

'I wait for the Lord, my soul waits,  
And in His word I do hope'  
Psalm 130:5



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# Glasgow RPCS Magazine



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## Worship Services:

Lord's Day Morning: 11am

Lord's Day Evening: 6pm

Wednesday Prayer Meeting: 7.30pm

Saturday Prayer Meeting: 7pm

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## Minister's Article

### *The Bible, Alcohol and the Lord's Supper (Part 3)*

Recently, we began considering why we use real wine in communion – in distinction from a significant number of churches which now use unfermented grape juice or some other drink.

In order to set this issue in its wider context, we decided to begin by considering what the Bible has to say about wine and alcoholic drinks in general. It is important to begin there because there are disagreements among Christians on this matter: although all Christians acknowledge that drunkenness is a sin ('Do not be drunk with wine' Eph. 5:18 – see also Proverbs 23:20; Isaiah 5:11), and that it is a sin which breeds untold misery in the life of the drunkard as well as those around him, many Christians do not believe that there is a such a thing as a lawful use of alcoholic drinks.

As we saw, there are three viewpoints held regarding this matter.

First, there is the *prohibitionist* view. The prohibitionist believes that the Bible prohibits the use of alcoholic drinks.

Second, there is the *abstentionist* view. The abstentionist acknowledges that the Bible does not prohibit the use of alcoholic drinks but believes, on Biblical grounds, that it is wise for him – and possibly for others – to refrain from their use.

Third, there is the *moderationist* view. The moderationist believes that the Bible allows, and indeed commends, the use of alcoholic drinks in moderation.

In the last two articles, we examined the evidence of the Old and New Testaments and discovered that they teach that it is lawful to use wine and strong drinks in moderation – even in a context of worship.

Clearly, then, the Bible does not endorse the prohibitionist position. But what does the Bible have to say about the abstentionist position?

Even if prohibition is wrong, is abstention still wise?

The abstentionist argues that taking an alcoholic drink is probably unsafe for him and is a poor witness to unbelievers – and indeed to children – as well as being an offense to weaker brethren. According to the abstentionist, setting the example of taking such drinks is liable either to lead people onto a dangerous path which might lead to sin or to offend those amongst them, including Christians, who might believe that it is unlawful to drink them. Therefore, it is argued, the requirement of love should lead to total abstinence even if there is no law against the use of alcohol as such. This kind of teaching is based on scriptures such as Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 8–10.

Now, it is worth stating at the outset that this is a serious issue. The Bible clearly warns us against putting unnecessary stumbling-blocks in the way of brothers and sisters in Christ, as well as in the way of an unbelieving world, and so we need the constant guidance of God to enable us to walk in love instead of giving needless offence.

However, in light of the fact that God alone is Lord of the conscience and has left it free from the dictates of man, to argue for a blanket ban on what is *God-given* and on what *God has pronounced good*, for fear of leading into sin or of giving offence, would be to misuse the relevant passages of scripture and would not be correct for the following reasons.

First, the logic which requires Christians to abstain from the use of alcoholic drinks on the basis that they are abused in our society is a logic which would lead to total abstinence from tea and coffee as well as various other drinks and foods as well.

Second, if the Bible not only fails to condemn a certain practice but, on the contrary, expresses approval of it, then we should not condemn it either. And, as we have seen, the Bible doesn't merely refrain from condemning the use of alcohol but approves of its moderate and appropriate use.

Third, it is not the lawful use of wine that is a bad witness, but the unlawful use of it – and children should be instructed, by word and example, as to its lawful use.

Fourth, and in connection with a witness to unbelievers in particular, it is beyond doubt that Christ and his disciples partook of fermented drinks despite the fact that sinful men abused them to their own destruction at the time in which Jesus lived – as they still do today (1 Corinthians 5:11; 1 Corinthians 6:10). Indeed, although Jesus Himself was falsely accused of abusing wine (Luke 7:31-35) he continued his practice of drinking wine – after all, he created a substantial amount for consumption in a social context (John 2:1-12). Surely, no Christian would think of accusing Christ of behaving unwisely in that situation?

These general points alone should be enough to resolve the issue, but it is worth looking at the matter more closely – if only to discover where the fallacy lies in believing that the Bible teaches us always to refrain from what is clearly good in itself.

We need to examine, first, our duty to the ‘alcoholic’ and then our relation to the ‘weaker brother’ who may believe that it is unlawful to drink fermented drinks.

### **Responsibility to the Alcoholic**

‘Alcoholics’ are people who have acquired a certain kind of dependence upon alcohol – that is, to use current language, they have become addicted to it.

The problem, however, with the concept of addiction is that it needs proper definition – particularly within a Biblical framework which does full justice to the concept of sin. All too often, the term ‘addiction’ is used to mean a helpless dependence upon something over which a person has little control and for which he is not particularly responsible – and this definition or understanding of the concept is uncritically accepted by many Christians.

However, for a Christian with a proper understanding of sin, this understanding of addiction will not do. It is far better to think of an addiction as a persistent and reduced ability to resist a temptation to indulge in something unlawful or overindulge in something lawful – with the addicted person being responsible for that disability.

In other words, while there are undoubtedly physiological and psychological dimensions to addiction, the problem lies fundamentally in the will of the addicted person. *In this way, addiction to alcohol is really no different from any other kind of persistent sinful behaviour.* The Bible teaches that all men are predisposed to sin by nature but that they are all responsible for their own sin. The habitual and sinful abuse of alcohol is really no different from the person who habitually and sinfully abuses every other good gift that God has given us. A person can be just as physiologically and psychologically addicted to food or sex – but the Bible calls both such conditions ‘gluttony’ and ‘fornication’. Similarly, the Bible’s term for one who is addicted to alcohol is not ‘alcoholic’ but ‘drunkard’ or ‘wine-bibber’.

Although it runs completely counter to contemporary thought, the best answer to *abuse* is not *disuse* but *proper use*. The Christian should strive for a lawful use of money, sex, food and alcohol and *should not accept lacking self-control in any of these areas*.

In order to properly help someone abusing alcohol, it is necessary to enable him to see that his problem is not that he has inherited or acquired an incurable disease called ‘alcoholism’ but that he is living in express violation of God’s holy law – as we saw above, in biblical terms, he is a ‘drunkard’ (cf. 1 Cor. 5:11; 1 Cor. 6:10). His problem is exacerbated by the fact that he has been told that he cannot be completely cured. That is why he is foolishly told – by those who should know better – that if he takes one sip of wine at the Lord’s Supper, he will relapse. That is not so! It is impossible to fall into sin through the proper and faithful use of God’s ordinances. To imply that God will not preserve the one who was a drunkard when he takes wine in loving obedience to him at the Lord’s Table is rank unbelief. I have personally known hundreds of people with serious issues with alcohol – not one, to my knowledge, reverted to drink through the reception of wine in the Lord’s Supper.

The answer for the one who has abused alcoholic drinks is the same as the answer for all other sinners, irrespective of whatever sins they have been ‘addicted’ to – all sinful habits and sinful abuses are curable by the redemptive grace of God. Indeed, only God can meaningfully and spiritually deliver an addicted person from their addiction. He accomplishes this by the power of the Holy Spirit through a renewal of the will. This involves an acknowledgement of the sinfulness of the addiction as a sin against God as well as the exercise of repentance and faith.

To fail to believe this is to reduce the power of the gospel – or even to transform it into something less than a full gospel. After all, the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to all who believe (Romans 1:16). Paul tells us that all things are lawful for him but that he ‘will not be brought under the power of any’ (1 Corinthians 6:12). He further teaches ‘reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord... let not sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts... for sin shall not have dominion over you for you are not under law but under grace’ (Romans 6:11-14). The drunkard is, therefore, no longer under the tyranny or dominion of anything that is either lawful or unlawful: indeed, once he is saved, the drunkard is not to reckon himself a drunkard any more – along with the thief, the covetous person and the fornicator (and all other kinds of sinners) he has been washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of God (1 Cor. 6:9-11). Note that none of the rest of the sins listed in these verses is an incurable disease either.

Of course, the previously addicted person, while meaningfully delivered by Christ, may always have a particular vulnerability in that area of life – although that is by no means always the case – and must therefore take special care with respect to temptation in that area. But that fact, while it will increase vigilance socially, cannot do away with the glorious truth that the person who once abused alcohol has every right to expect that God will preserve him when he comes, in obedience and faith, to a lawful use of alcohol at the Lord’s Table.

So then, while it is true that certain people have different levels of tolerance to alcohol (just as others have different levels of tolerance for food or sex) the notion that a predisposition toward a particular kind of sinful abuse of what is good should lead all Christians to abstain permanently from the lawful use of these good gifts, is not biblical. Although it is wrong to deliberately tempt one whom you know to be vulnerable in a particular area, that is very different thing from advocating the permanent abstention from God’s good gift.

*Rev. Kenneth Stewart*



## Spotlight On...

### *RP International Holiday Conference - July 2018*



*Conference Attendees from the Scottish RP Church*

## **A Review**

The idyllic south of Ireland was the setting for an uplifting week of fellowship, friendship and Bible study. All five of the Scottish Reformed Presbyterian congregations were represented, and we were joined by Christians from across the world, including Japan, Australia and Mexico.

Five talks on Psalm 130 by Rev Matt Kingswood covered various key aspects of the Christian life:

1. Our experience
2. Our prayer
3. Our worship
4. Our patience
5. Our hope

‘Out of the Depths’ was the theme of the conference, and the talks succeeded in uplifting us. So much so in fact that, by the end of the week many described the conference as ‘a little taste of heaven’.

Contentment was the topic of the Lord’s day the morning service, led by Rev. Andrew Lytle from the RP work in Nantes, France. His task was surely eased by the warm Christian surrounding we all found ourselves in. ‘Christ is all’ was the theme of the evening service.

Later in the evening, Alana Carson shared of her harrowing experience in Nigeria last year. She recounted her kidnap, while working as an optician with a team of Christians. It was a very emotive presentation, describing her chilling experience. She was taken on her last night there and held for three weeks by a 14-strong gang. In contrast to the brutality of the kidnappers, Alana shared how gracious and preserving God was to her during the whole time she was kept.

From Monday each day started with family worship, leading immediately on to the talk from Rev. Kingswood, then followed by the seminars. There was a choice of four seminars daily which had a variety of subjects such as financial guidance, conflict resolution, contemporary evangelism, the importance of vows, and practical ways to care for your minister’s family.

The evenings provided some lighter moments, with everyone forming teams and participating in activities including ice breakers, a quiz, a talent show and reflections upon the conference. Each provided moments of laughter and an opportunity to get to know our fellow Christians better.

A bookstall was available for the duration of the week which everyone enjoyed as there were books for all ages and on a large range of subjects.

There was a creche each morning and several youth groups in the evenings split up by age. They played games, participated in quizzes and enjoyed fellowship together. This allowed the young people to make and deepen friendships with Christians their own age.



Off-site trips, games and other activities were organised each day by the committee who had evidently put a lot of work into the planning to make sure everything ran smoothly.

I would highly recommend you book a place at the next conference, taking place in 2022, Lord willing.

The talks from the conference are available to listen to at:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/8k234c9cmxbn8cs/AADvJ-VbicQytD7jktY9Gzia?dl=0>

*Heather MacLeod*

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### **Further Reflections**

*'This was the first time we had attended the conference and would definitely like to go back. We were truly blessed by the rich fellowship shared with believers from all over the world. It was a little foretaste of heaven.'*

*James, Katie and Thomas Fraser*



*'At the conference I enjoyed the kids group I went to each morning (Explorers, ages 8-11). We got to play games, then heard a Bible talk and had a quiz. We also learnt a Bible verse. I especially enjoyed the craft activity at the end. I made lots of new friends from Ireland.'*

**Elena MacLennan**

*'I absolutely loved the Gold Coast Conference. It was such an amazing experience to be with so many Christians from so many different countries. Mr Kingswood's talks were so helpful for someone like me who has no Christian friends in a school year of 100 people. I made lots of friends in the Trailblazers group for 12-16 year olds and look forward to seeing them again in the future.'*

**Grant MacLennan**

*'I really enjoyed the Gold Coast conference as it was a time you could spend with lots of fellow Christians. The conference had seminars on every day with a wide variety of very useful topics. It also had plenty things for young people my age to do every day so there was never a dull moment. The talks from Rev. Kingswood were extremely informative and very revitalising. Overall the conference was refreshing as it let you see the big picture, that there are Christians all over the world and that we should remember to pray for the global church continually in our prayers.'*

**Alexander Stewart**



## Are We Getting Holiness Wrong?

We can have the right doctrine of holiness; one that takes it as seriously as Scripture does. But in relation to its practical outworking and in our assumptions concerning it, we may have got it wrong. No doubt there could be many ways in which we could do this. We may fall into the error that we can contribute something, that there is a place for our personal merit. Or perhaps we subtly divorce holiness from happiness and find ourselves in a constant conflict between the two. This is a serious mistake because holiness is the only way to true happiness. If we secretly equate happiness with sinful pleasure or our own will rather than God's, we have gone badly wrong. We can only look at a few ways in which we may be inclined to get holiness wrong.

James Fraser of Brea takes an honest look at himself, searching into his motives and attitudes. The discovery is startling, while he values holiness he has certain attitudes that are hindering his progress. The evil one is insinuating false notions that confuse and divert. The following are only a few of the many things that Fraser identifies. Of course free unmerited grace must always be in view.

### 1. Thinking Repentance is Only Inward

In thinking that the essence of true repentance consists in contrition for sin more than in turning in heart and practice from it. When I have not found myself in a mourning, sorrowful spirit but limited in my affections, I have not turned from sin. I was still taken up with trying to sorrow for it, thinking there was no true repentance without this. When I have mourned I depended on this, thinking it was sufficient. But repentance mostly consists in turning to God, mourning is only the manner of this act of turning (Joel 2:12; Isaiah 58:6; Proverbs 21:3).

I have neglected the outward practice of repentance under the pretence that the Lord requires the heart. But we should serve the Lord both in body and in spirit. It is true, we should not rest in the outward, or mainly look to that but should look to the heart mostly; yet the outward act should not be neglected.

## 2. Wallowing in Self Pity

After falls and slips, Satan has sought to keep me astonished and confused by what I have done. In this way I was kept from getting up to my feet and going forward. Those who fall when they are running in a race lose much time and are far behind while they think about what to do. The best way is to get up, consider our ways, mourn, seek pardon, and then go to work. This is how it was with Joshua, God told him to get up and do his work rather than lie on his face (Joshua 7:10). When David sinned, he immediately goes to repentance: "I have sinned, yet now, Lord, forgive."

## 3. Emphasising Holiness But Not Practising it

It is wrong to neglect to obedience in dependence on grace by resting in a resolve to do and it and mere thoughts of how good it is. Either I thought this was enough or else through complacency have not expected difficulty in practice. Yet those who know, approve and teach God's requirements to other while neglecting it themselves, "say and do not" (Romans 2:13-14, 18; Matthew 7:21; Jeremiah 2:19- 20). Thus my thoughts delighting in obedience have not been so much to practise as to delight the understanding in dwelling on such subjects.

## 4. Rebranding Sin

Satan can transform himself into an angel of light, by gilding vices with the lustre and appearance of virtue, under spiritual pretences. I have been tempted to carelessness and excess under the pretence of avoiding unthankfulness and not using Christian liberty. I have neglected to have the heart rightly affected with the evil of sin, because repentance consists more in turning from sin than in sorrow for it. I have avoided prayer when not in the right spirit in case I make the easy yoke of Christ a grievous burden. Sin has prevailed in these ways and when it has overcome it appeared in its own clothing. The grace of God may be turned into lasciviousness (2 Corinthians 11:14; Romans 6:1). We have been "called to liberty" but we are not to use this to give opportunity for the flesh (Galatians 5:13).

## 5. A Legalisitic Spirit

There is nothing does me more damage than a legalistic spirit or spirit of bondage. Satan presses duties in a violent way, presenting God as a hard master and an austere judge. He



presents God as one that commands and requires duties in the way that tyrannical rulers make laws to entrap the subjects. He makes it seem as though God is urging hard duties and putting new wine into old bottles with the greatest threats and no promise of help. I am urged to obey hastily without being given time to breathe and extreme perfection is required or else it will not be accepted at all. Finding the Lord's yoke so hard, I have either cast it off or sometimes engaged in it disheartened. Nothing has influenced me worse than this. Talents have been slighted because God was viewed as a hard master. The Lord has not been served because our yoke is not made light. There is aversion and lack of love to God due to sinful fear (1 John 4:18).

## **6. Trying to Establish Our Own Righteousness**

Satan and my own heart have held me fast for a long time in the snare of seeking to establish my own righteousness. When my heart has been in a good condition, with a felt sense of what I lack and desiring to obey it has resolved to use specific means to obtain this. I have found Satan deceiving me in this by making me love these duties, means, graces and obtaining them because it is the produce of my own desire and resolve. Thus, they have been my own (as it were) and my choice. I have despised other means because they were not my own choice. I have therefore been grieved when favour come in a different way and valued such mercy less. When I have fallen into sins I resolve to avoid I have grieved more because my resolutions have been broken and my will thwarted than because God has been wronged or my soul endangered. Thus God has been provoked to break down these resolutions and cast down the tower that reached to heaven (Proverbs 19:3; Romans 10:3; Mark 14:37; Isaiah 10:7; Psalm 58:3).

## **7. Thinking Holiness is All About Hardship**

When difficult duties have been urged such as mourning, fasting, diligence etc. I have been brought to think that the purpose of the command was mostly to bring hardship on myself. I obeyed more often for this reason than to obey God's command. It was like pagans who cut themselves or Roman Catholics who whip themselves and it did me harm. It engendered hard thoughts of God and made me do duties in a spiritless way and without spiritual benefit because I only sought hardship for myself.

## 8. Not Avoiding “Little Sins”

I have not avoided “little” evils, fearing that this would be like tithing “anise and cumin” (Matthew 23:23).

## 9. Focussing On Outward Sins Rather than Inward Corruption

In striving against the outward acts of sin I have not been considering the inward corruption of the heart. I have been “making clean the outside” but neglecting to cleanse it within; cutting the branches, and sparing the root (Matthew 23:25-26). I have not profited in holiness because the fountain has not been cleansed.

## 10. Depending on Our Own Strength

Going on in duties in my own strength without looking for divine assistance, has done me great harm. When I have gone on in confidence of my own strength the Lord has chastened me for my presumption, as it was with Peter. When duties have been difficult I have become discouraged because I was relying on and looking to my own strength.



Source: <https://www.reformationscotland.org/blog/2018/07/13/are-we-getting-holiness-wrong/>



## Upcoming Conference

# Reformed Conference

## For Young Adults (Residential)

26<sup>th</sup>/27<sup>th</sup> Oct 2018 | Loch Lomond

Bookings are now being taken for the Reformed Conference for Young Adults we are hosting at Rowardennan Lodge, Loch Lomond, 26<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> Oct, Lord willing.

With the conference fast approaching we would appreciate any more bookings to be made as soon as possible.

You can find all the necessary information via this page on our church website:

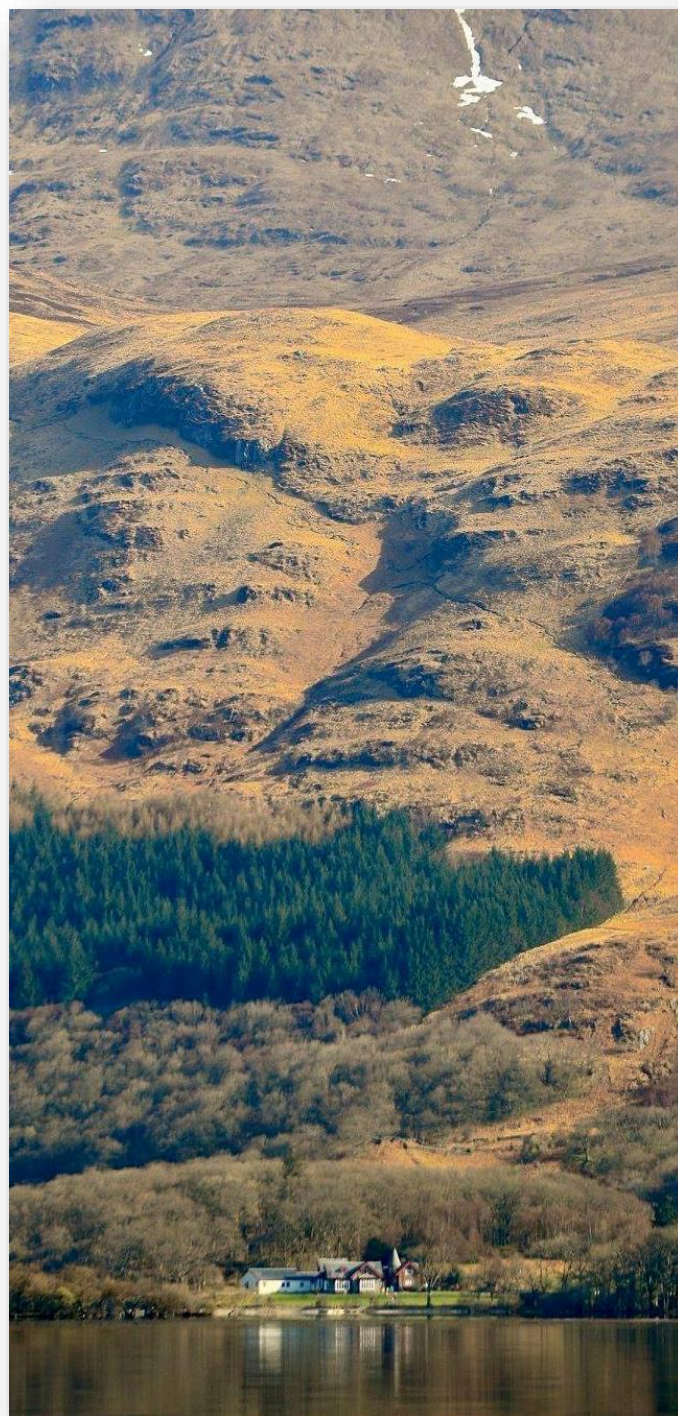
<https://www.glasgowrpcs.org/single-post/2018/05/15/Reformed-Conference-for-Young-Adults-Residential>

We also have a Facebook page for the conference to keep you updated:

<https://www.facebook.com/events/1814244322202810/>

Any queries can be emailed to:

[rpcsglasgow@gmail.com](mailto:rpcsglasgow@gmail.com)



*Rowardennan Lodge, Loch Lomond*

Visit the links below for further information on:



Our church: [www.glasgowrpcs.org](http://www.glasgowrpcs.org)



The Scottish RP church: [www.rpcscotland.org/](http://www.rpcscotland.org/)



The global RP church: [www.rpglobalalliance.org/](http://www.rpglobalalliance.org/)



Other sources used: [www.reformationscotland.org](http://www.reformationscotland.org)

Listen to the talks from the Gold Coast Conference 2018 here:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/8k234c9cmxbn8cs/AADvJ-VbicQytD7jktY9Gzia?dl=0>

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*'O Israel, hope in the Lord; For  
with the Lord there is mercy,  
and with Him is abundant  
redemption. And he shall redeem  
Israel from all his iniquities.'*

*Psalms 130:7-8*