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The Herald of His Grace

Presenting **every man** perfect in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

Volume XII
Issue 293

Don't Let Them Agitate Your Spirit!

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid (John 14:27).

To be spiritually minded is life and peace (Romans 8:6).

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:7).

Let the peace of God rule in your hearts (Colossians 3:15).

One of the greatest assets of the child of God is *peace*. It is the divine counterpart to grace. Thus, Paul repeats in each of his epistles, “*grace and peace*.” This is not a religious cliché; it is our heritage as sons of God.



remember: God is not *ruffled* by earthly events and details. This is because He is GOD ... and He is in sovereign control of *everything*. Simply put, this means that God is at peace – no wringing of His hands, no wiping of sweat from His brow – after all, Paul calls Him the “*God of peace*” (Romans 15:33; 16:20; 4:19; 1 Thessalonians 5:23).

Peace is defined as:

Freedom from disturbance; tranquility (*Oxford Dictionary*).

Inner contentment; serenity (*American Heritage Dictionary*).

Freedom from disquieting or oppressive thoughts or emotions (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*).

Calm and quiet; freedom from worry or annoyance (*Cambridge Dictionary*).

Freedom from agitation or disturbance by the passions, as from fear, terror, anger, anxiety or the like; quietness of mind; tranquility; calmness; quiet of conscience (*Webster's Original 1828*).

There are two distinct scriptural spheres of divine peace: “*peace with God*,” and “*the peace of God*.” We have “*peace with God*” because of the work of our Lord Jesus Christ on Golgotha’s hill. All enmity and strife between us and God has been permanently removed. Paul declared that Christ “*was delivered for our offences and was raised again for our justification*,” and that, “*therefore, being justified by faith*,” we, who once were estranged from God in our hearts and minds, enjoy “*peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*” (Romans 4:25; 5:1).

However, it is one thing to have “*peace with God*,” and quite another to have “*the peace of God*.” It is our

(see *AGITATE*, page 2695)

There surely is much uncertainty and turmoil in the world around us; but there is one thing that we need to

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This weekly publication (52 times a year) is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7);
- the affirmation of God's purpose to save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (1 Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11);
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25);
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the church, the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Romans 11:13);
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15);
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13);
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with:
 - total forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:14);
 - identity in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6);
 - adult sonship position (Galatians 4).

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This publication is not connected with any "church," "denomination," "movement," "organization," "mission," "creed," "meeting," "school," "conference" or "fellowship."

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AGITATE (continued from front page)

divinely-given privilege to enjoy not only “*peace with God*,” but “*the peace of God*.” In fact, Father desires that we are at rest *with Him* in every detail of life, enjoying His very Own unworried and tranquil spirit. We are to *let the peace of God rule in our hearts*, i.e., to take charge of all of our cares, concerns and worries; the peace of His Own nature and character *settling*¹ our hearts!

Let the peace of God rule in your hearts (Colossians 3:15).

The peace of God is your God-given possession. Therefore, *don't let anyone or anything agitate your spirit!*

Who or what manages to get under your skin and causes you to lose your peace? Are they *bigger* than He? Do they in any way threaten Father's plan for you? Can they derail His purpose for you? Certainly not! If He is the God of the universe, then why allow your spirit to be agitated by others?

One area that seems to bring great agitation to many is that of Nationalism. For all of my adult life I have seen professing believers allow their spirits to be agitated by social, political and economic pundits of nationalism and patriotism. For over four decades I have watched Christians surrender their God-given peace to these commercial agitators. My first exposure to them was through such national personalities as Carl McIntire, Billy James Hargis, W.S. McBirnie, Dan Smoot, Willis Carto and Robert Welch. A couple of generations have passed, but the stirring rhetoric continues. Their modern prophets include Bill O'Riely, Rush Limbaugh, Sean Hannity, Glenn Beck, Neal Boortz and Michael Savage. Don't let them agitate your spirit. Don't allow them to displace your peace.

Listen to Paul's wonderful words of encouragement to us,

Be anxious for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:6).

While only those who know that they are at *peace with*

God can know “*the peace of God*,” it does not follow, however, that all of those who know that they are at *peace with God* necessarily ENJOY “*the peace of God*.” Believers can enjoy “*the peace of God*” only as they practice Philippians 4:6 and turn every care over to His capable hands – *all of our trials, all of our problems*. As we follow these instructions the promise which follows will certainly be fulfilled.

And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep [“guard,” Rotherham; “garrison,” Weymouth] *your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus* (:7).

God is *never* caught surprised. He knows *exactly* what He is doing. We can have complete confidence in Him because nothing is outside of His sovereign control. Therefore, we should not be overwhelmed and defeated by the adversities of life.

We know that all things work together for good to them who love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28).

PEACE EVEN IN THE SPHERE OF NATIONALISM

Why do the nations rage? (Psalm 2:1; Acts 4:25).

The key to nationalism has to do with understanding its place in God's plan. When we understand God's purposes, we are better able to know how to relate to them. Nationalism is a divine judgment upon mankind introduced at Babel's Tower (Genesis 10; 11), and is His instrument of vanity among the Gentiles.

Nationalism is but a further tool in God's hand to subject mankind to vanity (Romans 8:20). Men look to governments for the answer to their problems, and even believers try unsuccessfully to influence the predestined course of the *vanity* of the Gentiles. The history of nationalism is one of successive and mounting failure. Hopes are raised for a “good” government, society and economy, only to find that “evil” prevails again: one nation after another, one kingdom overthrowing another, one party defeating another, one cause overpowering another, all in vain cycles. Yet, God is at the center of it all, “*for there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God*” (Romans 13:1). Pharaoh was God's servant (Romans 9:17), as well as was Cyrus (Isaiah 45:1).

1. “Settle” – Weymouth, Colossians 3:15.

... for this cause have I raised you up ... (Exodus 9:16).

We must never forget that "... the most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomsoever He will ..." (Daniel 4:17, 25), and that "... He does according to His will ... among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can restrain His hand ..." (Daniel 4:35). It is God Who rules "over all the kingdoms of the heathen" (II Chronicles 20:6).

We know that "the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: He turns it wherever He will" (Proverbs 21:1); and, in fact, "... **HE** is a great King over all the earth" (Psalms 47:2).

God rules over all nations, establishing their times and boundaries. The *who*, *how*, *when* and *where* are all determined by Him for His Own purposes.

[God] has made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation (Act 17:26).

Why is man's life filled with such vanity; such futility, emptiness, barrenness, purposelessness and aimless frustration? Because he has been subjected so by his Creator.

For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him Who has subjected the same in hope (Romans 8:20).

Life is vain when viewed apart from the sovereign, loving God Who is our Father. "Vanity" is the lot of man "under the sun." All areas of life illustrate and demonstrate the vanity of life apart from God (Ecclesiastes 1:2-8). Vanity is the purpose of *Phase One* of our existence.

I feel for those who face daily life apart from the knowledge that *He alone* is in complete control. Many live their daily lives without recognition of the stabilizing truth of the One Who "works all things after the counsel of His Own will" (Ephesians 1:11). They approach their day and struggle through it as the master of their own lives.

For those who live as though they were in charge of their lives, two of the hardest parts of the day are waking up in the morning and going to bed in the evening.

In the mornings, days are greeted with uncertainty as thoughts of the "What if ..." trials and challenges of the day press in upon the mind and heart. There is a waking up to varying degrees of uneasiness, concern, apprehension, worry and anxiety; even at times to overwhelming fear, dread and depression. Feelings of inadequacy and uncertainty press in.

In the evenings, days are retired with the annoying "What if ..." reflections of its happenings. There is second guessing, regret and disappointment. Feelings of frustration, dissatisfaction and failure settle in; even at times shame, guilt and worthlessness.

After all, they see themselves as the lords of their own lives, the captains of their own ships and the masters of their own destiny. With this view comes but a recurring cycle of vanity.

Those of us who know Father as the great Planner and Director of our days have a completely different approach to our mornings and evenings – and the entire unfolding of our every minute of our day.

In the mornings, days can be greeted with the joy and excitement of knowing that *they* as well as ourselves are His. The uncertainties of the "What if ..." viewpoint are divinely transformed into the eager anticipation of seeing what God has planned for the day. We are able to awaken to the thrill of knowing that we will be witnesses of the unfolding of His detailed plan and purpose for our day. His presence presses in upon our minds. There is a waking up to peace and joy as we know that our life, with all of its daily circumstances, is firmly in His hand and carried out by His capable direction. Our hearts are able to say, "Today we are on the great adventure of faith!"

In the evenings, when the day is over, we can rest our heads on our pillows and with surety and confidence regarding our day say, "This was the will of God." The "What if ..." reflections of its happenings are transformed into a place of peace and rest, knowing that the will of God was done, and who could have prevented it? The realization of our divine appointment is able to settle within our hearts and minds. After all, *He* is the Lord of our life, the Captain of our ship, the Master our destiny.

He does according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and

(see **AGITATE**, last page)

A Look at Alcohol in the Scriptures

Part 2

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

[God brings forth] *wine which makes man's heart glad* (Psalm 104:15).

A LOOK AT SOME COMMON PASSAGES USED TO CONDEMN THE USE OF ALCOHOL

There are a number of Scriptures that are used to imply a prohibition of alcohol. In this section we will look at a few of the more prominent passages.

Do not drink wine nor strong drink.
(Leviticus 10:9)

This is an impressive quote, that is, until we read the entire context:

And the LORD spoke to Aaron, saying, "Do not drink wine nor strong drink, you, nor your sons with you, when you go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest you die: it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations: and that you may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean; and that you may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the LORD has spoken to them by the hand of Moses" (Leviticus 10:8-11).

This passage is not a general prohibition of the use of alcohol, but simply states that the Aaronic priesthood is not to drink alcohol when they enter the tabernacle. This prohibition applies *only* to Aaron and his sons, and only "when" they are carrying out their priestly functions in the tabernacle. Since we are not a part of the Aaronic priesthood (which has passed away – Hebrews chapters 9 and 10), this text has nothing to do with us today.

He shall separate himself from wine and strong drink.
(Numbers 6:3)

Again, this is an impressive quote until it is read in its context:

Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them, "When either man or woman shall separate them-

selves to vow a vow of a Nazarite, to separate themselves to the LORD: He shall separate himself from wine and strong drink, and shall drink no vinegar of wine, or vinegar of strong drink, neither shall he drink any liquor of grapes, nor eat moist grapes, or dried. All the days of his separation shall he eat nothing that is made of the vine tree, from the kernels even to the husk. All the days of the vow of his separation there shall no razor come upon his head: until the days be fulfilled, in the which he separates himself to the LORD, he shall be holy, and shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow. All the days that he separates himself to the LORD he shall come at no dead body" (Numbers 6:2-6).

This passage clearly prohibits the Nazarite from the practice of wine drinking. As in the previous text, this is a unique circumstance that is irrelevant to us today.

This vow also included avoidance of grapes and raisins (:3), the cutting of hair (:5), and any contact with dead bodies (:6). The restrictions of this special vow were only temporary – "all the days of the vow of his separation" – "and **after that** the Nazarite may drink wine" (:20).

Drink not wine nor strong drink.
(Judges 13:4)

Again, we must read this quotation in its context:

And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD; and the LORD delivered them into the hand of the Philistines forty years. And there was a certain man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren, and bare not. And the angel of the LORD appeared to the woman, and said to her, "Behold now, you are barren, and bear not: but you shall conceive, and bear a son. Now therefore beware, I pray you, and drink not wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing: for, lo, you shall conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come on his head: for

the child shall be a Nazarite to God from the womb: and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines” (Judges 13:1-5).

Here the messenger of the Lord is speaking to Manoah’s wife about Samson, her future child. He was to be a Nazarite, and therefore the reason for the command that she was to follow the ceremonial prohibitions.

Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.
(Proverbs 20:1)

Unlike the previous passages, this text is not tied to any unique circumstance, but neither does it universally prohibit the drinking of alcohol. The verse is simply a warning concerning the potential dangers of strong drink. It is a caution against immoderate use.

Note a similar warning pattern found in I Corinthians 8:1.

Knowledge puffs up, but charity edifies.

The general warning of Proverbs 20:1 is that “*wine is a mocker.*”

The general warning of I Corinthians 8:1 is that “*knowledge puffs up.*”

Obviously we would not use the warning of I Corinthians 8:1 to prohibit knowledge. Neither should we use the warning of Proverbs 20:1 to prohibit alcohol. In some ways the drinking of wine and the acquisition of knowledge are similar, bringing certain responsibilities with them. Each can be used or abused. Both have their proper place, and the admonition is just to be careful.

The whole point is that alcohol has a *potential* ability to mock its abuser, just as knowledge has the *potential* to make its abuser arrogant. Not all who have knowledge are arrogant; neither are all who drink mocked.

Look not upon the wine when it is red, when it gives his color in the cup, when it moves itself aright. At the last it bites like a serpent, and stings like an adder.

(Proverbs 23:31-32)

This is one of the most frequently used “proof texts” for

the prohibition of alcohol. However, as with all texts, *context* is everything, for a text without a context is a *pretext*.

Proverbs 23 starts with the context of addiction: gluttony (“*given to appetite,*” :2) and materialism (“*labor not to be rich,*” :4), and then midway through the chapter the addictions of alcohol and gluttony are compared.

Be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh: for the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty (Proverbs 23:20-21).

Thus, we are prepared for the warning of :31 by :20-21. We then easily see that this is not a *general* prohibition of alcohol any more than :4 is one of increasing in wealth. Proverbs 23:31 and 23:4 must be understood in their contexts. There is a warning against the *abandoned thirst*, a *consuming ambition* to be rich, which is an addiction quite like that of the alcoholic. So, contextually we are dealing with addictions.

Even the *immediate context* is extremely clear: it’s a warning specifically to *abusers* of alcohol. The prohibitionist usually likes to quote :31-32 (as we did above). Yet, reading the previous two verses will bring the immediate context into perfect view.

Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has babbling? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? They who tarry long at the wine; they who go to seek mixed wine. Look not on the wine when it is red, when it gives his color in the cup, when it moves itself aright. At the last it bites like a serpent, and stings like an adder.

How could the context be clearer? The *abuse* of wine is in view here, not the *use*. The passage describes in detail the person it admonishes. This person clearly exhibits all of the characteristics of a drunkard: depression (“sorrow”), a contention and injuries (:29).

This passage is plainly concerned with those who “*linger long over wine*” (:30). Verses 33-35 describe the further effects of drunkenness: lack of judgment, deceitfulness (:33), disorientation (:34), and detachment, confusion and stupor (:35). Despite all of this they are addicted to its abuse (:35).

Of course, the *broader context* of Scripture *as a whole* clearly does not forbid the moderate partaking of “*wine or strong drink*” (Deuteronomy 14:26), or “*all sorts of*

wine” (Nehemiah 5:18). In fact, the gladdening effect of wine is quite acceptable before God.

[God brings forth] **wine which makes man’s heart glad** (Psalm 104:15).

*Go your way, eat your bread with joy, and **drink your wine with a merry heart**; for God now accepts your works* (Ecclesiastes 9:7).

*They of Ephraim shall be like a mighty man, and **their heart shall rejoice as through wine**: yea, their children shall see it, and be glad; their heart shall rejoice in the LORD* (Zechariah 10:7).

*The vine said to them, “Should I leave my **wine, which cheers God and man**, and go to be promoted over the trees?”* (Judges 9:13).

The goodness of God even mercifully prescribes wine and strong drink as sedatives under certain desperate conditions.

Give strong drink to him who is ready to perish, and wine to those who are of heavy hearts (Proverbs 31:6).

A LOOK AT SOME COMMON OBJECTIONS USED TO CONDEMN THE USE OF ALCOHOL

What About the Potential Alcoholic?

Prohibitionists express an objection to the use of alcohol because of the “potential alcoholic.” Certainly, different people have various levels of tolerance to alcohol; but such an objection is not raised by Scriptures. In fact, this objection actually questions the character of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, Who openly partook of wine (Luke 7:33-35) and changed the water into wine (John 2:1-11). Was He guilty of endangering those who were “potential alcoholics”? Did He leave a bad example for us? Are we somehow better than He?

Are we to avoid anything that someone potentially can abuse? Should we avoid food for the sake of the potential glutton?

How Much Is Too Much Alcohol?

It is clear that the believer must avoid drunkenness. The amount to cause drunkenness would, of course,

depend on the person, as different people have different tolerance levels; but obviously there is a difference between moderate and heavy drinking. Why else would God warn us against “much” drink, if it was impossible to draw such a distinction. The true issue is not actually the *amount* of alcohol consumed, but its *effect*.

To understand this issue better, we may simply ask a similar question: How much food is too much? At what point does one become a “glutton”? Should one avoid food altogether so as not to be in danger of being a “glutton”? This is the type of pointless reasoning employed when it comes to the issue of alcohol.

When I was young I used to hear it said that if it took ten drinks to make one drunk, then to take even a single drink would be to make one $\frac{1}{10}$ drunk. Of course the same course of ridiculous reasoning could be made for gluttony.

What About Alcohol’s Health Effects?

Surely the *abuse* of alcohol will be an abuse to the body. Again, the same is true of food. The key here is *use*, rather than *abuse*. Alcohol and food both can be *used* for improved health, or *abused* to its detriment.

It is not our purpose in this study to explore all of the health benefits of alcohol; after all, this is the **Bible Student’s Notebook** – not a health journal. Even so, Paul, our Apostle, clearly exhorts Timothy to *use* wine to better his health.

*Drink no longer water, but **use** a little wine for your stomach’s sake and your often infirmities* (I Timothy 5:23).

Our Creator – *the designer of our bodies* – surely ought to know if moderate alcohol *use* is detrimental to health under normal conditions, or whether it is one of His many gifts to mankind. On this point, those holding to prohibition actually call into question the integrity of God Himself and His Word; for as we have seen earlier in our study, the Scriptures plainly present the divinely benevolent nature of wine.

Obviously, the readers can also avail themselves of decades of various prominent research that demonstrates the many healthy benefits of the moderate use of alcohol.

What About Our “Christian Testimony”?

Prohibitionists argue that Christians should abstain from alcohol for the sake of a godly testimony. Again, this objection calls into question the actual character of God Who gave wine to mankind, and to the Son of God Himself Who openly produced and partook of wine. All of a sudden, this “godly” objection is brought into clear focus. A more “godly” testimony would *include* alcohol! For how much more “godly” can one get than God, and the Son of God?

Scriptural truth alone is what must determine the believer’s character and testimony. Mere human objection alone can’t restrict the believer from what Scriptures allow. We destroy instead of build our “testimony” if we promote a false religious morality – a standard that is “higher” than the Scriptures themselves, that actually stands in *contradiction* to Scripture. The scriptural testimony regarding alcohol is that of moderation.

Surely there is a truth taught by Paul regarding the believer’s liberty and the *destruction* of the weaker brother. This important truth concerning the outflow of love does not, however, change the fundamental truth of Scripture regarding alcohol or any other subject.

Even so, in those cases where temporary abstinence is prudent for the sake of a weaker brother, the goal of such must be for the truth of God in the believer’s liberty. When Paul became “*all things to all men*,” he did so with the long-range goal of bringing men into liberty. In I Corinthians 9:22 he writes,

To the weak I became weak.

AGITATE (continued from page 2696)

none can stay His hand (Daniel 4:35).

The “peace of God” that we possess has nothing to do with family, neighborhood, civil, social or national peace. The issue is that *our hearts* are aligned with God and His purpose, thus bringing quietness and peace to our hearts and to the very disposition of our lives.

No matter in what circumstances we may find ourselves, we can remain calm, peaceful and happy, knowing that Father is in *absolute* control. *THIS* is godly living. *THIS* is honest living – living in the truth that Father is completely in charge of all things. *THIS* “*godliness and honesty*” alone allows us to “*lead a quiet and peaceable life*.”

He did not do so to encourage them in their weakness, nor was he making it a permanent lifestyle. No! He continues,

To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak.

Paul’s temporary abstinence was so that he ultimately could teach the weaker brother their error and win them away from their weakness into true scriptural liberty.

For a more detailed look at the believer’s use of liberty, see the following studies:

- “**The Believer’s Liberty**” (*Bible Student’s Notebook*, #253, 254)
- “**Stumbling Over the Issue of Stumbling Blocks**” (*Bible Student’s Notebook*, #255)
- “**Abstain From All Appearance of Evil**” (*Bible Student’s Notebook*, #178).

CONCLUSION

Even though alcohol can be abused, this doesn’t need to be the case. Although this short study does not present all of the Scripture passages that could be considered on this subject, it does highlight a few that clearly show alcohol to be a benevolent gift from God for man’s enjoyment and benefit.

The LORD of hosts will prepare a lavish banquet for all people ... a banquet of aged wine, choice meat, and refined aged wine (Isaiah 25:6). ■

That we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty (I Timothy 2:2).

Our disposition towards “*all things*” and “*all men*” reflects our disposition toward God. A divinely aligned disposition will bring a change of quietness and peace to our life.

Many believers live in the turmoil created by the misjudging of the true source of “*all things*.” Government, politics, and economics are no exception. The political pundits agitate their spirits – displacing them from their God-given “*quiet and peaceable life*.” Do not give way to such a snare!

Don’t let them agitate your spirit! ■