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EDITORIAL

What Does The Bible Teach?

“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”

No man or woman can claim to be without sin. All have sinned, says the Bible at Romans 3:23. No one is born with sin or is a sinner from birth. (Ezekiel 18:20). But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his/her own desires and enticed. Then when the desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full grown, brings forth death. (James 1:14,15). The death spoken of here is not the physical death, which consequently, all must face, even little children who have never sinned. (Matt. 18:3 & 19:14). But just as Adam and Eve were separated from God because of their sin, in the beginning, so does sin bring separation from God, the source of spiritual life, to each one who commit sin. (Isaiah 59:1,2). The wages of sin, says the Bible in Romans 6:23, is death, but the gift of God, it says further, is eternal life in Christ Jesus. Because of sin man is destined to go and live in hell forever, where there is no God, because God and sin cannot live in the same place. But through His Son Jesus Christ God has offered to man a way of escape from sin and hell; and if man is willing to accept God's offer then he can choose to escape hell through Jesus Christ and be

prepared to go and live in heaven forever. This is the gospel, the good news of God for all mankind. God will not force one or induce one or coerce one to accept His offer. Everyone must choose for himself/herself.

We cannot deny the fact that we are all sinners. We all need forgiveness of our sins. We all have sinned against God. Only God can forgive us all. But what can we give to God in lieu of forgiveness for our sins? Can we offer Him anything? Does not everything belong to Him already? Or can we bribe God to appease Him? When our sins and iniquities have separated us from God, how can we imagine that He will hear our prayers and will accept our worship? First we must reconcile ourselves with God by getting rid of our sins, only then can we hope for God to hear our prayers and to accept our worship. How do we do that? How do we get rid of our sins and receive the forgiveness of our sins? Of course, through Jesus Christ, in whom God gives us the gift of eternal life. Because He was crucified on the cross by the will of God for the sins of humanity. And when one believes in Him and repents of sins and is baptized (Immersed in water) by His authority for the forgiveness of sins, God, because of the death of Christ for the sinners, forgives that individual all his/her sins.

Does this, however, mean that one will never need forgiveness for sins any more, once after baptism? Can one not sin, though not intentionally or deliberately, after one is baptized? The Scriptures teach: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:8&9). One who has been baptized into Christ, the Bible teaches, has put on Christ (Galatians 3:27), and, therefore, being in Christ the baptized believer has the privilege to confess sins and to receive the forgiveness of sins from Christ. This is the beauty and the uniqueness of being a Christian. And, if this was not true, who would want to be a Christian? Are you one?

Satan's Lies

J.C. CHOATE

The scriptures have a lot to say about Satan or the devil. Speaking of some people of His day, Jesus said, *"Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it"* (John 8:44). Peter warns us, *"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour"* (1 Peter 5:8). Many other verses could be added to these, but you get the idea of who Satan is and what he wants to do with you and me and all of God's creation.

Since Satan is the father of lies, we need to be made aware of some of them. With knowledge of his more prominent deceptions, we can better be on guard, to protect ourselves from being deceived.

1. Satan would have us to believe that human beings and all things that exist are the products of evolution. Some scientists tell us that the earth is billions of years old, that the universe and life began with a "big bang," and that it has taken this long for man to develop to where he is now. Our young people in particular are being bombarded in schools, through the news media, and wherever national and state parks have information on display, with the theory of evolution. Of course it is a *theory*, and not *fact*, but it is being passed off as fact.

This theory claims that all living things developed from non-living matter—a direct conflict with all known science which shows that life can come only from pre-existing life. It also claims that through the process of evolution, all that exists is in a state of refinement and progression of higher and better things—another scientific impossibility, because the second law of thermodynamics states that the universe and all matter are "running down" and moving toward eventual and

inevitable "heat death," not that they are improving.

The real truth is that there is a God in heaven and that He is the creator of all things. (Genesis 1-3). Evolution is one of Satan's most widely publicized lies.

2. Satan tries to get us to believe that Jesus was but a mere man. Jesus did have a physical body, having been born of a human mother but not of a human father. He was, in fact, the Son of God, having been born of the virgin Mary, through the over-shadowing of the Holy Spirit of God (Matthew 1). Jesus lived among men without sin, and after dying on the cross for the sins of the world, He arose from the grave and returned to the Father in Heaven to reign as King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Corinthians 15:1-4; 1 Timothy 6:15). He not only lives today but He will return one day to take His people to heaven to live with Him and the Father for all eternity (John 14:1-3).
3. Another lie that Satan tells is that one can be saved without being baptized. Why would he attack a rule or law that would seem to be little more than a "ritual"? The answer is very simple: if he can get people to believe that baptism is not important, by that lie he can close the door of salvation for them. How? Because Christ said that *one must believe and be baptized to be saved* (Mark 16:16). If people refuse to be baptized, they do not experience the "new birth" of John 3:5, and therefore the Lord cannot add them to His family. Since Christ adds the saved, the "born again" souls, to His church (Acts 2:47), then those who refuse baptism cannot be eternally saved (Ephesians 5:23). Satan says that baptism is not important, and by this lie he is causing millions to be lost eternally.
4. Another lie of Satan, actually several lies of Satan, is that the church is not important, that one can be saved and go to heaven without being a member of the church, that there are many churches. If the church is not important, then why did Christ promise to build it, and why did He shed his blood to purchase it? (Matthew 16:18; Acts 20:28). Of course the church *is* important, so *important that one must be a member of it to go to*

heaven. True, the church is not the saviour, but we cannot be saved eternally unless we are part of that body for which Christ promised to return (Ephesians 5:27; I Corinthians 15:24).

There are hundreds and thousands of other lies that the devil tells man, and it is not surprising that Satan lies about everything; the amazing thing is how many people *believe* these lies. I think it must be true with religious lies as well as political lies, and with lies in other walks of life, that the more they are repeated the more people believe them. Even false teachers and preachers, and their followers in general, tell the same doctrinal lies so repeatedly that they, themselves, come to believe them.

People hear these lies from every direction, and they hear them so often that their repetition makes them seem like the truth to the masses, while the actual truths of the Bible are rejected as lies. Paul talked about this very thing in Romans 1:25: *"Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen."* No, Satan's religious lies are not true. Just because people go through life hearing them and believing that they are the truth, does not make them true. One day, in the judgment, these false doctrines and promises will be exposed for what they are: the blatant lies of Satan. How sad that most religious people, even most believers in Christ, are going through this life believing all of these lies, being unwilling to seriously study the Bible and to know what the Lord has really said. How tragic that they will learn only at the judgment bar of Christ that they staked their very souls on the lies of Satan! Won't that be a horrible fact to face?

My friend, let me urge you not to listen to Satan and his co-workers. Realize that they will not tell you the truth, and that their lies will be beautiful and very persuasive. They will use every means possible to convince you that the lies are actually the truth. If Satan can get you to believe him, he will be responsible for you being lost. But on second thought, you, yourself, will have to accept much of the responsibility if you are lost because the Lord warned us in His word that we should not believe the devil, and that we should not allow ourselves to be deceived.

The truth is so plain and simple. Read God's word and

accept it for what it says. There is no reason why you, or anyone else, should not be able to understand the New Testament. Remember that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life and that no one can come to the Father except by Him. (John 14:6). Remember, too, that it is only the truth that makes us free (John 8:32).

The Church Is Not Growing, Why?

FRANCIS DAVID

We have seen many church members died in the past. Some of those members were excellent people. They lived good Christian lives. Their lives were examples to many. We have also seen many Christians died spiritually. They became unfaithful and then gone back into the world. How sad it is to see good Christians leaving their faith and going back to the same sinful situation. I think these people were not serious about their Christian lives and therefore slow in growth. They did not care for spiritual food. They were starving themselves spiritually. Apostle Peter encouraged Christians that they must desire the pure, sincere milk of the word. He says: ". . . laying, aside all malice, all guile, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as new born babies desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby (1 Pet. 2:2).

Today, we see the congregations of the Lord's church are dying spiritually. There are some who are no more in existence. They are gone or finished. What was the reason? Lack of spirituality. Sin was tolerated, nobody cared for spirituality. Everyone was walking according to his or her will. The leaders did not care for the congregations and result was the slow death.

The church is not growing because the members have no conviction, and they take the work of the church very lightly. People have no interest in evangelism. We are self satisfied and we just don't care for the growth of the church. We don't care for the greatest commission that Christ gave to his disciples that they must take the gospel to all the world. (Matt. 28:18-19; Mark

16:15-16). When there are gospel meetings, there are some members who do not show up even for one or two days. Isn't it sad? When there are works to do, many do not take interest. This is a sign of lack of growth. What about our worship service? A Christian is expected to attend the worship service but now many times we see people making all kinds of excuses for not attending the worship. Bible tells us: "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another . . . (Heb. 10:25). If we are not regular and not interested in the services of the church then we will see the slow death of the congregation.

If a congregation has elders, these elders have great responsibility to feed the flock, or the congregations with spiritual food. (Acts 20:28). Elders need to be watchful and vigilant about the spiritual welfare of the church. If not, then they will see the slow death of their congregation.

Sometimes, we see a church is not growing because of false doctrine taught there and nobody cared. All the members of the church need to be alerted when the word of God is being taught in their congregations. We must be like the people of Berea. These people searched the scriptures daily (Acts 17:11). We must be always ready to give answer to people concerning our hope and our faith. We read Peter says: "But sanctify the Lord God in your heart, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear." (1 Pet. 3:15).

If you really want to see the church grow then I would urge you to add Christian graces to your faith, and if you do that then you yourself would see the growth in you. We read about these graces in Second Peter chapter 1, Peter says: "But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, ADD to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge, self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.

For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. (verses 5-9). How wonderful it would be to see the congregations grow in number and in spirituality. Christian leaders, preachers, elders

and Bible teachers must set good examples before the congregations because they are being constantly watched, by members and others. What about the congregation where you worship, is it growing or dying?

Why Worship God—2

THOMAS R. DOHLING

In Hebrews 1:1-4, we find God speaking to us today through His Son. Just think of it. More than 2000 years ago, the Creator laid aside His glory, left the timeless realm and entered the realm of time clothed in humanity and humility so that His creatures who had lost sight of Him may see Him with physical eyes. Even though He veiled His divinity in the garb of flesh, He never ceased to be divine as evidenced from the extraordinary things that He did—like raising the dead to life, restoring sight to the blind, healing the terminally sick people, making the lame to walk, walking on water etc. he walked on this earth so that His creation—made in His nature—may see Him, i.e., His nature, and learn from Him (Matthew 11:29), may learn what his Creator requires of him. By His dealings with man through thought (Scripture), word (teachings) and deed (His activity), He was teaching man how he ought to be and continues to do so even now and will continue to do so till time ends. Just think about it. The Apostle Peter says how the Sovereign Lord bestowed His magnificent and precious promises on His people—2 Peter 1:3-4.

Isn't He worthy of our worship?

Paul always marveled at the mystery of the Godhead (see Ephesians 3). The divine mystery was revealed to the apostle Paul through divine revelation. He spells out the mystery in verse 6. Through the teaching of the gospel, i.e., through Christ Jesus, "the Gentiles are fellow heirs, fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus."

Our God is the most ingenious and resourceful designer. Like a skillful artisan, He designed and made each creature after its own kind. He also blessed them to be fruitful and multiply. By

His loving care, He sustains all creatures with His Spirit. This is the God we worship and trust. With His manifold wisdom, no problem in our lives is ever too difficult for Him. The Lord Jesus reminds us that our Heavenly Father even feeds the birds in the air and watches over the sparrows (Mt. 6:26, Lk 12:6-7). How much more will He provide for and protect us, His beloved children! Let us stop carrying our own burdens and learn to depend on our all-wise and ever-loving Creator.

One of the differences between animals and people is that we worry and they don't. How can you become carefree in your life but still make good use of the mind and intelligence God has given to you? By trusting Him. He will keep His promises. He asks us to cast all our anxieties on Him because He cares for us (1 Peter 5:7).

"Our Lord and Creator, you have shown us your wisdom, power, and love through your creation. Teach us to always lean on you and not trust in our own limited resources. Thank you for blessing us so abundantly. In Jesus' name, Amen."

Social Drinking and the Christian

ERNEST R. BURNETTE

By social drinking we mean drinking alcoholic beverages for pleasure, recreation or to enhance social relationships. This discussion does not take into consideration medicinal use of products that include alcohol.

First, we want to present reasons why a Christian cannot be a social drinker and second, we will explain scriptures that have been used by those who approve of social drinking.

REASONS WHY CHRISTIANS SHOULD NOT BE SOCIAL DRINKERS

1. It is important to understand that the word wine (*oinos* in Greek) is used 134 times in the Septuagint (Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament) and 33 Times in the New Testament, and *yahyin* (in Hebrew) is used 141 times in the Old Testament and that these words are generic words. There are

more words used that are translated "wine" but these are by far the most frequently used ones. So, when we see the word "wine" in the Bible we must not jump to the conclusion that it is alcoholic. Wine is the word used to describe the fruit of the grape that is being pressed (Isaiah 16:10) and while it is still in the cluster (Isaiah 65:8). It is also used to show it is alcoholic (Proverbs 20:1).

Since this word "wine" is generic, we must look to the context to determine whether it is intoxicating or not. People in New Testament times did drink intoxicating wine and get drunk. But, in the days of Christ people also drank non-intoxicating wine or grape juice. In fact, non-intoxicating wine was a common drink in New Testament times. Also, it is common knowledge from historians that grape juice could be preserved for years by several methods. (See Jim McGuigan, *The Bible, The Saint, and The Liquor Industry*, pp. 41-59).

2. Alcohol is an addictive drug. The main agent of alcoholic beverages is ethyl alcohol. It is an anesthetic. Some other drugs are marijuana, LSD, cocaine and heroin. No one drinks the first drink thinking he will become an alcoholic. The first drink makes the second one easier. It lowers one's inhibitions. If one can drink alcohol in moderation, couldn't he use cocaine in moderation? If one could support the liquor industry, could he not support the drug industry? You might say, "But those drugs are illegal." If they were not illegal, would you then use them?

3. What does it mean to be drunk? We use such terms as "dog drunk," "gassed," and "stoned" to describe one who is drunk. We may think one is drunk when he staggers, falls down or slurs his words. However, intoxication does not have reference to an exact stage but to a process. Even a very small amount of alcohol affects our reasoning and reaction time. Experts say within two or three minutes after consuming even a small amount of alcohol it can be detected in the blood! If you are a moderate drinker, you are moderately intoxicated or drunk. If it takes ten drinks to make you drunk, in the mind of men, you are one tenth drunk when you drink one drink. You cannot be a moderate drinker without violating the Bible prohibition against drunkenness (1 Corinthians 6:10; Galatians 5:21).

4. All thinking people know alcohol is a big problem in our world. A large number of people die each year on our highways

due to one or both drivers using alcohol. Over 60% of crimes such as rape, murder, aggravated assault, etc. are committed as a result of alcohol. Consumption of alcohol is a major cause of divorce and child abuse. Children go hungry and without the other basic needs of life because of parents who use their money for alcohol. Remember alcohol is a drug. Alcohol is the most abused drug by young people. Thousands of young people each year become alcoholics! The financial harm done in lost work time is staggering. In our world there are millions of confirmed alcoholics. There are not many families who have not been touched by this problem. It is a universal disgrace.

The Bible says in I Thessalonians 5:22, "*Abstain from all appearance of evil.*" *By any stretch of the imagination could we say the consumption of alcohol has no appearance of evil? Surely not.*

5. In Proverbs 20:1, we read: "*Wine is a mocker, Strong drink is a brawler, And whoever is led astray by it is not wise.*" Nothing is said there about excess but the thing itself is a mocker. This is simply a condemnation of intoxicating wine. What if we said, "Marijuana is a mocker." Could we say we could use it in moderation?

In Proverbs 23:29-32, we read: "*Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has complaints? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who linger long at the wine, Those who go in search of mixed wine. Do not look on the wine when it is red. When it sparkles in the cup. When it swirls around smoothly; At the last it bites like a serpent. And stings like a viper*" (NKJV) It bites like a serpent and stings like a viper. Ask someone who has been bitten by a serpent how it feels. We do not fool around with poisonous snakes, and we should not fool around with alcoholic drinks.

6. Can a Christian support the liquor industry? We have already spoken of the harm caused by this evil product. Do we defend this industry or do we stand against it? Millions of young people become problem drinkers each year. If a toy is introduced that harms young people, there is an outcry to remove it from the market. That makes sense. Surely Christians will stand opposed to this wicked product. If one can socially drink alcoholic beverages, he approves the industry. He supports it. He approves of the product because he drinks it. He pays to the

industry for its products. He approves of the promotion and advertisement of it.

7. Let's look at the definition of the word "sober." You will find this word in such places as I Thessalonians 5:6; I Peter 1:13; I Peter 4:7; and I Peter 5:8. In these verses you will find statements like, "... *let us watch and be sober,*" "*Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober,*" and "*be sober, be vigilant.*" From Vine's *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* we learn that sober means "Sound mind ... self-controlled ... sober minded ... it is associated with watchfulness ... to think soberly ... to be of sound mind ... involves the cultivation of sound judgment and prudence." Doesn't it follow that a Christian cannot take anything into his body that would cause him to lose control of his faculties? We have learned that with the first drink we lose skills and are affected in other ways. This first drink also makes it easy to take the second, third, etc. Even the first drink affects our power of judgment. We realize this word does not always involve alcohol and is not in contrast with drunk. We simply appeal to the having of a sound mind that allows one to think clearly.

8. If one is not convinced by this time, surely, consideration of our personal example will be convincing. Paul wrote in II Corinthians 3:2: "*Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men.*" In Matthew 5, Jesus says we are the light of the world. We are like a city set on a hill that cannot be hid. We are to let our light shine that men may see our good works and glorify our Father. Light dispels darkness.

There are many people who are not Christians who believe "social drinking" is wrong. How could we possibly teach such a person the gospel if we participate in social drinking? The drinking of alcoholic beverages destroys our influence for the cause of Christ.

Many Christians (my opinion) believe it is wrong to drink socially. What kind of influence could we have on these Christians? Notice what Paul wrote of his brethren in I Corinthians 8:11-13: "*And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to*

offend." The eating of meat Paul was speaking about was a matter of judgment. One was neither wrong if he ate or wrong if he did not eat. The problem was causing a brother to stumble. So Paul said he would give up that which was a matter of judgment if it would cause his brother to stumble. Drinking of alcohol is not a matter of judgment. It is wrong.

For many people who drink one drink, it is too late. They are not able to stop until they are in the gutter. How could a faithful Christian set an example before a brother that causes him to sin? Since "drunk" is a process rather than definable by visible action on the part of the drinker, to lead one to even one drink causes him to sin.

What kind of influence will we have on our own children if we drink alcohol? Not only would our example be bad with regard to alcohol, but since it is a drug it could open the door to cocaine, heroin or other drugs. What kind of influence do we have on our wife or husband when we drink alcoholic drinks?

Surely, the faithful Christian will see that he or she simply cannot drink alcoholic beverages in any amount. If we truly love our brethren and want them to be saved eternally, we will stay as far as possible away from this evil.

SCRIPTURES USED BY THOSE WHO JUSTIFY SOCIAL DRINKING

1. John 2:1-11

This was the beginning of miracles by Jesus. The purpose of this miracle was to make known His glory. Did Jesus turn water into alcoholic wine? If so, Jesus supplied about 150 gallons (estimates by early writers) of intoxicating wine to people who were already drunk! Surely if it is a sin to be drunk (and it is; 1 Corinthians 6:10), it would be sinful to contribute to drunkenness (and it is; Habbakkuk 2:15). But we know Jesus was sinless (Hebrews 4:15), so the wine he made could not have been intoxicating wine. Besides, the phrase in verse 10 "*well drunk*" (KJV) or "*drunk freely*" (ASV) stresses quantity without reference to the kind of liquid consumed. They drank until satisfied. The good wine mentioned in verse 10 would have had reference to taste.

Jesus provided a non-intoxicating wine at this wedding feast

which was superior in taste to what they had been drinking. There is absolutely no proof here that the wine was intoxicating.

2. I Timothy 3:3 and I Timothy 3:8

Some think because elders are to be: *"not given to wine"* and deacons are to be *"not given to much wine"* that the deacons may drink intoxicating wine in moderation. It is interesting that I Timothy 3:3 in the ASV is translated *"no brawler"* and the footnote says *"not quarrelsome over wine."* He is not to be one who parties or banquets so as to be near wine. He is not to be a drunkard. This comparison seems to make both verses mean neither elders nor deacons are to be drunks.

Does the phrase *"not given to much wine"* imply drinking in moderation is approved? Can't we urge a person to avoid drunkenness without approving moderate drinking? "Do not be a heroin addict" does not imply moderate use of heroin is acceptable. Does "stop this incessant lying" imply it is okay to lie some? Does, "despise not your mother when she is old" imply we can despise her when she is young? See Ecclesiastes 7:17, which reads: *"Do not be overly wicked."* Is it all right to be wicked, but not overly so? Of course not. There can be no moderate use of that which is unlawful. Even the lawful can be taken immoderately. Food can be used so as to be gluttony.

If this is intoxicating wine. Paul is simply saying, "Don't be addicted to wine; don't be near wine." He is saying that to both elders and deacons. If this was non-intoxicating wine, he is simply saying be moderate in that which is approved. The historian Ramsey says in the first century they had drinking contests where the person who drank the most won a prize. they used non-intoxicating wine where they could drink huge amounts without intoxicating. They still have those kinds of contests today, and you will find them in the "Guinness Book of Records."

3. Romans 14:21

"It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak," Paul wrote in Romans 14:21. This chapter deals with matters of indifference, such as eating meats that had been used in worship to an idol, and to special days. There is a strong brother and a weak brother in this chapter. The strong brother is to give up his rights to avoid causing the weak brother to

stumble. "Flesh" from verse 21 is the same as meat. There was nothing wrong with eating this meat, but Paul would give it up if it caused a brother to sin. The phrase "nor anything" would include things not mentioned but which if engaged in by the strong brother would cause the weak brother to stumble. In other words "nor anything" would include other matters of indifference not specifically mentioned here.

We have no reason to think there was anything wrong with drinking this wine. But, since we have already shown that there is a lot wrong with alcoholic beverages, we know intoxicating wine could not be under consideration here. Couldn't Paul have said, "Don't drink non-intoxicating wine if it offends your brother"? Certainly he could. There is nothing here that demands intoxicating wine. For this passage to support social drinking, it must be proven that this wine was intoxicating. That cannot be proven. Since there was nothing wrong with "flesh" or "nor anything" we can know there was nothing wrong with this wine. It was not intoxicating.

Remember, we cannot be drunkards and please God. Drinking intoxicating wine in any amount means we are to some degree drunk, "in the process of getting drunk." We cannot do in moderation that which is already unlawful.

4. I Timothy 5:23

This verse reads: *"Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities."* It is probable that Timothy drank no wine at all. Maybe he drank only water. Must we assume this "little wine" was intoxicating? Whatever kind of wine this was, it was medicinal. This would not support social drinking of alcoholic drinks any more than using heroin as a medicine would support its use as a recreational drug.

5. I Corinthians 11:20,21

"When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper. For in eating every one taketh before others his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken." Here "hungry" is set against "drunken." MacKnight (well known commentary) says, "one is hungry and another is filled." Here "drunken" is not set in opposition to "sober." They probably were gluttonous. They were abusing food and drink.

They were apparently combining a common meal with the Lord's Supper. There is certainly no reason to think they were intoxicated. Rather they had drunk well. They were satisfied. We have the same Greek word here as in John 2:11: "*Methuno*"; meaning "drunk freely."

Even if this had been intoxicating wine, we cannot conclude the Lord would have approved its use. In fact, we can know he would not have approved it.

6. Luke 7:31-35

"And the Lord said, Whereunto then shall I liken the men of this generation? And to what are they like? They are like unto children sitting in the marketplace, and calling one to another, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned to you, and ye have not wept. For John the baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and ye say, He hath a devil. The son of man is coming eating and drinking; and ye say, behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners! But wisdom is justified of all her children."

Was the Lord a winebibber? Winebibber means a "drunkard." Was Jesus a drunkard? His word says drunkenness will keep one out of the Kingdom of God (Galatians 5:21). I think we can see that these accusations are lies invented by the enemies of John and Christ. While Jesus did not specifically deny this charge, neither did He deny that He was a glutton nor that John had a demon. No denial was called for because it was obvious these were lies. It might be that John was living as a Nazarite. If he lived as a Nazarite, he would have abstained from even grape juice (Numbers 6:3,4). If Jesus was a drunkard (winebibber), He sinned. But we know He did not sin so he was not a winebibber.

7. Psalm 104:15

"And wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart." Remember what Proverbs 20:1 says: "*Wine is a mocker, strong drink is a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise*" (NKJV). Of course, there are two kinds of wine. One is intoxicating and the other is not. There is no reason to conclude that this wine was intoxicating. Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes

8:15 how there is nothing better under the sun than to eat, drink and be merry. But this only has to do with the pleasure of having a meal and enjoying it. We enjoy that pleasure today without alcoholic wine.

8. Ephesians 5:18

"And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit." The phrase *"wherein is excess"* is translated *"in which is dissipation"* in the NKJV. Dissipating means "to indulge oneself excessively in pleasures." The ASV translates this phrase *"wherein is riot."* Do not be drunk with wine because it is riotous and dissipative. The reference is to the result of a drunken life. There is here no support for drinking alcoholic beverages in any amount. Rather be filled with the Spirit through the word of God.

9. Custom

We have heard this from the beginning of the work in Ukraine. It is a custom for the Ukrainians to drink alcoholic drinks. Custom does not make unlawful things lawful! Polygamy is the custom in some countries. Can a Christian practice polygamy? Idolatry is the custom in parts of the world. Does that make it right? Custom must be examined in view of what the Bible teaches. By the way, the problem of alcohol in Ukraine is devastating. The church is made up mostly of women because the men are so often drunk.

10. Some say it is not the intoxicating wine that makes alcoholics, but the inability of people to control their drinking. It's not the use but the abuse of alcohol, they say.

Remember, even the moderate use of that which is unlawful is wrong. Is it lawful to drink alcoholic beverages in any amount? This problem must be solved before we talk about abuse. Intoxicating wine is a drug. The drinking of any amount of it reduces your ability to say "no" to the second drink. Besides, being drunk is a process that begins with the first drink. Christians certainly cannot set an example before others that would cause them to sin. Our work is in building up people to serve God in an acceptable way.

There are other scriptures people use to justify social drinking which can also be answered with the proper use of God's word, but time and space do not allow me to examine all

of them. The ones mentioned seem to be the ones use most often.

To Be A "Bible Church"

CLEM THURMAN

Many religious groups today, to avoid the restrictions, reputations and creeds of the various denominations, simply refer to themselves as a **"Bible Church."** I think it is commendable that they want to be a Bible church, when once they have seriously considered what that really means. You see, to claim to be a "Bible church" implies certain things about the teaching, faith and the corporate life of a religious group.

So, what does it mean to be a real Bible church? What must we do, if we would be a Bible church? Let us study this carefully.

WE MUST ACCEPT BIBLE AUTHORITY

The authority we accept determines who we are and what we do. But all authority must begin with God: *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth . . . And God created man in his own image"* (Gen. 1:1,27). He is Creator, and only He has the right to direct our lives, and direct our religious activities in the church. In fact, we are created to serve Him—that was His purpose in giving us life: *"Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man"* (Eccle. 12:13).

God spoke directly with Adam and Eve (Gen. 3) and later with Moses (Num. 12:8). But through most of the ancient times, God spoke to man through prophets, *"God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us by His Son"* (Heb. 1:1-2). Such prophets as Moses, David, Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah and others spoke God's word to the people. But they also wrote it, for a permanent record: *"No prophecy of scripture is of private interpretation. For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the*

Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:20-21). The Old Testament Scriptures were delivered through men guided by the Holy Spirit, and were given to men to guide them in this life in their relationship with God. That was God speaking, through the Scriptures, to man.

But notice that a change was made—God now speaks through His Son (Heb. 1:1). Jesus said, *"For I spake not from myself; but the Father that sent me, he hath given me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak"* (John 12:49). God also spoke of Jesus to Peter, James and John: *"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased; hear ye him"* (Matt. 17:5). That is the reason Jesus said, *"All authority hath been given unto me"* (Matt. 28:18). But Jesus, knowing that He was going back to the Father in Heaven, chose apostles who would deliver His word to man. And they did: *"When ye received from us the word of the message, even the word of God, ye accepted it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God"* (1 Thes. 2:13). If we would be a Bible church, we must listen to God. He speaks through Christ, in the Scriptures given us by the apostles.

WE MUST HAVE BIBLE TEACHING

The apostle Paul told Timothy, *"Preach the word"* (2 Tim. 4:2). That is the way the church was begun (Acts 2:1-47). And it is the only way to save souls and keep them saved: *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth"* (Rom. 1:16). It is by the Bible that we learn how to be saved and how to live as saved people. *"Bringing salvation unto all men, instructing us, to the intent that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world"* (Titus 2:12). The only way that people can learn how to be saved from sin is by Bible teaching.

But the only way people can know how to live as saved people is by Bible teaching. As the Bible says, *"Receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves"* (James 1:21-22). Only Bible teaching can do that. Peter exhorts, *"But be thou an example to them that*

believe, in word, in manner of life, in love, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give heed to reading, to exhortation, to teaching" (1 Tim. 4:12-13). Unless our mission is to be busy teaching the Bible, we can never claim to be a Bible church.

WE MUST DEVELOP A BIBLE FAITH

Many folk who talk about faith do not really understand what it is nor the source of it. It is true that we are *"saved by faith."* But it is a *"faith which cometh by hearing, hearing by the word of God"* (Rom. 10:17). When we engage in real Bible teaching, we will develop Bible faith. The importance of Bible faith is clearly seen: *"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. . . Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ"* (Mark 16:15-16; Rom. 5:1).

Bible faith is much more than just some "feel-good" emotional experience. It is a determination and commitment to the Lord, in whom that faith is centered. Jesus said, *"If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments . . . And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"* (John 14:15; Luke 6:46). God made very clear the kind of faith He wants us to have: *"What doth it profit, my brethren, if a man say he hath faith, but have not works? can that faith save him? . . . Even so faith, if it has not works, is dead in itself . . . O vain man, that faith apart from works is barren? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, in that he offered up Isaac his son upon the altar? Thou seest that faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect . . . Ye see that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only"* (James 2:14-24). Bible faith is a faith *"which works through love"* (Gal. 5:6).

WE MUST TEACH BIBLE SALVATION

"By grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, that no man should glory" (Eph. 2:8-9). How can we be saved? Men offer dozens of different options, but God offers only one! It is Bible salvation. It is *"by grace through faith."* And examples are found throughout the book of Acts. When people believed, they were told to Lord:

"Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins . . . But when they believed Philip preaching good tiding concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. . . . And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name" (Acts 2:38; 8:12; 22:16).

The above is Bible salvation. And it follows exactly what we read in Mark 16:16, *"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."* You will not find many so-called "Bible churches" teaching that today. The truth is that most denominations do not believe nor teach the above Bible truth. But a "Bible church" must believe it, teach it and act upon it. The apostle Paul wrote later that we are *"baptized into Christ"* (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27). So, it is clear that we are not *"in Christ"* until our faith has led us to be baptized into Him.

How do we become children of God, and where? Read it in the Bible: *"For ye are all sons of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ"* (Gal. 3:26-27). Notice the "how"—*"through faith."* Notice the "where"—*"in Christ."* Then notice the means by which we enter into Christ—*"baptized into Christ."* To be a Bible church; we must teach that Bible salvation.

WE MUST ENGAGE IN BIBLE WORSHIP

Too many today are seeking a group with which to worship where they will "feel good." So various kinds of "entertainment" are provided to attract folk—rock bands, athletic games, etc. Even worship has become a "spectator sport" in many churches today. But, friend, God wants us to worship Him *"in spirit and in truth"* (John 4:24). And He expects all of us to participate.

What we do in our worship of God is not up to us to decide, we must worship as God directs. We read in Lev. 10:1-2 of the two sons of Aaron who *"offered strange fire which God had not commanded,"* and God put them both to death! God accepts in worship only what He has authorized. And our authority for what we do in worship must be found in the Bible, if we are to be a Bible church! When people became Christians 2000 years ago,

"They continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers" (Acts 2:42).

The Bible church today must also, as did the early church, continue in Bible teaching as part of the worship. The Bible church must eat the Lord's Supper, ***"breaking bread"*** on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). The Bible church will have fellowship by their giving (1 Cor. 16:1-2). The Bible church will pray together in their worship (Acts 20:36; Col. 4:2-3). And singing ***"psalms, hymns and spiritual songs"*** (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16) must also be part of the corporate worship of any Bible church. Many question why some do not use any instrument of music in worship, and the answer is really very simple: God did not authorize instrumental music in Christian worship. If we want to be a Bible church, we must worship as the Bible authorizes.

It is easy to SAY, "We are a Bible church." But the truth is that most who make that claim are not really Bible churches at all! Most reject the authority of God by rejecting some of what He teaches and/or practicing things which He does not authorize in the Bible. Most so-called Bible churches do not really teach the Bible as the inspired word of God and the indispensable guide for our lives. And most who claim to be a Bible church teach "faith only," and not that ***"obedient faith" of the Bible*** (Rom. 1:5; 16:26) as the faith which saves. Whereas the Bible states, ***"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved"*** (Mark 16:16), most so-called Bible churches will not teach baptism as a requirement to be saved. And the worship of most "Bible churches" is not based on God's authority, but instead is based on what the worshippers want.

Friend, are you in a Bible church? The Bible says Jesus built only one church (Matt. 16:18), and it is His body (Eph. 1:22-23). And ***"There is one body"*** (Eph. 4:4). Why not accept the authority of God, believe what the Bible says and then mold your life in accord with its teaching? That will make you part of the church of the Bible and give you hope of eternal life.

How To Win The Battle

JOHNNY RAMSEY

There will always be problems in life. Satan will see to that. He wants to stifle our spirits with obstacles of discouragement. Like a crafty old chameleon, the devil has various plans and subtle schemes designed to dishearten and confuse us. Fortunately, the Lord counters with brighter and better arrangements to see us through the darker roads on our journey in life. The Lord gives us blessed assurance in these charming words: "*Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world*" (1 John 4:4).

An old hymn powerfully thrills our soul by telling us that Jehovah has helped us in the past and presently sustains us whatever may confront us day by day! When we put on "*the whole armour of God*" (Eph. 6:10-17), we can, through a courageous stand for the truth, resist the devil, who is like a "*roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour*" (1 Pet. 5:8). Victory in Christ is very sweet.

There are practical ways to be ready for the onslaught of evil and the fiery darts of the wicked one. The following statements ought to help us to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might (Eph. 6:10), regardless of the circumstances.

- [1] If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish ulterior motives—*be kind anyway.*
- [2] If you are successful, you will win some false friends, and true enemies—*succeed anyway.*
- [3] If you are honest and trusting, people may cheat you—*be honest and trusting anyway.*
- [4] What you spend years building, someone may destroy overnight—*build anyway.*
- [5] The good you do today, people will often forget tomorrow—*do good anyway.*
- [6] Give the world the best you have, and it will never be enough—*give your best anyway.*

You see, in the final analysis, it is between you and God!! It was never between you and *them* in the first place!!

The compassionate heart of Jesus caused Him to die for us at Calvary, despite our indifference and shameful sinfulness. Because of these tragic points, we desperately need a Savior that could overwhelm the ploys of the devil and give us hope. In spite of our ingratitude, our Great Redeemer shed His precious blood anyway to bring us back to our Maker!

*Is it for me, dear Savior,
Thy glory and Thy rest,
For me so weak and sinful,
Oh, shall I be so blest . . .*

Mothers have sacrificed for years for ungrateful children who broke their hearts, but godly women did it, anyway. Some wives have been kind and gracious to brutal and thoughtless husbands, but these women sacrificially suffered, anyway.

Satan has a very difficult time with people who are committed to the Cause of Christ regardless of external battles and daily opposition.

*Shall I be carried to the skies
On flowery beds of ease,
While others fought to win the prize,
And sailed through bloody seas?*

When the battle for truth and right rages and the struggle between heaven and hell is a strong challenge, may we recall these wonderful passages:

"Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phile. 3).

"Every way of a man is right in his own eyes; But Jehovah weigheth the hearts" (Prov. 21:2).

"That the wise man may hear, and increase in learning; And that the man of understanding may attain unto sound counsels" (Prov. 1:5).

Hand in hand with Jesus, we can always win the victory (Rom. 8:31-39).

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