

Drinking Alcohol



Among the many doctrines of men (Matthew 15:8-9), are teachings about the drinking of alcohol that are not Biblical.

Three main errors abide.

- 1) Biblical wine was substantially different in alcoholic content than today's wine.
- 2) Drinking alcoholic beverages is a sin.
- 3) A person can be a Christian on their way to heaven and at the same time be a drunkard.

Each one of these is a lie.

I. Word Games

For an example of the first lie (Biblical wine was substantially different in alcoholic content than today's wine), Pastor Andy Pietrylo of Bible Baptist Church Of Mandarin (4211 Julington Creek Rd., Jacksonville, FL 32223-2001) states,

Unfermented wine was the most common wine in biblical times. It was not what we know today. You cannot defend wine drinking today on the basis of biblical times because the two are totally different (Wine and Alcohol, www.jax-inter.net/~dajohn/Wine.html, 10-29-01, hard copy on file)

"Unfermented wine"? That's like clean filth. Wine, by its very definition, is fermented, as Webster states,

wine (win) n. . . . **1** the fermented juice of grapes, used as an alcoholic beverage **2** the fermented juice of other fruits or plants (*Webster's New World Compact School and Office Dictionary*, copyright 1995, p. 493)

So, besides his use of an oxymoron ("unfermented wine"), Dr. Pietrylo supports this conclusion, not with Biblical proof, but rather he uses the testimony of Aristotle, The Donovan Bible Commentary, Smith's Bible Dictionary, and his own

words, which all prove nothing; because Scripture is the standard, not Aristotle, Donovan, Smith, or Pietrylo no matter what they say (Colossians 2:8-10)!

Pietrylo's main argument is that,

The wine was stored by boiling the juice until the water was evaporated. What was left was a thick, nonintoxicating syrup or paste. (ibid.)

This statement is nowhere substantiated in Scripture. The closest thing to it would be Joel 1:10, but that describes dried up wine as a bad thing. Whether Joel 1:10 is saying the wine is dried up, i.e. dehydrated, or dried up, i.e. all gone, is hard to determine. Nevertheless, Scripture teaches no such dehydration process with wine.

Another example of the first lie can be found in an article written by Pastor Rick Rogers (Calvary Baptist Church, 9122 Durand Ave., Sturtevant, WI, 262-886-4463). He writes,

Wine today is different than Biblical wine.
(<http://logosresourcepages.org/alcohol.htm>, under Biblical background, 2., hard copy on file, printed 10-21-01)

And,

D. Biblical Warnings (Remember, we are speaking of Biblical wine and strong drink - that which is much weaker than alcohol today). (ibid.)

And,

E. Biblical Questions: what about the passages that seems to condone the use of alcohol?

1. Remember foremost that the terms were different in biblical times than now! (ibid.)

So says Mr. Rogers, not the word of God (Proverbs 30:5-6). Rogers supports his claim, in part, by arguing,

B. Biblical Background:

1. Wine, including fermented, was used in earlier times to purify water that was stored in cisterns and wells. That was a major use of it! It was mixed with water at a very low ratio, consisting of the lowest ration of (3 parts water to 1 part wine-which was the lowest acceptable ratio; this produced a

drink that was 2.5%-2.75% alcoholic) up to (20+ parts water to 1 part wine). (ibid.)

"Wine, including fermented"? Again, that's like saying, "Humans, including homo sapiens." This "unfermented wine" idea is contrary to reality. Nevertheless, Roger claims this mixing was the "major use" of wine in Scripture, yet he does not back this up with a single verse. Not only is this idea unsubstantiated in the Word of God (Proverbs 30:5-6), but the Word reveals just the opposite. Isaiah 1:22 depicts the mixing of water with wine as a bad thing.

Your silver has become dross, your wine mixed with water. (Isaiah 1:22)

In other words, it is no good. Silver that has become dross is bad silver. Likewise, wine mixed with water is bad wine.

As part of their deceit, both Pietrylo and Rogers state that the Hebrew word for new wine, *tiyros*, is "fresh grape juice." This cannot be substantiated anywhere in the Word. In fact, the same Hebrew word is used in Hosea 4:11 translated "new wine."

Harlotry, wine, and new wine enslave the heart. (Hosea 4:11)

It should be obvious that fresh grape juice is not addicting ("enslave the heart") as new alcoholic wine can be.

If the Lord wanted to say "grape juice" He could have, and, in fact, He did in Numbers 6:3.

He shall separate himself from wine and similar drink; he shall drink neither vinegar made from wine nor vinegar made from similar drink; neither shall he drink any grape juice, nor eat fresh grapes or raisins.
(Numbers 6:3)

The Hebrew words for "grape juice" (*mishrat `anâviym*) are literally rendered, "juice of grapes," or in other words, "grape juice." When the Bible says, "wine" it means "wine."

Dr. Samuele Bacchiocchi, a Seventh-Day Adventist, argues over words (1 Timothy 6:4) stating,

"Wine" in Biblical Perspective. Building on the conclusions reached in Chapter 2, I proceeded in Chapter 3 to examine the reasons for the Biblical approval and disapproval of wine. What I found is that the positive references to "wine" have to do with unfermented and unintoxicating grape juice. . . .

On the other hand, the negative references to "wine" have to do with fermented and intoxicating wine.

(www.biblicalperspectives.com/books/wine_in_the_bible/1.html, hard copy on file, 10-29-01)

How convenient. Change the word "wine" into the idea of "unfermented" grape juice and then conclude, without any Biblical support, that the positive references to wine actually refer to this oxymoronic "unfermented" wine, and the negative passages refer to fermented wine.

II. Terms

What are the Hebrew and Greek words for wine and what do they mean? In short, they mean what they say.

A. The Old Testament

In the Hebrew there are several different words for wine, and they are never used to mean "grape juice." The most common Hebrew word for wine is yayin (used 141 times), and drunk to excess, can certainly intoxicate (e.g. Genesis 9:21). It is used in Genesis 9:21, 24; 14:18; 19:32-35; 27:25; 49:11-12; Exodus 29:40; Leviticus 10:9; 23:13; Numbers 6:3 (2x), 4, 20; 15:5, 7, 10; 28:14; Deuteronomy 14:26; 28:39; 29:6; 32:33, 38; Joshua 9:4, 13; Judges 13:4, 14 (2x); 13:7; 19:19; 1 Samuel 1:14-15, 24; 10:3; 16:20; 25:18, 37; 2 Samuel 13:28; 16:1, 2; 1 Chronicles 9:29; 12:40; 27:27; 2 Chronicles 2:10, 15; 11:11; Nehemiah 2:1 (2x); 5:15, 18; 13:15; Esther 1:7, 10; 5:6; 7:2, 7-8; Job 1:13, 18; 32:19; Psalm 60:3; 75:8; 78:65; 104:15; Proverbs 4:17; 9:2, 5; 20:1; 21:17; 23:20, 30-31; 31:4, 6; Ecclesiastes 2:3; 9:7; 10:19; Song of Solomon 1:2, 4; 2:4; 4:10; 5:1; 7:9; 8:2; Isaiah 5:11, 12, 22; 16:10; 22:13; 24:9, 11; 28:1, 7 (2x); 29:9; 55:1, 21; 56:12; Jeremiah 13:12 (2x); 23:9; 25:15; 35:2, 5 (2x), 6 (2x), 8, 14; 40:10, 12; 48:33; 51:7; Lamentations 2:12; Ezekiel 27:18; 44:21; Daniel 1:5, 8, 16; 10:3; Hosea 4:11; 7:5; 9:4; 14:7; Joel 1:5; 3:3; Amos 2:8, 12; 5:11; 6:6; 9:14; Micah 2:11; 6:15; Habakkuk 2:5; Zephaniah 1:13; Haggai 2:12; and Zechariah 9:15 & 10:7.

The next most common Hebrew word for wine is *tiyros* (used 38 times). This also can intoxicate as *yayin* can. See Hosea 4:11 where both words are used for the same enslavement of alcohol.

Tiyros is usually translated "wine" or "new wine" and is used in Genesis 27:28, 37; Numbers 18:12; Deuteronomy 7:13; 11:14; 12:17; 14:23; 18:4; 28:51; 33:28; Judges 9:13; 2 Kings 18:32; 2 Chronicles 31:5; 32:28; Nehemiah 5:11; 10:37, 39; 13:5, 12; Psalm 4:7; Proverbs 3:10; Isaiah 24:7; 36:17; 62:8; 65:8; Jeremiah 31:12; Hosea 2:8-9, 22; 4:11; 7:14; 9:2; Joel 1:10; 2:19, 24; Micah 6:15; Haggai 1:11; and Zechariah 9:17.

Another Hebrew word translated "wine" is *chemer* used only twice, Deuteronomy 32:14 & Isaiah 27:2. This word is closely linked to the Hebrew word *chamar* for "ferment" (e.g. Psalm 75:8 "the wine foams" NAS) or "red" (e.g. Psalm 75:8 "the wine is red" NKJV). In Aramaic this word for wine is *chamar* and is found 6 times, Ezra 6:9; 7:22; Daniel 5:1, 2, 4, & 23.

Another Hebrew word translated "wine" is *âsiys* (used 5 times). This word is translated "sweet wine" in Isaiah 49:26 and Amos 9:13. In Song of Solomon 8:2 it is translated "juice" ("of my pomegranate"), and it is describing "spiced wine" (see Song of Solomon 8:2). In Joel 1:5 and 3:18 it is translated "new wine." If anyone wondered if *âsiys* truly means "wine" (i.e. fermented), Isaiah 49:26 and Joel 1:5 should remove any doubt.

Another Hebrew word for "wine" is *shemâriym* (used 5 times). This word is used for older wine in Isaiah 25:6 (2x), for the "dregs" of wine in Psalm 75:8 and Jeremiah 48:11, and figuratively in Zephaniah 1:12 for those who are "settled in complacency" (literally, "thickened on their dregs"). Dregs (or lees) refers to the sediment that accumulates in the fermentation process. Therefore, with the idea of "dregs," the wine spoken of here is indeed wine.

Another Hebrew word for "wine" is *mimsâkh* (used twice). This word is translated "drink offering" in Isaiah 65:11 and "mixed wine" in Proverbs 23:30. The passage in Proverbs is in the context of drunkards who search for it.

Finally, there is the Hebrew word *mâzeg* (used once). It is translated in Song of Solomon 7:2 as "blended beverage" (NAS "mixed wine," KJV "liquor").

The Hebrew word translated "strong drink" or "intoxicating drink" is *shêkhâr* (used 23 times). This is used in Leviticus 10:9; Numbers 6:3 (2x); 28:7; Deuteronomy 14:26; 29:6; Judges 13:4, 7, 14; 1 Samuel 1:15; Psalm 69:12; Proverbs 20:1; 31:4,

6; Isaiah 5:11, 22; 24:9; 28:7 (3x); 29:9; 56:12; and Micah 2:11. One use of this word gives a death blow to the folly of men like Rick Rogers.

In the article mentioned above, Rogers states,

Wine today is different than Biblical wine. "Strong drink . . . unmixed wine . . ." in Biblical times was only 3-11% alcohol. Those who drank this form of alcohol were considered barbaric! Distillation, which increases alcohol content, was not discovered until A.D. 1500. Modern wine has 9-11% alcohol; 80-100 proof whiskey and brandy has 40-50% alcohol; Biblically and culturally, these would have been unthinkable! (ibid.)

Rogers reveals his historical tunnel vision in his statement about distillation. Just because modern man records distillation as first being discovered in A.D. 1500, this does not mean the ancients of old did not use distillation (Ecclesiastes 1:9-11). Moreover, if Rogers is correct, then the Lord did the unthinkable and encouraged the Israelites to be barbaric, because Yahweh said,

And you shall spend that money for whatever your heart desires: for oxen or sheep, for wine or similar drink, for whatever your heart desires; you shall eat there before the Lord your God, and you shall rejoice, you and your household. (Deuteronomy 14:26)

The Hebrew word for "similar drink" in this verse is shêkhâr. It could well be translated "strong drink," as it is in Proverbs 20:1, or "intoxicating drink," as it is in Leviticus 10:9. The Israelites are told by God to get whatever their heart desires, and this could include strong drink.

B. The New Testament

In the Greek, the most common word for wine is oinos (used 28 times). This word is used for the wine Jesus made (John 2:3, 9, 10 [2x]; 4:46), the wine Paul commands not to get drunk with (Ephesians 5:18), and the wine Paul tells Timothy to drink a little of it for his stomach's sake and his frequent ailments (1 Timothy 5:23). The word is elsewhere used in Matthew 9:17 (2x); 27:34; Mark 2:22; 15:23; Luke 1:15; 5:37-38; 7:33; 10:34; Romans 14:21; 1 Timothy 3:8; Titus 2:3; and Revelation 6:6; 14:8, 10; 16:19; 17:2; 18:3, 13; & 19:15. There is nothing peculiar about this word. It means "wine."

After oinos, not much is left in the Greek New Testament for the term "wine." The Greek word for "sour wine" is oxos (used 5 times) and is found in Matthew 27:48; Mark 15:36; Luke 23:36; and John 19:29 & 30.

The Greek word translated "new wine" in Acts 2:13 is gleukos, and is only used here, in the context of an accusation of being drunk from drinking it (Acts 2:15).

Also, there is one Greek word used one time in the New Testament for "strong drink" (sikera), and this is found in Luke 1:15 where Gabriel states that John the Baptist will not drink wine nor strong drink.

Finally, the Greek word for "grape juice" (trux) is not used in the New Testament.

Therefore, in conclusion, it should be evident that the terms used in the Bible for wine and strong drink do not indicate anything different than our present day wine and strong drink. Those who argue to the contrary are only supported by arguments from history and the supposed practice of that day, but upon a Biblical foundation they do not stand.

III. Is Drinking Alcohol Sin?

Southhaven Church of Christ (1483 Brookhaven Dr., Southhaven, MS, 38671, 662-393-2690) has on their web site an article by Kevin D. Beard in which he writes,

*For many years, not only members of the Lord's church, but also religious people in general have understood the drinking of alcohol in any quantity to be sinful. But that attitude is changing. Many in the Lord's church believe there is nothing wrong with so-called "social" drinking. But such is not true. The only Scriptural grounds for drinking beverage alcohol is found in 1 Timothy 5:23, but the purpose of Paul's instruction to Timothy is not for pleasure, but for the medicinal qualities of the wine. Scripture condemns the recreational use of beverage alcohol in any amount.
(www.southhavencoc.org/Articles/drinking.htm, hard copy on file, 10-29-01)*

To support his stand, Mr. Beard argues it is wrong because the Bible commands self-control (e.g. Galatians 5:22-23), soberness (e.g. 1 Peter 1:13), separation from the world (e.g. Romans 12:1-2), and condemns drunkenness (e.g. Romans 13:13). Amen to self-control, soberness, separation from the world, and a refusal to get drunk, but all these can be lived out, and yet an alcoholic beverage can be enjoyed

in moderation breaching not one of these commands (e.g. Luke 7:33-34; Hebrews 7:26).

Mr. Beard goes so far as to indicate that you will lose your soul if you drink alcohol "in any amount" (except for medicinal purposes).

Drinking beverage alcohol in any amount is wrong. Christians must have no part of it, no matter what the world may say. But if any still doubt the danger of it, answer this question: Is your soul worth it? (ibid.)

Nothing is worth losing your soul (Mark 8:36; 9:42-48). But, drinking an alcoholic beverage is not wrong. Paul wrote,

The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. (Romans 14:17)

Paul's statement is made in the context of drinking wine (Romans 14:21). It is not wrong to drink wine (Luke 7:33-34), or even strong drink (Deuteronomy 14:26 KJV).

Those who claim, as Kevin Beard does, that drinking wine is sinful, actually pronounce sin upon Him who is "without sin" (Hebrews 4:15), because Christ drank wine.

For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say, "He has a demon." The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, "Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!" (Luke 7:33-34)

In the context of drinking wine, Christ says He came "drinking." In other words, He came drinking wine. As the haters of Christ accused Him of sin on this very same issue many years ago accusing Him of being a drunkard (winebibber), so today, men who teach drinking wine is wrong accuse the same One of similar sin. In fact, the wicked of old were more Biblically accurate in their accusation. It would certainly be wrong to be a winebibber (a drunkard, Proverbs 20:1), but to simply drink an alcoholic beverage is not a sin. Otherwise, Jesus Himself sinned.

Terry Watkins, in his reliance upon his own understanding, comes right out and calls Jesus a sinner!

*What about when Jesus turned the water into wine at the marriage in Cana. If Jesus Christ turned water into fermented liquor, he directly disobeyed Habakkuk 2:15, "Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that putteth thy bottle to him, and maketh him drunken also . . ." **And, if Jesus disobeyed Habakkuk - HE WAS A SINNER!** (emphasis in original, Worldps Deadliest Drug tract, Dial-The-Truth Ministries, 5990 Willow Ridge Rd., Pinson, Al 35126; 205-681-9956)*

Watkins radically perverts Habakkuk 2:15. He leaves out the very phrase that would expose his perversion. The end of the verse, which Watkins leaves out, reads, ". . . **that thou mayest look on their nakedness!**" (Habakkuk 2:15, KJV). What is condemned in Habakkuk 2:15 is getting someone drunk so that you can look on their nakedness, not just getting someone drunk (see below, **VI. Giving Strong Drink**). Lot's daughters made their father drunk so that they could look on his nakedness (Genesis 19:32-35). Jesus did no such thing. Yet, He did make real wine (i.e. fermented), and according to Terry Watkins, if Jesus really did make wine (i.e. fermented), then "**HE WAS A SINNER!**"

Christ was no sinner (John 8:46; 2 Corinthians 5:21). Yet, He did make real wine (i.e. fermented). As it is written,

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 the inferior. You have kept the good wine until now!" (John 2:9-10)

What is "good wine"? Old wine.

And no one, having drunk old wine, immediately desires new; for he says, "The old is better." (Luke 5:39)

Jesus made wine (oinos), good wine, real wine (fermented), and don't let anyone tell you otherwise (Colossians 2:8-10).

Another example of the condemnation of drinking wine can be found with Dr. Pietrylo. He clearly declares the drinking of wine to be sin.

2. DOES THE BIBLE PROHIBIT DRINKING WINE?

- **YES**

*There are many warnings and commands by God that instruct us not to drink wine. In **Proverbs 23:29-35** we are told not even to look at alcohol. (ibid.)*

What is Proverb 23:29-35 talking about?

Those who linger long at the wine, those who go in search of mixed wine. (Proverbs 23:30)

The entire passage is in the context of the use of alcohol in excess.

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. (Proverbs 23:29-33)

Verse 32 says, "**At the last it bites like a serpent . . .**" It is not at the first, but at the last. A small glass of wine or even a shot of whiskey will not cause you "to see strange things" or "utter perverse things." These verses describe a drunken stupor, not someone who has drunk in moderation.

For those who might be tempted to linger long at the wine, Scripture indeed exhorts,

Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it swirls around smoothly. (Proverbs 23:31)

In other words, don't let yourself be tempted. This is consistent with Christ's exhortation in Matthew 18:8-9 and Mark 9:43-47 where Jesus says to cut off anything that causes you to sin. Likewise, Proverbs 5:8 exhorts to not even go near the door of the immoral woman's house. So, here, Proverbs instructs to not even look at the wine, because if you go down the road of debauchery,

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 23:34-35)

Alcoholic beverages, used in excess, indeed can destroy. Proverbs 20:1 warns,

Wine is a mocker, strong drink is a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise.

It does not say, "whoever drinks it is not wise," but rather, "whoever is led astray by it." To drink wine or strong drink to the point of drunkenness is not wise, and it is a breach of the Lord's commands.

And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit. (Ephesians 5:18)

Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, . . .
(Romans 13:13)

Several times over we are instructed to be sober (1 Thessalonians 5:6, 8; Titus 2:2; 1 Peter 1:13; 5:8). Drinking large amounts of alcohol makes this impossible to obey, and those who live this way are most definitely "led astray" (Proverbs 20:1). But, to drink in moderation, is not only allowed by God, it's commanded.

Go, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart; for God has already accepted your works. (Ecclesiastes 9:7)

In opposition to this Word, Rick Rogers argues,

Consider: Dr. Norman Geisler writes: "Christians ought not to drink wine, beer, or other beverages for they are actually strong drink and forbidden in Scripture. Even ancient pagans did not drink what Christians drink today." ["A Christian Perspective on Wine Drinking," Bibliotheca Sacra January - March, 1982, p. 51] The Bible condemns strong drink (remember, 3-11% alcohol?) which covers virtually all alcohol popular today. No Biblical defense can be used to support the consumption of alcohol! (ibid., under B. Biblical Background)

Besides the fact that: 1) Christ both made (John 2:1-11; 4:46) and drank wine (Matthew 11:18-19; Luke 7:33-34). 2) Paul says the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking (Romans 14:17, 21). 3) Ecclesiastes 9:7 encourages to "**drink your wine.**" And, 4) the Lord instructed the Israelites to drink strong drink if they so desired (Deuteronomy 14:26). A Biblical defense can indeed be further made to support the consumption of alcohol.

To begin with, Melchizedek is a good example to follow (Genesis 14:18). When Abraham returned from warring with Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, Melchizedek, the priest of God Most High (Genesis 14:18), the eternal man (Hebrews 7:1-3, 8, 16), came to Abraham and brought with him bread and wine. Bread is for food. Wine is for drink.

Furthermore, though the priests could not drink wine or intoxicating drink when they went into the tabernacle (Leviticus 10:9), they could drink wine at other times (Numbers 18:12). Though the Israelites did not drink wine or similar drink as they wandered in the desert those 40 years (Deuteronomy 29:5-6), nonetheless, in anticipation of finally arriving in the promised land, the Lord commanded them to drink wine in their worship of Him (Deuteronomy 14:23). Moreover, someone who took a Nazirite vow could not drink wine during the time of his separation (Numbers 6:3), but after this, after he has properly presented his offering before the Lord, **"the Nazirite may drink wine"** (Numbers 6:20).

Isaac drank wine (Genesis 27:25) and blessed his son Jacob with plenty of it (Genesis 27:28, 37). Jotham declares wine to cheer both God and men (Judges 9:13). The godly woman Abigail (1 Samuel 25:3-35) brought David wine for him and his men to drink (1 Samuel 25:18). Nehemiah and those with him drank wine (Nehemiah 5:18). Esther, who was a godly woman (Esther 2:7; 4:15-16, etc.), made a banquet of wine (Esther 5:6; 7:2, 8). Job, a man who was blameless and upright (Job 1:1, 8; 2:3), allowed his children to drink wine (Job 1:13, 18). The Song of Solomon, several times over, describes wine as a good thing (Song of Solomon 1:2, 4; 2:4 **"banqueting house"** NKJV, Hebrew **"house of wine"**; 4:10; 7:9); Solomon says, **"I have drunk my wine"** (S.S. 5:1), and his wife says, **"I would cause you to drink of spiced wine"** (S.S. 8:2). Psalm 104:14 says the Lord makes wine (brings it forth), and it **"makes glad the heart of man."** Isaiah 25:6 says,

The Lord of hosts will make for all people a feast of choice pieces, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of well-refined wines on the lees.

Isaiah 55:1 figuratively says to **"buy wine."** Wine is seen as a blessing from God (Proverbs 3:9-10; Isaiah 25:6; Jeremiah 31:12; Joel 2:18-19, 24; Amos 9:13), and to be thwarted from drinking it is illustrated in a curse (Micah 6:15; Zephaniah 1:13).

Scripture does not support the notion that drinking an alcoholic beverage is sinful. **What is sinful, is drinking in excess** (e.g. Isaiah 5:11). And, even in Proverbs 30:4-5 this is what is in view.

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)

Prior to this, Lemuel's mother instructs,

Do not give your strength to women, nor your ways to that which destroys kings. (Proverbs 31:3; see also Proverbs 7:26)

This verse is not a condemnation of all women, nor a condemnation of all sexual activity, but rather, it warns of immoral women and the practice of immoral sex. Likewise, Proverbs 31:4 does not forbid the moderate use of wine or intoxicating drink, but rather the misuse of it, "**lest they drink and forget the law, and pervert the justice of all the afflicted.**" The balance is found in Ecclesiastes 10:17.

Blessed are you, O land, when your king is the son of nobles, and your princes feast at the proper time - for strength and not for drunkenness! (Ecclesiastes 10:17)

IV. How Much, When, And With Whom?

Since Scripture encourages the moderate use of alcohol (e.g. Genesis 14:18; Deuteronomy 14:23, 26; Ecclesiastes 9:7; Luke 7:33-34; etc.), at what point does the drinking become sin? When God is disobeyed, then it is sin. The Lord says, "do not be drunk with wine" (Ephesians 5:18), and "be sober" (1 Peter 1:13). As long as these commands are not breached, then the drinking has been moderate, and no sin has been committed.

Yet, sin has been committed, if, by drinking alcohol, a brother has been caused to stumble or is offended (Romans 14:20).

It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak. (Romans 14:21)

If a brother in the Lord is offended, or even if an ungodly man is offended, abstinence, for their sake, should be observed (1 Corinthians 9:19-22; 10:31-33; 2 Corinthians 6:3). Paul says,

All things indeed are pure, but it is evil for the man who eats [or drinks] with offense. (Romans 14:20)

Eating or drinking with offense is eating or drinking in defiance of those who are known to be in disapproval of the behavior. This is the context of both Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 10:31-33. This does not address a circumstance in which such disapproval is unknown. Scripture does not dictate a believer should completely abstain from drinking any alcohol, lest someone someday somewhere might be offended. Jesus openly came eating and drinking (Luke 7:33-34), and His example can be followed. Abstinence can also be practiced, if so desired. Either way, one thing that should never be submitted to, or given any kind of approval, is false doctrine concerning this matter. Paul writes,

So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths. (Colossians 2:16)

Out of love we may choose not to drink in someone's presence. But in truth, we should stand firm on what Scripture teaches about this issue, speak the truth, and in no way cower to any doctrine of men.

And, although we may have the freedom to drink, we do not have the freedom to be fellow drinkers with those who over indulge.

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. (Proverbs 23:21; see also 1 Corinthians 15:33).

V. Drunkards Go To Hell!

God says,

Woe to those who rise early in the morning, that they may follow intoxicating drink; who continue until night, till wine inflames them! (Isaiah 5:11)

Woe to men mighty at drinking wine, woe to men valiant for mixing intoxicating drink. (Isaiah 5:22; see also 28:1-8; 56:12)

In Galatians 5:21 drunkenness is listed as one of the deeds of the flesh and those who practice such will not inherit the kingdom of God. Likewise, in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 drunkards are listed as unrighteous and among those who will not go to heaven. Even in the law, it is recognized that the drunkard should not be included with the sober (Deuteronomy 29:19).

Yet, despite such clear declarations in Scripture, there are still those who teach to the contrary. Like Jack Hayford, who says,

*I'll tell you something, there's never been a person who was addicted to smoking, **addicted to liquor**, never been a person who was addicted to immorality, never been a person who was on the brink of suicide, there's never been a person who named the name of Jesus Christ, and His life and in fact entered them, that no matter how encrusted or encased they were with their sin, there's never existed the person to whatever degree, small or great, that bondage has been in their life, that there still was not enough power of Jesus in them to minister to somebody else. Oh, listen! Greater is He that is in you than everything else that's around. Hallelujah. (tape # 02439B, "The Sin Of Suicide," bold added)*

Contrary to Hayford's statement, Jesus is not in drunkards. Those who are "addicted to liquor" are still lost in their sin (John 8:34) and are without God (Ephesians 2:12). Hayford turns the grace of God into lewdness (Jude 4), and proclaims the exact opposite of the Word (John 8:31-36).

In Rick Rogers article mentioned above, Roger claims,

Alcohol is responsible for approx. 66% of all fatal accidents; 70% of all murders; 50% of all rapes; 60% of child abuse and child molestation cases; and commits more people to the mental hospital than any other cause!

Actually, it is people who lack self-control and are wicked who are responsible for 100% of all these things. The misuse of alcohol is only part of their evil, and the subsequent damage and crimes are simply resultant of their rebellious hearts and evil ways (Proverbs 17:11).

VI. Giving Strong Drink

One astounding passage that not only runs against the grain of some of the error we've seen so far (e.g. Terry Watkins), but pushes right off the edge the promotion of sobriety for the wicked (that is, for those who refuse to repent, Psalm 7:11-12).

Give strong drink to him who is perishing, and wine to those who are bitter of heart. Let him drink and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more. (Proverbs 31:6-7)

Scripture actually instructs us to give strong drink to the wicked (him who is perishing). Why? So he can "**drink and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more.**" In other words, so he can get drunk and forget all his troubles!

Here is a practical application of Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 15:32.

If the dead do not rise, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!"

The wicked, who refuse to heed the gospel of God, live in this very lie. They live as if, and believe in their hearts (Psalm 14:1), that "the dead do not rise." Therefore, they do not consider their latter end (Deuteronomy 32:29). And, what is so amazing about all of this is, the Lord does not tell us to attempt to clean up these sinners, even though they heed not the Word. Instead, He tells us to give them booze, so that their days can be spent with less personal turmoil; because "**wine makes merry**" (Ecclesiastes 10:19).

Proverbs 31:6-7 throws out any idea of a "Christian" rehabilitation center. If a drunkard took heed to the gospel, he would be set free (John 8:34-36) and would no longer be a drunkard. He would need no rehab to get him off of the abuse of alcohol. The Savior would give him all he needs (2 Peter 1:3). This is the power of godliness (2 Timothy 3:5)!