

A Biblical Truth on Wine or Just an Opinion?

There are times when preachers say some of the dumbest things and other times when what they teach is purely **opinion** and **not the Scriptures!** Now the Bible teaches that we preachers are to preach the WORD OF GOD, to reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and DOCTRINE. I do not see anywhere where our **opinions** are to be preached and the people EXHORTED by our opinions.

Nowhere is this more true than the Sermon preached this last Sunday evening at a local baptist church. The sermon title is: **"It is Good not to Drink Wine"**. While I would like to give this preacher the benefit of the doubt I find difficulty in doing that since he lets us know right up front that he is unable to prove his point by the "*pages of the New Testament*" alone. He also does not limit his subject to the Biblical usage of wine but rather includes in his discussion hard liquor and smoking. It becomes readily apparent that he has a soapbox and would rather give his *opinion* of the subject at hand *rather than the truth* found only in the Holy Scriptures.

It is unfortunate that the name of the Church and the author of this sermon must be identified but because the material is copyrighted with all rights reserved I must give credit to the author as he requires by copyrighting, *although my preference would be to leave this information anonymous*. The full text of this sermon can be found at: http://oldfaithbaptist.org/Documents/Wine_CIBC.pdf

I will include sections of the sermon here and make my comments in **blue**. I will not quote the entire sermon but I encourage you to read the whole sermon for yourself. I want to avoid any appearance that I am being "unfair" in my assessment or that I am taking any of his statements out of context. *(I do not read this Brother's sermons for the purpose of creating a hostile environment or for material for the soapbox section of my opinions page. In fact I don't read his sermons at all. The only reason this sermon came to my attention is because it was brought to my attention by a fellow believer.. Now we are brothers by a common faith, and I love this brother. The only reason why I am writing this **opinion** is because of my love for the Word of God, the truth and to expose error.*

Here we go:

"It is a difficult thing to condemn the drinking of alcohol using only the pages of the New Testament. But that is what I will try to do this evening. It is a difficult thing, but not an impossible, especially when speaking to people who are the children of God. The drinking of wine and other alcohols does not appear to be explicitly condemned, and in fact it seems to be encouraged under certain conditions.

DANGER! DANGER! Several things in the first opening statement ought to have caused the people of God to have gotten up out of the chairs and ran for the doors!

FIRST, If the use of alcohol is not condemned and even encouraged in the New Testament (as well as the Old Testament) then why are we attempting to contradict the Word of God? **SECOND**, This brother claims that the New Testament is the only rule of faith and practice in his church. Then why is he trying to convince the people to believe something other than the Word of God? Notice he said, **"It is difficult...using only the pages of the New Testament"** From what I read of his sermon I guess that his personal opinion and experience should be the basis of your faith and not the New Testament. **THIRD**, In addition he indicates that the children of God are to be convinced of something **other** than the truth of God's Word (**"It is a difficult thing, {to convince you to believe his way, contrary to the Word of God} but not impossible, especially when speaking to the people who are the children of God."**) I read in the Scriptures that "the sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me" again, "As it is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God..." "Hath in these last days spoken unto us by *his* Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things..." This preacher is attempting to undermine the Word of God and its authority and substitute his opinion as a higher authority than Christ's.

"I have not knowingly consumed a full swallow of any alcohol since early in my Christian life. The only possible exception might be some forms of it hidden in medicine, or as used by cooks, without my knowledge, in a restaurant or two. My refusal to buy, drink or use alcohol is directly linked to my relationship to Christ. You could say that I am "fully persuaded in my own mind" (verse 5) that I should not drink that stuff. But more than this, I am convinced that no Christian should use alcohol." Please read this paragraph carefully. Notice how many times he refers to himself, and since he is convinced in his own mind concerning his opinion, that his opinion now applies to all Christians everywhere and in all times (this appears a little arrogant to me, but that's my opinion). One is certainly entitled to his opinion and if so convinced, as this man is, abstinence is what he should practice. Does not the Scriptures teach that, whatsoever is not of faith is sin? BUT where is the argument from God's eternal Word that ALL Christians are to abstain from the use of wine? What Scriptures teach that it is a sin to use wine? If this preacher wants to convince Christians of this terrible SIN then please teach us by the Scriptures. OH, THAT'S RIGHT, "ITS DIFFICULT THING TO CONDEMN THE DRINKING OF ALCOHOL USING ONLY THE PAGES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT"

"Despite its lack of direct New Testament condemnation, the Kingdom of God does have laws against alcohol. In fact it might be said that abstinence embodies the spirit of that Kingdom. And the nature of those laws can be gleaned from a survey of this chapter 14 of Romans." Now I don't find any "laws" against alcohol in the New Testament and neither does this Preacher, otherwise he would not have such a difficult time trying to convince us that the use of alcohol is condemned. Now, there are two laws that govern the Kingdom of Heaven one is law of **LOVE, the other the law of **LIBERTY**. "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him,**

and make our abode with him." 1Th 4:9 "But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another." Jas 2:8 "If ye fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well" Concerning the law of Liberty the very text this Brother is preaching from teaches us **LIBERTY**, (Romans 14) Now that would make great sermon material, that would teach the proper use wine, if any, by the believer. I believe that his conclusion is wrong, **"that abstinence embodies the spirit of that Kingdom"** because the scriptures teach that **love and liberty** embodies the spirit of that Kingdom.

"When a Christian buys a bottle of wine in Costco, the city, as a whole, will not blink an eye. But what will that purchase suggest to the child of the fellow church member who sees you? It could say a hundred different things all depending on the nature of that child, and what he has been taught about wine. What does it say to that man's neighbor, who himself has a serious drinking problem? And what does it say to that man's own son or daughter? Now if my dear brother was to teach about the Law of Love and Liberty, he would properly cover the subject of influence, offense and testimony but he chose a rather negative argument which has no scriptural basis. I want an argument from the Scriptures!

I was raised in a home, where just about every variety of alcohol could be found in abundance. It was not a Christian home, per se, so the application is just a little different, but there was a message to this little boy in every one of those bottles. It told me that there is nothing wrong with drinking, and there is nothing wrong with drunkenness. It taught me that to celebrate adult birthdays, anniversaries, national holidays, or anything else worth celebrating, drinking was a necessity and drunkenness was a good thing. It wasn't that my parents sat down with me and told me that drinking was an essential to life. I simply learned these lessons by observation, because..... "none of us liveth to himself." This is the bases of his whole argument against the use of alcohol. It is found in his experience as a young man. My dear brother has introduced a personal argument not a scriptural one. We could just as well have introduced Coke-a-Cola as the subject. There are many people addicted to this beverage but it just doesn't have stigma attached to it that wine or alcohol has. I believe the Bible teaches that we are to be temperate in all things. To be addicted to anything, whether it be your morning coffee or your afternoon Coke, is a sin. To be enslaved to any of our fleshly appetites would be sin (now I can prove that by the Bible!) **And when I saw the devastation that drinking was causing - the car accidents, and the marital problems - these points were basically ignore. Alcohol is not the cause of car accidents or marital problems, it is the abuse of alcohol that was the cause and the cause of the abuse is an immoral, defective, depraved heart. This is the real issue not wine or alcohol. We need to quite blaming the product which is only a symptom of the problem and deal with the real problem. Teaching abstinence does not fix a defective heart. This is what Jesus taught when he said, "if thy eye offend thee, pluck it out..." The problem is not with the eye, it is with the heart.**

"Second: I don't drink because I am going to have to stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ". Others will stand before the Judgment Seat who did drink. What does any of this have to do with the Judgment Seat of Christ? In fact many of God's people believe that the proper element in the God given ordinance of "The Lord's Supper" is wine. Our forefathers used wine in the Supper. Wine was used in the Sacrifices and offerings of the Old Testament. We know that wine was a common beverage in the houses and churches of the Lord in the New Testament. The members of the Corinthian church were not commanded to stop drinking wine, only that they were not to be drunken. There condemnation was not the use of wine but rather the manner in which they were observing the Supper. I don't read where a believer will be judged for the use of wine in any part of the Bible, let alone at the Judgment Seat of Christ. It does say that we will be judge according to our works, now what this brother has to do, by the Scriptures, is show that drinking a glass of wine is an evil work. I can show you that drunkenness is forbidden and thus an evil work.

"I am going to have to give an account of myself to God. Changing vices for a moment: Some Christian smokers point to prominent preachers of the past, saying things like: "Well, the great Baptist Pastor, Charles Haddon Spurgeon smoked cigars. If he could smoke those terrible things, then I can chew this tobacco." Sounds good, until you consider one extremely important point. A hundred years ago, there wasn't the evidence that we have today about the harmful effects of tobacco. In fact a hundred years ago, it was believed that tobacco, opium, cocaine and dozens of other poisons, were considered to be beneficial - stimulating to the heart and mind. Today we know better about these things. But on the other hand, we have always known about the evils of alcohol and alcohol abuse." Now here's his argument against smoking, as long as you are ignorant of the harmful effects of tobacco you are not sinning. After all a hundred years ago we didn't know smoking was bad for you. Now, I hope to help this preacher out a bit because he seem to be a bit ignorant of some facts, *Tobacco, Opium and Cocaine ARE beneficial!* Now that might take you by surprise but let me explain. I recently had a tooth extraction that took three hours and created a lot of pain. Along with that I had "dry socket". The drug that prescribe for me was a opiate derivative. There are many other drugs that are taken to relieve pain and symptoms that are derivatives of the drugs listed above. Even Nicotine has its proper place. In fact there is medical research showing that a good **cigar** provides low levels of carbon monoxide that may actually help victims of heart attacks and strokes, smokers have a better chance of surviving angioplasty surgery, small doses of nicotine help produce new blood vessel growth around blocked arteries and even improve your memory and concentration. Before we get all bent out of shape GET THE FACTS FIRST. **Let me make a disclaimer here.** I am not advocating that we should all go out and buy a pack of cigarettes and start smoking. Cigarettes are designed by the Cigarette manufactures to create addiction. And remember, there is a law of Christ and it is the law of love and liberty, and this law includes giving no offense to the Jew, the Greek or the church of God. In the spirit of the teaching of Romans 14, the text this brother's

sermon is based, we ought to discipline ourselves and deny ourselves, even that which might be good, if it causes an offense or a brother to stumble.

Now the last statement in this paragraph **"we have always known about the evils of alcohol and alcohol abuse."** If the use of wine is so evil why did God commend its use and give it as a gift to men? Why was it used in the sacrifices and offerings? Why was it a symbol of God's blessing upon Israel? What we do know is that which is very good can be used for evil. There is significant scientific data showing the positive effects of the none abusive use of wine. But like all good things they are subject to misuse and abuse. Should we condemn all things that are good because they can also be abused. Or only the things on the "Christian Hit List"? It is a simple fact that the use of wine was never an issue among the true churches of Christ until the "Womens Temperance Movement". And if the Methodist, Mr. Welch didn't invent "grape juice" to use in the sacraments, I doubt that it would be an issue today.

"There is ample proof that for every tiny benefit that there is in smoking marijuana, there are a hundred arguments against it". Sometimes we are blinded by our own prejudices. Genesis clearly teaches us that every herb bearing plant was good including the herb marijuana. My garden and food closet is full of herbs. I use herbs to season my food and strengthen my body. I use herbs for my blood pressure and to help control my diabetes. They ALL serve a purpose. All modern medicine has its basis in the plant kingdom so why are we all bent out of shape because of the abuse of an herb? (Let me make a disclaimer here: I do **NOT** advocate the use of Marijuana in its common form and used as a "recreational drug. I have seen first hand the devastating effects of its abuse but I will not condemn its **proper** uses because it is so widely abused?) Hemp make great cloths, rope, paper, and the derivatives of the plant have many medical applications. Maybe we should not be so short sighted. Maybe we should condemn from our pulpits prescription drugs because they also are widely abuse, even by them to whom they are prescribed. And while we are at it maybe we should condemn the majority of the foods we buy from the grocery store because they are full of chemicals that are detrimental to good health. Let's not be hypocrites, preach against the use of Pepsi products by our membership, after all it is full of chemicals and addictive as well. Not one ounce of these products have **ANY** healthful benefits but we serve them at our potlucks. We would do our people service to give them a glass of wine with their meal then a can of Coke! **"And there is not a single good reason to smoke cigarettes. According to one biography that I read about Spurgeon, when someone told him that his cigars were bad for his health, he immediately quit"**. Now I don't know what biography he read but maybe he will write me and give me the edition. Here is what Spurgeon said in his own words,

"Well, dear friends, you know that some men can do to the glory of God what to other men would be sin. And notwithstanding what brother Pentecost has said, I intend to smoke a good cigar to the glory of God before I go to bed to-night.

"If anybody can show me in the Bible the command, 'Thou shalt not smoke,' I am ready to keep it; but I haven't found it yet. I find ten commandments, and it's as much as I can do to keep them; and I've no desire to make them into eleven or twelve.

"The fact is, I have been speaking to you about real sins, not about listening to mere quibbles and scruples. At the same time, I know that what a man believes to be sin becomes a sin to him, and he must give it up. 'Whatsoever is not of faith is sin' [Rom. 14:23], and that is the real point of what my brother Pentecost has been saying.

"Why, a man may think it a sin to have his boots blacked. Well, then, let him give it up, and have them whitewashed. I wish to say that I'm not ashamed of anything whatever that I do, and I don't feel that smoking makes me ashamed, and therefore I mean to smoke to the glory of God."

"There is growing up in society a Pharisaic system which adds to the commands of God the precepts of men; to that system I will not yield for an hour. The preservation of my liberty may bring upon me the upbraidings of many good men, and the sneers of the self-righteous; but I shall endure both with serenity so long as I feel clear in my conscience before God"

From, "An Interview With Eric W. Hayden" The Foremost Authority on C. H. Spurgeon, "When I was a student the College principal, Dr. C. W. Evans, used to say that Spurgeon gave up smoking for two reasons — 1) he was disgusted when he saw a sign for "Spurgeon Tobacco" in a shop window, and 2) he saw the harmful effect it was having on "old John," his coachman. I have never seen evidence in any biography that Spurgeon gave up "the weed."

When it comes to alcohol, the benefits are less than 1 in 100. Not True! At this point, I don't think that it will be necessary to run down a long list of the evils of drink. If you are not familiar with them, those facts and statistics are readily available. In many countries, including Great Britain, half the average food budget is spent on alcohol. In our own country some say that alcohol is involved in half of all crime. Between 10 and 15 million children live in homes destroyed by booze. Alcohol plays a major part in poverty, in the high cost of health care, in crime, in debauchery. The is the same kind of argument that is made by the anti-gun advocates. A bunch of statics that don't mean a thing! "Booze" is not the cause only the symptom. Guns do not kill anybody but people do! Should we outlaw guns and preach from our pulpits how wicked guns are because they kill, maim, destroy homes and send people to jail? We can make the same argument about guns as about "Booze" but,that's right, it's not on the "Christian Hit List". I do not advocate drinking "booze". I do advocate the baring of Arms. I am simply illustrating that preaching our opinions will get us into trouble. Having an opinion is well and perhaps good but to preach you opinion as if it is the Word of God is dangerous, arrogant, ignorant and foolish. And when you as a Christian will stand before the Son of God, if you drink, you will have no answer for your rejection or your lack of proper response to these facts." Please give chapter and verse for this! What kind of preaching is THIS? Where is it taught that we are going to be judged upon worldly statistics?

"And what will your answer be to the Author of the Word of God, as He points to verse after verse. "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise." Why weren't you more wise, avoiding strong drink? "He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man: he that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich." Yes, the Bible teaches us that drunkenness is a sin. But the subject is not drunkenness as he stated in his very first paragraph. Look at the wealth that you squandered buying cigarettes and beer. And cable TV, Coke-a-Cola, Chips and all the frivolous comforts of home, a night out for dinner and any other "waster of money". "Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine." "Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright." No argument, he is quoting the Scripture. But this is not the point. We all agree that drunkenness is a sin but he is trying to prove that any use of wine is sin.

You may continue to read the rest of the sermon, it has, in my opinion, a number of inaccuracies, assumptions and presumptions. But I would like to conclude this OPINION PAGE with an exhortation.

WE are, as gospel preachers, to preach the WORD. Nothing more and nothing less. There is nothing wrong with expressing an opinion and even a strong opinion but it is dangerous to true Christian liberty to impose your opinions on others and judge others by those opinions. To judge another believer and his standing before God is to make yourself as God. In the very text that this sermon was based upon, Romans 14, verse four says, "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up; for God is able to make him stand." And verse 10, 13, But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that not man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in *his* brother's way."

I am by no means advocating that Believers should take up smoking and drinking, in fact the opposite is true. I believe we as the children of God need to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. We must be led by the Spirit of God and live according to the laws of Christ. These laws, found in the New Testament, are without controversy the laws of Christian conduct. They are the law of love and the law of liberty. We are to cultivate the greatest of Christian compassion and love of the brethren. This kind of opinion based sermon leads only to division, it breeds contempt, it devises and adds to the law of Christ the commandments of men.

Humbly submitted,
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