What Happens When Christians Drink Socially?

(Joshua Creel)

 I couldn’t believe that Denver had won the Super Bowl! I was rooting for Peyton Manning and the Broncos, but I had little expectation that they would win. Carolina looked to be the better team by far, and Peyton was looking washed up. But, despite the odds, Peyton and the Broncos won. I was thrilled, that is until Peyton gave his post-game interview: *“I want to go kiss my wife and my kids. I want to go hug my family. I’m going to drink a lot of Budweiser tonight… I promise you that. I’m going to take care of those things first. I’m definitely going to say a little prayer, thank the man upstairs for this great opportunity. I’m just very grateful.”* How could one of my all-time favorite players stoop to shilling for a beer company during one of the greatest moments in his career? And how could he go from *“drinking a lot of Budweiser”* to thanking *“the man upstairs”*? The two seem incompatible!

For some time now many Christians have been doing the same thing; praising & worshipping Jesus as their Lord while regularly drinking alcohol at home and/or in social settings. Many Christians, myself included, believe that Christianity & drinking are incompatible, but others do not share that view.

The reasons given for drinking are varied and too numerous to deal with in this article. However, you’ve no doubt heard warnings from concerned parents, teachers, elders, etc. You’ve probably engaged in discussions about what the Bible really says about drinking. Perhaps you remain unconvinced about the differences in alcoholic beverages in Bible times & alcoholic beverages now. Perhaps you view the Bible’s warnings against drinking as only applying to drunkenness. Maybe you intend to continue practicing your faith AND drinking in social & recreational settings. Before you do, ask yourself the following question: *“What happens when I drink socially?”* Please consider these possible answers…

When Christians drink socially they support a great evil.

The Super Bowl always contains a number of commercials for beer and other alcoholic beverages. They are often some of the funniest, best produced and memorable ones we see during the game. This year had all the kinds of commercials we have come to expect, but there was one commercial that stood out for its different approach and tone. It was a commercial for Budweiser starring the actress Helen Mirren, a commercial where she never encouraged the viewer to buy Budweiser, rather she belittled anyone who would drive while drunk. The commercial was widely praised for its message and sensibilities. I found it to be revolting! 28 people die every day in America as a result of drunk driving crashes. **28 – die – every - day**. Budweiser’s product is one of the main culprits in those 28 deaths each day, so I’d have a lot more respect for Budweiser if instead of lecturing people on drunk driving, they would quit making beer.

Drinking alcohol is one of the great ills of our society. Its rotten fruits include suicide, violent crime, sexual abuse, domestic abuse, poor workplace, and school performance, etc. Maybe you’re one of the fortunate ones who drink only moderately and you’ve never been adversely affected by alcohol. Consider yourself fortunate because untold millions have been negatively affected by this cancer on our society. And your participation in drinking contributes to an industry that wrecks lives. Please, seriously consider the warning of Scripture: ***“Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them”*** (Ephesians 5:11).

When Christians drink socially they give off some unintended signals.

First, they send the signal that the Father’s warnings aren’t that serious. No, they don’t mean to send this signal. They love God and they believe we ought to follow Him. And while they claim to heed His warnings against drunkenness, they signal to others that alcohol, if taken in moderation, is harmless. I fear that they have not properly considered all of the Father’s warnings on this. ***“Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise”*** (Proverbs 20:1). ***“Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it goes down smoothly; at the last, it bites like a serpent and stings like a viper”*** (Proverbs 23:31-32).

Second, they send the signal that enslavement isn’t that big a concern. Again, they do not intend to send this signal, but it is given nonetheless. They know that addiction is a struggle for many and they profess that they would quit drinking if it becomes a problem. But since it’s not a problem for them yet, they will continue to drink. Such an attitude is a far cry from Paul’s statement that ***“all things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything”*** (1 Corinthians 6:12) and ***“just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification”*** (Romans 6:19). Facts are that enslavement may only be a few drinks away. If we are enslaved to anything, let it be to righteousness!

Third, they send the signal that our highest aim is NOT the Father’s glory. ***“Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body”*** (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). Can I glorify God by participating in an activity that destroys the lives of so many? I cannot see a way to answer that question in the affirmative. So, if you choose to drink it will be for your own reasons, not the Father’s glory.

When Christians drink they show little concern for the souls of others.

Maybe you are indeed one of those lucky ones that can drink only in moderation. Maybe it will never affect your health or ruin a single relationship. If only everyone else was so fortunate. ***“It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine, or to do anything by which your brother stumbles”*** (Romans 14:21). Maybe if my brethren took the 1:00 a.m. phone calls from the spouse whose husband has been drinking, they would think differently. Or, if they counseled the teen that’s been expelled from school for having vodka in his locker, they would see just how vile this stuff is. My brethren, think of these souls before you partake in this great evil.

What happens when a Christian drinks socially? In short, **nothing good**.