

THE BIBLE VIEW

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Should a Christian Drink Alcohol?

Bill Brinkworth

Today, possibly because the Word of God is not obeyed and is considered not relevant, many Christians have no conviction about what the Bible says about many things, including the drinking of alcohol.

The Bible says much about the dangers and effects that alcohol will have on one and a Christian testimony. Indulgence in alcohol is never recommended in God's Word. Its use is usually negatively spoken about.

Here are some reasons why a Christian should avoid alcoholic beverages:

- Alcohol is dangerous. Even wine is likened to a poison that will ruin one's life!
"Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself

aright [fermenting]. 32 At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.” Pro. 23:31-32

- Alcohol should not be drunk by a wise person.
“Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.” Pro. 20:1 Wine’s influence will make one mock, or deride, others. Strong drink will often make one loud and cause him to show his anger.
- Alcohol will increase one’s problems and affect health and mental stability.
“Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? 30 They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine.” Pro. 23:29-30
- Alcohol will control a person and affect one’s thinking and discernment.
“But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment.” Isa. 28:7
- Alcohol will affect one’s will.
“Whoredom and wine and new wine take away the heart.” Hos. 4:11 Notice that there are two types of wine: new, unfermented wine, and alcoholic (fermented) wine.
- Alcohol will affect one’s desire to do something for the Lord and the desire to be industrious.
“Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that

they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them! 12 And the harp, and the viol, the tabret, and pipe, and wine, are in their feasts: but they regard not the work of the LORD, neither consider the operation of his hands.” Isa. 5:11-12 “Be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh: 21 For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags. We are not to even be around drinking, so certainly the Saviour would not have broken this commandment.” Pro. 23:20

These verses, and many more, show we should not drink, especially if we are concerned about keeping the “temple” that God gave us clean (I Cor. 6:19) from temptations and sin. However, what confuses many, and is often used to justify drinking, is the Bible’s usage of the word “wine.” In the New Testament, that word is used to describe alcoholic and non-alcoholic wine. The Greek word “oinos” refers to fermented and unfermented “wines.” The context of the verse usually reveals which type of “wine” it refers to.

What is non-alcoholic “wine”? We call it grape juice. Sometimes the Bible refers to it as “new wine” (Mat. 9:17, Luke 5:39). Understand that in biblical days there was no refrigeration and that it was hot, which would quickly ferment the “new wine.” To keep this from happening, the new “wine” was often simmered so that the water would evaporate from the “wine.”

That process would result in a thick grape syrup that would last a long time. It also was called “wine.” Before it was drunk, water would be added to it again. An ancient shipwreck was recovered with a cargo of containers of that grape syrup, which was still preserved.

There are other reasons why a Christian should not drink, even wine. They include:

- Fermented wine is a picture of sin! The yeast (“leaven”) in the grape skins turns the juice to alcohol. Yeast is a picture of sin, as it spreads and “ruins” (fermentation is a decaying and rotting process) many things it is placed in. For this reason, it should not be drunk and should NEVER be used in the Lord’s supper, as Jesus was sinless and should not be pictured as sinful by fermented grape juice.

Also, for the same reason, raised bread should not be used. A little “leaven” in grape juice or flour will raise and spread throughout the product, just as a little sin spreads and affects whatever life it touches.

“A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.” Gal. 5:9

“Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?” I Cor. 5:6

- Many justify drinking because Jesus turned water into “wine” (John 2:9-10). It was not alcoholic wine He changed from water. If He did that, He would have been serving alcohol, which would have earned Him God’s “woe” rather than God’s approval on His life (Mat. 3:17). Jesus’ converting the water was not an example of biblical doctrine on drinking. It was a

miracle to show Jesus was God in the flesh.

“Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that puttest thy bottle to him, and makest him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness!” Hab.

2:15 If one is not to give it to others, then he should not be drinking it himself.

- Alcohol is often a gateway to other sins. One sin usually leads to others, and alcohol is no exception.

“Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things.” Pro. 23:33

- Some twist I Tim. 5:23 around to say that drinking wine for your health is okay. Any drunk or doctor will tell you that alcohol will tear up one’s stomach.

Alcohol irritates the digestive system, including the stomach, causing it to produce too much acid. This can lead to gastritis, stomach pain, vomiting, diarrhea, and bleeding. Look at the beer belly of a beer guzzler for proof. God knows all this, so alcohol consumption cannot be what I Tim. 5:23 is referring to.

“Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach’s sake and thine often infirmities.” I Tim 5:23

I read that to get the “good” chemical in wine that is supposed to help one’s health, many bottles of wine should be drunk daily. Drinking that much would qualify one as a drunkard the Bible condemns. Eating grapes or drinking unfermented grape juice is a better choice for one’s stomach health.

- What is “drunk”? How many drinks does it take to be “drunk”? An excellent answer to this question is from Jim Jorgenson in Should I. He wrote, “Perhaps you would say, ‘It would take six beers to make me drunk.’”

If you only drink one beer, then you are one-sixth drunk. You are one-sixth less able to serve God than before drinking.”

- We are not to have the appearance of doing anything wrong. We are to have an upright testimony. Drinking would give an impression to others that we were drunkards.

“Abstain from all appearance of evil.” 1 Thes. 5:22

Christians should be led and guided by the Spirit of God, not the spirit of drunkenness. Interestingly, the old-time drunkards knew that drinking was not of God, and the wrong spirits influenced users of it. To prove that look at a bottle of booze, which will still be identified as 50% (or another number) spirits. Drinking it leads one to follow the wrong spirit, which will not be the Spirit of God.

A Christian should be “Christ-like,” as the name implies. He should not be close to the edge of the godless world from which he was saved. A believer should be as far from temptation and sin as possible. One cannot lose his salvation, but he can lose his Christian testimony and be ensnared by many of the same pitfalls the unsaved fall into when they indulge in alcohol. All lose when they drink booze!

“And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;” Eph. 5:18

“Alcohol is a very effective dissolving agent. It dissolves families, marriages, friendships, jobs, bank accounts, and neurons, but never problems.”

Effects of Drinking

Gleaned from Should I? by Jim Jorgensen, Page 51

Physical Effects

Controlled by alcohol: (Isa. 5:11)

Leads to sickness: (Hosea 7:5)

Causes one to stagger: (Job 12:25)

Can cause one to vomit: (Isa. 19:14)

Affects one's eyes: (Prov. 23:29)

Leads one to be hurt: (Prov. 23:29)

Produces filthiness: (Isa. 28:8)

Provokes one to do dumb things: (Prov. 23:34)

Mental Effects

Impairs judgments: (Prov. 31:5, Isa. 28:7)

Impairs the memory: (Prov. 31:4-5)

Encourages one to lose his temper: (Prov. 20:1)

Moral & Spiritual

Leads to indifference for the work of the Lord: (Isa. 5:12)

Is allied with gambling and licentiousness: (Joel 3:3)

Is allied with indecent exposure: (Gen. 9:21, Hab. 2:15-16)

Ultimately, it can lead to:

A ruined life: (Prov. 23:32)

Poverty: (Proverbs 21:17, 23:21)

Strife: (Proverbs 23:29-30)

Woe and sorrow: (Proverbs 23:29-30)

“One never has to battle the strangling grasp of alcohol, if one never takes the first sip.”

A Monster

T. Adams, 1871

A drunkard is the annoyance of modesty, the trouble of civility, the spoil of wealth, and the destroyer of reason. He is the thief of one's self, the beggar's companion, and the sheriff's trouble. The drunk is his wife's woe, his children's sorrow, his neighbor's scoff, and his shame. He is a spirit of unrest, a thing below a beast, and a menacing monster.

“To a drunkard who feels unlovable, the message that God loves him comes as good news.” — *Jerry Dunn*