

# What the Bible Teaches about Drinking Alcohol

## Stumbling-blocks

### Introduction:

1. Lesson 1 gave an overview of the Bible's condemnation of drinking alcohol and the resulting drunkenness.
2. Lesson 2 focused on the principles of sobriety and the meaning of drunkenness in the Bible.
3. Lesson 3 showed the generic nature of the words "wine" and "strong drink," emphasizing the importance of context when studying passages using these words.
4. Lesson 4 discussed passages that seem to describe alcohol being used as medicine.
5. Lesson 5 examined examples of instructions given to various groups of church members and the example of Jesus at the wedding in Cana.
6. Still, it is claimed that drinking alcohol is just a matter of opinion or personal scruple.
7. Thus, this last lesson will consider alcohol as a stumbling-block...

### I. The Lord's Supper (Matthew 26:26-29)

- A. When Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, He referred to the drink as the "fruit of the vine" (cf. Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:15-20).
  1. By modern scientific classification, melons, tomatoes, and cucumbers are fruits that grow on vines.
  2. The Greek word for "vine" referred to the grapevine and was also used for vineyards (cf. James 3:12; Revelation 14:18-19).
  3. Thus, the fruit of the vine was a reference to the juice of grapes.
- B. Paul simply referred to it as "the cup" (1 Corinthians 10:16; 11:25-28).
- C. It is worth noting that the word "wine" is not used at all (in Greek or English).
  1. The Lord's Supper was instituted at the close of the Passover feast.
  2. During that time, the Israelites were to remove all leaven, and anything leavened from their homes (Exodus 12:15; 13:6-7; 34:25).
  3. The process of leavening bread is the same as that for fermenting drink.
  4. Thus, it seems that fermented juice would not have been used for the Passover or the Lord's Supper.
  5. It is argued that there are historical examples of fermented wine being used during the Passover feast.
  6. However, this does not mean that God intended it to be that way.
  7. Also, one should remember Paul's instruction to Timothy to "use a little wine" – unnecessary if he was already drinking wine in the Lord's Supper (1 Timothy 5:23).
- D. If fermented alcoholic wine were used for the Lord's Supper, it could serve as a stumbling-block to those who struggle with addiction to alcohol.
  1. Would Jesus command such a thing?
  2. Would God approve of such a thing?
- E. The fruit of the vine symbolizes the pure and perfect blood of Jesus offered for the sins of the world.

### II. The Weak Brother (Romans 14)

- A. Strangely, some attempt to use Romans 14:21 to classify drinking alcohol as a matter of personal opinion that cannot be judged or condemned.
  1. They argue that one should not eat meat when in the presence of a brother who is offended by such action.

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2. Likewise, they claim that one should not drink wine in the presence of a brother who is offended by it.
3. However, when not in such company, they claim it is right to eat meat or drink wine – with the approval of God!
- B. In matters of opinion, there is liberty (Romans 14:1-12).
  1. A brother who is “weak in the faith” is to be received, but not for the purpose of arguing over his scruples.
  2. These scruples concern things that are matters of indifference, about which there is no scriptural command.
  3. These are individuals who are overly strict due to their own consciences.
  4. Some believed that it was wrong to eat meat.
    1. Jewish Christians believing some things were unclean
    2. Gentile Christians avoiding meat offered to idols
  5. Some set aside certain days and distinguished them above other days.
  6. In matters of opinion each Christian must give account to God, not to one another.
- C. In all matters – whether of doctrine or opinion – the Christian must act with love toward his brethren (Romans 14:13-23).
  1. No Christian should act in any way that would cause his brother to stumble or fall.
    - a. A stumbling-block is “an obstacle in the way which if one strikes his foot against, he stumbles or falls” (Thayer).
    - b. An ‘occasion to fall’ is “any impediment placed in the way and causing one to stumble or fall; a trap or snare” (Thayer).
  2. Thus, if a weak brother is made to stumble by a stronger brother eating meat, then he should cease eating meat (cf. 1 Corinthians 8:7-13).
- D. Of course, when not around a weak brother, one could eat meat.
  1. It is implied that the meat to be eaten is approved of God.
  2. There are some things that are not to be eaten (Acts 15:20, 28-29; cf. Genesis 9:3-4).
- E. Likewise, one should not drink wine if it causes a brother to stumble.
  1. This wine may have been used in idolatrous worship.
  2. In fact, it is not necessary to assume that this wine was fermented.
- F. Of course, when not around a weak brother, one could drink wine.
  1. It is implied that the wine to be drunk is approved of God – not alcoholic.
  2. Intoxication is not a matter of indifference or mere opinion.
  3. It is condemned in any degree!
- G. This chapter emphasizes the need for not violating one’s conscience (14:23).
- H. However, it is just as important not to violate the Word of God!

### Conclusion:

1. The Bible commands sobriety.
2. Yet, it allows a limited exception for the medicinal use of alcohol.
3. Ultimately, abstinence is the answer (1 Peter 2:11; 1 Thessalonians 5:22)!