

# CHRISTIAN WORKER

“We are workers together with Him...” (2 Corinthians 6:1)

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## THE DEPTHS OF TRIUMPH

Kevin W. Rhodes

When Moses ascended Mount Sinai and originally received the Law from the LORD, he heard, for the first time, the Decalogue, the Ten Commandments, which God established as the foundation for Israelite society. Among the precepts instituted in the wilderness that day, the requirement to “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Ex. 20:8) would later generate great controversy throughout the life of Jesus as the first century Pharisees’ interpretation of the requirement (long ignored throughout Jewish history) took on an extensively regulated meaning. However, while we ourselves recognize the reality of rest that the LORD instituted as part of that law (Ex. 20:9-11), as did the Pharisees, we often fail to appreciate its essential character of holiness, which the Pharisees also missed. The title applied to the ninety-second psalm, “A Song for the Sabbath day,” deserves consideration. The LORD did not give the Sabbath merely for physical rest but also for spiritual renewal, as this psalm also implies. More than that, its thematic emphasis on the character of God Himself illustrates well the actual purpose underlying the original command to keep the Sabbath holy. It should have been a day distinctly spent in dedication to the LORD, thinking about Him and all that He had done. Therefore, while Christians follow the gospel rather than the Law, and therefore have no responsibility to keep the Sabbath (Col. 2:14-15), the holy aspect of its purpose should endure as God’s people today reflect regularly on the glory of their God and why He is worthy of their worship.

Remembering God and all that He has done is not

just commanded; it is good. It is good morally, certainly, but it is good for us. Giving thanks to God helps us remember how blessed we are, and praising Him in song thrills the soul and unites our hearts (Psa. 92:1). Indeed, we ought to fill our days with declarations of His care and attention (Psa. 92:2-3). It may seem silly to some, overly demonstrative to others, but stopping the hustle and bustle of daily life to consider what God has done—instead of always concentrating on what we must do—is one of the healthiest activities you will ever undertake. God has done far more for us than we could ever do for ourselves—and not just in providing salvation (Psa. 92:4). Reflecting on the thoughts He provides through His Word provokes us to grow and deepen our understanding of ourselves, of others, of our purpose, and of Him (Psa. 92:5-6). By meditating on His Word, we gain perspective amidst tribulation, knowing that the wickedness of the moment will one day pass and be destroyed but that the LORD reigns eternally

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# CORONAVIRUS, ALCOHOL, AND THE CHURCH

Cody Westbrook

The novel coronavirus known as COVID-19 will be remembered historically for the societal adjustments it has produced on a world-wide scale. Business models have changed, dining out has changed, we shop differently, we consume media differently, and we have even developed an extended vocabulary. Words and phrases like “social distancing,” “flattening the curve,” and “self-isolation” have taken on new meaning. Another term, one that carries a great deal of weight, is “essential business.”

This expression produces much debate, and understandably so. Thousands of people suddenly find themselves without work with one swipe of a Governor’s pen because their business is not deemed essential. Additionally, many are puzzled at the seemingly subjective nature of determining the essentiality of a business. Why are big box stores like Wal-Mart and Home Depot considered essential while small privately owned businesses that sell the same products are not? A related, but far more important question is why are liquor stores deemed essential? What does it say about society that a local hardware store cannot open but a store that specializes in the Devil’s brew can? What reasons are given? How should the church react? These questions are all worthy of our consideration.

### Alcohol as an Essential Business

The term “essential business” varies from state to state but generally it refers to any business or service that society cannot function without. Grocery stores, hospitals, and Public Services would all be included, for example. That begs the question, why would alcohol fit the definition of something without which society could not function?

The answer is that alcohol is such a deeply rooted cultural component that making it unavailable is considered anathema by many. Philosopher Peg O’Connor summarizes the American view well:

Liquor is essential because many people believe it is essential to them. This is a peek into the American psyche. Simply put, the United States is a country steeped in alcohol; our culture is saturated. Not only do we have a right to drink, we tell ourselves in all sorts of ways we deserve to drink. We work hard, so we deserve a drink.

We’ve had a bad day, so we deserve a drink to take the edge off. We’ve finally turned 21, so we deserve to drink. Times are tough or times are totally great, we deserve to drink. We’re scared, we deserve to drink. Rites of passages (birth, graduation, marriage, anniversaries, birthdays, retirement) are all occasions deserving of alcoholic beverages. We drink alcohol to amplify feelings or to regulate them. Liquor comes to feel essential because we live in a culture that treats it as such. We treat it as such.<sup>1</sup>

American culture insists on alcohol, but it does so to its own demise. The truth is that the exaltation of alcohol has created a physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual crisis. Consider the fact that nearly 15 million people suffer with, what the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism calls, Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD), and taking alcohol away from alcoholics overnight can be problematic and potentially deadly for the addict and those around him. A Newsweek article from April 1, 2020 suggested “officials and advocates believe these stores [liquor stores CW] are an essential component of the broader healthcare system.” New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy included liquor stores in his list of essential business. In commenting on that action, the governor relayed the story “of a woman who was on her knees profusely thanking me for keeping the liquor stores open as it relates to just the whole addiction front.” George F. Koob, director of the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism said, “each year there are roughly 250,000 emergency department visits and 850 deaths related to alcohol withdrawal.” He further stated “Abruptly limiting access to alcohol could lead to an increase in withdrawal among people with severe alcohol use disorder and add to the burden on the healthcare system.” He went on to suggest that the fact that many people turn to alcohol as a coping mechanism in a time of duress should be considered as well.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/philosophy-stirred-not-shaken/202003/why-are-liquor-stores-considered-essential-businesses>

<sup>2</sup> Information found in <https://www.newsweek.com/marijuana-alcohol-covid-19-essential-businesses-1495600>

There are at least two major points to glean from this information, neither of which are good. First, Americans have “added sin to sin” (Isa. 30:1) by creating a health dilemma related to alcohol. As has already been pointed out, swiftly taking away all alcohol from alcoholics would likely lead to terrible consequences. All sorts of medical issues arise from withdrawal and other complications related to alcoholics being unable to feed their addiction. Additionally, the lives of friends and family members would be put in danger because of the uncontrolled rage that would surely follow many alcoholics not being able to access their drug. This is the dilemma. We have allowed sin in the form of alcohol to occupy such a prominent role in society that taking it away would produce an entirely different set of difficult problems. Second, the tragic reality of our time is that thousands of people have no idea how to cope with the issues of life without alcohol. Wine, not God, is the source of strength and hope for too many. A Market Watch article noted that online alcohol sales increased 243% in the early portions of the pandemic.<sup>3</sup> The reason for the increase is that people believe they need alcohol either because they just cannot live without it or because they feel they cannot cope without it. Both are tragic.

### **The Church and Alcohol**

The Church is the “pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15) and it is our responsibility to spread the light of truth in the world and confront sin and error in whatever form it may be found. Consequently, society’s alcohol plague should trigger a response, but what should it be?

First, we must recognize the serious nature of the problem. Alcohol is devastating to all who fall under its curse. The Bible is clear on this matter. Alcohol “enslaves the heart” (Hos. 4:11). It produces poverty (Pro. 23:21), shame and embarrassment (Pro. 20:1), and will cost one his soul (1 Cor. 6:10; Gal. 5:21). Solomon asked,

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 (Pro. 23:29-30).

The world glamorizes alcohol to try and hide its filth, but the reality is much more like what my family witnessed at a fast-food restaurant the day before Thanksgiving. As we were eating, a woman just a few feet away fell to the floor. Several rushed over to help her. At first, we thought she had suffered a stroke. She could not speak, she could not get up, and her facial expression never changed. But her young teenage son, with great embarrassment, told us she

was drunk. The shame increased a short time later when she tried to kiss the man who was helping her to the car and could not stop telling him how much she loved him. How tragic that a young boy is forced to drive and watch over his own mother because her drunkenness renders her incapable of functioning. But this is just one small incident among thousands. Throughout our world people are dying physically and spiritually because of alcohol. Marriages are torn apart. Children are neglected and abused. Individuals destroy their minds and bodies because of their addiction. There is nothing good or glamorous about alcohol at all. It is a toxic and destructive tool which the Devil uses with great success. God commands, “Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it swirls around smoothly” (Pro. 23:31). Paul said, “And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation...” (Eph. 5:18). Christians cannot be fooled into viewing alcohol nonchalantly, as if it is no big deal. We must see alcohol as the evil that it is.

Second, Christians must stop arguing in favor of “social drinking.” Some within the body of Christ would agree with the previous point, but then say, “The Bible only condemns being drunk, not having a little wine on a special occasion.” The social drinking push by many is counterproductive and unbiblical for a number of reasons.

- First, consider the utter hypocrisy of the argument. How can a person stand completely opposed to drunkenness and all the carnage it produces, then support the alcohol even if it is on a “smaller” scale? Like it or not “social drinking” is still drinking, and it is still participation in the same industry and culture that destroys people. How could you say anything about the dangers of alcohol when you engage in it yourself? Such is hypocritical and also self-defeating. You cannot claim to be walking in the light (1 John 1:7) and argue for the inclusion of darkness.
- Second, why would a Christian want to drink alcohol at all? What is the motivation? The danger of alcohol is clear and yet some Christians still argue in favor of it. Why? Actions proceed from the heart (Mark 7:14-15) and so there must be some driving force behind a Christian who argues in this fashion. Is it a desire to be like the world? Is it a refusal to “condemn” friends or loved ones? Is it just that you *want* to drink socially and so you refuse to believe there could be anything wrong with it (if so, you still miss the point)? Things done with sinful motives are indeed sinful (Jas. 4:1-6).
- Third, some social drinking arguments manifest a backwards view of Bible authority. Someone may respond, “I don’t see anything wrong with it, and you’re

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.marketwatch.com/story/us-alcohol-sales-spike-during-coronavirus-outbreak-2020-04-01>

being too judgmental.” Okay, but do you see anything *right* with it? Colossians 3:17 says, “And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus...” Can you point to a passage of scripture that authorizes drinking to any degree? Likely someone would say “Yes! First Timothy 5:23,” but that passage has no bearing here. Paul’s instructions to Timothy were in regard to medicinal needs and our discussion is about recreational drinking. No one who uses 1 Timothy 5:23 in favor of social drinking uses the passage correctly. You cannot transform a medicine passage into a sin passage. Additionally, Romans 14:23 teaches an important principle. In the context of judgment matters Paul said “But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin.” The principle is this—if I cannot say with certainty that God would be pleased with something, I have no business doing it. Our approach should be positive in regard to authority. Meaning, I should ask “Is this right?” and “Will God be pleased?” instead of saying “I just do not see anything wrong with it.”

- Fourth, social drinking ignores the Bible’s command for sobriety and abstinence. First Peter 1:13 says, “Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” “Sobriety” in ancient usage meant not only literal abstinence from drink but also behaving as a non-intoxicated person should, hence with dignified self-control.”<sup>4</sup> The word indicates being completely free from intoxicants or anything else that would blur judgment and compromise our self-control. It is impossible to do that while drinking alcohol to any degree. Further, Ephesians 5:18 commands, “And do not be drunk with wine in which is dissipation...” The point of the passage is to not even begin the process of being drunk. Paul said, “But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts” (Rom. 13:14). Who could argue that social drinking is not making provision for the flesh? We are to be holy as God is holy (1 Pet. 1:16). We are called to come out of the world (2 Cor. 7:1) and be different (1 Pet. 2:9). It is impossible to fulfill those divine obligations while at the same time condoning or participating in something which God condemns.

Third, the church must take an offensive approach toward the problem of alcohol. The Bible teaches us to expose the unfruitful works of darkness (Eph. 5:11). We should attack the problem head-on instead of waiting for it to come to us. Here are some suggestions.

<sup>4</sup> Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 1 Pe 1:13.

- First, we must be sure to preach and teach what the Bible says about alcohol and its dangers. The job of a preacher is to proclaim the “whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27). This includes the Bible’s teaching on alcohol. The church must hear God’s instruction on this important matter, regularly. Preachers should be able to explain the pertinent passages clearly. We should be able to deal with the word “wine” in scripture and explain how it is used in its various contexts. Preachers should be able to present the Bible’s case against social drinking clearly so that hearers may understand and be able to reason through the issue clearly and biblically themselves. We must not have congregations of God’s people where mystery and ignorance abound concerning drinking.
- Second, in conjunction with the first point, we must be sure to teach our children clearly and comprehensively what the Bible says on the subject. The instruction of children is primarily the parent’s responsibility—not the church’s (Eph. 6:4). This implies that parents must learn God’s Word for themselves first (cf. 2 Tim. 1:5). Parents, look for teachable opportunities. If you are sitting at a restaurant and the table next to you is filled with rowdy drunks, take the opportunity to remind your children what God says about what they are seeing. Use family devotional time to read passages like Proverbs 23:29-32. Make passages like Ephesians 5:18 memory verses and be sure your children understand what they mean and how they apply. Above all, do not treat alcohol as a subject full of question marks and non-consequence. Teach your children to see alcohol the way God does.
- Third, the church must work to provide support for individuals who are struggling emotionally and in other areas. Many people turn to drugs and alcohol as a coping mechanism. They often feel as if they have nowhere else to go. People are hurting and we have the one thing that can bring comfort—the gospel of Jesus Christ. God’s Word is all sufficient (2 Tim. 3:16) and gives us all we need (2 Pet. 1:3), even for our mental health (cf. Phil. 4:8; 2 Cor. 3:5; Mark 7:20-21; Pro. 4:23; 23:7; etc.). We should be mindful of those who are struggling and seek to help them. We should educate ourselves in ways to provide comfort and counsel. Perhaps by providing the emotional support that so many need, some plunges into alcoholism could be avoided.
- Fourth, we should do what we can to help those who are currently struggling with addiction to alcohol and other drugs. Alcohol use is currently on the rise. An already gargantuan problem is growing larger. More and more in our evangelistic efforts we come into contact with

those who are struggling with addiction and we must be equipped to help them. One way to do this is to support works like the *Home of Recovery and Restoration* (www.homeofrecovery.org). This is a work done by faithful members of the church in Winnsboro, Texas which seeks to help men overcome addiction. The problem with so many addiction recovery programs is that they are emotionally based and lack the proper substance to sustain a person after the emotion is gone. Therefore, the goal of the *Home of Recovery* is to provide substantial instruction from God's Word which will stand as a solid permanent foundation. Overall, congregations of the church should place more emphasis in learning about addiction and how the Bible addresses it.

### Conclusion

Alcohol is not a new problem, but one that COVID-19 has highlighted substantially. In fact, this pandemic has given attention to the fact that alcoholism and drug addiction is itself a pandemic in our country and in our world. The church cannot and must not side on the sidelines while such a fire rages. As the army of God (Eph. 6:10-20) it is incumbent upon us to wage war against this evil. We cannot do so by taking a blasé approach toward it, by trying to argue that some alcohol consumption is okay, or by neglecting to teach and preach God's decrees on the matter. We must arm ourselves with the proper attitude and with a commitment to learning more about addiction, how to help those who struggle with it, and proclaiming to the world the truth about alcohol. May God help us to this end.

comfort Christians have in God.

### CASTING

Our first "C" derives from a Greek term meaning "to throw upon" (Thayer) and is used only twice in the New Testament. Writing of Jesus' *Triumphal Entry*, Luke noted: "And they brought him to Jesus: and they cast their garments upon the colt, and they set Jesus thereon" (19:35). Peter's use of this word emphasizes a more definite and singular tone and better expresses the sense of "to throw away" or "to give up" to someone else. One commentator noted how the construction of the Greek denotes "an act once and for all." (Marvin Vincent; Vincent's Word Studies In The New Testament). The apostle's admonition is for us to throw the whole of our cares away once and for all — never considering them again!

This character is evident in Hannah's attitude after petitioning God for a son: "So the woman went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad" (1 Sam. 1:18). Certainly a deep abiding faith and trust in God is required for such an act of "giving up" one's cares to God!

The Scriptures are filled with exhortations and reminders to "throw away" our cares, and trust in God. David wrote, "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord." (Ps. 27:13-14; cf. 37:5). Jesus continually instructed His disciples to trust in God (Matt. 6:25, 34; Mark 54:19; Luke 8:14; et al), and Paul eloquently edified the Philippians to the same end: "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." (Phil. 4:6). What a tremendous comfort to know we serve a God in whom we can trust and on whom we can cast every distress in our lives.

### CARES

It is the cares of this world that we are to cast away upon God once and for all. This word is often explained as anxieties that come with the distresses of life. While this is an accurate explanation, there is also a sense in the Greek of "separating into parts." Hence, the cares and anxieties we are to cast upon God refer to those things which "separate us from" or "distract our minds from" spiritual things. We see an occasion of such a distraction in the account of Jesus in the house of Martha: "But Martha was cumbered [*distracted*] about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath

CW

## HE CARETH FOR YOU

Ronnie Scherffius

**A** most comforting thought in difficult times is that someone else is concerned for your wellbeing. The apostle Peter, looking back to the Psalms, noted that such a comfort should also motivate us to humble ourselves before God.

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:  
**Casting** all your **care** upon him; for he **careth** for you (1 Pet. 5:6-7)

The three "C's" of verse seven are especially noteworthy and direct our hearts to the overwhelming peace and

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**SOUTHWEST**

Southwest School of Bible Studies

**SECOND QUARTER—CLASS SCHEDULE**

Dates: November 2, 2020 - January 22, 2021

**MONDAY – WEDNESDAY – FRIDAY**

<b>Chapel: 8:30-8:50</b>		<b>CHAPEL</b>	
9:00-9:50	<b>1</b>	Rhetoric	Logan Summers
	<b>2</b>	Greek 2	Steven Lloyd
10:00-10:50	<b>1</b>	Intro to OT	Matt Gibson
	<b>2</b>	Logic	Logan Summers
11:00-11:50	<b>1</b>	Intro to Preaching	Matt Gibson
	<b>2</b>	Jeremiah/Lam.	Logan Summers
<b>Lunch: 11:50-1:00</b>			
1:00-1:50	<b>1</b>	Hermeneutics 2	Steven Lloyd
	<b>2</b>	Phil/Col/Phile	Matt Gibson
2:00-2:50	<b>1</b>	John	Steven Lloyd
	<b>2</b>	Isaiah	Matt Gibson
3:00-3:50		<b>GSP</b>	

**TUESDAY & THURSDAY**

<b>TUESDAY</b>			
<b>Chapel: 8:30-8:50</b>		<b>CHAPEL</b>	
9:00-11:50	<b>1</b>	Numbers	Clay Bond
	<b>2</b>	Church History	Ronnie Scherffius
<b>Lunch from 11:50-1:00</b>			
1:00-3:50	<b>1</b>	Luke	Ronnie Scherffius
	<b>2</b>	Romans	Cody Westbrook
<b>THURSDAY</b>			
<b>Chapel: 8:30-8:50</b>		<b>CHAPEL</b>	
9:00-11:50	<b>1</b>	Godhead	Steven Lloyd
	<b>2</b>	1 Corinthians	Wayne Jones
<b>Lunch from 11:50-1:00</b>			
1:00-3:50	<b>1</b>	Leviticus	Logan Summers
	<b>2</b>	Psalms 2	Clay Bond

left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me” (Luke 10:40). Jesus warned of the end of all who fail to trust in God and cast away cares of this world: “And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with *cares* and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection” (Luke 8:14). Hear the appeal of the apostle — Cast away the whole of those things that distract and separate you from a spiritual mind and focus on God.

### Careth

The deep sense of this word is “it is of concern” (Strong’s Concordance). God is not simply aware, but He cares about those things that distress us. Imagine, the God who created the heavens and the earth is concerned about your cares! We often comment that one appreciates or cares more for a thing that is the work of his own hands. Parents are sometimes found instructing their children how much more that child will appreciate something purchased with his own “hard earned money.” God created *all* things. Jesus paid the penalty for *all* men’s sins with His *own* blood. We are bought with a price! How deeply God must care for us!

First Peter 5:7 should be taken in light of the charge of the previous verse: “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord” (5:6). Pride is at the root of most of our anxieties. Human pride greatly resists casting our cares upon another to take care of “my problems.” Dear friend, what anxieties, what cares, what distractions are you trying to “care for” alone? Look to God — He already knows how much you need Him. He is patiently waiting. He cares for you!

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(Psa. 92:7-9). Seeing life in terms of God’s blessings keeps us humble, knowing that whatever we achieve, we did so because of what God made possible (Psa. 92:10-11). In this there is no false humility but only confidence rooted in faith, that following God and doing His will leads to blessings and success because we understand success in terms of blessings and our achievements as a testimony to the glory of our God (Psa. 92:12-13). This will sustain us in life and bring comfort without end (Psa. 92:14), because no matter what else happens, we have the LORD as our standard, as our defense, and as our King, and He will never lead us astray (Psa. 92:15).

To some, these thoughts seem as mere platitudes for the weak, but in a faithless age, they increasingly require great courage to maintain. Many wish to eliminate God from public conversation because these thoughts make them uncomfortable. And they are uncomfortable because they themselves stopped thinking about God. Sadly, many Christians’ faith is failing them, and it could so easily be prevented if they would take the time to stop, reflect on God, and meditate on His Word. The godless negativity of the world may seem like the dominant voice in society today, but you do not have to listen to it. So just stop and, instead, take the time to spend with God and His Word

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# SOUTHWEST

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**“To Know Jesus and...make Him known”**

## From the Director's desk



Steven Lloyd  
Director SWSBS

**C**OVID-19 has not galloped into the sunset yet. The student body at SWSBS is still being affected. All but a handful have shown symptoms and tested positive. One of our students was hospitalized. It has made its way through our faculty as well. All but two of our instructors have tested positive.

I am surprised to report that the school has not skipped a beat where schooling is concerned. When needed, faculty members have taught from home, and students have signed in online. We have not all been sick at the same time. For that reason, the scattered pattern of illness has spread out over time from the final weeks of the 1st quarter to the present time. One of our students returned this week with a smile on her face, saying, “I’m so glad to be back here.”

We will be off for two weeks for our year-end break. Many will return to their homes to enjoy the season with family and friends. We are scheduled to return January 4, 2021. I hope that COVID will have done all the damage it can do and we will all be immune and no longer carriers of the virus. Everyone is hoping the new vaccine is effective.

Prospects for students for August 2021 is encouraging. We already have 6 students lined up, and a few more filling out applications.

Best regards,  
Steven Lloyd

www.swcofc.org