

Just A Little Wine!

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Introduction

The Holy Scripture teaches us that we:

- ✠ “Should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind” (**Ephesians 4:17**)
- ✠ “Redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (**Ephesians 5:16**)

These teachings and warnings have been mentioned many times in the Bible simply because:

- ✠ “We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (**Ephesians 6:12**)

That shouldn't scare us since God will always protect us and keep us in His Hands as He promised saying:

- ✠ “I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one” (**John 17:15**).

With this Godly love and care, Christians should present their bodies as acceptable holy sacrifices before the Lord. They should wake up from their asleep because salvation is drawing much nearer than we think:

- ✠ “And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed” (**Romans 13:11**)

We should also differentiate between good and evil as St. Paul said:

- ✠ “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret” (**Ephesians 5:11, 12**)

One of the “unfruitful works of darkness” is drunkenness caused by drinking wine for its hidden and destructive effects. Wine has been mentioned many times in the Bible in many different places and in many different occasions that was mistakenly understood and interpreted. Unfortunately, many people tried to make their own interpretations in a way that makes drinking wine a commandment rather than a sin, which contradicts the true teaching of God and the church. Therefore, this article is intended to take a step toward the true interpretation of the Bible about wine by answering many critical questions raised by youths and adults.

The Word “Wine” in the Bible

Some people have tried to interpret some of the scripture as allowing us to drink wine. For example, they think that the following scripture is a clear permission from God to collect and drink wine:

- ✠ “And it shall be that if you earnestly obey My commandments which I command you today, to love the Lord your God and serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul, then I

will give you the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the latter rain, that you may gather in your grain, your new wine, and your oil” (**Deuteronomy 11:13, 14**)

If this verse permits us to drink wine, how about the Bible’s warning that prohibits us from drinking or even looking at wine:

- ✠ “Then the Lord spoke to Aaron, saying: Do not drink wine or intoxicating drink, you, nor your sons with you, when you go into the tabernacle of meeting, lest you die. It shall be a statute forever throughout your generations” (**Leviticus 10:8, 9**)
- ✠ “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” (**Proverbs 23:31, 32**)

Is there a conflict between the above verses? Never. The problem lies in the personal interpretation not in the true interpretation. The Bible teaches us that breaking one commandment is the same as breaking them all:

- ✠ “For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all” (**James 2:10**)

Drinking wine is no exception. It is treated as a sin like all others. For example when we talk about richness and money, we never say that being rich is a sin, but it is a sin if you misuse the money or treat money as a god. Similarly, there is nothing wrong with wine in itself (the substance), however the problem lies in the misuse of wine. For example we use wine in the liturgy as a holy sacrament and the church practices this sacrament every day. However, drinking, even with moderation as some claim, or getting drunk and hurting yourself and others is inappropriate as will be detailed a little later in our discussion.

Now, the Bible tells us that when God was blessing the Israelites, He was also blessing their grain, their wine and their oil. These things were gifts from God. However we should note a couple of things in the listing of these gifts. First, the word wine is mentioned as “new wine”. Second, wine is preceded and followed by plants (grain and oil). From this we should understand that the real meaning of “wine” is the vine itself or probably the grape juice mix that was produced in these days, or the fermented wine that has a very small percentage of alcohol and not the kind of wine that causes drunkenness. We should also note that the Bible used to refer to the whole thing by just one of its characteristics. Therefore, when the Bible mentions the word “wine”, it could simply mean the fruit (the grape) itself. Here are few examples:

- ✠ “Moses told the Israelites: You shall truly tithe all the increase of your grain that the field produces year by year. And you shall eat before the Lord your God, in the place where He chooses to make His name abide, the tithe of your grain and your new wine and your oil, of the firstborn of your herds and your flocks, that you may learn to fear the Lord your God always” (**Deuteronomy 14:22,23**).

This verse indicates that tithing is for all “grain that the field produces”, and wine and oil are not grains that the field produces. Therefore, the verse must mean the plants or fruits that produce oil and wine; namely, olive and grape. Also, the Bible says:

- ✠ “Then Israel shall dwell in safety, the fountain of Jacob alone, in a land of grain and new wine; His heavens shall also drop dew” (**Deuteronomy 33:28**).

The word “land of” followed by “grain and new wine” refers to the land and the plants that produce grain and grape. Please listen to what Hosea says:

✠ “The earth shall answer with grain, with new wine, and with oil; they shall answer Jezreel”
(**Hosea 2:22**)

It is clear here that the earth will not answer with wine, but by grape. In the book of Revelation, it is written that:

✠ “When He opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, ‘Come and see’. So I looked, and behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying: A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the oil and the wine”
(**Revelation 6:5, 6**).

He who sat on the black horse was told to harm all trees and plants of the land but not to harm the oil and the wine. Since oil and wine are not trees or plants, then oil and wine must be referring to olive and grape. Why, simply because they are used in the church liturgical services and God wants us to continue using them until His Second Coming.

When God mentioned the curses to the Israelites, He said:

✠ “You shall plant vineyards and tend them, but you shall neither drink of the wine nor gather the grapes; for the worms shall eat them” (**Deuteronomy 28:39**).

This clearly refers to the grapes and its juice; otherwise how could the worms eat them? This agrees perfectly well with what the Bible said about man. Many times the Bible used the word “soul” to refer to the whole body or to a person.

From the above discussion, the Bible describes three meaning for the word wine:

1. Wine that does not cause drunkenness (e.g., grape juice).
2. Wine drink like fermented grape juice, grape juice mixes or nectarines.
3. Wine that causes drunkenness. This is the type that the Lord condemns saying:

✠ “Awake, you drunkards, and weep; and wail, all you drinkers of wine, because of the new wine, for it has been cut off from your mouth” (**Joel 1:5**).

Additionally, the word “wine” in the New Testament was used in many different places with many different meanings. For example, “Wine” or “vine” was used by our Lord Jesus Christ to describe *Himself*,

✠ “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word, which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing” (**John 15:1-5**)

With the same meaning, the word “branches” here refers to the believers and the word “fruit” is the working and loving faith.

“Wine” was used by Isaiah to describe the *Bible’s teaching*,

✠ “Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price” (**Isaiah 55:1**)

What indicates that wine in the above verse means Bible’s teaching is how the Lord Jesus Christ described His new teaching as new wine and how He gave it to us freely and must be freely given:

✠ “But new wine must be put into new wineskins, and both are preserved” (**Luke 5:38**)

✠ “Freely you have received, freely give” (Matthew 10: 8)

This is similar to St. Paul’s use of milk to refer to his preaching,

✠ “And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able” (**1 Corinthians 3:1, 2**)

“Wine” or “the fruit of vine” was used to describe *eternal happiness*,

✠ “But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom” (**Matthew 26:29**)

It is certainly known that saints do not physically eat or drink in heaven for they never thirst or hunger and therefore this fruit of the vine (wine) means eternal happiness for being with God the eternal as He promised,

✠ “Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world” (**John 17:24**).

“Wine” was also used to describe *punishment for sinners*,

✠ “For in the hand of the Lord there is a cup, and the wine is red. It is fully mixed, and He pours it out; surely its dregs shall all the wicked of the earth drain and drink down” (**Psalms 75:8**).

“Wine” was also used to describe *wrong teachings*,

✠ “And another angel followed, saying: Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication. Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice: If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb” (**Revelation 14:8-9**)

“Wine” was used to as a medication (because of the nature of the alcohol in it and because there were no other known medications at that time) as the Lord described the Good Samaritan saying:

✠ “So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him” (**Luke 10:34**)

The wine was used as cleansing of the wound (effect of alcohol) and oil was used as a seal to avoid infection.

St. Paul also commanded his disciple St. Timothy saying:

✠ “No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach’s sake and your frequent infirmities” (1 Timothy 5:23)

“Wine” was used to describe *holiness* where it was used along with oil in the offerings,

✠ “With the one lamb shall be one-tenth of an ephah of flour mixed with one-fourth of a hin of pressed oil, and one-fourth of a hin of wine as a drink offering” (Exodus 29:40)

Note that bread and wine were the only two things presented by Melchizedek to Abraham,

✠ “Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High” (Genesis 14:18)

Therefore, oil and wine were used together to describe blessings in the Old Testament, as we use them now in our liturgical services:

✠ “The threshing floors shall be full of wheat, and the vats shall overflow with new wine and oil” (Joel 2:24)

What is wrong with Drinking Wine?

This question is very common not only in Youth Meetings but also in public meetings and debates. Many people try to make their own view and interpretation. They even go further by using verses from the Bible that assures the permission of drinking wine and say it is written that Jesus Himself used to drink. Well, let us answer some of these claims.

First, drinking intoxicated wine is and has always been a punishable sin in both the Old and New Testaments. For example, it is written:

✠ “If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and who, when they have chastened him, will not heed them, then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his city, to the gate of his city. And they shall say to the elders of his city: This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard. Then all the men of his city shall stone him to death with stones; so you shall put away the evil from among you, and all Israel shall hear and fear” (Deuteronomy 21:18-21)

The reason for such a big punishment for the rebellious and drunkard son is that his body is no longer suited for the inhabitation of the Holy Spirit,

✠ “If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are” (1 Corinthians 3:17)

✠ “Woe to those who rise early in the morning, that they may follow intoxicating drink; who continue until night, till wine inflames them” (Isaiah 5:11)

Notice how Isaiah declares a “woe” to those who become slaves to intoxicated drinks so that they rise up early seeking drinks continuing until night. This wine will eventually inflame them.

Is it wrong to sell or offer wine to a friend?

✠ “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” (Habakkuk 2:15)

This is a very serious warning. Imaging the fate of the person whom you invite for just one drink. What happens if that person, who may be much weaker than yourself enjoyed your drink and could not stop (that is if you think you are strong enough to stop drinking when you so desire, as everybody else claims). What happens to his life, his future, or his family? Can you make it up to him? Can you make up the years of his life that he may lose? Can you bring him back the decent job and successful career that he lost because of his addiction? Can you bring him back his family and children? Woe to him who gives a drink to his neighbor, just as a little wine.

Would God be angry with drinkers?

Let us see how the Bible answers this question:

- ✠ “Woe to you who are at ease in Zion, and trust in Mount Samaria, notable persons in the chief nation, to whom the house of Israel comes! ... Who drink wine from bowls, and anoint yourselves with the best ointments, but are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph. Therefore they shall now go captive as the first of the captives, and those who recline at banquets shall be removed” (**Amos 6:1-7**)
- ✠ “You also will be drunk; you will be hidden; you also will seek refuge from the enemy” (**Nahum 3:11**)
- ✠ “What do you conspire against the Lord? He will make an utter end of it. Affliction will not rise up a second time. For while tangled like thorns, and while drunken like drunkards, they shall be devoured like stubble fully dried” (**Nahum 1:9, 10**).

People in old times drank a primitive wine that contained low levels of alcohol, yet it was sufficiently intoxicating that a person could get drunk if they consumed enough of it. Consequently, the Bible does address this question. Generally speaking, the Bible condemns drunkenness as a sin and warns the righteous to carefully avoid intoxication. Since this was true in a day of weak and watered down wines, it is widely held by Christians today that complete abstinence is the only responsible choice when it comes to the relatively strong alcoholic beverages of our own day.

A closer look at the Bible’s teaching indicates hard punishment not only for drinking but also for looking (i.e., considering) wine:

- ✠ “Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it swirls around smoothly” (**Proverbs 23:31**)

The word “Do not look” is a clear commandment that does not require any further explanation. It reminds us with God’s commandment about adultery:

- ✠ “But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (**Matthew 5:28**)

Again, here it emphasizes the fact that looking can start and initiate the sin and we should stop here before it grows up. Therefore, if God prohibits looking, telling people that a little drink will not hurt violates God’s commandment and makes them vulnerable to God’s punishment.

Drunkness Condemned

From our discussion let us recite and add more verses that condemn drinking and drunkness:

General Public

- † “So Eli said to her, ‘How long will you be drunk? Put your wine away from you!’ And Hannah answered and said: No, my lord, I am a woman of sorrowful spirit. I have drunk neither wine *nor* intoxicating drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord. Do not consider your maidservant a wicked woman, for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief I have spoken until now” (1 Samuel 1:14 -16)
- † “But if that servant says in his heart, ‘My master is delaying his coming’, and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk. the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers” (Luke 12:45)
- † “But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly” (Luke 21:34)
- † “Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy” (Romans 13:13)
- † “But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner--not even to eat with such a person” (1 Corinthians 5:11)
- † “Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Corinthians 6:10)
- † “Envy, murders, drunkness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God” (Galatians 5:21)
- † “Do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18)

Priests

- † “Do not drink wine or intoxicating drink, you, nor your sons with you, when you go into the tabernacle of meeting, lest you die. It shall be a statute forever throughout your generations” (Leviticus 10:9).
- † “No priest shall drink wine when he enters the inner court” (Ezekiel 44:21).

Kings

- † “It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine, nor for princes intoxicating drink; Lest they drink and forget the law, and pervert the justice of all the afflicted. Give strong drink to him who is perishing, and wine to those who are bitter of heart. Let him drink and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more” (Proverbs 31:4-7).

Nazirites

- † “Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘When either a man or woman consecrates an offering to take the vow of a Nazirite, to separate himself to the Lord, he shall separate himself from wine and similar drink; he shall drink neither vinegar made from wine nor vinegar made from similar drink; neither shall he drink any grape juice, nor eat fresh grapes or raisins. All the days of his separation he shall eat nothing that is produced by the grapevine, from seed to skin” (Numbers 6:1-4).

✠ “But you gave the Nazirites wine to drink, and commanded the prophets saying: Do not prophesy!” (**Amos 2:12**).

This warning for Nazirite was emphasized when the angel appeared to Manoah’s wife to tell her about the birth of Samson. He clearly asked her not to drink wine or any similar drinks:

✠ “Now therefore, please be careful not to drink wine or similar drink, and not to eat anything unclean. For behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. And no razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines” (**Judges 13:4-5**).

If you debate that this warning was only given to the Nazirites, are you saying that we are all not Nazirites, I mean temples of God. If not, how about God’s teachings:

✠ “He has made us kings and priests to His God and Father” (**Revelation 1:6**)

You see, we are God’s priests, kings and virgins (the spiritual meaning) and He:

✠ “Gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works” (**Titus 2:14**)

Therefore, as Nazirities, we must live in purity and righteousness and watch not to cause others to sin:

✠ “It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak” (**Romans 14:21**).

Examples of Evil that Result from Intoxication

✠ “Then he (Noah) drank of the wine and was drunk, and became uncovered in his tent” (**Genesis 9:21**).

✠ “So they made their father (Lot) 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” (**Genesis 19:33-35**).

✠ “Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them. So fire went out from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord. And Moses said to Aaron: This is what the Lord spoke, saying ‘By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; and before all the people I must be glorified’. So Aaron held his peace... Then the Lord spoke to Aaron, saying: Do not drink wine or intoxicating drink, you, nor your sons with you, when you go into the tabernacle of meeting, lest you die. It shall be a statute forever throughout your generations, that you may distinguish between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean” (**Leviticus 10:1-3, 8 –10**).

✠ “Now Absalom had commanded his servants, saying: Watch now, when Amnon’s heart is merry with wine, and when I say to you, ‘Strike Amnon!’ then kill him. Do not be afraid. Have I not commanded you? Be courageous and valiant” (**2 Samuel 13:28**).

Are Drinking Parties Condemned?

The circumstances in which one might consume alcohol would often put a Christian in places he ought not be. Drinking parties and Bars are off limits to those professing Christ. We have no business associating with drunkards in their sin. Let us read what the Bible says about this:

- † “Do not mix with winebibbers, or with gluttonous eaters of meat; for the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty, and drowsiness will clothe a man with rags...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?” (**Proverbs 23:20-21, 29-35**).
- † “Woe to those who rise early in the morning, that they may follow intoxicating drink; who continue until night, till wine inflames them! The harp and the strings, the tambourine and flute, and wine are in their feasts; but they do not regard the work of the Lord, nor consider the operation of His hands. Woe to men mighty at drinking wine, woe to men valiant for mixing intoxicating drink” (**Isaiah 5:11-12, 22**).
- † “Yes, they are greedy dogs which never have enough. And they are shepherds who cannot understand; they all look to their own way, every one for his own gain, from his own territory. ‘Come’, one says: I will bring wine, and we will fill ourselves with intoxicating drink; tomorrow will be as today, and much more abundant” (**Isaiah 56:11-12**).
- † “But if that evil servant says in his heart, ‘My master is delaying his coming, and begins to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (**Matthew 24:48-51**).
- † “Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy” (**Romans 13:13**).
- † “For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles--when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries. In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you. They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead” (**1 Peter 4:3-5**).

Did the Lord Jesus drink wine?

Some people claim that the Lord Jesus Christ used to drink; as He described Himself in the Bible. Sadly people do NOT read the Bible as it is written. They read it as they want to read it, interpret it, as they want to interpret it, and hear it, as they want to hear it. That is what we call “selective hearing”. Let us read the verses to explain my point:

- † “The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say: Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners” (Luke 7: 34)
- † “The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say: Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ But wisdom is justified by her children” (Matthew 11: 19)

Beloved, please tell me where did it say in the above Scriptures that the Lord Jesus Christ drank wine? Both Scriptures say “The Son of Man has come eating and drinking”. STOP HERE please. Where is the word wine, just “drinking”, meaning regular food and drink! However, the Jews accused Him saying He is a “winebibber”. So, the Lord never declared Himself to be a drinker of wine. It is the Jews who accused Him of these false accusations among many others, just to make Him look bad before people, meaning He doesn’t fit the description of even a prophet and to get rid of Him.

How could that be true if the Lord Jesus converted water into wine?

How could the above argument hold true if the Lord Himself converted the water into wine at the wedding of Cana of Galilee?

Please read the story carefully. It says:

✠ “When the master of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and did not know where it came from, but the servants who had drawn the water knew, the master of the feast called the bridegroom. And he said to him: Every man at the beginning sets out the good wine, and when the guests have well drunk, then the inferior. You have kept the good wine until now” (John 2: 9-10)

If the wine that the Lord presented was a regular wine, the master of the feast wouldn’t have known. This means it was a different kind of wine (a fermented wine) that made him wake up and know the difference between inferior and good wine.

Did church saints drink wine?

Some people claim that some saints were drinking wine. The example that most people use is the story of St. Macarius. What happened is that some people were affected by the western world where wine was commonly used, as a source of energy during winter time. So, those who used to drink wine were offering St. Macarius wine, who, if it happened that he drank, he used to punish himself by not drinking water all day until people learned and stopped this wrong habit. This exactly happens now a day where people in Christmas parties, work parties, school parties, etc., offer you wine and if you don’t drink, they speak against you as if you are weak, have no tolerance, etc. To refute their claim, you mistakenly drink or do the wrong thing to prove yourself.

How about the monasteries that sell wine?

Some people claim that monasteries make and sell wine as an income to live by. This is very wrong to even say it. Monasteries do not need extra income. Our people are so kind to support churches and monasteries. Donations are good enough for monks to live peacefully. So, it is not for income. It is to help churches. Although monasteries make wine, it is for people to buy and offer to churches trusting the source and making sure that it is according to the church standards, with no high percentage of alcohol or bad things in it.

There are many bad things happening against our people and our churches now a day. This is why we must be careful. For example, please read the health warning on our church website (www.stbishoy.ca) that we received from the Canadian Public Health Division that speaks about poisonous botulism cases in Toronto resulting from:

“Salted mullet fish dish, also known as ‘feseekh’ or ‘fesikh’. Feseekh is consumed primarily during an Egyptian holiday marking the start of spring.”

What are they referring to? They are referring to Sham El Nessim, that is Easter Monday where Christians eat Feseekh. This exact situation of poisoned Feseekh happened in Egypt couple of years ago. They are all targeting Christians. So, now whom should we trust? No other source but our churches and our monasteries. So, please don't take this great effort as an excuse of allowing you to drink wine. If you want to drink wine, it is your choice but please don't use the Bible or the church or the monastery as an excuse of approving of your wrongdoing.

How about clergy that drink wine or allow moderate drinking?

Some people claim that clergy and deacons can drink wine and allow their congregations to drink wine as long as it is done in moderation They use the Biblical source:

✠ “A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous... Likewise deacons must be reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for money” (1 Timothy 3:2-8)

They use the words about deacons of “not given to much wine” as an approval of drinking just a little or in moderation. If you wish to establish a doctrine and a teaching, please read the whole Bible, especially what was said before and after the verse that you are citing. For example, here in Timothy, it said clearly that bishops should “not be given to wine” PERIOD. Then, it says “likewise”, meaning no wine PERIOD. So, how about these words of “not given to much wine”?

It is important to note here that Josephus the Historian indicated that the Jews in his time were very moderate in their drinking habits. It was indicated that most of the Jews used to drink the fermented grape juice not the one that causes drunkenness. So, even that drink, must be restricted to the deacons to avoid getting drunk or getting used to it. St. Paul was trying to remove anything that could lead to addiction.

Please read the strange news in the last few days. Schools discovered that high school students are using “HAND SANITIZER” as a source of drinking alcohol. Who could ever imagine that? Students got addicted to alcohol from home (ask parents please) and they couldn't stop in school. They needed something to satisfy their urge for alcohol. Please search the article “Teens Are So Desperate for Alcohol They're Chugging Hand Sanitizer” on CNN, MSNBC, etc.

If what I said above is not the case, why did St. Paul repeat this teaching in his Epistle to Titus:

✠ “For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money” (Titus 1: 7)

Now, for clergy who drink wine or approve of moderate drinking, I can't teach my reverend fathers, as a poor, uneducated, and ignorant priest myself (so you don't have to fall into the sin of judging me). But, I will just bring this scripture to everyone's attention without further comments:

✠ “But 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” (Isaiah 28:7)

So, if St. Paul is allowing moderation, how about what he said:

✠ “Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy” (**Romans 13:13**)

Please read the Bible as a whole, not pick and chose verses that “you think” agree with your life. Do you know what “heresy” means? It means “pick and chose”. Please check your dictionary.

The Unpleasant Circumstances of the Drinker

The following verses are self explanatory:

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

✠ “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” (**Isaiah 19:14**).

✠ “But 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. For all tables are full of vomit and filth; no place is clean” (**Isaiah 28:7-8**).

Arguments for Complete Abstinence

The alcoholic content of nearly any modern alcoholic beverage, compared with the weak and watered-down wine used in the old times, would lead us to define modern alcoholic beverages as “strong drink”, and the consumption of even a small amount would be considered excessive drinking in Biblical terms. The stronger the drink, the more this conclusion would apply. When we consider all of the above passages that warn against excessive drinking, we must conclude that this fact alone would lead us to abstain from all present day alcoholic beverages.

Sobriety is very difficult to maintain when drinking modern alcoholic beverages. In Bible times a relatively large quantity of wine had to be consumed before one’s reasoning abilities were impaired. Today, one mixed drink or one beer is sufficient to lower one’s inhibitions and make it likely that more alcohol will be consumed. Complete abstinence is the only way to insure that we will avoid the sin of drunkenness.

Priests who served in the house of God were commanded to avoid all wine so that they might not profane God’s house. This includes all Christians who are “spiritually” priests, meaning they raise their hands and present themselves as sacrifices to God:

✠ “you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (**1 Peter 2:5**)

Since we find ourselves in a similar position of responsibility, we should take similar precautions.

Beloved, let us understand this important fact. In addition to the Bible teaching of complete abstinence from drinking wine, there is so much more that address the influence of alcohol as a destructive and evil force in our society, back then, right now and in generations to come. We must maintain a life of purity that separates us from the wickedness around us. The Bible describes principles of this pure life saying:

✠ “Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against

you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation” (1 Peter 2:11-12)

- † “Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts” (Romans 13:10-14).
- † “Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Therefore, come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the Lord Almighty” (2 Corinthians 6:14-18).
- † “But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them. For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things, which are done by them in secret. But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. Therefore He says: Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light. See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:3-18).

Associating ourselves with the consumption of today’s “strong drinks”, and the evil that goes with them, would violate these principles. We must influence others for good, not evil. We might believe that the moderate consumption of weak beverages is lawful, but the strength of today’s beverages makes such distinctions precarious. Those around us, especially the young and the ignorant, are not able to distinguish between our “moderate” consumption and the world’s excess. When teenagers see their parents or older brothers drink wine, they may not have the ability to stop and may be led to destruction. Who would be responsible then? If you bring alcohol home, how do you know that your young ones will not drink? If you think they don’t, think again... The weak and ignorant will be encouraged and emboldened to sin, and this we should not allow.

In old times, wine was a staple food source that in many places was something of a necessity. In many areas grapes were one of the few crops that could be grown that could provide ample amounts of nutrition. The only way to store sufficient quantities of the grape harvest for year-round use was

by turning the juice into wine. Wine provided a source of carbohydrates and sugar that could be stored. Through most of the year the only beverages available were water, milk, and wine. In many places the water sources were unreliable or contaminated. Fresh milk was not available to everyone in sufficient quantities. Wine filled a crucial role as a reliable and safe source of liquid refreshment, and by mixture it helped to purify poor water and make it more palatable.

Today we find ourselves in completely different circumstances. With our numerous food sources and expansive selection of innocent beverages there is absolutely no need for anyone to drink alcoholic beverages. The only reason anyone would choose to do so would be to satisfy a personal craving. But when we consider all of the dangers and objections that we have presented, such a choice would be unwise at best, and in my opinion it would actually be unjustifiable.

Conclusion

✠ “And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit”
(Ephesians 5:18)

Be filled with the Spirit, and not spirits.

Please read the following scripture where the Lord rebukes us by giving the example of the house of the Rechabites. Please read it carefully MANY times and see the punishments and rewards. Ask yourself: If the sons of Rechabites listened to their father and the Lord used their obedience of NOT drinking wine as an example of obeying God, wouldn't you strongly consider obeying His commandments?

✠ “The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, saying, "Go to the house of the Rechabites, speak to them, and bring them into the house of the Lord, into one of the chambers, and give them wine to drink." Then I took Jaazaniah the son of Jeremiah, the son of Habazziniah, his brothers and all his sons, and the whole house of the Rechabites, and I brought them into the house of the Lord, into the chamber of the sons of Hanan the son of Igdaliah, a man of God, which was by the chamber of the princes, above the chamber of Maaseiah the son of Shallum, the keeper of the door. Then I set before the sons of the house of the Rechabites bowls full of wine, and cups; and I said to them, "Drink wine." But they said, "We will drink no wine, for Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, commanded us, saying, 'You shall drink no wine, you nor your sons, forever. You shall not build a house, sow seed, plant a vineyard, nor have any of these; but all your days you shall dwell in tents, that you may live many days in the land where you are sojourners.' Thus we have obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, in all that he charged us, to drink no wine all our days, we, our wives, our sons, or our daughters, nor to build ourselves houses to dwell in; nor do we have vineyard, field, or seed. But we have dwelt in tents, and have obeyed and done according to all that Jonadab our father commanded us. But it came to pass, when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up into the land, that we said, 'Come, let us go to Jerusalem for fear of the army of the Chaldeans and for fear of the army of the Syrians.' So we dwell at Jerusalem." Then came the word of the Lord to Jeremiah, saying, "Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: 'Go and tell the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, "Will you not receive instruction to obey My words?" says the Lord. "The words of Jonadab the son of Rechab, which he commanded his sons, not to drink wine, are performed; for to this day they drink

none, and obey their father's commandment. But although I have spoken to you, rising early and speaking, you did not obey Me. I have also sent to you all My servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them, saying, 'Turn now everyone from his evil way, amend your doings, and do not go after other gods to serve them; then you will dwell in the land which I have given you and your fathers.' But you have not inclined your ear, nor obeyed Me. Surely the sons of Jonadab the son of Rechab have performed the commandment of their father, which he commanded them, but this people has not obeyed Me. ' ' Therefore thus says the Lord God of hosts, the God of Israel: 'Behold, I will bring on Judah and on all the inhabitants of Jerusalem all the doom that I have pronounced against them; because I have spoken to them but they have not heard, and I have called to them but they have not answered.' " And Jeremiah said to the house of the Rechabites, "Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: 'Because you have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts and done according to all that he commanded you, therefore thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: "Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not lack a man to stand before Me forever" (Jeremiah: all chapter 35)