**Alcohol, “Social Drinking,” and the Christian (2)**

*What does the Bible say about alcohol? Is “social drinking” – drinking in moderation – authorized for Christians?*

**Introduction**

1. The first lesson in this series of three dealt with a few things concerning alcohol, and social drinking:
   1. **Alcohol is not harmless in any way.**
      1. ***“whoever is led astray by it is not wise” (Proverbs 20:1).***
      2. ***“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” (Proverbs 23:31-32).***
      3. It is a drug (**cf. Galatians 5:20** – **sorcery** – *pharmakeia* – the use or the administering of drugs. Strong); it is a poison (toxic poisonous – intoxicated – poisoned).
   2. **“Wine” in the Bible is not always fermented:**
      1. *Yayin, tirosh, shekar (Hebrew), oinos (Greek) – all generic.*
      2. The scriptures refer to “wine” in both positive and negative ways. (There is an obvious distinction between the two – fermented or unfermented.)
   3. **There were ways to prevent fermentation in antiquity. *“Wine”* does not necessitate fermentation.**
   4. **Lastly, we must through wisdom, discernment, and spiritual thinking understand the obvious prohibition of alcohol consumption in scripture.**
2. Still, there are those who believe and teach that moderate drinking of alcohol, or “social drinking” is acceptable before God.
3. Abusing Scripture
4. Exegesis VS Eisegesis
   1. When studying scripture, there are two approaches taken in study to determine the meaning of any given passage – exegesis or eisegesis – only one is the correct approach.
      1. **Exegesis** – an explanation or critical interpretation of a text. (Webster’s)
         1. **Ex** – out of.
         2. **Hegeisthai** – to guide, lead.
         3. **To lead out** – interpret a passage by leading out by context the original thought of the writer. (What is God conveying to us?)
      2. **Eisegesis** – the interpretation of a text (as of the Bible) by reading into it one's own ideas. (Webster’s)
         1. **Eis** – in, into.
         2. **Hegeisthai** – to guide, lead.
         3. **To lead, or guide in** – the reading of one’s own ideas into scripture.
   2. **Cause for exegesis** – ***“Therefore, do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is” (Ephesians 5:17).***
   3. **Cause for eisegesis** (adapted – D. R. Dungan, *Hermeneutics*, pg. 42-45):
      1. **Sectarianism** – party spirit – defend and justify the party of which you are a part. (Denominationalism)
      2. **Moral or practical atheism** – feeling of indifference toward God’s word. It is His word, therefore His will, but He will accept us either way. (There is a God, but it makes no difference whether we do His will – practical atheism.)
      3. **A wish to do as we please** – In what way can I interpret this passage that will justify my actions?
5. Abusing Scripture
   1. **Matthew 4:5-7** – Devil abused scripture to tempt Jesus to test (tempt) the Father’s trust.
      1. The scripture was meant to give confidence and comfort.
      2. **The devil used it to suggest that Jesus should test God’s faithfulness.**
   2. **2 Peter 3:15-16** – Some take Paul’s writings, as well as others, and twist them to their own destruction.
      1. This is often because of a wish to do as they please.
      2. **Untaught and unstable** – ignorance of the truth, thus an instability in approaching scripture.
      3. **When there is a conflict with inner desires this leads to *“twist[ing] to their own destruction”* the scripture they read.**
6. *Some use eisegesis in their study to justify “social drinking,” or drinking in moderation instead of recognizing the obvious condemnation of alcoholic beverage in the entirety of scripture. 🡪*
7. Arguments from Scripture
8. Wedding Feast in Cana – **John 2:1-11**
   1. ***Argument:*** *Jesus made wine at the wedding, and thus, sanctioned “social,” or moderate consumption of alcoholic beverage.*
   2. Assumptions made:
      1. The ***“wine”*** which was first offered, as well as that which Jesus made from water was fermented. (Alcoholic)
      2. The description of the wine which the ***“master of the feast”*** gave ***(“good wine”)*** described its potency (alcoholic content).
      3. ***“Well drunk”*** in verse 10 considers drunkenness/intoxication.
   3. Purpose of the miracle – **(v. 11)** – Manifesting His glory, namely, the glory of God.
      1. ***“glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:6).***
      2. ***“the brightness of [God’s] glory and the express image of His person” (Hebrews 1:3).***
      3. ***“these [miracles] are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God” (John 20:31).***
   4. ***“Wine” (vv. 3, 9, 10)*** – *oinos* – either fermented or unfermented. (Generic term – context determines)
   5. ***“Good wine” (v. 10):***
      1. What led to the master’s description, ***“good wine?”*** – **(v. 9)** – HE TASTED, THEN ANNOUNCED.
         1. ***“tasted”*** – *geuomai*; to taste; by implication, to eat; figuratively, to experience (good or ill). (To try the flavor.) (Strong)
      2. ***“Good”*** answers to the taste, not the potency.
         1. **NOTE: toxic effects could not have been immediately observed.**
         2. Taste, however, could have been observed immediately, and was.
      3. **Consensus of antiquity** – the best wine was unfermented. (*As noted in Part 1, wine could be preserved unfermented.*)
         1. Pliny – “wines are most beneficial when all their potency has been removed by the strainer.” (Pliny, *Natural History* 23, 24, trans. W. H. S. Jones, *The Loeb Classical Library* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1961))
         2. Plutarch – “[wine is] much more pleasant to drink [when it] neither inflames the brain nor infests the mind or passions.” (Plutarch, *Symposiac* 8, 7.)
   6. ***“Well drunk” (v. 10)*** – Means they were drunk/intoxicated?
      1. ***“well drunk”*** – *methuo* – to drink to intoxication, i.e. get drunk. (Strong)
      2. However, the word has a generic sense of being replete, satiated, or saturated.
         1. ***Methuo*** – to be moistened; to be drenched with liquid. (If intoxicating liquid, then drunken/intoxicated. CONTEXT DETERMINES)
         2. LXX usage – ***Psalm 23:5 (“My cup runs over”); Song of Solomon 5:1 (“drink deeply”; “drink abundantly”); Jeremiah 31:14 (“I will satiate the soul of the priests with abundance”)***
         3. Thus, to satiate, fill, drink to fullness.
   7. **NOTE: IT WAS A MIRACLE!**
      1. Water made wine 🡪 instantly consumed.
      2. Fermentation – a natural process which takes place over an expanse of time.
      3. **No time for the wine to ferment**. (Jesus skipped the natural process – MIRACLE)
      4. **Thus, either unfermented wine, or Jesus consciously made fermented wine. 🡪**
   8. **Implications of Jesus making fermented wine:**
      1. Jesus contributed to drunkenness! (*Supplied 120 gallons at least, and 180 gallons at most of even STRONGER ALCOHOLIC WINE?* ***(v. 6)***)
      2. After men were drunk with a weaker wine, Jesus gave them an even MORE POTENT WINE!
      3. Jesus tended bar!
      4. **WOULD THIS MANIFEST JESUS’ GLORY? NO!**
         1. He would have led others to sin.
         2. Thus, he would have sinned Himself – ***“For He made Him who KNEW NO SIN to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Corinthians 5:21 – Not a sufficient sacrifice if Jesus “knew sin.”).***
9. New Wine and New Wineskins – **Luke 5:37-39**
   1. ***Argument:*** *Jesus commended alcoholic/intoxicating/fermented wine with His allusions to wine in this passage.*
   2. **Claim:**
      1. ***“new wine”*** – wine recently pressed, but already in the process of fermentation.
      2. ***“old wineskins”*** – too brittle to hold the ***“new wine”*** which is fermenting.
         1. **Fermentation** – produces carbonic acid gas which would expand.
         2. ***“old wineskins”* therefore would burst, but *“new wineskins”* would be more pliable, and would withhold the expansion.**
   3. **Contradiction:**
      1. ***“new wine,”*** if in the process of fermentation, and not completely fermented, **COULD NOT BE HELD BY NEW WINESKINS EITHER** 🡪
      2. Elihu said, ***“Indeed my belly is like wine that has no vent; it is ready to burst like NEW WINESKINS” (Job 32:19).***
      3. *No wineskin could withstand the expansion with the fermentation process producing carbonic acid gas.*
      4. **IF COMPLETELY FERMENTED – Either wineskin would do – old or new.**
   4. **Jesus is saying:**
      1. **Goal?** – PRESERVATION **(v. 38**) – Not only of the wineskin, but of the WINE.
         1. Remember, the consensus of the time was that unfermented wine was the best.
         2. **They wanted, and were able, to keep the wine fresh.**
      2. ***“new wine”*** – recently pressed, but not in the process of fermentation. (oinos – generic term)
      3. ***“old wineskins”*** – would have remains of old (fermented wine) in the bottle.
         1. This would affect the ***“new wine,”*** causing fermentation.
         2. **The carbonic acid gas from fermentation would burst the wineskin.**
      4. ***“new wineskins”*** – Used instead of ***“old”*** because they have no traces of ***“old wine”*** – Therefore, could preserve the ***“new wine”*** fresh and unfermented **(v. 38).** (*Using methods of preservation discussed in Part 1*)
   5. **What about verse 39?**
      1. **Is Jesus saying the *“old wine”* – fermented wine – is *“best,”* thus, authorizing drinking alcohol?**
      2. Who is ***“he”?*** – The one who has drunk the ***“old wine.”***
         1. He has gained a liking for the alcoholic wine, and does not want ***“new,”*** or UNFERMEENTED WINE.
         2. **THE DRUNK SAYS, *“The old is better.”***
         3. **Take alcoholic wine from a drunk, and give him Welches grape juice – HE WON’T LIKE IT.**
   6. **What is Jesus TEACHING?**
      1. **Context** – Pharisees and others, as usual, trying to test Jesus, and the reject Him and His teaching.
      2. **(v. 36)** – Jesus is not a patch for the Old Law.
         1. ***“No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away from the garment, and the tear is made worse” (Matthew 9:16).***
         2. Jesus came to fulfill the Old Law, and nail it to the cross, establishing a NEW LAW.
      3. **(v. 37-38)** – Jesus’ teachings, and as such the New Law, was not to be implemented in the Jewish system. (*It was meant to replace it.)*
      4. **(v. 39)** – The Pharisees did not want the New – Jesus and His teaching – they held on to the Old. (The Old was obviously NOT better.)
10. Jesus – A Winebibber? – **Luke 7:31-35**
    1. ***Argument:*** *Jesus drank wine, and when accused of being a* ***“winebibber”*** *did not deny it. Thus, Jesus sanctioned moderate drinking with His own practice.*
    2. ***Oinos*** – (Generic) wine, either fermented or unfermented.
       1. There is no denial that Jesus drank wine.
       2. **However, it is illogical, and inconsistent with scripture to suggest He ever imbibed alcohol.**
    3. **From whom is the accusation coming?**
       1. **(v. 29-30)** – a contrast between those who accept John and his teaching, and Jesus and His teaching, and those who reject both.
       2. **Pharisees and lawyers!** What other accusations did they bring against Jesus that were true?
          1. ***“Then the Jews answered and said to Him, ‘Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?’” (John 8:48).***
          2. *Accused of blasphemy and crucified.*
    4. **Jesus’ point:**
       1. **(v. 32)** – These men are like bratty children, who can’t be satisfied.
       2. **(v. 33)** – They didn’t accept John, and brought an ABSURD accusation against him.
          1. John was required by God to take the Nazarite vow – ***“He will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink” (Luke 1:15).***
          2. John would live a secluded life, his preaching being in the wilderness – ***“The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make His paths straight’” (Luke 3:4).***
          3. ***SO HE HAS A DEMON?! – They just didn’t like his message.***
       3. **(v. 34)** – They didn’t accept Jesus, and brought an ABSURED accusation against him.
          1. Jesus ***“has come eating and drinking”*** – this was true. He had not taken the Nazarite vow.
          2. Jesus ate with ***“tax collectors and sinners,”*** but called them to repentance – *His ministry was more public than John’s*.
          3. ***SO HE IS A GLUTTON AND A WINEBIBBER?! – They didn’t like His message either.***
       4. *Jesus is showing how ABSURD their accusations are!* ***It does not matter who did the preaching, or what kind of life they lived – the Pharisees would reject them!***
    5. **(v. 35)** – The lives of John and Jesus reflect heavenly wisdom, thus justify wisdom by their works – **In other words, the accusations are unsupported!**
    6. **(v. 34)** – Their accusation of Jesus as a ***“winebibber”*** paired with what they think is wrong in association with tax collectors and sinners shows that such would be wrong anyway!
11. Not given to MUCH wine – **1 Timothy 3:3, 8**
    1. ***Argument:*** *Elders are told to be* ***“not given to wine,”*** *but deacons are told to be* ***“not given to MUCH wine.”*** *Therefore, those who aren’t elders can have SOME wine.*
    2. **Condemnation of EXCESS does not necessarily imply the sanctioning of MODERATION:**
       1. ***“Therefore lay aside all filthiness and OVERFLOW OF WICKEDNESS” (James 1:21)*** – Is wickedness in moderation sanctioned?
       2. *If this is the only argument it is insufficient and illogical, thus, ineffective.*
    3. **Elders as examples (a large part of the reason for the qualifications):**
       1. ***“nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock” (1 Perter 5:3).***
       2. ***“Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow” (Hebrews 13:7).***
       3. **Claim:** Elders are NOT to be given to ANY wine, but it is okay for deacons to be given to SOME wine? – **Contradicts scripture, and one of the reasons for elders, and the members’ responsibility in submitting in part by following their example.**
    4. **Immediate context – 1 Timothy 3:**
       1. **(v. 2)** – temperate (positive qualification) – *nēphalios*; (from *nēphō*; to abstain from wine); sober.
       2. **(v. 3)** – ***“not given to wine”*** (negative qualification) – *me paroinon*:
          1. ***Me*** – not.
          2. ***Paroinon*** – from *para* (near; beside; in the vicinity of; at proximity with) and *oinos* (wine). (ADDICTED TO WINE)
          3. ***Me paroinon*** – not near, beside, in the vicinity of, or at proximity with wine. (NOT JUST DON’T DRINK, BUT DON’T BE NEAR) (NOT BE ADDICTED TO WINE – ***“not addicted to wine” NASB***)
       3. **Would it make sense then to allow deacons to be moderate drinkers of alcohol? Elders can’t even be NEAR WINE but deacons can DRINK WINE?**
       4. **Are there double standards with God?**
    5. ***“not given to much wine”***
       1. *Me oino pollo prosechontas:*
          1. ***Me*** – not
          2. ***Oino*** – wine
          3. ***Pollo*** – much
          4. ***Prosechontas*** – to hold the mind towards, i.e., pay attention to; TO BRING TO, TO BRING NEAR (***cf. paroinon***)(BE ADDICTED TO)
             1. ***Same idea as paroinon (v*. 3)** – not near, beside, in the vicinity of, or at proximity with wine. (NOT ADDICTED TO WINE – one word)
             2. ***Prosechontas (general)*** – added ***“much wine”*** to show what the mind is not to be held toward, or paid attention to. (NOT ADDICTED TO, and added ***“much wine”*** – three words ***“prosechontas pollo oino”***) ***(“not addicted to much wine” – NASB***)
             3. ***NOTE***: Why ***“much?”*** – **Addiction includes *“much.”*** *(If we aren’t to be addicted to something, does it logically follow that we can have A LITTLE, OR MODERATE AMOUNT?)*
       2. **Not a qualification that sanctions, but forbids. (Condemnation of excess does not sanction moderation.) (SILENCE DOES NOT AUTHORIZE)**
       3. **Another possibility as to the qualification given by Paul:**
          1. ***Oinos*** – generic, can mean, and often does mean unfermented grape juice.
          2. “Drinking parties were prevalent in those days and people went out of their way to win prizes for their excessive drinking. They’d drink wine whose strength was broken so they could drink gallons without becoming intoxicated.” (McGuiggan, *The Bible, The Saint, and The Liquor Industry* 142).
          3. **Protection against, and prohibition of a present cultural vice.**
    6. **This passage cannot be used to sanction moderate, or “social drinking.”**
12. Use a little wine – **1 Timothy 5:23**
    1. ***Argument:*** *Paul told Timothy to use a* ***“little wine,”*** *so that sanctions moderate, or “social drinking” which includes* ***“little wine.”***
    2. ***Oinos*** – generic; does not necessitate fermented wine.
       1. ***“No longer drink only water”*** – Timothy was an **ABSTAINER TO BEGIN WITH.**
          1. **It took a command from an inspired apostle to get him to even consider drinking wine.**
          2. *However, this does not necessarily mean fermented wine.*
       2. **Possible (Nazarite) vow taken** – could not drink grape juice period. (Much less alcoholic grape juice.)
          1. **Drinking only water** – no nutritional value.
          2. **Grape juice** – vitamins and nutrition.
          3. **NOTE: consensus was that unfermented grape juice was the best** ***– Pliny*** – “wines are most beneficial when all their potency has been removed by the strainer.” (Pliny, *Natural History* 23, 24, trans. W. H. S. Jones, *The Loeb Classical Library* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1961))
    3. **Why *“use a* *little wine”* Paul?:**
       1. **(v. 21-22)** – Spiritual state – ***“keep yourself pure”***
       2. **(v. 23)** – Physical state – Paul was concerned for Timothy’s SPIRITUAL health, **but also his PHYSICAL HEALTH**.
          1. ***“for your stomach’s sake”***
          2. ***“and your frequent infirmities”***
          3. **If alcoholic, this is not authority for moderate, or “social drinking,” but for medicinal use!**
             1. Not drink wine, ***but “use” wine*** – ***chraomai*** – to use, or to take. (**MORE LIKE A DOCTOR’S PRESCRIPTION THAN ANYTHING)** Also note how this was usually done 🡪
             2. “The Apostle’s use of the dative case [oino-wine], rendered in English by the adverb ‘with’ indicates that ‘a little stomach wine’ should, as a medicament, be mixed, or ‘mingled’ as in other parts it is translated, with the water, as the syrup anciently prepared from grapes, and other fruits was done for use as a tonic to the stomach in cases of dyspepsia.” (Ferrar Fenton, *The Bible and Wine* (London, 1911), p. 93)
             3. **It was diluted with water** – sometimes ONE PART WINE mixed with TWO, THREE, FIVE, or MORE PARTS WATER.

**Conclusion**

1. The Bible must be approached with a desire to discover the truth.
2. **If the Bible is approached correctly – in honest desire for the truth – there can be found no authority for moderate, or “social drinking.”**
3. The use of these passages to sanction “social drinking” FAILS MISERABLY!
4. **The Bible does not authorize drinking alcohol on any level – the next (3rd) and final lesson in this series will consider this further.**