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YOKEFELLOW

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Gospel Campaigns

Billy Bland

After the MSOP Lectureship, the students diligently worked in four gospel campaigns. Faculty members either preached the campaigns, or were in other locations preaching. This year’s campaigns had the theme, “**YOU CAN BE SURE.**”

I started a web site, www.UcanBsure.org, some years ago, with sermons, articles, and a free, online, five-lesson Bible correspondence course with the titles: “You Can Be Sure About God,” “You Can Be Sure About The Bible,” “You Can Be Sure About Salvation,” “You Can Be Sure About The Lord’s Church,” and “You Can Be Sure About Your Eternal Security.”

Additionally, I have an in-home study course of three-lessons: “You Can Be Sure About The Bible,” “You Can Be Sure About Salvation,” and “You Can Be Sure About The Church.” These are designed for a one-on-one Bible study. God has blessed these efforts as several people have obeyed the Gospel after studying these lessons.

Our campaigns are now “You Can Be Sure Campaigns,” using the You Can Be Sure Bible correspondence course and in-home Bible studies. All materials are provided at cost to the host congregations. We have professionally colored brochures printed and personalized (with announced sermon subjects), for the congregation hosting the campaign, and we provide an attractive color banner announcing the campaign with the inscription, “In a World of Religious Confusion – You Can Be Sure.” This banner is displayed prior to, and during, the campaign.

In **Columbus, MS**, we worked with the **Magnolia Church of Christ**, where Doug English is the local preacher. We knocked 1,322

doors, signed up 52 Bible correspondence courses, and established 17 in-home Bible studies. Two were baptized. I was privileged to preach in this campaign.

Jason Hilburn (MSOP graduate and preacher for the Nesbit, MS, congregation), preached in the campaign with the **Pickwick Church of Christ, in Pickwick, TN**. There were 1,026 doors knocked, which resulted in 40 Bible correspondence courses. David Lambert is the local preacher for the Pickwick congregation.

In **North Charleston, SC**, Don Blackwell serves as local evangelist for the **North Charleston Church of Christ**. Curtis A. Cates, preached the Gospel in this campaign. There were a total of 2,000 doors knocked, which resulted in 29 Bible correspondence courses, and one in-home Bible Study. There was one baptism during the campaign.

The **Highland Church of Christ, in Dalton, GA** hosted the other campaign. Barry Gilreath, Jr. is the local preacher. Garland Elkins preached in this campaign. There were 1,300 doors knocked, 16 correspondence courses established, and four in-home Bible studies. There was one baptism during the campaign.

While we rejoice, we realize numbers alone do not necessarily indicate success. Success is accomplished when we carry out God’s will, turning neither to the right, nor to the left (Jos. 1:7-8). We plant and water, but it is God Who gives the increase (1 Cor. 3:6).

We are happy to have worked with these congregations, and wish them great success in the Lord’s Work. (If you would like to schedule a campaign, contact brother Bland at MSOP, well ahead of the time you desire the campaign. BL)

A SPECIAL NEED

Kenny Taylor (MSOP 2006) continues treatment for cancer. He, Rebecca, and Malachi, now need our financial help (1 John 3:17). You may send checks to MSOP marked Kenny Taylor. Please keep the Taylors in your prayers.

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Michael McDaniel Named Alumni Liaison

For the last four years, brother McDaniel worked ably and faithfully as President of the MSOP Alumni Association. Upon his completion of his time in office, we have invited him to serve in a new way, as MSOP Alumni Liaison.

This new role will continue brother McDaniel's work of editing the **Laborers Together Newsletter**, and communicating to alumni by e-mail. In addition, he will help us to take a new step forward by establishing **Alumni Association Chapters** in regions where there are a number of alumni in close proximity to one another. Each Chapter will have a coordinator, who will have the contact information for alumni in that area (so he can keep alumni informed), and who will schedule area-wide alumni meetings.

Organizing alumni within a region will help to assist with communication, and with information about special projects, and will facilitate fund-raising for good works, benevolent needs, and mission trips in which our alumni are involved. We hope this will also promote fellowship, and encourage the building of friendships and working relationships. Area meetings will be announced in the **Yokefellow** and the **Laborers Together Newsletter**.

Brother McDaniel has already worked to establish Chapters in Northwest Tennessee and Northern Georgia. Others will soon follow. We ask for the help and cooperation of all MSOP alumni in this exciting new endeavor.



A number of Hebrew words are rendered by the English "wine," the most common of which are *yayin* (134 times) and *tirosh* (33 times). The basic term for "wine" in the Greek New Testament is the term *oinos* (33 times), corresponding to the Hebrew *yayin*.

While the term "wine" in English always denotes an alcoholic beverage, the Biblical term "wine" is a generic term, occasionally referring to fresh grape juice (cf. Isa. 16:10; Jer. 48:33 – the juice in the grape). Sometimes, the Bible praised its ingestion (Sol. 5:1; Joel 2:19), and other times, it condemns it (Eph. 5:18). Therefore, the Bible offers many warnings against the indiscriminate use of wine (Pro. 20:1; 21:17; 23:20-21, 29-35; Isa. 5:22; 28:7; Joel 1:5; Amos 6:6; Hab. 2:5; 1 Cor. 5:11; 6:10; Gal. 5:21; 1 Tim. 3:8; Tit. 2:3).

Certainly, we should bear in mind that drunkenness is a matter of degree. The alteration of one's mental faculties commences almost immediately as one ingests the distilled spirits of our modern world. To counter such, the Greek term *nepho* (sober) signifies that which is free from the influence of intoxicants. In addition, another factor we must consider is our influence as Christians (cf. Rom. 14:21).

Sometimes, one may suggest that Pro. 31:6-7 actually recommends drinking alcoholic beverages. The context (v. 1) does not suggest that kings should not drink (vv. 4-5) but everyone else can (vv. 6-7). However, this motherly advice is advising him to stay away from alcohol because it impairs judgment, leads to improper decisions, and adversely affects those whom he governs. Yet, by way of contrast, some people drink to forget. In essence, she says, "Let them do it, but as for you, manage the stress of your position to rule with equitable justice."

In his commentary on Proverbs, Duane Garrett, Professor of OT at the Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary summarizes by stating, "The queen-mother does not recommend a free beer program for the poor or justify its use as an opiate for the masses; her point is simply that the king must avoid drunkenness in order to reign properly. The comparison to the suffering poor and to their use of alcohol is meant to awaken King Lemuel to the duties that go with his class and status rather than to describe some kind of permissible drunkenness." If it was true for the king, it is also true for the Christian (Mat. 5:13-16; 1 Pet. 2:11-12)!

Sometimes, one may try to argue that the Bible sanctions the use of alcohol in different countries according to custom. From everything that the Bible teaches on this subject and about itself, the gospel is the universal standard of ethics, morals, and right conduct. Thus, the child of God who is committed to Jesus is not going to pretend that he can drink wine in Italy, vodka in Russia, stout in Australia, lager in Germany, rum in the Caribbean, bourbon in Kentucky, or champagne in France, and be pleasing to God. We do not change our morality by crossing state lines or international borders!

On a practical note, we know that alcohol is the top drug problem in America today – it is accepted, endorsed, and legalized. Instead of MADD (Mothers Against Drunk Driving), why not have MAD (Mothers Against Drinking), because we are not going to solve the problem of drunk driving until we solve the problem of drinking. Statistics show that the greater is the percentage of prevalence of alcohol in the home, the younger the age is at which the child takes his first drink of alcohol.

If we give liquor to our pet cat (as one newspaper reported), we are cruel, but if we give liquor to a person, we are the life of the party! Let an animal reel, act as a fool, fall into a drunken stupor, and readers howl in protest; let a person reel, act as a fool, doing likewise, and we simply ignore it. We cannot cause the hair of an animal to fall out without protest, but we can cause the liver of a person to rot out and nobody says a word. Of course, we should not get our pets drunk, but neither should we allow our sons, daughters, business associates, and friends to drink either, because if it is not fit for our pet, it is certainly not fit for humanity. Such carnality only describes one who cares little for what God plainly and simply states about the dangers of alcoholic beverages!

IS CONSUMING ALCOHOL A HELP, OR A HINDRANCE?

Gordon Wells

The church is facing many challenges, both externally and internally. One of these is the ever increasing problem of alcohol consumption among the saints. The influence and effectiveness of the church will be diminished and compromised, if this situation is not remedied. Therefore, the issues with which this study will deal is whether one is prepared not only to put his own life at risk, but also his family's, and whether he is willing to compromise the influence which he exerts on this world as a Christian. Values are caught more often than they are taught; accordingly one should ask, "How influential am I going to be in teaching the Gospel to my family and others in the community? What type of example am I setting, and what kind of legacy am I leaving behind? Is it worthy of emulation?"

The Latin word "vinum," from which the English "wine" derives, was used to refer to both fermented and non-fermented grape juice. In our older English dictionaries, it refers to the juice of the grape whether fermented or not. The words used for wine in the biblical languages do not indicate whether it was fermented or not; consequently there is the problem. There are those who use this "apparent discrepancy" to justify their consumption of alcohol, even though many scholars agree that the words *oinos*, *tirosh*, and *yayin* are generic terms used to describe the grape and the juice of the grape in all its various stages.

Alcohol is created when grains, fruits, or vegetables are fermented, a process that uses yeast or bacteria to change the sugars in the food into alcohol. Alcohol is absorbed into the blood stream as soon as it is consumed. From there, it affects the central nervous system, which controls virtually all body functions. This then alters a person's perceptions, emotions, movement, vision, hearing, judgment, and reasoning.

The abuse of alcohol contributes greatly to the break-up of marriages and families, to emotional, physical, and sexual abuse, and to the moral decay of our communities. With all these potential pitfalls, is it really worthwhile to drink and to expose our children to its dangers? A turning point in this writer's life occurred when his son, while playing an innocent game with his friends said, "Come and sit down, let me pour you a drink." He realized that his son (now a Christian) was not only looking at his father's lifestyle, but also imitating the way he was living, talking and interacting with others.

Yet, some try and justify social drinking by saying the Bible does not condemn it, or that they do not ever

over indulge, and that they can handle it! But I submit to you that everyone does not react to drinking alcohol in the same manner. If one considers that from the moment one starts drinking wine that one puts oneself and others in danger, is it really worth the risk? Drunkenness is a process which starts the moment one consumes the first drink and the body begins to be affected immediately.

There are many Scriptures condemning the consumption of alcohol because of its side-effects. Here are just a few. 1. It promotes violence (Pro. 4:17). 2. It leads to poverty (Pro. 23:21). 3. It leads to lust and perverse things, and can be addictive (Pro. 23:31-35). 4. It can destroy the drinker (Nah. 1:10). The condemnation due to the effects is in addition to the general prohibition against the Christian's drinking alcohol (Eph. 5:18, Rom. 13:13, Luke 21:34; Gal. 5:21).

Some argue that when Jesus turned water into wine at the wedding in Cana (John 2:1-10), He endorsed the consumption of fermented wine. The master of the banquet made the comment that the good wine was kept for last. Some say this was because of its high alcohol content. However, this is not correct because in the Roman world of the New Testament, the best wines were those whose alcohol content had been boiled and filtered away. The Greek verb *methusko* translated "well drunk," refers to the fact that they were drinking the juice liberally, or freely, and not that they were intoxicated. Therefore, it can be concluded that Jesus did not make alcoholic wine. It begs the question: How influential would Jesus have been, as the Savior, if He were known not only to condone the drinking of fermented wine, contradicting the inspired Scriptures (Hab. 2:15), but also were known to have used His divine power to produce fermented wine? How would this have impacted how men viewed His deity and His mission to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10)?

A Christian should exert a positive influence on this world. A Christian should be the salt and the light (Mat. 5:13-16). As the salt, one must have a purifying, preserving, and flavoring effect. As the light, one leads the lost through this dark world into the wonderful light of Jesus Christ, by being visible and reflecting the one true light; thus, glorifying God. Question: Will consuming alcohol hinder or help one in carrying out the Great Commission? The obvious conclusion is that one's influence is hindered when no visible difference is seen in his lifestyle as compared to someone of the world. Christians are sanctified, set apart for God's purpose, unto every good work (2 Tim. 2:21). Therefore the exhortation for all Christians is: "Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1 Pet. 1:16).

"Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise" (Pro. 20:1).