

# ***THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST***

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

## **The Truth About Alcohol**

### **Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:**

*THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST.* Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Ben Bailey.

“Wine is a mocker, strong drink is a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise” (Prov. 20:1). Welcome to our study of the truth about alcohol. The use of alcohol has become a confusing topic for many people, especially among Christians. Some wonder as to whether or not Christians may partake of alcoholic beverages. Others adamantly oppose such a thing because of the evils that are associated with it. Today I am going to be asking the question, “What does God say about the use of alcohol?” Should a Christian use things like these in his or her everyday life? Should a Christian ever use alcohol? This is an important topic because it is a biblical topic. Any topic that God’s Word discusses is naturally an important topic. Christians are told in 1 Thessalonians 5:21, “Prove all things; hold fast to that which is good.” So we are going to be looking to the Bible for proof regarding whether a Christian should or should not use alcohol. We need to understand that this is a moral and ethical topic. There are a lot of moral and ethical problems related to alcohol and its uses. And there is much confusion in the world over this topic.

What is the problem related to alcohol? This topic is relevant because alcohol is a dangerous substance. Three out of every ten homes are affected in some way by alcohol. Out of every ten homes, three are affected in some way by alcohol-related problems. There are over one hundred million Americans who have an alcohol-related problem. **One hundred million!** In a survey performed by the Gallup polling organization, 64% of the populace said that they had either drunk alcohol in the past or still drink it currently. So this is a very serious problem, and one by which many people have been brought under the devil’s influence.

Sometimes people will try to condone the use of alcohol by saying, “Jesus made water into wine.” But let’s consider this for a moment? Did Jesus make wine at the wedding feast in Cana of Galilee? Is that really what Jesus did? Did He make alcoholic wine so that people could consume that and get drunk? In John 2 we know that they filled large pots with water. Mary, Jesus’ mother, told the servants, “Whatever He says to you, do it.” There were about four pots containing around thirty gallons of water apiece. Thus, Jesus would have made about 120 gallons of wine. There are several things to be considered here. For example, the host usually gave out the best wine first. But the host of this wedding said, “You have saved the best for last” (vs. 10). The wine that Jesus made was better than the rest. Quality (then) was based not on alcoholic content, but on a wine’s freshness. That therefore suggests to us that the wine Jesus made was not alcoholic in nature. There is a passage in the Old Testament which teaches (when the principles are applied correctly) that Jesus did not make alcoholic wine. Look at Habakkuk 2:15—“Woe to him who gives drink to his neighbor, pressing him to your bottle, even to make him drunk, that you may look on his nakedness.” This passage condemns one person giving another alcohol so that he can become drunk. How does this relate to John 2? If Jesus is the perfect, sinless Son of God (and He is, according to Hebrews 4:15), then He did not make 120+ gallons of alcoholic wine to give to people who had already drunk well. That would have been a direct violation of Habakkuk 2:15. This, in and of itself, ought to teach us that Jesus did not make (or

condone) alcoholic wine. The key here is to understand the Greek word for wine—*oinos*. That word can mean either fresh juice that has been squeezed from a grape, or it can mean alcoholic wine. The context determines which one is under consideration. Habakkuk 2:15 would suggest that the wine that Jesus made was not alcoholic, for if it was, Jesus would have been committing sin.

Are there reasons why a Christian should not drink? Yes, there are plenty of reasons. Let me offer today just a few of those for you to consider. First, a person should not drink alcohol because it distorts his perception of reality. It gives him a distorted view of life and of events around him. He cannot think clearly when he drinks. Listen to Isaiah 28:7.

“They also have erred through wine, and through intoxicating drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through intoxicating drink, they are swallowed up by wine, they are out of the way through intoxicating drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment.”

Here is an example of people who, because of intoxicating drink (wine and its consumption), were not able to think clearly. Proverbs 23:33 says, “Your eyes will see strange things, and your heart will utter perverse things.” That is a perfect example of a person whose perception of what is real has been distorted through the use of alcohol. He cannot see clearly, and he does not know what is right or wrong. Who wants to live that kind of life? A Christian certainly should not want to.

Second, drinking alcohol weakens one’s moral awareness. The good morals that we ought to possess, and the upright standards by which we should live, are weakened with every drink of alcohol that a person takes. How do we know this? Think of a couple of examples in the Bible. In Genesis 9, as soon as Noah got off of the ark, he planted a vineyard and drank of the wine. He subsequently got drunk, and Noah’s nakedness was uncovered by one of his sons. How sad that situation was for Noah and his family. That son was cursed because of this event. Because Noah’s moral awareness was weakened, he did not even realize what was going on at the time. What a horrible situation!

Or, think about Genesis 19 and the example of Lot and his two daughters. They had escaped from Sodom and Gomorrah. The daughters were wondering how, since there were no men around, they would be able to produce offspring. So, they devised a plan to get their father drunk so that on one night one of the daughters could have sexual relations with him, and on another night the other daughter could do the same. Thus, Noah’s daughters got him drunk in order to have sexual relations with him, thereby bearing children by him. They had to get him drunk (to weaken his moral awareness) before he would do such a thing. People know clearly today that alcohol weakens a person’s moral awareness. Men and women both have done things that, had they been sober and thinking correctly, they never would have done.

Third, we should not use alcohol because it impairs a person’s decision-making ability. We learn this from Leviticus 10:9-11. God told the sons of Aaron not to give in to intoxicating drink so that they could distinguish between the holy and the unholy, and between the clean and the unclean. Why did God tell the priests that? It was so that they could make a righteous decision in regard to worshiping God and helping people make their sacrifices. They needed to be able to discern what was right and what was wrong. Today, you frequently see a plaque on machinery that says something like, “Do not operate this machinery if you have drunk alcohol.” Why is that? It is because alcohol affects a person’s decision-making ability. A person cannot respond as quickly, or think as he ought to think. A Christian ought to never be in that state of mind.

Fourth, a person should avoid alcohol consumption because it can cause him to become physically ill. If you want a graphic description of this, look at Isaiah 19:14—“The Lord has mingled a perverse spirit in her midst; and they have caused Egypt to err in all her work, as a drunken man staggers in his vomit.” That is a graphic description of what alcohol will do. It can cause a person to get sick and to have his physical health impaired. Think about the people who have been affected by alcohol’s long-term use. People have cirrhosis of the liver, and see their brain functions cease to work as they should. It is a proven fact that alcohol consumption is not good for one’s health.

Fifth, a person should not use alcohol because it disqualifies him from civil and/or religious service. Proverbs 31:4-5 says that alcohol is not good for a king to use. A king is a man who needs to have high standards because he has to make tough decisions. Thus, alcohol disqualifies one from civil service. It also disqualifies a person from religious service. In 1 Timothy 3:2-3, and in Titus 1:7-8, we see that elders are “not to be given to wine.” They are not to have anything to do with it. They are not to associate with it in any form. Why? It is because their religious service is such that they need to be above the standards of the world. Thus, one can be disqualified from civil and religious service if he uses alcohol.

Sixth, alcohol usage is something to be avoided because it can ruin a person’s example. Think about how a Christian should appear to those in the world. The Bible says in 1 Timothy 4:12 that we are to be an example to believers. There is no doubt about that. We should not ever want to offend another Christian. But Matthew 5:16 says that we are to be shining lights to those in the world, too. Jesus said, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” We are to be a good example. If we are down at the local liquor store buying case of beer, what kind of example are we to the person who works there? What kind of example have we been to the people who came in that store? What kind of example were we to the people who might have seen us leaving that establishment? We cannot be a good example to the world while being associated with things that are worldly by their very nature.

Seventh, we should not become involved with alcohol because it could become a stumbling block to a new or weak Christian. Suppose that someone has just obeyed the Gospel. They have come out of a rough life. Perhaps they have been involved in things like this in the past. But they come to know the principles of Christ, and they repent. You then invite them over to your house, they open the refrigerator, and lo and behold, there’s a beer. Romans 14:13 says that we should do nothing to cause another person to stumble. Paul said that if eating meat caused his brother to stumble, he would never eat meat again. Thus, we ought to think about new or weak Christians who may not know or understand these things, and who might be caused to sin by our usage of alcohol. This would be a sin for the individual who used the alcohol, and that individual in turn could cause someone else to stumble and sin as well. The Bible teaches that a Christian ought to be completely sober. Look at the words of 1 Peter 5:8, where the Bible says, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” The word for “sober” means literally not to have any alcohol corrupting our body. We must be completely free from that so that we can do battle against the devil, be in our right mind, and have all our faculties together—because the devil is a powerful adversary. We must be sober!

Someone might ask, “Where in the Bible is the passage which says that a person should not drink or that it is wrong to get drunk?” Look at Ephesians 5:18—“And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit.” If you want an explicit statement, here it is. Do not be drunk with wine! That is something that is sinful in God’s sight.

So let's say that a person has a six pack of beer, and it takes them six beers to get drunk. If they drink half of the six pack, are they half drunk? We need to be careful that we stay completely sober. It is interesting to notice what Paul had to say to Timothy in regard to the use of alcohol for medical purposes. Paul said in 1 Timothy 5:23, "No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent infirmities." Look at how serious Timothy was about not using alcohol. He was so concerned about being a good example, and knew the sinfulness of using alcohol, that Paul had to write him by inspiration to tell him to use alcohol for medicinal purposes. That is the only time in which the Bible authorizes the use of alcohol—assuming that this passage is even referring to alcoholic wine. It may be the case, of course, that the passage is referring to grape juice. Welch's has published a pamphlet to show the benefits of drinking grape juice each day. One of those benefits is the fact that grape juice helps stomach ailments. It may be the case in 1 Timothy 5:23 that the "wine" is grape juice. But either way, Paul still had to write to Timothy to instruct him not to use water, but to use wine. We as Christians must be sober and alert, and always ready to do battle against the devil.

Now I want you to see one of the most serious and graphic descriptions in the Bible of a drunkard. Turn your attention to Proverbs 23:29-35. These verses describe in great detail what being drunk is like.

"Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has complaints? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who linger long at the wine, those who go in search of mixed wine. Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it swirls around smoothly; at the last it bites like a serpent, and stings like a viper. Your eyes will see strange things, and your heart will utter perverse things. Yes, you will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea, or like one who lies at the top of the mast, saying: 'They have struck me, but I was not hurt; They have beaten me, but I did not feel it. When shall I awake, that I may seek another drink?'"

Who has woes, complaints, problems, and wounds of an unknown source? It is "he who lingers long at the wine." Look at the foolishness of this man, who said, "They struck me, but I did not feel it. When can I awake and have another drink?" That is the deplorable state in which a person finds himself when he engages in the consumption of alcohol. A person's eyes see strange things. His heart will utter perverse things. He may be out of his mind. And if a person is in such a state, you can be sure that the devil is having his way with that person. The devil has that person right where he wants him. We need to understand that this is a very serious problem.

Alcohol has done so much to destroy families. When alcohol is used in a family by a father or a mother, it brings a curse, not a blessing. How do we know that? Genesis 9:20-26 tells us so.

"And Noah began to be a farmer, and he planted a vineyard. Then he drank of the wine and was drunk, and became uncovered in his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside. But Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it on both their shoulders, and went backward and covered the nakedness of their father. Their faces were turned away, and they did not see their father's nakedness. So Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done to him. Then he said: 'Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants He shall be to his brethren.' And he said: 'Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem, and may Canaan be his servant.'"

Because Noah got drunk, and because his moral standards were weakened, he allowed his nakedness to be uncovered by Canaan. As a result, Canaan and his family were cursed. How many families have been cursed today because of the use of alcohol? How many fathers or mothers have ended up in prison, with their families suffering as a result of their

actions? How many fathers have beaten their wives? How many mothers have abandoned their children because of the use of alcohol? How many little children have had to suffer because of some parent's alcohol consumption? I guarantee you that every time—without fail—alcohol brings a curse, not a blessing, to the family.

Alcohol is destroying our families because it weakens morals. Genesis 19:30-35 shows us the example of how Lot and his daughters got involved with the use of alcohol. As a result, the daughters were able to use alcohol to get Lot to do something that he normally would not do. Look at Genesis 19:30-35.

“Then Lot went up out of Zoar and dwelt in the mountains, and his two daughters were with him; for he was afraid to dwell in Zoar. And he and his two daughters dwelt in a cave. Now the firstborn said to the younger, ‘Our father is old, and there is no man on the earth to come in to us as is the custom of all the earth. Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve the lineage of our father.’ So they made their father drink wine that night. And the firstborn went in and lay with her father, and he did not know when she lay down or when she arose. It happened on the next day that the firstborn said to the younger, ‘Indeed I lay with my father last night; let us make him drink wine tonight also, and you go in and lie with him, that we may preserve the lineage of our father.’ Then they made their father drink wine that night also. And the younger arose and lay with him, and he did not know when she lay down or when she arose.”

Here is Lot—a great man who was considered in his time to be righteous. For his daughters to do these things, his morals had to be weakened. They had to get him drunk because they knew that under normal circumstances he would not do these things. He would not do these things if he were of a sober mind. So they decided to get him drunk. The text says, “He did not know when she lay down or when she arose.” He was in a state where his morals were weakened. How many young women have been in a state like that? They have been out on a date, had a few drinks, and then, the next thing they knew, they ended up in an intimate relationship in which they had no desire to be involved. Before long, a child is on the way. How many children have been harmed because their parents' morals were weakened? Thus, we need to understand that alcohol is destroying families because it weakens a person's morals, and causes the person to do things that he or she normally would not do.

Alcohol also contributes to foolish choices, not wise ones. The text of 1 Samuel 25:36-38 is the example of Nabal, who was considered to be a great fool. Listen to the words that were penned about him.

“Now Abigail went to Nabal, and there he was, holding a feast in his house, like the feast of a king. And Nabal's heart was merry within him, for he was very drunk; therefore she told him nothing, little or much, until morning light. So it was, in the morning, when the wine had gone from Nabal, and his wife had told him these things, that his heart died within him, and he became like a stone. Then it came about, after about ten days, that the Lord struck Nabal, and he died.”

This man was a fool. He made a decision while in a state of drunkenness. He was in a state where he could not make good decisions, and his wife used that situation to cause Nabal to make a foolish choice. Foolish choices are being made today by many who use alcohol. For example, think about the harm that has been done by those who made a foolish choice to get behind the wheel of a vehicle after having gotten drunk. How many people's lives have been damaged because someone chose—even though they were in a drunken state—to get in a car and drive? Then, as a result, they harmed or killed someone else. Perhaps it was innocent people who were simply driving home, yet they were harmed or killed by the foolish decision of someone who was drunk. We need to understand the harm that alcohol does to the family.

What is the solution to such problems today? How can we keep from having these types of alcohol-related problems? There is only one way. Abstinence is the only solution to the alcohol problem. In 1 Peter 2:11 we read, "Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul." There is only one way to deal with such a horrible problem as alcohol and all the issues associated with it. We need to abstain. There is evidence from the Scripture that a Christian ought never to drink. Social drinking is not something of which God approves. Jesus did not make alcoholic wine. And after we have studied the evidence of Scripture, we ought to say that drinking alcohol is something that we ought never to do because we are to abstain from every form of evil (1 Thess. 5:22).

What if someone has an alcohol-related problem? How can they deal with that? They first must realize that their problem is very serious, and that it will cost them their immortal soul unless they change. They must realize that the abuse of alcohol (as a drug) can harm their body and their relationships. It is not something to be taken lightly. People must realize that they must repent and stop doing what they have been doing. In Luke 3 Jesus said that repentance demands that we stop sinning. Certain people came out to John to be baptized because it seemed like the popular thing to do, but John said to these religious leaders, "Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" (Mt. 3:7). Then he said, "Bear fruits worthy of repentance" (vs. 8). True repentance means that we must bring forth good fruits. If we have a problem with alcohol, we must be willing to state, "This is not right in God's sight. I need to stop doing this. I am going to repent, starting right now. I am not going to do this any more." That does not mean that a person will never fall into that sin ever again. There may be problems along the way. But each time as a person repents, he must say, "This is not right, and I am not going to do it any more. I am going to put this sin behind me." Also, a person should seek help if he needs it. There are groups that can provide such help, and that can provide support and encouragement.

But most of all, people must turn to the Scriptures and turn to God in prayer. The Bible says, "Cast all your care upon Him, for He cares for you" (1 Pet. 5:7). We need to let the Great Shepherd lead us, as in Psalm 23. The best advice is simply to never have anything to do with alcohol. Young people, hear me well. You are at an age in your life where people are going to tempt you to use this drug. You need to realize that if you get involved with it, it is going to ruin your Christian example. It will cause horrible consequences to come to you, and you are going to do things and say things that normally you would not do. Do not have anything to do with alcohol! If you have friends who are involved in the use of alcohol, find new friends! You need to make sure that the people with whom you associate are the kinds of people who can help you glorify God. Parents need to be alert. We need to get our heads out of the sand and realize that children can get involved in alcohol-related problems. We must not act as if nothing is happening. Rather, we need to be alert and aware. We need to be up and waiting for our son or daughter when he or she arrives back home at the end of curfew. We need to be sure that we know who they are with and where they have been. We need to make sure that certain things are not happening. So what if our children are not happy that we have set up such rules? We may prevent a very serious problem from occurring in the lives of those children.

If you have lived a life of sin—maybe a life that has had alcohol in it—you can still become a Christian. You can become a child of God and be forgiven of all that sin. You can go to Heaven. To do that you must believe that Jesus is God's Son. You must be willing to change your life. True belief demands that a person be willing to repent. In Acts 17:30 we are told, "Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteous-

ness." A person must repent because there is a Judgment Day coming. Also, a person must confess that Jesus is the Son of God (Rom. 10:10). And yes, a person must be baptized in water for the forgiveness of sins (Mk. 16:16). Then, when a person comes up out of that water as a new creature, he or she must avoid falling back into the same traps. And if that does happen, then the person must pick himself or herself up and get back on the right road. May we realize the truth about alcohol. It is destructive and sinful, and a Christian should never be involved with it. May God help you to overcome alcohol-related problems in your life as you strive to live by the Gospel of Christ.

**Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:**

*THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST* is brought to you by loving, caring members of the church of Christ. The McLish Avenue church of Christ in Ardmore, Oklahoma, oversees this evangelistic effort. For a free CD or DVD of today's broadcast, please write to:

***THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST***

**607 McLish Ave.**

**Ardmore, OK 73401**

You may call **580-223-3289**. Please visit us on the web at [www.thegospelofchrist.com](http://www.thegospelofchrist.com). We encourage you to attend the church of Christ, where "the Bible is loved and the Gospel is preached."

## STUDY QUESTIONS FOR “THE TRUTH ABOUT ALCOHOL”

1. According to Proverbs 20:1, what is wine (or alcohol)?
2. In the New Testament, the Greek word for wine (*oinos*) can refer to two different types of “wine.” What are those two types?
3. What does Ephesians 5:18 teach?
4. What is the thrust of 1 Peter 5:8 in regard to using alcohol as a beverage?
5. Why did Paul have to command Timothy “take a little wine” for his stomach’s sake (1 Tim. 5:23)?
6. According to Paul’s comments in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, what fate awaits those who engage in drunkenness?
7. Explain the impact of Proverbs 23:29-35 on the drinking of alcohol as a beverage.
8. How does the use of beverage alcohol factor into a Christian’s example to those people around him (especially non-Christians)?
9. What would be wrong with drinking in the privacy of your own home, even assuming that you never got drunk?
10. What might happen to young, immature Christians if they were to see older, more mature Christians using beverage alcohol in their lives?
11. How might the drinking of beverage alcohol lower or weaken our moral standards?
12. Give two scriptural reasons why we know that Jesus did not turn water into alcoholic wine at the time of His first miracle in Cana of Galilee.
13. How does Isaiah 28:7 factor in to the concept that beverage alcohol can cause a person to lose touch with reality?
14. What does Proverbs 23:33 say will happen to people who drink beverage alcohol?
15. Why, in Leviticus 10:9-10, did God tell the sons of Aaron not to drink intoxicating beverages?
16. Proverbs 31:4-5 says that it is not wise for a king to use beverage alcohol. What does that tell us?
17. In Genesis 9:20-26 we learn that Noah was seen naked by one of his three sons. What caused this event to occur?
18. In Genesis 19:30-35 we learn that Lot had an illicit sexual relationship with his daughters. What caused this event to occur?