

THE BIBLE, ALCOHOL, AND THE CHRISTIAN

THE BIBLICAL VIEW OF ALCOHOL AND A CHRISTIAN'S RESPONSE TO IT

Illustration: There was a man who was addicted to whiskey. The pastor wanted to show him how whiskey would destroy his health. He took a glass and poured water in it, and took another glass and poured alcohol in it. Then he put a worm in these two glasses. The worm in the water lived and the worm in the whiskey struggled for some time and died. The pastor asked the drunkard, "What do you learn from this?" The drunkard said, "Hallelujah. I have learned that if you drink whiskey you will not have worms."

How many of you believe that your beliefs and practices must be based on God's Word?

❖ **Scripture:** "Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink..." (Colossians 2:16).

F. F. Bruce, a Bible scholar: The Jewish food laws did not extend to beverages, but here the reference is to more stringent regulations of an ascetic nature, perhaps involving the renunciation of animal flesh and of wine and strong drink (after the Nazirite fashion). In any case, Paul lays down the principle of Christian liberty in all such matters.

Comment: Since pronouncing judgement on alcohol is a natural tendency of Christians, let us look at this issue in the light of Bible perspective. The goal of this message is not to encourage people to drink alcohol or to promote drinking alcohol. It is to save Christians from self-righteousness and unbiblical judgment on this issue.

Definition of Alcohol: An alcoholic drink, or alcoholic beverage, is a drink that contains a substantial amount of ethanol (informally called alcohol). Ethanol, the only alcohol used in beverages, is produced by the fermentation of grains and fruits. Fermenting is a chemical process whereby yeast acts upon certain ingredients in the food, creating alcohol.

Cambridge Dictionary on Wine: "an alcoholic drink that is usually made from grapes."

Bible scholar, D.F. Watson, states in *The Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, "All wine mentioned in the Bible is fermented grape juice with an alcohol content. No non-fermented drink was called wine."

❖ **Matthew 9:17,** "Neither is new wine put into old wineskins. If it is, the skins burst and the wine is spilled and the skins are destroyed. But new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved."

- The old skins burst under the fermentation of the wine (Vincent's Word Studies)

Daniel Wallace, the Greek and NT scholar at Dallas Theological Seminary: "Some take the words for wine to mean 'grape juice.' If this were so, then why would there be prohibitions against drunkenness? One cannot get drunk on grape juice."

I. Positive Statements on Wine:

1. God speaks about Israelites' drinking of wine.

- ❖ **Deuteronomy 14:22-23**, “You shall tithe all the yield of your seed that comes from the field year by year. And before the Lord your God, in the place that he will choose, to make his name dwell there, you shall eat the tithe of your grain, of your wine, and of your oil, and the firstborn of your herd and flock, that you may learn to fear the Lord your God always.”

2. God provides wine.

- ❖ **Psalms 104:14-15**, “You cause the grass to grow for the livestock and plants for man to cultivate, that he may bring forth food from the earth and wine to gladden the heart of man, oil to make his face shine and bread to strengthen man's heart.”
- ❖ **Hoses 2:8**, “And she did not know that it was I who gave her the grain, the wine, and the oil...”

3. Wine is a blessing from the Lord.

- ❖ **Deuteronomy 7:13**, “He will love you, bless you, and multiply you. He will also bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground, your grain and your wine and your oil, the increase of your herds and the young of your flock, in the land that he swore to your fathers to give you.”
- ❖ **Ecclesiastes 3:13**, “everyone should eat and drink and take pleasure in all his toil—this is God's gift to man.”

4. Lack of wine is a curse from the Lord.

- ❖ **Jeremiah 48:33**, “Gladness and joy have been taken away from the fruitful land of Moab; I have made the wine cease from the winepresses; no one treads them with shouts of joy; the shouting is not the shout of joy.”

5. Wine was offered as a drink offering.

- ❖ **Exodus 29:40**, “And with the first lamb a tenth measure of fine flour mingled with a fourth of a hin of beaten oil, and a fourth of a hin of wine for a drink offering.”

6. Wine brings gladness.

- ❖ **Psalms 104:15**, “wine to gladden the heart of man...”
- ❖ **Ecclesiastes 10:19**, “Bread is made for laughter, and wine gladdens life...”

7. Wine was compared to Romantic love.

- ❖ **SOS 1:2**, “Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth! For your love is better than wine.”

8. Wine has medicinal value.

- ❖ **Luke 10:34**, “He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine.”
(The Good Samaritan)
- ❖ **I Timothy 5:23**, “(No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.)”

Daniel Wallace: “What is truly remarkable here are the many positive statements made about wine and alcoholic beverages in the Bible. Wine is so often connected with the blessings of God that we are hard-pressed to figure out why so many modern Christians view drink as the worst of all evils.”

II. Examples of People Who Drank Wine:

1. Abram drank wine.

- ❖ **Genesis 14:17-18**, “After his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley). And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. (He was priest of God Most High.)”

2. Nehemiah drank wine.

- ❖ **Nehemiah 1:11b – 2:1**, “Now I was cupbearer to the king. In the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was before him, I took up the wine and gave it to the king.”

3. Esther gave feast to the king with wine. She probably drank too.

- ❖ **Esther 7:1-2**, “So the king and Haman went in to feast with Queen Esther. And on the second day, as they were drinking wine after the feast, the king again said to Esther, “What is your wish, Queen Esther? It shall be granted you...”

4. Job's Righteous Family.

- ❖ **Job 1:13**, “Now there was a day when his sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house...”

5. David drank Wine.

- ❖ **2 Samuel 16:1-2**, When David had passed a little beyond the summit, Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth met him, with a couple of donkeys saddled, bearing two hundred loaves of bread, a hundred bunches of raisins, a hundred of summer fruits, and a skin of wine.”

5. Daniel drank Wine.

- ❖ **Daniel 10:2-3**, “In those days I, Daniel, was mourning for three weeks. I ate no delicacies, no meat or wine entered my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all, for the full three weeks.”

6. Timothy drank Wine.

- ❖ **1 Timothy 5:23**, “(No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.)”

7. Women in church also drank wine and Paul warned them of excessive drinking.

- ❖ **Titus 2:3**, “Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine.”

8. The Lord Jesus drank Wine.

- ❖ **Luke 7:34**, “The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, ‘Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’”

Note: When people ask you, “Why don’t you drink?” do you say, “Because I am a Christian?” If you think you are a better Christian because you don’t drink, are you saying you are better than Christ?

- ❖ **Matthew 26:29**, “I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.”

Craig L. Blomberg: Fruit of the vine (v. 29) was a stock phrase used in thanksgiving prayers for the wine (m. Ber. 6:1) and therefore does not refer to unfermented beverage.

D. A. Carson: “The ‘fruit of the vine’ is a common Jewish way of referring in prayers to wine.”

Leon Morris: Jesus took a cup, and though Matthew does not mention the contents specifically, the meaning is a cup containing wine. Jesus speaks of this fruit of the vine, which clearly means wine.

R. C. H. Lenski: Such a thing as grape juice was an impossibility in April in the Holy Land of Christ's time. It could be had only when grapes were freshly pressed out, before the juice started to ferment in an hour or two.

Daniel Wallace: The fact that the wine of the Passover was a symbol the Lord used for his blood and for the new covenant implicitly shows that our Lord's view of wine was quite different from that of many modern Christians.

He even turned water into wine:

- ❖ **John 2:10**, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now."

John MacArthur: That the wine was normally fermented and thus capable of causing drunkenness seems evident from the verb translated "drunk freely" in 2:10. (c.s.d: I personally believe it was not as fermented as the normal wine was, since the people already drank wine).

Got Questions: Throughout the passage, the Greek word translated "wine" is oinos, which was the common Greek word for normal wine, wine that was fermented/alcoholic. The Greek word for the wine Jesus created is the same word for the wine the wedding feast ran out of. The Greek word for the wine Jesus created is also the same word that is used in Ephesians 5:18, "...do not get drunk on wine..." Obviously, getting drunk from drinking wine requires the presence of alcohol. Everything, from the context of a wedding feast, to the usage of oinos in 1st century Greek literature (in the New Testament and outside the New Testament), argues for the wine that Jesus created to be normal, ordinary wine, containing alcohol. There is simply no solid historical, cultural, exegetical, contextual, or lexical reason to understand it to have been grape juice.

9. The Corinthians drank wine in the Lord's Supper:

- ❖ **I Corinthians 11:20-21**, "When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat. For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk." **v. 33**, "So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for one another..."

III. Examples of People Who Abstained from Wine:

Almost everyone drank wine in the Bible with few exceptions.

I. Aaron and his sons while doing ministry in the Tent of Meeting.

- ❖ **Leviticus 10:8-9**, And the Lord spoke to Aaron, saying, “Drink no wine or strong drink, you or your sons with you, when you go into the tent of meeting, lest you die. It shall be a statute forever throughout your generations.

2. A Nazirite.

- ❖ **Numbers 6:3**, “he shall separate himself from wine and strong drink. He shall drink no vinegar made from wine or strong drink and shall not drink any juice of grapes or eat grapes, fresh or dried.”

3. John the Baptist.

- ❖ **Luke 7:33**, “For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine...”

IV. Negative statements on Wine (Drunkenness):

1. Excessive drinking of wine can lead one astray.

- ❖ **Proverbs 20:1**, “Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise.”

2. Excessive drinking of wine is a curse.

- ❖ **Isaiah 5:11**, “Woe to those who rise early in the morning, that they may run after strong drink, who tarry late into the evening as wine inflames them!”

3. Excessive drinking of wine is debauchery (reckless lifestyle).

- ❖ **Ephesians 5:18**, “And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery...”

4. Excessive drinking of wine disqualifies one to be an elder in church.

- ❖ **1 Tim 3:3, 8; Titus 1:7**—one of the qualifications of elders and deacons is that they must not be drunkards.

5. Excessive drinking of wine leads to poverty.

- ❖ **Proverbs 23:20-21**, “Be not among drunkards or among gluttonous eaters of meat, for the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty, and slumber will clothe them with rags.”

6. Excessive drinking ruins one’s life.

- ❖ **Proverbs 23:29-35**,

Who has woe? Who has sorrow?

Who has strife? Who has complaining?
 Who has wounds without cause?
 Who has redness of eyes?
 Those who tarry long over wine;
 those who go to try mixed wine.
 Do not look at wine when it is red,
 when it sparkles in the cup
 and goes down smoothly.
 In the end it bites like a serpent
 and stings like an adder.
 Your eyes will see strange things,
 and your heart utter perverse things.
 You will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea,
 like one who lies on the top of a mast.
 “They struck me,” you will say, “but I was not hurt;
 they beat me, but I did not feel it.
 When shall I awake?
 I must have another drink.”

7. Drunkards are excommunicated from the church.

- ❖ **I Corinthians 5:11**, “But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one.”

8. Drunkards will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

- ❖ **I Corinthians 6:9-10**, “Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.” (cf. Gal. 5:19-21)

V. Examples of People Who Got Drunk with Wine:

1. Noah got drunk and laid naked. Ham saw his nakedness and was cursed.

- ❖ **Genesis 9:20-21**, “Noah began to be a man of the soil, and he planted a vineyard. He drank of the wine and became drunk and lay uncovered in his tent.”

2. Lot got drunk and his daughters had physical relationship with him to bear children.

- ❖ **Genesis 19:31-32**, “And the firstborn said to the younger, “Our father is old, and there is not a man on earth to come in to us after the manner of all the earth. Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve offspring from our father.”

3. And others about whom the Bible cautions on drunkenness in different passages mentioned above (Negative statements on wine).

Brad Whittington breaks down the biblical references of alcohol into three types. In all, there are 247 references to alcohol in Scripture. 40 are negative (warnings about drunkenness, potential dangers of alcohol, etc.), 145 are positive (sign of God's blessing, use in worship, etc.), and 62 are neutral (people falsely accused of being drunk, vows of abstinence, etc.)

Note: Despite the abuse of wine, the Bible neither condemns nor forbids drinking of wine.

Martin Luther, the Protestant Reformer: “Do not suppose that abuses are eliminated by destroying the object which is abused. Men can go wrong with wine and women. Shall we then prohibit wine and abolish women? The sun, the moon, and stars have been worshiped. Shall we then pluck them out of the sky? Such haste and violence betray a lack of confidence in God. See how much he has been able to accomplish through me, though I did no more than pray and preach. The Word did it all. Had I wished I might have started a conflagration at Worms. But while I sat still and drank beer with Philip and Amsdorf, God dealt the papacy a mighty blow.”

John Calvin, the Protestant Reformer: “We are nowhere forbidden to laugh, or be satisfied with food...or to be delighted with music or to drink wine.”

Increase Mather, a puritan minister: Drink is in itself a good Creature of God, and to be received with thankfulness, but the abuse of drink is from Satan; the wine is from God, but the Drunkard is from the Devil.”

A word to those who drink alcohol (moderately) and not drink alcohol:

- ❖ **Luke 7:33-34**, For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine, and you say, ‘He has a demon.’ The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, ‘Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’

Daniel Wallace: John the Baptist abstained from drinking wine; Jesus did not abstain [indeed, people called him a drunkard! Although certainly not true, it would be difficult for this charge to have been made had Jesus only drunk grape juice]. Both respected one another and both recognized that their individual lifestyles were not universal principles. One man may choose not to drink; another may choose to drink. We ought not condemn another servant of the Lord for his choice.

VI. Cautions to Those Who Drink Alcohol

1. Beware of the possibility to get drunk and addiction to drinking, which is sin. If your body is addictive to drinking, flee from it.

2. Be aware of the effects of addiction to alcohol.

Weight gain and high blood pressure can result from repeated overconsumption of alcohol, and long-term overconsumption of alcohol can raise the risk for:

- Depression.
- Liver damage.
- Cancer.
- Depression of the immune system.
- Reduced sexual performance.
- Loss of sound mind.
- Ineffective performance in work.
- Domestic violence.
- Bad influence on others, especially children.
- Death: According to *The Indian Express* one Indian dies every 96 minutes due to alcohol consumption.

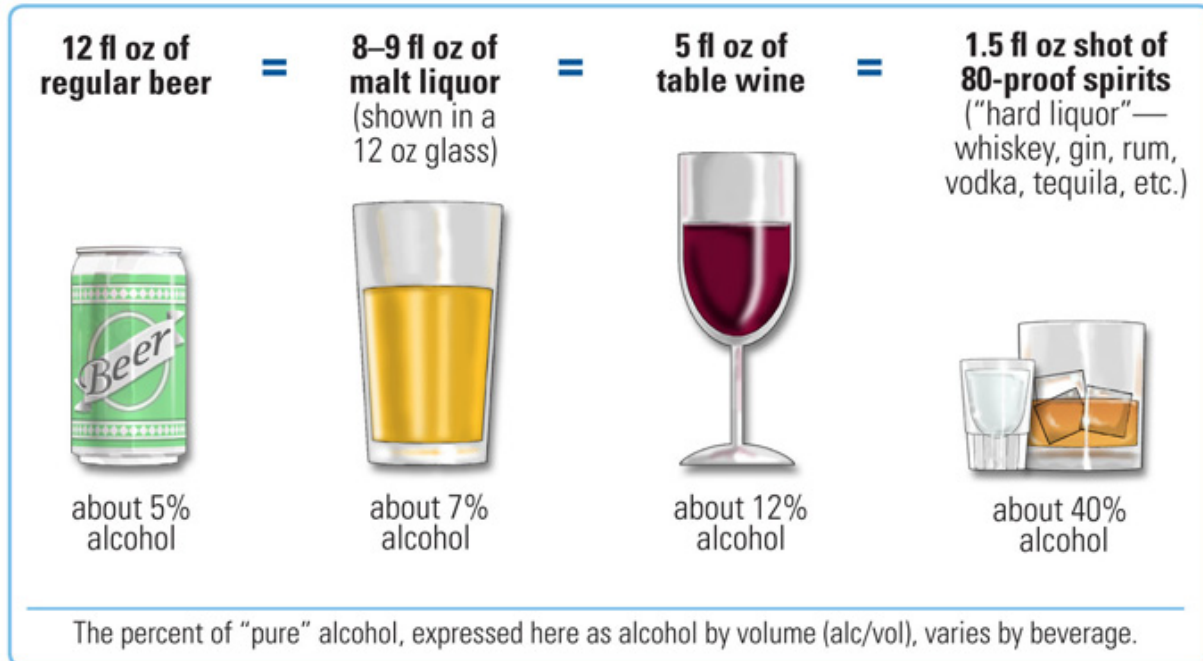
Drunk driving:

Every day in America, 28 people die as a result of drunk driving crashes.

The Hindu News: “70 per cent of road accidents in India is due to drunken driving.”

Note: The above effects are the result of excessive drinking, not moderate drinking.

3. Choose less alcoholic beverage.



- Beer is made from grains, especially from barley. [12 fluid ounce is 355 ml]
- Malt alcohol often contains corn, added sugar. [8-9 fluid ounce is 265 ml]
- Wine is made particularly from grapes. [5 fluid ounce is 148 ml]. R. A. Baker, a church historian, "The wine in the ancient world was most likely stronger (in flavor, not necessarily alcoholic content) than modern wines."
- Spirits (hard liquor or hard alcohol) is an alcoholic beverage produced by distillation of grains, fruit, or vegetables that have already gone through alcoholic fermentation. [1.5 fluid ounce is 45 ml]

Red wine packs in a ton of nutritional value. It contains four to nine percent of your DRI of iron, 9.4 percent for potassium, and five percent of magnesium. It is also filled with antioxidants. Red Wine May Lower the Risk of Heart Disease and Stroke, reduce the risk of cancer and type 2 diabetes. However, consuming too much of it has negative health effects (addiction, liver problem, weight gain...etc).

4. Be mindful of not becoming a stumbling block to your weaker brother in Christ.

- ❖ **Romans 14:20-21**, "Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for anyone to make another stumble by what he eats. It is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that causes your brother to stumble."

- ❖ **I Corinthians 10:31**, “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”

VII. Cautions to Those Who Don't Drink Alcohol

1. Know that it is not a sin to drink alcohol. It is getting drunk which is sin.

Listen again to this message if you haven't got this point.

Question: Just because of the fear that someone may abuse alcohol and get addicted to it, is it biblically fair to condemn drinking alcohol of any amount as sin?

2. It is good if you don't drink alcohol, but don't think you are more godly than others just because you don't drink. Remember, the great heroes of the Bible drank wine. Consider the words of the Lord Jesus.

- ❖ **Matthew 15:11**, “It is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth; this defiles a person.” **Mark 7:21-23**, “For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.”

- If alcohol makes a person behave out of control, then what does anger do?
- If alcohol makes a person behave out of control, then what does lust do?
- If alcohol makes a person behave out of control, then what does greed do?
- How better are we than the alcoholics when we live with these evils in heart?

3. If you don't drink alcohol because of health reasons, be careful of eating and drinking other junk that ruins your health.

- Just like drugs, sugar is not good for us. Sugar Is Not Only a Drug but a Poison Too. There are approximately 10 teaspoons of added sugar in a single can of cola. The World Health Organization (WHO) recommend consuming no more than 6 teaspoons of added sugar daily, meaning drinking just one serving of cola a day could take us well above these guidelines. According to the *Harvard School of Public Health*, people who drink 1-2 cans of sugary beverages daily are 26% more likely to develop type 2 diabetes, and *Medical News Today* reported on a study claiming 184,000 global deaths each year are down to sugary drink consumption.

- **Worst effects of junk food (pizza, burgers, deep fried items):** Obesity, heart disease, Type 2 Diabetes, Ulcer. *KFC, MacDonald, Dominos...etc are closely related to pubs and bars, except that you don't get drunk.*
- **White rice:** New research, published in the *British Medical Journal*, has found high-consumption of white rice to be associated with an increased risk of developing type 2 diabetes. The increase in risk was especially noted in Asian populations.
- **Oil:** Vegetable oils are loaded with Trans Fats and can produce more fatty acids in body. Have it in excess, which is common in Indian food, leads to obesity, heart disease and cancer. Also, healthy plant oils like olive oil or coconut oil are extremely good.
- **Lack of physical exercise:** According to Daily Mail, lack of physical exercise is as 'deadly' as smoking. The research says that the burden of physical inactivity on global deaths and major diseases includes coronary heart disease, type 2 diabetes and breast and colon cancer.
 - Lack of exercise or any physical activity is responsible for 30% mortality in men and 60% of death rate in women. It is the most important cause preventable deaths all over the world.

Note: “Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit” should not only be used in the context of alcohol, but also in other matters.

4. Beware of judging others who drink moderately.

- ❖ **Colossians 2:16**, “Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink...”

Application: I do not encourage Christians to drink. Culturally, it is better not to drink. But we must know that the Holy Bible doesn't condemn moderate drinking, so don't judge something as 'sin' which the Bible doesn't call 'sin'. In matters of Christian liberty, let no one judge you and most importantly, do not judge anyone who drinks moderately. This is the primary reason why I teach this subject, although there is fear that people may abuse this teaching and get addicted to drinking. Let us not judge each other. But correct a brother or a sister who gets drunk and is addicted to alcohol. Warn them of the sin of drunkenness.