

the hog house. Just one lapse in this practice is enough to make your home reek permanently.

Likewise, God commands Christians to remove the garments of sin. The Holy Spirit directs the believer to remove all anger, wrath, malice, slander, abusive speech and lying from his life (Co 3.8-9). Does this list seem like a daunting task for you? Perhaps you've struggled with these issues for years and have not experienced any success. Or maybe you have never considered these to be sin at all. No doubt every person before his salvation was a slave to some or all of these sins. Now these sins are affecting your life, your marriage, your family, your job, and even your walk with God (Ep 4.30). Worse, the world has many false counselors today who are excusing these sins by placing the blame upon others ("my parents abused me") or one's physical condition ("I'm suffering from a disorder that affects my personality"). Psychiatrists are prescribing drugs to alleviate [read: 'aggravate'] these problems. Millions of Americans are on these drugs. Many believers have bought into the lie that they need these drugs and that they cannot cope with life or change their behavior without them. They think that their problem is physical and not spiritual.

The Holy Spirit disagrees. He commands the believer to remove these sins. He even makes the claim that you can put these sins off (Ro 6.12-14; Ga 5.16-17). In fact, the Holy Spirit says that when you got saved, you actually did break the hold these sins had over your life: "since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices" (Co 3.9). This statement is not well understood. At first glance it appears to be a contradiction. How can Paul urge us to put off the garments of sin (v. 8), because we have already laid aside the old self (v. 9)? The answer has been one of much controversy. Some say that at salvation one receives a new self, but also keeps the old self. They believe that the struggle of living the Christian life is due to the battle between the two selves. To them, the Christian is a kind of schizoid having dual personalities. This interpretation, however, doesn't square completely with the New Testament. 2 Corinthians 5.17 states that "if any man be in Christ, old things have [already] passed away; behold, all things are [in the process of] becoming new." Romans 6.6 says "that our old self was crucified with him." If the old self was crucified with Christ, and if it died with Him (Ro 6.6-8), then how do we have dual natures?

The answer is to be found in the definitions. First, let's define the term "old self." It is used only three times in the NT: Ro 6.6; Ep 4.22 and Co 3.9. Ephesians 4.22-24 gives us God's definition of the term: "... that in refer-

ence to *your former manner of life*, you lay aside the old self." From this passage we can see that the old self is "your former manner of life." That is, the old self was our life before salvation—a life corrupted by deceitful desires and evil practices (Ep 4.22) which were directed by "the Prince of the Power of the Air" (Ep 2.1-3; 2 Ti 2.26).

The old self has been replaced by the "new self" (Ep 4.23-23; Co 3.10). This is the regenerate self, the new creation that Paul speaks about in 2 Corinthians 5:17. This new self exists in every believer (Ep 4.24). The new self is no longer a slave to Satan. But the new self is not made fully mature (1 Pe 2.1-3); the new self is "being renewed to a true knowledge ac-

God commands Christians to remove the garments of sin.

ording to the image of the One who created him" (Co 3.10). In other words, as we hear, read and understand "True Knowledge" (Co 3.10)—the Word of God—we grow in Christlikeness. Sanctification is a process that restores the damage done by the Fall. This renewal works when Christians think the thoughts of God. We must not be "conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of [our] mind[s]" (Ro. 12:2).

To summarize, before salvation the old self was ruled by Satan. He directed our thoughts and actions. But at salvation, that slavery to Satan was broken. We no longer have to obey Satan. By God's grace, we can defeat sin in our lives. In order to defeat sin, we need to think like God thinks. Our responsibility as believers now is to completely "reprogram" our thinking by the Word of God.

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Putting Theology Back in the Pew

October, 2004

The Christian and Alcohol Part 2

Scott Williquette

In the last issue of *Sola!* we saw that modern alcoholic beverages are quite different from the alcoholic wine consumed in Bible times. Wine consumed in Bible times was mixed wine containing very little alcohol. It was different from modern alcoholic beverages today. Furthermore, unlike God's people in Bible times, today we have hundreds of beverages to choose from that contain no alcohol at all. Last, we noted that the danger with alcoholic beverages is that it may dull the senses and ultimately replace the Holy Spirit as the believer's controlling influence. The Bible universally forbids this. The best way to steer clear of such sin is to take advantage of the hundreds of options God has provided us today. This article will build upon the backdrop provided by part 1 by considering the biblical material that applies to alcohol's use today.

In the New Testament Period God's People Used Diluted Wine As a Medicine.

1 Timothy 5.22-23, "Keep yourself pure. 23 Stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses."

Luke 10.33-34, "but a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. 34 He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him."

In 1 Timothy 5.23 Paul commands Timothy to stop drinking water alone, and to drink mixed wine instead. Timothy was avoiding the use of diluted wine. We are not told why, but it may be because Timothy was misinterpreting Paul's encouragements to be pure, as including abstinence from all alcohol. In verse 22 Paul

commands Timothy to be pure, and surely this was a common encouragement from Paul. Regardless of the reason, Timothy was avoiding the use of diluted wine, and Paul commands him to change his practice. Timothy had stomach problems and other frequent illnesses. It is possible that his stomach problems stemmed from drinking contaminated water without the aid of alcohol to kill bacteria. It is also possible that Timothy simply had chronic health problems. Either way, it is clear that diluted wine was used as a medicine in the New Testament period, and that God's people could use it as such.

Notice the words "stop drinking only water" (μηκέτι ὑδροπότει) in the beginning of verse 23. The KJV renders this phrase, "Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake." The NASB renders it, "No longer drink water exclusively, but use a little

Diluted wine was used as a medicine in the New Testament period.

wine for the sake of your stomach." Alongside the NIV, all three translations accurately capture the point of the Greek word ὑδροποτέω. Ὑδροποτέω does not simply mean "to drink water." It means "to drink water without wine mixed in."⁽¹⁾ Paul then is commanding Timothy to drink diluted wine as a medicine, and to stop drinking plain water.

In the NT Period God's People Used Diluted Wine As a Beverage. In John 2.1-11 Jesus changed water into fine diluted wine at the wedding in Cana. In verse 10 the Master of the Banquet indicated that the wine Jesus had miraculously provided was more than grape juice when he reminded the groom that the custom was to "bring out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink." No amount of hermeneutical gymnastics will allow us to interpret wine here

as anything other than alcoholic wine. This wine was certainly an alcoholic beverage, but as we know, it was also a diluted alcoholic beverage. It would not have been consumed without being diluted at least 2 to 1 and probably more.

According to the pastoral epistles, leaders in the early church drank diluted wine.

1 Timothy 3.2-3, "Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness . . ."

Titus 1.7, "Since an overseer is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain."

1 Timothy 3.8, "Deacons, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine . . ."

Pastors and deacons must not be "given to drunkenness" and must not indulge "in much wine." These men are to be controlled by Scripture and the Holy Spirit, not alcohol. That is clear. It is equally clear that these men could drink diluted wine as long as it did not impair their judgment.

God's People Today Should Abstain From Using Alcoholic Beverages. *First*, God's people today should abstain from drinking modern alcoholic beverages because their use is not permitted in the Bible. As we saw in the previous article, Bible passages that permit or command the consumption of alcoholic beverages are speaking of beverages very different from what is produced today. The Bible in no way condones the drinking of modern alcoholic beverages. The wine Jesus made at the wedding in Cana was diluted before consumption into a beverage that contained no more than 2½ % alcohol. Paul commanded Timothy to drink diluted wine containing a similar amount of alcohol. Nowhere does the Bible condone or command the consumption of beverages with more than 2½ % alcohol. Alcoholic beverages produced today are not permitted or condoned in the Scriptures.

Second, God's people today should abstain from drinking alcoholic beverages because their use provides no spiritual benefit. In 1 Corinthians 10.23-24 Paul states, "Everything is permissible" — but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible" — but not everything is constructive. Nobody should seek his

own good, but the good of others." In these verses Paul first quotes the slogan of the false teachers and then responds to it. The false teachers were teaching Christian libertarianism. They were saying that anything and everything was permissible to them; that as Christians they were free in Christ to do whatever they wanted. Many professing Christians today live by that same slogan. Paul responds by teaching that believers should seek that which is spiritually beneficial, spiritually constructive, and spiritually good for others. What we want to do is irrelevant. The issue is what is spiritually edifying to all concerned. Knowing all that we know about modern alcoholic beverages, it is hard to see how anyone could insist that its consumption is spiritually edifying to all concerned.

Third, God's people today should abstain from drinking alcoholic beverages because their use could lead to sinful slavery. In 1 Corinthians 6.12 Paul writes, "Everything is permissible for me" — but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible for me" — but I will not be mastered by anything." Paul once again quotes the libertarian false teachers and mentions the need for spiritual benefit. He also mentions that anything that masters the believer is not permissible. In other words, Christians should shun any activity that could lead to sinful habits. Modern alcoholic beverages are severely addictive. The easiest way for believers to obey this verse is to abstain from them.

Fourth, God's people today should abstain from drinking alcoholic beverages because their use may cause others to stumble into sin. Philippians 2.4 commands believers, "Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others."

Romans 14.19-21 reads, "Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification. Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All food is clean, but it is wrong for a man to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble. It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother to fall."

The Christian should ask himself, "Could my drinking alcohol cause someone to stumble into sin?" "Could it encourage others to follow my example, and thus place them in danger of the sin of drunkenness or slavery?"

Fifth, God's people today should abstain from drinking alcoholic beverages because they are associated with the unsaved life.

1 Corinthians 6.9-10, "Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral . . . nor drunkards . . . will inherit the kingdom of God."

Galatians 5.19-21, "The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, . . . drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God."

Scripture drives us to the conclusion that alcohol is not an option for the Christian.

The Bible clearly teaches that drunkenness is associated with the rebellious living of the unregenerate man. Drunkenness is one of the sins that easily fits into the unsaved life. Those who hate God commit sins like drunkenness. I realize many people today drink alcoholic beverages without getting drunk. However, because alcoholic beverages today contain so much more alcohol than in Bible times, it is much easier to become drunk. Furthermore, there are different stages of drunkenness. A person doesn't have to be falling down drunk to be drunk. At the point where a person's mind is even a little bit influenced by alcohol, he is violating Scripture. The mind is to be controlled by the Spirit of God, not alcohol (Eph 5.18).

Sixth, God's people today should abstain from drinking alcoholic beverages because alcohol can be easily abused and lead to other forms of wickedness. Alcohol can impair your judgement. In Isaiah 28.7 the prophet prophecies about Ephraim's captivity. In that context he describes the loss of judgement of people under the influence of alcohol. Isaiah writes,

"And these also reel with wine and stagger from strong drink: The priest and the prophet reel with strong drink, They are confused by wine, they stagger from strong drink; They reel while having visions, They totter when rendering judgment."

Alcohol can lead to many forms of wickedness. According to national surveys alcohol is involved in as many as

- 65% of the murders committed in the U.S.
- 40% of the assaults
- 35% of rapes
- 55% of domestic violence,
- 60% of child abuse cases, and
- 60% of all traffic fatalities.

The misuse of alcohol can lead to many forms of sin.

Conclusion: Christians are to be distinct from the world. We are to be holy and above reproach in every day life. That being true we must ask questions before we act. Questions like: Will this thing I want to do benefit me spiritually, or could it move me away from the things of Christ? Could this thing I want to do evolve into a sinful or spiritually debilitating habit? Could this thing I want to do cause others to stumble into sin? Could it compromise them somehow, or could it hinder their spiritual walk? Does this thing I want to do associate me with the sinful activities of unsaved people? Could it cause people to pause and wonder about my love for Christ? And, could the thing I want to do lead me into other forms of wickedness?

When we ask these questions of the alcohol controversy, it seems to me that the Scriptures drive us to the conclusion that alcohol is not an option for the Christian.

Endnotes:

(1) "Every other known use of this verb in antiquity means to drink water only in the sense of abstaining from wine." Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, p. 92.

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The Second Step to Christlikeness, Part 1

Steven Owen

Farmers know that nothing can approach the hog in the category of awful scents. Its odor is highly offensive. A strong wind can carry the malodor of a hog lot for miles. Perhaps the worst thing is that its awful stench actually attaches itself to a person's clothes if he is close enough to the source. One just has to approach the doorway of a hog house and the microscopic dust that carries the putrid scent will settle on his clothes and everything it touches. Hog farmers know that one must remove his shoes and all his garments before he enters his home, or else his house will forever smell like