

For some time now studies have espoused the theory that alcohol is good for the heart, but more recent studies have indicated that even moderate drinking, like a glass of wine a day, can do serious damage. A recent study now indicates that no amount of alcohol is safe. The Global Burden of Diseases did a long term study through nearly 200 countries over a period of twenty five years that analyzed the effects of alcohol on health. The study indicated that alcohol was the main factor that led to disease, played a role in 10 percent of deaths between the ages of 15 to 49, was the primary cause of cancer for those above 50, and was directly or indirectly responsible for millions of deaths yearly.

What is even more tragic is that this drug has become a favorite vice of many who call themselves Christians, and a great hindrance to Christian growth. There is a story in the Bible where the children of Israel lose a battle and Joshua begins to pray, asking God why they lost. God responds, "Israel has sinned," adding, "There is an accursed thing in your midst, O Israel; you cannot stand before your enemies until you take away the accursed thing from among you" (Josh. 7:11, 13). The same warning might be said today. I know we are all sinners and I am not claiming to be better than anyone, but there is an accursed thing among the people of God that we must address.

Alcohol has not only has it been embraced by many Christians, but some even claim it is condoned by Scripture, but those who study the Bible with an earnest desire to know the truth will find that the Bible in no way condones the use of alcohol, but considers it a sin. This was once taught among Christian churches, but has been lost sight of in more recent years. For those who really desire to follow God in this area, it is difficult to deny. Jesus said, "If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine," but for those who do His will, "God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie" (John 7:17; 2 Thes. 2:11).

I can understand how, by surface reading, some may get the impression that the Bible

condones the use of alcohol, but a deeper study of the word will clarify the issue. You see, when the Bible speaks of wine, it does not distinguish between fermented and unfermented wine. In the Bible, the word wine sometimes refers to unfermented grape juice, while other times, it refers to the fermented drink, which we commonly call 'wine.' That's because wine was simply juice that fermented. In essence, it was initially the same drink, so they used the same word for it. That explains why the Bible sometimes refers to wine as good (Isa. 55:1), while other times it refers to wine as bad (Prov. 23:31, 32).

Since there was no refrigeration, preservation was difficult, so juice got old and fermented quickly, so the situation today is not the same as it was back then. Without the preservation abilities that we have today, it was impossible to see the moment and degree to which wine began to ferment. Since there was initially no clear distinction between unfermented and fermented juice, God did not strictly tell His people to avoid grape juice, but simply cautioned not to be "given to much wine," or juice (Titus 2:3, 1 Tim. 3:8). That is, while they were permitted to drink grape juice cautiously, they were to avoid drinking too much for fear of getting fermented juice and getting drunk.

Of course, some sins "God overlooked" due to certain circumstances. We know this by the example of David and his many wives. While it was a sin to have multiple wives, God overlooked David's sin because he was confused by the cultural norms of society around him. His sin was a sin of ignorance. Similarly, many are confused about the issue of alcohol. They have been lied to and told that it is okay in moderation. Certainly, "these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent" (Acts. 17:30). According to the Bible, alcohol use is a sin, and it is time for Christians to stand against this evil that has become such a terrible curse to society and to God's church.

Paul plainly tells Christians, "Do not be drunk with wine" (Eph. 5:18), adding that those

who practice "drunkenness... will not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal. 5:21). However, Jesus warned that because His return would seem to delay, many Christians would start "to eat and drink with the drunkards" (Matt. 24:49). Clearly, the act of getting drunk is condemned throughout the Bible. While many Christians claim drinking a little is okay, and reason that they drink for health, that sham has been exposed. Studies show that even moderate alcohol use is more damaging than healthful. Of course, the reason most drink is not really for health, but for the feeling of getting a buzz, or drunk, which the Bible condemns.

Today we have become masters of making sin sound cute. We have 'safe sex.' We tell 'little lies.' And we don't get drunk. Instead, we get a 'buzz,' and 'drink responsibly.' Still, no matter how we try to hide it in language, the Bible condemns alcohol. This is because even small amounts of alcohol lower a person's inhibitions, causing them to do things they would not do while sober, making it easier to slip into sin. Think of it from God's perspective. God hates sin. Sin is killing us. If alcohol makes sin easier, and also kills so many people, which we all know it does, could God in any way condone the use of alcohol. Common sense alone tells us that He could not.

Still, for those willing to do the research, the Bible makes it more than clear that Christians are to stay away from alcohol. The Bible even warns against offering alcohol to others and cautions hanging out with someone who drinks a lot (See Hab. 2:15; 1 Cor. 5:11). In spite of this, many Christians continue to justify alcohol use on the basis of one of the greatest lies that has entered the Christian church. Today many claim that alcohol must be okay, since "Jesus turned water into alcohol." As a result, some churches even use this deadly drug in communion services, all based on this lie. The truth is, Jesus did not turn water into alcohol, but into juice. This becomes clear to any who are willing to honestly study the issue.

Again, when the Bible refers to wine it does not distinguish between alcohol and grape juice, so we must look at the context. In the context, we

see Jesus turning water into six large jugs of wine “containing twenty or thirty gallons apiece” (John 2:6). If more than ten percent of people who take a drink of alcohol become alcoholics, would Jesus willfully put that kind of temptation before people? James 1:13 says, “God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.” Habakkuk 2:15 even warns, “Woe to him who gives drink to his neighbor, pressing him to your bottle, even to make him drunk,” but according to many Christians, that’s exactly what Jesus did.

For Jesus to turn water into alcohol, He would have to go against His own word. In fact, Jesus said that some would be led to commit sinful offenses, but “woe to him through whom they do come! It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea” (Luke 17:1, 2). While some justify getting drunk with the claim that Jesus turned water into alcohol, those who have come to this conclusion are guilty of surface reading, often to justify their own habit, without really studying the text. The Bible repeatedly warns against getting drunk, and yet many use the miracle of Jesus to justify their sin. Those who sincerely search will find that Jesus did not turn water into booze, but juice.

Paul makes it very clear that “drunkards...will not inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor. 6:10). Getting drunk is sin, and those who are honest will admit that the reason they drink is to get a little drunk. I know from personal experience that it is very difficult to stop drinking, but like any hard thing, it is worth the fight. Christians, it is time to stand up. God is looking for a people who are ready for His return, but we must put our profession into action and start living out our faith. God is calling us to repent and return to Him today.

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