



WINE IS A  
**MOCKER**

WHY ALCOHOL & HOLINESS CAN'T WALK HAND IN HAND

JOSHUA P. GIMENEZ

# Wine Is A Mocker

*Why Alcohol and Holiness Can't Walk Hand in Hand*

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All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version (KJV)

## *A Note From The Author*

This booklet was not written out of tradition, personal preference, or pre-determined loyalty. It was born from a deep desire to approach a difficult and often controversial subject with one driving question in mind: *What does the Bible actually say about alcohol?*

In a time when Christian liberty is frequently used as a justification for questionable choices, I believe it's crucial for believers to be both honest and thorough in our examination of Scripture. My prayer is that what you'll find in these pages is not just an argument, but a call — a call to holiness, discernment, and a life that glorifies God in every choice, including what we consume.

I don't claim to have all the answers, but I do know the Bible does. And when we lay aside culture, assumption, and emotion to let God's Word speak clearly, the truth becomes beautifully—and sometimes uncomfortably—clear.

Whether you're convinced, curious, or even critical, I invite you to read with an open Bible, an open mind, and a heart submitted to Christ. May this study help you walk more wisely and reflect the holiness of the One who saved you.

For His Glory,



Joshua P. Gimenez  
PSALM 91

*Joshua P. Gimenez*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>A Note From The Author</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>I: Defining the Terms</b>	<b>8</b>
A: Strong Drink	9
B: Liquor.	11
C: Wine	12
1: Tirosh	14
2: Yayin.	15
Historical Use of Yayin	15
Dilution Was the Norm	16
Why Such Heavy Dilution?	17
How Strong Was Their Yayin?	17
Why Not Just Drink Juice?	18
An Intoxicating Mixture?	18
But Could It Be Abused?	19
<b>II: Biblical Conclusions</b>	<b>21</b>
A: Based On Alcohol Content Alone.	21
B. It's Not Just About Drunkenness.	22
C: What "Drunk" Means In the Bible.	23
D: "Strong Drink" Is Consistently Condemned In Scripture.	27
E: The Holiest Individuals In Scripture Practiced Abstinence	27
F: Consider Stumbling Blocks & Our Call To Holiness.	28
G: Your Testimony Matters!	28
<b>III: The Human &amp; Health Perspective</b>	<b>29</b>
Short Term Effects	29
Long Term Consequences	30
Health Problems	30
<b>IV: Common Questions &amp; Objections</b>	<b>31</b>
<i>A: Didn't Jesus Make Wine At The Wedding?</i>	<i>31</i>
1. Jesus Would Have Violated Proverbs 20:1.	31
2. Jesus Would Have Promoted Drunkenness.	32

3. There's No Biblical Reason to Assume It Was Alcoholic.	32
4. "Oinos" Did Not Automatically Mean Fermented.	33
5. The Wedding Master Was Shocked by the Flavor—Not the Fermentation.	34
6. Historically, the "Best Wine" Was Always Diluted.	34
The Final Answer	34
<i>B: What About "Strong Drink" In Deuteronomy 14?</i>	35
1: Start with Clear Scripture.	35
2: Understand the Context.	35
3: Examine the Phrase.	36
4: Study the Usage in Sacrifice.	36
The Final Answer	37
<i>C: Doesn't The Bible Say To Give Wine To The Sad and Dying?</i>	37
1: Group 1 - "Him That Is Ready to Perish".	38
2: Group 2 - "Those That Be of Heavy Hearts".	39
3: Why This Doesn't Justify Drinking Today.	39
The Final Answer	40
<i>D: Didn't Paul Tell Timothy to Take a Little Wine?</i>	40
The Final Answer	41
<i>E: What About the Word "Juice" In Song Of Solomon 8:2?</i>	41
The Final Answer	43
<i>F: Do The Commands To Priests and Pastors Imply Permission For Others Outside Of Those Positions?</i>	43
1: Faulty Logic: "Because It's Prohibited for Some, It's Permitted for Others"?	44
2: The Call to Holiness - Everywhere.	44
The Final Answer	45
<i>G: "Wine Brings Joy And Gladness!"</i>	45
Why & How Would Juice Bring Joy?	46
Psalm 104:14-15	46
Deuteronomy 7:13	47
Joel 2:23-24	47
Proverbs 3:9-10	47
The Final Answer	47

<i>H: Isn't This Legalism?</i>	48
<i>I: "But I'm Free In Christ! Didn't Paul Say 'All Things' Are Lawful?"</i>	49
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>50</b>
The Real Questions To Ask	52
Let's Be Honest About What We've Seen	52
The Ultimate Question Remains	53
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>54</b>

## *Introduction*

For centuries, Bible-believing Christians have consistently stood against the use of alcohol. They have preached and promoted complete abstinence. They have spoken out, petitioned legislatures, supported prohibition efforts, and held this position faithfully through generations.

Yet, with each new generation, opposing voices have emerged—voices claiming that drinking alcohol is acceptable in moderation. They argue that alcohol itself isn't sinful—only drunkenness is. That the issue isn't drinking, but abusing it.

Tragically, this “moderation mindset” is now championed by many modern, contemporary churches. These same churches often dilute doctrine, allow worldly influence to shape their worship, and mold themselves into “feel-good, welcoming” institutions that reflect culture more than Christ. And this isn't limited to non-denominational movements or Catholic traditions that use wine in mass. Even liberal Southern Baptists—and yes, some of our own Independent Baptist brethren who have turned aside to vain jangling—are now carrying the banner that social drinking has a place in the Christian life.

But let me be clear: I don't care what they say.

Now, to be fair—yes, what they say matters in one sense. Their influence over people is real. Their infiltration into bastions of sound doctrine is dangerous. But when I say “I don't care,” I mean this:

I do not derive my doctrine or my standards from the words of men.

That is not where I find the truth. That is not where I find authority.

I find those things in the Word of God.

In this lesson, I'm not asking you to take their word for the validity of social drinking—or mine for the value of abstinence. My goal is to show you what the Bible actually says about alcohol, and to help you draw clear, biblical, and logical conclusions from that truth.

This is not about opinion.

*This is A Biblical Response to Alcohol.*

## *I: Defining the Terms*

When we come to the subject of alcohol and the Christian, several common questions inevitably arise:

- Didn't Jesus make wine?
- Isn't alcohol spoken of favorably in certain parts of Scripture?
- Isn't the Bible only condemning drunkenness, not drinking itself?
- Where does our church stand on this issue?
- And many more.

These are not hypothetical questions—I've been asked them repeatedly, and more frequently in recent years. As this issue grows in prominence, so must our clarity in addressing it.

But before we begin forming conclusions, we need to start by identifying the key players in this conversation. Who exactly is involved in this debate? What do they believe? And more importantly—what does God say?



## **A: Strong Drink**

The phrase “strong drink” is one of the clearest terms in Scripture when it comes to the subject of alcohol. It comes from the Hebrew word *shekar* (שֵׁכָר, pronounced shay-kawr), and it always refers to the most fermented, intoxicating beverage available in Bible times. It was, without question, the hard liquor of that era.

As the old saying goes, “If you wanted to get drunk fast”, you went for the strong drink.

Even though it was the most potent drink available at the time, it's important to understand that the alcohol content in biblical “strong drink” was far lower than in today's modern beverages. Why? Because the process of distillation—the method by which alcohol is extracted and concentrated—was vastly less advanced than it is now. Consider just how much has changed in only the past two centuries:

### 19th Century Advancements:

- Steam Heating replaced open flames, offering better control and preventing scorching.
- Continuous Column Stills (patented by Aeneas Coffey in the 1830s) allowed for continuous distillation—eliminating the slower, batch-based pot still method.

### 20th Century Innovations:

- Precise Temperature Controls and pressure regulation made distillation more efficient and safer.
- Fractional Distillation separated alcohols more accurately, producing purer, stronger liquors.
- Optimized Fermentation processes, using specialized yeast strains, sped up alcohol production.

### 21st Century Breakthroughs:

- Computerized Automation monitors temperature, pressure, and alcohol content with minimal human error.
- Vacuum Distillation allows high-proof spirits to be produced at lower temperatures, preserving flavor.

- Scale & Speed: While traditional pot stills take hours, modern stills can produce thousands of liters per hour at much higher proof.

Why does all this matter?

Because Christians must recognize that the alcoholic beverages of the Bible are not the same as what is being consumed today. It's not even close. The "strong drink" of the Old Testament era typically ranged between 3% to 10% alcohol content, and even in rare, highly fermented conditions, it would cap out around 12% to 15%. (Why? Because the drink would stop "fermenting" and would start "rotting"!)

Compare that to today's standards:

- Beer: 4%–15%
- Wine: 10%–23%
- Hard Liquor: 35%–50%

Even the strongest drink in Bible times would be considered a low-end beer today—and yet Scripture consistently condemns it. We must understand that when we apply Scripture to modern living, we are not comparing apples to apples. This is an entirely different ballgame. And here's the essential truth to know about "strong drink" in the Bible:

It was always condemned.

*(There is one passage that seems to contain a reference to "strong drink" in a good light. This is simply a misunderstanding of the passage, as will be shown later on in this study.)*

God's Word is consistent in its warning: total abstinence from strong drink was expected, without exception—save for two specific instances that some claim as allowances (which we'll cover next week).

But truthfully, in all my study and conversations, I have yet to hear a single Christian argue that biblical "strong drink" is acceptable for believers today. Not one. Virtually every Bible-believing Christian agrees on this point:

A Christian should have nothing to do with strong drink.

### **B: Liquor.**

The word “liquor” appears only once in the entire Bible—both in Hebrew and in English. The Hebrew word used is *misra*, which refers to a juice or unfermented fruit drink. Now, at first glance, someone might object and say, “Liquor is liquor.” But it’s important to remember this foundational principle (which we’ll explore more in the next section): the King James Bible was translated over 400 years ago, and words change meaning over time.

In 1755, Samuel Johnson compiled his famous English dictionary, giving us insight into how words were commonly understood near the time of the King James translation. According to Johnson, the word liquor meant: *“Anything liquid: it is commonly used of fluids inebriating, or impregnated with something, or made by decoction.”*<sup>1</sup>

This definition reveals something important: liquor in that era was not limited to alcoholic beverages. In fact, it more broadly referred to any liquid substance—especially one infused, steeped, or extracted from something else.

That matches what we know historically about *misra*. Yes, it could refer to freshly squeezed juice. But more often, it described a drink produced by steeping crushed grape skins and seeds in water—a kind of infused or macerated beverage, rather than a fresh-pressed juice like we think of today.

Strong’s Concordance supports this definition:

*“In the sense of loosening; maceration, i.e., steeped juice:—liquor.”*<sup>2</sup>

So while *misra* could be a form of fruit juice, it wasn't made in the same way we produce juice today. In truth, we might not even call it "juice" by today's standards. It was closer to what we might describe as a grape-based tea or infusion.

Now, does this have a major impact on the alcohol debate?

Honestly, no—not really. This word is not often referenced in discussions about social drinking. I found very few commentators who mention it in detail, and virtually no one uses it to support moderate alcohol consumption. Still, it's important to define every term clearly and understand how each was used in its proper context.

Yet, the biggest player in this whole game and the word that brings the most contention to the discussion of if alcohol is permissible in the life of the Christian is the following word:

### **C: Wine**

The word "wine" appears 231 times in 212 verses throughout Scripture. But for many Christians, this one word becomes a source of great confusion.

Why?

Because sometimes wine is spoken of positively, and at other times, very negatively. One moment it's presented as a blessing, the next as a cause of shame and destruction. To the casual reader, it may seem inconsistent or even contradictory.

Let's look at the first four times the word "wine" appears in the Bible:

Genesis 9:21–24 - *"And he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two*

*brethren without. And Shem and Japheth took a garment, and laid it upon both their shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were backward, and they saw not their father's nakedness. And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him."*

Noah drinks wine, becomes drunk, and lies uncovered in his tent. His son Ham sees his nakedness, leading to a family curse.

There's no question—wine is presented here in a very negative light.

Genesis 14:18 - *"And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God."* Melchizedek, priest of the most high God, brings forth bread and wine, and blesses Abram. This use of wine appears to be positive, as part of a sacred offering and fellowship.

Genesis 19:33 - *"And they made their father drink wine that night: and the firstborn went in, and lay with her father; and he perceived not when she lay down, nor when she arose."* Lot's daughters give him wine so that they may lie with him, committing incest. Once again, wine is associated with destructive consequences and moral failure.

Genesis 27:25–28 - *"And he said, Bring it near to me, and I will eat of my son's venison, that my soul may bless thee. And he brought it near to him, and he did eat: and he brought him wine and he drank. And his father Isaac said unto him, Come near now, and kiss me, my son. And he came near, and kissed him: and he smelled the smell of his raiment, and blessed him, and said, See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed: Therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine:"*

Isaac blesses his son and includes wine as part of the abundance and prosperity he prays for. In this context, wine seems to be associated with God's provision and blessing.

You could go on like this throughout the entire Bible—seeing wine spoken of in both good and bad contexts. And yes, it can be confusing at first glance. But here's the key to remember:

*The word "wine" in the Bible does not always refer to an alcoholic beverage.*

This is one of the most critical points in the alcohol discussion. Many Christians and even sincere Bible students stumble over this one issue because they assume the word wine always means fermented, alcoholic wine. But it doesn't. That's why, before we can draw any solid conclusions, we must break the term down and examine it in its biblical and historical context.

While the King James translators used the single word "wine" in English, the Hebrew language actually uses two distinct words that are both translated as wine in our Bible. The first of these is *tirosh*.

### 1: *Tirosh*

This Hebrew word appears 38 times in Scripture and refers specifically to freshly pressed grape juice—what we would call unfermented juice. That naturally raises an important question: "If *tirosh* just means juice, why didn't the KJV translators simply translate it that way?"

The answer is actually quite simple: the word "juice" was not in common usage during the early 1600s when the King James Bible was translated. The translators were aiming to produce a Bible in the common tongue—language the everyday person would understand. And at that time, "juice" was not yet a common word in English speech.

The word juice had only recently entered English from the French word *jus*. It existed, but it wasn't widely embraced or commonly used by the public. Instead, for centuries, the common English term used for both grape juice and fermented wine was the same: wine.

If you research the word juice using resources like the Oxford English Dictionary, or explore Oxford University's Etymology and Language Department, you'll find that: *"For much of history, English speakers used 'wine' to refer to both grape juice and fermented wine. The term*

*'juice' gained prominence in the 1500s–1600s but only became the standard for unfermented fruit liquids by the 19th century, especially as food preservation improved.”<sup>3</sup>*

In fact, Oxford’s research shows that “juice” didn’t truly enter into everyday English vocabulary until around the time of the Revolutionary War—more than 150 years after the King James Bible was translated! So, how can we tell the difference between juice and alcoholic wine in Scripture?

### *Context.*

If we lived in the 1600s and someone said, “My child sure does love his wine,” no one would have imagined they meant alcohol. Everyone understood the reference was to grape juice. But if a man said, “Let’s hit the streets this Friday night and get us some wine,” everyone would recognize he meant the alcoholic kind.

It’s the same word—but context makes the meaning clear.

While *tirosb* is certainly important, it is used only 38 times out of the 231 total uses of the word wine in Scripture. That makes it the less common of the two Hebrew terms. The real debate—and the more frequently used word—centers around the next term.

## 2: Yayin.

At this point, you might be thinking, “I’ve got it now! This is easy—*tirosb* is the Hebrew word for juice, and *yayin* is the Hebrew word for alcoholic wine, right?” Not exactly. While that conclusion might seem logical, a deeper study of the word *yayin*, combined with historical evidence, reveals something quite different.

### Historical Use of Yayin

Historically, *yayin* most often referred to fresh grape juice that had been boiled down into a thick syrup or paste, which was then stored and later reconstituted for drinking. This was done to preserve the juice for long-term use in a time without refrigeration.

Professor Samuel Lee of Cambridge University affirmed this truth, stating that *yayin* (the Hebrew word for wine) and *oinos* (the Greek equivalent) do not refer solely to intoxicating fermented drinks. Instead, they referred to a boiled, unfermented syrup, designed for storage and later consumption. This syrup was typically non-intoxicating in its preserved form.

And this wasn't just Lee's opinion. A wide range of respected ancient sources and historical documents confirm this practice:

- Hippocrates (5th century BC)
- Aristophanes (5th century BC)
- Galen (2nd century AD)
- Pliny the Elder (1st century AD)
- James Grout, *Encyclopedia Romana*
- The Jewish Mishnah

All of these sources—and many others—reference the common process of boiling grape juice into syrup (*yayin*) and later mixing it with water to make it drinkable throughout the year. Yes, over time, that syrup could ferment. But the fermentation was usually not the goal—and if it fermented too much, it was often discarded. The way they prepared and diluted the drink helped prevent intoxication.

### Dilution Was the Norm

How was *yayin* consumed?

It was almost always mixed with water before drinking. Ancient sources confirm this repeatedly:

- Plutarch, in *Moralia*, stated: “*We call a mixture wine, although the larger of the components is water.*”<sup>4</sup>
- A 1:1 ratio of wine to water was considered strong and often frowned upon.
- Only barbarians drank undiluted wine, according to Greek and Roman writers.

The dilution ratios varied, but they were significant:



- 3:1 (common in taverns)
- 5:1, 10:1, even 20:1 (typical for daily use)

Homer, in *The Odyssey*, wrote: “*Our wine was of such strength that no man ever dared to drink it without mixing it with twenty measures of water.*”<sup>5</sup> The Jewish Mishnah (*Nedarim* 4:3) confirms that wine was not considered fit for drinking unless diluted. Pliny the Elder and Athenaeus also note that drinking undiluted wine was considered uncivilized—even dangerous.

### Why Such Heavy Dilution?

You might wonder: “If they diluted it so much, wouldn’t it just taste like water?” Yes—and that was the point.

- First, it preserved their supply of *yayin*.
- Second, and most importantly, it purified their water.

The acidity in the grape syrup helped kill bacteria. Modern science backs this up. Oregon State University found that properly prepared wine solutions killed bacteria like *E. coli*, salmonella, and staph within 30–60 minutes.

### How Strong Was Their Yayin?

Even at its strongest dilution in taverns (3:1), *yayin* had a lower alcohol content than modern beverages. It would have been around 2.5%, less than most light beers. For everyday drinking, it was typically diluted at 5:1 or higher, resulting in an alcohol content of 0.5% or less—comparable to a modern supermarket Kombucha.

*(Note: This refers to non-alcoholic Kombucha sold at grocery stores, such as Publix’s GreenWise Kombucha. Some alcoholic versions are sold in liquor stores—but that’s not the type being referenced here.)*

Jews typically didn’t drink it strong, because doing so would quickly deplete their *yayin* reserves. Instead, they mixed it lightly and responsibly, ensuring it lasted—and that it did not intoxicate.

### Why Not Just Drink Juice?

That's a fair question—and the answer is simple: they did, when it was available. But in ancient times, grapes were not accessible year-round, and without refrigeration, fresh juice would spoil quickly. Boiling it into *yayin*—a shelf-stable syrup—allowed them to preserve the harvest and enjoy a flavorful, safe drink throughout the year.

### An Intoxicating Mixture?

Now you might ask, “Wouldn't the mixture of *yayin* and water make someone drunk?”

No.

To illustrate, I researched modern Kombucha as a comparison. Kombucha, especially non-alcoholic varieties like Publix's GreenWise Kombucha, is remarkably similar in alcohol content and function to the historical usage of *yayin*. Both are naturally fermented but not intoxicating under normal conditions.

To reach even a mild state of inebriation, you would have to drink nearly four gallons of GreenWise Kombucha in a single sitting.

Now you might be tempted to shout, “Aha! So it's possible to get drunk from it!”

Not exactly.

Because here's the issue: you'd likely end up in the hospital before you ever got drunk. Why?

### *Probiotic Overload*

Kombucha is rich in probiotics, which support gut health in moderation. But drinking too much can overwhelm your digestive system:

- Gas and Bloating: An overload of probiotics can cause discomfort and pressure.
- Diarrhea: Sudden influxes of live cultures can upset your digestive balance.

- Rare Infections: In people with weakened immune systems, excess probiotics can increase susceptibility to infection.

### *Sugar Overload*

Kombucha typically contains 8–12 grams of sugar per 16 oz. Four gallons is 512 oz, totaling over 400–600 grams of sugar:

- Blood Sugar Spikes: Risk of dizziness, fatigue, or sugar crashes.
- Metabolic Stress: Increased risk of insulin resistance and weight gain.
- Dental Damage: That level of sugar can seriously harm your teeth and enamel.

### *Caffeine Overload*

Most Kombucha contains 10–25 mg of caffeine per 8 oz, derived from the tea used in fermentation:

- Four gallons could equal 640–1,600 mg of caffeine, enough to cause jitters, anxiety, heart palpitations, and even insomnia or worse.

### *Electrolyte Imbalance*

Due to its acidic content, drinking large volumes could irritate your digestive tract and throw off your electrolyte levels, especially when combined with other sweetened or caffeinated beverages.

Here's what all of this proves: nobody is getting drunk off of GreenWise Kombucha. The volume, sugar, caffeine, and probiotics would get to you long before the alcohol ever did. And that's exactly the point about the common usage of *yayin*. It wasn't typically consumed to intoxicate. The way it was prepared and diluted made that relatively impossible in normal, day-to-day life.

But Could It Be Abused?

Absolutely.

There were people who lowered the water ratio—mixing 2:1, 1:1, or even less dilution—which would increase the alcohol content and open the door for drunkenness. And this is why Scripture speaks of *yayin* in both a good light and a bad light.

*Yayin* wasn't inherently sinful. It was, at its core, a fruit-based syrup. But it could become sinful depending on how it was mixed and how it was used. That's why we see warnings in verses like Proverbs 20:1: "*Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.*" This is not a condemnation of all *yayin*—it's a warning against its misuse. The kind of *yayin* referred to here is the undiluted, intoxicating kind. And what does God say about it?

"It will mock you."

"It will rage against you."

"It will deceive you."

Why?

Because alcohol—when mixed and consumed in a way that leads to intoxication—causes people to do foolish, sinful, and destructive things. It doesn't just harm your body. It warps your judgment, distorts your character, and damages your testimony.

That's the danger.

And that's why God warns us about it so strongly.

There are still a few objections we'll need to address, but based on what we've studied so far, we can already draw some clear and reasonable biblical conclusions:

## *II: Biblical Conclusions*

### ***A: Based On Alcohol Content Alone.***

The Christian's decision about alcohol could be made based on alcohol content alone. Many who seek to justify social drinking attempt to equate biblical wine with modern wine—as if they're the same. But as we've already seen, that's simply not an honest handling of Scripture or history.

Biblical wine was a completely different drink. It was diluted, non-intoxicating in typical use, and used in a culture where preservation and sanitation were central concerns. It is not comparable to the high-alcohol-content beverages of today.

Trying to compare modern wine to Biblical *yayin* is like comparing apple cider to hard liquor—it's not even close. If anything, modern wine—along with beer, whiskey, vodka, and similar beverages—resembles biblical “strong drink,” not Biblical wine - based on alcohol content.

And how does Scripture treat strong drink?

It condemns it. Repeatedly. Unequivocally.

- *“Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.”*  
(Proverbs 20:1)
- *“Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them!”* Isaiah 5:11
- *“But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink... they stumble in judgment.”*  
(Isaiah 28:7)

Today's alcohol—whether beer, wine, or hard liquor—well exceeds the potency of what the Bible classifies as strong drink. And according to God's Word, strong drink is:

- A source of deception,
- A destroyer of judgment,
- A danger to spiritual leaders,
- And an object of God's warning - not His blessing.

If God condemned strong drink in biblical times—when its alcohol content was significantly lower—how much more should Christians avoid it today, when alcohol is stronger, more accessible, and more abused than ever? If undiluted wine was frowned upon, and strong drink was forbidden, then modern wine—stronger and undiluted by design—falls squarely in the category that Scripture warns us to avoid.

### ***B. It's Not Just About Drunkenness.***

Some will argue that Proverbs 20:1 only condemns drunkenness. They point to the last part of the verse—“*whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise*”—and suggest that deceived implies intoxication. And while that's a fair observation, the logic behind that interpretation breaks down when you consider the first part of the verse.

*“Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging.”*

This does not merely describe the result of overindulgence—it describes the nature of alcohol itself. The wine mocks. The strong drink rages. That's before intoxication even occurs. The verse is not just condemning the drunk—it is warning about the substance itself.

Even if someone insists that the core issue is intoxication, we're still left with a critical question:

If a substance is inherently deceptive, why would a wise believer engage with it at all?

Scripture frequently follows this pattern: the wisest path is not moderation—it's avoidance. Proverbs 23:31–32 is a striking example:

*“Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.”*

This passage doesn't say “Don't drink too much.” It says “Don't even look at it”—don't entertain it, don't flirt with it, don't admire it. This isn't a warning against excess. It's a warning against exposure. If alcohol were simply to be used “responsibly,” why would God tell us not to even look upon it in its fermented state?

*That's not a call to moderation—it's a clear call to abstinence.*

### **C: What “Drunk” Means In the Bible.**

One of the most common errors in the modern alcohol debate is a misunderstanding of biblical drunkenness. Just as modern alcoholic drinks are radically different from those of 3,000 years ago, our understanding of drunkenness today is not the same as what the Bible meant by “drunk.”

We also run into a second problem—defining words by today's standards rather than the Bible's context. So what does the Bible mean when it says someone is “drunk”? Let's go back to the historic definition—the one that would have been understood by readers at the time of the King James translation. According to Webster's 1828 Dictionary, the word “intoxicated” (which is biblically synonymous with “drunk”) is defined as:

*“To inebriate.”<sup>6</sup>*

And what does inebriate mean?

When you trace the meaning down historically, it ultimately means:

*“To disorder or dull the senses.”*

That's the key.

In biblical terms, to be drunk was to have your senses dulled—even slightly. If it began to impair your judgment, even a little... if it began to slow your reaction, cloud your discernment, or disorder your thinking, you were already considered intoxicated.

And here's the truth: that can happen after just one drink.

Some will say, "I'm fine! I only have one drink—I'm not drunk." But that line of reasoning doesn't hold up under scrutiny. According to a study conducted by researchers at San Diego State University, even a single drink can impact brain function: "...*findings suggest that even a single alcoholic drink can impair our ability to make decisions, though we're not aware of it.*"<sup>7</sup>

Why does this happen so quickly?

Because of how alcohol enters the body. As soon as alcohol enters the mouth, it's absorbed directly into the bloodstream through the blood vessels located under the tongue—a process known in medical field as sublingual administration. This bypasses the digestive system entirely and causes rapid neurological effects.

I once spoke with a former alcoholic who became a respected state addictions counselor. He told me: "I didn't drink because I liked the taste. I drank for the buzz—I wanted to feel drunk. And the amazing thing is, as soon as I took my first drink and leaned my head back, I could immediately feel that buzz begin."

*That's the reality.*

Even one drink—of modern, distilled alcohol—can begin to dull the senses, impair judgment, and initiate intoxication. And by biblical definition, that is drunkenness.

Another misunderstanding is the assumption that biblical drunkenness was as easily reached as it is today. But historically, it wasn't. Why? Because their drinks had far less alcohol content.



As we've discussed, most people diluted *yayin* heavily—sometimes up to 20:1. To become drunk, someone would have to consume enormous volumes, comparable to the four gallons of Kombucha we referenced earlier.

What did pagan cultures do to overcome this?

History gives us the disturbing answer. Wading into the writings of Seneca the Younger, Suetonius, & Plutarch gives us a peak into the common reality of what was required: *Participants would drink wine to the point of vomiting, then vomit it up to make room to drink more, continuing the cycle to prolong the effects of drunkenness.*

They had to force themselves into drunkenness through repetition, volume, and even vomiting—because it wasn't easy to get drunk. That's a far cry from today's reality, where just one or two drinks can dull the senses within minutes.

Posing another concern, I would ask those who view alcohol consumption as a “Christian liberty” a sincere question: How much is too much?

Let's say I've never had a drop of alcohol in my life (and praise the Lord—I haven't), and you offer me a beer. You tell me it's part of my “freedom in Christ.” But I have to ask: How much of that beer is too much for me? A few sips? Half a beer? Just one?

I once posed this exact question to someone who holds that view. Their answer?

“You should stop just before you become biblically inebriated. Anything beyond that is drunkenness.”

I responded, “But I don't know what that feels like. I've never had alcohol.”

They said, “Well... you'll feel it the first time—and then you'll know not to go that far again.”

Do you realize what they were saying?

In order to avoid the sin of drunkenness, I would first have to experience it.

Their standard of moderation required me to cross the line once to learn where the line is. To start, this is not how God intends us to operate. He never gives us lines that we can only know are true and clear if we cross them. He warns us of their consequences and tells us to never cross them. That answer is also clearly ignoring the reality of how many homes, lives, and marriages *one time* of drunkenness caused.

If it were easy to get drunk and never go there again, we wouldn't have another alcoholic, another broken home, another ruined testimony. Clearly, it doesn't work that way. Why would I ever need to sin once in order to figure out how not to sin again?

So I ask again: Where is your line? And more importantly—why does the Bible draw a different one?

Solomon, writing to Rehoboam, gave his son this line for avoiding drunkenness: *“Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright.”* (Proverbs 23:31)

He didn't say, “Just drink a little.”

He didn't say, “Stop before you get drunk.”

*He warned his son to not even look at it.*

Why such a strong warning? Because wine is a deceiver (Proverbs 20:1). It convinces you that you're in control—until you're not. And then comes Proverbs 23:32: *“At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.”*

When we take everything into account—from the biblical definition of drunkenness, to modern science, to ancient cultural practices—it becomes clear:

The Bible doesn't just condemn drunkenness—it warns against consuming what causes it. Let's return once more to Proverbs 20:1: *“Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.”* Even if someone insists that this only applies to

intoxication, the verse still describes alcohol itself as a mocker, as raging, and as deceptive. So the question remains: If something is inherently deceptive... should a believer even risk engaging with it?

The biblical answer is plain: no.

### **D: “Strong Drink” Is Consistently Condemned In Scripture.**

Scripture consistently speaks of strong drink in a negative light—never in praise, only in warning.

- If strong drink was forbidden in biblical times...
- And if modern alcohol is far stronger than anything available then...

How much more should today’s Christians avoid it altogether?

### **E: The Holiest Individuals In Scripture Practiced Abstinence**

Some of the most set-apart and honored individuals in the Bible completely abstained from alcohol:

- Priests were forbidden from drinking while ministering before the Lord (Leviticus 10:9). Now, we are a royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:9). Shouldn’t we consider this standard - that was about lifestyle, not just temple service - as a wise standard for us to follow?
- John the Baptist—a man of God filled with the Spirit from the womb—never drank (Luke 1:15).
- Nazarites committed to total abstinence as part of their vow (Numbers 6:3).
- Kings and princes were told that wine was not wise for them (Proverbs 31:4).
- Pastors and elders are required to live above reproach—including abstaining from alcohol (1 Timothy 3:3).

If these godly men and leaders were called to total abstinence, shouldn't we consider this not just a wise option—but a moral obligation?

Priests were forbidden from drinking when ministering before God (Leviticus 10:9), and kings were advised to avoid it altogether (Proverbs 31:4). Since all Christians are now a royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:9) and called to reign with Christ (Revelation 1:6), shouldn't we hold to the highest standard rather than the lowest?

### **F: Consider Stumbling Blocks & Our Call To Holiness.**

*“But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.”* (1 Peter 1:15–16)

If alcohol has even the potential to lead to sin, or to cause a weaker brother to stumble, holiness requires complete abstinence. Romans 14:21 says: *“It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth...”*

Ask yourself:

- Why do we want to see how close we can get to a substance that has wrecked so many lives?
- Why risk something that blurs the lines of holiness and can so easily lead to compromise?

### **G: Your Testimony Matters!**

*“Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.”* (Matthew 5:14)

A believer's testimony is precious—and fragile. In a broken, dark world, we're called to shine brightly and clearly. When considering what alcohol has done to lives, homes, marriages, ministries, and society at large, shouldn't we ask:

*“Is this worth the damage it could cause to my testimony?”*

- Alcohol mocks, rages, and deceives (Proverbs 20:1).
- It destroys clarity.
- It damages influence.
- And it compromises a Christian's light in a dark world.

Your testimony is too valuable to sacrifice over a drink.

### *III: The Human & Health Perspective*

While the Bible is abundantly clear that God's people should abstain from alcohol, we can also reach a striking conclusion from a human, logical, and medical perspective—even apart from Scripture:

*Alcohol is not something any person should willingly consume.*

Let's just look at the facts.

#### **Short Term Effects**

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), alcohol has serious short-term effects, including:

- Injuries from motor vehicle crashes, falls, drownings, and burns.
- Violence, including homicide, suicide, sexual assault, and domestic abuse.
- Every day, 29 people in the U.S. die in alcohol-related car crashes—that's one death every 50 minutes.
- The annual cost of these alcohol-related crashes? Over \$44 billion.

## **Long Term Consequences**

- High blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, liver disease, and digestive issues.
- Increased risk of cancers: breast, mouth, throat, esophagus, liver, and colon.
- Weakened immune system, making you more prone to sickness.
- Learning and memory problems, including dementia.
- Mental health struggles, like depression and anxiety.
- Social consequences: lost productivity, broken families, unemployment.
- Alcohol addiction and dependence.

## **Health Problems**

WebMD confirms much of the same, listing alcohol's harmful effects on the body:

- Liver damage
- Heart disease
- Brain and nervous system problems
- Anemia
- Cancer
- Seizures
- Gout
- Infections
- Digestive disorders
- And more...

And Karam-Hage goes even further, stating the impact of alcohol on our organs. In an article for MD Anderson Cancer center, he shows the affects of alcohol on our organs, particularly the brain, liver, esophagus and stomach - *"Alcohol has a toxic effect on many organs."*<sup>8</sup> That's not just a warning—it's a design feature. Your body was never meant to ingest this. It reacts like it's under attack... because it is.

So let's ask a simple question:

As a human being—designed by God, created with a purpose, gifted with a body to steward—does it make sense to consume a substance your body treats as poison?

*Of course not.*

## *IV: Common Questions & Objections*

### ***A: Didn't Jesus Make Wine At The Wedding?***

This is one of the most frequently raised objections in the conversation about alcohol and Christianity. In John 2, we read that Jesus performed His first public miracle at a wedding in Cana, where He turned water into wine. Mary brings the issue to Jesus, and He instructs the servants to fill six large water pots—each holding two to three firkins apiece. In total, Jesus produced between 120 to 180 gallons of wine.

That's an enormous amount of liquid. So the question arises:

Was this wine alcoholic?

If so, we encounter several serious contradictions with Scripture—and even with the character of Christ Himself.

#### ***1. Jesus Would Have Violated Proverbs 20:1.***

Proverbs 20:1 declares: *“Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.”*

If Jesus produced 180 gallons of alcoholic wine, He would have been aiding in mockery, deception, and unwise behavior—something clearly condemned by Scripture. This would place Him in violation of the very Word He came to fulfill (Matthew 5:17), which is impossible, for Jesus is God and without sin (Hebrews 4:15).

## 2. Jesus Would Have Promoted Drunkenness.

The Greek word used in John 2 is *oinos*, which—like *yayin* in Hebrew—is a general term that can mean either alcoholic or non-alcoholic wine. But the context matters.

John 2:10 says the crowd had “*well drunk*”. Some assume this means they were intoxicated, but the phrase simply means they had drunk plenty. If Jesus added 180 gallons of fermented wine to a crowd that had already been drinking, He would have been enabling drunkenness—which is universally condemned in Scripture:

- “*Look not thou upon the wine when it is red... at the last it biteth like a serpent*” (Proverbs 23:31–32).
- “*Woe unto them... till wine inflame them!*” (Isaiah 5:11).

Would the sinless Son of God, who came to fulfill the law, turn water into a substance that promotes sin?

## 3. There's No Biblical Reason to Assume It Was Alcoholic.

Let's be honest—some assume it was alcoholic wine simply because they assume people at weddings drank alcohol. But the text doesn't say that. And even if fermented wine had been served earlier, that does not mean Jesus produced alcoholic wine.

Here's why:

- Jesus never drank intoxicating wine.
  - As our High Priest (Hebrews 4:14–15), He would uphold the standard of Leviticus 10:9—priests were forbidden from drinking while ministering.



- As our King (Revelation 19:16), He would model Proverbs 31:4–5—“*It is not for kings to drink wine.*”
- Jesus refused wine at the cross.
  - “*And they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but he received it not.*” (Mark 15:23)
  - This was fermented wine - often mixed with a narcotic painkiller—yet Jesus refused it, though it was one of the rare biblically permitted uses.
  - If He rejected intoxicating wine in His moment of greatest agony, would He then freely distribute it at a joyful wedding?

#### 4. “Oinos” Did Not Automatically Mean Fermented.

As we saw earlier, *oinos* is a broad Greek term that includes both fermented and unfermented grape products—just like *yayin*. Most scholars agree that the common “wine” in biblical times was often:

- A boiled syrup made from grape juice.
- Mixed with water—commonly at ratios from 5:1 up to 20:1.
- Non-intoxicating under normal use (similar in alcohol content to modern kombucha—0.5%).

When Jesus drank wine at the Last Supper, He would have been drinking this diluted, non-intoxicating form of *oinos*, if not pure juice altogether. And as we discussed before—you can’t compare that to today’s wine. We’re not even talking about the same drink.

If someone says, “Jesus drank wine, so I can too,” the logical question is: “What kind of wine are you drinking?”

*Because it’s not what Jesus drank.*

### 5. The Wedding Master Was Shocked by the Flavor—Not the Fermentation.

Some might say, “Wouldn’t the master of the wedding have known if it wasn’t alcoholic?”

Actually, yes—but that’s exactly the point. His surprise was not about the presence of alcohol. It was about the quality and fullness of flavor.

At ancient Jewish weddings, it was common for hosts—especially poorer ones—to dilute the wine more and more as the days went on. So by the time Jesus created new wine, it would have stood in stark contrast: rich, full, undiluted, and likely unfermented. It tasted fresh and pure—because it was.

### 6. Historically, the “Best Wine” Was Always Diluted.

A study in historical writings show us what was viewed as “the best wine”. Many Jewish sources and The Jewish Encyclopaedia elude to the fact that the best wine was the wine that was diluted with water. Even 2 Maccabees (from the Apocrypha) notes that diluted wine was considered pleasant, while undiluted wine was called harmful or distasteful. After the conquest of Palestine by Alexander the Great, Greek customs dominated Jewish culture—including the universal practice of mixing wine with water to tame its strength.

### The Final Answer

Was Jesus’ miracle at Cana alcoholic?

Based on the character of Christ, the teaching of Scripture, the historical understanding of *oinos*, and the context of the passage - the answer is no. He did not—and would not—create a drink that mocks, deceives, and destroys. He gave the wedding guests the best wine—pure, rich, and undefiled.

*Just like Him.*

## **B: What About “Strong Drink” In Deuteronomy 14?**

This question arises from Deuteronomy 14:23–29, where it appears that God permits the use of “strong drink” as part of a tithe-related feast. At first glance, some assume this is a green light for alcohol consumption. But let’s take a closer look.

### **1: Start with Clear Scripture.**

Whenever we encounter a difficult or unclear passage, we must begin by reaffirming what is already clear in Scripture. Proverbs 20:1 remains a foundational verse: *“Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.”*

This verse doesn’t leave much wiggle room. Strong drink is not neutral. It’s raging—aggressive, chaotic, and deceptive. And Scripture consistently warns against it. That alone should give us pause when we interpret Deuteronomy 14.

### **2: Understand the Context.**

Deuteronomy 14 outlines various laws concerning tithes—specifically the tithe of agricultural increase (v. 22) and flocks (v. 23). This tithe was not always fully handed over to the Levites. In some cases, it was used to host a feast before the Lord in the place He chose to place His name (i.e., where the tabernacle was).

But what if someone lived too far away to carry the physical harvest and livestock? Verses 24–26 answer that: they could sell their tithe locally, bring the money with them to the sanctuary, and then purchase what they desired for the feast. *“...thou shalt turn it into money... and shalt go unto the place which the Lord thy God shall choose... and thou shalt bestow that money for whatsoever thy soul lusteth after.”* (Deuteronomy 14:25–26)

The word translated “lusteth” here is the Hebrew word *avah*, which simply means to desire—especially food or drink. This is not describing a sinful lust, but a permitted craving.

God wanted the feast to be a joyful, celebratory event. The average Israelite couldn't afford lamb or specialty foods very often. But on this occasion, they could purchase and enjoy what they normally could not.

### 3: Examine the Phrase.

This is where the controversy centers. Verse 26 includes this phrase: “...for wine, or for strong drink...”

Is God telling His people to consume alcohol here?

Not at all.

First, we must interpret Scripture with Scripture. This is not the only passage addressing the tithe-feast. Just two chapters earlier, Deuteronomy 12:5–7 and 17–19 speak of the same practice and clarify that the tithe was also used for:

- Sacrifices
- Feasting
- Provision for the Levites

In other words, not everything purchased with tithe money was consumed by the worshiper. And this is key: not everything purchased was for personal use.

### 4: Study the Usage in Sacrifice.

So if the Israelites were forbidden from consuming strong drink (as clearly stated in Proverbs 20:1 and Isaiah 5:11), what was it doing on their shopping list?

Answer: it was for sacrificial use, not personal consumption.

Look at Numbers 28:7, which details how strong drink was used: *“And the drink offering thereof shall be the fourth part of an hin for the one lamb: in the holy place shalt thou cause the strong wine to be poured unto the Lord for a drink offering.”*

This strong drink was poured out before the Lord—not consumed. It was part of the drink offering, a symbolic act of devotion, often representing joy, abundance, and total surrender. I would also add that the strong drink carried many cleaning purposes in times of old. It could be that God asked for this so that the altar could be properly cleaned and disinfected periodically.

So when Deuteronomy 14 says to buy *“wine or strong drink”*, it doesn't mean to drink it—it means to purchase it for the feast or for the altar. What was the strong drink for? According to the biblical context:

- The tithe was used for three purposes: feasting, sacrifices, and provision for Levites.
- Strong drink was included only as part of the drink offering, never for personal consumption.
- God's people were never encouraged to drink strong drink—only to offer it.
- Proverbs 20:1 and other verses still stand: strong drink deceives, rages, and mocks.

### *The Final Answer*

When we rightly divide the Word, we see that Deuteronomy 14 does not give approval for drinking alcohol. It aligns perfectly with the rest of Scripture: God's people are called to be separate, holy, and wise—not deceived or mocked by a raging drink.

### ***C: Doesn't The Bible Say To Give Wine To The Sad and Dying?***

*“Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts. Let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more.”* (Proverbs 31:6–7)

This passage records the advice of a mother—believed by many to be Bathsheba—speaking to her son, King Lemuel, often considered a poetic name for Solomon. She begins by instructing him not to drink wine or strong drink: “*It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink.*” (Proverbs 31:4)

The reason is clear: alcohol clouds judgment and impairs wisdom—two qualities essential for a righteous ruler (see also Proverbs 20:1; 21:17; 23:20, 30–31). But then, in verses 6–7, she adds something that many people misunderstand: “*Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts. Let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more.*”

Is this a contradiction? Is Bathsheba telling Solomon, “You don’t drink—but give alcohol to sad people so they can drown their sorrows”?

Let’s take a deeper look at what this passage actually teaches.

### *1: Group 1 - “Him That Is Ready to Perish”.*

Historically, those about to die—especially by execution—were sometimes given an alcoholic beverage to numb their senses. It was considered an act of mercy, not entertainment. This is exactly what they tried to do with Jesus before His crucifixion: “*And they gave Him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but He received it not.*” (Mark 15:23)

This wine mixed with myrrh was a narcotic designed to dull pain. Jesus refused it—choosing instead to bear the full suffering of the Cross with no earthly relief. His example sets the bar for total surrender and sacrifice.

So, when Bathsheba tells Solomon to “*give strong drink to him that is ready to perish*”, she’s not endorsing recreational drinking. She’s referring to a well-known merciful tradition for those about to die.

## 2: Group 2 - "Those That Be of Heavy Hearts".

What about this second group—those with “heavy hearts”? Is this talking about people who are simply sad or depressed?

The Hebrew word translated “heavy” is *mar*, which refers to bitterness—often rooted in pain or deep suffering. It’s the same word used to describe the waters of Marah in Exodus, which were too bitter to drink. Even Webster’s 1828 Dictionary defined “misery” as: “*Great unhappiness; extreme pain of body or mind.*”<sup>9</sup> So the phrase “those that be of heavy hearts” historically referred not to sorrowful people, but to those in physical torment or extreme distress.

That’s how Jewish rabbis, ancient commentators, and historical preachers understood this passage:

- It referred to those in pain, not those seeking escape.
- Wine was used medicinally, not socially.
- Those who could not afford such treatment were to be helped by the king as an act of mercy.

In ancient times, before morphine or anesthetics, alcohol was sometimes the only available method to dull pain—especially during procedures like surgery or amputation. Think of soldiers being given whiskey before having a limb removed during the Civil War. It wasn’t for pleasure—it was for survival.

## 3: Why This Doesn't Justify Drinking Today.

Some might ask, “So...should I drink before surgery then?” Absolutely not. Why?

Because we have better options today.

- Modern medicine gives us safer, more effective pain relief.
- Alcohol has long been replaced in hospitals and treatment centers.
- Even for the dying, comfort care uses regulated drugs—not open containers of whiskey.

To try and apply Proverbs 31:6–7 to modern social drinking is a serious misinterpretation. This verse doesn't encourage people to drink when they're feeling down. It acknowledges that in ancient days, alcohol was the only tool available for extreme pain.

### *The Final Answer*

Charles Spurgeon once summarized this passage as follows:

*“These somewhat singular sentences were spoken by the mother of Lemuel... Solomon. She had already said to him, ‘It is not for kings to drink wine.’ But such a king must have had plenty of wine in the palace. She therefore urged him to give it to the sick and poor, who needed it more. The Jews gave strong drink with drugs to dull the senses of those about to be executed. As for the sorrowful, yes, wine was sometimes used for the very weak and dying, when they could not afford it themselves. But if any man reads this and thinks he should drink to forget his poverty or sorrow, he will find himself quickly mistaken. If he had one misery before, he'll have ten after. Those who fly to the bottle for consolation might as well fly to hell to find a heaven.”<sup>10</sup>*

Well said.

The bottom line? Proverbs 31 does not permit drinking for pleasure, sadness, or relaxation. It refers to acts of mercy in a world without modern medicine—helping the dying or those in pain. Alcohol was used sparingly, medicinally, and mercifully—never recreationally. And even then, it was used by others on behalf of the afflicted.

*Not for self.*

### ***D: Didn't Paul Tell Timothy to Take a Little Wine?***

Yes, Paul did say this: *“Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities.”* (1 Timothy 5:23)



Let's begin by addressing a crucial point: Timothy was a pastor. Just two chapters earlier, Paul laid out qualifications for pastors (or bishops) and stated clearly: "*Not given to wine...*" (1 Timothy 3:3) That phrase literally means that a pastor should not be associated with wine. If Paul had just commanded that, he would not turn around and encourage a contradiction two chapters later.

So what is Paul saying? Paul is telling Timothy to use (not drink) wine to purify contaminated water—particularly due to frequent illnesses caused by impure sources during travel. Take note of Paul's wording:

*"...use a little wine..."*

He doesn't say, "Drink wine," but "use" it.

The Greek word translated "use" ( $\chi\rho\omega$ , chro) means "*to employ or make use of something*", not necessarily to consume it for enjoyment. In a time when clean water was far from guaranteed, especially for a traveling pastor like Timothy, this would have been a practical directive.

### *The Final Answer*

As we've already studied, ancient wine (*oinos*) was often diluted and used medicinally—not sipped socially. Paul, knowing Timothy's likely strict abstinence due to earlier instruction, could have been reassuring him: "You're not violating your calling by using this to purify bad water. You're taking care of your health."

### ***E: What About the Word "Juice" In Song Of Solomon 8:2?***

*"I would lead thee, and bring thee into my mother's house, who would instruct me: I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine of the juice of my pomegranate."* (Song of Solomon 8:2)

At first glance, this verse seems simple enough—but for someone studying the Bible's language surrounding wine, the word “juice” might raise a few questions.

You may recall from our earlier study that the word “juice” was not common among the English-speaking population during the 1600s when the King James Bible was translated. While the word existed—having entered English through French in the 15th–16th centuries—it wasn't widely used by commoners until around the time of the American Revolution in the late 1700s. That's why the KJV translators most often used the word “wine” to cover a wide range of meanings, including fermented beverages and unfermented juice.

So, why did they choose to use “juice” here?

The answer lies in the Hebrew word being translated. The word used in this passage is *asis* —a rare word found only five times in the Old Testament. While it is translated as “wine” in the other four uses, its meaning consistently refers to fresh, sweet, unfermented juice—the juice of freshly pressed fruit, especially grapes.

But *asis* is more than just juice. It was the finest juice—the most desirable, the freshest, the sweetest. In Jewish culture, there was a difference between:

- *Tirosh*: common grape juice, pressed from the general harvest, often unfiltered and sometimes even slightly sour.
- *Asis*: premium juice—meticulously hand-pressed from the best fruit, carefully filtered, and immediately served at its peak freshness.

When a host wanted to offer something truly special, they didn't pour *tirosh*. They offered *asis*. And that's what the Shulamite bride is saying to her husband here. In poetic, intimate language, she expresses her desire to give him the very best she has. This is a love song, not a grocery list—and the language matters.

### *The Final Answer*

To preserve the poetic depth and personal care of this expression, the King James translators chose the word “juice” in this one place. It was a word the educated class would recognize and that carried a connotation of freshness, sweetness, and quality. Though uncommon, it clarified the intention and meaning behind the original Hebrew.

So, no, this isn't a hidden loophole for fermented wine. Quite the opposite—the use of “juice” here reinforces the distinction between fresh, unfermented fruit drink and the kind of intoxicating beverages that Scripture repeatedly warns against.

### *F: Do The Commands To Priests and Pastors Imply Permission For Others Outside Of Those Positions?*

This is a classic argument by those trying to undermine the Bible's consistent stance against alcohol when taking into account the full context of Scripture and history. On the surface, it might appear to have merit—until you apply basic logic and biblical reasoning.

Let's consider two of the most often quoted passages:

- *“Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations.”* (Leviticus 10:9)
- *“Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous.”* (1 Timothy 3:3)

Some argue: “See? Only priests had to avoid wine in the temple, and only pastors were told not to be ‘given to wine.’ So doesn't that imply everyone else is allowed to drink?”

But this reasoning crumbles under even the lightest scrutiny. Let's examine it:

### 1: Faulty Logic: "Because It's Prohibited for Some, It's Permitted for Others"?

I ask you: are we really to believe that, because it is prohibited for some, it makes it permissible for others? In every circumstance? The simple answer is: no. That's like saying...

- "You can commit felonies—as long as you're not trying to serve on a jury."
- "You can disqualify yourself morally—as long as you're not applying for military service."
- "You can be a striker or greedy—as long as you're not a pastor."

Of course not! These are qualifications, not permissions! Being disqualified from a leadership role because of a behavior doesn't mean that behavior is okay elsewhere.

Let's go further with 1 Timothy 3. If their argument held water, we'd also have to believe:

- You can have multiple wives if you're not a pastor (1 Tim. 3:2).
- You can have bad behavior if you're not a pastor (1 Tim. 3:2).
- You can be greedy or violent if you're not a pastor (1 Tim. 3:3).

Nobody would argue for that! So why make an exception for alcohol?

Here's the point: What God expects of all believers, He requires of His leaders. The pastoral qualifications aren't creating loopholes for non-pastors—they're reinforcing the standard that all should aspire to.

### 2: The Call to Holiness - Everywhere.

Let's return to Leviticus 10:10–11, where God explains why priests were not to consume wine:

*"And that ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean; And that ye may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the LORD hath spoken..."*

This wasn't about location—it was about consecration. It wasn't just for inside the tabernacle. It was about maintaining a visible, continuous testimony of holiness and discernment. And if it was dangerous to drink alcohol in the presence of God... why would it be safe outside of it?

Can we forget that God's presence now dwells within the believer?

- *“Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”* (1 Corinthians 10:31)
- *“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation...”* (1 Peter 2:9)

We are now the priests. The call to be holy is not less for us—it is greater.

### *The Final Answer*

The ceremonial requirements of the Old Testament priesthood were fulfilled in Christ (like the ephod, incense, or tabernacle). But the moral and representative expectations of the priesthood—like sobriety, discernment, and holiness—are still valid for the believer today. If God required holiness through abstinence for the holiest men in Israel... shouldn't we strive for the same as a royal priesthood today?

### ***G: “Wine Brings Joy And Gladness!”***

This is one of the most commonly misused ideas in the conversation about alcohol: “If wine makes the heart glad, doesn't that mean God approves of drinking it?”

Let's start with a simple clarification from earlier: when people try to use these “joy and gladness” verses, they are never referring to strong drink. That alone removes any attempt to connect these passages to modern alcohol. Additionally, these “wine and gladness” references typically involve either:

- *Tirosh* – the word for freshly pressed grape juice, or
- *Yayin* – the word often used for diluted grape syrup.

Neither of these reflects the modern understanding of fermented, intoxicating wine. Instead, they were natural, low-alcohol, often unfermented drinks tied to harvest, provision, and blessing.

### *Why & How Would Juice Bring Joy?*

To us, it may sound odd to say juice brings gladness, until we understand the cultural and agricultural context of Bible times:

Wine (*tirosh/yayin*) in Scripture represents joy because it is a picture of God's blessing—specifically, the joy of harvest. It symbolized a successful growing season, answered prayers for rain, and the reward of months of labor. For them, this was payday. It was a sign of God's abundant provision.

Consider some of the key passages often cited:

### *Psalm 104:14-15*

*“He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man: that he may bring forth food... and wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart.”*

This harvest psalm is not endorsing intoxication. It is celebrating the bounty of God's creation:

- Wine
- Oil
- Bread

This is about joy in God's abundance and provision, not in alcoholic indulgence.

### Deuteronomy 7:13

*“And he will love thee, and bless thee, and multiply thee: he will also bless the fruit of thy womb, and the fruit of thy land, thy corn, and thy wine [tirosh], and thine oil...”*

*Tirosh* here refers to the new wine—fresh juice—straight from the press. This isn't a celebration over a bottle of liquor. It's the joy of an overflowing harvest.

### Joel 2:23-24

*“The floors shall be full of wheat, and the vats shall overflow with wine [tirosh] and oil. And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten...”*

After judgment and devastation, God promises restoration. What's the sign of that restoration? Full wheat bins and overflowing juice vats—clear evidence of blessing and abundance. Again, this is not about alcohol. It's about God reversing judgment and bringing gladness through fruitfulness.

### Proverbs 3:9-10

*“Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine [tirosh].”*

Here again, wine is symbolic—not of a drink, but of reward. Those who honor God with their substance will experience overflowing provision. This has nothing to do with a glass of alcohol—and everything to do with the harvest joy of a blessed life.

### The Final Answer

These verses have been twisted by many to justify modern alcohol. But the context and original language reveal the truth: Wine in these verses is about joy through blessing, not intoxication through fermentation. Modern alcohol has stolen biblical words and repurposed them, but Scripture is clear when viewed rightly.

Just because something is called a blessing does not mean all forms of it are approved by God. Rain is a blessing (Deut. 28:12), but a flood is judgment (Gen. 6–9). Grapes are a blessing, but fermented wine, when abused, is a curse.

### **H: Isn't This Legalism?**

That's a fair question—and one that deserves a thoughtful, biblical response.

Legalism is not defined by abstaining from something. Legalism is when someone teaches that righteousness or salvation is earned by works, rules, or religious standards instead of through Christ alone. If someone says, “You must abstain from alcohol to be saved,” that is legalism.

*That is false doctrine.*

But if someone says, “Because I am saved, I choose to live in a way that reflects holiness, protects my testimony, and avoids what Scripture warns against”—that's not legalism. That's love for Christ.

Jesus said in John 14:15: “*If ye love me, keep my commandments.*” He didn't say “If ye want to earn salvation...” —He said, “If ye love Me.” That is not legalism. That is Lordship.

Choosing the path of total abstinence from alcohol isn't about impressing God—it's about obeying God in response to His grace. It's not about creating a man-made rule. It's about honoring biblical wisdom, protecting our influence, and pursuing the highest standard of holiness.

Romans 12:1 says: “*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice...*” Not to earn salvation—but because of His mercy. Legalism exalts man's efforts. Holiness exalts Christ's work. If our reason for abstaining from alcohol is rooted in love for the Lord, reverence for Scripture, and a desire to be a light to the world—then it's not legalism. It's simply discipleship.



### **I: “But I’m Free In Christ! Didn’t Paul Say ‘All Things’ Are Lawful?”**

This objection often comes from a genuine desire to honor liberty in the Christian life. The thinking goes like this: “We’re under grace, not law. So if I’m not getting drunk, and I’m doing it in moderation, isn’t it just a matter of personal freedom?”

Yes, Paul does say in 1 Corinthians 10:23, “*All things are lawful for me...*” But don’t stop there. He immediately follows with: “*...but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.*” In other words: Just because something is technically permissible does not mean it’s spiritually beneficial. And just because something doesn’t violate a specific command doesn’t mean it’s wise.

And that’s the entire point.

Christian liberty is never a license to indulge in dangerous things. In fact, Galatians 5:13 warns, “*Use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.*” Liberty is not a tool to justify indulgence—it’s a calling to serve others in holiness, edification, and love.

Ask yourself:

- Does alcohol edify you or anyone else spiritually?
- Does it strengthen your walk with God or your influence for Christ?
- Does it build others up in faith or potentially tear them down?

*That’s the test of true liberty.*

So yes, “*all things are lawful*”—but if it:

- Deceives (Prov. 20:1),
- Mocks (Prov. 20:1),
- Dulls the senses (Prov. 20:1),
- Hurts your brother’s conscience (Rom. 14:21),

- Or hinders your testimony (1 Cor. 10:31),

...then Paul would not say, “Go ahead, it’s your freedom.” He would say, “*I will not be brought under the power of any*” (1 Cor. 6:12). In short: You are free in Christ—but that freedom is not the freedom to do what you want. It is the freedom to do what is right.

But we must go one step further: this issue is not merely one of wisdom—it is one of sin. When we consider the full weight of Scripture:

- Wine is a mocker (Prov. 20:1),
- Strong drink is raging (Prov. 20:1),
- The Bible says not even to look at it when it is fermented (Prov. 23:31),
- It dulls the senses (Prov. 20 & 23),
- And leads to deception, destruction, and defilement.

The pattern of Scripture is clear: Alcohol is not morally neutral. When used for intoxication, even slightly, it is sinful. And modern alcoholic beverages—unlike diluted ancient “wine”—are designed to intoxicate, even with one drink.

Freedom in Christ is never freedom to sin. Romans 6:1 makes it unmistakably clear: “*Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid.*” Your liberty doesn’t override God’s commands. If it goes against the clear guidelines of God’s Word, then it’s not a liberty issue. It’s a sin issue. And liberty in Christ never removes the restriction of sin. It gives us the power to say no to it.

## *Conclusion*

Having taken the time to outline what God’s Word says about alcohol and answering some objections, let us conclude.

Let's remember the Scriptural conclusions we've drawn:

1. *A Christian should not drink based on alcohol content alone.*

The wine of the Bible was not the alcohol of today. It was diluted, preserved syrup or fresh juice—far from modern beverages.

2. *It can't just be about drunkenness.*

Proverbs 20:1 and other passages don't merely condemn intoxication—they expose alcohol itself as deceptive and destructive.

3. *Modern Christians often misunderstand the Bible's definition of drunkenness.*

Scripture defines “drunkenness” as inebriation—the dulling of the senses. Research confirms this begins with the very first drink of modern alcohol.

4. *Proverbs 23:31-32 clearly tells us not even to look at wine when it ferments.*

Scripture doesn't flirt with danger—it warns plainly of the seductive power of alcohol and commands distance from it.

5. *The holiest roles in Scripture were commanded to abstain.*

Priests, Nazarites, prophets, and pastors were held to the standard of total abstinence. As God's royal priesthood today, should we settle for less?

6. *Consider stumbling blocks, temptation, and the call to holiness.*

We are called to be holy (1 Peter 1:15–16) and not to cause others to stumble (Romans 14:21). Even if something is lawful, it may not be loving.

7. *A Christian must protect their testimony.*

We are the light of the world (Matthew 5:14). Alcohol ruins families, testimonies, and credibility. Why associate with what destroys?

## **The Real Questions To Ask**

After studying the Bible's full counsel on alcohol, the question is no longer:

“Can a Christian drink?”

The real questions become:

- Is it wise?
- Does it glorify God?
- Does it protect my testimony?
- Does it reflect holiness and love for others?

## **Let's Be Honest About What We've Seen**

- *Biblical wine is not modern alcohol.*  
It was diluted or fresh (tirosh), not the strong drink of today.
- *Jesus' example does not justify modern drinking.*  
At Cana, He made something pure, full of flavor, and unfermented. On the cross, He refused wine mixed with narcotics, even in His suffering.
- *Paul's advice to Timothy was medicinal, not recreational.*  
And with modern medicine, alcohol is no longer needed even for that.
- *The Bible's warnings are severe.*  
“*Wine is a mocker... strong drink is raging*” (Proverbs 20:1). “*Look not... when it moveth itself aright*” (Proverbs 23:31).
- *Your testimony matters most.*  
Even if you think it's lawful, Romans 14:21 reminds us: “*It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine... whereby thy brother stumbleth.*”

## **The Ultimate Question Remains**

*Why risk it?*

Why risk your testimony, your influence, your holiness, your example? Why take part in something Scripture warns against repeatedly, that science shows is destructive, and that so many have stumbled over?

The safest, wisest, most Christlike, and Biblical choice is:

*Total abstinence.*

This is not legalism.

This is not tradition.

This is not fear.

*This is love.*

Love for God's holiness.

Love for your neighbor's soul.

Love for your own integrity.

Will you choose the path that most clearly reflects the holiness and compassion of Christ?

The Bible never presents alcohol as a path to spiritual wisdom, blessing, or holiness. Rather, it consistently warns of its deceitfulness, its danger, and its ability to pervert judgment. As believers, we are called not to walk the line of compromise, but to walk circumspectly — choosing what is best, not merely what is allowed. The Bible is clear. Though questions will still rage from those who would pervert God's Word, I simply remind you: *The burden of proof lies not on the Christian who abstains, but on the Christian who desires to indulge.*

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