

Christ and Alcohol

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[0 : 0 0] Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize?! So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. So I do not run aimlessly. I do not box as one beating the air, but I discipline my body and I keep it under control, lest after preaching to others, I myself should be disqualified. And we saw Paul and his attitude towards those who were lost, and we saw his, in this text, his self-denial and his self-control, ultimately for his joy. And kind of our focus in our study has been the last half of 22 and 23. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings. And so Paul, knowing that he's been liberated by Christ, he's still holding to the law of God in Christ, he's been liberated from the sacrificial system, but says still, even though I now can do some things that I couldn't have done before, I have self-control and I have self-denial that I might see people come to Christ.

And so we've been talking, we've been in this vein through this summer of our liberty and how it is as Christians we should be engaging our culture for the sake of the gospel. In fact, as some have said, changing our culture, seeing Christ come into people's lives and change who they are. And that's what we've been working through together, and we've talked about a number of things. We've talked about language, how it is that we should speak, art, sexuality. We've talked about patriotism, money. We talked about abortion and a number of other topics. And a lot of these topics have very simple black and white answers. Some don't. In some there is gray. Some darker grays than others. But there's a spot in between that causes us to rely on God in Christ, the spirit that dwells within us for the answers to some of these questions. And so today, not intentionally, with college students returning, but it's probably fitting, we're going to talk about Christ and alcohol. I'm using this as a hot issue to talk about all those things, all those liberties. So it doesn't just include this, but in order for us to unpack it, I didn't feel like I could also talk about how we eat and how we dress, how we adorn ourselves. But this is kind of the gray area sermon this morning. So read with me now. We're back in Matthew chapter 5, verses 17 through 20.

Our main text today will be in the book of Colossians, but I feel it's necessary for us to start here with the words of Christ in the Sermon on the Mount, beginning in verse 17. He says, Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have not come to abolish them, but to fulfill them. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Therefore, whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. So we have this interesting line to walk as we're set free in Christ from the law. How is it then that we're still beholden to the law? And Christ gives us some clues to that here, and that he came to fulfill it. It's we're able to keep the law in Christ himself. And we must understand what is it that Jesus Christ is talking about when he talks about the law? Because do you know that throughout the Old Testament there are a number of different types of law? There's not just the law, but there's the moral law, there's the ceremonial law, and there's the civil law or the judicial law. And the moral law is what is commonly, most commonly being spoken about in the New Testament. The moral law being the

Ten Commandments found in Exodus chapter 20. Jesus summarizes them for us, brings it down even simpler, those Ten Commandments, in Matthew chapter 22, verse 37 through 40, where he says, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, you shall love your neighbor

as yourself. On these two commandments depends all the law and the prophets. All right, so Jesus brings it down even simpler for us. Really the first four of the Ten Commandments are about the loving God with all your heart, with all your mind, with all your soul.

And the second to the last six commandments are about loving your neighbor as yourself, serving them properly. So he even simplifies it for us a bit more. And this is the law that Jesus is referring to here.

[5 : 21] This is the law that expresses God's character to mankind. In fact, God spoke these laws and he wrote them on the stone tablets that Moses brought down from the mountain with his very own finger.

These never change. We are to keep these laws, the moral law. And then the moral laws that were added to that by God throughout the scriptures were meant to point to, continue to bring us back to, further explain these Ten Commandments given to us. The ceremonial law was meant to be a picture, was meant to be a shadow, was meant to show, was meant to point back to the character of God, was meant to show God's people how very incapable they were of doing what God had asked them to do on their own. They couldn't do it. And that's what that was about. The sacrificial system over and over and over and over and over again. Sacrifice had to be made for the people because they transgress God's moral law. The temple was a very busy place. Blood flowed constantly. There was no furniture in the temple in God's very careful design of what the temple would look like. There were no places for priests to sit down. You know why? Because they didn't need a place to sit down. Because they were constantly at work making atonement for the sins of Israel. It is significant in Hebrews chapter 1 when the writer of Hebrews says that Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father.

To Jewish readers they would have said, whoa, because it meant that the sacrifice had been made once and for all. That's what Christ meant when he said, it is finished. The ceremonial law at that point was abolished. There was no need for it any longer because the perfect sacrifice had been made. So we have record of the ceremonial law. What purpose does it serve us now? To point to our inability and what is necessary to atone for our sins. Our inability to keep the law and what is required for us to be righteous before God. And that's found in Christ. It's a shadow of what was coming in Christ. And now we have that revelation. So we don't keep the ceremonial law any longer.

We don't have an altar here, right? Because we don't make sacrifice any longer. Jesus Christ made that sacrifice and it's finished. And then there's the civil law or the judicial law. At the time, they were living under a theocracy. God ruled over Israel. And so all of those civil laws, the judicial laws, things like if a child is disobedient to his parents, you're to take him out to the gate and stone him to death. Things like that were meant to show us how seriously God takes sin. I would not suggest now we punish disobedient children in the same way. Although God still requires that children be obedient to their parents. We should still be pressing our children to do that.

Children, you should be keeping that law. But we don't punish it the same way because the government that God's placed over us, which we're told to obey, would not like it if we stoned our children.

[8 : 38] So we're then freed from that. So here's what Jesus is talking about. He's saying he has come and he's bringing to us power to give us righteousness that we might keep God's moral law. So we're set free in Christ. We have liberty from some of these things, but we're also held to an incredibly high standard. So you have to hear me today as we talk through this issue. I want you to recognize your liberty, but I don't want you to be licentious with it. But I also don't want you to become legalistic. And that's the two sides of this tightrope we can fall off of. It is a tightrope.

Most of theology is. And we have to work to stay on it. If you're going to fall off one side or the other, you're going to become legalistic or you're going to become licentious. And we don't want that to be the case in your life. So join me. I'm going to lead us in prayer. And then we're going to dive into Colossians chapter 2. Don't turn there yet, but let's pray together and then we'll do that.

Father God, I love you. And I thank you so much for the great love that you've shown me in Christ. I thank you for these people who have a desire to come together on a Sunday morning and study from your word. And I pray, Father, that you will bless that as they've been drawn here by you, that you will speak to all of our hearts. And as we talk about an issue that certainly we have to be careful with, I pray, God, that no one misunderstands what you intend for us to do with this topic. Pray that none of us become licentious. None of us become legalistic. And I pray all this in Christ's name.

Amen. All right. So Colossians chapter 2. This is where we're going to camp a little bit. I used to work for Truett McConnell College and Truett McConnell gave me a computer that I could use. And so my typical habit was to type notes and print them, have them available. And when I stopped working there, I no longer had the computer. And so I went and bought myself an iPad because I figured most things I do, I can do on it. But copying and pasting text out of my ESV study Bible on the iPad, I can't do. So we're going to turn more today than we ever do because I have to get there to see it. So I hope that's okay with you. All right.

So Colossians chapter 2. We're going to start reading in verse 16. Therefore, let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind and not holding fast to the head from whom the whole body nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments grows with a growth that is from God. If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations? Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch, referring to things that all perish as they are used according to human precepts and teachings. These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they have no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh. And my main concern, what I want to talk about primarily, is something that plagues us all. We all have the danger of slipping into legalism. It is rampant. You may not know this because we don't have it on our sign, but we're a Southern Baptist church. Southern Baptists are legalistic about the topic of alcohol. I think probably every Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting, and probably every Georgia Baptist Convention annual meeting, there's a new resolution passed against alcohol. I don't know why they keep doing it, as if they haven't made the point before. They just continue to pass a new resolution that Southern Baptists do not drink alcohol. And it's fairly legalistic, and my fear with that is that legalism says that you should look like me, not you should look like Christ. Legalism is rooted in a self-reliance and not in the grace of God and Christ. On the one hand, legalism means treating biblical standards of conduct as regulations to be kept by our own power in order to earn God's favor. On the other hand, it means erecting specific requirements of conduct beyond the teaching of Scripture, and making adherence to them the means by which a person is qualified for full participation in the local family of God, or the church. In the first case, we use our own power to make ourselves moral. In the second case, we use our own power to make the church moral. In the first case, we rally, we fail to rely on the power of God for our own sanctification. In the second, we fail to rely on the power of God for the sanctification of others. And that is the danger. [13:59] It is rooted, legalism is rooted in unbelief. It's rooted in unbelief that God will complete the good work that he began. That's Philippians 1.6. In Philippians, Paul is confident. He tells the Philippian believers that they will be perfected one day. He's not doubting God's work in their life.

He even says that if God hasn't yet revealed this to you, he will. What I'm telling you now, you should believe to be true about the gospel. If he hasn't yet revealed it to you because you're his children, he will. He had a sure confidence and therefore was not a legalist. So the redemptive work of Christ has set us free from legalism. We don't have to be that way. We don't, aren't meant to live under our own power anymore. We're meant to live in full reliance on the grace of God. And so in light of the redemptive work of Christ, I want to show you five things from our text this morning, right? Five things. Number one, what a person eats or drinks is not a basis for final judgment. What a person eats or drinks is not a basis for final judgment. The only basis for final judgment where somebody will end up for eternity is whether or not they're found in Christ. Whether or not they have saving faith in the one, the one way back to God. When they stand before God and are judged, are they clothed in Christ's righteousness and seen as holy? Or are they not? And all of their sin is exposed. That is the only basis for final judgment. Now, those of us in Christ are meant to live holy lives, right? The evidence of who we are, of where our faith is, is our work. So we're not saved by our work, but our work shows that we're saved. So we must handle things like this carefully. So ultimately, we're not judged for this.

Verse 16, let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. But however, what and how a person eats or drinks, dresses, matters.

Paul speaks to it. Ephesians 5, 18 says, do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery or an abandonment of that which is life. Prodigality, it's licentious, to be drunk with wine. There are strong warnings all throughout scripture about wine. One example, Proverbs 21, says, wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise. But it says, whoever is led astray by it is not wise. It doesn't say whoever partakes of it is not wise. And I am not willing to make a regulation for you as an individual, for us as a church, that's not in the scriptures. That would be isogesis. That would be reading in the scripture what we want it to say, not reading out of scripture what it actually says about the topic. So there's strong warning. We certainly should be very careful with how we handle alcohol, but we cannot make it a law that you cannot drink. This is going up on our website. I'm sure I'm going to get in all kinds of trouble if anybody in the SBC ever discovers us. I doubt they will, but to say such a thing. But here's the deal, all right? But here's the deal. We could take this a step further, and I want you to turn with me to 1 Corinthians. Put your finger, put your Bible marker, 1 Corinthians chapter 8. Which does not speak specifically to the issue of alcohol, but to food being offered to idols.

[18:01] And the Jews avoided this at all costs. Okay? But the gospel liberated them to eat meat that had been offered to idols. It was offered to idols and sold in the marketplace, and Paul's writing about that, and the principle applies. Chapter 8, beginning in verse 8. Food will not commend us to God. What we eat, what we don't eat, what we drink, what we don't drink. Food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. But take care that this right of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will he not be encouraged. If his conscience is weak to eat food offered to idols. And so by your knowledge, this weak person is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died. Thus sinning against your brothers and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.

So what is Paul saying there in 1 Corinthians? He is saying, if somebody else has an issue with it, should you do it?

1 Corinthians chapter 9. Paul said, to the weak, I have become weak. And that could be frustrating. That could be really frustrating, because we don't want to be judged for things we do that we've been given the liberty to do that we would like to enjoy. But more than that, I want to experience the advance of the gospel. I want to see people come to know Christ and share with them in its blessing.

So what's more valuable to me, that people come to know Christ and I can share in that blessing forever, or a drink on a Saturday night? Put those on a scale, right? I don't drink because of my position, primarily. I don't want anybody to come here and not hear what I'm saying, because they may have seen me out at a restaurant the night before. It's just not worth it to me. But even with that, even with 1 Corinthians chapter 8, Paul's saying, be very, very careful. It's not worth it. If you have any doubt in your mind about whether or not you should be doing the thing you're doing, don't do it. I think our congregation as a whole should barely ever drink. We certainly should never be known for it, right? And there are congregations that are known for it. We must be so, so careful, and not in our self-denial and our self-sacrifice, not that we're really ultimately missing out on anything, right? Because there's greater blessing stored up for us as we live to Christ. Now, as a caveat, there's a lot of young people in the room, and I don't know all of you. I would presume that many of you are under the age of 21, I am not giving you permission to go drink. It is illegal for you to do that, all right? We could be talking about, you know, people will say, you know, look at all the things alcohol does, all the things it causes, all the alcoholism, which is rampant in our society. There's no doubt about that. It does, it can have unhealthy effects, but you could also argue that it has some healthy effects. I've heard many studies on glass of wine a day, fending off heart disease, and things of that sort. So, you can make that argument either way. You could carry the same argument to cars. People die in cars all the time. Should we all stop driving? No, we shouldn't stop driving. We should be careful when we drive, but if you're under 16, you shouldn't drive, right? Because the law doesn't allow that to happen. I can remember being in high school and having kind of an open discussion high school, Sunday school class, and this is like the only issue that anybody wanted to talk about. And the main guy that was making the argument, I have a horrible memory, but I can remember him. His name was Rob, and he really, really, really wanted permission from our Sunday school teacher to drink. He really wanted the Sunday school teacher just to say, you're

right, you're right. There is no commandment. There is no black and white on the issue. It's a gray one. He really wanted him to say that, and to the point of annoyance on my part, and I finally just said, Rob, you're 17.

[22 : 11] Think about it in four years. It doesn't matter right now. That makes no difference. So if you're under 21, stop thinking I'm giving you permission, because I'm definitely, definitely not. So it's not the basis for final judgment, okay? Number two, second implication, the redemptive work of Christ that we can find here in Book of Colossians chapter 2. The fullness of deity dwells in Christ, not in our practice. Verse 17 and 18, these are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. Let no one disqualify you insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, and puffed up without reason by his sententious mind. As is always the case, there's false teaching in the church. And from the beginning, the beginning of remittance of history to now, there's false teaching in the church. And what was going on in the church of Colossae was that they were being led to very strict regulations, man-made regulations, that's the asceticism part, and then the worship of angels. And it was false, and it caused these people to be puffed up and to think that they could accomplish holiness on their own, and it's bad, bad theology. Paul writes to the Galatians in chapter 3, having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? The particular wrong teaching there was circumcision. The Jews were coming and saying, for you to be holy, Christ is good, we like that, but let's add to that circumcision. It was no longer the case. Paul actually said in chapter 5, verse 1 of Galatians, for freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. He says in Galatians, if you're circumcised, Christ is of no value to you.

You think you can earn your salvation by the work that you do? Christ is of no value at all. So the fullness of deity dwells in Christ. You can see Colossians chapter 2, verse 9.

For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in him who is the head of all rule and all authority. That has nothing to do with your action. It has everything to do with his. He died for your sin that he might make you perfect in him, and you have been filled in him. I heard a super cool analogy, simple analogy, talking about the us in Christ and Christ in us, and how that works out. This guy, great, funny guy, talked about Christ being the ocean.

The ocean is the ocean, whether or not we have anything to do with it. The ocean is the ocean. We're like a cup floating in the ocean, like a Dixie cup floating in the ocean. It's got that little rolled corner, so it's got air in it, and it tends to float. We don't change the state of the ocean by any means, but the ocean's in us, and we're in the ocean. And that's kind of a picture. I want to make you feel pitiful by being a Dixie cup, but that's the picture of what's going on. We are found in Christ, and our righteousness is in him, not in what we do. He possesses all deity. Thirdly, third implication of Christ's redemptive work. The source of life and purity and growth is through holding fast to Christ.

So we're called to that. We're called to grow in our faith. We're called to progress towards perfection. That's the fancy word for that is sanctification. We're meant to be putting off the old self, Colossians chapter 3, putting on the new self. We're supposed to become more perfect. We're supposed to hate sin more and love righteousness more. That's a process that's going on in our lives, but the solution to it is not legalism. It's not erecting a bunch of rules that aren't found in the scriptures. The source of that, life, purity, and growth, is through holding fast to Christ. So here's these false teachers we saw in 17 and 18, and then in verse 19, and they're not holding fast to the head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God. That's the source. Jesus Christ is where all righteousness comes from. So we go on in Colossians. Man-made, subtitles, chapter headings, verses. Those were not inspired. Chapter 3, keep reading. If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Then he goes on to tell us, beginning in verse 5, put to death the following things in your life. In verse 12, put on then, as God's chosen ones, these things, right? We cleave to Christ. We hold to him so tightly that these other issues are all sorted out for us. The issue of alcohol in your life. If you will hold tight to Christ, he will give you the answer in every moment, in every situation. Right now, I don't drink. Will that be the case forever? Probably, but I don't know. I don't know. I've got to ask that question. Sam and I might go on a fantastic vacation one day on a cruise line. I might think, this is the place I

think it'd be appropriate for me to have a drink. I'll ask. That's all you have to do, right? We have a relationship with the most holy God. Is this an appropriate time, God? Would this be a good thing? [28 : 04] Would this honor you? No? Okay. Moving on to tomorrow. Yes? Well, great. Thank you for the good thing to enjoy. I will drink it to your glory. It's a famous story about Charles Spurgeon, which I absolutely love. It's also a story about the danger of turning the pulpit over to somebody that you don't really know. He preached a sermon on little sins and how little sins tend to amass themselves into bigger sin, more licentious sinning. And he was going to give a few moments to a visiting pastor, and the pastor got up and talked very legalistically against the smoking of cigars.

And if you know much about Charles Spurgeon, you know that he really liked to smoke cigars. In fact, one time he was asked how much smoking was too much smoking. And he said, well, two cigars at one time would be in excess. He liked his cigars. And the congregation knew that. I mean, so there's this man up there railing against the smoking of cigars. And the congregation knew this about him. So he stood up and he said, I just need to clear the air and say to you that I have no problem with the smoking of cigars, that it is not a sin. In fact, I'm going to go home this evening and smoke a cigar of the glory of God before I go to bed. Now, in kind of reading about that, you know, this day we have the tool of the blog, which serves some purpose, but I think more often than not it's harmful to the church. And I hate how quickly the articles go out there and the responses to the articles, and it's all so distant and people don't really know each other. That happened back then, too. Newspaper writers came to large churches and wrote articles about the sermons and what was preached, and people responded in letter. It took a little more time than it takes. You can have a whole kerfuffle explode and die down in a week with our current technology, but it happened back then, too. And I discovered that he actually ended up apologizing for the statement because he had popularized in the following months the phrase, I smoke cigars for the glory of God. And he felt like he had given people permission just to do it, just to go off and smoke, and that was the right thing to do. And he clarified his stance to say that we must carefully consider what we do, what we don't do to honor God. He said, it's okay for me. My conscience is clean about the smoking of cigars, but it may not be for you. And the apology letter was actually really beautifully written. So a really great story about that. So the source of life and purity and growth is through holding fast to Christ and not through man-made regulations. Fourth implication. Those who erect regulations do not know what it means to die with Christ. Those who erect regulations do not know what it means to die with Christ. And that means one of two things. Either they never have, they've never placed their faith in Christ and died in him to the world. That's a possibility. You find sitting here that you have kind of a legalistic mind. That that's what you strive for. You're just kind of trying to amass the rules. You're just trying to figure out exactly how it is that you think God wants you to live, to be seen good in his eyes. You probably haven't died with Christ. You don't actually understand what it means to be given the grace of God in Christ. That you could have done nothing apart from him to earn his favor. And that all that favor is bestowed on you because Jesus Christ died for your sins, bore the wrath of God for your sins that you've committed, that you're currently committing. Even in this room right now, I'm sure we're sinning in some way, some of us, or going to. All that past, present, future Christ died for, it is finished. There's a chance you've never placed your faith in him. Or, if you have, you forget the gospel. We do that. All of us do that. None of us are immune to this. We have to preach the gospel to ourselves every day, every moment of every day, remembering what God has done for us in Christ so that we don't do this, so we don't erect regulations. That is what our flesh wants.

That is what Satan wants. Satan wants us to think we can do it on our own. Because he knows if he gets us in that position, that's what we're going to do. And we're going to be totally fruitless. Joyless, fruitless, nothing is going to happen for the kingdom if it's us, depending on us. Now, us depending on God, nothing can stop that. So that's what's going on in your life if you're erecting these regulations. Because these people don't know what it means to die with Christ. Verse 20 through 22, if with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why? As if you were still alive in the world, you submit to regulations. Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch, referring to things that all perish as they are used. He's basically saying these are elemental worldly things. They don't matter anymore according to human precepts and teachings. Why do you do that? It's because you've forgotten the gospel. That's the answer to that question. You've forgotten that you depend on God for everything.

[33 : 28] Number five, legalism is a distraction from holiness. It may not seem that way on the surface. I can remember in kind of some crisis of faith in my life asking the question, why didn't God just make it simpler? Why didn't he just give us, give us the rules? Why does his book even need to be so big? Couldn't he just pass down a list and say, live this way? And I was totally missing the point. Totally missing the point.

Because I thought I could do it. God gives me the list. I can figure it out. God doesn't give us the list because he wants us to depend on him. He wants there to be gray. The gray is healthy for us. Because if we want to live righteously, we will ask the questions. We will come close to him. We will hold fast to him. Because there's no way to find the answer to some of these questions on our own. We can't do it.

So we will, in fact, cleave to him. Verse 23 says, these have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh. That's really clear, isn't it? The regulations that we erect that are outside of scripture, or thinking that we can accomplish the standard we're held to in scripture, either way, is of no value. You could be the strictest. You could be on the outside, the exterior. You could look so moral. Take the Pharisees, for example. They kept the law from everybody's perspective. Everybody looking at it said, if anybody's doing it right, it's them.

They have got it figured out. They had all those hedge laws. They were keeping those laws. What did Christ say about them? They're whitewashed tombs, pretty on the outside, looking good in appearance, but full of dead men's bones. They weren't actually keeping the law of God. They just looked like they were. And that's what we do when we become legalistic, is we build up for ourselves a self-righteousness that's not sourced from Christ. It's of no value. Legalism is a distraction from holiness. And that's why I'm not willing to be legalistic. The issue of alcohol, as my example this morning, I will not say to you, you cannot drink. I will say to you, you probably shouldn't.

There's some good warnings about alcohol. Our culture is kind of hypercharged on this issue right now. We probably should all be setting ourselves aside and not drinking. But I can't tell you not to, because it would be legalistic. And there's a great, great danger in that. John Piper wrote of this text, wherever happy confidence in the sovereign power of God for our own lives and the lives of others grows, weak legalism creeps in. So wherever we're happy and confident that God is leading us and taking us where we should go, teaching us what we need to learn, guiding our lives, wherever that kind of joy exists, weak legalism creeps in. For we inevitably try to compensate for loss of dynamic faith by increased moral resolve and the addition of man-made regulations. But wherever joyful confidence in the power of God is waning, the flesh is waxing. So wherever the confidence in God is falling off, the flesh presses right on.

[37 : 07] Which means that the very morality that we had hoped would save ourselves and the very regulations we hoped would purify our church fall victim to the massive power of the flesh and become its instruments of self-reliance and self-sufficiency. So let us not be individuals and let us not be a church that's legalistic.

Let us also not be a church and individuals that are licentious. Let us pray. Let us draw closer to God through his word and through meeting with the people of God that our church will be purified by Christ.

Let us have a confidence in him that that will happen. Because for all that God asks, he provides. We have to hold on to that. We cannot believe we can accomplish it on our own because it's counter-gospel.

And if we do, Jesus Christ is of no value to us. Join me in prayer.