**ONE OF THESE THINGS JUST DOESN’T BELONG**

***Christianity and Alcohol***

Sesame Street had a regular feature to teach children how to connect things together. I used to watch it, and sometimes sing it, with my children. It goes like this:

One of these things is not like the others,
One of these things just doesn't belong,
Can you tell which thing is not like the others
By the time I finish my song?

Did you guess which thing was not like the others?
Did you guess which thing just doesn't belong?
If you guessed this one is not like the others,
Then you're absolutely...right!

Due to the fact that I am a preacher, I tend to always think of things I see and hear in terms of “How can I turn that into a sermon.” So, when we sang “one of these things just doesn’t belong,” I wanted to lecture my kids on spiritual versus worldly things. After all, wasn’t I, as their father, instructed to… “*talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up*” (Deut. 6:7)? So, even Sesame Street became a teachable moment to “talk of them when you sit in your house.” So I thought to myself, how do I connect that song to the Bible? Ahhh, I know, Jesus and Alcohol. Here it is…

“*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. Your eyes will see strange things, And your heart will utter perverse things.”* (Proverbs 23:31-33)

Solomon said “*do not look on the wine when it is red.*” Why? Because it will strike you like a snake and blur your vision and tongue. Surely that is all a disciple who follows Jesus needs to know to resist social drinking. And, by the way, any research into “wine” (oinos) of Biblical days will quickly teach you that modern day beer, wine and whiskey is many times stronger than what Solomon forbade.

Yes, it is certainly true, the Bible mentions the drinking of wine in a good way.

Psalm 104:14-15 says, *“He causes the grass to grow for the cattle, And vegetation for the service of man, that he may bring forth food from the earth, And wine that makes glad the heart of man, Oil to make his face shine, And bread which strengthens man’s heart.”*

Ecclesiastes 9:7 says, *“Go, eat your bread with joy, And drink your wine with a merry heart; For God has already accepted your works*.”

I Timothy 5:23 says, “*No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach’s sake and your frequent infirmities.”*

But that wine drinking can in no way contradict passages like Proverbs 23 and others like:

*“Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit”* (Eph. 5:17-18).

*“Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. 7 For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. 8 But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation*” (I Thess. 5:6-8).

It was February 7, 2016. I was so disappointed because I was a huge fan of his since his college days at Tennessee. In the post-game interview after the Super Bowl, having watched Peyton Manning win his second championship ring, he happened to mention he was going to celebrate by “*drinking a lot of beer tonight*.” With his two small sons standing on the podium with him he announced to the world that instead of going to Disney World he would for all practical purposes go get drunk.

The world never bats an eye at such statements. Many in modern day “Christendom” would think nothing of celebrating with alcohol. Let me therefore ask YOU --- what do you think of social drinking? Is it right, or is it wrong? What say you?

If the wise man’s words don’t convince you, maybe the apostle Peter’s will. He bluntly said the Gentiles (i.e. worldly sinners) “*walked in … drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties*” and called such actions a “*flood of* *wild living -*HCSB,*”* or, *“flood of debauchery -*ESV” (I Pet. 4:3-4).

If you think it wise to drink alcohol then please, before you imbibe, do a thorough word study of this text in I Peter 4:3-4. Examine not only the Greek words but also the various translations of this text. My study reveals Peter showing a digression from social drinking… to tipsy drinking… to out-and-out stone drunkenness. We all know the Bible condemns drunkenness and revelries (Gal. 5:21), but we also must know a loss of sobriety is likewise condemned (Eph. 5:18). Not only that but causing another to stumble into their weakness for alcohol is strongly rebuked by God: “*Wine is a mocker, strong drink is a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise*” (Prov. 20:1).

The very idea of “sipping saints” is an oxymoron. If an elder in the church, who is to be “*an example to the flock*” (I Pet. 5:2-4) is “*not given to wine*” (I Tim. 3:3), why should any Christian think it right to be given to wine, or any alcoholic beverage?

Alcohol. Christ-likeness. Godliness.

One of these things is not like the others. One of these things does not belong. Can you tell which thing is not like the others, by the time I finish my song?

*“Be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”* - Rick