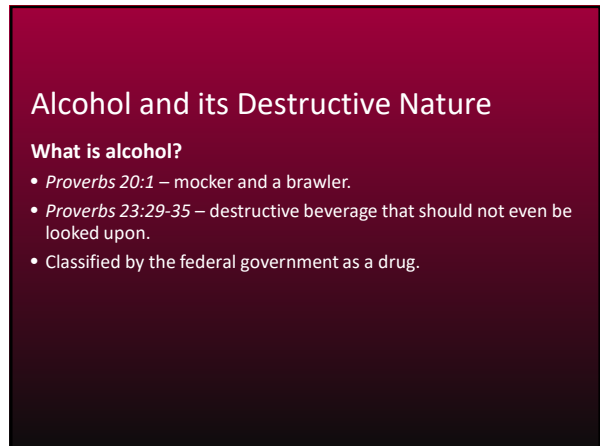


## Alcohol, “Social Drinking,” and the Christian

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

1

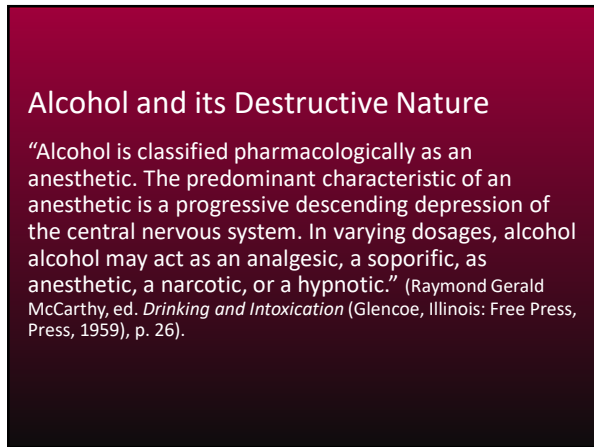


## Alcohol and its Destructive Nature

### What is alcohol?

- *Proverbs 20:1* – mocker and a brawler.
- *Proverbs 23:29-35* – destructive beverage that should not even be looked upon.
- Classified by the federal government as a drug.

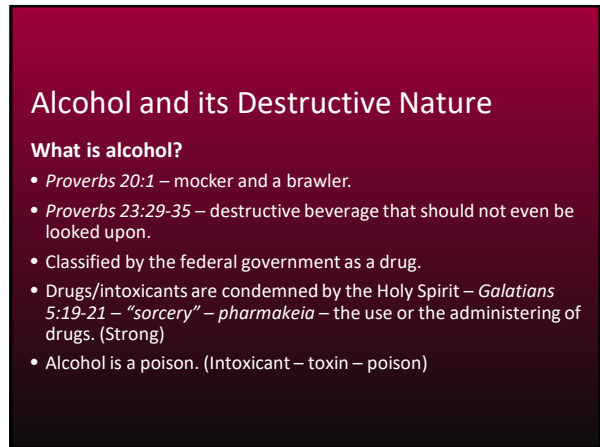
2



## Alcohol and its Destructive Nature

“Alcohol is classified pharmacologically as an anesthetic. The predominant characteristic of an anesthetic is a progressive descending depression of the central nervous system. In varying dosages, alcohol alcohol may act as an analgesic, a soporific, as anesthetic, a narcotic, or a hypnotic.” (Raymond Gerald McCarthy, ed. *Drinking and Intoxication* (Glencoe, Illinois: Free Press, 1959), p. 26).

3

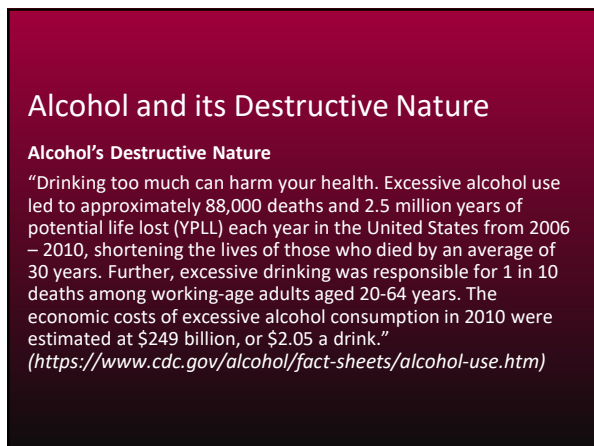


## Alcohol and its Destructive Nature

### What is alcohol?

- *Proverbs 20:1* – mocker and a brawler.
- *Proverbs 23:29-35* – destructive beverage that should not even be looked upon.
- Classified by the federal government as a drug.
- Drugs/intoxicants are condemned by the Holy Spirit – *Galatians 5:19-21* – “*sorcery*” – *pharmakeia* – the use or the administering of drugs. (Strong)
- Alcohol is a poison. (Intoxicant – toxin – poison)

4

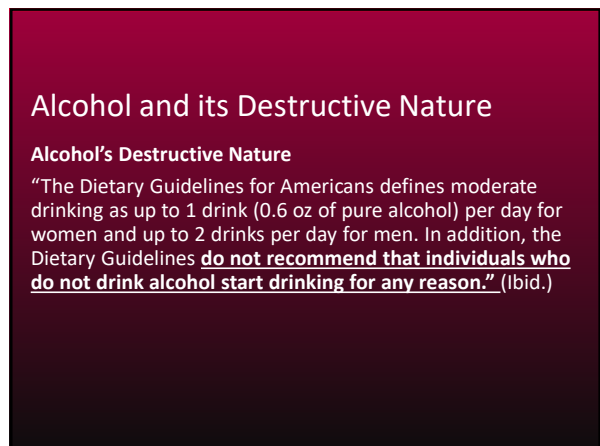


## Alcohol and its Destructive Nature

### Alcohol's Destructive Nature

“Drinking too much can harm your health. Excessive alcohol use led to approximately 88,000 deaths and 2.5 million years of potential life lost (YPLL) each year in the United States from 2006 – 2010, shortening the lives of those who died by an average of 30 years. Further, excessive drinking was responsible for 1 in 10 deaths among working-age adults aged 20-64 years. The economic costs of excessive alcohol consumption in 2010 were estimated at \$249 billion, or \$2.05 a drink.”  
(<https://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/fact-sheets/alcohol-use.htm>)

5



## Alcohol and its Destructive Nature

### Alcohol's Destructive Nature

“The Dietary Guidelines for Americans defines moderate drinking as up to 1 drink (0.6 oz of pure alcohol) per day for women and up to 2 drinks per day for men. In addition, the Dietary Guidelines **do not recommend that individuals who do not drink alcohol start drinking for any reason.**” (Ibid.)

6

## Alcohol and its Destructive Nature

### Alcohol's Destructive Nature

"There are some people who should not drink any alcohol, including those who are...Driving, planning to drive, or participating in other activities requiring skill, coordination, and alertness." (Ibid.)

- The call of Christ? – *Ephesians 4:1*
- Requires sobriety and vigilance – *1 Peter 4:8*

7

## Adam Clarke on 1 Peter 4:8

"There is a beauty in this verse, and striking apposition between the first and last words, which I think have not been noticed; - Be sober, *nepsate*, from *ne* not, and *piein*, to drink – do not swallow down – and the word *katapien*, from *kata*, down, and *piein*, to drink. If you swallow strong drink down, the devil will swallow you down. Hear this ye drunkards, toppers, tipplers, or by whatsoever name ye are known in society, or among your fellow-sinners, strong drink is not only your way to the devil, but the devil's way into you. Ye are such as the devil particularly may swallow down." (Adam Clarke (n. 20), vol. 2, p. 869.)

8

## Wine in the Bible – Is it always fermented?

### Hebrew (OT) three most prominent terms:

- *Yayin* – wine, either fermented or unfermented.
- *Tirosh* – must or fresh grape juice (as just squeezed out); by implication (rarely) fermented wine. (Strong)
- *Shekar* – 'sweet drink' expressed from fruits other than the grape, and drunk in an unfermented or fermented state.

9

## Wine in the Bible – Is it always fermented?

### Greek (NT) most prominent term:

- *Oinos* – a generic term for wine, either fermented or
  - Usually used in place of *yayin* in the LXX.
- *Gleukos* – "new wine" – produced from the purest juice of the grape, which flowed spontaneously from the grape before the treading began.

10

## Wine in the Bible – Is it always fermented?

### Contrasted Uses – shows the generic nature of the terms. (Not always fermented.)

- Blessing – *Psalms 104:14-15*; Cursing – *Habakkuk 2:15*
  - Cheers God and men – *Judges 9:13*; Is a mocker – *Proverbs 20:1*
  - Spiritual blessing – *Isaiah 55:1*; Divine wrath – *Psalms 60:3*
- No Prevention Argument** – disproven by the above contrasts.
- Obvious references to unfermented wine in antiquity.
  - Methods of prevention – Gluten Separation; Moisture Removal; Air Exclusion; Reduced Temperature; Sulphur Fumigation

11

## A Failing Argument from Scripture

### The Wedding in Cana – *John 2:1-11*

- **Argument:** Jesus made wine at the wedding, and thus, sanctioned "social," or moderate consumption of alcoholic beverage.
- Assumptions:
  - "wine" – alcoholic
  - "good wine" (v. 10) – spoke to its potency.
  - "well drunk" (v. 10) – considers drunkenness/intoxication.

12

## A Failing Argument from Scripture

### The Wedding in Cana – John 2:1-11

- **Argument:** Jesus made wine at the wedding, and thus, sanctioned “social,” or moderate consumption of alcoholic beverage.
- Purpose of miracle – (v. 11) – manifest Jesus’ glory.
- “wine” (vv. 3, 9, 10) – *oinos* – fermented or unfermented (generic).
- “good wine” (v. 10) – descriptive of its taste (v. 9).
  - Consensus of antiquity – the best wine was unfermented.

13

## A Failing Argument from Scripture

### The Wedding in Cana – John 2:1-11

- **Argument:** Jesus made wine at the wedding, and thus, sanctioned “social,” or moderate consumption of alcoholic beverage.
- “well drunk” (v. 10) – to their full, satiated.
  - *Methuo* – to be moistened; to be drenched with liquid.
  - LXX usage – *Psalm 23:5* (“My cup runs over”); *Song of Solomon 5:1* (“drink deeply”; “drink abundantly”); *Jeremiah 31:14* (“I will satiate the soul of the priests with abundance”)

14

## A Failing Argument from Scripture

### The Wedding in Cana – John 2:1-11

- **Argument:** Jesus made wine at the wedding, and thus, sanctioned “social,” or moderate consumption of alcoholic beverage.
- Implications of Jesus making fermented wine:
  - He contributed to drunkenness!
  - (v. 6) – made 120-180 gallons.
  - (v. 10) – after they had “well drunk.”
  - Would this manifest Christ’s glory? (v. 11)

15

## Understanding Drunkenness as a Matter of Degree

- **Argument:** The Bible condemns drunkenness, but it does not condemn moderate drinking.
- **Assumption:** Drunkenness is a stage that is reached. Moderate drinking is drinking without reaching the stage of drunkenness.
- **Drunk** – having the faculties impaired by alcohol. (Webster’s)
- **Intoxication** – the condition of having physical or mental control markedly diminished by the effects of alcohol or drugs. (Webster’s)
- Drunkenness or intoxication is not a stage, but a matter of degree. Any impairment qualifies.

16

## Understanding Drunkenness as a Matter of Degree

“The higher nerve functions of the forebrain, such as reasoning, judgment, and social restraint are impaired by very low concentrations of alcohol in the blood.” (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1959 ed., s.v. “Drunkenness,” by Clarence Weinert Muehlberger, p. 683)

“Within two or three minutes after a few sips of whiskey or beer are swallowed, alcohol can be detected in the blood.” (Rolla N. Harger, “The Sojourn of Alcohol in the Body,” in *Alcohol Education for Classroom and Community*, ed. Raymond Gerald McCarthy (New York: McGraw Hill Book Co., 1964), p. 79)

17

## Understanding Drunkenness as a Matter of Degree

“There is a general sequence of events which commonly occurs when a sober person begins to drink alcoholic beverages. These events are expressions of the degree to which a person has lost control over his speech, emotional expression, and motor behavior. The rate at which this effect takes place is related to the quantity of alcohol ingested, to the rapidity of absorption, and to the body weight of the drinker. With the first few ‘social’ drinks, the individual’s judgment and inhibitions are affected.” (Donald L. Gerard, “Intoxication and Addiction,” in *Drinking and Intoxication*, ed. Raymond Gerald McCarthy (Glencoe, Illinois: Free Press, 1959), p. 27)

18

### Understanding Drunkenness as a Matter of Degree

- **Argument:** The Bible condemns drunkenness, but it does not condemn moderate drinking.
- **Assumption:** Drunkenness is a stage that is reached. Moderate drinking is drinking without reaching the stage of drunkenness.
- **Drunk** – having the faculties impaired by alcohol. (Webster's)
- **Intoxication** – the condition of having physical or mental control markedly diminished by the effects of alcohol or drugs. (Webster's)
- Drunkenness or intoxication is not a stage, but a matter of degree. Any impairment qualifies.
- **Moderate drinking = moderate drunkenness/intoxication**

19

### Understanding Drunkenness as a Matter of Degree

- *Galatians 5:21* – “drunkenness” – *methē*; an intoxicant, i.e. (by implication) intoxication. (STRONG) (DEGREE NOT SPECIFIED – ANY)
- *Ephesians 5:18* – “do not be drunk with wine”
  - **Drunk** – *methuskō* – signifies to make drunk, or to grow drunk (an inceptive verb, marking the process of the state expressed in “*methuō* – to be drunk with wine”), to become intoxicated. (Vine)
  - “with wine, in which is dissipation” – *asōtia* – denotes “prodigality, profligacy, riot” (from *a*, negative, and *sozo*, “to save”) (Vine)

20

### Understanding Drunkenness as a Matter of Degree

#### Degrees of Drunkenness Condemned – *Romans 13:13*

- **Revelry** – *kōmos* – “a revel, carousal,” the concomitant and consequence of drunkenness. (VINE)
- **Drunkenness** – *methē* – intoxication; drunkenness (THAYER)
  - “To be pretty well drunk.” (LIDDELL-SCOTT)
  - “stronger, and expressing a worse excess.” (R.C. TRENCH)

21

### Understanding Drunkenness as a Matter of Degree

#### Degrees of Drunkenness Condemned – *1 Peter 4:3*

- **Drunkenness** – *oinophlygia* – an overflow of wine. (STRONG)
- **Revelries** – *kōmos* – “a revel, carousal,” the concomitant and consequence of drunkenness. (VINE) (*cf. Romans 13:13*)
- **Drinking parties** – *potos* – a drinking. (VINE; STRONG; THAYER)
  - “the drinking bout, the banquet, the symposium, not of necessity excessive..., but giving opportunity for excess.” (R.C. TRENCH)
  - “It means properly drinking; an act of drinking; then a drinking bout; drinking together.” (Albert Barnes’ Notes on the Bible, 1 Peter 4:3)
  - “A social gathering at which wine was served, drinking party.” (BDAG)

22

### Alcohol and the Christian

#### Sobriety

- Christians are called to be sober – *1 Peter 1:13-14*
- Physical sobriety – *nēphō* – to abstain from wine. (STRONG)
- Mental sobriety – *sōphrōn* – safe in mind, i.e. self-controlled. (STRONG)
  - Often used interchangeably:
    - *1 Timothy 3:2* – qualification of elders.
    - *1 Peter 5:8* – warning about the Devil.
    - *1 Thessalonians 5:5-10* – exhortation to be of the day.

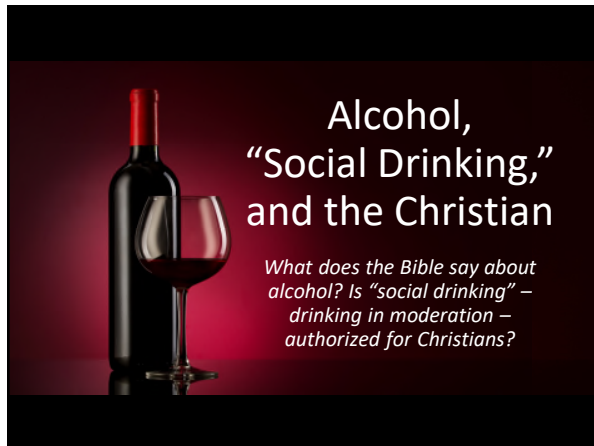
23

### Alcohol and the Christian

#### Holiness

- Christians are called to be holy as God is holy – *1 Peter 1:13-16*
- *1 Peter 2:4-5, 9* – holy/royal priesthood, holy nation.
  - Instruction for priests – *Leviticus 10:8-11* – abstain to distinguish between holy and unholy.
  - Instruction to King Lemuel – *Proverbs 31:4-5* – intoxicating drink is not for kings, lest they forget the law.
- Perfect holiness in the fear of God! – *2 Corinthians 7:1*
- Do not look on the wine! – *Proverbs 23:31-32*

24



25