

SOME EXCOGITATIONS CONCERNING WINE: IT'S USE AND ABUSE

By Wayne Camp

Genesis 14:18: And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God.

Proverbs 20:1: Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.

There is not a contradiction in the two verses given above. In the first we find Melchizedek, a priest of the most high God and a type of Jesus Christ, bringing wine and bread to Abram when he met him after he had rescued Lot. Surely, none will say that Melchizedek was guilty of sin when he brought this wine and when he apparently joined Abram in a meal and the wine was consumed.

In the second text we are warned of the dangers of the abuse of wine and strong drink and the problems it holds for those who are not wise in their use of it. The same wise man that wrote Pro. 20:1 also wrote Proverbs 3:9-10: "Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine."

In the Bible there are 212 verses in which the word wine is used. Many of them condemn its abuse while many of them commend its proper use. When I first prepared the notes (About A. D. 1980) from which I am writing this article, I carefully read every verse in the Bible that uses the word wine. I am doing that again to refresh my mind about the subject.

The word excogitate means "to think out; to study intently and carefully in order to grasp or comprehend fully." I hope that you will join me in an intensive and careful study of the matter of wine, its use and its abuse. Too many times our convictions are based on emotions that have been formed by the Temperance Movement and others on such subjects as is before us. While I am a tee-total abstainer, I drink no wine except in the Lord's Supper, I am convinced that many are in error in their attitude toward wine and this error causes them to object to its use in the Lord's Supper.

I want to point out in the beginning that I am speaking of wine, naturally fermented, in this article. I am not speaking of wine that has been fortified with gin or some other liquid with high alcohol content. I am not speaking of beer, whiskey, or any other such liquid.

I am speaking of wine, the natural produce of the grape. I am speaking of wine such as Melchizedek brought forth when he and Abram met. I am speaking of wine such as the Israelites were commanded to use in some of their sacrifices and feasts. "And thou shalt bring for a drink offering half an hin of wine, for an offering made by fire, of a sweet savor unto the LORD (Num. 15:10). I am speaking of the kind of wine of which a tithe was to be brought to the Lord. "And thou shalt eat before the LORD thy God, in the place which he shall choose to place his name there, the tithe of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the firstlings of thy herds and of thy flocks; that thou mayest learn to fear the LORD thy God always (Deu. 14:23).

I am speaking of the kind of wine Jesus made when he performed his first miracle. I will deal with this in detail later, but I would remind the reader that the wine which Jesus made was pronounced by the governor of the feast to be the best wine served at the feast. It was not grape juice; it was wine, wine

with alcoholic content.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

As we excogitate together on this subject, let me pose a few questions that should be considered in our study.

Is it the use or the abuse of wine the Bible condemns?

Is wine to be considered inherently evil? Did God command total abstinence in his word?

If wine is considered inherently evil, why is it set forth as a blessing from God in Scripture?

If wine is to be universally condemned, why is it used symbolically so often in Scripture to represent that which is good?

If wine is inherently evil and to be totally condemned, why would Paul recommend that Timothy use it for his stomach and other infirmities?

If wine is inherently evil and to be totally condemned why would a priest of the most high God bring it to Abram?

If wine is inherently evil and to be totally condemned why would Jesus make wine as his first miracle?

If wine is to be universally condemned and is inherently evil, why would Jesus infer that he drank wine while in the days of his flesh?

Can we approach this question with a willingness to let the Word of God speak to our hearts and minds that which is truth and lay aside the traditions and prejudices, the opinions and suppositions that are founded on emotion rather than "thus saith the Lord"?

THE USE OF WINE

I debated for some time on which to deal with first, the use or the abuse of wine. Since the average person is probably more familiar with the Scriptures which condemn the abuse of wine, I thought it judicious to first consider the use of wine as spoken of favorably in God's Holy word.

In the study of the subject at hand, it would be well if we remember certain things about the word of God. It condemns gluttony, but not the eating of food. It condemns illicit and perverse sex, but not the marital relations of a husband and his wife. It condemns the misuse of liberty, but not liberty itself. It condemns murder, but not self defense or the death penalty. It condemns "divorce for any cause," but allows for divorce in very specific cases. And, it condemns the abuse of wine, but not the proper use of wine.

Godly Isaac drank wine. I think that none will deny that Isaac was a godly man. The Lord appeared to him on more than one occasion to bless him. He is mentioned in Heb. 11:20 as being one with great faith. "By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come."

Isaac drank wine. When Jacob brought him wine (Gen. 27:25), Isaac drank it without protest.

Obviously, he regularly drank wine with his meals and did not think it abnormal, or a breach of faith in God, for Jacob to bring him wine on this occasion.

When conferring the blessing upon Jacob, Isaac said, "Therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine" Gen. 27:28).

Wine was commanded as a beverage in several of the offerings commanded by the Lord in the Law of Moses. Numerous scriptures could be cited to show this and we will look at some of them.

Aaron and his sons were to offer certain offerings that were accompanied with a drink offering that was wine. ". . . the fourth part of an hin of wine for a drink offering (Ex. 29:40). Would God command them to bring a drink offering of wine if wine is inherently evil?

Other offerings included drink offerings of wine. Lev. 23:13 "And the meat offering thereof shall be two tenth deals of fine flour mingled with oil, an offering made by fire unto the LORD for a sweet savor: and the drink offering thereof shall be of wine, the fourth part of an hin." Numbers 15:5 "And the fourth part of an hin of wine for a drink offering shalt thou prepare with the burnt offering or sacrifice, for one lamb." Numbers 15:7 "And for a drink offering thou shalt offer the third part of an hin of wine, for a sweet savor unto the LORD." Numbers 15:10 "And thou shalt bring for a drink offering half an hin of wine, for an offering made by fire, of a sweet savor unto the LORD."

The word translated wine in these verses is YAYIN. The same Hebrew word is used in Prov. 20:1 which we have used as our text on the abuse of wine and will examine later. The drink offerings were of wine, not unfermented grape juice, or, as some have erroneously designated it, unfermented wine.

As much of a surprise as it may be to some of our readers, God specified STRONG wine was to be used in at least one of the sacrifices as a drink offering. This was the continual burnt offering which was a sweet savor to the Lord. This offering was to be made twice a day every day at morning and at evening. One lamb was to be offered in the morning and another in the evening. Each time an offering was made, one-fourth of one hin of strong wine was to be poured out as a drink offering before the Lord. A hin equaled five quarts. A fourth of that would be one quart and one cup, or about five cups of strong wine. Five cups of wine and one lamb were offered in the morning and five cups strong wine and one lamb were offered in the evening, every day, seven days per week, except on the Sabbath day the offerings were doubled—two lambs and ten cups of wine in the morning and two lambs and ten cups of wine in the evening. "It is a continual burnt offering, which was ordained in mount Sinai for a sweet savor, a sacrifice made by fire unto the LORD. And the drink offering thereof shall be the fourth part of an hin for the one lamb: in the holy place shalt thou cause the strong wine to be poured unto the LORD for a drink offering. And the other lamb shalt thou offer at even: as the meat offering of the morning, and as the drink offering thereof, thou shalt offer it, a sacrifice made by fire, of a sweet savor unto the LORD" (Num. 28:6-8).

Now, I would remind all of us that all these sacrifices and offerings pointed to our Lord Jesus Christ. Did this drink offering of strong wine that was offered twice daily point to our Savior? He poured out his blood before God as a sweet savor offering, just as this strong wine was poured out as part of a sweet savor offering. This was a drink offering and he said of his blood, "My blood is drink indeed" (Jn. 6:55). He also said, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you."

The blood of Christ is represented in the drink offering of strong wine, and points to the mighty power

in his blood, its mighty cleansing power, its mighty propitiating, satisfying, and pleasing power. New and weak wine would not do! It must be strong to represent the powerful blood. Grape juice would have been rejected by God because it would be a weak and beggarly figure of our Savior's precious and powerful blood.

Surely no one will argue that the strong wine poured out morning and evening before the Lord as a drink offering was grape juice. Nor do I think that any would insult our intelligence by suggesting that the strong wine was some imaginary unfermented wine. Strong wine suggests wine that has reached its peak or strength by aging. As Jesus said, "No man also having drunk old wine straightway desireth new: for he saith, The old is better" (Lu. 5:39). By the way, if wine is inherently evil, as some erroneously claim, why would Jesus say that old wine is better than new wine? Surely he would have seized this opportunity to say, "Old wine is stronger and higher in alcoholic content therefore it is even more evil than new wine. It is more the devil's brew than is new wine." But, our sinless Saviour, in whose mouth was no guile, who never uttered an untrue declaration said, "Old wine is better." It is strongest and has reached the peak of taste and bouquet. That is the kind of wine that was required for the continual burnt offering made twice daily.

The Hebrew word is SHEKAR which means "that which satiates, that which pleases." It pleased the Lord to bruise the Lord Jesus Christ and to pour out his blood. He was pleased and satisfied with the blood of Christ. He was propitiated through the blood shedding of Jesus Christ. So, this SHEKAR, this strong wine which was poured out as part of a sweet savor sacrifice, a drink offering symbolizing and pointing forward to the precious blood of Christ which would propitiate God, was real, alcohol containing wine. It was wine containing enough alcohol that it was called "strong wine."

Commenting on this, John Gill said that this wine was "old choice wine, old wine being reckoned best, see Luke 5:39, and though this wine was poured out on the altar, and not properly drunk by any, yet it was to be the strongest, best, and choicest that could be got, as it was reasonable it should; since it was poured out as a libation or drink-offering to the Lord, which was his way of drinking it, as the burning of the sacrifice was his way of eating that; all which was typical of the sufferings, sacrifice, and bloodshed of Christ, which are well-pleasing and acceptable to the Lord."

Matthew Henry writes, "the wine to be poured out in the drink-offering is ordered to be strong wine (v-7), the richest and most generous and best bodied wine they could get. Though it was to be poured out upon the altar, and not drunk (they therefore might be ready to think the worst would serve to be so thrown away), yet God requires the strongest, to teach us to serve God with the best we have. The wine must be strong (says Ainsworth) because it was a figure of the blood of Christ, the memorial of which is still left to the church in wine, and of the blood of the martyrs, which was poured out as a drink-offering upon the sacrifice and service of our faith, Phil. 2:7."

Why strong wine and not grape juice or new wine? That which represents the precious, powerful blood of the sinless Son of God must not be a weak and beggarly element, it must be the best, fullest bodied wine available.

If wine is as inherently evil as some claim, why would God ever command that strong wine be offered up to him as a pleasing, sweet smelling savor? Why would he command strong wine to be used to picture the blood of Christ before Israel's eyes every morning and every evening?

Wine was forbidden to the priests only when they were ministering in the tabernacle. If wine is as inherently evil as many advocate it to be, surely God would have forbidden his holy, consecrated,

anointed priests to be total abstainers. But, that was not the case. They were forbidden to drink wine while on duty in the tabernacle but not at all times. "Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations" (Lev. 10:9). Note that the prohibition was not for all times of their lives. It was only when they went in for their tour of duty in the tabernacle. Apparently they could drink wine at other times, but not when serving in the tabernacle.

As we will see in a moment, the children of Israel were commanded to bring tithes of their wine. What was to happen to the wine brought to the Lord's tabernacle. Was it to just sit around and eventually be poured out or burned on the altar. No! Much of it was for the priests to take to their homes and use for themselves and their families. Numbers 18:12 "All the best of the oil, and all the best of the wine, and of the wheat, the firstfruits of them which they shall offer unto the LORD, them have I given thee." Some things were to be eaten in the tabernacle. Wine was among those things that were to be consumed in the home, not the tabernacle. "Every one that is clean in thine house shall eat of it."

The tithes of wine, oil, etc. that were brought to the tabernacle went to the priests for their use, or at least to be shared with them. Deuteronomy 12:17-19 "Thou mayest not eat within thy gates the tithe of thy corn, or of thy wine, or of thy oil, or the firstlings of thy herds or of thy flock, nor any of thy vows which thou vowest, nor thy freewill offerings, or heave offering of thine hand: But thou must eat them before the LORD thy God in the place which the LORD thy God shall choose, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite that is within thy gates: and thou shalt rejoice before the LORD thy God in all that thou puttest thine hands unto. Take heed to thyself that thou forsake not the Levite as long as thou livest upon the earth."

The priest was also to receive the firstfruits of the wine, oil, and wool of the people. Deuteronomy 18:3-4 "And this shall be the priest's due from the people, from them that offer a sacrifice, whether it be ox or sheep; and they shall give unto the priest the shoulder, and the two cheeks, and the maw. The firstfruits also of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the first of the fleece of thy sheep, shalt thou give him." Again, one is made to wonder about this idea that all use of wine is evil and that being godly demands total abstention from all use of wine in light of the fact that the priest was to be given wine for his personal use. The Hebrew word used here is TIROSH and someone might be tempted to argue that this refers to new wine, and suggest that new wine was simply grape juice. The Greek equivalent of this word is GLEUKOS. It is used in Acts 2:13 when those mockers of the work of the Holy Spirit accused those who spoke in various languages of being under the influence of new wine. They said, "These men are full of new wine." Peter replied, "For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day."

It is incontrovertibly evident that one could get drunk on new wine, else this exchange would have been foolish. New wine was that which had just been brought in out of the vats where it had already gone through fermentation. The Hebrew word for wine in the vats is YEQEB. It was to be gathered in out of the vats just before the Feast of Tabernacles was observed. Deuteronomy 16:13 "Thou shalt observe the feast of tabernacles seven days, after that thou hast gathered in thy corn and thy wine."

Included in the blessings which God promised to give to his people Israel was the blessing of wine. Deuteronomy 7:13 "And he will love thee, and bless thee, and multiply thee: he will also bless the fruit of thy womb, and the fruit of thy land, thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep, in the land which he sware unto thy fathers to give thee." Deuteronomy 11:14 "That I will give you the rain of your land in his due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil."

That wine was considered a blessing is evident from the fact that God warns Israel if they sin he will cause things to happen that will destroy their wine, as well as other produce. Deuteronomy 28:39 "Thou shalt plant vineyards, and dress them, but shalt neither drink of the wine, nor gather the grapes; for the worms shall eat them." Deuteronomy 28:51 "And he shall eat the fruit of thy cattle, and the fruit of thy land, until thou be destroyed: which also shall not leave thee either corn, wine, or oil, or the increase of thy kine, or flocks of thy sheep, until he have destroyed thee."

Amos 9:13-14 "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt. And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them." Among the blessings God promised Israel when he brought them back from their captivity was the blessing of planting vineyards and drinking the wine thereof. This promise is set in the same book in which the excessive use of wine is condemned. One may commend the proper use of wine and still condemn the excessive use of it.

Wine was sometimes brought to the priests on special occasions. When Hannah brought Samuel to the house of the Lord as she had promised before his conception she brought various gifts with her. Among them was wine. 1 Samuel 1:24 "And when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, with three bullocks, and one ephah of flour, and a bottle of wine, and brought him unto the house of the LORD in Shiloh: and the child was young." The Hebrew word used here is the same as used in Prov. 20:1. "Wine is a mocker. . . ." There is no doubt that real wine, not some imaginary unfermented wine, is what the godly Hannah brought to the house of the Lord in Shiloh.

Other statements of Scripture indicate a good and acceptable use of wine. In a Psalm of praise David glorified the Lord for all his providential arrangements which blessed his people. In that Psalm he says, "he causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth; And wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart" (Psa. 104:14-15).

Solomon wrote of God's blessings on those who remembered to render to the Lord the firstfruits of their increase. He said, "Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine" (Pro. 3: 9-10).

Most of the readers will be familiar with that glorious invitation found in Isa. 55:1-5. It starts off with these words, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price."

"But," you say, "Bro. Camp that is figurative language. He is describing the blessings of salvation in that passage and uses wine as a type of the joy of salvation." That is true. Remember that the Psalmist said, "Wine maketh glad the heart of man." As God speaks of the joys of salvation he knows that Israel knew how wine would make the heart glad so he used it figuratively to describe the joys of salvation awaiting those who come to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, my question is, "If wine is so evil, and its use so wicked that it must not be used any time any where in the Lord's services, why would God use it to symbolize the joys of salvation?"

This is the point of the first miracle of Jesus in which he turned water into wine. The nation of Israel had lost the joy of their religion. Their worship of God was steeped in ritualism and formalism. They had run out of the wine of gladness and joy. To show them that, Jesus used the occasion of a wedding feast in Cana where the wine had run out long before the feast was over, and he made wine from water so that the joy of the feast would not be dulled.

In that miracle he was saying to the nation of Israel, "You have lost the joy of your worship of God. It is without gladness that you worship. I can and will restore that joy if you will but look to me." He made wine. He made wine that was the best served at the feast. New wine and grape juice would not fit the description given by the governor of the feast.

Jesus said in another place, "No man also having drunk old wine straightway desireth new: for he saith, The old is better" (Luke 5:39). Since old, fully fermented wine is better than the new wine that has not reached the peak of its taste yet, and since the wine which Jesus made was better than any served at the feast, it is obvious that the wine he made was comparable to or better than the best wine that man could produce. It was better than the old wine which Jesus declared to be better. "When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom, And saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now" (Jn. 2:9-10).

If Jesus had made mere grape juice, do you suppose the governor of the feast would have reacted as he did to its rich flavor and goodness? If Jesus had made the imaginary "unfermented wine" of some, do you suppose the governor would have responded as he did. I remind you that Jesus himself said that old wine is better than new wine. And, then I ask, "If wine is inherently evil, as some suppose, and should be totally avoided, how do you explain our Lord's actions here? He made wine! He made wine that was superior to any that had yet been served at the feast. He made wine that would gladden the heart.

Commenting on this, Dr. A. T. Robertson wrote, "It was a custom that the strongest, best wine was served at the beginning of a feast, and later that which was lesser in strength would be served. The Governor of the feast declared the wine Jesus had made to be the best served."

John Gill wrote, "It is usual with men, when they make entertainments, first to give the guests the best, the most generous, and strongest-bodied wine; as being most suitable for them . . . then that which is lesser; a weaker-bodied wine, that is lowered, and of less strength, and not so intoxicating, and which is fittest for the guests."

It is quite evident from the surprise of the governor that what Jesus made was indeed very good wine. It surpassed the old, full-bodied wine served in the beginning of the feast.

Jesus drank wine. I know that some of you may draw back in horror at this suggestion. But, I believe the words of Jesus himself will corroborate my statement. Luke 7:33-34 "For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and ye say, He hath a devil. The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!"

There are at least three things in this declaration that prove that the drinking to which Jesus referred was the drinking of wine. First, he is contrasting himself with John the Baptist as seen by the Jews. John ate locusts and wild honey, a very restricted diet. Jesus did not restrict his diet but ate as did others. John the Baptist drank no wine. The people accused him of having a demon. The drinking that

Jesus was doing was in contrast to what John was doing, therefore, it is evident he was drinking wine. Second, The people accused Jesus, because of his eating and drinking, of being a gluttonous man and a winebibber. Third, Jesus makes no denial of either his eating or his drinking as they accused. One would have to probe deeply into the sea of speculation to even hypothesize that he did not drink wine. Yet, he did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth. Jesus drank wine. If drinking wine is the sin many claim it to be we have no Saviour.

Now, I ask you, Dear Reader, "If wine is so inherently evil, why would our sinless Savior make wine, and a good amount of it? If wine is inherently evil, why did Jesus drink wine? If wine is inherently evil, why would Jesus say old wine is better than new wine? I know I have asked that question before, but perhaps asking it again will provoke someone to give us an answer. Since Jesus made and drank wine, on what Biblical grounds do you say it is evil, if indeed you do say it is evil?"

Paul commended the proper use of wine. Paul admonished Timothy, "Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities" (I Tim. 5:23). Surely none would suggest Paul is recommending grape juice for Timothy's stomach ailments. Wine relaxes a person and aids in the digestive process.

Naturally fermented wine does not have more than seven to fourteen percent alcohol. In moderation, it has some very practical health benefits as Paul knew. Therefore he encouraged Timothy, who was apparently a total abstainer, to use a little wine for his stomach's sake.

Once when I was taking this position with a brother, he said, "But, you cannot be filled with the Holy Spirit if you drink wine at all." He cited Ephesians 5:18 "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit." I pointed out to him that this does not teach what he claimed at all. There are two key words in this verse which show that it is the abuse of wine, not the use of it that Paul is referencing. The key words are drunk and excess. It is the excessive use of wine that Paul is objecting to. It is the drinking of enough wine rapidly enough to get drunk that Paul has in mind.

According to Paul, a pastor need not be a total abstainer, but he must be one who is "not given to wine" (I Tim. 3:3). This means he must be one who does not "sit at wine," or "is continually sipping at it, or drinking it, or is intemperate in the use of it" (John Gill). "This qualification disqualifies a man from the office of Bishop if he is one who sits long at or beside his wine" (A. T. Robertson). The excessive use of wine impairs one's health, stupefies his mind, and leads to all manner of sin. It is, therefore, forbidden that one who is to pastor one of the Lord's churches be one who tarries long at his wine and drinks a great deal.

In his epistle to Titus Paul gives that young preacher some admonitions to pass on to his congregation. Of some the aged women he wrote, "That they be in behavior as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things" (Titus 2:3). Note please! Paul did not command that these aged women who were to be teachers of good things, especially to the younger women, were to be total abstainers from wine. No! They were to be "not given to much wine!" The expression here means "not enslaved to much wine." They are expected to set an example for the younger women and must not, therefore, be enslaved by wine.

The good Samaritan, as we often call him, used oil and wine to treat the wounds of the man whom he found who had fallen among thieves. Luke 10:33-34, "But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took

care of him." The oil was to soothe the pain and the wine to cleanse and disinfect. Grape juice, with its inherent yeast, would multiply infection. Wine cleanses and disinfects.

An objection answered. When discussing this I have had brethren counter with this argument, "If you teach that even a little wine is okay, you are going to cause some to be drunkards." I wonder how many drunkards Paul started down the road of alcoholism with his admonition to Timothy to use a little wine for his stomach. I wonder how many Jesus started down the road to excessive use of wine by making over 100 gallons at that feast in Cana.

Shall I refrain from mentioning food lest I cause someone to become a glutton? Shall I not tell the truth about the sinlessness of marital sex for fear I will cause someone to become promiscuous? Shall I avoid telling someone about the goodness of pure, clean, cool water lest he go over board and drink enough water to drown in it (it has happened)? Shall I desist from mentioning the importance of baptism lest someone depart from the truth and teach the heresy of baptismal regeneration? Shall I cease and desist from mentioning the doctrine of election lest someone go to an extreme on that position? Shall I refrain from suggesting that a car serves many good purposes, lest someone go head over heels in debt, buys five, and drives all five at the same time at 100 miles per hour? Shall I refrain from telling you that there are Scriptural grounds for divorce lest a lot of readers go out and get a divorce.

Let me illustrate my point. At the Missionary Baptist Seminary in Little Rock, Arkansas, Dr. L. D. Foreman used to give a special lecture to the students at the beginning of each year. Most of it was especially directed toward the first-year students just entering seminary. In that lecture, Bro. Foreman would point out the advantages of a pastor being married and would encourage the young preachers to carefully look for a wife. He would point out that those suggestions that Paul made in his letter to the church at Corinth that most would be better off if unmarried was for a "present distress" through which Christians were going at that specific time. One year, there was this young preacher from way back in the mountains, who heard the lecture. When school was out that day, he disappeared and did not show up at school for several days. When he did return, he had a pretty little girl in tow. He marched right into Bro. Foreman's office and said, "Lookie here what I got Bro. Foreman." Bro. Foreman looked and there was this young woman. The young preacher said, "You said the other day we'uns ort to be looking for us a wife, every preacher needs a wife. I went home and got me one." Should Bro. Foreman have refrained from ever again mentioning the benefits of marriage lest all the single boys take off home, and on the spur of the moment, marry a wife? Absolutely not!

Shall I refrain from preaching that where sin abounded grace superabounded lest someone think he should sin so that grace could abound? There is no end to this. Now, again, should I cease and desist from telling you that wine is good if used in moderation just because some use it in excess? If so, will you apply that same reasoning to every thing you know of that is good if used properly, but bad if used improperly and/or excessively? Maybe we should ban chain saws lest some idiot cut down all the forests!

My dear friends, every word of God is pure and none of it should be offensive to any of his children. I will teach that Jesus made wine and apparently also drank wine. If someone seizes that and goes overboard and excessively uses wine, it is their problem, not the Lord's, not mine. If I declare the whole counsel of God on wine, I must tell you that, used moderately, it serves many good and health-enhancing purposes. If I declare to you the whole counsel of God on wine I must also tell you that its abuse is sinful, wrong, and wrought with many pitfalls.