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GRACE**

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# **Alcohol Drunkenness**

And a

## **Merry Heart**

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

# Alcohol, Drunkenness, and a Merry Heart.

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## Topics.

- Do not get drunk, but be filled with the Spirit.
- Priests and strong drink.
- When drinking becomes sinful.
- Isaiah and drunkenness.
- Drinking in moderation is acceptable.
- Scriptures that speak against drunkenness.

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## DO NOT GET DRUNK, BUT BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT

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- **Ephesians 5:18-19:** do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit <sup>19</sup>addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart.

**The word, debauchery** carries the idea of self-indulgence, immorality, and shamelessness. Notice, Paul does not say, do not drink at all, but do not drink to excess (i.e., to get drunk), drinking alcohol is not a sin, but excessive drinking is dangerous and can lead to sin. Paul is simply saying, do not drink excessive alcohol to be merry, but rather be merry in the Lord. Even the secular world understand that excessive drinking is dangerous because:

- It weakens a persons will, morals and inhibitions, and therefore can lead to behaviour that is regrated the next day and even worse for the rest of a person's life, (i.e., unlawful behaviour, loose morals, drunk driving, adultery, and violence etc).
- It often leads to self-indulgence, shamelessness, and doing things that when sober the person would not think of doing, and when they have sobered up, greatly regret how they acted or what they have done.
- It clouds the mind and dulls rational thinking, and overtime destroys the liver, brain cells and memory.
- It has the potential to lead to alcoholic addiction and destroy marriages, families, and relationships, and wastes money that could be spent on far better things.
- It leads to violence, and often to the death of the innocent through drunken driving.

These are all reasons the Bible warns against excessive drinking, even the secular world understands these truths, and that drinking to excess can lead to many dangers and regrets. For these reasons, it is obviously better to abstain altogether, nevertheless a man and woman who have a glass of wine over a romantic meal, or a man who has a couple of beers after a hard day's work are not sinning, for though there are many verses that do strongly warn against drinking an excess, it does not teach total abstinence, and those who do drink in moderation cannot be accused of committing any sin.

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## PRIESTS AND STRONG DRINK

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The Bible teaches that any priest who drank strong drink prior to or during his service in the temple was considered unclean, today we would say he was unfit for service. Naturally serving in the temple or in any form of ministry while under the influence of alcohol would be extremely foolish for obvious reasons, and an offence to God, and to those in the assembly, but outside of serving in ministry drinking alcohol is not a sin.

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## WHEN DRINKING BECOMES SINFUL

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**NOTE:** drinking alcohol is not a sin, it is the following two results that cause it to be sinful:

1. The immoral and sinful behaviour that results from drinking an excess of alcohol.
2. Becoming addicted to it, for once a person is addicted, it is the alcohol that controls their life, and not God's word and His Spirit.

God does not ban things that can do great harm in excess, and be enjoyed in moderation rather He expects His people to have self-control (one of the fruits of the Spirit). Drunkenness highlights the truth that they lived to gratify the flesh and their sensual lusts and not to serve God.

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## ISAIAH AND DRUNKENNESS

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- **Isaiah 28v1:** Woe to the proud crown of the drunkards of Ephraim, and the fading flower of its glorious beauty, which is on the head of the rich valley of those overcome with wine!

Having many vineyards throughout the fertile valleys of Samaria the Ephraimites were exposed to drinking an excess of alcohol and frequently overcome by it, but this is no excuse for excessive drinking, for all God's people are called to use self-control. Isaiah words are aflame with loathing, he speaks with fiery indignation as he looks upon the moral corruption of the Northern kingdom.

He fixes his focus on drunkenness and partying which is one of the most common vices of all generations. This is not to imply that this was their only sin, but to highlight the rottenness underlying the glory of the royal city and the visible beauty of its surrounding hills and valleys.

Symbolically speaking, it could be said they were drunk with proud self-confidence, and power, glory and fame, and their great affluence and riches, and since they had a golden calf set up in Dan and one in Bethel, and groves and altars built in the high places throughout their land it could also be said, they were drunk with idolatry.

- **Isaiah 5:11-12:** Woe to those who rise early in the morning, that they may run after strong drink, who tarry late into the evening as wine inflames them! <sup>12</sup> They have lyre and harp, tambourine and flute and wine at their feasts, but they do not regard the deeds of the LORD, or see the work of his hands.

Not only are these people drinking most of the day, but they are also turning the feast of the LORD into a time of wild revelling and partying, and instead of celebrating God in an honourably and worthy manner are using these feasts as a time to gratify their base lusts and pleasures. They make light of drunkenness and live as though God will not punish sin.

The use of music is not wrong, but when it is used with excess alcohol and draws people into immorality, and away from God and what is right before Him, it then becomes sin.

- **Isaiah 5:22-23:** Woe to those who are heroes at drinking wine (mighty to drink wine in KJV), and valiant men (men of strength in KJV) in mixing strong drink, <sup>23</sup>who acquit the guilty for a bribe, and deprive the innocent of his right! (Which justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him! in the KJV).

The words, "woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine," (strong drink) are like those in the above verses, but there the revellers were simply common men of the careless self-indulgent type, while here they are identified with heroes, mighty and valiant men which may refer to either of the following three groups:

1. Ruthless soldiers who would not only drink an excess of strong wine and boast of their victories and battles, but also take by force what rightfully belong to the righteous and the innocent for the price of a bribe, like modern day mercenaries who kill for financial reward.
2. Those who were rich since they could afford the spices and herbs, the dates, and drugs, etc., to mix with the wine to make it more intoxicating.
3. Judges and those who were in positions of authority and power, since it is linked to corrupt rulers who take bribes (i.e., rewards). Such men were in positions that enabled them to cheat the innocent and righteous out of what is rightfully theirs (i.e., their land, homes, property, or inheritance) by perverting justice and distorting laws. To pervert justice and cheat the innocent out of what was rightfully theirs is an abomination before the LORD.
4. Those who were so accustomed to strong drink that they boasted of their ability to drink extraordinary amounts, and resist its usual intoxicating influence, boasting in this manner is still common today.

A similar idea is expressed in the following verse:

- **Isaiah: 56:12:** Come, they say, "let me get wine; let us fill ourselves with strong drink; and tomorrow will be like this day, great beyond measure."

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## DRINKING IN MODERATION IS ACCEPTABLE

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The following verses show that it is not a sin to drink alcohol in moderation.

- **Psalms: 104:14-15:** You O LORD caused the grass to grow for the livestock and plants for man to cultivate, that he may bring forth food from the earth <sup>15</sup>and wine to gladden the heart of man, oil to make his face shine and bread to strengthen man's heart.
- **Ecclesiastes 9:7:** Go, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart, for God has already approved what you do.

- **John 2:7-11:** Jesus said to the servants, “Fill the jars with water.” And they filled them up to the brim. <sup>8</sup> And he said to them, “Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast.” So they took it. <sup>9</sup> When the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom <sup>10</sup> and said to him, “Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now.” <sup>11</sup> This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.

Some claim that the wine in focus here was non-alcoholic grape juice, but this is an error, for the whole purpose of drinking wine at a wedding, was to make the heart merry. Added to this, the purpose of giving the best wine first was so that the guests taste and mind would be slightly dulled later in the evening, and therefore would not notice they were drinking cheaper wine.

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## SCRIPTURES THAT SPEAK AGAINST DRUNKENNESS

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Following are a few of the verses that warn against excess:

- **Proverbs 20:1:** Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise.
- **Isaiah 28:3:** The proud crown of the drunkards of Ephraim will be trodden underfoot.
- **Hosea 7:5:** On the day of our king, the princes became sick with the heat of wine; he stretched out his hand with mockers.
- **Ephesians 5:18:** be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess.
- **Revelation 17:2:** With whom the kings of the earth have committed sexual immorality, and with the wine of whose sexual immorality the dwellers on earth have become drunk.

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*As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.*

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