



The Caller

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Confidence Corner John F. Board

In this week's *Confidence Corner* we will examine the question "What is the big deal with alcohol?" I ask us to consider the following thoughts regarding this danger against which God provides strong

warning.

People see themselves using alcohol in four different ways. (1) Some people do not drink at all. (2) Some experiment with it—experimental drinkers. (3) Others are social drinkers, and (4) some are dependent or problem users. Some may move from one category to another in sequence, but others jump directly from nonusers to abusers.

That alcohol is a drug is not up for debate. Its toxic effects are well-known and cause permanent damage to the body. Large doses can result in immediate death, and prolonged usage can also hasten or cause death.

Unfortunately those who think the Bible permits them to drink socially think they will never slip into the category of problem or dependent users of alcohol, and they have convinced themselves that they will never become alcoholics. They think that happens only to others. Yet, if twelve people drink over the course of ten years, one will become an alcoholic and three others will become problem drinkers. People do shift from one category to another, sometimes without realizing it.

After cancer and heart disease, alcohol is the third leading cause of death in this country. Alcohol is responsible for thousands of suicides and drowning deaths. Drunk drivers are responsible for about one-half of the fatal automobile accidents each year. In 1989 it was estimated that there were close to twenty million alcoholics in America. It has proved to be a dangerous drug.

So what is the big deal about alcohol? If we look to God and Scripture, the answer is clear. "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging, and whoever is deceived thereby is not wise" (Proverbs 20:1). Will you accept or reject the advice of the Father?

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In this column of *The Caller* we will provide Old Testament verses to study in connection with the 7 Trumpets that we examined very briefly last Sunday. I will list the trumpet and then the verses you can consider in connection with that section of Scripture.

Trumpet #1 (Psalm 11:6; Isaiah 28:2,17; Isaiah 30:30-31; Ezekiel 38:18-22; Genesis 19:23-29)

Trumpet #2 (Jeremiah 51:24-26; Revelation 14-18; Isaiah 54:9-10; Psalm 46:1-2)

Trumpet #3 (Isaiah 14:3-15; Jeremiah 9:15; 23:15; Lamentation 3:19).

Trumpet #4 (Exodus 10:21-23)

Trumpet #5 (Deuteronomy 28:15-19, 42; Joel 1:1-4; 2:1-11)

Trumpet #6 (see Revelation 6:9-10 and 8:3-5)

Trumpet #7 (Daniel 2:44; Exodus 25:22)

As we noted in class, a key in understanding the book of Revelation is to allow the Old Testament Scripture to shed light upon the book that John pens through inspiration. The persecuted saints would know it well and understand John's signs and symbols—many of which have their basis in the Old Testament.

Sunday's Sermons:

**A.M. — No Middle Ground
Matthew 7:13-14**

**P.M. — It's Not About Me!
Matthew 16:24**

The Gospel

“What is the Gospel?” If we were to engage in a little brainstorming about the word “gospel,” many different ideas would emerge. Many readers would immediately think of the general evangelic explanation of the “gospel,” that is, “the basic message of salvation.” For others an obvious answer would be that the gospel is the four accounts of the life of Jesus found in the Bible. The lovers of 1970s Broadway musicals may offer that our English word “gospel” comes from the older “God-spell,” meaning “good” (OE *gód*) plus “tidings” (OE *spel*). Those with a knowledge of Greek may suggest the etymological analysis of *eu* plus *angelion*, “good news.” Some may even go further by noting that around the time of Jesus this Greek word was often used to refer to the announcement of “good tidings,” especially that a new emperor had been born or ascended to the throne. Such thoughts and possibly others would arise from our brainstorming reflections on “gospel.” Perhaps all of these are significant to some, but what does Scripture reveal as important regarding an understanding of the “Gospel?”

In order to find this significance we might examine Paul’s use of “the gospel of God” at the opening of his letter to the Romans. He reveals what he means by this gospel from or about God in the following verses. It is the good news that God promised beforehand in the Holy Scriptures (1:2), namely, the coming of Jesus, descended in the flesh from David (1:3) but shown to be so much more, God’s very Son, as demonstrated by the power of the Spirit and Jesus’ resurrection from the dead (1:4). This is “good news” because it is grace, and consequently it is a call to all the nations to come and believe in this message of hope (1:5–6). In Paul’s epistle to the Galatians he reproves Christians for potentially abandoning this same good message about Jesus Christ. This is foolish, he says, because the “different gospel” they are turning to is really no good news at all; it is a hopeless attempt at accepting Jesus plus OT obedience (Gal. 1:6–7; cf. 2:16).

We will not take the time to examine all the occurrences of this important word in the New Testament, which are readily available in other studies. Instead, we may simply observe that consistently throughout the New Testament epistles the “gospel” refers to the oral proclamation about Jesus the Christ (meaning the anointed Davidic King)— who he was; what he accomplished through his life, death, and resurrection; the promise of his future return to establish God’s reign; and the call to repent and have a faith that leads to obedience in baptism for the remission of sins. It is importantly also a proclamation of God’s grace and the invitation to hope. This is why it is rightly called “good news.”

It is this “good news” that Paul tells the Romans is the “power of God unto salvation.” If the message of God’s love and Christ’s sacrifice on our behalf is not enough to prick man’s heart, I know of nothing that possibly could. Are you sharing the good news with others?

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