

Voices: When God turns “Wine Into Water”

March 22, 2017

Many Baptists observe Substance Abuse Prevention Sunday every spring. I can get behind Substance Abuse Prevention Sunday. because I am addicted to alcohol and tobacco.



Eric Black

I know I am, not because I use either one. I know I am, because I used to use and abuse both. I used to tell those who told me I had a problem that I didn't. I used to get tired of their concern, and I used to hide and drink by myself. I know addiction well, and I know the agony of trying to get free.

Thankfully, I know the joy of being free. It's like being new again.

Waste of addiction

The waste of addiction is like an unending desert, rough ground, every watering hole a mirage, every promise a heartache, every thought an inward turn away from love and friendship and life and a turn down into a bottomless pit of more, more, more, when can I get more, how can I get more, where can I get more, who will I have to hide this from?

The waste of addiction is like living death.



And it never seems to go away.

And we despair, and despair turns us inward one more time. If only we could change. If only we could see things differently. If only we could

God desires more

God hurts to see us live this way. To all of us, addicted or not, God desires more for us:

Seek the Lord while he may be found;

call on him while he is near.

Let the wicked forsake their ways

and the unrighteous their thoughts.

Let them turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on them,

and to our God, for he will freely pardon.

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts,

neither are your ways my ways,”

declares the Lord.

“As the heavens are higher than the earth,

*so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

*As the rain and the snow
come down from heaven,
and do not return to it
without watering the earth*

*and making it bud and flourish,
so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater,
so is my word that goes out from my mouth:*

*It will not return to me empty,
but will accomplish what I desire
and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.*

*You will go out in joy
and be led forth in peace;
the mountains and hills
will burst into song before you,
and all the trees of the field
will clap their hands.*

Instead of the thornbush will grow the juniper,

and instead of briars the myrtle will grow.

This will be for the Lord's renown,

for an everlasting sign,

that will endure forever." (Isaiah 55:6-13)

Words in context

Maybe you've heard God's thoughts are not our thoughts, and God's ways are not our ways. Maybe you've heard God's ways are higher than our ways, and God's thoughts are higher than our thoughts. Maybe you've heard God's word will not return void but will accomplish what God intends. But have you seen those words in their context?

Now you have, and the context is clear. Our thoughts and ways are a spiral down into darkness and death, and God's thoughts and ways are toward vibrant and eternal life. How we long for vibrant life! If only we could get there.

Thankfully, God makes a way through Jesus Christ, who opens the way and shows us the way. Jesus taught us if we will give up our thoughts and ways and will follow God's way, we will know new and vibrant and eternal life.

If we will give up our thoughts and our ways and turn to God, we will find mercy and pardon.

If we will give up our thoughts and our ways and will turn to God, we will receive God's words of life that will be to us like:

rain and the snow

com(ing) down from heaven,

... watering the earth

and making it bud and flourish,

so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater.

Wouldn't you like the parched soil of your addicted soul to soak in life-giving rain?

If we will give up our thoughts and our ways and will dive into God's way of life, we will begin to leave addiction behind and

will go out in joy

and be led forth in peace,

(and) the mountains and hills

will burst into song before you,

and all the trees of the field

will clap their hands.

Renewing exchange

Wouldn't you like to exchange the moans of addiction for the celebration of life?

If we will give up our thoughts and our ways and will wash in God's life-giving love, the thorn bush and brier patch of addiction will be replaced with evergreen.

Wouldn't you like to be free of the tearing thorns of addiction and surrounded by flourishing life?

If we will give up our thoughts and our ways that take us away from life as God intended it, and if we will accept God's thoughts and ways, God will

make us new again.

If you will, you won't be alone. Jesus will be with you, and Jesus is faithful to send other encouragers, also.

If you will give up your ways and your thoughts and will live in God's way, following Jesus, you will leave the living death of addiction behind and will come to know joy and fullness of life.

If you will, God will make you a new creation, and God's new creation is good and endures forever.

Eric Black is pastor of First Baptist Church in Covington, Texas, and a member of the Baptist Standard board of directors.

["Wine Into Water"](#) is a song by T. Graham Brown, recorded in 1998 on Intersound Records.