

# Applying Colossians to the Problem of Addiction, Part 1

Ricardo Campos, Teaching Elder Grace Chapel, Orange, CA May 9, 2010

## I. Introduction

Addiction is not restricted to the unbeliever. It's also a problem that many Christians face today. What is God's view of addiction and what is man's? Is addiction something you're born with; if so, how can God judge you for it? What is man's solution to addiction, what is God's? Is there a *permanent* solution? What does Colossians have to contribute to the topic? Did God deliver the Colossians from their "addictions"?

## II. God's View of Addiction vs. Man's View of Addiction

### A. How Does Man Look at an Addiction like Alcoholism?

In 1956 the AMA declared alcoholism an illness. More recently man's been searching for the "alcohol gene." The NIAAA (who believes alcoholism is a disease) says this in a publication titled Alcohol Alert No. 18, The Genetics of Alcoholism: *Success in uncovering the genes involved in a vulnerability to alcoholism will help us to recognize the potential for alcoholism in high-risk individuals, to intervene at an early stage, and to develop new treatments for alcohol-related problems. This is a productive area of research that will continue to yield important answers to the basic questions of what causes alcoholism and how we can prevent and treat it.*<sup>1</sup>

Labelling alcoholism a disease leads man (and it MUST) to see the addict as a victim. It's not his fault that he's an addict; he's got a disease. Though organizations like AA have been helpful to many and even have some biblical principles, they fail because they see alcoholism as a disease and not a sin. This prevents them from dealing with the actual problem: the individual's sinfulness.

### B. How Does God View Alcoholism or any Other Addiction?

#### **Alcohol is not to be an addictive substance, but a blessing from God.**

Though AA would tell you otherwise, alcohol is a blessing from God: He tells Israel that they can enjoy alcohol as they celebrate the pilgrimage feasts, Deut. 14:26. In Ecc. 8:15 God says "eat, drink, and be merry," drink refers to wine or another alcoholic beverage. In Jn. 2:9, Jesus made wine for all to drink at the wedding feast. Undoubtedly some got drunk off that wine. Who would God hold accountable for this, Jesus for making the wine or the individuals themselves for drinking too much?

If alcohol is a blessing from God, then man has one of two options concerning God and alcoholism: either God is a sadist for giving man a disease and the means (alcohol) to get addicted or God is a loving God who blessed man with alcohol, but holds him accountable when he abuses the blessing He gave him.

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/aa18.htm>

If you're an alcoholic, don't misinterpret God's blessing as Him giving you an excuse to get drunk. He expressly tells you not to get drunk, Eph. 5:18. And if it's a long time before your conscience allows you to touch alcohol, that's OK. But once God frees your conscience enough to touch alcohol, then no one can judge you for drinking, Col. 2:16, or not drinking, Rom. 14:1-13.

**If alcohol is OK, where does alcoholism come from; is it in the genes?** As of yet, man hasn't found the "alcohol gene." However, does man need a "gene" to tell him there's something wrong with him? We have Adam's sin nature, Rom. 5:12, we shouldn't be surprised when we sin. All of us were born not wanting to obey God, Ps. 14:1-3. This is what's at the heart of every addiction: our own sinful desires and rebellion against God.

**But you don't understand, I CANNOT control this!** Your addiction may *feel* like a disease, but it's not. You may have conditioned your body to crave a drug because of long-term abuse. But even this doesn't give you a pass with God because every addiction begins and continues with a choice, a choice that you can overcome despite what you've been told. In fact, everyone's familiar with addiction because we're all addicted to sin, Rom. 7:13-24.

**Alcoholism is a sin problem not a genetic one?** There are several examples in Scripture that reveal this: Gen. 9:20-27, an entire race of people cursed to serve another because one guy got drunk. 1 Cor. 11:21, Paul condemns the Corinthians for defiling the Lord's Table with drunkenness and God kills some of them for it, 11:30. Gal. 5:21, drunkenness robs you of your inheritance. Eph. 5:18, drunkenness is clearly a sin.

**Thus, addiction is a sin, a sin of our choosing.** Addiction starts with a choice, then it turns on us. We choose our addiction, then our addiction chooses us and by then it's got a death grip on us. But it's a sin and like all sin it starts with our own sinful desires, Jam 1:14-15. Addiction is common to all of us because when it comes to sin, we all want what we want and we could care less about the consequences. This is the very nature of sin. If you tell an addict that he's got a disease, then you CANNOT address the real issue: his sinfulness, because by definition it's not his fault; he's got a disease.

**Does God understand the nature of addiction?** He knows your addiction better than you. He knows your constant suffering, how deceitfully attractive your addiction looks to you, how it destroys your life, how it makes you do and say things you don't want, how it makes you put your life in danger, how you still crave it even after you've suffered life and limb, Prov. 23:29-35.

**What is addiction in the end?** When you habitually devote yourself to anything other than God, this is idolatry. Your addiction reveals who you worship, love, and serve. The Bible has more to say to addiction than just “Stop it.” It realizes that the addict is both in control and out of control, i.e., he is in rebellion against God and in bondage to his addiction, both of which stem from choosing to sin.

**How does God see getting addicted to anything?** Though God gave man many blessings like food and sex, he’s not supposed to be brought under the power of them or anything else, 1 Cor. 6:12.

### C. What Does Colossians Have to Say to Addiction?

The Colossians may have possibly been sex addicts. They were fornicators who lived in fornication, 3:5–7, and may have been surrounded by cultic prostitution from the Greek religions. For the sake of argument, let’s pretend that they weren’t addicts but that one of them tried to use this as an excuse to Paul’s admonition against fornication in 3:5. What would Paul say to this sex “addict”? Would this “addict” get a pass? No! Sin is sin, whether you do it habitually or not.

There’s something else Colossians has to say to addiction. Throughout this, we’ve compared man’s opinion vs. God’s opinion. This is the problem that faced the Colossians. Man’s opinion which once enslaved them to fornication, 3:5-7, wanted to enslave them again. But this time it wanted to do it through an empty religious system that looked promising, but was in fact empty, 2:20–23. It couldn’t deliver because it came from sinful man and not God, 2:8, 22.

This is the same issue that is at stake when it comes to addiction. Man’s opinion tells the addict that he has a disease. God tells him that he’s a sinner in need of repentance. Man’s solution deals with the symptoms through abstinence. God’s solution deals with the root of the problem: the addict’s sinfulness, through repentance and a right relationship with God.

## III. CONCLUSION

Addiction is a serious issue and we must say more to it than “No.” We must realize that those who struggle with addiction are in the grips of something which **feels** like a disease. But we must also realize that it’s something which started with a sinful choice. The only way out of it is addressing the sinful choices made, the one that started the addiction and the ones that keep it alive, even though to the addict it feels like it’s something out of his control.