

Applying Colossians to the Problem of Addiction, Part 3

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I. Introduction

The issue of addiction is complicated; it has many facets. However, your starting point will determine your end-game. If you believe that at its core addiction is a disease, then you will forever see the addict as a victim. You may hold them accountable for their behavior, but underneath that is the realization that they are victims of a disease. If you believe that at its core addiction is a sin, then you will take control away from the addictive substance and give it back to the addict.

II. If Alcohol is a Blessing from God, Should a Guy Who's Been Sober 30 yrs. Drink?

If his sobriety is due to his own will power and he sees alcoholism as a disease, the answer is, “NO!” Though alcohol is indeed a blessing from God, (Deut. 14:26; Ecc. 8:15) it would be sin to offer someone a drink who's been sober by their own will power and thought of alcoholism as a disease. Why? Because it would be enticing them to go near a sin, which they think they cannot control.

If he's been sober because he saw his addiction as sin and God liberated him from it and now he properly understands the use of alcohol, then the answer is, “It depends.” If the individual has dealt with every underlying issue regarding his addiction (from why he started to why he continued it) with the understanding that all of it revolved around his choice to sin, and he now properly understands alcohol as a blessing, then based on this he's got two options:

- (1) He can choose to drink and no one can judge him for it because it's not a sin to drink and God gives him the freedom to drink (or not), Rom. 14:1–13.
- (2) He can choose never to drink again. If God has freed his conscience enough to drink again, but he decides not to, then he's got a right not to and no one can judge him for it, Rom. 14:1–13; Col. 2:16.

III. Doesn't Experience Reveal That Addiction is a Disease?

A. Man's Experience Tells Him that Addiction is a Disease

It's not hard to understand why man comes to this conclusion after seeing individuals time and again go back to their addiction, even after being told that if they do, they will die.

B. God's Says that It is a Sin

Man's sinful heart, when God created man, He made him free of sin. One day he decided to live by his own rules, so he sinned. This is the nature of all sin. When God says, "No," and we say, "Yes," we set our authority above His and live according to our rules, including when we say "yes" to getting drunk.

At its core, habitual sin, addiction, is really that simple. Are there complicated issues behind addiction? Yes, there always are; life brings with it misery. But how we react to it is our choice.

How can a Christian contradict man's conclusion that addiction is a disease? If Jesus is Lord, then He's Lord over all issues of which He speaks, including addiction. If He says that it's a sin, then this is to be the Christian's starting point.

Does God understand that the addict feels enslaved? Yes, He does. He knows that the addict feels an uncontrollable lust for more, Prov. 23:35; Eph. 4:19, which then enslaves him, Jn. 8:34.

The nature of sin: it feels like a disease, but you decide whether or not it will control you. The sinner is both in-control and out-of-control. Sin wants to dominate him, but he's supposed to rule over it, Gen. 4:7. Sin feels like a disease because it's *like* a disease, Isa. 1:5–6. It is powerful, Rom. 7:15–19, but it cannot enslave you unless you let it, Rom. 6:1–2, 6–7, 12–14.

God understands the physical aspects of sin, that it feels like a disease. But sin goes much deeper than this, which is why God takes you to its core so that you can indeed overcome it. He's delivered others out of addictive sin (1 Cor. 6:7–11; Col. 3:5–7; 1:4, 6), He can deliver you. And He's made a promise: no matter how great the temptation might feel, He will not allow it to overcome you, 1 Cor. 10:13.

IV. Isn't There Evidence That Man's Solution to Addiction Works?

Is man's solution temporary? The question is not whether man's solution can provide an addict a lifetime of sobriety. The question is whether or not man's solution can set him free from his addiction.

There have been individuals who've achieved a lifetime of sobriety through AA or such programs. But they are not free from the threat of their addiction. Why? Because by definition it's a disease that will always remain a threat.

Does eternity matter? Man's solution may provide a non-Christian a lifetime of sobriety and this is a good thing. However, does it help him in eternity? Though it's a good work and God records it as such, it will not save him from the lake of fire, Rev. 20:11–15 (Matt. 19:16–17—God's definition of *good*).

If this is a Christian, this good work achieved by his own will power cannot please God, Rom. 8:8; it will be burnt up and cost him rewards, 1 Cor. 3:12–15.¹

Thus, when it comes to man's solution vs. God's and eternity, there's a colossal difference between man's solution and God's. Achieving sobriety through your own will power may grant you a sober life, but it will not save you from the lake of fire or provide you rewards in eternity.

God wants to give you more than sobriety. He wants to give you an abundant life (Jn. 10:10) you can enjoy in spite of (and with) the same problems and trials, but without being enslaved by them in the process. And in the end, He wants to see you stand victorious in glory as part of His Son's Body, Col. 1:22; 3:4.

¹ A Christian's good works are judged, but only to determine whether or not they'll receive rewards, 1 Cor. 3:12–15. Further, John 5:24 reveals that those who believe in Christ will not face the judgment of Revelation 20:11–15.

V. As a Christian Struggling with Addiction, What is Your Identity?

A. Do You Identify with Your Sin of Addiction?

My name is Bob and I am an alcoholic. Because man's solution begins by seeing addiction as a disease, the only identity it can provide is that of an addict.

B. Or Do You Identify with Your Position in Christ?

My name is Bob and I am a Christian struggling with the sin of addiction. If you're a Christian struggling with addiction your identity should always be with your position in Christ. Thus, you are a Christian struggling with a sin.

My name is Bob; I am a Christian and I'm here to help those struggling with the sin of addiction. After you've overcome your addiction, you should not be speaking as if you are still struggling with the sin of addiction. If you are still participating in a recovery program because this has now become your ministry, then identify yourself as such, as a believer helping other believers struggling with a sin. To do otherwise is to give the sin of addiction power it should never have, Rom. 6:1–7, 12–14.

As Christians what we say and do reveals the philosophy we follow: God's or man's. If God has told us to get rid of our former sins because this is no longer our identity, Col. 3:8–10, we should not be identifying ourselves with any sin.

VI. Conclusion

God understands the enslavement the addict feels, how his addiction makes him do things that are seemingly out of his control regardless of the consequences. This is why when God talks about addiction He goes far beyond its physical effects because its core lies beyond the physical. At its heart addiction is habitual sin out of control. However, God desires not only to deliver you from your addiction, He wants to give you a life that's full in spite of its trials and tribulations. He wants to give you the capacity to deal with every tribulation without being enslaved by them and in the end to see you stand in glory, Col. 3:4.