

SOME ARGUMENTS AGAINST SOCIAL DRINKING

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Vol. 106, No. 7

Some say the Bible condemns drunkenness, but not social drinking. A cocktail before dinner or wine with one's meal is acceptable Christian conduct, according to some.

As some point out, Jesus turned water into wine at a wedding feast (John 2:1-11) and Paul told Timothy, "Drink no longer water but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities" (I Timothy 5:23). The qualifications for elders and deacons say one must not be "given to wine" or "given to much wine" (I Timothy 3:3,8). Some say elders and deacons may drink wine in moderate amounts.

Let us briefly examine these arguments. First, Jesus made approximately 120 gallons of wine for a wedding in Cana of Galilee (John 2:1-11). The word "wine" (John 2:3, 10) is *oinos*, a generic term which could mean either fermented or not fermented juice. If this means intoxicating drink, several problems arise: (1) Jesus did what was strictly forbidden in the Law: "Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it sparkleth in the cup..." (Proverbs 23:31); (2) Jesus would have been tempting them to drunkenness in violation of Habakkuk 2:15: "Woe unto him that giveth his neighbor drink, to thee that addest thy venom, and makest him drunken also..." (3) Jesus would have provided a drink in such quantity to make hundreds drunk in defiance of many passages that condemn drunkenness. The sinless Jesus made non-intoxicating "wine" at the wedding feast. Therefore, his example cannot be cited as an argument for social drinking!

Regarding 1 Timothy 3:3,8 and Titus 1:7, "not given to wine" and "not given to much wine," let us notice two things. (1) To

be consistent, those who say that “much wine” implies one may drink “a little wine” would have to affirm that Ecclesiastes 7:17, “Be not overmuch wicked” means it is right to be moderately wicked! Also, “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body” (Romans 6:12) means there is nothing wrong with sin, if it does not take control of one’s life! (2) “Not given to wine” is *paroinos* (I Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7). This is a compound Greek word—*para* (at, by the side of, near) and *oinos* (wine). Thus, *paroinos* would literally mean that an elder must not be at, by the side of, or near wine. The word wine in these passages would obviously mean intoxicating wine. We conclude these passages cannot be used to argue for social drinking. What of Paul’s instruction to Timothy to “drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach’s sake and thine often infirmities” (I Timothy 5:23)? Consider: (1) Timothy must have been a total abstainer, else this apostolic admonition would not have been necessary; (2) he was told to use a little wine, not a large amount; (3) the instruction was in view of a physical ailment. Therefore, Timothy was not told to drink wine socially. There is absolutely nothing in the passage to support social drinking!

Advocates of social drinking must look elsewhere to justify their practice. Brethren who love the Lord and the church will strive to lead pure and holy lives in the sight of God and their fellow man.