is taught that it is wrong to drink.
- C. Some *observations* are pertinent at this point.
1. Abstinence is the *historical* stance of the Restoration Movement, and of some other religious groups, including many Baptists and Methodists.
 - a. Those wanting a different stance are CHANGE AGENTS, and --given the dangers associated with drug use--very dangerous CHANGE AGENTS, threatening both soul and body. (cp. Gal. 1:6-9; 5:21)
 - b. One recalls the advice given by an Elder in Midland, TX: “Boys should say ‘we don’t smoke, drink, or chew, *or* go with girls that do.’”
 2. Directly and indirectly, our Brother’s statements open the door to supporting one enslaved to their passions or desires in matters of drinking & smoking.
 - a. When our Brother speaks of the physiological effect alcohol has on him and indicates he can not stop smoking, it leads to the conclusion those practices prejudice his comments. (This is reinforced by his claim that preaching against drinking makes members who drink to *feel* bad — because a *feeling* has nothing to do with whether something is scripturally right or wrong. cp. Ga. 5:17)
 - b. Scripture clarifies the status of such an individual. (Eph. 2:3; Ga. 5:16ff; Jde 10, cp. Jde. 3-16; II Pt 2:12)
 - c. Scripture implies such teaching/statements will destroy the Church.
 - i. It will destroy the doctrine or truth, as it results in false teaching. (Jde. 4, 16-19)
 - ii. This false teaching will result in brethren tearing it apart. (Ga. 5:16-17 & 15)
- D. In considering “drinking” it is crucial to note two things about the *words* being used.
1. The word “wine” in NT Times had changed its *general* meaning since OT times.
 - a. Lexicons often discuss the various meanings a word acquires thru the years.
 - b. William Barclay’s commentaries often demonstrate we must be careful when interpreting a word over several centuries.
 2. Some of our *words* and *ideas* have changed considerably since NT times.
 - a. Just since 1611:
 - i. We have generally discarded *Holy Ghost* for *Holy Spirit*.
 - ii. We have quit saying we *fetch*ed a compass and now say we “circled round.” (Ac. 28:13)
 - b. So, it is not surprising to find OT words changing their meaning by the 1st Century and possibly meaning something very different today.
- E. In NT times, the “wine-drinking” acceptable in polite society was *at best* the drinking of “watered (or *diluted*) wine.
1. THE INTERNATIONAL STANDARD BIBLE ENCYCLOPEDIA (ISBE, attached) notes that the Greek influence of mixing water with wine before it was drunk had become the standard in Palestine. (**Vol. , p. ,** a copy of the article is attached)
 2. The article **Wine —??** in ENCYCLOPEDIA OF EARLY CHRISTIANITY agrees with ISBE.
 - a. In 1975, a *Christianity Today* article, by Ivy League trained Scholar (Robert Stein) noted that his research affirmed this stance. [CT; 20Jun75, p. 9-11)

- b. Dr. Stein noted there were “recipes” for mixing wine with water in various parts of the Mediterranean.
 - i. If I recall correctly, the range was from a 1:1 mixture up to 8:1 or 9:1.
 - ii. However, the most common mixtures seem to have been from 2:1 to 4:1 (i.e. 2 parts water to 1 part wine, etc.).
 - iii. He quotes one ancient writer as complimenting a wine, saying “it bears the water well.” (i.e. The wine-water mixture was still flavorful.)
 - iv. Two of his conclusions were eye catching.
 - It would generally take about 22 glasses of watered wine to put one “under the influence.” (Today, 1-2 beers or glasses of wine will do that for many, with their frontal lobes, where right and wrong are decided, being affected first.)
 - His second observation “borders on the gross” but it makes his point: that such watered wines affect the bladder long before they affect the mind or judgment (so one would not be under the influence of alcohol from this kind of “drinking”)
 - v. From his reasoning, we conclude that drinking this wine with a meal would *not* be “drinking” in any sense that term is normally used in America today.
 - vi. Thus the use of watered-wine as part of the eating/feasting at the Wedding at Cana (Jn. 2), has almost no comparison to “drinking” today, where alcohol is consumed undiluted, and often more-or-less by itself, and often for its “buzz” or physical and emotional/mental effect on the individual — for which our Brother claims he uses it..
 - vii. Therefore, the type of *drinking* after a hard day which our Brother describes as for its effect on him (cp. Taped Interview) is totally different from that we find in and around the Lord — assuming that wine was actually alcoholic. (See the paper by Jeffrey Hamilton asserting it was non-alcoholic.)
 2. Dr. Everett Ferguson researched this question in the early centuries after Christ, and reached a similar conclusion. (ENCYCLOPEDIA OF EARLY CHRISTIANITY, *my Library is in storage and I have lost the written page notation.*)
 3. Justin Martyr also wrote concerning the early communion. (@ 167 AD)
 - a. He describes an early communion service
 - b. In the service mixed wine and water are brought. (From FIRST APOLOGY, Chapt. LXV)
 - c. Again, we see the use of “wine” is different from using “undiluted wine” today.
 - d. Dr. Everett Ferguson circulated this information for some years as a Bulletin article.
- F. A rather strong case for the meaning of the Word *Wine* to be a *generic term able to be used to refer to unmixed wine, mixed wine, or sweet/unfermented wine* is also attached. (the context would determine the meaning according to Jeffrey Hamilton)
1. Hamilton’s case is interesting, making some points worthy of consideration.
 2. However, at the time the Sermon on *Teaching Youth Not To Drink* was preached, the speaker believed that “watered wine” was in view in the NT use.
 - a. The FERGUSON position (above) alone is enough to destroy modern concepts of “drinking” and to oppose any influential use or possession of alcohol in/by/ around one’s family.
 - b. Therefore, while HAMILTON may eventually prove correct — the lesser position that the NT speaks of *watered wine* is enough to destroy our Brother’s assertions.

- G. In American society the notion of *drinking* has changed considerably from NT times, and the products drunk are also changed.
1. Many folk use “drinking” to cover imbibing beer, wine, ale, whiskey, etc., in short all sorts of alcoholic beverages, whether diluted or non-diluted.
 2. These appear to be much stronger kinds of alcoholic consumption than in NT times.
 - a. NT times looked down on drinking “strong drink” or “unmixed wines” as *barbarian*, while in America such “drinking” is commonplace.
 - b. Today brewers and distillers are subtly redefining the meaning of drinking habits.
 - i. They say “responsible drinking” includes having a “designated driver,” (i.e. It is ok to drink till it controls you a little or a lot, as long as you have someone to drive you home. In that case, I was wrong in the Army when buddies offered me \$50 a night to go to Juarez and then drive them home.)
 - ii. Brewers’ ads imply drinking is part of acceptable, everyday living by nice, normal folk, and this is a rebellion against the generally sober America that became the World Power of the 1920’s—1960’s. (cp. Dry counties of Tex. & NM)
 3. So, **it is wrong** try to read our current notion of “drinking” back into the Scripture.
 - a. To do this would be “adding to” Scripture (Rev. 22:18), and this changes the Gospel (Ga. 1:6-9).
 - b. Thus it is not in anyone’s best interest for a Christian to drink today.

H. CONCLUSION:

1. Jesus most certainly did not “drink” in any manner considered “drinking” today.
 - a. The proof our Brother claims in MATTHEW 11:18-19/Luke 7:34 is not there.
 - i. The verse uses a word (*drinking*) whose meaning is changed from the 1st Century.
 - ii. Thus, the passage agrees with the sermon preached.
 - b. Changing water into wine in Cana, does not tell us whether it was “watered wine” which would be consistent with their then-current practice, or wine that retained its flavor after being mixed with water.
2. To teach against the drinking of the 21st Century does not accuse Jesus of sin!
3. To uphold being led by the Revelation of the Spirit is to uphold a state in which the renewed mind of a Christian controls his actions according to the strict dictates of the Scripture. (cp. Hb. 2:1-4, therefore it is inconsistent with Spirituality for a Christian to drink.)

II. Since the drinking of today and the beverages drunk are considerably different, therefore what about the statement that it is *child abuse* to have alcohol in the home/refrigerator?

- A. Seminars I have attended on Alcohol have shown Research indicating the following.
1. The first part of the Brain to be affected by alcohol is the frontal lobe which affects that which we call wisdom and judgment and lessons that the world calls inhibitions.. (cp. Ep. 5:18-20, see Pr 1:7)
 2. Genetics are a strong indicator of alcoholic abuse.
 - a. If Abuse is in the family, one may have a tendency to abuse or become an alcoholic.
 - b. However, not everyone with family alcoholics/abusers necessarily will be one.

3. For whatever reason, the following statistics seem true (gleaned from seminars & study).
 - a. Studies seem to indicate that 1 in 8 to 1 in 13 drinkers will become alcoholics.
 - b. Studies seem to indicate that 1 in 6-10 drinkers will become abusers.
 - c. Here *availability*, and *conditioning* seem to play a significant role.
 - d. Parental acceptance, example, and teaching may condition and/or encourage a child to drink. (Our Brother notes “drinking” is in his family’s heritage.)
 - i. Some will undoubtedly become alcoholics.
 - ii. Some will undoubtedly become regular abusers.
 - iii. Some will simply get drunk a few times, perhaps incurring a legal, social, or pregnancy problem along the way.
 - iv. Some may just set a bad example for others, or their family who in turn become the alcoholics--abusers.
 - v. It is incredible to assume one could live a pure and wholesome moral life by frequenting bars, or mimicking a bar-like behavior etc., much less that such could spiritually exemplify the Christ. (cp. Mt. 5:13-16; Php. 2:5f; Eph. 6:4)
- B. When a parent drinks or buys alcohol, particularly with a child present is that abuse?
1. Many would consider the following to be forms of child abuse we call *reckless endangerment*. (*an act that harms or that can lead to harm for the child*)
 - a. Driving without the proper seat carriers for infants.
 - b. Having live but uncovered electric wires where children can “play” with them
 - c. Putting a TV on the edge of a bathtub to entertain the bathing child.
 - d. Leaving loaded weapons unlocked, or available to children, much less using them carelessly around children would be reckless endangerment.
 2. By the same reasoning, one must condemn using -- or leaving -- drugs such as marijuana, alcohol, heroin, etc around the home where a child can access them.
 - a. The *influence* of seeing a parent or friends use them, or teach they are “ok” is something that ratchets up the endangerment.
 - b. Leaving such drugs in the fridge, etc. makes them available to a child
 - c. We cannot sow a negative or even a questionable example without expecting a crop failure someday. (Ga. 6:7-8)
- C. CONCLUSION.
1. To open the door to the use-of-a-powerful-drug-like-alcohol according-to-one’s-feelings is indeed an abuse of a child!
 2. Common sense vindicates the statement and the sermon against drinking.