

Alcohol and Christian Responsibility

by

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“For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power and love and of a sound mind” (2 Tim. 1:7).

If a bill were introduced in Congress making it legal to play Russian Roulette, I am sure that all of us would be up in arms and on the job to prevent passage of such a bill. Russian Roulette, in case you do not know, is a so-called game, played by placing ONE cartridge in a chamber of a six-shot revolver, leaving five chambers empty. Then you spin the cartridge chamber around without looking, place the gun to the head and pull the trigger. For those jaded individuals desperately seeking a thrill, this is supposed to be IT! You have one chance in six of killing yourself, or if you prefer, five chances in six to live. This sounds ridiculous and any attempt to legalize it would be stopped in a hurry.

Yet this is exactly what we are doing with the problem of alcohol! Use of alcohol is the American way of playing Russian Roulette. One chance in six of losing the life by committing suicide. Let us look at the record! It is difficult to get accurate figures regarding the use of alcohol; one can come up with the conclusion he is looking for, generally speaking. But there are some figures which are accurate and substantiated by authorities in the field. According to the Licensed Beverage Industries report for 1964, published February 15, 1965, there are 62.1% of the adults in the United States who use beverage alcohol. This would be somewhere around 85 million. Of this number, heavy drinkers total 5 million. As to the alcohol addict -- well, I heard Mrs. Marty Mann, who probably is the leading authority on the question, say, “We talk about 5 million alcoholics - that’s a lot of hogwash. Let’s start with 10 million and we’re getting closer.” Now these figures total 19 million people with a severe drinking problem of 22% of those who drink at all are already in the class of potential alcohol addicts if not there NOW. Less than ten years ago, Dr. Andrew C. Ivy stated that “at the present rate of addiction, within ten and fifteen years one out of every five drinkers would be a problem drinker.” We are beyond that point now! We shudder to think of legalizing Russian Roulette with a 16% chance of suicide but go on legalizing the liquor business which now has a 22% rate of suicide!

This is the number one problem in our country. It is the number four cause of deaths; socially, politically and economically it is number one! I do not want to waste your time with figures which you have probably heard over and over again. But in order to bring the problem into true perspective and to challenge you with the responsibility we face as Christians, I must set up the problem as we face it. Let us not be afraid of it for our text says, “God hath not given us the spirit of fear but of power and of love and of a sound mind.”

THE PROBLEM

The problem of alcohol addiction is as old as this world. The story of the drunkenness of Noah; the horrible crime perpetrated through Lot when he was under the influence of drink demonstrates the truth of this. The Old Testament is full of references against the use of alcohol.

“Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler and whosoever is led astray by it is not wise” (Prov. 20:1). “Woe to him who makes his neighbors drink” wrote Habakkuk and in the New Testament, “Nor drunkards ... will inherit the kingdom of God” and in the pictures of heaven we read that “Without are ... drunkards.”

In modern times we find the problem intense. In spite of all the efforts made to help the alcohol addict; in the face of millions of dollars spent to effect cures; with psychology and psychiatry putting forth intensive efforts the problem grows annually. Dr. Karl M. Bowman, Superintendent of the Langley Porter Clinic in San Francisco said, “The United States is fast becoming a nation of alcoholics.”

In February 1965, the Chicago Committee on Alcoholism stated: “Two hundred fifty thousand alcoholics in the city of Chicago is a conservative estimate of a number that is growing daily.”

In Nassau County, New York, a careful study made by a professional psychologist in the high school brought out the fact that 90% of the students drank. This is terrible, but even more shocking is the fact that 75% of these drinking teenagers took their first drink at home under the direction of their parents!

The cost of the problem to industry staggers the imagination. Figures to 1963 show that the cost of absenteeism and accidents due to alcoholism is far in excess of two billion dollars a year. The Chicago Committee on Alcoholism says of this: “No item is produced in America from tooth brushes to automobiles that does not include in its cost a percentage directly chargeable to mistakes and failures of alcoholic employees.” Many large corporations have set up expensive alcoholism programs in an effort to head off the problem especially among executives and to deal with those who have reached the stage of addiction.

How does this problem affect government? In the first place every tax dollar spent goes in part to repair the ravages of alcohol. But there is another factor. Just how much the employees of government -- whom we support -- are affected by alcohol is difficult to discover. One thing is certain: the per capital consumption of alcohol in Washington, D.C. is the highest of any major city in the land. The national average consumption of alcohol beverages is 19 gallons per year. In our national capital it is over 29 gallons. Draw your own conclusions.

The Licensed Beverage Industries report of February 15, 1965, show that

the nation spent over \$11.5 billion in 1964 to drink!

THE PRESSURES

Very briefly I would like to mention some of the pressures brought to bear on all of us by the liquor traffic in defense of their nefarious business.

Pressure Number One: We need the “very high” taxes paid by the liquor industry. Do we? In 1964 tax revenue from the liquor industry was \$5 billion. The cost of alcohol addiction to industry alone was over \$2 billion in direct costs. Add all the rest of cost for crime; mental illness caused directly by alcohol and all the rest of prevention and treatment and the cost soars far above the tax revenue.

The State of Massachusetts became concerned about this some time ago and made a detailed analysis with the following findings: Revenue from alcohol tax just over \$13 million and the known direct costs for caring for drunkards was \$61 million. For every dollar from tax revenue from alcohol the state spent \$4.70 to care for the products of the liquor business. We need the liquor tax?

Fallacy Number Two: The Liquor industry creates employment. The census report of manufacturers show that for every \$1 million spent on beer, 63 people were employed while in other fields of industry the same amount spent employed, 106, nearly twice as many.

Argument Number Three: Prohibition was a failure; it caused bootlegging; everybody drank under prohibition; if it was eliminated all the problems caused by alcohol would disappear!

The Facts: U.S. Department of Agriculture report, February 16, 1965, shows that in 1934 \$2 billion was spent for drink; 1963, \$11 billion and 1964, \$11.5 billion. In 1934 the per capital consumption was 10 gallons; 1964, 19 gallons -- almost double. The Licensed Beverage Industry report of February 15, 1964 claims that 1/7 of all liquor sold in the U.S. is made illegally -- in other words, bootleg! This means that the amount of admitted bootleg liquor sold in 1964 was almost the equal of all liquor sold the first year after prohibition!

Pressure Number Four: And this is one for which many church members fall! “Everybody drinks. You must serve drinks or you are not socially accepted.” This is the devil's propaganda! Everybody doesn't drink! I resent being put in the category of one who does. I have hundreds and probably thousands of friends all over the United States and Canada and among my real friends, none of them drink! But subtle propaganda along this line is terrific. In February 1965 there was a series of articles in the Chicago Daily News written by a man whose daughter was slain by an attacker in her apartment in New York. The series was to show girls how to protect themselves away from home. The writer said, “Watch yourself and your

own drinking. Moderate drinking can be one of the delights of living; immoderate drinking is one of its worst dangers." Now that is hogwash! It is really playing Russian Roulette. Every drunkard was once an immoderate drinker; Jim Brosnan, the baseball player, now a writer, once asked me on a TV program if I could tell him by psychological research how many martinis were too many for him. I answered: "Jim, one is too many," and when he asked why, I replied, "If you don't take one you don't have to worry about how many."

Fallacy Number Five: This is one of the most deadly! "Alcoholism is a disease such as any other; the alcoholic should never be told he is a sinner; should never be criticized; alcoholism should never be treated as a sin or a moral failure." In the light of Galatians 5:19-21, this is a real fallacy. For the passage Paul lists drunkenness along with adultery, murder, idolatry, witchcraft and other "works of the flesh" and goes on to say, "They which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." This "shelter" that "alcoholism is a disease like heart trouble, cancer, tuberculosis and so on" is very popular with the alcohol addict. It gives respectability to a vicious habit. Now where did this idea come from and how was it propagated so widely? Through the Yale School of Alcohol Studies, now housed at Rutgers University. And who were the big financial backers of the Yale School of Alcohol Studies? The breweries and distilleries.

Alcohol addiction is entirely different from heart trouble, cancer or TB. It is a self-induced disease which is the result of drinking alcohol! No one will ever become an alcohol addict who does not take the first drink. No one becomes alcoholic without making an effort to do so! Alcoholism does not come from a germ! The sooner Christians expose this fallacy and recognize alcohol addiction for what it is the better off we'll be. Now, are we ready to agree that it is a disease -- of the soul, the body and the mind? It is caused by sin in the life! Regardless of what the so-called experts call it -- the basic factor is sin!

About ten years ago I knew an outstanding lawyer. He began drinking more and more. I asked him the reason and he said, "I'm always afraid of standing up in front of people to make a speech, so I drink ahead of time to give me courage. I'm afraid I'll make a fool out of myself otherwise." I told him he made much more of a fool of himself by drinking. A short time ago I saw him at LaSalle and Madison Streets. He would have been more at home over on Skid Row - practice gone; health ruined; friends a thing of the past; mind almost a blank -- he didn't know me. Fear was the basic cause. I was acquainted with the president of a certain firm. He drank steadily from the time he arrived at his office until he left. When I asked the reason, he said, "I'm afraid of talking with the men in the shop. They are all so big and powerful. I have to be pretty well loaded before I have nerve enough to go out and tell them what to do." He was smart enough to be president of the firm, draw \$50,000 annual salary, but not smart enough to see what he was doing to himself. Finally the board of directors fired him. Fear!

Once I talked with a woman 35 years old, married, 12 year-old daughter, beautiful home and fine husband. But she was a drunk. Helen told me, "When I'm drinking there isn't anything I don't do." Her daughter was not allowed to play with the other children because she was "Helen's kid." Even this didn't stop the mother from drinking. We worked with her and discovered the reason for her drinking -- she was afraid to face up to a situation in her life going back 20 years! Then we led her to Christ. For the first time in her life she actually faced this old situation unafraid. The problem was solved. The fear gone -- no further reason to drink! She has been a fine, sober Christian mother ever since. Her daughter is now welcome in any home in the neighborhood.

I could go on indefinitely but these stories illustrate the point. In 1962 at the Chicago Christian Industrial League, we made an exhaustive study of thousands of cases. This was done by two Ph.D. candidates under my direction. This survey gave us the facts: "The basic cause for men being on Skid Row is fear!" Since about 70% of these men were alcohol addicts, the study gave an adequate proof of our belief that fear is the cause of alcohol addiction.

OUR CHRISTIAN RESPONSIBILITY

Since fear is the basic cause we need to turn to God for the answer. "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear but of power and love and a sound mind." Surely the comparison is quite obvious. Fear versus a sound mind! The drunkard with a shattered mind, wrecked body, unable to control him or herself versus a sound mind. There is only One who can give love, power and sound mind -- the Lord Jesus Christ! This puts the problem where it should be! In the hands of the Lord!

"Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand." Isaiah 41:10

I was having lunch in Ottawa, Canada with a young French Canadian who was secretary of the LaGadere Movement in Quebec. This is an organization made up of Roman Catholics. He informed me that 15,000 people, French Canadian Roman Catholic, have signed a pledge not to drink, serve, buy, sell or handle any type of alcoholic beverage. The movement was growing rapidly and he anticipated another 10,000 joining in the immediate future. When I expressed amazement that such a thing was possible in Quebec, he laughed and said, "Well, our bishop is, what you would call in the States, hot on total abstinence."

I thought then and am convinced that what we need is Christians who are hot on total abstinence. No total abstainer ever became a drunk! There are ample Scriptural demands for abstinence. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy which

temple ye are." Now alcohol in any form defiles or harms the mind and the body. It is a scientific fact that alcohol in the smallest amount immediately begins to anesthetize the nerve cells. These neurons operate the various controls -- judgment, discrimination, self-control and others.

Now if these are put to sleep, which alcohol does, man does have a loss of control of his faculties and hence liable to do anything. This certainly is defiling the temple of God! Anything that destroys life is an enemy of Jesus Christ. Therefore alcohol is an enemy of Christ and has no part in the life of the Christian. The church takes a stand against divorce. We need to take a stronger stand against the principal cause of broken homes. A judge in the municipal court of Boston stated that 89% of all divorces in Boston had their foundation in alcohol.

We must face the facts and the responsibility that is ours as Christians. In the word of God are over 160 verses on the evils of drunkenness. This is more than there are against theft, pride, adultery, hypocrisy and other sins. God's work is true and since it says my body is "the temple of the Holy Spirit," I have a solemn responsibility to keep that body pure and holy in every area of life. What I put into my body is important. What I do with my mind is equally important. God gave me that mind and I am under obligation to Him for it. When I allow things to enter my body which affect the mind, then I am violating the law and commandments of the Lord God Jehovah. The Word says, "God will render unto every man according to his deeds." I also have a responsibility to others. The Word says, "But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to them that are weak ... if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no meat ... lest I make my brother to offend" (1 Cor. 8:9, 13).

I firmly believe that the answer to the problem of alcohol lies in Total Abstinence. For centuries so-called moderation has been tried. Today drunkenness is more prevalent than ever. One thing is sure: the person who is a total abstainer will never be an alcohol addict! The high point of the stand of the Christian in this matter is in and only in total abstinence.

The Christian does not need the stimulant or depressive of alcohol to meet problems of life. "What time I am afraid I will trust in thee." "In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us and gave Himself for us." May we take our stand for total abstinence regardless of the cost or what comes as a result. Under all circumstances let us stand firm and when asked to drink reply, "Thank you. I don't drink. I am a Christian." Let us assent to the creed of the Canadian group, "I will not drink, serve, buy, sell, or handle any type of alcoholic beverage."

Idealistic? Perhaps! But this must be our stand as Christians. Always we can be sure that "God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power and love and a sound mind." *Copied from the original transcript.*

The Alcoholics Victorious Creed

I realize that I cannot overcome my addiction by myself. I believe that the power of Jesus Christ is available to help me. I believe that through my acceptance of Him as my Savior, I am a new person. (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Because the presence of GOD is manifested through continued prayer, I will set aside two periods every day, morning and evening, for communion with my Heavenly father. I realize my need for daily Bible reading and use it as a guide for my daily living. (Psalm 27:11-15)

I recognize my need of Christian fellowship and will, therefore, have fellowship with Christians through the church of my choice. I know that in order to be victorious, I must keep active in the service of Christ and His Church and I will help others to victory. (Hebrews 10:23-25)

I do not partake of any beverage containing alcohol I know it is the first drink that does the harm. Therefore, "I DO NOT DRINK."

I can be victorious because I know that GOD's strength is sufficient to supply all my needs. (Philippians 4:19)

Therefore if any man be in Christ,
he is a new creature;
old things have passed away;
behold, all things become new. ~ 2 Corinthians 5:17

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