

THE GUIDELINE

Psalms 31:3

PHINEAS GAGE

Who was Phineas Gage? “On a September afternoon in 1848 in the little town of Cavendish, Vermont, Phineas P. Gage, a 25-year-old railroad gang foreman, had placed a charge of blasting powder and a fuse into a hole in some rock. He then began to gently tamp the charge and the inserted fuse with a three-foot-long tamping rod. Distracted, Gage turned his head to check his crew when the rod struck the rock, producing a spark and setting off the blasting powder. Instantly the rod shot through Gage’s grip, entered his head at the jaw, tore through his brain, exited from the top of his head, just behind his forehead, and flew many yards beyond Gage. Thrown back by the blast, Gage gave a few convulsive movements, but in a few minutes, he was able to speak to the men who had anxiously gathered around him. Carried to an ox-drawn cart, he sat up and remained conscious throughout the ride to town. He was taken to his hotel three-fourths of a mile away, where, according to the physician’s report, he was able to walk with little assistance up a long flight of stairs and down a long hallway to his room. Two country doctors cared for him there until his physical recovery, which took two and a half months.

Prior to his accident, Gage was described as a man of medium stature, athletic build, temperate habits, and considerable character. After the accident, though his body healed physically, it became apparent that Phineas Gage, the well-respected foreman, was no longer the man his crew had known. In the words of his physician, Dr. J. M. Harlow, “the equilibrium, or balance, so to speak, between his **intellectual faculties** (emp jc) and animal propensities seems to have been destroyed. He is fitful, irreverent, indulging at times in the grossest profanity (which was not previously his custom), manifesting little deference for his fellows, impatient of restraint or advice when it conflicts with his desires, In this regard, his mind was radically changed, so decidedly that his friends and acquaintances said he was no longer Gage.” (Taken in part from Ministry Magazine 1986)

This terrible accident and Phineas’ strange behavioral patterns sparked a great study in the field of neuroscience that revealed how important the frontal lobes of the brain (located directly behind the forehead) were to one’s moral judgments and character revolutionizing neurophysiology and other fields of neuroscience.

Like the neurological studies mentioned above concerning Mr. Gage’s injuries, countless medical and neurological studies have been conducted on a different type of brain injury—the effects of alcohol on the brain. It has been shown that within minutes of imbibing alcohol it enters the bloodstream and once it reaches the brain it immediately begins slowing down its activity. **The frontal lobe of the brain**, which controls our judgment and inhibitions, is **greatly affected**. Very small amounts of alcohol can cause dysfunction in the brain. One researcher said, “Even a single alcohol drink may seriously impair one’s ability to pay attention to more than one thing at a time.” (Melvin H. Kinsley)

Why would a small amount (let’s say one beer) have such an effect on one’s brain? Have you ever thought about what is in beer? Beer **always** contains the **narcotic** Alcohol. This is ethyl alcohol and it is the main intoxicant found in the beverage. It might be good to think about the word “intoxicant” and pay attention to the word “toxic” tucked away within and rightly so because beer often contains a few more chemicals other than ethyl for one to imbibe. Potassium Metabisulfite a type of bleach, Tartaric acid sometimes used in laxatives, Papain—a good wart remover, Magnesium sulfate which can cause respiratory problems, Dextrin which makes the pretty bubbles in beer but is also used to manufacture fireworks and explosives, Tannic Acid which is used to tan cow hides and make ink are all known possible ingredients. Would any sane person, especially one who claims to be a Christian, want to put these things in their body? Thousands do and sadly many Christians try to defend the partaking of such!

Much more can be said from a scientific standpoint about alcohol, but I want to look at some Bible passages that will help us see the strong force with which God speaks against the evil of drinking intoxicants. “*And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard: And he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent.*” (Genesis 9:20-21) The combination of the warming sensation and the loss of inhibition

through drinking wine caused Noah to fling off his clothing, pass out, and allow himself to be found naked and uncovered for all to see. This is not the end of that story because the Bible tells us that his own son Ham found him and somehow took a sinful pleasure in the situation which prompted a Hamitic curse. One is surely led to wonder if things would have turned out differently had Noah not taken that first drink! The lessons we should learn from this are many, but one would be how Noah, through drunkenness, lost control of his inhibitions. Another example of how drinking can change one's demeanor is found in 1 Samuel 25:36, *"And Abigail came to Nabal; and, behold, he held a feast in his house, like the feast of a king; and Nabal's heart was merry within him, for he was very drunken: wherefore she told him nothing, less or more, until the morning light."* Here was a man whose wife had basically saved his life, but she could not inform him of such due undoubtedly to his drunken nature. He was a fool and full of folly! In a fiendish plot to cover up adultery David also understood the numbing nature of the drink, *"And when David had called him, he did eat and drink before him; and he made him drunk: and at even he went out to lie on his bed with the servants of his lord, but went not down to his house."* (2 Samuel 11:13) No doubt, David thought that making Uriah drunk might weaken his inhibitions and that he would lie with his wife going against his pledge. In order for Kings not to "forget the law", the wise prohibition for Kings to abstain from drinking "wine" or the fermented juice of other fruits called "strong drink" is enjoined (Proverbs 31:4-5). These are a few prohibitive passages that show the awful effect that alcohol has on the mind. I will close with something for all those who believe it is permissible to have an occasional sip, "When a person imbibes any amount of alcoholic drinks, according to the definition of the biblical term "methusko" and the determinations of medical science, they are softened, intoxicated, and drunk to that degree. There is absolutely no other basis upon which drunkenness can be properly determined....., Those who hold that social drinking is permissible, despite both biblical and scientific evidence to the contrary, cannot successfully deny that persons do not know their personal limit of resistance until they indulge. A leading medical journal indicates, 'Blood alcohol of 1/10 of one percent can be accepted as prima facie evidence of alcohol intoxication recognizing that many individuals are under the influence in the 5/100 of one percent range...' There is no minimum(blood-alcohol concentration) which can be set at which there will be absolutely no effect." (W.D. Jeffcoat pg. 97-98) What



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does this mean? If you drink one beer you are impaired to that degree. There is no such thing as not being drunk if you drink any alcohol whatsoever! Consider this, 1. Will it make you a better Christian? 2. Do you want your children to do it? 3. Will it help you lead others to Christ? 4. Would Jesus do it? 5. Can I do it in the name of the Lord? 6. *"And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares."* (Luke 21:34)†

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