

THE ISSUE ALCOHOL:
A BIBLICAL SURVEY AND WORD STUDY
WITH SOME DEVOTIONAL THOUGHTS

*Wherefore be not unwise,
but understanding what the will of the Lord is – Ephesians 5:17*

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INTRODUCTION

There are many issues facing the church today. One that is troubling is the issue of alcohol. This study should be prefaced with a couple thoughts. The issue of alcohol is a subject that is not easy to answer. It is a subject that history has shown divided our nation. But not only is it an issue that split our country, it is dividing churches today. At the conclusion of this survey it will be demonstrated that abstinence from modern day alcohol is biblically sustainable.

There are churches that are moving from an abstinence position to a more moderate position concerning alcohol. Recently one popular evangelical pastor, who is on the radio every day, spoke bluntly of how he took the church he pastors from an abstinence position to a moderate position. The message itself was very weak and non-text based.

But not only is this an issue that divided our nation, today dividing churches, it also is dividing families. You may be dealing with it or you may have come out of an alcoholic home. There are people who know what it is to have a teenager who is exploring with alcohol. Therefore I approach the subject with humility and say upfront that this survey does not claim to have all the answers. Let us explore the Scriptures together and say with Samuel of old, *“speak Lord thy servant heareth.”* We must view each issue in light of the Word of God—that is what makes us New Testament Christians. In addressing and dealing with difficult issues we want to also promote the glory of God and to turn our focus to the Lord.

Finally, as I share some opening thoughts, I am deeply moved by Titus 2:10-11. I look at that text which says, *“the grace of God has appeared to all men teaching us to say no to ungodliness and worldly lusts and that we might embrace that which is right and truthful.”* Grace has edges so that when you look at grace, anything *“outside the box”* is not grace; it is a license to do what you want.

We must to live our lives in the text. If we do everything we speak about will come out of those terms. Many will prostitute grace but Romans 6 deals with that—*“shall we continue in sin that grace may abound – God forbid.”*

NOTES

THE NT TERM WINE AND THE GREEK TERM OINOS

There are no obvious hard and fast rules concerning the usages of *oinos* in the New Testament. To complicate the issue there is limited material in these inspired books with regard to alcohol. To be sure, the book of Revelation uses the term most frequently in the New Testament. However all of its uses are metaphorical except for one—Rev. 18:13. In addition, outside the four gospel accounts (I prefer “four perspectives of the one life—Jesus”) and Revelation, only Paul uses the term *oinos* but he only uses it five times. Of his five usages four of these are in a context where there is some sort of prohibition. The other usage relates to its medicinal value—1 Tim. 5:23.

This matter is very intricate when two issues are carefully considered.

1. The first arises out of the ancient complication of keeping freshly squeezed juice fresh without the convenience of preservatives and refrigeration we enjoy today

One source points out that “unfermented grape juice is a very difficult thing to keep without the aid of modern precautions. Its preservation in the warm and not so clean conditions of ancient Palestine would have been impossible.” If one was to drink the fruit of the vine in the ancient world – he was limited to three options:

- a) He could drink the highest grade of extracted juice. This was considered the best and most expensive drink in the ancient world. It was drunk within the first 24 hours of its extraction of the grape. Another source says, “even the extracted juice had several grades in the ancient world—(1) *The highest grade*—the first juice to flow from the vat as the ancients held that the least pressure on the grape produced the best product. It was kept separate from the other grades. (2) *The lower grades*—which had some water added to it to allow for slower stages of fermentation.”
- b) Drink a lower grade of the freshly squeezed juice. Again this was mixed with water to lower its intoxicating ability. In the ancient world over time a drink would be rejected because it would become strongly fermented and highly intoxicating and could no longer be diluted enough with water.
- c) This we see with the Old Testament case of the Nazarene and the New Testament case of John the Baptist (Luke 1:15). One could completely abstain from the fruit of the vine. This was extremely rare in the ancient days. The abstinence was usually related to a religious commitment (i.e. the Nazarene vow). But also it could be related to someone’s grief. In this case water or milk would be the staple drink.

Consider the second issue:

2. The second issue arises out of the Greek translation and understanding of the terms “*wine*” and “*strong drink*”

When one studies this issue it becomes clear that the Greek term for “*wine*” is *oinos* and it is an “elastic” term. It is used in the Septuagint¹ and it is important to our understanding of the term. Each time the Old Testament is quoted in the New Testament, the writers are quoting the LXX and not the Masoretic text (Hebrew). This translation helps us understand the mind of the Hebrew as he translated the Hebrew Scriptures into Koine Greek²—the language of the world at that time.

When the OT use of this term “*oinos*” is understood the New Testament understanding becomes much sharper. There are two other usages other than “*oinos*”:

- (1) There is “*gleucos*” used in Acts 2:13, which means “sweet wine” and considered fermented in the context. You may recall – they are speaking in tongues and some are mocking saying—“*these people are full of new wine*”
- (2) Also “*sekira*” which is found one time in Luke 1:15 translated *strong drink*

Now remember there are no hard and fast rules. As this study unfolds our thesis should become clearer—abstinence from modern day wines (alcoholic beverages) is biblically sustainable. Not that there is an imperative in the Scriptures that says, “don’t do this.” But there are some commands that relate to drink and we want to be very careful how these terms are framed. This survey of alcohol will use this framework.

There are about seven Hebrew terms with regard to *wine*. Of those three are relevant to our study. They give to us an understanding of how the mindset of the day was. There are three terms that are used by the Old Testament writers that deal with the issue of a fermented drink.

¹ This is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Testament and from this point will be referred to as LXX

² This was the language of the “streets”—of the masses

NOTES

HEBREW TERMS FOR WINE

TIROSH

This was the freshly squeezed juice fresh from the grape. The first usage of this term is found in Genesis 27:27-28. Here Isaac is blessing Jacob and the term *tirosh* is used. It is translated in the NIV & NASB *new wine* and the idea is something that is *fresh* or *new*.

Another passage the term is found is Numbers 18. There the NIV & NKJV translate it *new wine* and the NASB translates “*fresh wine*”. It is interesting all three agree in Deuteronomy 12:17 (NIV, NAS, NKJ) *new wine*.

With a brief look at some of the English translations we should notice that the LXX translates *tirosh* with *oinos*. That is significant to the point. The observation is this: *oinos* that is used in the New Testament is an elastic term. It covers that which is *freshly squeezed* and we see in these 3 illustrations (it is not limited to these 3). That helps to shed some light on understanding this term *new* or *fresh* wine.

YAYIN

This is the most widely used term. *Yayin* is the juice at any stage of fermentation. Now remember that within 24 hours without modern precautions and such there is going to be fermentation that takes place and *yayin* is speaking of any stage beyond that first 24 hours. In other words, the beginning stage of fermentation until it becomes hard liquor.

There are two passages found in Genesis, 9: 21, 24 and 19: 33, 35-36 that use the term *yayin*. Both of these speak of family issues tied to *yayin*. In chapter 9 Noah takes his clothes off and gets drunk which brings about a major family issue involving his sons. In chapter 19 Lot takes his clothes off and has sexual relations with his two daughters. In both texts the Holy Spirit is very clear to demonstrate the relation to *yayin*.

In Genesis 9 the text is clear to show the point that *yayin* has the ability to intoxicate the consumer. Notice the difference in chapter 9 and 19 in that Noah knew what happened but Lot was so intoxicated (so immersed in *yayin*) he did not know what was going on.

In these two passages we see that *tirosh* and *yayin* are different terms. The first is freshly squeezed but the later is an intoxicating drink—a fermented drink. Therefore *tirosh* is the fresh and most expensive stuff. As soon as it was squeezed they would put it in the wine skins and maybe even place it in a cool stream to hold off the process of *yayin*.

We see that the Greek *oinos* is also a translation of *yayin* in the LXX. That is an important point as *oinos* translates that which is freshly squeezed as well as any stage of fermentation. Therefore we conclude as previously stated *oinos* is an elastic term—it covers the whole spectrum.

SHEKAR

In the LXX this term is translated *sekira* and it is *hard liquor*. This is a product that can no longer be diluted.

Moses puts the two terms *yayin* and *shekar* together in the same verse in Leviticus 10:9—*do not drink wine nor strong drink*. The context here is after the Lord kills the sons of Aaron. They were tending to their priestly service in a flippant manner. The point here is that they did it because they were intoxicated.

The term is used one time in the New Testament. In Luke 1:15 where God gives to the parents of John the Baptist the requirements for their son—“for he shall be great in the sight of the Lord and shall drink neither wine (*oinos*—covers fresh to any stage of fermentation) nor strong drink (*sekira*—the heavy stuff).”

The Holy Spirit covers it all there and the point is that John the Baptist is not to drink the fruit of the vine at all.

So let us recap some—*oinos* the Greek term covers the Hebrew terms *tirosh* and *yayin*. This is freshly squeezed juice to include going all the way through the fermentation process.

The Hebrew was very careful to water down the *yayin* through the process to protect against intoxication. But there comes a place in the process that you can no longer water down and that is *shekar*, which in the Greek is *sekira*. This puts it together and it gives us some background for this survey.

NOTES

QUESTIONS TO THINK THROUGH

As we think through this issue there are 6 questions to consider and anyone who is thinking through this must ask these questions—they cannot be ignored.

What do you note from these OT passages concerning the Greek term “oinos”?

The most obvious is that *oinos* covers that which is *new* or *fresh* to include any stage of fermentation. It seems to stop there. Then *sekira* takes over from there and it is hard liquor.

Why did God allow and even approve using *shekar* for a drink offering?

In Numbers 28:7 when the drink is no longer drinkable God says you can take the *shekar* (the hard liquor) and bring it as an offering to me—pour it out on the altar to me.

Why would God allow that? This represented the fruit of their hands. They grew it, harvested it, crushed it, and kept it. At some place conscience wouldn't let them drink it anymore. So they could either dump it out or God allows them to bring it to the Levites. Not for them to drink rather bring it to them so they can pour it out on the altar on their behalf as it represents all their hard labor and work through the summer months and early fall.

How do these OT passages influence our understanding of the term *oinos* in the NT?

We would not understand *oinos* properly in the New Testament without the Old Testament Scriptures. It is highly significant through the lens of the LXX to see their understanding of the terms *tirosh* and *yayin*. Also how the other term *shekar* is used. The first two the Greek term *oinos* covers and then there is a break in the last term *sekira*.

In light of the biblical data how do you understand the following 2 passages?

John 2:1-10

Did Jesus turn water into *oinos*? Yes, but what is governing us here? The context. The product Jesus presented was the best. In other words it was the *tirosh*—fresh or new; top of the line. Not only does this keep us in check but it also enhances the miracle—why? This is freshly crushed juice (straight out of the grape) that just miraculously appears at the wedding!

1 Timothy 5:23

The context here says that this is some juice that is in some stage of fermentation. There was some quality of the juice that was beginning to turn and that is why extreme caution is used—*little*. Obviously for Timothy it had some medicinal value.

The context of John 2 says that this is the freshly squeezed juice. The context of 1 Tim. 5 says that Timothy is not doing something. Therefore it takes the concerned apostle Paul to say to Timothy, “you have a chronic illness here and the one thing that is going to help it is to take a little *oinos*.”

How do you explain Jesus being called a wine bibber in Luke 7:31-35?

Notice first of all it is His accusers who are calling Him this. What is the accusation that Jesus is bringing to light? Those in v. 30 are saying that he is a *glutton*, that he is spending too much time at *the wine*, and he is a friend of *tax collectors*.

That is what sinners do: they are gluttons—they only care about themselves; they drink a lot of wine—to forget themselves. That is the program. So it is important to understand the accusation. Jesus responds saying, “you guys are like babies (v. 32)”.

What is the real issue? Back in chapter 5 we see that this is not the first time this comes up. In v. 29 Matthew is saved and he gives Jesus a great feast in his house. Many of his previous co-workers are there (tax collectors and others). The scribes and Pharisees (religious crowd) complain about this. They ask, “Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?” Jesus responds saying, “That is who I came to save.” We can imagine that was like sandpaper on the backs of the religious crowd of the day.

So the real issue in chapter 7 needs to be seen in light of chapter 5. They couldn’t stand it that Jesus would eat and drink with these low life’s—people the Pharisees would have nothing to do with.

In the broad context of His ministry the real issue is that Jesus is a friend of outcasts. However you understand chapter 7 Jesus himself said, “the Scriptures will never be broken and I came to fulfill the Scriptures.” Since that is true then Jesus will fulfill every single point of the Scriptures.

According to Proverbs 23:19-21 wine bibber and glutton go hand in hand. They both over indulge and is seen in the waste line, in activity, and (according to Proverbs 23) moral reasoning is lost. The Lord Jesus will not break any law or commandment—any of the Scriptures. At this point it must be noted that wine in the Bible is always set in a context of negative consequences.

Take the two passages in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 which both refer to the quality of the Pastor-teacher. The term in both cases is *paroinos*. It is a compound word of *para* and *oinos*. The preposition *para* means *beside*. The term *oinos* is *wine*. In both cases the term *me* is used which is a negation. Literally then the pastor-teacher is to *not be beside the wine*—stay away from it.

Is there any cultural connection between a drink in the ancient world and a 6 pack of beer today?

I will leave that for you to think through in light of our word study. Is the Word of God authoritative and sufficient?

One of the most powerful texts in Scripture for the Christian is Ephesians 5:15-17—*wherefore be not unwise but understanding what the will of the Lord is (v. 17)*. When you talk about the will of God immediately the question comes, how do I know the will of God for my life? God is a transcendent God. He is omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent. How am I to know what He wants for me? God has mediated Himself through language (written word). Therefore *do not be unwise but do understand what the will of the Lord is*—and you can know what that is. In order to know we need to know what He has said in His word

Concerning the area of wine, I am very concerned as a believer with so many things happening within the church of Jesus Christ today. Consider that in America we are by far the number one country for alcoholics in the world and the second place finisher (if you will) isn't even close.

Did you know that there are over 18 million alcoholics in the America right now? That is horrifying to me considering there are pastors who will lend support to consuming alcohol (albeit in moderation). Then on the other side there are messages preached on abstinence from alcohol but very weak (a lot of ranting) textually. In other words these messages are based on opinion. That is unnecessary considering God has spoken on the subject.

Do the Scriptures give any principles which will govern any moral decisions like alcohol or is the local church today on its own?" In other words do we run to the Bible or just do what we want? Consider a statement someone told me—"now that I drink some I am able to sit down with my alcoholic dad and have conversation with him." These are questions that you have to answer and think through.

We live in a society that is overrun with liquor. The target age for sex and drink is between 12 and 18 years old. If the satanically controlled world can get a kid involved in promiscuity when they are young it is a great victory. Our middle school age kids are highly influenced—are we awake to what is happening on the middle school level today (or any level for that matter)?

NOTES

PRINCIPLES

Grammar

Not only did God humble Himself in sending Jesus to this earth to die for sin He also humbled Himself in His revelation of Himself through words—the text of Scripture. The God of the universe reduced Himself in revelation to man in words, sentences and books. Knowing this we need to know how it is functioning. “All Scripture is the breath of God (God let’s us in His intimate zone through His Word) and it is profitable...study to show yourself approved” (2 Tim. 2:15, 3:16).

Historical context

Not only is it essential that we handle the grammar of the text properly and literally but we must interpret with an understanding of the historical context in which each writer wrote. Considering 2 Peter 1:15:21 we note that the Holy Spirit did not take over the personalities of the writer nor did He remove them from the context in which they wrote; He simply super-intended the words of Scripture.

Sobriety

There is one place in the Scripture that we find a command on drunkenness. This is Romans 13:11-14—“*rioting and drunkenness*”. These two words are found together in Galatians 5—works of the flesh and 1 Peter 4—one paraphrase translates *rioting* as *wild parties*. Our modern vernacular would speak of these as *the party life*.

This is what you will hear—“the Bible is against being drunk – but the Bible is not against drinking.” Is that an accurate statement? The only way for the believer to answer that is going to the Word of God.

The idea of legalism has plagued the church for years. How should issues be addressed? For example someone says, “do not go to the movies” or “do not dance.” In the context of our present discussion one may say, “do not drink any alcohol.” Do we have freedom in Christ? The consistent teaching of Scripture is that we do. Allow me to suggest all of us to run to the principle of purity.

The Word of God strictly and clearly forbids drunkenness. At the same time it is loaded with principles in which the believer is to build his life. This is seen in Titus 2—grace has edges. Do not get moved away in the discussion to the philosophical—we must be textual.

What is the point? The Holy Spirit motivates Grace living. He must guide or you will run off a cliff. Do not leave Him out. When people are saying things like “I am free to do this”, maybe they are—but where is it taking them?

The principle of purpose and reason

The question that needs to be asked is not *can* I do this but *should* I do this. We all need to grasp this. We are called (Eph. 5) to be wise knowing what the will of the Lord is along with being controlled by the Holy Spirit. It is not about rules—it is not about *am I allowed to do this*.

Take for example 1 Peter 4:1-5. This passage will help sharpen our thinking concerning what we do. In the passage we find:

- Suffering
- Sin
- Former friends

Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind, for He that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin (v. 1)—suffering purifies. When you are suffering, when there is trouble, whom are you looking to? You aren't worried about anything else—totally focused on God.

That He no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revelings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries... (v. 2-3)—this is how we were.

Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you (v. 4). When someone says, “now that I am free I can do what I want. I can really sit down with this person and have good conversation with them.” Ask right away how does that square with v. 4? —*they speak evil of you*.

Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead (v. 5)—He is ready to judge the living and the dead.

These are some great thoughts that go together with this principle of purpose and reason. Whatever we do the end result needs to be that the world has a right value of our God.

What is highly significant here is that the ones who are saved in the text are going in a different direction than their old friends—from where they used to be. It is running in a direction that is apparently opposite of drinking alcohol. So that we are true to the text, it doesn't say how far they are running, just that they are going in another direction.

What is the flow of the passage? Peter is writing to people and something has changed them and now the result is that they are living a lifestyle that is absolutely distinct from the former. Their former friends are saying, “What in the world is going on with you?” Then they get together and speak evil of you!

Purpose and reason must always come back to the will of God (v. 2). How do you make decisions?

- Have you gone to your elders
- Have you talked with church leadership
- Have you talked to your family
- Have you sought godly counsel

Seduction

In Proverbs 23:15-25 the passage is given over to *the father son motif*. Then the key verse is (v. 26) which says, “My son give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways.”

Parents are asking for the hearts of their kids from the time they don’t even understand the words. Notice carefully what the father says—to get the heart son you observe my ways—watch me.

The idea is as the son watches dad and mom the heart of that child is going to mom and dad. When they don’t have the heart of the child one possibility is that there is disconnect between what mom and dad are saying and doing.

Now there are two specific areas that he addresses in the rest of the chapter. One is sex and the other is drink. These are two things that parents must be very careful with. If we want the hearts of our children and our children are going to watch our ways. Therefore dad must be free of the harlot (v. 27-29).

Then the writer throws into the mix (v. 30) concerning “those who linger long at the *yayin* and they that seek mixed wine.” This is the term *memosop*, which is different altogether. There would be wine and spices would be added to the wine to bring potency to the wine. It was then drunk quickly in order to get the feeling they are looking for.

Then after all that he gets to the core of the principle of seduction (v. 31-32)—*look not thou upon the wine*. The eye is powerful and an amazing part of our bodies. The same writer says that the eye is never satisfied. What enters the eye gate tattoos the brain

The harlot lures the eyes. Therefore all kinds of things are done with TV and computers. Extreme caution must be sued simply because children watch their parents. They see what catches the eyes attention; they listen to the talk of dad, and observe what mom is watching. Children are highly influenced—parents beware.

There is also the seduction of wine. It looks so smooth and besides everyone else is doing it and on the surface they appear to be ok. In the end it will bite you. That is the principle of seduction and it is interesting that this principle is connected with family—

specifically with dads. They are the ones who have the highest accountability in the Scriptures.

A quick word, a quick look, the wrong movie, or the wrong drink from dad will impact the child more than we will know. Unless the grace of God comes in and does what only it can do—wipe it clean and blot it out.

With the issue of *oinos* principles must be established to think through. So that we do not walk away saying, “you better do this or that”. Rather walk away saying, “I really want the holy Spirit to lead me by the Scriptures and I really want the kind of testimony that is going to bring my children up in the nurture and admonition of Christ; that is really going to cause the name of Jesus to be valued with my neighbors and people around—this is my desire.”

Be very careful for the sake of your family. You want to come to the place where you want to do this—you want to be like Jesus. It is not because of the flesh but the Spirit living within who is just chomping away at the inside helping you to chart a new course. Note that He will not force Himself on you as the believer must cooperate.

Ask yourself—“do I want to be dominated by Christ?”

The Church Body

Consider the subject of this paper we will look at the principle of the church body by making some observations from 1 Corinthians 8:7-13.

- v. 7 – not everyone has the knowledge; they have a weak conscience because the conscience is only as good as what you feed it
- v. 8 – food does not commend us to God
- v. 9 – don’t let your liberty become a stumbling block. This is the issue—Who will you be a stumbling block to?. “Them that are weaker”—the term “weak” is the term “infirm”. In the gospels over and over we are told, “Jesus went about healing the infirmed—the weak.” In Romans 15:1—those that are “weak”. That is *adunamis*—without power. The idea is, they are sick in the faith. In other words, don’t let your liberty drive a nail in another’s spiritual coffin.
- v. 10-11 “an idol”—Paul says this just doesn’t make sense but because of your knowledge the weak brother perishes.
- v. 12—you sin against CHRIST. That is what should keep us on our toes.

Because there are sins of sight someone comes by they see you doing this or drinking this (whatever it is) and this brings them to sin. But there is also sins of silence. This is what happens in chapter 11:29. He is saying, you bring damage to the body—“not discerning the body of the Lord.”

God is holding each of us as believer's accountable. We surely would not want to sin against Christ.

- v. 13—"if food makes my brother stumble I will never do it again!"

When we talk about ethical issues we must come to text and say, "I am a person dominated by Jesus Christ and His word of grace." Paul addressing the elders at Ephesus says, "and now brethren I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified (Acts 20:32)." Or consider what grace is doing to the believer. Paul again says, "the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men but it is teaching us (the believer)—it is training us to say no to ungodliness and the lust of the world. (Titus 2:11-14)"

What is absent today is people who can say no to self; say no to stuff; say no to money; say no to wine; say no to things that have the potential to dominate their life. The text is king and everything else is secondary—*the Word liveth and abideth forever.*

NOTES

ALCOHOLISM³

It is virtually impossible to define what alcoholism is and where it begins. Consider this definition however—although there are many different definitions of what alcoholism is the use of alcohol is qualified for alcoholism. Some remark of the long-term effects of consistent alcohol use while the ingestion of alcohol by definition necessary to develop a definition of alcoholism. The use of alcohol does not predict the development of alcoholism.

The use of alcohol is not predictable. What makes an alcoholic? That data is not predictable. The quantity, the frequency, the regularity of alcohol consumption required to develop alcoholism varies greatly from person to person. In addition although the biological mechanism's underpinning alcoholism are uncertain. Some risk factors include social environment, stress, emotional health, genetic predisposition, age, and gender have been identified.

For example those who consume alcohol at an early age (before age 17) are at a much higher risk later on of becoming abusers of alcohol. Also the portion of men with alcohol dependence is higher than women although women are more vulnerable to the long-term consequences of alcoholism. Around 90% of adults in the U.S. consume alcohol and everyday 700,000 people are treated for alcoholism—EVERYDAY!⁴

We are a nation succumbing to pleasure. We are a nation where young people are totally given over to the visual and not thinkers.

So we come to this issue of wine and we should not be surprised at how our churches and prominent leaders are speaking concerning this issue of Alcohol. This is only the beginning underneath there is something going on just be ready. You see the devil is much smarter than all of us and when we go soft on issues that God speaks clearly about and leaders in our churches won't biblically address issues and the culture is absorbing into the church—just wait and see what that looks like in a few years. This is why grace is so foundational.

We need to understand that the fruit of this will be seen in the coming generation, those who are going to lead our church in the next 20 years or so. They are going to model moms and dads and they are going to model what they have heard in the local church and that is scary.

³ Some thoughts on the disease of alcoholism—the principles section resumes below

⁴ These statistics are taken from the Center for Disease Control and National Institute for Health

Faith and Conscience

Paul wrote three books on his third missionary journey—Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians. In chapter 14 and 15 he is very concerned about *the weak* and *the strong* getting along in the same church. In chapter 14 he has three conclusions that are given in v. 13, 16, 19).

- Conclusion 1—v. 13 “therefore don’t judge one another”. This is important especially with a weaker brother. He goes by and he sees this and it becomes a stumbling block.
- Conclusion 2—v. 16) “therefore don’t let your good be evil spoken of”. Why is this? The answer is v. 17.
- Conclusion 3—v. 19-20. Don’t tear down the work of God. Did you know that can be done?

Notice “anything” is in italics in v. 21. He is saying whatever it is. Then v. 22 is to the *strong* and v. 23 is to the *weak*.

- To the strong he says, “you have faith and it is great”. Notice v. 5.
- To the weak if you are wavering on something and you don’t have full settledness on the position then don’t eat. Because it is not of faith and whatever is not of faith it is sin.

The idea is that the weaker comes by and he sees you, the stronger, doing something and it tears him down—makes him weaker. He is emboldened by what he sees but his conscience has not yet caught up with the Scriptures and it is damaging. You must operate from faith! A convinced conscience is one that is convinced from the word of God. If not just don’t do it, whatever it is—in this case it is *oinos*.

Personal Pleasure and Satisfaction with Christ

Consider Colossians 3:1-7:

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them.

Kitty Dukakis, the wife of a former presidential candidate wrote of her alcoholism. She decided to limit herself to just one drink a day. She found herself living for that one drink a day. That was her every thought. She couldn’t wait for that one moment of her

day. In other words, she was absolutely consumed with just that. For me it must be that the highest pleasurable thought is Christ. How does that work with YOU?

Potential Enslavement

All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body—1 Corinthians 6:12-13.

This is the seduction principle restated because no one knows where they stand on this issue of alcohol. For you it might be *this much* for another it might be *more or less*. No one knows until it is too late. It should overwhelm us where the flesh will lead us. Draw closer to the Lord through His word and through prayer. Sex won't satisfy, food won't satisfy, and pornography won't satisfy. Don't let Hollywood trick you.

God's Glory

All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not. Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth. Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, that eat, asking no question for conscience sake: For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof. If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake. But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof: Conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other: for why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience? For if I by grace be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks? Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God: Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved. Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ—1 Corinthians 10:23-11:1.

The big picture is: you are an abstainer from meat because you are concerned about the program and how the animals are raised. But now you are invited by one of your pagan friends and you go and you sit down and you bring another brother with you from your church and you guys sit down and he serves meat.

What do you do? If you say to the pagan, "I don't eat this" it will offend. If you say something to the brother it might offend him. According to the text you heir with the brother. If the brother doesn't eat that for whatever reason you then abstain along with him. The whole context of 1 Cor. 10 is a powerful statement on the body of Christ.

Because v. 29 you have to understand *conscience* and *liberty* and v. 31—make sure whatever it is it is for the glory of God. Then v. 32-33 we see the point—“that everyone might saved.” Then 11:1 you see the principle of *the glory of God* and it is very powerful.

Gospel Ministry

This is 1 Tim. 3 and Titus 1—they are very tight restrictions around those who will be in the gospel ministry. Because it all begins with being blameless but then all these other things tell us what it is to be blameless. One of those is *don't be next to the wine pastor*.

CONCLUSION

Bathe your soul in the Word of God. Seek to be dominated by Christ. If that happens out of your mouth with come sweetness and not bitterness. The husband and wife relationship will be sweet. Families will not argue so much. Lives are put together under the domination of Jesus Christ.

It isn't about single issues it is about your life. Do you see yours under the control of the Spirit of God and grounded on grace? It is such a blessing to be trained by the grace of God (Tit. 2:11)—training us how to say no.

We can do it but we must have a life of integrity and we must always come back to the text. So if the Scripture doesn't give a command on *oinos* then don't you. But to say that the Scripture is silent on how I live my life morally or ethically then we do a great injustice to the Scripture.

We need broken hearts before God. I need that and you need that or else it won't work. *"Oh God our help in ages past, our hope for years to come, be thou our God while life shall last."* Can you frame those words in your heart?

In considering this biblical survey of alcohol we then conclude that *abstinence from modern day alcohol is biblically sustainable.*

NOTES