

Is it Alright For Christians To Drink Alcohol?

(Reasons from the Bible)

by Gary T. Panell

"Then the LORD spoke to Aaron, saying: 'Do not drink wine or intoxicating drink, you, nor your sons with you, when you go into the tabernacle of meeting, lest you die. *It shall be* a statute forever throughout your generations, that you may distinguish between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean, and that you may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the LORD has spoken to them by the hand of Moses" (Leviticus 10:8-11). "*It is* not for kings, O Lemuel, *it is* not for kings to drink wine, nor for princes intoxicating drink; lest they drink and forget the law, and pervert the justice of all the afflicted" (Proverbs 31:4-5).

After citing these Bible passages Jerry Dunn and Bernard Palmer, authors of *God is for the Alcoholic*, continue:

"Priests were ordered not to drink during their course in the Temple so they could tell the difference between the good and the bad. Kings and princes were not to drink for the same reason. They were to abstain from drinking so they could tell the difference between right and wrong and be fair in their judgment of the people who came before them.

"The book of Revelation states that those who have accepted Christ as Savior are kings and priests: '[.and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him *be* glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.]*' (Revelation 1: 5-6)

"The apostle Peter also says that we became kings and priests. We are members of a royal family. '[But you *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.]*' (1 Peter 2:9)

"Because of our salvation through faith in Christ we have become sons, the adopted sons of the King. As such we are members of the King's family, and the orders that went out to the kings and priests apply to us. We are not to drink so that we will have clear judgment and discernment as God's representatives in this world.

'As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.' Jesus told His disciples (John 20:21b). As Christians we are sent to witness, to teach the people. This is the responsibility of the believer. '[Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,]'* the Lord Jesus Christ instructed His disciples (Matthew 28:19). In order to teach we must know the difference between right and wrong.

"Therefore I believe that we as Christians are not to drink alcohol.

"On one occasion after I presented this thesis to a youth group a young man got to his feet. 'The Bible says that the priest isn't supposed to drink when he's in the Temple, but what about when he's outside the Temple? It doesn't mention that.'

"That's true,' I told him. 'But the Bible also says, '[For you are the temple of the living God]*' (2 Corinthians 6:16b). As believers we are always living in God's temple. We are to think of ourselves as serving God daily in the temple of our bodies, and to do this we must so live as to be usable to Him.'

"The Christian does not drink because he knows the Lord Jesus Christ personally and is a member of His family. The Christian is a king and a priest, and the Bible specifically says that kings and priests are not to drink. The matter of total abstinence, then, depends upon our love for the Lord Jesus Christ. How much do we love Him?" (*God is for the Alcoholic* by Jerry Dunn with Bernard Palmer)

*Originally quoted from the Amplified Bible, changed to the New King James Version for readability.

I agree with these statements to a point, and I believe Mr. Dunn gave an excellent answer for us as Christians today, and I would highly recommend this book, but I would like to go further and answer the young man's question about priests and other believers' use of alcohol in the Old and New Testaments.

I would like to comment, first, that this warning to the priests was a warning given to them specifically about the tabernacle or temple service; and that it came after two men Nadab and Abihu died for drinking alcoholic wine while on duty, causing them to become careless and offer "strange (or profane) fire before the LORD."

I say this because it is in this same context (in Leviticus 10: 1-11) that these two men were killed. This is an example of what the Lord thinks about believers drinking, and showing deadly consequences that can come from drinking. "Ancient Jewish interpretation taught that they were intoxicated when they came before the LORD, which intensified the gravity of their actions (Leviticus 10: 9)." (*New Spirit Filled Life Bible*) So this passage is not teaching that it was only wrong for priests to drink while on duty, but rather the seriousness of drinking alcoholic wine.

I would like to show that there were other warnings also in both the Old and New Testaments, to the average believer not to drink alcohol, and that these warnings were not just directed or restricted to priests or kings. We will see in this study, too, how we can help people with alcohol addiction today.

However, to start with I would like to give a little background to my own life and why I have come to these conclusions, that there are Biblical reasons from the Old and New Testaments why a Christian should not drink alcohol. I will do this, to begin with, by answering some questions

that were asked of me through the years on our interactive web Bible Study at Bible-Christian.org.

This is a translation of a letter we received about our tract on [Wine in the Bible](#):

"Many people think that the Bible is in agreement with drinking alcohol." this is how you start your tract. This is not really true that the Bible is not talking about alcohol when the word "wine" is used. Look, you say that the term "wine" is unique in the Bible and is what is referred to in all the Scriptures (that it can be fermented or unfermented depending on the context). Here are my arguments against this view:

"My example in Genesis is when the daughters of Lot gave their father wine so they could have children by him. If this was only grape juice what effect would this have on him?"

"Fermented wine is good for stomach problems; this is what Paul told Timothy. And Solomon wrote about wine and how it makes the heart happy. You also speak about the prevention of spoilage by various methods, but this has to be fermented wine in order to be preserved."

"The Bible condemns drunkenness because this is in excess. This causes negative changes in a person, and this is what Solomon teaches. It is wrong for kings to drink wine, but in all the cases it is the same wine. The fermentation is a chemical process that begins the moment it leaves the vine. The wine is obtained from the "must" of the juice. Already in this same grape you find the enzymes capable of transforming the sugars to form the wine."

"Then I would like to say that to drink a cup of wine after a good lunch is not bad, nor anything people should condemn. The problem comes when one drinks wine with other motives. As I have already said it is wrong to drink to get drunk, this is very bad."

"Where you talk about the context, it is very ambiguous. It seems that you are saying that in every place that something good is happening it has to be grape juice, but when it is bad, it is speaking of fermented wine. The Bible is precise and clear, and I cannot be in agreement with this kind of interpretation."

"Thanks, write back to me."

The following is a quotation from my response:

Dear Friend,

Thank you for your comments. Many Christians have the same view as you, but very few of them will actually write. I understand that your position is that all the wine in the Bible, every time it is mentioned, is speaking of a fermented drink. Then too, you feel it is not wrong to have a glass of wine after your meal.

I do not want to answer this question on an academic level only, because I believe it goes beyond that, to the spiritual. So after some discussion on a personal level, I will get down to some specifics from the Bible.

First, the reason I began to search this subject out is because as a Christian growing up, we were at that time told it was wrong to drink alcohol, but we were given very few Biblical reasons. So when I got into the military I began to experiment with beer. I found out it did not take long for it to get the upper hand. I do not believe anyone starts out to become an alcoholic, but it does not take long for most people to start to have problems with alcohol. However, many young people today do go out to get drunk, they are not thinking about drinking only a little. Still they do not think that they will become an alcoholic.

I believe those parents who drink only a little are setting a bad example that will lead their children astray. The parents who drink only a glass after a meal influence their children or others who may not be able to drink only one glass. Then, too, even a glass once in awhile can start to build an ethyl alcohol addiction in our bodies. I believe that even the little my dad gave me before he became a Christian, could have caused my body to have a longing for more alcohol.

The following are the arguments people come up with most often when they think it is ok to drink as Christians. If they have any knowledge of the Bible at all, they will usually question things like, "Did Jesus drink wine?" "Did Jesus make wine for a wedding?" "Why did Paul tell Timothy to take a little wine for his stomach's sake?" And then an interesting argument that is not related to the Bible, they say, "All Christians in Europe drink alcohol." I have heard these arguments from those just starting out on the road to drinking, and from alcoholics alike. They feel these arguments justify their drinking.

So this is the reason I wanted to know for myself what the Bible had to say on the subject. Let us start with the last argument. All Christians in Europe drink alcohol. First, I do not believe this is true, but even if the majority of them do drink, is what Christians do in Europe our standard? I believe the Bible is our standard. Martin Luther said, "Solo la Biblia!" This means that the Bible is our only standard. So we need to see what it has to say, not talk about what other Christians do.

The other arguments have been discussed in my tracts on the subject of alcohol, but I do want to go over some things here. Like the argument that says all wine in the Bible is fermented. If this were the case, why would we be told in Proverbs 23:31-32 not to look at the wine when it is fermented, "Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it swirls around smoothly; at the last it bites like a serpent, and stings like a viper." In, Isaiah 16:10b it says, "...no treading will tread out wine in their presses." As soon as the juice was pressed out of the grapes it was called "wine." So to assume that every time the Bible uses the word "wine," it is talking about a fermented drink is not looking at the facts.

Many people assume that the word "wine" in the Bible always means a fermented drink because in English most people think fermented when they hear the word "wine." The same thing is true in Spanish for the word "vino." If you go to the "modern" dictionary for the meaning of wine it

will say something like, "The fermented juice of any of various kinds of grapes, usually containing from 10 to 15 per cent alcohol by volume."

This is where the problem arises for people studying the Bible only in their language, but not in the original languages of the Bible. The word most often in Greek in the Bible texts is "*oinos*," and in Hebrew it is "yayin." These words have historically been used to refer to the juice of the grape, whether fermented or unfermented. (For more on background information of the Hebrew, Greek and English usages of the word wine, go to [Dr. Bacchiocchi's web site](#).)

In Genesis, where Lot and Noah got drunk on it, it is obviously fermented. I might add, note how it got them both into trouble by drinking fermented wine. Yes, after a time, depending on the temperature and the conditions grape juice will ferment or spoil. It is clear from reading the book *Bible Wines* by William Patton that most people tried to preserve their grape juice as long as they could, and did not want it fermented.

The fermented wine was considered inferior to the fresh grape juice (wine). This observation can help us understand the nature of the "good wine" produced by Christ at the wedding of Cana (John 2:10). He produced fresh grape juice, which would have been a very welcome gift at a wedding in Israel at that time. [We go into more detail on this miracle of Jesus creating (wine) grape juice later in the article.]

In his book *Bible Wines*, Patton goes into great detail how they could keep their juice fresh longer. I have shown in my other article, [Beer and Other Alcoholic Beverages in the Bible](#), that people in Bible times did know how to preserve their grape juice, so it would not spoil or ferment, and they did this even without refrigeration"

To preserve their sweet juices in a hot climate, people often boiled the juice down until it was thick like syrup, and later when they were ready to use it they would add water to it. Also they would boil their juices and, then seal the air out. There were other methods to prevent fermentation like filtration or by drawing off the juice from the subsided yeast, and by the use of sulfur. They could, at times keep juice in a cool place such as in a cave, underground or in water. For more on this subject read, [Bible Wines](#), by William Patton or [Wine In The Bible: A Biblical Study On The Use Of Alcoholic Beverages](#), by Samuele Bacchiocchi.

In his article Bacchiocchi talks about the way people preserved their grape juice. I might say he goes into much historical detail, and it is an excellent study. He explains that it is a myth to think that in Bible times it was easier to store fermented wine than it was to store unfermented wine. Bacchiocchi explains how they did not understand the causes of fermentation; this was not clearly understood until the 1860's, when Louis Pasteur undertook his study of fermentation. So the truth is, in reality it was far more difficult for them to store fermented drinks, than it was to store grape juice.

So let us not assume it is speaking about an alcoholic drink when the word "wine" is used in the English Bible. One must go to the context, verses before and after the word, to see if fresh grape juice is in question or fermented grape juice. Sometimes the wine is fermented, and we can see the difference, depending on the context.

We need to do our homework; this is the way it is in a lot of Bible study. For example, the religious leaders said that the Messiah had to be born in Bethlehem, and concluded Jesus was not born there because he grew up in Nazareth. They did not even bother to check it out for themselves. We need to check things out for ourselves; Paul commended the Bereans because they checked with Scripture to see if what he was saying was so. "These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily *to find out* whether these things were so." (Acts 17: 11)

I know that what I am teaching flies in the face of what many of the churches teach. But my question to you is, "Are you willing to check it out for yourself, or are you going to assume that the churches are always right?" You might be interested to know that these same churches did not always teach that it was all right to drink alcohol in moderation. Look at their historical doctrines, and you might be surprised at what you find, probably even in your own church. And look at how much heartache it has caused in Christian homes, since they did start teaching it was ok to drink in "moderation."

I believe this is the reason that even some translations of the Bible have been translated the way they were in some references to alcohol, and that is because of the prevailing views of alcohol in the society when a translation is made. Reading in the Greek and Hebrew you see a view of fermented or "strong drink" as harmful, not helpful, with the exception of using it to pour on a wound. (Luke 10:34) or using it for a dying person to kill the pain (Proverbs 31: 6). Even as they offered it to Jesus on the cross, but when He had tasted it he would not drink it, Matthew 27:34.

Also Proverbs 31: 7 says, "Let him drink and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more." "At first this advice seems to contradict such prohibitions as in Proverbs 23:31. However, it is obvious in context that the advice is given in irony to those who have drifted so far from God as to be 'appointed to destruction' [die, or Lit. "*sons of passing away*" NKJV] anyway, Proverbs 31:8." (Dr. Henry M. Morris *Defender's Bible*)

Some people think that all believers drank alcohol in the Bible so they bring up passages like this one in 1 Samuel. Here it talks about when Hannah was at the tabernacle praying for a baby, "And it happened, as she continued praying before the LORD, that Eli watched her mouth. Now Hannah spoke in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard. Therefore Eli thought she was drunk. So Eli said to her, 'How long will you be drunk? Put your wine away from you!' But Hannah answered and said, 'No, my lord, I am a woman of sorrowful spirit.

"I have drunk neither wine nor intoxicating drink, but have poured out my soul before the LORD. Do not consider your maidservant a wicked woman, for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief I have spoken until now.'" (1 Samuel 1:12-16) She was not drinking a fermented drink or getting drunk, because she did not want to be considered "a wicked woman."

You also mentioned Timothy was told by Paul, to take a little wine for his stomach's sake and not to just drink water. We know Paul was speaking here of grape juice which is good for your stomach, your heart, and the rest of your body. He was not telling him to drink a fermented wine, because this would have been bad on his stomach and digestive system. Some say a little wine is good for your heart, but it has other side effects that are not good for you, when you could drink

dark grape juice. It will have healthy benefits for your heart, without the negative side effects on the rest of your body. (Welch's website.)

Alcohol also causes bad effects on the muscular, skeletal, nervous, and circulatory systems as well. Deuteronomy 32:33 says, "Their wine is the poison of serpents, and the cruel venom of cobras." So the Hebrew word (*chemah*) is translated as "poison" when speaking of fermented wine in this passage of Scripture.

You mentioned that Solomon said it makes the heart "merry," I believe you could be referring to, Ecclesiastes 8:15, "So I commended enjoyment, because a man has nothing better under the sun than to eat, drink, and be merry; for this will remain with him in his labor all the days of his life which God gives him under the sun." This is really speaking of living life, as Solomon did for a time, without the thought of the hereafter. Many people today think this way also. That is where we get the saying, *Eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die.*" This is not really a Christian philosophy!

This is not the Christian's view of life, but the world's view of life, "under the sun," so to speak. At the end of Solomon's life he realized his errors, and says at the end of the book, "Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth. Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil." (Ecclesiastes 12:1a, 13, 14)

There is nothing wrong with enjoyment or merriment, and Scripture makes it clear that men enjoy drinking "grape juice," it gives me pleasure to drink it. We do not need to have a "high" from fermented wine or alcohol; we need to have the high of the Holy Spirit. When I was drinking in the military I was high for a little while, then I had the morning after to contend with. I would much rather drink non-alcoholic drinks and have my health as I have today. Also, my testimony is at stake, and I want to be sober for the Lord!

You mentioned Lot, and said his daughters gave him wine. It was fermented wine, of course, but he was sinning when he did this. He also had incestuous relations with his daughters as a result of his drinking, Genesis 19:30-38. He would not have done this if he had not been drinking, and the girls knew that. If you look at all the places in Scripture where people drank fermented wine, it caused problems for them. You may be able to drink a glass after supper and stop there, but this is not the case for the vast majority of people.

Solomon says in Proverbs: "Hear, my son, and be wise; and guide your heart in the way. Do not mix with winebibbers, *or* with gluttonous eaters of meat; for the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty, and drowsiness will clothe *a man* with rags. Listen to your father who begot you, and do not despise your mother when she is old.

"Buy the truth, and do not sell *it*, *also* wisdom and instruction and understanding. The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice, and he who begets a wise *child* will delight in him. Let your father and your mother be glad, and let her who bore you rejoice. My son, give me your heart, and let your eyes observe my ways. For a harlot is a deep pit, and a seductress *is* a narrow well. She also lies in wait as *for* a victim, and increases the unfaithful among men." (Proverbs 23:19-

28) [I believe God is using a harlot here as an example of how alcohol is seductive. Comment by G. T. Panell]

"Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has complaints? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who linger long at the wine, those who go in search of mixed wine. Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it swirls around smoothly; at the last it bites like a serpent, and stings like a viper.

"Your eyes will see strange things, and your heart will utter perverse things. Yes, you will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea, or like one who lies at the top of the mast, saying; 'They have struck me, but I was not hurt; they have beaten me, but I did not feel it. When shall I awake, that I may seek another drink?'" (Proverbs 23:29-35)

Dr. Bacchiocchi shows in his study that: "The drinking problem in America [U.S.A.] today claims at least 100,000 [+] lives per year, 25 times as many as all illegal drugs combined. Since the repeal of Prohibition in 1933, most churches have abandoned their stand for total abstinence, encouraging "moderation" instead. Unfortunately, moderation has led over 18 [+] million Americans [U.S.A.] to become immoderate drinkers, because alcohol is a habit-forming narcotic which weakens one's capacity for self-control."

If all our parties only offered soda and good non-alcoholic drinks, we would have a lot fewer deaths on the highways. We would have a lot fewer murders. We would have a lot fewer sexual abuse cases, and a lot less home violence! Whenever I go to a party here or in Mexico, I have to say, "No thank you" many times when they offer me a drink of alcohol. I say, "A soda will be fine for me, thanks." Television and the media tell our kids that wine is the key to sophisticated entertaining. Television tells our kids beer is part of sports. The most powerful medium in the world brings beer and wine into our living room and makes us comfortable with them!

The Bible says, "Wine is a mocker [obviously fermented here], Strong drink is a brawler [causes violence], and whoever is led astray by it is not wise." (Proverbs 20:1) A 1987 Gallup Poll indicates that 1 in 4 families are troubled by alcohol. This means that more than 61[+] million Americans are affected by some alcohol-related problems such as retarded children (Fetal Alcohol Syndrome), divorce, and violence in the home, crime, sickness and death.

I personally know from firsthand experience what it can do to a person, through my use of alcohol in Vietnam. It was not until I got back to the States, married and started attending church again regularly, that I got my life straightened out with the Lord. Even now I have to be very careful. A number of years ago, I drank one Margarita, and I almost went back into drinking. Thank God, I have not tried that again. (Later in the article we will talk about addiction, and what can be done to help those in need.)

Some people might ask why I do not explain the differences between different drinks and their percentages of alcohol; also why we do not go into the fact that Bible drinks were not distilled. The reason I do not talk about these differences is because if you realize that a typical 12 ounce can of beer is just as "strong" as a glass of wine or a cocktail with liquor. The fact is that 12

ounces of beer, a 5 ounce glass of wine, or 1 ¼ ounces of liquor all contain the same amount of pure alcohol.

People may not think about the financial giant we are up against in fighting alcohol, but let me give you a personal example. We live in Washington State in a place that is now called, "Wine Country." That probably tells you how many types of grapes that are grown here for wine use. We also grow the most hops of any place in the world, as you may know; it is the main ingredient for beer. My suggestion to the farmers is, why not sell your grapes to Welch's Grape Company which produces no fermented drinks, and God has prospered them. I believe He would do this for you if you would trust Him.

Because of its healthy nourishing properties, grape juice (unfermented) was fittingly used to represent the divine blessing of material prosperity in places in the Bible. Here are just two of the many examples of this: "Therefore may God give you of the dew of heaven, of the fatness of the earth, and plenty of grain and wine." Genesis 27:28; "Then Israel shall dwell in safety, the fountain of Jacob alone, in a land of grain and new wine; His heavens shall also drop dew." Deuteronomy 33:28, even though the word wine is used, we know that grape juice is referred to by the context.

Also Christian churches bear a lot of the responsibility for the inestimable human tragedy. Through their beliefs, teachings and preaching they are able to influence the moral values and practices of our society, probably more so than any other institution.

However, most churches teach that Scripture approves of the moderate use of alcohol, but prohibits immoderate use of it. This could not be further from the truth! I would comment, "With this kind of teaching no wonder we have so many problems with alcohol in our Christian homes today!" The Bible teaches total abstinence from alcoholic liquors, or temperance as it used to be taught.

You mentioned in your letter that kings were not supposed to drink at all because it would cloud their judgment. In Revelation 1:6, we are called kings and priests, according to Scripture, kings or princes were not to drink fermented wine or intoxicating drink (Proverbs 31:4,5). We are also told that priests were not to drink any wine or intoxicating drink when they went into the tabernacle (or temple) (Leviticus 10:9-10). Then in the Church Age we are told, in 1 Corinthians 3:16, "Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you." Let us keep this temple, our bodies, holy for the Lord!

The following are related questions and the answers given:

Is Paul endorsing the consumption of alcoholic beverages when he instructs Timothy to drink wine for his stomach's sake in I Timothy 5:23?

We do get a little insight into how the early apostles lived by looking at I Timothy 5:23. Here Paul tells Timothy, "No longer drink only water, but use a little wine (grape juice) for your stomach's sake and your frequent infirmities." They seem to be so afraid that if they drank any grape juice it might be fermented, that they would not even try it. At least this is the experience

of Timothy. Paul was suggesting that a little grape juice would be good for Timothy's stomach. My doctor tells me that the dark Concord grape juice is also good for my heart. He suggests a couple glasses a day.

It seems the disciples of Jesus went on the verses from the Old Testament like Proverbs 23:31-32, "Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it swirls around smoothly; at the last it bites like a serpent, and stings like a viper."

Please explain Deuteronomy 14:26 to me. I have been doing an internet search regarding alcoholic beverage consumption and what the Bible has to say. This one verse has really perplexed me because this is the only time I have seen a possible endorsement of intoxicating liquors in the Bible.

Thanks for asking the question about alcohol and the Bible. The Bible is very clear on this subject; I will give you the "short" answer. The word "wine" in our English Bible does not always mean a fermented drink. The main Hebrew word for "wine" (since the Old Testament was written in Hebrew) is "yayin" (what is pressed out). The verse you are asking about (Deuteronomy 14:26) is very straight forward. It uses this Hebrew word "yayin" which means "grape juice". Remember that this word is almost always translated as "wine" whether the grape juice is fermented or not. When we think "wine", we always think "fermented", but this is not the case. The word "wine" in the Bible is a generic term. The context (words before and after the word wine) indicates whether it was fermented or not. For some examples of this, look at Isaiah 65:8. Grape juice is called "wine" when it is still in the grapes on the vine, where it is impossible to be fermented.

So to assume that every time the Bible uses the word "wine" it is talking about a "fermented drink" is not looking at the facts! Another example of this is found in Isaiah 16:10b where it says "...no treaders will tread out wine in their presses..." As soon as the juice was taken out it was called "wine."

Now I would like to finish answering your question on this specific reference, Deuteronomy 14:26. God wanted these believers to tithe on everything, including their fresh grape juice (look at verses 23b and 26). Here God is saying if it is too far to travel from your house to the place of worship with these things, you could sell them right away and take the money instead. Then when you get there, you can buy the same type of things, fresh grape juice, etc. Then you can rejoice before the Lord. That doesn't mean to get drunk, but to enjoy the food and grape juice you have bought for your family. The New King James Version of the Bible is the best to read when discussing this area of alcohol, it is the most accurate on this subject.

I guess I didn't isolate the part that bothered me. It is the other drink mentioned. The New King James says "wine or similar drink". The Old King James says "wine or strong drink". The Complete Jewish Bible says "wine, other intoxicating liquor." One source I read says the noun in Hebrew means an intoxicating drink. Where did the New King James get "similar?" I was raised in a Baptist church and never ever heard a word about this verse. Do you disagree with the meaning of the Hebrew word for the other drink mentioned with wine?

Yes, I do stand by the New King James Version translation "wine or other similar drink". I do this for two reasons: first, having been raised in a Baptist church (I myself was an M.K. & P.K.) you will know that one does not make a doctrine out of one verse. The rest of Scripture is very clear on this subject. I hope you had a chance to look at my articles and the other web sites listed there. Second, the NKJV used the 1967/1977 Stuttgart edition of the Biblia Hebraica, based on the Ben Asher text, while frequent comparisons were made with the Bomberg edition of 1524-25. The Septuagint (Greek) Version of the Old Testament and the Latin Vulgate also were consulted. In addition to referring to a variety of ancient versions of the Hebrew Scriptures, the New King James Version draws on the resources of relevant manuscripts from the Dead Sea Caves. You can read more of these quotes from the front of a good NKJV.

Christ's first miracle was the turning of water into wine at the marriage feast. I was always taught that the wine was unfermented. The wine that Lot's daughters drank was fermented, etc. I guess the bottom line is that I was taught that when it was used in a good way in the Bible it was unfermented, when used in a bad way it was fermented. I believe that Scripture does not contradict itself and that if Jesus turned the water into wine, it must be unfermented, as Jesus knew the Scripture and He would not do anything against it. Can you help? Thanks.

Thank you for the question and it is a good one. You are on the right track, you seem like you just want some proof for what you believe. I believe there is proof! Proof that is beyond a shadow of a doubt!

"On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Now both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding. And when they ran out of wine, the mother of Jesus said to Him, 'They have no wine.' Jesus said to her, 'Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come.' His mother said to the servants, 'Whatever He says to you, do it.'

Now there were set there six waterpots of stone, according to the manner of purification of the Jews, containing twenty or thirty gallons apiece. Jesus said to them, 'Fill the waterpots with water.' And they filled them up to the brim. And He said to them, 'Draw *some* out now, and take *it* to the master of the feast.' And they took *it*.

When the master of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and did not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew) the master of the feast called the bridegroom. And he said to him, 'Every man at the beginning sets out the good wine, and when the *guests* have well drunk, then that *which is* inferior; *but* you have kept the good wine until now.' This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him." (John 2: 1-12)

(The following is paraphrased from an article by Dr. Bacchiocchi, Jesus and Wine. The statements in quotation marks are quoted verbatim)

The popular belief that "Jesus was not a teetotaler," but a moderate drinker of fermented wine who even "miraculously manufactured a high-quality (alcoholic) wine at Cana" has

no doubt influenced the drinking habits of millions of Christians around the world more than anything else that the Bible says about drinking.

The reason is simple. The example and teachings of Christ are normative for Christian belief and practice. If Christ made, commended and used fermented wine, then there can hardly be anything intrinsically wrong with a moderate drinking of alcoholic beverages! Simply stated, "If wine was good enough for Jesus, it is good enough for me!"

The belief that the wine Christ provided in Cana was alcoholic rests on five major assumptions. First, it is assumed that the word oinos "wine" indicates only "fermented-quality grape drink, i.e. wine." Second, it is assumed that since the word oinos "wine" is used in reference both to the wine which ran out and the wine that Christ made, both wines must have been alcoholic.

Third, it is assumed that the Jews did not know how to prevent the fermentation of grape juice; and since, as argued by William Hendriksen, the season of the wedding was just before Spring Passover (cf. John 2:13), that is, six months after the grape harvest, the wine used at Cana had ample time to ferment. Fourth, it is assumed that the description given by the master of the banquet to the wine provided by Christ as "the good wine" means a high-quality alcoholic wine.

Fifth, it is assumed that the expression "well drunk" (John 2:10) used by the master of the banquet indicates that the guests were intoxicated because they had been drinking fermented wine. Consequently, the wine Jesus made must also have been fermented. In view of the importance these assumptions play in determining the nature of the wine provided by Christ, we shall examine each of them briefly in the order given...

...The Meaning of Oinos... (The first and the second assumption are really based on this mistaken view that oinos, Greek for wine, always is fermented.)* A better acquaintance with the use of the word 'wine,' not only in the Greek language, but also in old English, Latin and Hebrew, would have saved scholars from falling into the mistaken conclusion that oinos means only fermented wine. The truth of the matter is, oinos is a generic term, including all kinds of wine, unfermented and fermented, like yayin in Hebrew and vinum in Latin. Thus the fact that the wine made by Christ at Cana is called oinos, offers no ground for concluding that it was fermented wine. Its nature must be determined by internal evidence and moral likelihood. The record of the evangelist, as we shall see, affords information for determining this question.

(The first and second assumptions are discredited by two facts.)* First as mentioned earlier, the word oinos is a generic term referring to fermented and to unfermented wine. Second, the wine provided by Christ is differentiated from the other by being characterized as ton kalon, 'the good' wine. This suggests that the two wines were not identical. The nature of the difference between the two wines will be discussed below.

Preservation of Grape Juice: The third assumption, that it would have been impossible to supply unfermented grape juice for a spring time wedding about six months after vintage, rests on the assumption that the technology for preserving grape juice unfermented was unknown at the time.

The latter assumption is clearly discredited by numerous testimonies from the Roman world of New Testament times describing various methods for preserving grape juice. Preservation of grape juice was in some ways a simpler process than the preservation of fermented wine. Thus, the possibility existed at the wedding of Cana to supply unfermented grape juice near the Passover season, since such a beverage could be kept unfermented throughout the year. **"High-Quality Alcoholic Wine:"** The fourth assumption is that the wine Jesus provided was pronounced 'the good wine' (John 2:10) by the master of the banquet, because it was high in alcoholic content. Such an assumption is based on twentieth-century tastes.

Albert Barnes, a well-known New Testament scholar and commentator, warns in his comment on John 2:10 not to "be deceived by the phrase 'good wine.'" The reason, he explains, is that "We use the phrase to denote that it is good in proportion to its strength, and its power to intoxicate. But no such sense is to be attached to the word here."

.To the Roman world of New Testament times, the best wines were those whose alcoholic potency had been removed by boiling or filtration. Pliny, for example, says that "wines are most beneficial (utilissimum) when all their potency has been removed by the strainer." Similarly, Plutarch points out that wine is "much more pleasant to drink" when it "neither inflames the brain nor infests the mind or passions" because its strength has been removed through frequent filtering.

The wine Christ made was of high quality, not because of its alcohol content, but because, as Henry Morris explains, "It was new wine, freshly created! It was not old, decayed wine, as it would have to be if it were intoxicating. There was no time for the fermentation process to break down the structure of its energy-giving sugars into disintegrative alcohols."

It thus was a fitting representation of His glory, and was appropriate to serve as the very first of His great miracles (John 2:11). **Rabbinical Witness:** The rabbinical witness on the nature of wine is not unanimous. Rabbi Isidore Koplowitz points out in his introduction to his collection of rabbinical statements on wine and strong drink that "it is true that some Talmudic doctors have sanctioned, aye, even recommended the moderate use of wine.

But it is equally true that many Talmudic Rabbis have in vigorous words condemned the drinking of wine and strong drinks. Some Rabbis have even ascribed the downfall of Israel to wine. An example of disapproval is the statement, often repeated with minor variations by different rabbis, which says: "When wine enters into the system of a person, out goes sense, wherever there is wine there is no understanding."

.Elsewhere the Talmud indicates that drinking was forbidden to the accompaniment of musical instruments in festive occasions such as weddings (Sotah 48a; also Mishna Sotah 9, 11). .In the light of these testimonies and considerations we would conclude that the wine provided by Christ was described as "the good wine" because it was not intoxicating.

Moral implications: Another reason leading us to reject the assumption that "the good wine" produced by Christ was high in alcoholic content is the negative reflection such an assumption casts upon the wisdom of the Son of God. .The oinos in this case was grape juice. In the light of

the whole Old Testament condemnation of wine [that was fermented], it certainly would appear that the beverage was grape juice."

It is against the principle of Scriptural and moral analogy to suppose that Christ, the Creator of good things (Genesis 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25,: Col 1:16), would exert His supernatural energy to bring into existence an intoxicating wine which Scripture condemns as "a mocker" and "a brawler" (Proverbs 20:1) and which the Holy Spirit has chosen as the symbol of divine wrath.

Scriptural and moral consistency requires that "the good wine" produced by Christ was fresh, unfermented grape juice. The very adjective used to describe the wine supports this conclusion. "It must be observed, "notes Leon C. Field, "that the adjective used to describe the wine made by Christ is not agathos, good, simply, but kalos, that which is morally excellent or befitting. The term is suggestive of Theophrastus' characterization of unintoxicating wine as moral (ethikos) wine.

Referring to the nature of the wine produced by Christ, Ellen White says: "The wine which Christ provided for the feast, and that which He gave to the disciples as a symbol of His own blood, was the pure juice of the grape. To this the prophet Isaiah refers when he speaks of the new wine 'in the cluster,' and says, 'Destroy it not: for a blessing is in it'.The unfermented wine which He provided for the wedding guests was a wholesome and refreshing drink. Its effect was to bring the taste into harmony with a healthful appetite."

"Well Drunk." The final assumption to be examined relates to the expression "well drunk" (John 2:10) used by the banquet master. The full statement reads: "Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk then that which is worse; but thou hast kept the good wine until now" (John 2:10, KJV).

The assumption is that since the Greek word methusthosin "well drunk" indicates drunkenness and since drunkenness is caused, according to the statement of the banquet master, by the "good wine" customarily served first, then "the good wine" provided by Christ must also have been intoxicating, because it is compared with the good wine usually served at the beginning of a feast.

This reasoning misinterprets and misapplies the comment of the master of the banquet, and overlooks the broader usage of the verb. The comment in question was not made in reference to that particular party, but to the general practice among those who hold feasts: "Every man serves the good wine first; and when men have drunk freely, then the poor wine." (John 2:10, RSV). This remark, as many commentators recognize, forms parts of the stock in trade of a hired banquet master, rather than an actual description of the state of intoxication at a particular party.

Another important consideration is the fact that the Greek verb methusko can mean "to drink freely" without any implication of intoxication. The verb methusko in John 2:10 is used in the sense of satiation. It refers simply to the large quantity of wine generally consumed at a feast, without any reference to intoxicating effects.

Those who wish to insist that the wine used at the feast was alcoholic and that Jesus also provided alcoholic wine, though of a better quality, are driven to the conclusion that Jesus provided a large additional quantity of intoxicating wine so that the wedding party could continue its reckless indulgence. Such a conclusion destroys the moral integrity of Christ's character.

The Object of the Miracle: The stated object of the miracle was for Christ to manifest His glory so that His disciples might believe in Him. This objective was accomplished: "This, the first of His signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him" (John 2:11).

Christ's presence at a marriage feast was intended to show divine approval of the marriage institution and of the innocent enjoyments of social life. Yet all of these considerations were subservient to the manifestation of Christ's glory in fulfillment of His Messianic mission. The glory of God is revealed especially in His act of creation (Psalm 19:1-2). Likewise, Christ's "eternal power and deity" (Romans 1:20) through an act of creation: "He made the water wine [grape juice]" (John 4:46).

The wine of the miracle must have been identical to the wine found in the grape-clusters, because this is the only wine that God produces. "There is not a hint," writes R. A. Torrey, "that the wine He [Christ] made was intoxicating. It was fresh-made wine. New-made wine is never intoxicating. It is not intoxicating until sometime after the process of fermentation has set in. Fermentation is a process of decay. There is not a hint that our Lord produced alcohol, which is a product of decay and death. He produced a living wine uncontaminated by fermentation."

"I am satisfied," states William Pettingill, "that there was little resemblance in it [wine made by Christ] to the thing described in the Scripture of God as biting like a serpent and stinging like an adder (Proverbs 23:29-32). Doubtless rather it was like the heavenly fruit of the vine that He will drink new with His own in His Father's kingdom (Matthew 26:29). No wonder the governor of the wedding feast at Cana pronounced it the best wine kept until the last. Never before had he tasted such wine [grape juice], and never did he taste it again."

Christ's miracles were always directed to benevolent ends. He "came not to destroy men's lives but to save them" (Luke 9:56). If it were true that Christ miraculously manufactured an intoxicating wine, then that miracle would be a notable exception among His miracles. It would be a malevolent manifestation of His power. He would have manifested shame rather than glory.

Christ was aware of the powerful influence His example would have on contemporary and future generations. If, with all this knowledge He created an intoxicating wine, He would have revealed diabolic rather than divine power and glory. His disciples could hardly have believed in Him, if they had seen Him do a miracle to encourage drunkenness.

[I agree 100 percent with these statements and would like to add to them that: The Bible says Jesus always did the will of the Father who is in heaven. So He would not disobey God the Father who said by the Holy Spirit, "Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it swirls around smoothly; at the last it bites like a serpent, and

stings like a viper." (Proverbs 23:31-32 NKJV) Also, He would not make people sin by making an alcoholic drink, which we are told not even to look at, let alone drink.

Also, Jesus (being God as well as man) would know about the harmful effects of alcohol, such as Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, and would not give alcohol to a wedding party, which probably included several pregnant women. No, Jesus did NOT make a fermented wine at this wedding. What He did do, was to create and give a wedding gift of at least 120+ gallons of fresh grape juice, thus proving He is the loving Messiah-God, as the theme of St. John points out!]* Comments by G. T. Panell

Thanks for the question and God bless you!

Question: Hello, I was reading your online article about fermented and unfermented wine in the Bible and had a specific question about the passage which I have copied and pasted at the bottom of this message. You said that yayin is unfermented wine or grape juice and then say that Deut. 32:33 tells us that fermented wine is poison. My confusion is Deut. 32:33 uses the Hebrew word yayin to portray that wine was poisonous. It also used specifics here. Saying that Gomorrah's wine was poisonous not that all wine was poisonous. Please help me to understand this interpretation as I am still trying to get a full understanding of whether wine is okay to drink or not. Thank you for your time and consideration. God Bless. -

Thanks for your question. In this verse in Deuteronomy 32:33 from the text and since the word poison is used the Lord is speaking of what they had done with their grape juice and that was to ferment it, and drink it. God shows us what he thought of their wine and that was, it was like gall, bitter, poison of serpents, and cruel venom of cobras, not a positive description by any stretch of the imagination.

God wants to spare us this heartache and trouble, but we need to decide that we will not even look at the alcohol to be tempted by it. I have enjoyed my health and life so much since I gave up drinking. If one wants to drink he or she cannot say God's Word is encouraging them to drink. If one studies all the passages on alcohol you see that God wants us to walk away from it for several reasons. The most holy life a person could lead in Scripture was that of a Nazirite, and they could not even drink grape juice, but we are not told we have to do this, but we are to be like Jesus and not even look at it when it is fermented. I have to say, "No thank you," often when I am at a wedding or at a place where they are drinking alcohol, but it has always been a good testimony when I kindly say, "No thanks."

These questions and answers cover most of the main issues concerning alcohol in the Bible, but here is another verse that some people claim condones the use of alcohol by Christians.

(Ephesians 5: 17-18) "Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation (intemperance); but be filled with the Spirit."

If we want to be wise and know what the will of God for our lives as Christians is, it is given to us here in these two verses. First, verse 18 is not condoning the moderate use of alcohol, as some

have claimed, but just the opposite. Being filled with wine or using any would be wrong, but being filled with the Holy Spirit is a command to be followed!

"The first command here could better be translated: 'Do not begin to be drunk with wine.' Since even a small amount of an intoxicant has a damaging effect on the brain, this command in effect calls for total abstinence from alcohol. Proverbs 23:31 warns against even looking on the wine, lest it tempt one to drink.

"The connotation of 'filled' here is 'being filled.' That is, the filling with the Spirit is not a once-for-all experience, like the baptism of the Spirit into the body of Christ [1 Corinthians 12:13]. Instead, we are urged to continually be filled with the Spirit-controlled by the Spirit. In a way analogous to how alcohol may control a person's thoughts and actions, the better way is to allow the Holy Spirit to have control." (The Defender's Study Bible, Dr. Henry M. Morris)

Now what should a Christian do for someone who has an addiction to alcohol?

This section has more quotes from *God is for the Alcoholic* by Jerry Dunn with Bernard Palmer.

"The term *alcoholism* was first used by Magnus Huss and may be defined as any change in the condition of the body or in its physical or mental activities caused by ethyl alcohol or alcoholic beverages. Alcoholism is literally a poisoning by spirits.

"It is the ethyl alcohol in beer, whiskey, and other liquors that causes intoxication. It is ethyl alcohol that causes addiction. The fact that there are those who drink because of personality defects cannot be denied. Yet basic research does not hold to the premise that the psychological makeup of a man is the primary cause of his alcohol addiction.

"Dr. Robert Fleming, one of the leaders in the World Health Organization, says, 'Most alcoholics are not psychiatric cases: they are normal people.' The conclusion reached in a fifty-six-page report issued by the World Health Organization is: 'First, nobody is immune to alcoholism. Second, total abstinence is the only solution. Alcohol is a poison to the nervous system. The double solubility of alcohol in water and fat enables it to invade the nerve cell. A person may become a chronic alcoholic without ever having shown symptoms of drunkenness.'

"Dr. Edwin H. Sunderland of Indiana University reached the same conclusion 'The alcoholic could be a sad type or a happy type, an introvert or an extrovert. In short, he could be anybody.'

"Alcoholism starts with the social drinking of alcoholic beverages, not with a problem personality. All alcoholic beverages-wine, beer, or whiskey-contain ethyl alcohol, a habit-forming drug. (*God Is For the Alcoholic* by Jerry Dunn with Bernard Palmer)

I have worked for years off and on with the Union Gospel Mission, which by the way is doing an excellent job for the Lord in their ministry. I have also worked in several other Christian organizations, and was a pastor of both an English speaking Community Church and a Spanish speaking Community Church. I can tell you from experience, that Christians struggle with this area of alcohol and drunkenness!

We need to realize this as a fact first and foremost, and then we need to see what we can do to help. Maybe God will call you to go to your local Union Gospel Mission and volunteer your help. It might mean getting with your pastor and asking him if there is a way you could help Christians in your church that are struggling with alcohol addiction. I know of one church in our area that allows AA to meet in their church building for free. You can pray that God will direct you as to what He wants you to do.

You will need to first understand very clearly what Scripture says about this subject of alcohol, and then how to work with those who are addicted or struggling with it. That is what this section is all about. Someone has said though, "It is better to build a fence at the top of a cliff with a warning, than it is to put an ambulance at the bottom of the cliff." There is more truth than poetry in that statement, as the saying goes. If we can prevent young people and Christians from every starting to drink it will be better than trying to help all those that will be addicted if not warned.

Two Types of Alcoholics

"Members of the Committee on Alcoholism of the American Medical Association's Council on Mental Health divided alcoholics into two groups. The first, *primary* alcoholics are those who drink because of addiction alone. *Secondary* alcoholics are those who begin to drink compulsively because of personal problems or for physical reasons and later become addicted. The primary alcoholic can be attracted to alcohol from the first drink and keep right on drinking until he is a slave to it.

"Roy E. Hatfield writes in *Christianity Today*, 'Today social drinking has become quite acceptable in many segments of the evangelical church. Forty eight percent of the Baptist community, for example, uses alcoholic beverages.' (*God Is For The Alcoholic*)

When I was a child it was rare for a Baptist to drink, in fact, many churches had in their constitution by-laws that you could not be a member of the church and even sell alcohol. Things have changed a lot through the years and not for the better, think of the untold domestic violence that has happened in 'Christian homes,' since this attitude that drinking "in moderation" is all right for the Christian.

As a side note, there was a lady, who in her desire to help people started a group that stressed drinking "in moderation;" last I heard about her she was pulled over for drunk driving. You see it is either good for us and of God, or else it is bad and not right for us. There is no middle ground, either a person is abstinent or they are on the road to becoming a person having problems with alcohol in the future. There are scientific reasons for this, no one thinks that they will be an alcoholic or have problems with alcohol when they start experimenting with alcohol, but ethyl alcohol is very addictive.

"Dr. Morris Fishbein wrote his own convictions on the same subject in the AMA Journal. 'Just a drink or two and the safe driver is turned into a reckless traffic menace.' There is good reason for this. Ethyl alcohol, when taken into the body, goes almost immediately into the bloodstream and up to the brain. It begins to affect the cortex of the brain, the location of higher brain centers that have to do with memory, conscience, and judgment. The anesthetic effect of alcohol slows man's

reactions measurable. It decreases his ability to judge distances and to tell the difference between visual and auditory stimuli.

"Until recently it was assumed that the deleterious or harmful effects of alcohol were largely due to nutritional deficiencies. Those who drank heavily were notoriously careless about their diet and neglected proper nutrition. During the past several years, however, it has become clear that alcohol itself is a toxin to many body organs and that proper and adequate nutrition does not protect the drinking individual from the effects of alcohol.

Effects on Society

"The *Alcoholism Report* published in December of 1983 made this startling comment in reviewing the Consumer's Federation of America's report: "Alcohol was third, behind automobiles and cigarettes in the top ten most hazardous of consumer products. Millions of Americans abuse or are addicted to alcohol. This abuse is a major cause of tens of thousands of deaths and millions of injuries that occur each year in accidents involving automobiles, boats and weapons. Moreover, heavy drinking is as important a cause of disease as cigarette smoking. Medical researchers have directly linked heavy consumption of alcohol to heart disease, hepatitis, cirrhosis of the liver, and to cancer of the mouth, esophagus, larynx, liver and other organs.

"Even small amounts of alcohol during pregnancy can be detrimental to the unborn baby. Women who have two standard drinks per day during pregnancy often give birth to smaller children. Significant increases in spontaneous miscarriages are noted in women who have as little as two drinks twice a week. Alcohol consumption during pregnancy can also cause physical and mental birth defects. [Do you see here another reason why Jesus would not have made an alcoholic drink for the wedding of Cana, being a large wedding there would have been probably several pregnant women?]

"The economic costs of alcohol abuse are also significant. Medical bills, time missed from work, property damage, and other associated costs totaled a hundred billion dollars in 1982. [I'm sure it is far greater now.] In the United States only heart and cardiovascular diseases exceeded alcohol abuse in total economic cost. In addition, alcohol is a major factor in crime. Eighty-six percent of homicides involve alcohol. Seventy-nine percent of assaults, seventy-two percent of robberies, fifty percent of rapes and fifty percent of automobile accidents."

Understanding the Alcoholic

"Before it is possible to help the alcoholic, it is necessary to understand him. We must remember that all alcoholism starts with social drinking.

"The first step is social drinking. Practically without exception, people take their first drink because someone offers them one. A few years ago young people began to feel the pressure to drink when they reached high school or college. Today it often begins in junior high, where increasing numbers think they have to have beer to enjoy a party. During the past school year, a

small Midwestern town was stunned when thirty-eight students attending a school sponsored junior high dance were caught drinking.

"Getting alcohol is no problem for most youngsters. They don't have to go to someone on a street corner to buy what they want. Many get their first drink from the refrigerator at home and most of their beer from their parents supply in the basement or garage.

"Mothers and fathers are often so concerned about marijuana, cocaine, and other drugs that they are almost relieved to learn that their children are only dabbling with alcohol. They may not realize that alcohol is also a drug, with the potential to destroy the lives of the unwary, and in a number of ways is more dangerous than the drugs every parent fears.

"We often fail to consider that the effect of alcohol on an individual has a direct relationship to his body weight. A can of beer will have far less effect on a 225-pound man than it will on a boy or girl of 90 pounds. Even a small amount of alcohol can have a devastating effect on a child.

"By the time many reach high school they are already on the road to problem drinking. 'I started hitting the bottle when I was fourteen,' a Canadian friend told me. 'Before the year was out I was a full-fledged alcoholic. I'd lie and steal to get another drink...'

"A high school teacher from another part of the United States told me, 'I have had kids come into my classes who were so drunk they scarcely knew where they were. We try to do something about it, but often they are problem drinkers, and we have no way of helping them except to urge their parents to get professional help for them.'

"In a small Nebraska town the inevitable round of graduation parties was held. A seventeen-year-old girl got drunk and went home with a girl friend. The next morning she was found in the bathtub, dead by drowning. Accidental deaths of graduating students in automobile accidents are common across the country and often take the lives of the innocent as well.

"There is mounting evidence that people who start drinking early are more likely to become alcohol dependent, Hingson and his team note in the July issue of the Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine. To investigate whether they may also become alcohol dependent at a younger age, the researchers analyzed the results of a 2001-2002 survey of 43,093 adults conducted by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. The researchers found that 47 percent of people who had started drinking before age 14 met criteria for alcohol dependence within 10 years." (*God is for the alcoholic*)

The following information can be found at druginfo.adf.org.au:

The facts about binge drinking - for young people

Introduction

Alcohol is the most widely used recreational drug in Australia. Because it is so widely used and socially acceptable in our society, alcohol is often not considered to be a 'drug', nor is it

considered to be particularly harmful. However, evidence from research shows that consumption of alcohol at harmful levels is increasing in Australia, particularly among young people. Furthermore, the prevalence of alcohol use among young people has increased in the past decade, the average age of first use being 14. Much of this drinking takes the form of 'binge drinking'.

What is binge drinking?

Binge drinking is a term widely used, but people tend to have quite different understandings of exactly what that means. Most definitions of binge drinking refer to the act of drinking heavily over a short period of time or drinking continuously over a number of days or weeks. Some common definitions of binge drinking/a binge drinker are:

- drinking to get drunk-a 'bender'
- occasional bouts of heavy drinking by young and/or non-dependent people
- intermittent, or irregular, episodes of excessive drinking
- 'a person who is normally restrained in their drinking habits but who at frequent intervals over-indulges to a marked degree'.

In this fact sheet, we use the term 'binge drinking' to refer to drinking, on any single occasion.

The consequences of these can have long-lasting effects on both your health and well-being (long-term harms).

Short-term effects

Binge drinking can result in acute intoxication (drunkenness). It can lead people to put themselves in dangerous situations and to take risks with their health and well-being. Common short-term effects of binge-drinking episodes are hangovers, headaches, nausea, shakiness and possible vomiting and memory loss.

The short-term risks of binge drinking include the risks of harm such as falls, assaults and car accidents. Young people often are not aware of the dangers associated with acute intoxication, and are more likely to indulge in risky behavior while intoxicated, such as swimming, driving, unwanted sex, verbal or physical abuse.

Long-term effects

If someone drinks heavily over a long period of time, they can become physically and psychologically dependent upon alcohol. Their body gets used to functioning with alcohol present and/or drinking can become more important than other activities in their life. Over time, alcohol can damage parts of the body, including the brain and liver. There are also the risks of developing emotional problems, such as depression, and problems at school, work and with relationships.

Other effects of binge drinking include unwanted pregnancy, feeling bad about yourself afterwards (such as shame or embarrassment), feeling vulnerable and out of control while intoxicated, losing friends or loved ones as a result of your behavior, loss of valuable items such as a car after a smash or personal items such as jewelry, or financial losses through reckless spending on alcohol or having to have time off work to recover from a binge.

How big a problem is it, really?

In 1998, alcohol use was the cause of 814 deaths and 25,207 hospital admissions of Australians aged 15-34. More than 40 per cent of people aged 16-24 surveyed in Victoria in September 2002 were drinking at levels that placed them at risk of short-term harm. Of these, 19.5 per cent of males and 13.8 per cent of females aged 18-24 were drinking at these risky levels on a weekly basis.

The prevalence of alcohol use, and binge drinking, among young people has increased in the past decade. "This generation of drinkers starts younger, drinks more and indulges in binge drinking to a greater extent than any previous generation." ([DRUG INFO Clearinghouse](#))

Here are more quotes from *God is for the Alcoholic* by Jerry Dunn with Bernard Palmer:

"In colleges and universities, drinking becomes a way of life. Schools that try to control alcohol in the dorms have been forced to set up security guards in an attempt to keep it out. The pressure to drink socially is sometimes irresistible even to those initially determined not to participate in parties and drinking bouts. And in exceptional cases, even physical pressure has been used. At a state school in Nebraska, classmates of a polio victim in a wheelchair wrestled him to the floor and tried to force liquor down his throat. 'You have to drink when you go to a party,' a university sophomore said to me. 'Everybody does.' ['Woe to him who gives drink to his neighbor, pressing *him/her* to your bottle, even to make *him/her* drunk, that you may look on their nakedness!'] (Habakkuk 2:15)]

"The pattern for gracious living set by adults has filtered down to their children. An evening cannot be a success without the hospitality hour. At many parties the pressure to get everyone to drink is so great it seems imperative that everyone have a glass in his hand. For some reason drinkers feel uncomfortable if someone is present who isn't drinking.

"I don't know why people will come to our neighborhood parties and be so smug they won't drink,' a woman complained in a newspaper advice column. 'It wouldn't hurt them to take just one cocktail...'

"The more education an American has the more likely he is to drink,' says Robert W. Jones, assistant director of the Center of Alcohol Studies at Rutgers University. 'More than half the people with only an elementary education drink. Approximately 70 percent of those with high school education drink, while the percentage is somewhat greater among college graduates.

"The liquor industry spends millions of dollars a year in advertising. Their purpose is to cloak their product with some semblance of respectability and to foster the notion that successful social

occasions call for alcohol. Their propaganda campaign has been very successful through the years. More and more evangelical Christians find themselves relaxing their opposition to social drinking and are adopting drinking habits that closely resemble those of American society in general. Consequently we are seeing increasing numbers of Christians falling into alcohol addiction.

"No one thinks he will become a slave to alcohol. The social drinker is determined not to drink so much that he staggers or makes a fool of himself or is a risk behind the steering wheel. He doesn't intend to make liquor the first love of his life-to the exclusion of his family, his friends, and his job. 'I've seen it happen to others,' he reasons, 'but it is not going to happen to me.' He is too smart-too much in control of himself-to let liquor master him. But, like 99 percent of all alcoholics, the chances are that he will not even recognize the danger signals until it is too late.

"Although social drinking is the first step to alcoholism, another even more insidious danger is the idea rapidly taking hold of more and more people that to demonstrate hospitality an alcoholic beverage must be served. Social drinking is the snare that traps many individuals who have fought their way back to sobriety.

"A man we'll call Pete was such a person. The path had been long and difficult for him, but at last he reached the place where he could stay sober. He won back his wife and family, got a good job, bought a new home, and was once more getting ahead. It had been five years since he had a drink.

"Then his wife went to visit her mother. While he was at home alone the people in the block had a housewarming for a new couple who had moved into the neighborhood. Anxious to be hospitable, the newcomers brought up a case of beer from the basement.

"At first Pete hesitated. He knew he shouldn't drink that it was dangerous for him to do so. But how could he explain all of that to complete strangers? Rather than give them the sordid story of his drinking days he took a beer.

"He was determined to handle it, but the fires of alcoholism had not been put out. They had only been banked within him and were still smoldering. The taste of alcohol in that single glass of beer was enough to catch fire and send the flames racing out of control.

"Although five years had elapsed, he started to drink again. You know the rest of the story. He lost his job, his home, his family, and once more hit skid row-all because someone offered him a social drink and he was too embarrassed to turn it down.

"The story of Michele, told in the November 1981 issue of *Moody Monthly*, reveals that this can happen even to a fine Christian young woman. Michele, a member of an evangelical church, was promoted to the position of sales manager at the company where she worked. The opportunities to drink looked inviting, and she began to drink socially.

"At first she was sure it helped business. Her clients seemed more relaxed when she drank with them, and she thought it helped in making sales. It wasn't long, however until she was unable to

control her drinking. In a few months she came to church under the influence of alcohol. She had never intended it to go that far, but it did.

"The *dependent drinker* turns to beverage alcohol when things start to build up; when the problems he faces get to be too great for him. His boss chews him out on the job; he loses a big contract; his wife wants to spend more than he thinks they can afford on new furniture; or a bill collector gets nasty. So he drinks. It helps him to forget what has happened. The disappointments and frustrations don't seem so great under the temporary glow produced by alcohol.

I know quite a lot about that sort of drinking. I used to do my share of it.

"If something happened that disturbed me or made me angry I'd head for the nearest bar or package store. The bottle didn't solve a single problem, but that didn't keep me from running to it for solace. Nor did I face the fact that I always felt worse and less able to cope with life when the effect of the liquor wore off. Even though at that time my chief compulsion to drink came from the pressures I faced. I was becoming addicted to ethyl alcohol. And, like the habit drinker, I didn't realize it.

"There is actually little difference between the habit drinker and the dependent drinker. Both are in the early stages of alcohol addiction.

Ways others Can Help the Alcoholic

"Every problem people face has a spiritual solution. The ever-increasing problem of alcoholism is no exception. God has provided a way of escape. Those who are trying to help alcoholics must believe this. Otherwise, counseling an alcoholic or dealing with a family member ensnared in alcohol addiction can be a frustrating experience. The situation is so complex, so staggering, that there seems to be no solution apart from the conviction that God has provided a way of escape. ["No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God *is* faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear *it*." (1 Corinthians 10:13)]

"The road to rehabilitation may be long and difficult, but there is hope. First we must come to understand the alcoholic and the product that has enslaved him. Then we must inform ourselves about the ways in which he can be helped. Whether we are working in a rescue mission, or as a pastor or counselor, or whether we suffer the alcohol addiction of one of our loved one, there are definite ways we can help the alcoholic. We will consider these in detail in this section.

"A father had just stumbled home and was sprawled on the floor in a drunken stupor. His distraught wife knelt beside him, threw her body across his, and in anguish carried out in prayer. 'God, deliver him from the power of drink. Make him a decent husband and father again. I commend him to Thee in the name of Christ!'

"A widow with two small children, she had married this man after his first wife died, leaving him with three small children. For several years they were very happy-until drink began to get its claws into Clarence.

"In time they were separated, and the wife, following the advice of well-meaning friends and going against her own judgment, divorced him. He went off into the never-never land of the alcoholic in a helpless, hopeless, self-centered search for one bottle after another.

"It was twelve years before she saw Clarence again. This time he was sober and a respected member of the community. He was on the staff of the rescue mission where he had found Christ as his Savior. It was our privilege to remarry them.

"'I prayed for Clarence's salvation for twelve years,' she told me. 'I knew he was going to become a Christian. I kept asking God to save him.'

"Three years or more before they met again and were remarried she heard that he had become a believer. 'My prayers changed,' she continued. 'I thanked God for saving him and delivering him from the power of drink. I started praying that we might be reunited if that was God's plan for our lives.'

"The first way to help to help the alcoholic is to pray for him [her]. 'You can do more than pray after you've prayed,' S.D. Gordon says in his book *Quiet Talks on Prayer*, "But you cannot do more than pray until you have prayed."

"There is no area in which this statement is truer than in working with the alcoholic. There is much that can be done for him [her], but we cannot successfully do anything until we have committed our loved one into the hands of the Lord.

"'Our prayer,' Mr. Gordon explains, 'is God's opportunity to get into the world which shut Him out.'

"Put the alcoholic on your prayer list, and pray for him by name daily, believing that God is going to deliver him. The most powerful weapon we have is prayer. Because it is so powerful, we must know how to handle it. [See our [Ephesians study part 6](#) for more on this area of prayer in a spiritual battle.]

"Prayer is so important in dealing with the alcoholic because the alcoholic cannot be helped unless he wants to be. Before anything can be done for him, he must reach the place where he asks for help himself. We can only help him decide that he wants help and will cooperate with the help he gets. The first step in accomplishing this is through prayer.

"There are a few simple ground rules we must understand and follow if our prayer lives are to be successful.

Be Sure You Are a Member of God's Family

"Prayer is a privilege and duty of the children of God. When the disciples asked the Lord Jesus to teach them to pray, He said, 'When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven' (Luke 11:2).

"If our prayers are going to be effective, we must first determine our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Have we experienced a personal deliverance from sin through faith in Christ? Have we been born into the family of God? If we have, we know that we have a right to pray to God as our heavenly Father. [For more on this go to our article [What does it Mean to be Born Again.](#)]

Where Do We Begin?

"When we first consider the problem of alcoholism and make an attempt to understand the alcoholic, we are apt to be overwhelmed. The problem is so bewildering and has so many ramifications we scarcely know where to begin. We feel as though we are in a maze and find it easy to forget that the most important thing we can do for the alcoholic is to present Christ to him [her].

"To be sure it isn't always possible to preach the gospel to every man on every occasion. You can't present Christ to him effectively if he is in a drunken stupor or needs medical attention. But we must always keep our attention focused on this one fact: the most important thing we can do for the alcohol addict is to speak to him [her] of Christ at the earliest possible moment. ["For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek." (Romans 1:16).]

"Garland Thompson, the founder and superintendent of the Open Door Mission in Omaha for a number of years, taught me this He had never been an alcoholic, nor had he made a special study of alcoholism. His entire life had been devoted to prayer and personal witnessing.

"I have seen Garland put an arm around a man who was too drunk to talk, telling him that God loves him and praying for him before he sent him on his way to sober up or perhaps to get medical attention. I had the privilege of talking to some of those same men after they were won to Christ.

"Know what set me to thinking?" they would tell me gratefully. "It was Garland Thompson putting his arm around me and telling me that God loves me and because He loves me, you guys here at the mission were going to help me. I was pretty drunk, but that got through." It was Christ who worked the victory in the lives of such men (and women), freeing them from alcoholism. In my own experience, it was the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ that got hold of me after everything else had failed. If your alcoholic is to be delivered, you must present the gospel to him.

"That may not always be easy. A good friend of mine with an alcoholic brother found that to be true. 'I've had all of you I can take!' his brother snarled at him. 'Now leave me alone!'

"An attorney discouraged him when he mentioned trying to get help for his brother through the gospel. The attorney scornfully said, 'If the psychiatrists and trained people at the state hospital weren't able to help him, I'm sure your religious friend wouldn't be able to do anything for him.'

"As the "religious friend," I wasn't able to help personally, but I was able to point the young alcoholic to the One who could solve all his problems. He became a stalwart Christian.

"Working with alcoholics is not the most enjoyable part of a pastor's ministry. The alcoholic is often difficult, surly, and uncooperative. Usually he thinks that anyone who tries to help him is a personal enemy. He is secretive, untruthful, and suspicious, and is apt to be involved in immorality, the writing of bad checks, and gambling. His excessive and compulsive drinking has deeply hurt and affected the lives of on the average-five innocent persons. He has become a blight on his family and his community.

"The average pastor has gone through some difficult experiences with alcoholics-experiences similar to those I have had.

Here I would like to share some of my own experiences. We were missionaries in Trinidad and Tobago in the West Indies, and we helped with church services in a little town called Lopinot. One night during the service there was a commotion in the snacket, the local bar next door to where the church was being held underneath a home. The houses in Trinidad are often built up on the second story with maybe a carport underneath or a place for animals. Anyway we were wondering what the noise was all about, and it turned out that the men had got into a fight and one had stabbed another in the side.

These men loaded the injured person up in a car and sped off for the hospital in the city. There was only one narrow lane road leading out of the village of Lopinot. So they sped away for help and they threw caution to the wind. As they raced along the road a woman and her child were walking along the narrow road unaware of the oncoming danger. As the car sped around the curvy road, in his haste, the driver didn't see the woman and the small child. As a result they hit the woman and dragged her under the car, as I remember it, and the infant was injured. Pastor K.K. and myself visited the man after he returned home from the hospital. His injuries had not been life threatening, so he was doing well, but the baby's mom had died. All this happened because some men wanted to have a "happy hour" at the local bar. "Wine *is* a mocker, strong drink *is* a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise." (Proverbs 20:1)

A friend of my dad, who lived in Moses Lake, Washington, had been drinking and had a head on collision with another car killing himself and everyone in the other car. The sad thing is that he knew Scripture, and I know my dad witnessed to him, but whether he was ever saved or not, I do not know. (See the tract [*What Happened to Shorty?*](#)) I could go on with many more personal experiences like this. Or I could tell about people who were saved and were still drinking, messing up their lives, and how they later got right with the Lord, and began serving Jesus Christ by reaching out to others.

"Stan Collie was such a man. He had degenerated to the point where, at forty years of age, he allowed his wife and six children to go hungry so he could have something to drink. On Saturday nights his wife and two of the older youngsters would go down to the business district of their little northern Saskatchewan community to pick him out of the gutter and pull him home in a coaster wagon.

"Then Christ got hold of him. His life was transformed. He began to witness to others and soon developed a great burden for the Indian people who lived in the Canadian north. Today he is known as the founder of the Northern Canada Evangelical Mission, an organization that has become a great force for God with almost two hundred missionaries all across Canada. We should look up each man [woman] as an opportunity.

Counseling Takes Time

"Often pastors are reluctant to work with the alcoholic because of the time it requires. We feel there is so much to do in seeing that the various church activities run smoothly and the needs of the rest of the congregation are met that we can't devote the time to one individual.

"You have to throw the clock away when you're dealing with the alcoholic," Charles Morey of the Chicago Christian Industrial League said. 'It is probably the most time-consuming type of counseling most of us will ever do.'

"Some pastors solve the problem by forming a team of concerned men within the church to work with the individual alcohol addict and help him out of alcoholism." (*God is for the Alcoholic* Jerry Dunn with Bernard Palmer)

You will have to read the book for yourself; it has some other great ways to reach alcoholics.

Now we would like to look at some summary comments by Dr. Bacchiocchi. I would suggest that this section is designed to help a Christian minister to see the arguments from Scripture as to the importance of not drinking alcohol. I believe that this section is important for everyone, but I need to explain that it goes into details of languages; everyone will not want to go into this much detail. I will give some examples of what you will find on his web site. For all the details though, please visit [Wine in the Bible: A Biblical Study of Alcoholic Beverages](#)

He will show, among other subjects that:

"... four related words *wine* in English, *vinum* in Latin, *oinos* in Greek and *yayin* in Hebrews. *In all four languages, these linguistically related words have been used historically to refer to the juice of the grape, whether fermented or unfermented.* This significant finding discredits the charge that the theory of the two wines is devoid of Biblical and historical support. The sampling of Biblical and historical sources examined in this chapter shows instead that it is the theory of one wine which is devoid of Biblical and historical support.

"Long before this century, scholars recognized that the Hebrew, Greek and Latin words for wine could refer equally to fermented or unfermented grape juice. In recent times, however, this historical understanding has been obscured by the restrictive use of "wine" which has come to mean only fermented, intoxicating grape juice. This has misled many Christians into believing that *yayin* and *oinos* also refer *only* to fermented wine which Scripture allegedly approves. (For an in-depth study on this area with references go to [The Meaning of "Wine"](#) by Dr Bacchiocchi)

"The study conducted in this chapter on the ancient methods of preserving both fermented wine and unfermented grape juice should help dispel two major misconceptions: (1) In the ancient world it was easy to preserve fermented wine because all that it takes is to let the pressed juice ferment naturally; (2) In the ancient world it was impossible to preserve the grape juice unfermented because people had neither the technical knowledge nor the means to prevent fermentation.

"We have found that both of these popular notions are unfounded. The problems the ancients encountered in preserving fermented wine were as great as, if not actually greater, than, those faced in preserving unfermented grape juice. To prevent wine from becoming acid, moldy, or bad-smelling a host of preservatives were used such as salt, sea-water, liquid or solid pitch, boiled-down must, marble dust, lime, sulphur fumes or crushed iris.

"In comparison to preserving fermented wine, the keeping of grape juice from fermenting was a relatively simple process. It was accomplished simply by boiling the juice down to a syrup, or by separating the fermentable pulp from the juice of the grape by means of filtration, or by placing the grape juice in sealed jars which were immersed in a pool of cold water, or by fumigating with sulphur the wine jars before sealing them. The use of such techniques clearly indicates that the means of preserving grape juice without fermentation were known and used in the ancient world.

"The fact that the documentation comes mostly from the classical world rather than from the Old Testament world does not mean that the art of preserving grape juice was unknown in ancient Israel. The Jews were not less knowledgeable in the art of preserving fruits, cereals and juices than were the surrounding nations. We found that, according to Josephus, the Romans were astonished to find in the fortress of Masada, wine, oil, fruits and cereals freshly preserved, though they had been stored for several years. Furthermore, rabbinical sources mention specifically the use of boiled wine.

"The reason for the silence of Scripture on the *means* used for preserving grape juice is to be found in the nature of the Bible itself, a book which deals primarily with those aspects of life which are related to salvation history. In the Bible we find no treatise on agriculture, as among classical writers. The reason is not a lack of interest or of knowledge of farming, but a reluctance to deal with issues unrelated to the religious life of God's people.

"No mention is made in the Bible of the means used to prevent the spoilage of fermented wine, yet the Jews must have known them. The same holds true for unfermented grape juice. The Bible attests that God's people did have and did use unfermented grape juice. We are not told how the Jews preserved the grape juice unfermented. We have reasons to believe that they knew some methods of preservation known and used in the ancient world. (For the whole article and references go to: [*The Preservation of Grape Juice*](#) by Dr. Bacchiocchi

"We have examined at considerable length the major wine-related stories or sayings of Jesus that are commonly used to prove that our Savior *made, commended, used* and *commanded* the use of alcoholic wine until the end of time. We have found these claims to rest on unfounded assumptions, devoid of textual, contextual and historical support.

"The 'good wine' Jesus *made* at Canaan was 'good' not because of its high alcoholic content but because it was fresh, unfermented grape-juice. The "new wine" Jesus *commended* through the parable of the new wineskins is unfermented must, either boiled or filtered, because not even new wineskins could withstand the pressure of the gas produced by fermenting new wine. Jesus' description of Himself as 'eating and drinking' does *not* imply that He *used* alcoholic wine but that He associated with people freely at their meals and elsewhere. The 'fruit of the vine' that Christ *commanded* to be used as a memorial of His redeeming blood was not fermented wine, which in the Scripture represents human depravity, corruption and divine indignation, but unfermented and pure grape juice, a fitting emblem of Christ's untainted bloodshed for the remission of our sins.

"The claim that Christ used and sanctioned the use of alcoholic beverages has been found to be unsubstantiated. The evidence we have submitted shows that Jesus abstained from all intoxicating substances and gave no sanction to His followers to use them. (For more on this subject with references go to: [*Jesus and Wine*](#) by Dr. Bacchiocchi)

"New Wine in Fresh Wineskins. A possible use of *oinos* in the New Testament as a reference to unfermented wine, is found in Matthew 9:17 where Jesus says: "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." From this verse we learn that it was customary in Christ's time to put new wine into new wineskins in order to preserve both the wine and its wineskins.

"The usual explanation for this custom is that new wineskins were used because they could better resist the expansive force of the carbonic acid generated by fermentation. For example, Jimmy L. Albright writes: "Freshly made wine was put into new wineskins; old skins would burst under the pressure (Matt 9:17; Mark 2:22; Luke 5:37-38)." This view can hardly be correct, because new wineskins, no matter how strong, could resist the pressure caused by fermentation. I have learned this fact from personal experience, as I have seen in my parents' cellar glass bottles shattered to pieces by grape juice which had inadvertently fermented.

"The *Encyclopedia Biblica* rightly observes that "it is impossible that the *must* could ever have been put into skins to undergo the whole process of fermentation, as is usually stated, the action of the gas given off in the earlier stages of the process being much too violent for any skins to withstand."

"The process of wine making in the ancient Near East is only relatively known. James B. Pritchard, excavator of ancient Gibeon, where storage vats were found, candidly admits that "only a little is known from literary and pictorial sources of preclassical times about the process of making wine in the ancient Near East." According to his reconstruction, at Gibeon the juice of pressed grapes was transferred into four different tanks during the course of several days. In the last three tanks the violent fermentation processes occurred. Then the decanted wine was poured into large jars sealed with olive oil at 65 degrees F (18 degrees C).

"Unfermented Grape Juice In the light of this information, Christ's saying about "new wine" being placed in "fresh wineskins" can best be understood as referring to wine fresh from the

press which was strained and possibly boiled, and then placed immediately into new wineskins made air-tight, possibly by a film of oil on the opening of the wineskin. The various methods used by the ancients to preserve grape juice unfermented will be discussed in Chapter 4. At this juncture it suffices to note that Christ's words suggest that "new wine" was placed into fresh wineskins to insure the absence of any fermentation-causing substance.

"If old bags were used,' Lees and Burns explain, 'some of the decayed albuminous matter adhering to their sides must, by the action of air, have become changed into a leaven or ferment (Hebrew, *seor*); or by long wear and heat, cracks or apertures admitting the air might exist undetected; and the wine, thus set a-fermenting, would in due course burst the skin, and be spilled and 'lost'"⁴⁴ On the other hand, if unfermented new wine was poured into new wineskins, no cause of fermentation would be present. Thus, the wine would be preserved from fermentation and the wineskins from rupture. If this interpretation is correct, then Christ's reference to 'new wine' (*oinos neos*) would constitute another example of the use of *oinos* in the New Testament to describe unfermented grape juice.

"Oil and Wine Spared An example of the generic use of the word *oinos* is found in Revelation 6:6, where a voice is heard from the center of the throne room, saying: "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; but do not harm oil and wine [*oinos*]!" The warning against hurting the oil and the wine sets the limits to the destruction which the black horse and its rider are about to carry out. 'Since the roots of the olive and vine go deeper,' explains Robert H. Mounce, 'they would not be affected by a limited drought which would all but destroy the grain.'

"In the context of this warning against the destruction of the harvest, the reference to "oil and wine" is significant, because it shows that these two terms could be used to refer to the solid fruits, the olive and the grape yielding oil and wine (*oinos*). This usage of the term *oinos* to refer to the actual fruit-the grapes-is not surprising, because there are numerous examples in secular Greek in which wine is spoken of as produced within the grape and cluster. Anacreon, for example, speaks of the *oinos* 'imprisoned in the fruit upon the branches,' and he sings of the treaders "letting loose the wine.'

"The above examples of the usage of *oinos* in the New Testament and in the Septuagint show that the term was used in Biblical Greek in a generic way, to refer to either fermented or unfermented grape juice. This usage is consistent with what we have found to be the use of *yayin* in the Old Testament. Thus the meaning of the two related Biblical terms for wine (*yayin* and *oinos*) must be determined by the context in which they are used.

"The chapter is divided into [three] parts, the first [two] of which deal with wine-texts and the last one with the admonitions to sobriety and to temperance. Thus, the outline of the chapter is as follows:

1. Acts 2:13: 'Filled with New Wine'
2. 1 Corinthians 11:21: 'One is Hungry and Another is Drunk'

3. Admonitions to Sobriety

"PART I: ACTS 2:13: 'FILLED WITH NEW WINE'

"Importance of the Text: The apostles had scarcely begun their Messianic proclamation when they were accused of drunkenness. On the day of Pentecost the first company of believers received the gift of tongues enabling them to preach the Gospel in the languages of the people gathered for the feast at Jerusalem. While thousands believed in Christ as a result of the miracle, others began mocking the disciples, saying: 'They are filled with new wine' (Acts 2:13).

"Summing up we can say that Acts 2:13 provides an indirect but telling proof that the apostles abstained from alcoholic beverages. As Ernest Gordon says, 'There would be no point in referring to unfermented wine as a source of intoxication and the strange actions following, if it were not generally understood that the apostles used no intoxicating wine.' [For all the reasons why this passage is not an indication that early Christians were drinkers look at this [site by Dr. Bacchiocchi](#).]

"PART II: 1 CORINTHIANS 11:21: 'ONE IS HUNGRY AND ANOTHER IS DRUNK'

"Importance of the Text Moderationists see in Paul's reference to 'drunkenness' at the communion table in the Corinthian church an unmistakable proof that alcoholic wine was used in the Apostolic Church both privately at home and publicly at the Lord's Supper. Paul's statement reads as follows: 'When you meet together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat. For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal, and one is hungry and another is drunk' (1 Corinthians 11:20-21).

"The reasoning of moderationists is that the problem of drunkenness at Corinth can only be explained by their use of alcoholic wine. As someone put it, "How could the Corinthians get drunk on Communion wine if it were not fermented?" Furthermore, it is argued that "it is significant to note that even in the light of their drunkenness, Paul does *not* issue a 'cease and desist' order in this matter." The argument is clear. Paul condemned the abuses at Corinth but not the use of alcoholic wine. We shall examine this claim by considering three points: (1) The Nature of the Feast; (2) The Meaning of the Verb *Methuo*; (3) The Implications of Paul's Admonition. [For a complete account of the arguments on this passage go to this site, but here is the conclusion.]

"In the light of the above considerations we conclude that Paul's reference in the King James Version to "drunkenness" at the Communion table of the Corinthian church, offers no support for a moderate use of alcoholic wine either privately at home or publicly at the Lord's Supper. First, because whatever was done at Corinth was a departure from the instructions Paul had "delivered" to the church and thus their actions are more of a *warning* than an example for us. Second, because the problem at the Communion table, as we have shown, appear not to have been intoxication with alcoholic wine but indulgence in eating.

"Paul's Admonition: In the epistles of Paul and Peter, several admonitions to sober-mindedness explicitly relate to physical abstinence on which the existence and exercise of sobriety rest. This

is indicated especially by the close connection in which they stand with such terms as *me paroinos*, *enkrate* and *nephalios*, all of which, as we shall see, refer primarily to abstinence from intoxicating wine.

"In 1 Timothy 3:2-3 Paul states: 'Now a bishop must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, *temperate*, *sensible*, dignified, hospitable, an apt teacher, no drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, and no lover of money.' The two terms 'temperate, sensible' are here used to translate the Greek *nephalion* and *sophrona*. The first, as we shall show below, means 'abstinent' and the second 'of sound mind,' or 'sober-minded.' The order of terms,' as Lees and Burns point out, "is instructive. The Christian overseer is to be *nephalion*, 'abstinent'-strictly sober in body, in order that he may be sober in mind.' The two words occur in the same order in Titus 2:2, though the word 'serious' is placed between them. In 1 Timothy 3:2-3 the two words stand in close connection with *me paroinon*, a term which literally means 'not near wine.' On the significance of the latter, more will be said below.

"In Titus 1:6-8, where Paul repeats to a large extent what he said in 1 Timothy 3 about the qualifications for the office of bishop/elder, the order is somewhat different: '... hospitable, a lover of goodness, master of himself [*sophrona*], upright, holy, and self-controlled [*enkrate*]' (v. 8). Here *sophrona* ('sober-minded'), translated 'master of himself' by the RSV, precedes *enkrate*, a term which as we shall see below, is also employed in the sense of abstinence.

"Peter's Admonition: A clearer connection between sober-mindedness and physical abstinence is found in 1 Peter 4:7: 'The end of all things is at hand; therefore keep sane [*sophronesate*] and sober [*nepsate*] for your prayers.' The verb *nepsate* is the (aorist) imperative form of *nepho*, which some etymologists derive from the prefix *ne* 'not' and *pino* 'to drink,' thus literally, 'not to drink,' while others from *ne* 'not' and *poinos* (for *oinos* 'wine'), thus literally, 'without wine.'

"The basic meaning of the verb *nepho*, as most Greek authorities cited below recognize, is 'to be sober, in contradistinction to being drunk.' Thus, what Peter is actually saying in 1 Peter 4:7 is 'keep mentally sober and physically abstinent for your prayers.' It is not difficult to see the connection among mental sobriety, physical abstinence and prayer life. Persons who use intoxicating beverages weaken their mental alertness, and consequently either ignore their prayer life or pray for the wrong things.

"In conclusion, some of the apostolic admonitions to mental sobriety, expressed through the *sophron* word group, are clearly connected to physical abstinence, which determines the existence and exercise of mental sobriety.

"Correlation with Luke 12:41-46. Peter's exhortations to vigilance and abstinence appear to have been inspired by the parable of the *drunken* servant which *Christ spoke directly to Peter* 'Then Peter said to Him, 'Lord, do You speak this parable *only* to us, or to all *people*?' (Luke 12:41).

"And the Lord said, 'Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom *his* master will make ruler over his household, to give *them their* portion of food in due season? Blessed is that servant

whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all that he has.

"But if that servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' and begins to beat the menservants and maid-servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk.' In that parable the faithful steward is commended for watching over his master's household while the unfaithful one is condemned for beginning 'to eat and drink and get drunk, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for *him*, and at an hour when he is not aware; and will cut him in two and appoint *him* his portion with the unbelievers.' (Luke 12:42-46).

"Allusions to this parable appear several times in 1 Peter. For example, 1 Peter 4:10 says, 'as good stewards of God's varied grace.' This is strikingly similar to Luke 12:42, 'the faithful and wise steward whom his master will set over his household.' Similarly 1 Peter 4:5, '...him who is ready to judge the living and the dead,' appears to be an echo of Luke 12:46, 'The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him...and will punish him.' Also 1 Peter 5:3, 'Not as domineering over those in your charge but being examples to the flock' harks back to the unfaithful servant of Luke 12:45 who began 'to beat the menservants and the maidservants.'

"The allusions in 1 Peter to Luke's parable of the unfaithful servant, who is caught *drunk* and punished by his returning master, strongly support the translation of *nepho* in its primary sense of abstaining from wine. Furthermore, the allusions help us understand why 1 Peter 1:13 would urge abstinence in radical terms: "*nephontes teleios*" ("be completely abstinent").

"Summing up our study of the five usages of *nepho*, two by Paul (1 Thessalonians 5:6, 8) and three by Peter (1 Peter 1:13; 4:7; 5:8), we can say that all show an amazing consistency in urging both mental vigilance and physical abstinence. Moreover, we have found that the primary meaning of *nepho* as abstinence from intoxicating beverages is supported in 1 Thessalonians by the contrasting parallel between the sons of the day who are sober and the sons of the night who are drunk.

"In 1 Peter, support for the abstinence meaning of *nepho* comes both from the allusions to the parable of the drunken servant of Luke 12 and from the context of 1 Peter 4:7, where the apostle refers to the past life-style of 'drunkenness' (1 Peter 4:3). It is also significant that all five admonitions to abstinence are given in the context of preparation for the imminent return of Christ. To this point we shall return after examining the usage of the adjective *nephalion*.

"Summarizing what has been said in references on alcohol in the Bible:

"The conclusion emerging from the investigation conducted in this chapter into the apostolic teachings regarding alcoholic beverages is abundantly clear. Contrary to the prevailing perception, the New Testament is amazingly consistent in its teaching of abstinence from the use of alcoholic beverages.

"We have found that the texts commonly used to support the moderationist view provide no support to such a view. On the contrary, some of them openly contradict the moderationist view.

"The irony of the charge in Acts 2:13 that the apostles were drunk on *gleukos*, that is, grape juice, their common beverage, provide an indirect but important proof of their abstinent life-style and inferentially of the life-style of their Master.

"Paul's reference to 'drunkenness' at the Communion table of the Corinthian church (1 Corinthians 11:21) offers no support for a moderate use of alcoholic wine, because whatever was done at Corinth was a departure from the instructions Paul had delivered to the church. Thus, their conduct constitutes a warning rather than an example for us. Furthermore, our study of the meaning of the verb *methuo* ('satiated') and of the implications of Paul's admonitions suggests quite clearly that the problem at Corinth was indulgence in eating rather than intoxication with alcoholic wine.

"The intent of Paul's admonition in Ephesians 5:18 ('Do not get drunk with wine') is not to sanction the moderate use of wine, but to show the irreconcilable contrast between the spirit of wine and presence of the Holy Spirit. The structure of the passage, as well as the possible connection between 'wine' and the relative clause-recognized by many ancient and modern translations-makes this text one of the most powerful Biblical indictments against intoxicating wine.

"The apostolic admonitions to sobriety and temperance call for a moderate use of all good things and total abstinence from all that is harmful. Our study of the Greek terms (*sophron*, *nepho*, *nephali*, and *enkrateia*) used in the apostolic admonitions has shown how these terms complement one another in emphasizing the Christian need for both mental vigilance and physical abstinence from intoxicating substances such as alcoholic beverages. The fundamental reason given by Peter and Paul for their call to a life of vigilance and abstinence is eschatological, namely, preparation to live in the holy presence of Christ at His soon coming.

"Wine separates man from the way of life and leads him in the pathway of death, because wine leads to idolatry... Thus we learn that wherever [Scripture] speaks of wine, there you find also dissoluteness ... For this Isaiah said: 'The strength of the law is in salvation, but the strength of wine is in sorrow. Woe to those who are heroes at drinking wine' (Is 5:22). For this we read: 'Who has a woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? ... Those who tarry long over wine' (Proverbs 23:29-30). When wine enters the body, out goes sense; where ever there is wine there is no understanding.

"Similar rabbinic warnings against wine are found in the compilation of Talmudic statements on wine by Rabbi Isidore Koplowitz. Here are some: 'Whenever wine enters a person, his mind becomes confused.' 'Rabbi Isaac said, 'The evil spirit entices a person only while he is eating and drinking, and when one becomes merry by wine, then the evil spirit has the mastery over him. . . . The drinking of wine causes the evil inclinations to be awakened within a person, as it is written, 'And they made their father [Lot] drink wine that night etc.' (Gen. 19:33).

"**Permanent Prohibition.** Another statement attributed to Rabbi Eliezer makes the prohibition against drinking wine a permanent law for all times: 'Therefore, the Holy One, blessed be He, commanded Aaron, 'Do not drink wine nor strong drink.' Do not assume that this injunction against wine and strong drink was only for the past, namely as long as the holy Temple at

Jerusalem was still in existence, as it is written, 'When ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation,' but you have to guard against wine for all times to come, for wine is an omen of curse.' An extreme example of how evil intoxicating beverages were in the mind of some Jews is the rabbinic statement that 'Samuel did not pray in a house that contained intoxicating drinks (Talmud Babli Erubin 65a).'

"Conclusion. The foregoing analysis of Ephesians 5:18 has shown that this text provides *no Biblical sanction for moderate use of alcoholic beverages*. On the contrary, the structure of the passage as well as the possible connection between 'wine' and the relative clause, a connection recognized by numerous ancient and modern translations, makes this text *a most powerful Biblical indictment of intoxicating wine*.

"The intent of Paul in this passage is to show the irreconcilable contrast that exists between the spirit of fermented wine and the Holy Spirit. In the life of a believer the two are mutually exclusive. Summing up, the thought of Ephesians 5:18-19 can be paraphrased as follows: 'Do not get drunk with wine, because the use of wine places a person in a state of *asotia*, that is, of moral corruption inimical to the reception of saving truth. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. Find enjoyment not in the stimulation of wine but in the inspiration of the Spirit who causes you to sing and make music in your heart to the Lord.'"

(All of these quotes are from Dr. Bacchiocchi, for the complete information given, and references, see his site: [Wine in the Apostolic Church](#).)

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