***The Doctrine of Leaven  
RO179-01***

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We are studying Romans 14:13-23. Our subject is "Christian Consideration," and this is segment number six.

**"Agape" Love**

God the Holy Spirit, in Romans 14, reveals to all church-age believers that it is the will of God the Father that the personal freedom given at salvation through God the Son is not to be used to cause spiritual injury to another Christian. You're free to do many things in Christ, but you are not free to do those things under conditions that cause injury to others spiritually. Christians are not to use their freedom, therefore, without considering the adverse effect that their conduct may have on other believers in some particular situation. Instead of being impatient with the legalisms and the unbiblical ideas of other believers, we are to be patient with them, and to protect their spiritual well-being. The genuine motivation in all of this, the apostle Paul points out, is "agape" love, which does no harm.

The Christian does not honor and please God through any kind of acts of eating and drinking. Paul says, "He honors and pleases God through acts of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit." God accepts the service of such believers. And Paul says that people in general will approve your conduct.

The guiding motivation in all that we do as Christians is to create peace and to edify others spiritually. The spiritually mature Christian is not to encourage the immature believer to violate his conscience on any issue. Even though some hang-ups that that weaker brother may have, have no biblical justification, it would be a sin for him to ignore his conscience, Paul points out.

**Eating Meats**

Paul uses the example here in Romans 14 of eating meats which have been classified under the Mosaic Law as unclean, and which would offend a Jewish Christian, or eating meat which had been offered previously to an idol which would offend a gentile Christian, who has just come out of paganism. So, Paul says, "Don't eat that kind of food if it will cause an offense. Do it privately where it will not cause an offense to someone else, and injure them spiritually.

**Drinking Wine**

This has brought us to another point that Paul has stressed, and that is that not only will he not eat certain foods that offend, and cause spiritual disruption, he also says that: "He will not drink wine." So, we come to a consideration of the Bible doctrine of wine. We have pointed out to you that the Hebrew and the Greek words for wine are generic in meaning. Therefore, they refer to both alcoholic and nonalcoholic grape juice. Unlike the English word for "wine," which only means alcoholic beverage, the Greek and Hebrew words are used for both unfermented grape juice and for fermented grape juice. Thus, Scripture refers to wine as both a blessing from God to man, and also as the cause of God's wrath on man. Wine is used in the Bible as a symbol of eternal happiness in heaven, and as the symbol of eternal suffering in hell. The Bible presents wine as a food to be enjoyed, and as a poison to be avoided. And as we matched these verses for you, one against another, it soon became evident that the writers of Scripture cannot possibly be talking about the same juice. They cannot have these diametrically opposite effects, and be talking about the same thing.

So, it became evident immediately that there is, in the Bible, two different kinds of wines, but they only use one English word for both kinds. Such diametrically opposite statements indicate that there is both alcoholic and nonalcoholic wine. Good wine is nonalcoholic and it brings comfort. It brings joy. It brings strength. It is just plain grape juice. Bad wine is alcoholic, fermented grape juice. It brings intoxication. It brings violence, and it brings suffering. There is no indication in Scripture that Jesus ever drank alcoholic wine. That's an unfounded assumption. And I think that if you have been with us, and you have followed carefully through the line of thinking and the Scriptures that we've been laying out for you, that now you see that there's no way that you could possibly say from the Word of God that Jesus ever partook of alcoholic wine.

**Nonalcoholic Grape Juice**

We pointed out to you that the people of the ancient world drank nonalcoholic grape juice as their standard beverage with meals. That was their iced tea and their coffee. The people of the ancient world drank nonalcoholic grape juice regularly, in the various activities of life. Part of this avoided contaminated water, which was not an uncommon problem in the ancient world. The workers in the field could quench their first with unfermented grape juice, and have no problem of becoming incapacitated for their work. It was the source of a great deal of refreshment in the hot climate where grapes are grown.

The people of the ancient world, furthermore, we pointed out to, you, preserved grape juice in unfermented form for use for over a period of the year. They knew how to do that. They did it by boiling the fresh grape juice to reduce it to a syrup which contained too much sugar for fermentation. They did it by filtration to remove the gluten, which was the leaven that causes fermentation. They did it by permitting the gluten to settle to the bottom of a container of grape juice, and then skimming off the top juice. They did it by fumigation of the liquid with sulfur, which prevents fermentation. So, they had many methods, and they had methods by which they preserved it new skins, where there was no old leaven contamination hanging on from previous alcoholic wine – skins which had been covered with pitch on the inside and the outside, and made airtight. And having been processed, it would be preserved as pure grape juice for as long as a year.

The Bible explicitly, clearly forbids intoxication. It is a sin with horrendous consequences. But at the same time, we must be fair, and say that the Bible does not tell a believer that he cannot use alcoholic beverages.

The production of alcohol from God's creation does not, of course, justify its casual use any more than any other drug that you may receive from God's creation. Just because, in the process of what God created, it is possible to produce morphine, or that it is possible to produce cocaine, does not justify the use of those substances in the casual way. There is a use for those in a legitimate way, as there indeed is for alcohol. But there are some people that will really tell you that if God did not want us to drink alcoholic beverages, he wouldn't have permitted it in His creation. And you see the utter nonsense of that line of reasoning.

The point is that, in view of the great hazard of alcoholic addiction, resulting in physical, mental, emotional, and social destruction, it is really wise to avoid the use of alcohol entirely.

There is furthermore, no call anywhere in the Bible for moderation in the use of alcoholic wine. There is no encouragement, as a matter of fact, for using alcoholic beverages at all. The Bible never calls upon you to use alcohol moderately. That's a fallacy. And I hope, as you follow Scripture, you are becoming aware that you never read that in the Bible. That's an invention that Christians who want to drink have imposed upon Scripture. And clearly, the Bible never says, "Booze it up."

The ancient cultures, I pointed out, we find from the writings of ancient writers, actually viewed the use of alcohol by women as a serious problem. And they forbad it \ under great penalties. It was especially forbidden for use by pregnant women.

Perhaps you heard the report this past week on television (a shocking report released) on the effects on babies with mothers who drank alcoholic beverages during pregnancies. In the United States today, we now have, because mothers used alcohol so widely in this country during pregnancies – one out of every 750 babies is born mentally retarded or deformed, directly attributable to the alcohol that the mother drank. And we're not talking about alcohol in large quantities. We're talking about just a small amount, perhaps on a daily basis – that, at one time, the medical profession itself used to recommend that mothers do. Now they recoil with horror from their previous advice on this recent study, and what they have discovered.

A man this week was discussing with me the things that we're studying here presently in the book Romans about the use of alcoholic beverages. He said, "Well, you could teach me a great deal about what the Bible says about the use of alcohol, and about the meaning of the words, and the background of the times. But I know from experience about this. I know all about this from experience." And he said, "I know the devastation (the horror) of what has happened."

Another person is distressed over the fact that a prom in a public high school of some significance in the area has had a pre-prom gathering where the students were able to imbibe alcoholic beverages. And this mother said, "I didn't believe it was happening, and when I walked in, and there I saw high school students already drunk before the main prom had begun, I wondered, 'What on earth are we doing today?'"

Alcohol is a drug. It is a vicious and a devastating thing. And young people think that it's cool and hip, and that's the way to go to be participants in the use of alcoholic beverages. Now if you are nipping away at home; if you have your little bar; and, if you have your little bottle in the refrigerator of your wine that you're keeping cool, don't be surprised that when your kids become teenagers, they think that that is the way to go. You have already taught them and shown them that. And here I am listening to parents now who are in desperation because they are seeing their teenage kids moving in that direction. They thought that because they came from a Christian home, and they were Christian kids, they would not go to the activities of the prom and participate in this. But sure enough, they did. Now you have to have your head examined a little bit to let your high school graduating senior go to a prom to begin with. People who have a godly insight has some rational brain still left to understand that that's not a place that you want to have your teenager celebrate his accomplishment of completing his high school education.

**Jesus Turned Water into Wine**

Well, this brings us now, on this background, to some of the question that naturally arise in our minds. One of the first is: what kind of warning that Jesus create on the occasion of His first miracle at the wedding in Cana of Galilee. That's recorded for us in John 2:1-11. We are told that, on this occasion, the feast was rolling along, and suddenly the maître d' discovered that there was not enough wine. It was all gone, and the feast was still rolling. The mother of Jesus called this to the attention of Jesus, and Jesus indicated that this was not His primary mission or concern or calling in life. But His mother told the servants, "Whatever He tells you, you do." And indeed, Jesus told them to gather up six water pots, which totaled about 120 gallons. He told them to fill each pot to the brim with water, and then he said, "Now take it to the host (the master of the feast), and let him distribute it." And as they poured it out, lo and behold, they found that this water had become wine.

The people at the banquet (at the marriage feast) said, "This is terrific juice." And the people wondered why the host was bringing the better wine near the end, instead of starting off with that after people had been somewhat satiated. But this was a miracle that Jesus had performed. It was the common beverage of the day to have wine at such festive occasions. It was not alcoholic wine that they drank. It was unfermented grape juice, because it was their common beverage.

So, we may assume, obviously, that there is no indication otherwise here in this text that what they had on the table was plain grape juice, as would normally be done. The claim that the beverage was alcoholic is a pure assumption, and it is imposed upon the text of the Scriptures. It would have been indeed very odd, wouldn't it, for Jesus to make 120 gallons of alcoholic wine for the guests to get drunk on, which in itself is a sin, and which Jesus Christ Himself was responsible for the record of Scripture that declares that alcoholic beverages are a poison? And here, wouldn't it have been odd for Jesus to make 120 gallons of poison.

What Jesus did was simply miraculously sped up the process which he originally created in nature for producing grape juice. In nature, the water is taken from the ground through the roots of the grapevine, and then it's transformed into juice in the individual grapes. The juice is unfermented, since alcohol is not found naturally in nature. Alcohol is not a normal product of living things. It requires special treatment by man, and it requires special ratio combinations to produce alcoholic grape juice. It doesn't just happen in nature. Grapes will rot on the vine, but they will not produce alcohol on the vine. It is not a normal product of God's creation. The destructive forces of decomposition and fermentation are necessary to produce alcohol to break the sugar down into alcohol.

So, Jesus produced rapidly what nature produces over a long period of time. And what he produced was just like what nature produces – unfermented juice in each grape. The wine that Jesus made did that taste superior. It was better quality than what had previously been served. It didn't mean that it was higher proof alcohol. And when you read this Scripture, that's what most people do. They say, "Hey, this wine has a bigger kick to it. Why didn't your bounce with this at the beginning? So, that after we were a little crocked, we would not know that you were serving us the worst stuff?" You see, that's all humanistic thinking imposed upon the Scripture. And you don't get that out of the Bible. When you put it against the background that we've given you the previous three weeks here, you will clearly see that what you would normally find was the normal drink that was on the table, unfermented grape juice, and Jesus gave them a new supply, and He gave them the best of the evening. What he created was delicious. It was sweet, which is what people of the ancient world loved, and people today love – the sweetness that was smooth to the taste.

People have a natural taste for what is sweet. They do not have a natural taste for the harsh taste of alcohol. You have to develop a taste for alcohol. You have to develop the stomach for the odor of beer. You do not naturally find that attractive. That is something that is not in our physiological makeup. It's something that you have to deliberately develop.

So, to suggest that Jesus Christ gave the example of drinking alcoholic wine, and then personally supplied it to others is to cast doubt on both His love and His good judgment. He knew better. Who knew better than He how poisonous alcohol really is to a human being, and the potential great disasters? Do not be intimidated when somebody comes at you, as they have at me, and says, "Oh, yes, that was alcoholic wine at the feast. And great theologians have said that – that that's what Jesus created. And I don't care what you say. It was alcoholic wine. Who are you?" Well, I'm nobody. I'm so humble that you can't find anybody as humble as I am. And I take a great deal of esteem for my humbleness.

Some years ago, my humility was demonstrated, and obvious to everyone, such that our executive board gave me a medal for humility. They presented a humility medal. The next Sunday morning, I wore it in church, and they took it back away from me. But people will try to intimidate you and say, "Who are you? Great Dr. Old Has Been Mossback, a great theologian, has long since taught that that wine at Cana was alcoholic." But I think you can see that you don't get that from Scripture.

However, you have sat in churches, as I have, where the Lord's Supper is observed, as we are going to observe it tonight. Now some of us, as churches, are doing the right thing, and some of us are doing the wrong thing, because some of us will use alcoholic wine at the Lord's Supper, and some of us will not use alcoholic wine. They're not both right. One is right, and one is wrong. And again, we must go back and say, "Now, what is a fitting symbol of the sinless blood of Christ? What would we normally have expected to be on the table there at the Passover meal?" And you do understand that the lamb was part of the Passover meal. That was part of the celebration. The wine was not part of the celebration in Egypt. The wine was just the iced tea that was on the table that night. And it was used by Jesus to make a point.

**The Bread**

So, in Matthew 26:26-27, we have the Lord's Supper laid out for us. First of all, Jesus deals with the bread.

**Leaven**

As a little background, so that again you will understand what Scripture is talking about as you read it, I want to call to your attention that the Bible speaks of leaven. We call it east today. The Bible speaks of leaven or yeast as a symbol of evil. It is never a symbol of the gospel. Some Bible teachers will tell you that leaven . . . And I was taught this at Baylor University in the Bible department, because they didn't like it when I pointed out in class one time that there is no inconsistency anywhere in Scripture when it refers to leaven. It is always consistently applied as a symbol of what is evil – of sin. And the professor argued in great extent that this represented the gospel.

And now, after World War II was over, they said that we are going to enter the kind of an era of peace that this world has never known. The millennium is at hand, and the gospel is now going to permeate like leaven does through a loaf of bread, and it's going to go everywhere. Well, I'm sure he's long dead and gone to heaven, and learned better, but unfortunately, like everybody who goes to heaven and learns better, they don't have a communication line back to us to say, "I played the fool. I did it wrong, and I don't want you to make the same mistake." That's what the rich man, in the historical record of Lazarus and the rich man, would liked to have done.

Well, leaven, in the Bible, you will find, is treated as a symbol of evil. It was an ingredient which produced fermentation in a substance (dough or fruit juice), and "fermentation" means "decomposition." When you drink something that is alcoholic, you must understand that it is something which has decomposed. And fermentation is brought about by the action of the leaven. In the Bible, leaven, as a fermenting process, was viewed as evil. Let's turn to a few Scriptures.

Please turn to Leviticus 2:11. We do not want to impose on Scripture what we think something means, but what the Bible says that it means. Leviticus 2:11: "No meal offering, which you shall bring unto the Lord, shall be made with leaven." It was strictly forbidden to have leaven in any meal offering.

In Matthew 16:6, there must have been a reason why God would not permit that to be part of the offerings of the Old Testament system. Matthew 16:6: "Then Jesus said unto them, 'Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.'" Now here you have an indication of something that is wrong. What the Pharisees and the Sadducees had was not something good. They were characterized by a variety of evils.

Mark 8:15: "And He charged them, saying, 'Take heed. Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.'" So, now you have three groups: the leaven of the Pharisees; the leaven of the Sadducees; and, the leaven of the Herodians.

Luke 12:1: "In the meantime, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trod one upon another, He began to say unto His disciples, 'First of all, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees which is hypocrisy.'" Here, Jesus identifies the leaven of the Pharisees as being the evil of hypocrisy.

1 Corinthians 5:6-9: "Your glorying was not good. Don't you know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump> Purge out, therefore, the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, as you are unleavened; for even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us. Therefore, let us keep the feast (that is, the feast of our salvation, celebrating our eternal life), not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity in truth." So, here, leaven is associated with malice and wickedness (evils), and the lack of leaven is associated with sincerity and truth. Levin is a symbol of something bad, not something good.

We have one more. In Galatians 5:9, that same principle is reiterated by Paul: "A little leaven leavens the whole lump." And there, Paul is saying that all you have to do is have one rotten apple in the barrel, and it's going to contaminate all the other apples in that barrel.

**The Feast of Unleavened Bread**

The Mosaic Law forbad leaven in the bread which was used in the Passover meal. The reason for this was that this bread, in God's eyes, symbolized the sinless body of Jesus Christ, which was to be sacrificed for the sins of the world. Therefore, that bread, which was used at the Passover, could not have any leaven that would have signifies evil. After the Passover meal, you remember there was a feast of seven days called the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This symbolizes personal fellowship with God of the believer through Jesus Christ. The believer was now a redeemed person. And in Exodus 12:8 and Exodus 12:15-20, you read about the feast of Unleavened Bread. And there you'll see that the directions were very explicit. You must clear out, through your house, all pieces of leavened bread.

The serious Jew, to this day, when he comes to observing the Passover meal, which they did last week (last Monday) – when they observed the Passover meal, they go through their houses very carefully, and look in every nook and cranny, so that there is not one piece of bread with yeast in it anywhere in that house. Especially if they have small children, they're very concerned that that little kid may have had a piece of bread, and he dropped it in a closet someplace, And they flush out that house so that when they sit down to that Passover meal, there is not one bit of leaven anywhere in that building. That's how serious they are about the symbol that was originally given them under the Mosaic Law that leaven represents evil. And it is unbecoming the Messiah Savior that God was to send to have Him represented by leaven.

There is, however, an exception made in one ceremony in the Old Testament system. You'll find it in Leviticus 23, where leaven is included. In Leviticus 23:17, we have two loaves of bread which are used in the ceremony of the firstfruits offering – the celebration of the firstfruits of the harvest. Leviticus 23:17: "You shall bring out of your habitations two wave loads of two tenth parts. They shall be of fine flower. They shall be baked with leaven. They are the firstfruits unto the Lord." These two loaves represented the church on earth and God's people Israel. These two loaves were presented as the total body of believers that God was dealing with: Israel in the Old Testament; and, the church in the New Testament. Why do you think that God said, "On this occasion, into these two loaves, which represent these two groups of believers, you will put leaven? Because both these groups still had the sin nature in them. The believers had the old sin nature in them, and, therefore, within the church, there is evil. Within Israel, there is evil, until both are brought into the very presence of God. The sin nature remains, so this symbol of evil was included in this bread.

Leaven was also included in some cakes which were offered with the thank offering in the Old Testament. You'll find this in Leviticus 7:13. In these cakes, the leaven was specifically to be included as a sign that the person who was making the offering still had a sin nature, but he was at peace with God. And that was the beauty in the process of making this peace offering, declaring, "I am right and at peace with the holy righteous God. Yet, I bring you something representing me that has evil in it. I'm at peace with you, but my sin nature has not yet been removed. The Old Testament sacrificial system was very clear in that.

**The Sacrifice of Thanksgiving**

Notice Leviticus 7:12: "If he offer it for a thanksgiving, then he shall offer with the sacrifice of thanksgiving unleavened cakes, mixed with oil, and unleavened wafers anointed with oil, and cakes mixed with oil and fine flour fried." When the offering was made to commemorate the peace of God, which the believer now had with this holy God, then he used unleavened bread. The peace with God was based upon the unleavened, perfect, sinless sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

However, then in verse 13, when he was commemorating his relationship with God in peace: "Beside the cakes, he shall offer for his offering leavened bread with the sacrifice of thanksgiving of his peace offering." He, at the same time, offered bread that had leaven in it to represent that he was a sinner, yet at peace with God – a sinless God. Leaven was excluded from offerings generally that were placed on the altar (Exodus 34:25).

You remember Matthew 13:33. There we have the story of the woman who put leaven in three measures of meal, and how the whole thing permeated. It is interesting that this, which is a symbol of evil, is put into this measure of meal – and it is done by a woman. This had a religious significance. It was doctrinal evil being instilled into mankind. And it is interesting to look back and to realize how many cults are the result of women who began with some false doctrine. Ellen White; Mary Baker Eddy; and, a whole slug of them came up with a false doctrine, and then began a system of religion. This was the case with Agnes Ozman, with the charismatic movement on New Year's Day, 1900, when she began blabbering in uncontrollable gibberish, and the charismatics proclaim that they were again speaking in tongues, as in the New Testament. A woman started that. So, here you have this very interesting comparison in Matthew 13:33 of leaven contaminating the meal.

True doctrine was the meal. It was corrupted by false teachings. You may on your own read many Scriptures which associate false teachings as a permeating lesson (1 Timothy 4:1-3, 2 Timothy 2:17-18, 2 Timothy 4:3-4, and 2 Peter 2:1-3). I think that these will establish for you the concept of false doctrine being viewed as leaven, a contaminating element. The woman here was responsible for putting this into the meal.

**The Leaven of the Pharisees**

1 Corinthians 5:8, as we have seen, defines level as malice and wickedness. The lack of it is sincerity and truth. The false doctrine of the Pharisees was externalism in religion (Matthew 23:14-16 and verses 23-28). You can read that on your own.

**The Leaven of the Sadducees**

What was the leaven of the Sadducees? Their leaven was skepticism about supernatural things. The existence of the supernatural was doubted by the Sadducees, and it included their resistance in Scriptures. You have this in Matthew 22:23-29. That identifies the legend of the Sadducees.

**The Leaven of the Herodians**

The leaven of the audience was worldliness. You find that in Matthew 22:16-21 and in Mark 3:6.

So, each of these groups is described as being contaminated, and we are to be aware of their leaven, and what their leaven is, is always bad. So, leaven in the Bible is always a symbol of evil.

Now with that background, let's get back to the wine. Alcoholic wine is a product of leaven. You cannot have alcoholic wine without the presence of leaven. Leaven is what makes the shiver go to alcohol. The natural gluten in grape juice acts as the leavening agent which causes the fermentation into alcohol. Alcoholic wine, with its leaven, thus, would indeed be an improper symbol for them to have on the table at the Passover meal, just as much as it would have been improper to have bread with leaven commemorating the Passover meal. Leaven is evil. And Exodus 34:25 specifically forbad the presence of leaven with the blood of the animal sacrifice. I want you to notice that. Exodus 34 said that when you sacrificed the animal, you are not to have leaven with his blood. And I want you to compare that now with that which is symbolic of the blood of Christ at the Lord's Supper. Exodus 34:25: "You shall not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leaven; neither shall the sacrifice of the feast of the Passover be left unto the morning." You eat it that night: But with the blood of this Passover sacrifice, representing Christ, you do not put leaven with it.

Now that causes a problem for me, to think that Jesus picked up a cup at the Lord's Supper (it was the wine that they'd been using at the Passover meal) and hold it up, and say, "This represents My blood, My sinless blood, given for you (the next morning, the next day, on the cross) shed for your sins to pay for your debt," and there it was associated with leaven." Under the Old Testament system, God was very careful to say, "When you pour the blood of the Passover lamb out, have no leaven associated with the blood – not just not in the bread, but don't have it associated with anything that you do to prepare this animal for eating."

Alcoholic wine, with its leaven, would not normally have been the beverage on the table at the Passover to begin with. That forbade the presence of leaven in that whole ceremony. The wine used by Jesus, when instituting the Lord's Supper, was the wine that was on the table at the time, and therefore, was the nonalcoholic grape juice which was there.

Deuteronomy 32:14 has an interesting expression. It refers to grape juice as the blood of the grapes. In Deuteronomy 32:14, grape juice is called the blood of the grape. So, you see why there was a fitting connection in the mind of the Lord with the grape juice as a symbol of His blood.

The Lord Jesus gave thanks for the contents of the cup. You have this in Matthew 26:26: "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and broke it, gave it to His disciples, and said, 'Take. Eat. This represents My Body.'" The bread was unleavened. Therefore, it fittingly represented the sinless body of Christ: "And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them saying, 'Drink all of it, for this is My Blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.'" This juice represents the blood which is to be shed to pay for your sins. It is sinless blood. The Jews could not have had the symbol of evil of leaven in it, which made it alcoholic, which it would have had if it were alcoholic, and be a symbol of the sinless blood of Jesus Christ.

I think that this is rather interesting. Do you notice that Jesus called it "the cup?" He didn't say, "This wine." He did say, "This bread," but He did not say, "This wine." It is almost as if He were trying to use different words to convey a point to us that the Greek word "oinos" does not do, since it's a generic word, and we don't know whether it's alcoholic or nonalcoholic in any particular place. Here, He says, "This cup," almost as if trying to tell us that this is unleavened grape juice: "It is the special kind that we use at this feast."

He gave thanks for this true symbol of His sinless blood to be shed the next day for the sin of mankind. He called it in, Matthew 26:29, "The fruit of the vine." Jesus said, "I'll not drink, henceforth (in this way with you – in this commemorative way) until you and I are celebrating the marriage feast of the Lamb with the church in the Millennial Kingdom." And when we're celebrating that feast, which is what we're going to do all through the millennium, we're going to stand, and we're going to raise our glasses, and we're going to commemorate the Lamb and His bride, the church: "Then I will be drinking this with you again."

However, notice what He calls it. He doesn't even call it "wine." Again He says, "The fruit of the vine." And the fruit of the vine, when it comes initially, is totally unfermented nonalcoholic.

The Lord's Supper wine is thus joined to the bread as symbols of the supreme blessing to man of God's love. It is not the gift of a sinful Christ, but of a sinless Christ, and, thus, no leaven.

Paul also follows this almost attempt at distinguishing what kind of wine was used. 1 Corinthians 10:16: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the Blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the Body of Christ? Paul says, "The Lord's Supper is cup of blessing. If it were filled with the symbol of evil (of leaven), it would hardly be described as the cup of blessing. And if the bread were full of leaven, it could hardly be called the communion of the Body of Christ. This juice is indeed a fellowship of the blood of Christ, because it has no alcohol. And the bread is indeed a fellowship that we have with the Body of Christ, because it does not contain any leaven in it. Only nonalcoholic grape juice, therefore, can be a true symbol of the sinless blood of Jesus Christ shed in death for the sin of mankind. It is quite improper to use alcoholic wine at the Lord's Supper meeting.

Suppose that you can't get grape juice. What do you do? The little church I grew up in in Chicago, during World War II, found that it became increasingly hard to buy grape juice. And one time, they just could not get grape juice. But the government always saw to it that there was plenty of alcoholic juice around. So, they decided they would have to use regular alcoholic wine for the Lord's Supper. But they didn't tell the people. You could imagine what an experience that was when they all drank. There was gagging and gasping and coughing all over that auditorium, because these people were not used to that, and they were totally unprepared for it. What they should have done was just said, "We will delay the Lord's Supper until we have the proper elements that properly symbolize what we're doing. We don't come in here with a piece of leavened drink, and say, 'This is the blood of Christ.'" Both the bread and the wine of the Passover had to be free of leaven to symbolize the sinless Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, the Messiah.

The use of leaven in the Passover was a serious crime. You should be aware of that. If somebody was so careless, and why the Jews are so careful about flushing the leavened bread out of their houses even today, Exodus 12:15 told them: "If you come to this feast, and you have leaven, then you're going to be cut off from all the covenant promises of blessings to Abraham, which was a terrible thing for a Jew to experience. Exodus 12:15: "Seven days shall you eat unleavened bread." This is the Feast of Unleavened Bread following the Passover meal: "Even the first day you should put away leaven out of your houses. For whosoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel." For that seven-day period, no leavened bread was to go past their lips. If they did, they lost all covered blessings promised to the Jewish people.

As a matter of fact, I've heard that some Jews today, in order to preserve the symbol of the removal of leaven, which they don't fully understand why they're doing it – but to preserve leaven from the grapes, the father sits there at the Passover meal, and he squeezes the juice out of the grapes right there. And, obviously, what is he doing? He is making sure, as the family has cleaned out all leavened bread, and they're using unleavened bread on the matzo on the table, he's squeezing the juice out of the grapes so that he is ensuring that they have absolutely non-leavened juice. There's no decomposition associated with the blood of Jesus Christ after His death. That's why this is so important. There was no decomposition of the Body or the Blood of Jesus Christ.

In Psalm 16:10, predicted centuries before, we have this statement. Here the Messiah is speaking: "For you will not leave My soul in Sheol (New Testament Hades). Neither will you permit your holy one want to see corruption:" "You will not leave My soul in Sheol, because You're going to resurrect Me, and put My soul back into My body. But furthermore, You will not permit Me, your Sinless Son, to have one ounce of decomposition in My body or My blood."

In Acts 2:31, the fulfillment of that prediction is recorded: "He, seeing this before (referring to David), spoke of the resurrection of Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, neither His flesh did see corruption." King David, in contrast to Jesus, did die. And King David suffered decomposition.

In Acts 13:35-37, that is described for you: "But David's greater son, Jesus, suffered no physical decomposition." It is leaven which causes the chemical change that brings about the breakdown, and that signifies evil. I don't think it's realistic to think that Jesus Christ would have used fermented wine, with its leaven, to symbolize His sinless Blood, which was to be shed on the cross when He instituted the Lord's Supper.

He will drink this again, and when He told the disciples that He will drink it again, I want you to notice another significant description that He made in predicting that millennial sharing of this observance. In Matthew 26:29, Jesus said, "But I say unto you, I will not drink, henceforth, of this 'fruit of the vine.'" He not only used that particular expression instead of the word "wine:" "Until that day when I drink it *new*, with you in My Father's kingdom. And you know that the Hebrew word "tirosh" means "unfermented wine." And "oinos," in the Greek, means "unfermented wine." And the translators, in trying to distinguish that, used the word "new wine." "New wine" is "unfermented wine." So, Jesus is not likely promising to share a little nip in the kingdom with His disciples when He gets to the millennium.

For some, the use of alcoholic wine at the Lord's Supper would, of course, in itself, be a temptation. It's extremely dangerous. It is illogical to think that Jesus would promote the use of intoxicating wine, with all of its attendant human miseries, and its great potential hazards, and say, "This is a symbol of My atonement for the sins of the world." The use of alcoholic wine in the Lord's Supper is an insult to the sinlessness of the Lord Jesus Christ, from which all spiritual Christians must recoil in horror. When you understand the doctrine of leaven, and when you understand the principle behind the use of that as a symbol of evil, and then you come to the realization of how alcoholic wine is produced (through a leavening process), then you understand that indeed the wine that was used at the Passover had to be as free of leavening agent (that symbol of evil) as did the bread. And that, when Jesus held it up and said, "This cup represents My Blood," it was a cup that was free of leaven, representing a sinless sinless Blood.

Now for some weak Christians, Paul has been pointing out, there is a qualm about using alcohol. And these Christians have some good reason to have qualms about seeing other Christians using alcoholic beverages. For example, Proverbs 2:1 says, "Wine is a mocker. Strong drink is raging. And whosoever is deceived thereby body is not wise." Alcoholic wine will do you in.

Proverbs 23:20-21 say, "Be not among winebibbers; among gluttonous eaters of flesh. For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty, and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags." There is good reason to be offended. Strong Christians who choose to use alcoholic beverages are an offense to weaker Christians. This will place a strain on your spiritual camaraderie if you choose to go ahead and do it. And in a weaker Christian, who may look up to you as a role model, he will be terribly disappointed. It is a very serious matter for you to offer a non-drinking Christian an alcoholic beverage. And I have been in positions with Christians where they have done just that. They didn't have the slightest, foggiest notion as to whether I had a propensity toward alcohol or not, or whether I could be hung into an alcoholic syndrome by just that first little drink. And when you sit around your house, or you're at some social event, you better think twice before you are ready to offer an alcoholic beverage to any other human being. That person may be influenced, if he's a believer, to violate his conscience, just to accept your hospitality, and just to be sociable. It is hard for a weaker Christian not to be intimidated by the strong, bold, confident drinking Christian. You have to be sensitive and considerate not to be pushy, and not to open doors that you may look back and regret that you did that.

I told you about the incident of my pulling duty as officer of the day for the security of the base on New Year's Eve because the colonel thought that I was the only one he could trust to be sober. Another part that's interesting with that particular man is that sometime previous to that, we had a private who had gotten fed up with how slow Chinese trains were. And they were notorious for going a little bit, and stopping; and, going a little bit, and stopping. It would take you forever. And he was on a detail transporting Japanese prisoners, and they were going, and stopping, and he wanted to get back. So, he solved the problem. He went up to the engine; pointed his rifle at the engineer; and, said, "You go chop chop, no stop, until we get there." And the engineer did. He pulled and blew the whistle, and they went, and they got there. The Chinese did not take that kindly. They reported in, and the Marine was pulled in; put under arrest; and, put in the brig. The colonel assigned me the job of going there in my jeep with my driver to bring him back. And it was a distance of maybe 30 miles or more. It was the dead of winter. It was an open jeep, and it was bitterly cold that day.

When I got back with him, and put him in the brig, and signed him off my hands, I went to supper. And as I ate, I was so chilled, I could not keep my hands from shaking. The colonel sitting across said, "John, just come by my quarters. I have some good bourbon, and I'll give you a shot, and it'll warm you up. So, I thanked him, and told him that I didn't think it was necessary, and that I'd warm up soon. At that point, he reacted indignantly, and told me, "There's absolutely nothing wrong with taking a little drink once in a while. I don't understand your attitude." And what he was doing was rebuking me because I had a preference to avoid the use of alcohol. I found it interesting later that when you wanted somebody could trust to be sober, he came back to the guy who wouldn't accept his nip.

So, you have to be a little gutsy because the world makes fun of you, and the weak Christian can be so intimidated by the sophisticated, stronger Christian, who's in the habit of passing around the cocktails. But your causing the violation of his conscience will create a great deal of guilt for him, and it takes him out of temporal fellowship. Your liberty places his spiritual enlightenment at hazard, and in jeopardy of his eternal rewards, because you pulled him out of temporal fellowship. You may even lead that Christian to develop a taste for alcohol that then rages out of control. Wouldn't you be glad to look back on that and realize that you are the one that told this Christian, "Oh, go ahead? It's all right. Christians can drink. The Bible doesn't tell us we can't drink." Wouldn't you feel great to know that you were the one that led him into that alcoholic condition? What a chance we take with the lives and the well-being of other people when we entice them to join us in what we consider our privilege and our freedom to use alcoholic beverages.

The considerate course of action for the strong Christian is to avoid the use of alcohol for the well-being of those who esteem him; for the well-being of your children; for the well-being of your family; and, for the well-being of your friends. Every one of you sitting here right now can look around this auditorium, and you know very well that there is somebody here that you would be very uncomfortable to see sitting at a bar, sipping a cocktail; or, out at a party, popping a beer can. There is somebody here that's close to you, or that has some significance to, such that you must admit to yourself, "I'd be very uneasy to see that person as a participant in alcoholic beverages.

Well, there are several more things that need to be said on this subject, because we have not touched upon some verses, including the advice of the apostle Paul to his young associate, Timothy, to start using alcoholic wine. And we shall look at that next time.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1988

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