

1 Timothy 3: 3; "Not Given to Wine", Sermon # 9 in the series on the Eldership, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall, on April 18th, 2010, In the Afternoon Worship Service.

We have now gone through the 1st group of seven qualifications for an Elder, and we are now entering in on our second group of seven. After that there are two others which relate to his length of experience as a Christian, and his testimony with those outside. There are 16 qualifications in all. This 2nd seven relate primarily to how the man reacts and interacts with his fellowmen; what motivates him and how he manages, or rules, his own house. The list begins with "not given to wine". Now, wine drinking among Christians is perhaps one of the most controversial areas of conscience that exists in the church today, or in any age. Some people believe that there is nothing wrong with wine, that God has endorsed its usage and given it to be freely used by people as it says Psalm 104: 14 and 15. It says there: "God causes the grass to grow for the cattle, and vegetation for the service of man, that he (man) 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." So they say, and we would agree, that wine is for the gladness of men's hearts in a good sense, although it is evident that in many ways its use is cautioned. The Lord Jesus' first miracle was to turn water into wine at the marriage of Cana in Galilee. He obviously saw wine as a good thing at that marriage feast. We also read of Him being called by those who hated him, "a wine-bibber and a friend of tax-gatherers and sinners." (Matthew 11: 19 and Luke 7: 34) A wine-bibber is one who is an excessive drinker; the rabbis would say, one who would drink his cup at one draught, one that is greedy for wine. This was indeed, incorrect of our Lord, and it was slanderously sinful to say it of Him, but it does show that even righteous and well-meaning social use of wine can be misconstrued by unbelievers and evil men as a sin chargeable upon a minister. Some people will never accept the preacher or his message no matter how social or separated from society he is. We must avoid being misconstrued, (that is made out to be something that we are not) but we must also realize that it will happen anyway; some people have not faith, love, or discernment. The wording in 1 Timothy 3: 3 is, "not given to wine". It is a negative requirement. So we will approach it in this way this afternoon; by asking a question. What are the problems with the use of alcoholic beverages which may hinder or disqualify the man being considered for the ministry? There are a number of real problems that are noted for us in the Scriptures which will cripple or destroy the man's ministry; that man who lingers long over wine. I'll give you a couple and then give you a good example of ministry.

1st – The man who lingers long over wine will find that his judgment and ability to rule will be perverted.

Turn with me to Proverbs Chapter 31, verses 1-9. "The words of King Lemuel the utterance which his mother taught him: What my son?" "And what, son of my womb?" "And what, son of my vows?" "Do not give your strength to women, nor your ways to that which destroys kings." "It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine, nor for princes intoxicating drink; lest they drink and forget the law, and pervert the justice of all the afflicted." "Give strong drink to those who are perishing, and wine to those who are bitter of heart." "Let him drink and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more." "Open your mouth for the speechless, in the cause of all who are appointed to die." "Open your mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy." We find, here, the mother of the king is concerned that her young son would turn out well when he becomes king. She is concerned for him that when he grows up, that he would be a wise and good ruler of his people. His name is Lemuel, which means "devoted to God". It was, I believe, a pet name which Bathsheba had for Solomon when he young. And she taught him this utterance; that is, she would say it to him enough that he would remember it always as he grew up. She had a great love for him; she had taken vows before God concerning him; to raise him up, and instruct him the way of the Lord, and in the fear of the Lord. But she had seen what men will sometimes give their strength to; something that if they give their ways to it will destroy kings. If a man drinks too much wine, his judgment will be impaired. He will not act the part of a king at all if he is caught up with wine. But a king is a man who needs very much, to be wise in his judgments. Too much wine takes away the ability to see what is needful to do, both in relation to one's self, and in relation to others. The law is forgotten and justice is perverted. Discernment on moral and spiritual matters, not to mention the discernment in matters related to good laws and wise decisions, can be greatly impaired.

Interestingly, Solomon when he grew up, was a man who tried to have both; drinking wine in moderation, and guiding his heart with wisdom. You will see this if you turn over with to Ecclesiastes 2, verses 1-3. "I said in my heart, 'Come now, I will test you with mirth; therefore enjoy pleasure; but surely this also was vanity.'" "I said of laughter—"Madness!"; and of mirth, "What does it accomplish?" "I searched in my heart how to gratify my flesh with wine, while guiding my heart with wisdom, and how to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was good for the sons of men to do under heaven all the days of their lives." Here you find Solomon experimenting with pleasure and laughter and concluding that if it is was done in excess, that it was madness. But he wanted to gratify his flesh in a wise way, using wine in precise amounts, while guiding his mind with wisdom. The object that he had in mind was to see what was good for the sons of men to do under heaven all the days of their lives. In other words, he is trying to find meaning in life apart from what his dear mother had told him when he was young. He wasn't about to be a drunk, but he thought that perhaps there could be a greater meaning to be life

than what he had yet experienced. He thought that it could be found in seeking to be wise and happy through smaller proportions of wine in connection with everything that he would do and build for himself. Out of this wine-stimulated mindset, he concludes that building houses, planting vineyards and fruit trees, making an irrigation system, having servants to tend his gardens, and having singers and musical instruments would give him just the meaning in life that he was seeking for. He would become great in worldly pleasures. A little wine would stimulate and enhance all of his this joy and his pleasure of pursuing his worldly dreams. But when he was all done with it, he finds that it has become to him, vanity and striving after the wind. There was no lasting profit in it at all. His problem was that he was a king who was simply pursuing his own selfish interests. The real problem with those who are given to wine; not just as drunks, but also those who are social and intellectual drinkers like Solomon was; is that their judgment is not being guided skillfully toward matters of importance related to justice and to helping the plight of poor, and needy, and afflicted people. Wine makes a person merry, but only the blessing of God will cause us to judge righteously in the cause of those appointed to die. I am not saying that Solomon's judgment was totally impaired in relation to these issues while he reigned, but he did end up doing a number of things that showed that he was not wise in doing them. His multiplying of horses; his multiplying of wives; his treating the workmen and the people in a strict disciplinary fashion to achieve his own ends;(1 Kings 12: 14) these indicate that his judgment and spiritual discernment were impaired at certain points. And wine could have been a very great contributing factor in that lack of discernment.

When we apply this to a man being considered for the ministry, or even Christians who are seeking to glorify Christ, we can say this. The man who lingers long over wine will not plead the cause of the poor or needy, or pour the balm of Christ's gospel into the wounds of those afflicted with sin. He will love a party, but he will shun the cause of all those who need real sympathy and attention in the flock. This is a real problem. The man's focus will be primarily upon himself, and not upon the needs of others. Let us pray that all of the young men in our own congregation would not be those who linger long over the wine. Let us pray rather that they would be filled with the Spirit of Christ. Christ our Savior turn will turn the water into wine (the common into the spiritually exhilarating) in the spirit of each one who will look to him for their joy, their happiness, and their refreshment. And truly He will give it. Jeremiah 31: 25 says, "For I have satiated (I have fully satisfied the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul." Let us determine to find all of our greatest satisfaction in Christ.

Then 2ndly – If one lingers long over wine it takes away the heart to minister.

Turn with me over to Hosea 4: 11. It says here, "Harlotry, wine, and new wine enslave the heart." In the King James Version it says, "Harlotry, wine, and new wine take away the spirit (or the heart). The exhilarations of wine, new wine, and

sexually immorality will take away the heart of any person, even a Christian man, away from following the Lord. The fear of the Lord and the Love of God are replaced with worldly and sensual pleasures. Turn with me to Isaiah 28: 1-10. "Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim, whose glorious beauty is a fading flower which is at the head of the verdant valleys, to those who are overcome with wine!" "Behold, the Lord has a mighty and strong one, like a tempest of hail and a destroying storm, like a flood of mighty waters overflowing, who will bring them down to the earth with His hand." "The crown of pride, the drunkards of Ephraim, will be trampled underfoot; and the glorious beauty is a fading flower which is at the head of the verdant valley, like the first fruit before the summer, which an observer sees; he eats it up while it is still in his hand." "In that day the Lord of hosts will be a crown of glory and a diadem of beauty to the remnant of His people, for a spirit of justice to him who sits in judgment, and for the strength of those who turn back the battle at the gate." "But they have also erred through wine, and through intoxicating drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through intoxicating drink, they are swallowed up by wine, they are out of the way through intoxicating drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment." "For all tables are full of vomit and filth; no place is clean." "Whom will he teach knowledge?" "And whom will he make to understand the message?" "Those just weaned from milk?" "Those just drawn from the breasts?" "For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little, there a little." You can see here the connection can't you; between wine and not being able to spiritually discern and teach things? These priests and prophets erred through intoxicating drink and wine. They are swallowed up by it. They have no ability to teach, but they must be taught themselves. This is why in Ephesians 5: 17 it says, "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;(that is; a scattering of all of your energies and all your efforts) but be filled with the Spirit. But when you are filled with the Spirit, you are truly able to minister. You see this in Acts Chapter 2 when the Holy Spirit came upon the Apostles and others who were gathered together there in Jerusalem. There were some who thought that they were drunk at first. But they were really filled with the Spirit, and they spoke the gospel powerfully to people, each in their own language (This is the highest use of the gift of tongues by the way; tongues are meant for a sign to unbelievers, not believers. Acts 14: 22) And also Acts Chapter 6, when the first deacons were being sought for; what did they look for in the men whom they would consider? Verse 3 of Chapter 6 says, "Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; but we will devote ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word." The first man that they chose was Stephen, who was also a good preacher we find out in Chapter 7. What does the filling of the Spirit produce in such a man? He produces good discernment in spiritual and doctrinal things.

And He produces a love to serve other people in a way that God will receive all the glory.

And then, 3rdly, let me give you the best example of what it means to be a minister; the Lord Jesus did not need to depend upon wine to fulfill His ministry.

Turn with me to Mark 15: 21-24. "Then they compelled a certain man, Simon a Cyrenian, the father of Alexander and Rufus, as he was coming out of the country and passing by, to bear His cross." "And they brought Jesus to the place Golgotha, which is translated , Place of a Skull." "Then they gave Him wine mingled with myrrh to drink, but He did not take it." "And when they crucified Him, they divided His garments, casting lots for them to determine what every man should take." The ability for any man to minister at all, and to minister effectually, is based entirely upon Christ's death and resurrection. The merit of His sufferings and the efficacy of His death are all imputed and imparted to the believer, based upon Christ's grace being faithfully and daily applied to their soul. His life is working in our life. And if that believer is called to be a pastor, he is being called to teach the people in his church and people in his community, the truth of Christ's love and power and grace, in a further way than he has ever been called to serve Him before. He is like this man, Simon of Cyrenian who was compelled to bear Christ's cross. Simon was forced to the task of bearing the cross; I know; and the believer who would be a minister desires the work. But still there is a similarity here. Christ Himself could not bear His own cross any further, but this man was enlisted to do it. In a higher way, with a much higher call, this is what one who is called to the ministry is called to do; yea he desires to do so. Christ has ascended on high and cannot bear His cross through this world without a man to do so; so He calls men to the ministry. Whereas others may mock, and seek the death of Christ's cause, the true minister of Jesus is called to bear His cross for him by refusing the wine that would lessen his suffering for Christ during his time of his ministry here upon the earth. Whereas some men may seek to "divide Christ's garments among them", he will not be serving Christ simply for the money that he will earn by his preaching the gospel. He will rather be "Always bearing about in the body, the dying of the Lord Jesus; that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in his life." As it says in verse 11; he is coming to know the truth of this statement: "For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh." This is what sustains him. He comes to understand the reality of verse 12 as well: "So then death is working in the minister, but life in you who hear him. (2 Corinthians 4: 10-12) This is the power of Christ's resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings.

We, as believers, are all called to follow Christ. But in a special way, the man who is called to be a minister is called to feel deeply and sympathize with, the trials and afflictions of the people whom he is called to minister to. He is called to rejoice with them when they rejoice, and weep with them when they weep, in a special way because he is teaching them to follow Jesus. Jesus when he went to

the cross, was offered wine mingled with myrrh by well-meaning people looking on at what He was about to endure. They would have Him to be insensible to the pain. But He refused. And I believe that He has given this as an example to all would minister on His behalf. In His refusal of the wine, He was not only showing us His willingness to suffer on our behalf, to feel the full weight of what our sins deserve; He was also giving an example for us who would minister to learn to feel what those in the flock that they pastor, are feeling. We merit nothing as ministers when we feel deeply, but Christ calls us to it. He would not have us be insensible to people's needs, or insensitive to what is hurting them, or discouraging to them. He doesn't want us to escape feeling true joy, deep sorrow, or the agonies and pains of what it means for those who would follow and know their Savior better. Wine dulls everything and makes men forget. Our God will have us to remember it all, and remember it especially in light of His resurrection, because in Christ's triumph we arise to newness of life and will rise to all eternity. His Spirit and His grace will be more than enough for us. We need not to be given to wine in this life. Our wine is at the Lord's Supper where Jesus said, "For this is my blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." "But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom.