

Introduction:

1. Few things are as dangerous to public safety as alcohol.
  - a. A large percentage of all deaths on the road are because someone was drinking.
  - b. Most of the “domestic abuse” cases in this country stem from someone drinking.
  - c. It has been reported that well over half of the violent crimes committed in this country involve someone who has been drinking.
2. Alcohol is a drug used by more people than all illegal drugs combined.
  - a. It is made readily available in many grocery stores, gas stations, Wal-Mart, and restaurants.
  - b. In 1970, a survey was released which said 79% of all men and 69% of all women drink alcohol.
  - c. It is advertised frequently on television as something fun or cool.
    - i. Never do you see a commercial for beer that shows a man beating his wife, with the caption “we helped cause this, drink it up!”
    - ii. Never do you see a commercial with a man at a funeral crying over his dead son who was killed by a drunk driver with the caption, “drink Bud Light, help keep funeral homes busy!”
    - iii. No, instead the commercials are written to be funny, showing people being “cool” and having beers in their hands.
    - iv. Why would they advertise what their product causes? That would hurt sales.
  - d. There is supposedly an age restriction to purchase alcohol, but it is very easy for someone to have their older sibling buy the beer for them.
    - i. Unfortunately, for a lot of teenagers, their own parents will buy the beer, giving the teenager free access to it at home.
  - e. Alcohol is rapidly becoming viewed as acceptable in this country.
    - i. Many tout the supposed “health benefits” from drinking alcoholic wine.
    - ii. Many say “it helps me relax at the end of the day.”
    - iii. Others say “I just drink to fit in.”
    - iv. Still others say “I like the taste.”
      1. This is proven false because “Near-Beer” was released years ago and it tasted EXACTLY like real beer.
      2. It didn’t give the buzz of alcohol, and did not sell, and they stopped making it.
3. Does the Bible speak about alcohol and whether it is right or wrong?
  - a. Is it possible that God wants us to enjoy alcohol?
    - i. The current pope wrote a book a few years back which said alcohol is from God, we should absolutely take advantage of it and enjoy it!
    - ii. Many preachers within the Lord’s church have been advocating that “social drinking” is completely permissible (some even said it is encouraged) by God.
  - b. Is it possible that God condemns all uses of alcohol?
    - i. Some believe that every use of alcohol should be avoided at all costs (some even go so far as to say rubbing alcohol should be banned).
  - c. Today we are going to look at some questions about alcohol from a Biblical point of view.
- I. Does the word “wine” in the Bible always refer to alcoholic wine?
  - A. The Greek word translated “wine” in the Bible is OINOS.
    1. It is the same word used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament.

2. It specifically refers to that which comes from the grape.
  3. It never refers to drinks made by some other means (malted hops and barley – beer).
- B. This word does indeed sometimes refer to fermented grape juice.
1. Ephesians 5:18 – be not drunk with OINOS, but be filled with the spirit.
  2. Noah drank of the OINOS, and was drunk (Genesis 9:21).
- C. The word, however, can also refer to plain grape juice.
1. The new OINOS is on the vine (Isaiah 24:7).
    - a. How can alcohol still be on the vine?
    - b. Grape juice will not ferment while it is still in the grape and on the vine.
  2. Washed his garments in OINOS, washed his clothes in the blood of the grape (Genesis 49:11).
    - a. The Hebrews liked to repeat themselves by saying the same thing in different ways.
    - b. Here, OINOS is called the blood (juice) of the grape.
  3. OINOS is what comes from treading out grapes – Proverbs 3:10, Revelation 19:15.
    - a. A winepress is where grapes are smashed to release their juices.
    - b. But it is the OINOS that is pressed out.
    - c. When you crush grapes, do you have alcohol or just grape juice?
- D. Because the same word is used for the juice of the grape whether fresh or fermented, we must look at the context to determine which one is being described.
1. If it is used in the context of someone being intoxicated, then we know it is alcoholic (fermented) wine.
  2. If it is not used in that sense, then there must be a compelling reason (and not just opinion or desire to drink) for us to say it is alcoholic wine.
- II. Does the Bible ever condemn drinking alcoholic beverages?
- A. Proverbs 20:1 – Wine is a mocker and strong drink is raging, and any who is fooled thereby is not wise.
1. Even the wise king Solomon knew that drinking alcoholic beverages was an unwise thing to do.
    - a. The opposite of wise is foolish or just plain dumb.
    - b. Imagine going before the judgment seat of God and saying “drinking beer is just fine.”
    - c. God might refer to this exact verse and say, “you fool. I told you drinking alcohol was a foolish thing to do.”
  2. Notice that in this verse he includes both wine (fermented grape juice) and strong drink (other alcoholic beverages like we might have today).
    - a. Both are flatly condemned as foolishness.
    - b. If something is called “foolish” or “not wise” does that mean it is something God desires we do? Of course not!
- B. Leviticus 10:9 - Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou [Aaron] nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die. It shall be a statute forever throughout your generations.
1. The priests were told that if they drank alcohol, the punishment was death.
  2. Many who try to defend drinking point out that this was qualified by the statement “when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation” (meaning when they were fulfilling their duties as priests).

3. We are the priests of God today, and we are ALWAYS to be doing our duty as priests (Colossians 3:17, I Peter 2:5).
  4. Notice that the command from God is not to drink it AT ALL if you are a priest!
    - a. He doesn't say "you can drink a little, so long as you are not drunk."
    - b. He says "DO NOT drink wine nor strong drink."
- C. Proverbs 23:29-35 - Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; **they that go to seek mixed wine**. Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, *when* it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things. Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast. They have stricken me, *shalt thou say, and* I was not sick; they have beaten me, *and* I felt it not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again.
1. The inspired writer says "don't look upon the wine when it is red, when it is in the cup."
    - a. Given the context (alcoholic is obviously being described), God says don't even look at it when it is in the cup!
    - b. If you are not even to look at it, what does that say about drinking it?
  2. God then has the Proverb writer describe the effects of drinking.
    - a. It stings like an adder.
    - b. It makes people seek after strange women.
    - c. It makes people say perverse things.
    - d. It makes the eyes red.
    - e. It makes people not feel the beating they are taking until the next day.
    - f. They still seek to drink again.
- III. Does the Bible ever permit the drinking of alcoholic beverages?
- A. Proverbs 31:3-7 - Give not thy strength unto women, nor thy ways to that which destroyeth kings. *It is* not for kings, O Lemuel, *it is* not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink: Lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted. Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts. Let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more.
1. First we need to notice that those who have responsibilities (kings and princes) are not to drink any intoxicating beverage.
    - a. Who has responsibilities for others today?
    - b. Do parents?
    - c. Do elders?
    - d. Do teachers?
    - e. If you have responsibilities, you are not to drink alcohol.
  2. Strong drink (alcohol) is for those who are about to perish.
    - a. Those who are about to die, usually this means those who are in intense suffering because of a deadly sickness or injury, can be given alcohol to kill the pain.
  3. Wine is for those of heavy hearts.
    - a. The phrase "Those who be of heavy hearts" is translated in different ways:
      - 1) "the bitter in soul" – ASV

- 2) "those who have lost all hope" – CEV
  - 3) "those at mourning" – Coverdale
  - 4) "those in bitter distress" – ESV
  - 5) "Those in anguish" – NIV
  - b. Today, we don't really see a problem with giving drugs to people who are suffering from depression.
    - 1) It is viewed as ethical to give drugs to someone who is having these mental breakdowns.
    - 2) God also allowed for that, specifically mentioning alcohol (they didn't have the synthetic drugs which we have today).
  - c. At least in the Old Testament, God permitted alcohol to be drunk for medical reasons.
- B. Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities (I Timothy 5:23).
1. This is probably the most quoted verse by those seeking to justify drinking.
  2. Here is an inspired apostle giving permission for every person everywhere to drink socially, and perhaps drink all they want, right?
  3. Look closely at the verse in question.
    - a. Paul tells Timothy to (literally) stop being a water-drinker.
      - 1) Is this a permanent command? Never drink water again?
      - 2) If so, then would it not follow that we should all avoid drinking water?
    - b. Instead, Timothy should use a little wine.
      - 1) The word little means just what it says.
      - 2) Literally, one said it means a puny amount, or for a very short amount of time.
    - c. The REASON Timothy needed "a little wine" was because of his stomach condition and his sicknesses/infirmities.
      - 1) According to some, Timothy was likely sick to his stomach dealing with the church in Ephesus, and possibly getting ulcers from all the worrying.
      - 2) Regardless of the cause, Timothy was told to take a little wine to help cure or alleviate his medical problems.
    - d. It is very important to realize that Paul had to command Timothy to do this.
      - 1) This shows that Timothy had rejected completely drinking any alcohol.
      - 2) He was only drinking water, and Paul commanded him to take a puny amount of wine to help his medical problems.
  4. People want to take this verse and say, "It's OK to drink socially."
    - a. Nowhere does this verse allow or endorse drinking for pleasure.
    - b. This verse only permits what was permitted in the Old Testament: alcohol to be used for the sake of medical issues.
  5. So, is it permissible to drink Nyquil which contains alcohol? If it is for a legitimate medical problem, of course.
    - a. Before the anesthesia that we have today, doctors would have their patients drink brandy before undergoing surgery.
  6. We need to make sure we don't "throw the baby out with the bathwater."

- a. Alcohol is a drug.
  - b. If it is permissible to use other drugs to alleviate medical issues, why would it be wrong to use alcohol for the same purposes (so long as it actually helped with those purposes)?
7. It is also important to notice that all the permitted descriptions of alcohol use were for already existing medical conditions.
- a. Nowhere does God say “drink some alcohol each day to keep from getting sick.”
    - 1) There are some who wish to advocate drinking a “glass of wine” each night “for their health.”
    - 2) However, the studies which touted the healthiness of drinking a small amount of wine each day neglected to reveal some other facts from the study:
      - i. The study concluded that in those over age 70, there was a slightly smaller occurrence of heart disease for those who drank a small amount of wine each day as compared to those who did not.
      - ii. The study concluded that those under age 70 who drank suffered other medical ailments in larger amounts than those who did not.
      - iii. The study also did not mention that an improvement in diet caused a large improvement in the number of those with heart disease, far exceeding the alcohol.
    - 3) All the health benefits from wine are found in greater concentration (150%) and number in unfermented grape juice.
    - 4) Also, you can now get those same antioxidants in gelcap form.
    - 5) Yet these “illuminated” ones insist that they must drink the fermented wine instead.
      - i. If it is truly for their health, why not drink grape juice (which improves the heart better)?
      - ii. If this is truly for their health, why not improve their diet?
      - iii. You know the reason why they insist on drinking alcohol.
  - b. The descriptions of the ones permitted to take it were:
    - 1) Those who were dying.
    - 2) Those who were suffering from mental depression.
    - 3) Those who were already suffering from medical issues which the wine could help alleviate.
- C. Like many other drugs, alcohol can be abused and misused.
1. Many people stay on medication longer than they should and become addicted to it.
  2. They think they cannot go without their pain pill, their cigarette, or their alcohol.
  3. Sometimes people take drugs for reasons other than legitimate medical problems.
    - a. They take them to get a buzz, to get high, or because they are hooked on them.

- IV. Does God ever permit alcohol to be used for purely social occasions (in other words, for pleasure)?
- A. The passage used by those who advocate social drinking is in John 2 when Jesus “turned water into wine.”
1. First, it needs to be noted that in Proverbs 23:20, the inspired writer says “be not among winebibbers” (those who are drinking alcohol).
    - a. A faithful child of God under the Old Testament was not to even be around those who were drinking alcohol (except perhaps if they were vocally preaching against it).
    - b. Jesus was a faithful child of God who lived under the Old Testament.
    - c. Connect the dots:
      - 1) Would Jesus have been hanging around a bunch of people who were drinking without preaching against it?
      - 2) Would Jesus flaunt rebellion to this command to faithful Jews and indeed make them even MORE drunk?
  2. We readily admit that Jesus turned water into OINOS, the Bible says so.
    - a. There is no one who will argue that point.
    - b. But was it alcoholic wine, or was it grape juice?
- B. Jews of the first century (and many centuries before them) commonly boiled their grape juice down to a paste (must) and saved it.
1. It was said that when properly done, and cooled in water or wet sand, it would stay fresh (unfermented) for well over a year.
  2. In order to make grape juice again, a few spoonfuls of it were added to a glass of water, and stirred.
  3. Jesus commanded the men there to fill up the six waterpots all the way to the brim.
    - a. Why?
    - b. To prove it was a miracle.
    - c. The men who filled them with water knew there was no room to add any of the paste or concentrate to the waterpots.
    - d. These were 20-30 gallon waterpots which would have required a large amount of concentrate to turn them into decent grape juice.
    - e. The fact that there was no room to add the concentrate, yet it turned to OINOS, proved it was a miracle.
- C. The Jews at the feast had “well drunk” (John 2:10).
1. This phrase does not mean they were wasted, drunk like we use the word today.
    - a. The same word is used and translated different ways other places in the Bible:
      - 1) Isaiah 58:11 – a WATERED garden
      - 2) Psalm 36:8 – ABUNDANTLY satisfied
    - b. The phrase means that they had already drank a lot of the grape juice, in fact, all that the one throwing the wedding party had provided.
  2. They were “well drunk,” but they could instantly tell that this new OINOS was far superior to what they had been drinking.
    - a. Anyone who has been drunk before could tell you that once you are drunk, you lose the ability to discern between flavors of your drink.
  3. The fact that this was “good OINOS” does not mean “more alcoholic” as some people wish to claim.

- a. Jews did not have a lot of sweet drinks like we do today (sodas, sweet tea, cappuccinos, Gatorades, etc...).
  - b. Their goodness or badness of a drink depended upon its sweetness.
- D. If there is any doubt that Jesus turned water into the best grape juice human lips have ever tasted and NOT into alcoholic wine, just remember that it was a sin for a child of God to be around those who were drinking alcohol.
1. If, as some claim, they were already drunk and Jesus gave them more alcohol, would Jesus have been sinless?
  2. No, He would have been encouraging drunkenness, something which is ALWAYS condemned in the Bible.

Conclusion:

1. There is much more that could be said (and likely will be said in a later sermon) about drinking and alcohol, but hopefully this will lay the groundwork for you to understand that God condemns drinking alcohol for pleasure.
2. The only times we have seen that God permits the use of alcoholic wine or strong drink is for medical-related ailments (just like any other drug).
3. The fact that it is legal and readily available to the masses does not mean it is something in which the Christian should participate!
4. We are to be separate from the world, completely given over to God's service.
  - a. We cannot serve God if we allow alcohol to cloud our minds.