Disciples Church

Wednesday, September 13, 2017

**TEACHING NOTES**

**Alcohol According to the Bible pt 2.**

**Tonight is part two of our mini series on what the bible teaches us about alcohol.**

Our aim in these things is to seek God’s word to be informed about what he thinks and says about something so that we do not form our own ways or walk outside if scripture in our daily actions or attitudes.

Our aim in this is to..

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.
**6**In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. **Prov. 3:5-6**

LAST WEEK:

**We studied both the OT and NT and discovered that God gave alcoholic beverages as a good gift that should be enjoyed for God honoring purposes and not over indulgence unto drunkenness.**

We saw that Drunkenness is sin and clearly not how God intended for alcohol to be used. Over indulgence in alcohol like many things has life changing and severe consequences and it to be avoided and repented of. One of the things the scriptures warn us about is the ways that drunkenness leads to more sin and life consequences.

**Sins that are associated with drunkenness include the following: incest** (Genesis 19:32-35), **violence** (Proverbs 4:17), **adultery** (Revelation 17:2), **mockery and brawling** (Proverbs 20:1), **poverty** (Proverbs 21:17), **failed leadership** (Proverbs 31:4-5), **late night and early morning drinking** (Isaiah 5:11-12), **hallucinations** (Isaiah 28:7), **legendary antics** (Isaiah 5:22), **murder** (2 Samuel 11:13), **gluttony and poverty** (Proverbs 23:20-21), **vomiting** (Jeremiah 25:27, 48:26; Isaiah 19:14), **staggering** (Jeremiah 25:27; Psalm 107:27; Job 12:25), **madness** (Jeremiah 51:7), **nakedness** (Habakkuk 2:15; Lam. 4:21), **inattention** (Joel 1:5), **escapism** (Hosea 4:11), **depression** (Luke 21:34), **and staying up all night** (I Thessalonians 5:7).

The sin of drunkenness often leads to other sins like the ones listed above. **By honoring God and avoiding the sin of drunkenness, we don’t give way to subsequent sins stemming from drunkenness.** This is an important clarity, because we must not conclude that drinking alcohol in god honoring moderation leads to sins like these.

<> **Sin begets sin, but properly enjoying a good gift of God does not.**

We also saw last week the ways that alcoholic beverages are referenced in both the Old and New Testaments, and how all references to the different kinds of drinks included testimony of sinful intoxication which does not honor God and God honoring uses that he prescribes or permits. We also saw some particular Positive Law restrictions for a certain people and a certain time that was only intended for the Old Covenant and does not apply to the New Covenant we are now in. Finally, we saw how Jesus' used and provided drink containing alcohol in many situations.

Last week we also introduced the three modern positions on the topic of alcohol consumption: prohibition, abstention, and moderation. To review…

**Prohibition:** Alcohol is evil and all drinking is sin.

**Abstention**: Alcohol is not evil, and drinking is not sinful, yet it is right and wise and more loving for all Christians to refrain from using them.

M**oderation**: The Scripture commends the use of alcoholic beverages to all Christians if used moderately. Conscience and witness should influence how one exercises one’s freedom to partake or not.

Tonight I want to walk through each of these according to scripture and then really focus in on some application for us in how we honor God in all these things.

**1. Why the Prohibitionist prescription is not biblical**

Some Prohibitionists defend their position with this line of reasoning:

 -Scripture condemns drunkenness.

 -Drinking alcoholic beverages *can lead* to drunkenness which can lead to other consequences and even death.

 -Therefore, Scripture condemns the drinking of alcoholic beverages.

However, following the same line of reasoning, Christians would also be forced to conclude the following:

-Scripture condemns gluttony.

-Eating food can lead to gluttony which leads to other consequences and even death.

-Therefore, Scripture condemns all eating of food.

Or the following:

-Scripture condemns the abuse of authority.

-Parents have abused their authority which leads to other consequences and even death.

-Therefore, Scripture condemns all parental authority.

Human reasoning cannot override how we read or interpret scripture.

We must submit ourselves to scripture alone and not add anything that we prefer or feel to what God declares and call it biblically authoritative.

It is not the **lawful use** of wine or strong drink that is condemned in Scripture.

It is the **unlawful abuse** of wine or strong drink that is condemned in Scripture.

THERFORE, the prohibitionist who says drinking is sinful is making unbiblical prescriptions.

Also, Scripture NOWHERE says that alcohol is in and of itself sinful.

Scripture is clear that: “It is not what enters into the mouth that defiles a man, but rather that which proceeds from an evil heart that defiles him” **Mark. 7:15-23**

Therefore, wine or any alcoholic beverage that enters the mouth is not evil, but rather use of it contrary to Scripture is what is sinful as a result of what proceeds from a sinful heart.

Again, There is no material thing that God created that is evil in and of itself,

it is the abuse or misuse of it that is evil. **Romans 14:14** I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean.

**Nothing is unclean in itself. That reality is: some will choose to level their conscience with extra biblical restrictions and “think it is unclean”.**

But, God’s word teaches that we should not submit our conscience to man-made decrees that forbid rightful touching, tasting, or handling. Extra-Biblical approaches like that do not honor God nor His commands.

Listen carefully to Paul’s words in..

**Colossians 2:20-23** If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations— 21 “Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch” 22 (referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings? 23 These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.

It appears wise to restrict or restrain but these extra biblical proscriptions are as Paul says it, “self made religion and ascet-icism”. Paul says they are of NO VALUE to stopping the indulgence of the flesh. WHY? Because self righteous works do not have power to save or transform. Only the Gospel does. They are empty man made religious practices that have no power within them.

We must never forget that the only way to keep the flesh truly in check is by living under the authority of God’s word, in dependence upon the Spirit, always applying the finished work of Christ to your life.

Listen to verse 8-15…

**Col. 2:8-15** See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. 9 For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, 10 and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. 11 In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, 12 having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. 13 And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, 14 by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. 15 He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.

Therefore, God alone is Lord of the conscience (in the matter of alcoholic beverages and in any other matter) and He has left your conscience free from the commandments of men that are in any way contrary to His word.

**1 Tim. 4:1-5** exhorts us to NOT give heed to doctrines of demons which teach that it is unlawful to marry or to eat certain foods which God has created, for everything God has created is good and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the Word of God and prayer.

Therefore, since wine and strong drink have been given by God to man to be enjoyed and to honor him with(Ps. 104:14-15), they may be lawfully enjoyed if they are used with moderation and received with thanksgiving and not causing someone around you to be persuaded to sin.

Therefore, to teach that it is sinful to use alcoholic beverages is to teach what Paul classifies as "doctrines of demons," for it is to teach that evil resides in what God has created, rather than in the evil hearts of men.

Therefore, we must see and agree that Scripture does not provide warrant for the Prohibitionist Position or prescription. But on the contrary does provide permission and prescription for the moderate, God-honoring, enjoyment of alcoholic beverages.

**2. Why the Abstentionist prescription is not biblical**

The position summarized: Alcohol is not evil, and drinking is not sinful, yet it is right and wise and more loving for all Christians to refrain from using them.

Those who have held or prescribed this position say, that ***“It is a poor witness to unbelievers, to weaker brethren, and to our children to drink alcohol.”***

As a matter of love, all Christians should totally abstain. This is essentially the “higher road” position. The thought is: “Just in case it might be used in a wrong way, or just in case someone somewhere might be persuaded to sin by it…..let’s not use it! We can take an even higher road than what Scripture teaches us in order to be extra careful and loving. “

One of the critical keys to what constitutes a good Christian witness must be judged by Scripture and not by our culture or personal preference.

For example: If unbelievers judge that it is a poor witness for Christians to be so "intolerant" in their views of sexual promiscuity, **should they change so as to have a better witness?**

Or if Christians are accused of being "narrow-minded" because of their pro-life views, **should they be more concerned about what God says or what man says?**

If Scripture does not condemn a practice as a poor witness (but on the contrary approves of the practice), then neither should you disapprove of it.

**Does a Christian necessarily project a biblical “Christian witness” to the world by practicing total abstinence when there is no biblical warrant for doing so?** The critical answer is: No!

And the central proof to understand why it is no is: the witness and practice of The Lord and His disciples themselves.

We know that they continued to use alcoholic beverages despite the fact that sinful men abused them to their own destruction at the time in which Jesus lived just as they do today (1 Cor. 5:11; 1 Cor. 6:10) and despite the fact that they were falsely testified of being a drunkard even when they were not. (Lk. 7:31-35)

But, this didn't cause Jesus or the disciples/apostles to discontinue His practice of drinking wine or prescribe that his followers should either.

As previously stated, Jesus even created wine for consumption in a social context (Jn. 2:1-12).

Certainly no Christian would think of accusing the infinitely wise and totally perfect Son of God of being unwise or ungodly in that situation.

However, if one believes Jesus should have abstained from all wine because He was falsely accused of being a drunkard, then likewise He should have abstained from all bread because He was also falsely accused of being a glutton. It is simply an over prescription to say that because some could struggle with it, you should lovingly not participate in it. We would simply not do many every day things if this were the case. I will come back to this later.

One of the Scriptures abstentionist love to reference is **Romans 14:20-21**, which says, “Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for anyone to make another stumble by what he eats. **21**It is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that causes your brother to stumble.,”

Now, It is true that we should always seek to be a good witness before believers and unbelievers alike. Anyone who throws the idea of being a good witness off is not heading the teaching of scripture. But the error of the abstenionist position is in its **misapplication of scripture** and **in dismissing many other scriptures.**

So let’s look at the context of this passage, in regards to what scripture says we are to do regarding “not causing a brother to stumble”.

**The context is really found in all of Romans 14 and 15. Here Paul is speaking to those he calls “weak” and those he calls “strong. Let’s first look at those he calls weak.**

**Rom. 14:1-3** As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions. 2 One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. 3 Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him.

**Romans 15:1** We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

The weaker brother here is the one who is weak in his understanding of scripture or his understanding that he no longer bound because of the Gospel.

He is also weak in his conscience, meaning his conscience condemns him for eating certain foods and drinking wine (perhaps because the food and wine had previously been dedicated to idols or abused by a loved one or even himself) even though both the food and wine are approved by Christ and can we consumed in God honoring ways.

Remember: **Rom. 14:14** I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean.

The “weaker brother” is weak because his conscience is controlled by standards other than the Word of God (whether by his culture, by his own feelings, or his environment or upbringing or by the standards of men).

In case you might be thinking, I have held that position about certain things in life…maybe this describes me as weak. Realize this, on MANY topics **we all at one time were weak in our understanding and application of biblical matters**. This is the journey of sanctification in Christ so please don’t take it personally.

To say it again, If one struggles to rightly understand, accept, encourage, or live in God’s revealed truths, Scripture calls them “weak.” This is God’s way to describe this, not mine.

The person in question has allowed something other than God and His Word to be the lord of his conscience (which indicates that he on this topic (not on all topics) is an immature Christian).

Now, as a result of this weakness, he was condemning the "strong" brother for partaking in the things God permits and blesses to partake of the food or wine; and thus the "weak" brother was thereby seeking to impose his "weakness" upon a fellow brother in Christ or even the church (Rom. 14:3).

Now quickly, **Who is the "strong" brother referred to by Paul**? (Rom. 14:2a; Rom. 15:1a)?

He is strong in his conscience meaning, his conscience approves of him eating all foods and drinking the wine in question (Rom. 14:2a) simply because he understands that God has permitted such things and given them to be enjoyed.

Now, It doesn’t mean the strong brother consumes it, it just means **he knows he is permitted to do it unto the glory of God and has NOT leveled an extra biblical reason why he shouldn’t on himself or another.**

The conscience of the "strong" brother is not controlled by anything except by God and His Word; and since Christ approves of the food and wine, the "strong" brother is free to enjoy them to the glory of God if he so chooses.

This indicates that the "strong" brother is a mature Christian in such things, (Paul includes himself in the category of the "strong", rather than in the category of the "weak" (Rom. 14:14; Rom. 15:1a).

Now, if you have the same conviction and freedom and view as the strong brother, **be warned.**

As a result of his lawful liberty in this area, the temptation of the "strong" brother can be to flaunt his liberty before the "weak" brother, or even to despise and look down at him, and not to fully receive him into the fellowship of the church because of his weakness (Rom. 14:1a,3a).

**This is not a Gospel way of walking with true brothers who simply need maturity in biblical truths, especially gospel application.**

**Now, What are both the "weak" and the "strong" to do in regard to these issues?**

First, **Let me point out the difference between the weak and the strong is not how saved they are (salvation belongs to the lord) but rather the maturity of their biblical understanding and practice.**

As Paul is speaking to members in the church who some are weak and some are strong.

The scriptures are clear that all Christians are to mature and grow into Christ and grow form milk to meat and to grow in sanctification so the scriptures emphasize, The "weak" are not to stubbornly remain in a weak position.

The prayer is that the weaker brother grows in the word and understanding and overcomes his former ways and convictions in his weakness in order to grow and mature in Christ and his word.

**Diligent personal bible study and leaning on pastors/ elders/disciple makers for counsel and training in the subject at hand are all helpful tools and resources for this journey.**

When a weaker brother is persuaded that God approved of the practice in question, ***they are to submit their conscience to God's authoritative word and change their conviction regardless of how they might still "feel" about the issue.***

Second, The "weak" brother must immediately stop condemning the "strong" brother and must discontinue his attempts to impose his position/conviction upon others (Rom. 14:3b-4).

If the "weaker" brother OUTGROWS his "weakness" in believing a certain practice to be sinful or not a good gift of God (e.g. drinking alcoholic beverages) and in expecting others to refrain from the practice. Then, he becomes a "strong" brother regarding that topic and is no longer weak.

NOW: Let me make something VERY clear, becoming “strong” in conscience in regards to alcohol, **does not mean** one must recreationally partake in drinking it. It is still the freedom of the stronger believer to choose not to drink recreationally but refrain for other reasons (e.g. he doesn't care for the taste of alcoholic beverages, or he has an allergic reaction to them or doesn’t like how much it cost, etc).

What is not legitimate, or when it becomes sinful, is when the conviction to personally abstain is partnered with unbiblical requirements for everyone else to abstain, or even to try and convince the strong that the weak position is more honoring to God or that the good gift of God is really not good at all.

This means it is loving for elders and or church family to NOT leave a brother/sister (for whom Christ died) in his/her weakness.

To truly fulfill Matthew 7:12 (i.e. to love others as oneself) requires an elder/brother in Christ to patiently work with a "weak" brother to overcome his "weakness." and to grow and mature.

**The modern priority of, “to each his own” is just not a biblical priority.**

Instead we long to and work to not be of our own but of Christ and his word.

Paul would never have permitted the position of the "weak" to become the position endorsed by the church because to do so would be **to set aside the authority of scripture to let man and man’s preferences be the authority for life and following God.**

Now, On the other hand, the "strong" brother must refrain from tempting the "weak" to sin by encouraging him to violate his conscience in recreational partaking of certain foods or alcohol which he believes to be sin.

To consciously flaunt one's liberty before a "weak" brother is to set a stumbling block before him.

It is to play the role of Satan in tempting him to sin (Rom. 14:13,20).

NOW let’s be clear, the instruction to NOT CAUSE A BROTHER TO STUMBLE is regarding a brother you know is struggling or who holds a “weak” position on the issue. The strong brother must be willing to sacrifice the lawful use of his Christian liberty temporarily in the presence of the "weak" brother, so as to keep him from stumbling (Rom. 14:21).

\* Christians should look for ways to do this well. When you do, you selflessly are looking out for others and it means you are keeping company with those who struggle and not creating a bubble of friendships that only share your maturity.

This brings us to a popular position of those who like or lean towards an abstentionist position.

Abstentionist will say, it is permissible for you to exercise your liberty within certain man-made limitations, such as in the confines of your home or in other private circumstances, but you should not ever drink in public for you don’t know who you could cause to stumble.

**This is an over prescription that once again**, not even Jesus and the disciples fulfilled by their example. For we have clear testimony that they drank in public and at larger social gatherings.

The reality is: if this were the standard we were truly held to, the faithful and loving Christian would do hardly anything in public.

If applied to other areas of life (i.e. entertainment, food, driving, spending money, etc.), Christians would no longer be able to rightly do many everyday things in public because people struggle with overuse or abuse of these areas of life.

Instead the biblical and loving action is to be willing to refrain if you are with someone you know to struggle.

* + **Romans 14:15**,**21 (NASB)** For if because of food your brother is hurt, you are no longer walking according to love. Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died. It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine, or to do anything by which your brother stumbles

Both the "weak" and the "strong" must above all else seek the profit of the other, seek to edify one another, and seek to demonstrate the love of Christ to one another.

**Rom. 15:1-3** We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. 2 Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. 3 For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, “The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me.”

The argument that we must permanently or publicly refrain from all alcoholic beverages in order to be a good witness is unbiblical.

Again, **It is not the lawful use of wine that is a bad testimony, but the unlawful use of it.**

**What about our witness to our children?**

Here is the fact: Children will not be any more likely to abuse wine when it is lawfully used within a Christian family, than they would be to abuse a car when it is lawfully used within a Christian family.

You should not refrain from the lawful use of any of God's good gifts simply because there is the possibility of abuse, rather you should carefully instruct your children in the legitimate use.

***We must constantly and consistently reorient our children to the gospel, teaching them that our propensity to sin and abuse God’s gifts comes from our own sinful nature and that the only cure is for our hearts to be transformed by Christ and conformed to His image.***

**Our God given role is to model for our children how to honor God rightly in how we steward and handle the things he has given us.**

\* be modeling how Jennifer and I handle things like alcohol, money, our stuff, our time is how we train them up in the ways they should go. I want my kids to have seen over a lifetime how we honor god with these things in moderation and accountability and not leave them to guess at how these things are dealt with in an god honoring way. There is not need to hide basic aspects of life from our kids. Instead we model for them and talk with them how we fight sin and honor God with them.

**What about those who are in our lives that are prone to struggle with temptation or sinful indulgence?**

Some abstentionist will argue that, "For the sake of the "those who are prone to struggle " who are around us.. that all Christians should abstain from the use of alcoholic beverages.

The thought is, there are so many who are "recovering alcoholics " in the work place, in the church, in the neighborhood, and in the family. Even seeing you drink one beer could lead them back into their fall out.

It is true that certain people have different levels of tolerance to alcoholic beverages (just as it is true that there are differing degrees of tolerance for calories and fat found in food among people). It we all struggle in different ways with life and sin.

But the notion that a pre-disposition toward a particular kind of sinful abuse (whether beer, sex, food, violence, fashion or any thing else) should lead all Christians to abstain permanently from the lawful use of that object or area of life is simply not biblical nor is it necessarily helpful.

Now again, you should never willingly tempt one whom you know to be vulnerable in a particular area, but that is quite different from advocating the permanent or public ceasing of a good gift from God in all circumstances.

We regularly advise those we are discipling and raising up to be proactive to inquire as to what our where one might be struggling. It is loving to ask someone before having them for dinner if they cant or don’t eat certain foods so that you avoid serving a rack of ribs to someone who does not eat pork or meat. The same for serving alcohol, It is loving to inquire if someone struggles with alcohol before serving them a glass.

Now, here is what MUST be understood regarding the idea of a predisposition to struggle or sin.

The Bible teaches that all men are predisposed to sin by nature and that all men are "constitutional sinners" (Ps. 51:5; Ps. 58:3; Rom. 5:19) and yet all men are responsible for their own sin.

The fact that one habitually and sinfully abuses alcohol and struggles to abuse it, should not put him into some preferential class of treatment, for all men, women, and children are in the same depraved condition (some of our sins are just more observable than others).

The core problem that one who deeply struggles with abusing alcohol has is not that he has developed an incurable disease (called “alcoholism” in modern society). His problem is that he has been convinced that he can never be completely cured ("once an alcoholic, always an alcoholic").

Thus, he is told, "Take even one sip of wine and it might set the disease off again."

The answer for the one who has abused alcoholic beverages is the same answer for all sinners:

**All sinful habits and sinful abuses are curable by the redemptive grace of God.**

 Once an alcoholic is not always an alcoholic for "where sin did abound, grace did much more abound" **Rom. 5:20**.

The Bible proclaims in **Romans 8:12** that all who have died with Christ are “no longer debtors to the flesh” meaning they are no longer enslaved to sin any longer.

Please, listen carefully here! The one who was once a drunkard is no longer viewed as a drunkard after he has been washed, sanctified, & justified in the name of the Lord Jesus & by the Spirit of God

**1 Cor. 6:9-11** Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, 10 nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

**Are the rest of the sinful abuses mentioned in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 incurable diseases?**

God forbid! Once a homosexual always a homosexual, once a thief always a thief. NO.

If so, what use or hope does one have in the gospel!

Instead: **The gospel is the power of God unto salvation to all who believe (Rom. 1:16).**

Thus, one is not necessarily helping the "alcoholic" by abstaining from all drinking any more than one would be helping the glutton by abstaining from all eating. **What they need is Jesus and the Gospel that sets them free and empowers them to fight sin and grow in holiness. Amen.**

If it is true that all Christians should abstain from all alcoholic beverages for the sake of the "ANYONE WHO COULD BE STRUGGLING", then Jesus was not wise in using wine in the presence of many "those who clearly were guilty of abusing it" (Lk. 7:33-35) and even creating it to be used in a wedding feast where the possibility for drunkenness was certainly present (Jn 2:1-12).

Jesus knows that what they need is not less alcohol around. They need new birth so that they can rightly steward the alcohol. The presence of the alcohol was not their issue. Their dead and sinful heart that abuses God’s creation was.

**Researcher, John Langone, has noted:**

Heredity, errors in the body's chemistry that prevent the alcoholic from using alcohol properly, brain defects, allergy, vitamin deficiency, glandular problems, a defective "thermostat" that causes an uncontrollable thirst for alcohol all have been examined by researchers. But thus far, none has been shown to be specifically responsible for alcoholism. There is no physical examination or blood test that can yet be performed to determine why a person has become an alcoholic, or whether he or she will become one; and no one has isolated a specific gene, that unit of heredity, for alcoholism (cited in The Christian And Alcoholic Beverages by Kenneth L. Gentry, p.100).

To be most clear and to stand on the scriptures as our ultimate authority:

The abuse of alcoholic beverages is not a problem with genetics, it is a problem with sin.

**The answer to this problem is Jesus Christ. The power to honor God in these things is new birth and walking in the spirit and not the flesh.**

**Romans 6:2-4, 7-8, 11**

How can we who died to sin still live in it? 3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

7 For one who has died has been set free from sin. 8 Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.

11 So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Furthermore, the abstentionist declares, "All Christians should abstain from the use of alcoholic beverages because they are so abused within our culture."

Here is the problem with that line of thinking: Christ commissioned the church to disciple all nations (in all cultures) baptizing them into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you (Mt. 28:19-20).

The answer to peoples over indulgence in a particular culture to anything is not to abstain from that which God declares to be lawful, but rather the answer is preach the gospel and to teach the proper use of that which is lawful in God honoring ways.

Therefore, I submit to you that the Abstinence Position finds no warrant in Scripture, but is contrary to what the Scripture teaches, which is the freedom to enjoy a moderate consumption of alcoholic beverages.

**The biblical position of moderation**

Because God gave alcoholic beverages as a good gift, and the Scriptures are clear that there are many ways we can enjoy them in a God-honoring way, we should have no biblical restriction or resistance to do so in moderation.

The power of the gospel at work in us can and should make way for anyone to enjoy the good gifts of God.

We are not bound by sin anymore and therefore not mastered by it any longer. In Christ, we have the power and freedom to enjoy His good gifts and the desire to exercise that liberty in such a way that doesn’t cause someone we know to stumble.

Now, hear me again. Just because you can eat meat doesn’t mean you need to. Just because you can drink in moderation doesn’t mean you need to.

**Let’s talk about the practice of moderation.**

1. Please don’t feel the NEED to go recreationally drink if you don’t now,

this lesson is not to convince you must use alcohol recreationally, but to help you be “strong” (biblically) in your understanding and conscience on this topic.

2. **Be Accountable**. If you haven’t drank much in the recent past or you have abused alcohol in the past (not uncommon) but you want to now or in the future, them enter into this very carefully and have solid accountability.

Begin slow, have one drink, choose a drink that’s not as strong as other, ask for insight from those who are mature and informed about these things. The Christian life is one of accountably. We walk these roads tighter and are blessed when our church family walks with us in accountability.

**3. Be mindful of others around you.** Like I said before, look for ways to inquire and be aware of your surroundings. This doesn’t mean you can’t enjoy a drink in public but it does mean if you are aware of a brother or sister who is present who is struggling that you joyfully set aside your liberty to walk with them.

4. T**est yourself along the way.** We often recommend people to test themselves that they are not growing a dependence or over indulgence for anything by implementing a self-imposed abstinence for a time. This sabbatical of sorts from good gifts God can help us evaluate or check if there is any growing dependence on them. Would you freak out or fail to function in joy in Christ if you went without social media for 30 days. Or without starbucks for 30 days. Or without … you name it.

The question is: Is this thing or practice become to central or dependant for my joy then Christ?

If so, you can make adjustments and seek accountability and repentance.

5. **Please, Do not test your limits,** the goal is not self indulgence but is ultimately honoring God.

If you feel you have ever had to much to drink or you are developing a sinful over indulgence or clinging to alcohol, don’t not let shame stop you from making sound decisions.

Confess it to mature accountability, **do not drive**, call for a ride if you are out, be willing to set it aside for a season to regroup in who you are in Christ.

**God is glorified when we repent, not when we do more sin to hide our sin.**

These things and others will help your witness be upright, modeled after Jesus, remember the council of Paul in Philippians 4:5 "Let your moderation be known unto all men…"

6. Just because you can doesn’t mean you always should. Our Highest aim is to honor God.

* Don’t forget the words of Paul in…
	+ **1 Corinthians 6:12 (NASB)** All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything.

**A few final clarities:**

**- Following the laws of the land where they do not contradict God’s commands**

All Christians are subject to the laws of the land that do not contradict God’s law.

* + **Romans 13:1-2 (NASB)** Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves.

These laws clearly indicate that underage recreational drinking is illegal.

Also, that driving while intoxicated in is illegal.

The testimonies I could fill the stage with, with just people in this room of how underage drinking or driving under the influence has caused major pain and damage to your life or others is very very real.

WE MUST TAKE THESE THINGS SERIOUSLY! We must not sin in these ways.

**-The clear command of scripture is that drunkenness is sin and not God glorifying.**

**It is important, like with anything we engage in, that we are aware of the ways our flesh can cause us to abuse the good gifts of God. The Scriptures are clear that drunkenness is sinful, and a sinful consumption of alcohol can lead to more sin.**

**Therefore, the one who drinks in moderation does so with the knowledge that he is responsible for his actions and accidental/unintentional overindulgence is no excuse for transgression.**

**To close:**

How we view alcohol according to scripture is very important.

If you have a weaker view/conviction I pray you long to lean in and study and grow into a biblically stronger view for the sake of your life and your witness and testimony of the Gospel.

We do not call anything that God created as evil or inheritably sinful.

We also do not create practice or prescriptions for universal absestenion of things that God gave us to enjoy and honor him with.

We are accountable and selfless in how we exercise our freedoms and we look for ways to walk with and train up those who might be struggling in a given area of life.

Church: The Gospel is our power to honor God and a misapplication of the Gospel is where we begin to adopt man made convictions, prescriptions or practices. May our Lord lead us in all things…

All of us are accountable to God for our actions, and all of our actions must spring forth from faith.

--For some, faith will lead to affirming alcohol as a good gift but choosing to personally not recreationally drink.

-For others, it will lead to drinking in moderation unto the glory of God.

For all of us, we aim to walk accountably and uprightly in these things.

Let us remember to do all things to the glory of God. AMEN.

Let’s pray.