

Alcohol

I. Two extremes.

1. There are people who profess to be Christians who take the position that the consumption of ANY alcohol is a sin.
2. There are people who profess to be Christians who are worldly and permit the excessive use of alcohol to the point of drunkenness.
3. Both groups are wrong.

II. There are NOT two types of wine in the Bible (alcoholic and non-alcoholic).

1. There are those who say that there are two types of wine in the Bible: fermented grape juice (alcoholic wine), and non-fermented grape juice.

A. This is a LIE and a denial of the meaning of words.

B. Wine *n.* - 1. a. The fermented juice of the grape used as a beverage. It is essentially a dilute solution of alcohol, on the proportion of which in its composition depend its stimulating and intoxicating properties. Wines are classed as red or white, dry or sweet, still or sparkling. 1535 Coverdale Ps. ciii[i]. 15 Wyne to make glad ye herte of man.

2. In wider use, usually with qualifying word: A fermented liquor made from the juice of other fruits, or from grain, flowers, the sap of various trees (e.g. birch and palm), etc.: sometimes called *made wine*

3. *Pharmacy.* A solution of a medicinal substance (denoted by a qualifying word) in wine; a medicated wine.

4. A wine-party, esp. of undergraduates.

5. *spirit(s) of wine*, alcohol, rectified spirit; oil of wine, œnanthic ester; also, a heavy oily liquid (heavy oil of wine) consisting of etherin, etherol, and ethyl sulphate, called also ethereal oil.

6. A wine-glass.

7. Passing into *adj.* A dark red colour.

C. The preceding definitions of *wine* includes EVERY definition of the word in the Oxford English Dictionary and NOT one of them even mentions or hints at *wine* being unfermented grape juice.

D. "Nonalcoholic wine" is an oxymoron like a square circle or a two story ranch style house.

E. To say that some of the wine in Biblical times was merely grape juice is to show a gross ignorance of what happens to the juice of grapes when they are crushed without refrigeration or pasteurization (it immediately begins turning into wine).

i. This is the basis of Jesus' teaching in **Luk 5:37-38**.

ii. Bottle *v.* - 1. a. A vessel with a narrow neck for holding liquids, now usually made of glass; originally of leather.

iii. "Bottles, in Eastern nations, were made, and are still made, of skins of beasts. Generally the skin was taken entire from a sheep or a goat, and, properly prepared, was filled with wine or water..... By long usage, however, bottles of skins became tender and would be easily ruptured. New wine put into them would ferment, and swell and burst them open. New skins or bottles would yield to the fermenting wine, and be strong enough to hold it from bursting." (Albert Barnes' Notes on the Bible - Mat 9:17)

iv. Not only was Jesus clearly referring to alcoholic wine (the only kind there is); He was also speaking of it in positive light (**Luk 5:39**).

F. Even "new wine" contains alcohol (**Act 2:13-15**).

III. The Bible does NOT condemn the moderate consumption of alcohol.

1. Wine is a blessing that God has given to men (**Joe 2:23-24**).
 - A. When we give our firstfruits to God, he rewards us by making our presses burst out with new wine (**Pro 3:9-10**).
 - B. Wine is said to cheer God and man (**Jdg 9:13**).
 - C. Wine makes glad the heart of man (**Psa 104:15**).
 - D. The Bible tells us to drink our wine with a merry heart (**Ecc 9:7**).
2. Jesus Christ Himself drank wine.
 - A. Jesus was called a *winebibber* by His enemies (**Luk 7:33-34**).
 - i. This was in contrast to John the Baptist who did not drink *wine* (**Luk 7:33 c/w Luk 1:15**).
 - ii. The *drinking* that Jesus did (**Luk 7:34**) was said in comparison to John the Baptist not *drinking wine* (**Luk 7:33**).
 - iii. It is clear that what Jesus was drinking was wine, else they would not have accused Him of being a drunk.
 - iv. Winebibber - 1. A tippler, a drunkard.
 - v. This was obviously an exaggerated and false charge since drunkenness is a sin (**Gal 5:21**) and Jesus never sinned (**1Pe 2:22**).
 - B. Jesus drank wine (fruit of the vine) at the Passover feast (**Luk 22:15-18**).
 - i. Wine represents blood (**Gen 49:11; Deu 32:14; Isa 49:26**).
 - ii. Being an intoxicant, wine is symbolic of blood which is symbolic of an intoxicant (**Eze 39:19; Rev 17:6**).
 - iii. This is why Jesus used wine to represent His blood (**Luk 22:20**).
 - iv. The Corinthians clearly used wine for the Lord's supper, in that they were made drunken from it (**1Co 11:20-21**).
 - a. Paul didn't rebuke them for *what* they were eating and drinking, but for *how much* they were eating and drinking (**1Co 11:22,33-34**).
 - b. If it were a sin to drink wine, Paul would have chided them for *what* they were drinking.
3. Jesus turned water into wine at the marriage feast in Cana of Galilee (**Joh 2:1-10**).
 - A. The clear implication is that the custom of the day was to give out the good tasting wine early in the feast when people are completely sober and then give out the poorer tasting wine later when their senses are dulled and they wouldn't know the difference (**Joh 2:10**).
 - B. If it was a sin to drink *any* alcohol, then Jesus would not have made them wine.
4. Paul told Timothy to drink *a little* wine instead of water (**1Ti 5:23**).
 - A. Timothy was told to do this for the sake of his health.
 - B. Clean water was likely scarce in the first century and was probably not healthy to drink as is the case in many developing countries yet today.
 - C. Due to its alcohol content, wine remains safe to drink for long periods of time without refrigeration.
 - D. This, along with its other health benefits, made it advantageous for Timothy to drink it.
 - E. Since a minister is not to be *given* to wine (**1Ti 3:3**), Timothy was exhorted to drink *a little* wine.
5. Under the law of Moses, the Israelites could turn their tithe into *wine* or *strong drink* and enjoy it as a means of worshipping God when it was too far for them to carry their tithes to Jerusalem (**Deu 14:22-26**).

- A. God would hardly give men instructions which would cause them to sin.
 - B. Therefore, it's obvious that it is not a sin to drink wine and strong drink.
 - C. Strong drink - Intoxicating liquor, alcoholic liquors generally. Also, drink of more than ordinary alcoholic strength. 1526 Tindale Luke i. 15 He+shall nether drynke wyne ner stronge drynke.
6. The various *specific* prohibitions on drinking wine in the Bible prove that drinking wine in moderation is *generally* permissible in the scripture. Exceptions to a rule (the rule is that it is permissible to drink wine in moderation) don't nullify the rule, they establish it.
- A. Nazarites could not drink *wine, strong drink, or liquor of grapes while they were under the vow of a Nazarite (Num 6:2-3)*.
 - i. Liquor - 3. a. Liquid for drinking; beverage, drink. Now almost exclusively spec., a drink produced by fermentation or distillation. *malt liquor*, liquor brewed from malt; ale, beer, porter, etc. *spirituous liquor*, liquor produced by distillation; spirits. *vinous liquor*, liquor made from grapes; wine. 1611 Bible Num. vi. 3 Neither shal he drinke any liquor of grapes.
 - ii. The Nazarite was also to keep himself from vinegar of wine, vinegar of strong drink, grapes, raisins (**Num 6:3**), anything made of the vine tree (**Num 6:4**), nor was he to cut his hair (**Num 6:5**), nor come at a dead body (**Num 6:6**).
 - iii. All these things were to be kept *during the days of his vow of Nazarite (Num 6:2-6)*.
 - a. All these things were permissible for normal people under normal circumstances.
 - b. It would make no sense for God to specifically command the person under a vow of a Nazarite to abstain from things that were sins for everyone at all times.
 - c. Notice that God didn't tell the Nazarite that during the days of his vow of separation he couldn't commit murder, rape, adultery, fornication, sodomy, theft, idolatry, and lying.
 - d. The point of the vow of separation was to separate himself from otherwise lawful things to set him apart from the rest.
 - iv. This obvious fact is proven beyond question by the fact that when his vow was over, he could once again cut his hair (**Num 6:18**) and drink wine (**Num 6:20**).
 - v. This also means that once his vow was accomplished he could also once again drink strong drink, liquor of grapes, vinegar of wine, and vinegar of strong drink, and that he could once again eat grapes and raisins and come at a dead body.
 - B. *The priests* in the OT could not drink wine nor strong drink *when they went into the tabernacle and entered into the inner court of the temple (Lev 10:9; Eze 44:21)*.
 - i. As in the previous example, the prohibition of drinking wine for *the priests* was *specific*, not *general*.
 - a. It was only *the priests* to whom this law was given.
 - b. *They* were only prohibited from drinking alcohol *when they went into the tabernacle and the temple*.
 - c. The priests were not banned from drinking alcohol at all times.
 - ii. The reason for this (not drinking alcohol when they went into the tabernacle and temple) was so that their judgment and discernment would not be

affected as they put a difference between the holy and unholy, and the clean and unclean, and as they taught the people God's law (**Lev 10:10-11**).

iii. The rule is that, in general, people are allowed to drink alcohol in moderation.

iv. An exception to a rule doesn't nullify the rule; it rather establishes it.

C. Pastors cannot be *given* to wine (**1Ti 3:3; Tit 1:7**).

i. Given *ppl.* - 1. a. Bestowed as a gift. 2. Used predicatively: Inclined, disposed, addicted, prone.

ii. Pastors are not prohibited from *drinking* wine (**1Ti 5:23**), but rather from being *addicted* to it (**1Ti 3:3**).

iii. Drinking wine in moderation is lawful for a minister, but he must not be brought under the power of it (**1Co 6:12**).

iv. Why would it be a necessity for a pastor to not be addicted to grape juice?

v. The fact that pastors are not to be *given* to wine demands that drinking alcohol is not a sin, else the verses would say that they can't drink *any* wine.

D. Deacons and aged women cannot be *given* to *much* wine (**1Ti 3:8; Tit 2:3**).

i. Deacons and aged women have a little more leeway than do pastors when it comes to drinking wine.

ii. Whereas a pastor can't be *given* to wine, the deacons and aged women can't be *given* to *much* wine.

iii. The prohibition from being *given* to *much* wine is proof that not all wine consumption is sinful, else the command is insufficient to prohibit sin.

IV. The Bible DOES condemn the excessive consumption of alcohol which causes drunkenness.

1. The Bible forbids men to be drunk (**Eph 5:18**).

2. Drunk *adj.* - 1. a. That has drunk intoxicating liquor to an extent which affects steady self-control; intoxicated, inebriated; overcome by alcoholic liquor.

3. We are not to be drunkards (**1Co 6:10**).

A. Drunkard *n.* - 1. One addicted to drinking; one who habitually drinks to excess; an inebriate, a sot.

B. This is a sin which will cause a person to lose their membership in the local church (**1Co 5:11-13 c/w 1Co 6:9-10**).

4. Not only must Christians not be drunkards, they must never get drunk (**Gal 5:21**).

A. Drunkenness *n.* - The state of being drunk; intoxication; the habit of being drunken or addicted to excessive drinking.

B. If a Christian gets drunk one time, he is guilty of drunkenness and must be put out of the church if it is commonly known (**Gal 5:21 c/w 1Co 5:1,11-13**).

5. The Bible repeatedly warns about the danger of drunkenness.

A. Wine and strong drink can deceive you if you drink too much (**Pro 20:1**).

B. Excessive alcohol consumption is dangerous to your health and your soul, and it leads to other sins (**Pro 23:29-35**).

C. It is especially important that God's ministers beware of the danger of *excessive* consumption of alcohol, as it causes drunkenness which will cause them to err in vision and stumble in judgment (**Isa 28:7-8**).

D. Christians should not spend time with drunks (**Pro 23:20-21 c/w Pro 13:20 c/w 1Co 15:33**).

E. It's not funny to watch people who are drunk; that's what fools do (**Pro 14:9; Pro 15:21**).

- F. If a Christian has struggled with an addiction to alcohol in the past, he would be wise to steer clear of it so as to not succumb to that temptation again (**Rom 13:14**).
 - 6. The prohibition of drunkenness itself shows that it is the *excessive* drinking of alcohol which is forbidden by God, not the drinking alcohol in itself.
- V. Alcohol use is an area of Christian liberty.
1. It is Pharisees who bind heavy burdens on men which God never commanded them (**Mat 23:1-4**).
 - A. Their unbiblical *traditions*, such as forbidding all consumption of alcohol, make the word of God of none effect (**Mar 7:9,13**).
 - B. The word of God tells a pastor to "use a little wine" (**1Ti 5:23**), and God's people in general to "drink thy wine with a merry heart" (**Ecc 9:7**), but our modern-day fundamentalist Pharisees say "thou shalt not drink wine."
 - C. The word of God says that Jesus, the sinless Son of God, drank wine (**Luk 7:33-34**), but our modern-day fundamentalist Pharisees say "drinking wine is a sin."
 2. We have liberty as Christians to eat and drink what we want as long as it is received with thanksgiving (**1Ti 4:3-4**).
 - A. In the same way that we are permitted to drink wine, but not in excess to the point of drunkenness (**Eph 5:18**), so we are permitted to eat food, but not in excess to the point of gluttony (**Deu 21:20; Pro 23:21; Luk 7:33-34**).
 - B. To say that we can't drink alcohol because the Bible forbids drunkenness is tantamount to saying that we can't eat food because the Bible forbids gluttony.
 - C. Using our liberty to eat food or drink wine *in excess* is using our liberty as an occasion to the flesh, which is sinful (**Gal 5:13**).
 3. Though eating meat and drinking alcohol is not sinful in itself, if a person's conscience is not at ease with it and he can't do it in good faith, then it would be a sin for that person to drink alcohol or eat meat (**Rom 14:14,20,23**).
 - A. If we have a weak brother whose conscience is not comfortable with drinking alcohol in moderation or eating meat, then we must refrain from it when in his presence so as to not offend him and make him stumble (**Rom 14:15-19**).
 - B. In that case, it is good to not drink wine in front of that brother (**Rom 14:21-22**).
 4. It is the weak believer whose conscience will not allow him to consume things which God allows (**Rom 14:1-2 c/w 1Ti 4:4**).
 - A. We ought to bear with the weak and not judge them (**Rom 14:3**).
 - B. As a believer matures, he should get stronger in faith and wisdom, and should guide his heart (**Pro 23:19**) in these matters of liberty.
 - C. But there is no excuse for a pastor, who should be strong in faith (**1Ti 4:12**), to have a weak conscience concerning these things.
 - D. A pastor may prefer to not drink wine or eat meat for various reasons, but it should not be because he thinks it's a sin.
 - E. A pastor who forbids others from eating meats and drinking alcoholic drinks which God allows is either a lying hypocrite with a seared conscience (**1Ti 4:1-3**), or an ignoramus.