***Be not Drunk with Wine  
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We continue today in Romans 14:13-23. Our topic is "Christian Consideration," and this is segment number seven.

**Alcoholic and Nonalcoholic Wine**

We have learned in our study thus far that the Hebrew and Greek words for "wine" used in the Bible are generic in nature. So, they refer actually to both alcoholic and nonalcoholic grape juice. Alcoholic wine is portrayed in the Scriptures as a poison which causes great human misery, and is used, in fact, to symbolize God's wrath and the eternal punishment upon unbelievers in the lake of fire. Nonalcoholic wine is portrayed in Scripture as a nutritious food, which brings great joy, and symbolizes God's grace and eternal blessing in heaven. Alcoholic wine is bad wine, causing intoxication, violence, physical injury, ungodliness, and suffering. Nonalcoholic wine is good wine, bringing refreshment without ill effects to body or soul. Nonalcoholic grape juice was the normal beverage which was drunk with meals in the ancient world, and it was used at all levels of society. It was a refreshing, thirst-quenching drink used throughout the day without causing intoxication. It, in fact, helped alleviate the unsanitary water sources that were often the case in the ancient world.

**Wine Skins**

Grape juice was also, as we have shown you, preserved in the ancient world for up to a year by boiling, filtration, sedimentation, or fumigation. The unfermented grape juice, however, could not be stored in the goatskin containers which had previously had in them fermented wine juice. The gluten of the fermented wine impregnated the old wine skin, and therefore, when the new, unfermented grape juice was put in it, it would cause that juice, under proper conditions, to ferment. The fermentation process then produce carbon dioxide gas, along with converting the sugar into alcohol, that built up pressure in the old wine skin, and in time, because the old skin had lost its elasticity, would actually burst the skin, and the juice would be lost, as well as the container.

So, the new wine had to be stored in new wine skins which were uncontaminated by leaven, in order to preserve both the new wine and the wine skin. If fermented wine were put into old wine skin, the skins would not break, because the fermented wine would not create the gas that causes the breaking of the container.

This is the background. I tell you this so that you appreciate a little more the illustration that Jesus used in Matthew 9:17. Jesus said, "Neither do men put new wine into old wine skins, else the wine skins break, and the wine runs out, and the wine skins perish. But they put new wine into new wine skins, and both are preserved." The very illustration that Jesus uses here testifies to the fact that he referred here to unfermented wine. The illustration also indicates that wine was both fermented and unfermented, like when we speak of apple juice cider today. What Jesus was saying was that if you put new wine into old wine skins, which are contaminated with the leavening matter (the gluten), you'll create the gas, and it'll break the old skin. But if you put new wine, because it's fermented, into new skins, then no gas is going to be generated, because it will not ferment, and the result will be that both will be preserved. He's talking about unfermented grape juice here, quite clearly. And the point of His illustration, of course, is that you cannot put Old Testament Judaism into New Testament Christianity. New Testament Christianity will not hold Old Testament Judaism. And if you try to mix them, you destroy both of them.

So, the use of alcoholic beverages is a big subject in the Bible. One of the things we have observed is that the use of alcoholic beverages is not forbidden in the Bible as a sin per se. But, at the same time, we must observe that God never encourages the use of alcoholic drinks, nor does he ever advise their use in moderation. So, you have to observe both of those. Yes, the Bible permits you, as a Christian, to use alcoholic drinks. God never advises you to do that. And He gives you plenty of reasons why it's not the smartest thing to do. And He certainly never advises you even to toy with the serpent a little bit. There is no glamor; no merit; and, no compelling social reasons attached to the use of alcoholic beverages anywhere in the Bible.

**Wine in the Bible**

The wine portrayed in the Bible as a gift from God, and as a blessing to man, is always nonalcoholic new wine – new grape juice. Grape juice does not degenerate into alcohol in nature. It requires special treatment on the part of man to produce it. The gluten in the grape juice acts as the leaven. That causes the fermentation into alcohol. It requires the right ratio of sugar, water, and gluten, and at the right temperature before it will decompose into alcohol.

God very clearly condemns drunkenness as a great moral evil which destroys a person. No one who uses alcoholic beverages, of course, ever intends to become an alcoholic. If you watched the television special last week, "My Name Is Bill W," the founder of Alcoholics Anonymous, it was a very sobering and a very sad picture of a man who had great financial abilities, and who moved to the top of the financial world, and who was always attracted, increasingly, beyond his control to alcohol, so that all he was and all that he accomplished came crashing down around his ears, so that all he could do was call himself a drunk. And he found that he couldn't even turn around and go back up the road out of his drunken addiction. He was hooked in it. All he could do was try to avoid taking alcohol, and succumbing to that temptation, and being brought down again. And it's a very sad story of how there are thousands upon thousands of groups in the world today as the result of Bill W. His name was Bill Wilson. They never use the last name – to be anonymous. There are so many people who gather and they sit and look at each other and say, "You're a drunk. And I'm a drunk. And we'll talk about this, and maybe it'll help us not to do this anymore.

So, I assure you that no one who starts using alcoholic beverages, for whatever reason, intends to become an alcoholic. Some people have a genetic predisposition to alcoholism, and they become hooked. Some people simply become addicted to alcohol as a drug, because it eases psychological stress, and then they can't stop using it. Drunkenness in the Bible is associated, in fact, with the vilest of sins, and they are the kinds of things that God says, "Is what condemns the unregenerate into the lake of fire." There is no glory; no glamor; no encouragement; and, no justification for the use of alcoholic beverages in Scripture.

Galatians 5:19 shows where God places drunkenness in terms of His moral evaluations: "Now the works of the flesh of the sin nature are manifest, which are these: adultery; fornication; uncleanness; sensuality; idolatry; sorcery; hatred; strife; jealousy; wrath; factions; sedition; heresies; envyings; murders." And sandwiched right in there: "drunkenness; revelings; and, the like, of which I tell you before, as I've told you in time past, that those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." The unbeliever is characterized by all of these things. This is what characterizes a person who is not born-again. What a tragedy it is to see someone who is born again expressing those same potential vile qualities of the sin nature.

In Revelation 14:9-10, we may add to this: "And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, 'If any man worship the beast and his image (that is, the antichrist), and receives his mark in his forehead or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation. And he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb.'" Here you have the quality of drunkenness associated with the most severe judgment of God. Alcoholic wine here is presented as a symbol of the wrath of God upon a human being.

**Did Jesus Christ Drink Wine?**

So, there's no indication that there is anything attractive or anything of value in the use of alcoholic beverages. Furthermore, there is no indication in the Bible that the Lord Jesus Christ ever consumed alcoholic wine. To claim that He did so is entirely an assumption based on the English meaning of the word "wine." Yes, He drank wine. But He drank unfermented wine – not fermented wine. The warnings of Scripture against alcoholic beverages, and the normal use of fermented grape juice in New Testament times at meals makes it unlikely that Jesus used alcoholic grape juice.

Furthermore, the role model of Jesus Christ to His followers would also, I think, argue against His use of such a hazardous drug as alcohol, because His principle was, "Follow Me. Do like I do." And it is most unlikely that the Lord Jesus Christ would have engaged in the use of alcoholic beverages with all of the threat that that has to a human being.

**Jesus Turned Water into Wine**

The wine that Jesus made at the wedding celebration at Cana of Galilee was no doubt unfermented grape juice. Yes, this is a judgmental call. It doesn't say specifically, but since it uses the word that can be either fermented or unfermented grape juice, and on the background of everything else that we have presented, I think we may logically conclude that what Jesus produced was 120 gallons of nonalcoholic grape juice, to continue the normal drink that was at the meal that night. It is hard for me to believe that Jesus would use His miraculous power to produce such a dangerous substance as alcoholic wine for all those guests.

**Leaven**

In the Bible, we also showed you that leaven, or yeast, is always used as a symbol of evil, and that's an important factor for you to understand. So, at the Passover meal, the Jews were explicitly told that the bread that was used with that meal could not have leaven in it, because that bread ultimately represented the sinless body of Jesus Christ, the final Lamb of God, to be given for the sin of the world. To have leaven in that bread would have suggested that Jesus Christ was sinful. Therefore, the symbol had to be free of any leaven. In like manner, the wine which was on the table, at the Passover meal celebration, represented the sinless blood of Jesus Christ. That, too, would properly have to be free of leaven. Therefore, it could not be alcoholic, because without the leavening process, you can't make alcohol; as without the leavening process, you can't make that dough rise in that loaf of bread you're making.

**The Bread and the Wine at the Passover Meal**

So, the bread and the wine that were on the Passover table normally are the same things that Jesus used in instituting the Lord's Supper for the church age. Both the bread and the wine were free of all leaven. The wine of the Lord's Supper, then, was unfermented grape juice, as was used at the meal. The contents of the cup at the Lord's Supper is called a blessing in the Bible. Can you imagine calling a cup of alcoholic wine a blessing in the Bible, with all that we know about its potential hazards to a human being?

**Other Christians**

The apostle Paul, in our passage here in Romans 14, says that Christians who use alcoholic beverages must not ignore the reservations of conscience of other believers who do not feel free to use alcoholic drinks. The Christian who does use alcohol is not to violate the responsibility toward the brother who is offended by that. He is not to encourage the nondrinker to violate his conscience, and to join him in the use of alcoholic beverages. To do this would potentially open this person up to the enslavement of alcohol. Insisting on using one's freedom to drink alcohol, which indeed you do have, could lead another Christian into his spiritual ruin, and to the eternal loss of rewards for him.

So, the principle of the love of the Holy Spirit will lead the spiritual Christian to avoid the use of alcohol in the presence of those that are offended, or that might be tempted to use it to their destruction.

Now to give you a little more background on the use of alcohol by Christians, so that you may make your decision on the basis of not some legalistic attitude that many Christians have in the past made this decision, but I hope, when we're through, you'll be able to make this decision because you've got some real biblical reasons that you cannot ignore that actually God the Holy Spirit can use in giving you a direction and a position such that you will not be intimidated when people make fun of you, or seek to encourage you to be a participant with them in the use of alcoholic drinks.

I think we can see part of this through some passages of Scripture that give us a picture of what Christians should be like in certain ways – the qualities and the characteristics of a Christian. For example, in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, the apostle Paul says, "Do you not know that they who run in a race, run all? But one receives the prize. So, run that you may obtain." Paul says, "We Christians are in a race for rewards. And everybody who comes across the line is going to be rewarded. And you, therefore, live your life in such a way to obtain these rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ in heaven.

**Temperate**

Now verse 25 says, "And every man that strives for mastery is temperate in all things." Then he goes on to say that they do it just to win a prize that is a corruptible prize – a laurel wreath that dries up. But Paul says, in verse 26, "I don't fight as one who is just beating the air." Verse 27 says, "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection." Paul says, "I control what my body does." For what reason? "Lest that, by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." Paul says, "I'm not about to get up into heaven, and stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ, and find that I'm stripped clean of rewards practically, while others, to whom I have taught this doctrine, and who took it seriously, come through with great armloads of rewards from God the Father for service committed under the empowerment of the Spirit of God."

**Self-Control**

The word I want to direct you to is in verse 25. Paul says that in order to do this, he has to be temperate. And the word “temperate” looks like this in the Greek Bible: "egkrateuomai." This word means "to exercise self-control." And what it implies is that you cannot run down a racetrack drunk. You cannot exercise self-control when you have lost control to alcohol. Self-control means abstaining from anything that brings about self-injury. You can see that the very meaning of this word is telling you that you better think twice before you let yourself become inebriated. If you're going to run the Christian life, and run it as a winner, you cannot do that as a drunk, any more than you can run in a foot race when you're inebriated. You'll weave all over the track.

A second example of this concept of self-control is in Galatians 5:23. Among the qualities that God the Holy Spirit produces in the believer is: "Goodness and self-control." And that's the word we're looking at – self-control. This is a similar to the one we just had again. This time, it's the noun form: "egkrateia." This is self-control in the believer. How do you produce that? You produce self-control when God the Holy Spirit is controlling your life. When the spirit of alcohol is controlling your life, then you've lost self-control, and you are under self-destruction.

In Galatians 5:21, the verse just before this, Paul points out that part of the characteristics of the sin nature is drunkenness. So, the apostle Paul says here again, "What is a characteristic of a Christian? A person who controls his body?"

**Be not Drunk with Wine**

And we get a little more specific in Ephesians 5:18, with which you are well familiar: "And be not drunk with wine, in which is excess, but be filled with the Spirit, and be not drunk with wine." The word "drunk" is "muthusko." "Muthusko" means, in the Greek language, to be under the influence and controlled by alcohol. When he says here, "Do not be drunk with wine," he is talking about wine in the sense of fermented wine. And this, in the Greek language, is in the imperative mood. It is a command. Now we're getting really serious. Almighty God, here again, directly to the Christian says, "Don't you ever, under any condition, be drunk with alcoholic beverages." You as a Christian are strictly prohibited from doing this. And when God gives you the command to do something, it means you can do it. And when He gives you the command not to do something, it means you have the volitional control not to do it.

**Excess**

So, here the Christian is not to come under the control of alcohol. And how is the best way to do? The safe way is to avoid it altogether. Why not have a little binge once in a while? Why not get together with the boys and the girls, and go into a little fun with booze? Because he says, "That is excess." The word "excess" looks like this in the Greek Bible: "asotia." "Asotia" means "dissipation" or "debauchery." A person under the control of alcohol wastes his life. That's the point. A dissipated person is a person that's blowing his life. An "asotia" person is one who is living in debauchery and in self-destruction. He is dissipating himself in the evils of the sin nature, and this is the lifestyle of unbelievers that includes being drunk. It shouldn't be included in the lifestyle of the Christian.

1 Peter 4:3 tells the believers that Peter speaking to, saying to them, "For the time past of our lives may suffice to have wrought the will of the gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, sensuality, lusts, excessive of wine, revelings, carousings, and abominable idolatries." Peter here says, "Our unsaved days were all the time we need to invest in being drunk. We did plenty of it just like the gentiles do. "As Christians, that should now be put forever behind us.

**Be Filled with the Holy Spirit**

"Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess." Truly, what he is talking about is drunkenness. And these unsaved pagans are in the process of doing this. Christians should not. Christians, in contrast, he says, should be something else. They should be "filled with the Spirit." The word "filled" is the Greek word "pleroo," and it is also a command from God. God is telling you, "You better see to it that you are filled with the Spirit." The word "filled" here means to be under control of something. Here it is under the control of the indwelling Holy Spirit that indwells every born-again believer. The command indicates that the Christian can put his life under the control of the Holy Spirit at any time that he so desires. That is done by confessing all known sins; repenting; and, lining your life up with the will of God and the Word of God. The Christian who is under the control of the Holy Spirit is so guided by the Holy Spirit that he does not waste his life.

The contrast here is between the fullness the control of inebriating wine; and, the control or the fullness of the Holy Spirit. The drunk expresses his emotional high with corrupt songs; with carousing; and, with silly talk, all of which honor Satan. But verse 19 says that the Christian, under the control of the Holy Spirit, is also going to have an emotional high. He too, is going to be joyful, and he will speak, it says, "In psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in our hearts to the Lord." Verse 20: "Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting yourselves one to another and to fear of God." Now that's an awful, great contrast to the carousing drunk and the way he expresses his so-called happiness. The soul that is filled with the Holy Spirit does not seek happiness and excitement through alcoholic wine. The Christian who is under the influence of alcohol does not seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit. He is actually insensitive to Him.

So, this is a very critical verse. And God brings alcoholic wine right in here, and says, "Christians, don't be hitting the bottle in order to get relief for whatever you need, or to get the fun that you're looking for, because it's short-lived, and has a dark side, and has a grim penalty. The happiness that you need, God is ready to provide to you through the indwelling Holy Spirit. And you may be filled with the spirit, which does not mean you get more of Him, but it means He gets more of you. You turn over control to Him. When you've done wrong, you change your mind, which is what "repent" means. You admit it to God the Father, and you go on. Your slate is clean.

**This Doesn't Affect your Salvation**

This never affects, of course, your salvation. There are many drunken Christians who go into the Lord's presence.

Many months ago, I got the word of a man that was a man who did a lot of good for God's work. But one thing he couldn't handle was alcoholic beverages. He could not stay away from the wine. He could not stay away from the strong drinks. And I'd meet him on occasions when he was really down and out; help him to straighten up; and help him to get back on a stable basis. And he'd tried to go along, but he could not unhook himself from this evil quality. And then, with all the years of life that he had ahead of him, that he could have really done some good things because of the abilities he had, he and a friend ran smack into a truck one night, and both of them were killed, just permeated with alcohol to every brain cell in every cell in their body. But you know where he went? This man, who was a blessing to God's work in many respects? As a drunk, he went right into the presence of Jesus Christ. But what great personal loss he has entered into that presence with.

Don't take lightly this business of alcoholic beverages just because the Bible says, as a Christian, you are free to use it. We caution you not to injure somebody else in the process. And you run a great hazard of injuring yourself.

**The Lord's Supper**

1 Corinthians 11:20-24 deal with the Lord's Supper. What kind of people should Christians be?

**The City of Corinth**

In the Corinthian church of the ancient world, there was a great deal of sin. The city of Corinth was one of the good times cities of the ancient world. Whatever sin you wanted, you could find on the streets of court. Whatever debauchery; whatever corruption; and, whatever vileness that had ever come into the human mind, there were places where you could find it openly in the city of Corinth.

**Speaking in Tongues**

Many of these people who came into Christianity came in from that kind of a background. And it is interesting that this very carnal church is the very church to whom Paul, in the 14th chapter of this book, has to give explicit directions about speaking in tongues, and about the place of women in the local church organization. The whole thing had gotten out of line. In the Corinthian church, they were standing up in the local congregation, and they were babbling gibberish – not real languages, but gibberish, the way charismatics do today, and the way the pagan priests and priestesses did at the temple worshiping the pagan gods. They also spoke in this kind of gibberish, uncontrollable tongues. And Paul says, "No more of that." And Paul says, "Furthermore, the real thing, when it is done, is to be done under these kinds of controlled conditions, because it is a testimony to unbelievers. There is no point in talking in real languages, the gift of tongues, the gift of languages, in the presence of believers, because it is always, by God's purpose, a proof to an unbeliever that your message is from God. Christians don't need that proof.

So, Paul had to deal with this church in so many ways, and they didn't like Paul. He got very sarcastic with them because they said, "You're just making money. You're just another one of those TV evangelists." And Paul said, "Yes, I came to you. I didn't take any money from you. I supported myself. I worked, and I took care of the people who were on my staff. And I was no burden to you. Well, excuse me!" That was Paul's response. He said, "I'm sorry to have wounded you." Now that's not a very nice way for Paul to talk, but it's right in there. He just got a little fed up with these people who were indebted to him, and they're coming down and accusing him of having gotten rich off of them.

Well, one of the grossest things that they would do took place when they would gather in the evening to commemorate the Lord's Supper meal. And I want to show you the role that alcoholic wine had in that. These people (these Christians) were, out of their pagan days, used to consuming it regularly. 1 Corinthians 11:20: "When you come together, therefore into one place (which would be someplace, either outdoors, or in somebody's home that was large enough to meet in – they didn't have church buildings) – when you come together, therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's Supper." He said, in the Corinthians church, "The way you're doing this, you're not really coming together to celebrate the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper is celebrating your unity as believers in Christ who has died, and made it possible for you to be part of the very person of Christ Himself, and thus part of one another, the body of Christ. And here was the problem:

"For in eating, everyone takes before the other his own supper, and one is hungry, and another is drunk." These believers gathered to commemorate the Lord's Supper. But this memorial ceremony, by their custom, was preceded by an evening supper meal, which they brought from home. Instead of coming and putting it out as a common meal for all believers to partake of, this pre-Lord's Supper meal degenerated into a collection of private parties all over the place. There was a little group here, and a little group here. And the rich folks and the well-to-do people would gather with their friends. And, of course, they had a very luxurious meal that they brought. And along with it, they brought an ample supply of alcoholic wine. Other Christians, who were poor, were left out of these circles, and they gathered with the poor folks with whom they had a compatibility in where they were welcome, and they didn't have too much to bring to the supper meal. So, they were comparatively hungry.

So, here you have this condition. A group of people is gathering to commemorate the Lord's Supper. Before that, they have a meal, and they're broken up into little parties around the place, some of them with barely enough to assuage their hunger, and others eating to the point of gluttony, and drinking alcoholic wine in large quantities. The Lord's Supper, thus, was preceded by a spirit of disunity in the congregation, and worst of all, by some people getting crocked, because by the time they got to the Lord's Supper meal, their eyes were glistening; the speech was slurred; the silliness had taken hold of them; and, they were now going to come in to commemorate Christ's dying, the great Lamb of God, for the sin of the world, for those of us who are one loaf in Christ, the body of Christ. You have to shake your head and say, "They really didn't do that, did they?

That's exactly what they were doing. And they were coming into that commemorative memorial feast now drunk. They expressed a selfish disregard of their hungry brethren, and they indulged their own personal gluttony and drunkenness. And none of that was conducive to commemorating the Lord's Supper and what it meant.

So, Paul is here rebuking these Corinthians Christians for their conduct. And he told them, "Hold your eating and drinking parties at home. Don't come and do that here in the meetings of the congregation."

Verse 22: "What? Have you not houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I praise you not." What they were doing was, in fact, Paul says, despising the body of Christ because these poor Christians were part of that body, and you're treating them in a contemptible way in that you do not invite them to share of your excess in the food. And you are guilty of the sin of creating disunity among brethren, and there's almost no greater sin, I suppose, that a Christian can be guilty of within the local congregation than creating disunity and friction and division within the body of Christ.

The apostle Paul told them that if their selfish, insensitive conduct was their way of demonstrating their freedom under the grace of God, and they thought that they should be praised for enjoying their freedom, Paul says, "You've got nothing to be praised of, and I don't praise you. You're not praiseworthy." The more prosperous Christians were, in fact, acting in the very way that the pagans did when they gathered at their festivals to worship their gods. In 1 Corinthians 10:16, Paul says, "The cup of blessing which we bless (that is, the cup of wine used in the Lord's Supper) – is it not the communion of the body of Christ? Is it not we Christians sharing in the benefits of the blood of Christ shed for us? The bread which we break – is it not the communion of the body of Christ, sharing in the body of Christ which was given in death in payment for our sins?"

The cup represents the believers sharing in the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ – cleansing from his moral guilt. The blessing concept, fittingly represented here, would have to be by nonalcoholic wine. It's inconceivable that Paul says, "This cup a blessing, this wonderful juice, that represents the sinless body of Christ should be represented by alcoholic wine, which has leaven in it."

1 Corinthians 10:20 says, "But I say that the things which the gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons, and not to God, and I would not that you should have fellowship with demons." Here, Paul points out that unbelievers worship their gods. They make sacrifices to their demon gods. And, in fact, they share in the power of the demon gods. Christians worship their God, the true God, and in fact, they share in His power through the indwelling Holy Spirit. But he says, "You Christians are to have no part in any practices associated with demon worship. The benefits of demon worship are fittingly represented by the wine which was used in demon worship. And when they worshiped demons, they always used alcoholic wine.

So, here's the contrast that Paul is bringing before us. Here is the Lord's table on one side. Yes, it has wine on it. It has unfermented grape juice representing the blood of Christ. Here is the demon's table. Yes, it has wine on it. It is alcoholic wine as the fitting symbol of all that Satan stands for. And the apostle Paul is making this contrast so that he can make a point to these people.

Verse 21: "You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot be partakers of the Lord's table and of the table of demons. A Christian cannot partake of both tables. It is a sin to do so. A Christian cannot properly drink the nonalcoholic wine of the Lord's Supper and the alcoholic wine of demon worship. And that's what he was trying to tell these people (these Christians in Corinth). You shouldn't be coming to the Lord's Supper all drunk because of the party you held before, because, in effect, that alcoholic wine is exactly the way the pagans worship their gods and honor their gods. And you're doing the same thing. And as a Christian, you cannot worship demons and God both. The minute you bring in subjection and respect toward demons and their practices, you've taken yourself out of fellowship, and you have no part in the Lord's table.

In Scripture, non-intoxicating wine is a cup of blessing. Intoxicating wine is a cup of cursing. The Christian gives thanks in the Lord's Supper for a cup of blessing, not for a cup of cursing. Therefore, he is thanking God for a cup of unfermented wine, not for a cup of fermented wine.

The use by some Corinthian Christians of alcoholic wine before the Lord's Supper, of course, does not prove that it was used in the Lord's Supper ceremony, because it wasn't. The conduct of the gluttons and the drunks had taken them out of temporal fellowship. So, Paul says, "You've created another problem for you."

Getting back to 1 Corinthians 11:27, he said, "Now you've had this party before the Lord supper. You're as far out of temporal fellowship as anybody can be. You bunch of gluttons, you're coming here drunk. You violated the Word of God. You've been insensitive to the other believers who needed the food. You've indulged yourself, and now you're coming under that condition to the Lord's Supper. And I want to tell you something else: You better think twice before you do that.

1 Corinthians 11:27 says, "Wherefore, whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily (that is, out of temporal fellowship) shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord; that is, holding the body and the blood of Jesus Christ in such contempt that, though you are out of fellowship with that Lord, you will come in to participate in this service."

So, verse 28 says, "Let every Christian person examine himself, and then let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup." What does that mean? It means to confess all known sins as per 1 John 1:9, to secure temple forgiveness, not eternal forgiveness. You've already got that, and you can never lose that, but this is talking about your fellowship in time with God before you come to that table.

Verse 29 says, "For he that eats and drinks unworthily eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." If you come to this table under these conditions, as these people were, then you're asking for divine discipline.

Then verse 30 says here's what God is going to do to you: "For this cause, some of you, because you're coming to this table out of temporal fellowship, as a result of what you did at the pre-Supper meal, some of you are weak physically, and you have emotional disruptions. Secondly, others of you have illnesses. You are sickly. And third, God is imposing upon some of you the sin unto death, and you are put to death by God. Suddenly, you die."

Last week, you were here. You're very young. All of a sudden, we get the word that you've had a terrible accident. Something has struck you, and bingo, you're gone. You're dead. We say, "That can't be. I just talked to him last week. He was just fine yesterday." The sin unto death was imposed. Their sinful conduct could be stopped. Confession of their guilt before the Father could be made. And that should be done before they partook of the Lord's Supper. Paul says, "Otherwise, you are going to have these physical weaknesses. You're going to be sickly. You're going to be shot-through with illnesses because God is disciplining you. And if you won't turn around, He'll finally put you to death and take you home to heaven."

"The Corinthians," Paul says, "should wait for one another to arrive for the supper, and then they all eat together. And if you can't wait," Paul says, "eat something at home before you come." The booze wine is best left at home on the occasion of the Lord's Supper.

God, furthermore, interestingly enough, in the Word of God, specified that certain men that that He was going to use to bring great blessing to people were, all their life, to abstain from alcohol. And I think that's interesting. For example, John the Baptizer was one such man. We have this recorded for us in the very opening of the gospel of Luke, in Luke 1:14-17, where John's parents are being told about this boy who's going to be born, who's going to be the forerunner to announce the coming of Jesus Christ, his cousin: "And you shall have great joy and gladness, and many shall rejoice at his birth (John's birth), for he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink – ever." This man who's going to be the announcer that Israel's Messiah, that we've waited for for centuries, is here. God is ready to establish His millennial kingdom on this earth, and the man who's going to carry that grave responsibility, and be looked at by people like he's crazy, and is going to be checked out in a variety of ways – the one thing he doesn't need is to ever be seen drunk, or to ever be seen in the possibility that his life practices could suggest that someplace along the line, he is mentally disoriented: "He shall not have strong drink."

I want to show you this Greek word: "sikera." This word "sikera" is not translated as "wine," but it means a highly alcoholic drink that causes intense intoxication. It is a highly alcoholic, intoxicating drink, and it was made from a variety of things. Here, it is associated with wine, so, by context, we know that our Greek word "oinos," which could be fermented or unfermented, here means fermented wine. So, John was not ever in his life to have any kind of alcoholic beverages, mild or intensely alcoholic.

Furthermore, that was because he was a Nazirite. And we won't go into this. I'll let you read in Numbers 6:1-8, that got set up a vow that a person could take called the vow of a Nazirite. The word "Nazirite" comes from the Hebrew word "nazar," which means "separated." A person would separate himself to a certain mission; to a certain service to God; or, to a certain devotion. And he would set up for a certain period of time that he would take on himself a Nazirite vow. At that point, he could not use any alcoholic beverages. He could not touch a dead body. He could not cut his hair. His hair was to grow long so that he would become an object of ridicule while he's standing in devotion to God. And these were imposed upon him until the time of his vow was completed. John, all his life, was under the vow of a Nazirite. And therefore, he was to abstain all his life from alcoholic beverages, because God had a great mission for him.

Another example of that was Samson. Samson's parents were told: "This boy will never touch alcoholic drink. He is under a Nazirite separation all his life, because I have a great mission for him to perform." You can read about that in Judges 13:4-7.

Then came along Samuel, one of the all-time great men of the Old Testament used by God. Samuel was declared to his mother Hannah that he would be a Nazirite all his life, under separation to God's service. Therefore, Samuel, in 1 Samuel 1:11, was told that this boy must never use alcoholic beverages.

Now I think it's kind of interesting that these men of God, entrusted with a divine, vital mission, were never to drink alcoholic beverages, but they were to be yielded totally to the power of God the Holy Spirit. And they were. On occasions, they slipped. But basically, their lives were not empowered by alcohol, but by the Spirit of God. And they were voices that people had to contend with. They knew that, through these men, they were listening indeed to the living God.

Now we come to modern times. What kind of people should Christians be? There is an area where we have to zero in on leadership that gets us into the local church, and gets us into government. On one occasion, sometime ago, I was at a party (a celebration). And I sat next to a pastor of a very large church. They were serving wine at this celebration. And as we sat there talking about theological things, he kept nipping at his wine. And it was kind of sad, as the evening went along, that there were the signs: the eyes beginning to glisten; and, trying to stumble over words. And I'm sitting here listening, because I know that two days hence, he was going to stand before his altar, leading a congregation before the living God. That made me uneasy. That upset me. That really distressed me, because I think that that was out of line, and that is questionable. And there is biblical basis for that, as we shall see next time – very big biblical ground for that. The pastor-teacher, in that respect of responsibility and influence, is no different than any one of you. So, don't breathe a sigh of relief and say, "Thank God, I've never been put under the burden of having to stand up in the pulpit. Thank God that I've escaped the burden of the pastor-teacher or the spiritual leader in the church role." If you think that, you're wrong. You have a circle of influence in your generation. The people are to be like the priest. The people are to find example in those who are in the pulpit.

So, what could I say to this man? Well, I didn't say anything. He was not open to it. He was not open to a lot of things. But I really would have liked to have brought some things to his attention, and cautioned him whether he did not think that what he was doing was a problem, because there were people in his congregation all over the room, and they were watching him, and they were certainly following his example, I can assure you. The party really got happy. It was a true happy hour – a degenerate happy hour. And it was so sad that spiritual leadership was right out there in front, leading it.

So, what does the Bible have to say about those of you who stand up before people, and are instructors in the Word of God? It has a lot to say, and you need to be aware of this, and very subject and obedient to that, and we shall look at that next time.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1988

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