

## Proverbs 23:29-35

### Wisdom for the Holidays: Wine

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For the Christmas season this year I am talking about topics we encounter this time of year. Last week I preached on gifts and gift-giving since many of us are purchasing gifts for family and friends this time of year. Next week I'm preaching on family as we often spend time with family over the Holidays. Today, I'm preaching on drinking **wine** but more **generally alcohol**. As we go to **work parties** or spend time with friends we may be offered or ourselves offer **wine, beer, cider**, or some **other drink**. **Should we** turn them down or not offer these beverages because the Bible prohibits drinking? Proverbs warns:

**Proverbs 20:1** (NIV)

Wine is a mocker and beer a brawler;  
whoever is led astray by them is not wise.

What about the book right before this, Psalms? Doesn't it actually encourage drinking?

**Psalms 104:15** (NIV)

[The LORD makes...]  
wine that gladdens human hearts,  
oil to make their faces shine,  
and bread that sustains their hearts.

Which one is it? Drink nothing or a lot? As you might **suspect** the Bible falls somewhere **in-between**. Let's first look at the **negative** side of wine, then the **positive**, followed by the **redemptive** side.

### 1. The Bible warns against the overuse of wine and strong drink.

From the Old Testament to the New the Bible warns against drinking too much and getting drunk. The **first time** wine is mentioned in the Bible is with Noah.

#### Noah - Drunkenness can destroy a family.

After the flood that destroyed all humankind but Noah and his family he plants a **vineyard**, becomes **drunk**, and passes out **naked** outside his tent (Gen 9:20-21). One son, **Ham**, treats his father disrespectfully, and the other two sons, **Shem** and **Japheth**, cover him up. This leads to Noah **cursing Ham's family** and blessing the other two sons' families. Although God uses this story for **good to bless Shem's descendants**, the "**Semites**," and foreshadow the acceptance of the **non-Jewish Gentile** people into the family of Shem, **Japheth's descendants**, it also illustrates how **drunkenness can tear a family apart**. I imagine Noah had **every reason to get drunk**. He probably had **PTSD** from the flood and was **self-medicating**, but that **didn't make it okay**. *Noah's drunkenness mixed with his son's disrespect destroys his family.*

#### Proverbs - Wisdom says don't over-drink (especially leaders).

We've been spending a lot of time in Proverbs. It's a book of **wisdom**—that means it tells us how to live our **everyday life God's way**. Towards the end of Proverbs there's a section called "**Thirty Sayings of the Wise**."<sup>1</sup> The longest of these sayings is "**Saying 19**" in **Proverbs 23:29-35**. It says not to **drink too much**. I want to read the **central two verses** of the **seven verses**.

**Proverbs 23:31-32 (NIV)**

31 Do not gaze at wine when it is red,  
when it sparkles in the cup,  
when it goes down smoothly!

32 In the end it bites like a snake  
and poisons like a viper.

**Wine, beer, and alcohol, when over-consumed, although it might be a lot of fun to drink, makes you eyes red, makes you see strange things, makes you stagger back and forth, and is a pointless addiction that leaves you wanting more (Prov 23:29-35). Proverbs also warns that over-drinking can leave you poor.**

**Proverbs 21:17 (NIV)**

Whoever loves pleasure will become poor;  
whoever loves wine and olive oil will never be rich.

**Over-consumption of alcohol can lead to acts of violence (Prov 4:17).**

**Proverbs 20:1 (NIV)**

Wine is a mocker and beer a brawler;  
whoever is led astray by them is not wise.

Proverbs also warns kings to be careful with wine.

**Proverbs 31:4-5 (NIV)**

4 It is not for kings, Lemuel—  
it is not for kings to drink wine,  
not for rulers to crave beer,  
5 lest they drink and forget what has been decreed,  
and deprive all the oppressed of their rights.

I think it's fair to apply this to anyone in **leadership today**. If you are **in authority over others**, whether in **government**, a **business**, your **family**, or the **church**, be careful with drinking. **Michigan Medicine** published a Mott Poll Report in December 2018 about parenting and alcohol.<sup>2</sup> They found:

- 1 in 4 parents who drink alcohol on special occasions are not likely to plan how much they drink or whether they'll be able to take care of their child the next day.

Proverbs would recommend not drinking too much in the first place. Over-drinking impairs our judgment.

- 3 in 10 parents know of an adult who may have caused an unsafe situation for their child due to drinking alcohol on a special occasion.
- 1 in 12 parents (8%) admitted to a prior situation where they may have been too impaired from alcohol to take care of their parenting responsibilities.

As parents we must be mindful of how alcohol can effect our parenting. All throughout Scripture those who are **entrusted** with the **spiritual care of God's people** are also to be **mindful**. In the Old Testament, the **priests** were not allowed to drink wine before going into the **tabernacle** to protect its holiness and to be able to **teach the people** (Lev 10:8-11). In the New Testament, the **church leaders**, our **Elders** and **Deacons**, are not to be "given to drunkenness" or "indulging in much wine" (1 Tim 3:3, 8). *Wisdom says don't over-drink (especially leaders)*. Drinking too much can also hurt our walk with God.

## Relationship - Alcohol can harm your relationship with God.

When the Israelites are renewing their covenant-relationship with God at the end of Deuteronomy before entering the promised land God reminds them of how they lived in the wilderness.

**Deuteronomy 29:5-6** (NIV) Yet the Lord says, “During the forty years that I led you through the wilderness, your clothes did not wear out, nor did the sandals on your feet. 6 You ate no bread and drank no wine or other fermented drink. I did this so that you might know that I am the Lord your God.”

God **preserved** the people and then didn't allow them to drink so that they would know he was with them. Alcohol has a way of **interfering** in our **relationship** with the **Lord** (Isaiah 5:11-12, 22).<sup>3</sup> We lose our **understanding** of what really matters (Hos 4:11). Paul likewise says:

**Ephesians 5:18** (NIV) Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit,

Over-drinking can lead to debauchery (**intimacy sins**) but seeking the **Holy Spirit** leads to a **relationship with God**. So when we drink too much wine, or beer, or alcohol we can **easily fall into sin**. It's **possible** that if you're **prone** to drinking too much you **might not realize it**. If just **one person** in your life says you drink too much, or even says it as a **joke**, I'd take that **really seriously**. When you **mess up**, **confess it**, **take a break**, set up **boundaries** and get an **accountability partner**. We can't risk **giving** into **drunkenness** **because the stakes are too high**. Paul **warns** drunkards will **not inherit** the kingdom of God.

**1 Corinthians 6:9-10** (NIV) Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men 10 nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

Drunkards will not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor 5:11; 1 Thess 5:4-11). Some of us should **never drink** because **we or our family** are **alcoholics**. If you're addicted to alcohol **the first step** in ***Alcoholics Anonymous*** is admitting you're **powerless** over alcohol and the **second** is **believing** that there's **a God who can help**. If you think you might be addicted to alcohol, give AA a try, or **Celebrate Recovery**, which is a **Christ-centered** alternative to AA. **Noah's story** gives us a lot of hope because Noah sinned but God still **saved him** and **counted him as a righteous man** (Gen 6:8-10). **God offers grace in failure**. If you've failed with alcohol, God can **forgive you** and **change you** for good.

Notice how I've been talking about over-drinking. That's the **wrong way** to drink. This **implies** there is a **right way** to drink. Now just in case you're wondering, this **does not** give anyone under the **age of 21** **permission** to drink, and you should **never drink** and **drive**. For those who are **old enough**...

## 2. The Bible encourages the moderate use of wine.

Some of you may be breathing out a **sigh of relief**. You **like** wine or beer, you **enjoy** it, and you try to **drink responsibly** and **never get drunk**. Let me encourage you that the **second story** in the **Bible** that has **wine** in it is more positive. In **Genesis 14** a man named **Abram**, who God named Abraham, is coming home from a **victory in battle**. As he comes home he is greeted by a **king** who is a **priest of the one true God**.

**Genesis 14:18-19a** (NIV) Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, 19 and he blessed Abram...

Melchizedek is king of “**Salem**” which is the city that would one day become **Jerusalem** (Psa 76:2). In **Psalm 110 King David** prophecies that a king will come who will be “a **priest** forever in the order of **Melchizedek**” (Psalm 110:4). In the New Testament in **Hebrews 7 Jesus** is identified as being a priest in the order of Melchizedek (Heb 7:11). What does Melchizedek do? He gives Abram and his men bread and wine after their battle. He **cares** for them. He **refreshes** them. He shows us what Christ is going to do one day, also bringing out **bread** and **wine** at the **last supper**, not to just **refresh us physically but spiritually**.

**Clean drinking water** could be hard to come by so people often **drank wine**, which could **easily lead to drunkenness**.<sup>4</sup> Throughout the Old Testament we see people bringing gifts of wine when they come before **kings** (1 Sam 16:20; 25:18; 2 Sam 16:1). Bread and wine were a **common food** and **drink** (Judges 19:19). The **Nazarites** wouldn’t drink wine, but only for the **duration** of their **vows** (Num 6:3, 20). It was very unusual for people to **completely abstain** from alcohol. We know of **Samson** in the Old Testament and **John** in the New Testament (Judges 13:4, 7, 14; Luke 7:33). **Jesus’ very first miracle** was **turning water** into **wine** at the **wedding** at **Cana** (John 2:1-12). *The Bible seems to encourage the moderate use of wine.*

## **Psalms - Wine can make the heart glad.**

Did you know **Tolkien** and **C.S. Lewis** met at *The Eagle and Child Pub* in **Oxford** to discuss their writings? We watched a video a couple months ago of a **church-planter** who is going to the **local bar** to do a ministry called “**Theology on Tap**” where they **drink beer** and **talk about God**. **Wine can open you up**, yes in bad ways, but also in good ways. It can be **emotionally** and **mentally** good for the **heart** to enjoy a beer or a glass of wine (Prov 31:6).

### **Psalm 104:15** (NIV)

[The LORD makes...]

wine that gladdens human hearts,  
oil to make their faces shine,  
and bread that sustains their hearts.

Have you ever met someone who transformed from a grouchy person into a rather pleasant person when they had a glass of wine? One photographer did a photo study of people **before** a **glass of wine**, and then **after** one, two, and three glasses of wine. You can tell that just one glass can change someone’s **attitude**.<sup>5</sup> Now it’s not healthy if you always need a glass of wine to be happy, and yet *wine can make the heart glad*.

## **Israel - Lack of wine was a sign of God’s judgment.**

Throughout the **Old Testament** one of the ways God **judges** is by not allowing people to enjoy the fruit of their vineyards (Isa 24:9, 11). For example the Moabites are judged this way by God for their sin (Isa 16:10).

### **Jeremiah 48:33** (NIV)

Joy and gladness are gone  
from the orchards and fields of Moab.  
I have stopped the flow of wine from the presses;  
no one treads them with shouts of joy.  
Although there are shouts,  
they are not shouts of joy.

In the Bible a lack of wine can symbolize God’s judgment.<sup>6</sup> Does this **mean** that if you don’t have wine God is judging **you**? Not at all, but it shows that a vineyard and wine was **in general** considered a **blessing**.

## **Solomon - Love is like wine.**

The poet Solomon uses wine to describe and contrast with love (Song of Songs 1:2-4; 2:4; 4:10; 7:9; 8:2).

### **Song of Songs 5:1 (NIV)**

**He**

I have come into my garden, my sister, my bride;  
I have gathered my myrrh with my spice.  
I have eaten my honeycomb and my honey;  
I have drunk my wine and my milk.

**Friends**

Eat, friends, and drink;  
drink your fill of love.

Solomon uses wine as an **illustration** for love **because** wine is **good**. *Love is like wine*.

Did you know the **original temperance movement** was about **not drinking hard liquors**. Many thought it was fine to drink **beer, wine, and cider**. Some decided you couldn't drink any alcohol at all, and these people became known as "teetotalers"—as in totally abstain.<sup>7</sup> The teetotalers eventually won out. Should we **totally abstain**? Although Paul tells the **young pastor Timothy** to take a little wine for his upset stomach and health, he does give reasons to abstain (1 Tim 5:23).

### **Paul - We need to be mindful of others.**

Paul says to graciously care for those "**whose faith is weak**" (Rom 14:1). I think these could be brothers and sisters in Christ who think it's **wrong to drink** or who are **struggling with an addiction**.

**Romans 14:21 (NIV)** It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother or sister to fall.

If our drinking will cause a brother or sister in Christ to fall into sin, we **shouldn't do it around them**. We don't want them to **wrongly judge us and so sin**, or to **go against their own convictions** and **start drinking against their conscience**. We want **them** to have a pure conscience as they **abstain** and for us to have a pure conscience as we **enjoy**. *The Bible encourages the moderate use of wine but we need to be mindful of others.*

We've looked at the **negative** side of wine, and the **positive**. Now I want to finish with the **redemptive**.

### **3. Wine points us to Jesus.**

At the very end of Genesis Jacob blesses his twelve sons. As he is blessing Judah, who will become the royal tribe through whom the **Messiah (God's special eternal king)** will come, he talks about wine.

**Genesis 49:10-11 (NIV)**

10 The scepter will not depart from Judah,  
nor the ruler's staff from between his feet,  
until he to whom it belongs shall come  
and the obedience of the nations shall be his.  
11 He will tether his donkey to a vine,  
his colt to the choicest branch;  
he will wash his garments in wine,  
his robes in the blood of grapes.

12 His eyes will be darker than wine,  
his teeth whiter than milk.

We see this prophecy fulfilled by Jesus. In **John 15** Jesus **identifies** himself as the **true vine**.

**John 15:5** (NIV) “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

Genesis 49 also says “he will wash his garments in wine, his robes in the blood of grapes.” The last book of the Bible, **Revelation**, tells us **Jesus** will return in a “robe dipped in blood” (Rev 19:11-13). If we go back back to the Old Testament we see wine being identified with blood.

When God gave the Israelite people the **sacrificial system** he prescribed the **priests** make a **daily offering**. Every **morning** and **evening** they were to sacrifice a **year-old lamb** with **flour**, **olive oil**, and **wine** (Exod 29:38-41). The **poured out** wine was called a **drink offering**.<sup>8</sup> The drink offering was an important part of the **sacrificial system**. In the New Testament **Jesus** speaks of the drink offering, but **applies** it to **himself** in the **Last Supper**.

**Luke 22:20** (NIV) In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.”

Jesus is claiming his blood is the wine of the drink offering.<sup>9</sup> When he is **crucified** and the **soldier’s** spear pierces his **side** his **blood pours** out as the **true** and **final drink offering** (John 19:34). **Paul** also identifies his life as a drink offering as he sacrifices himself to tell others about Christ (Phil 2:17; 2 Tim 4:6).

### ***Wine points us to Jesus.***

This Holiday season as you go to **office Christmas parties** and have **opportunities** to drink **beer**, **wine**, **cider**, and other **strong drinks**, **remember** how *the Bible warns against the overuse of wine and strong drink just as it encourages the moderate use of wine; but most of all remember how wine tells us about redemption through Christ*. Wine is a **picture** of **something greater**, the **blood of Jesus**. At the **cross** this wine was **poured out to make you whole**. Will you **take this wine**? This wine can make you new again and it can make your heart glad, forever. *Wine points us to Jesus.*

*Pastor Jonathan Romig preached this message at Cornerstone Congregational Church. You can download a PDF copy of this sermon above, which includes endnotes and references, or share it through Apple podcasts or Google Play Music. Read the story of our church here.*

<sup>1</sup> See NIV Bible.

<sup>2</sup> Mott Poll Report. *Excessive Celebration Can Lead to Parenting Hangovers*. Published December 17, 2018. Vol 33. Issue 2. Accessed December 6, 2019. [https://mottpoll.org/sites/default/files/documents/121718\\_AlcoholSpecEvents\\_0.pdf](https://mottpoll.org/sites/default/files/documents/121718_AlcoholSpecEvents_0.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> The book of Isaiah warns that those who chase after drinks “have no regard for the deeds of the Lord, no respect for the work of his hands.”

<sup>4</sup> Back at that time it could be difficult to find good drinking water, so people drank a lot of wine, which meant it was pretty easy to get drunk. R. K. Harrison, *Leviticus: An Introduction and Commentary*, TOTC 3; IVP/Accordance electronic ed. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1980), 117. [https://accordance.bible/link/read/Tyndale\\_Commentary#3034](https://accordance.bible/link/read/Tyndale_Commentary#3034)

<sup>5</sup> Tim Nudd, *This Photographer Takes Fun Portraits of People After One, Two and Three Glasses of Wine*, published April 7, 2016, accessed December 6, 2019, <https://www.adweek.com/creativity/creative-takes-fun-photos-people-after-one-two-and-three-glasses-wine-170673/>.

<sup>6</sup> When God’s judgment is poured out it is often pictured as a cup of the wine of God’s wrath being poured out on his enemies (Psa 75:8; Isa 51:21-22; Jer 25:15-16; Rev 14:10; 16:19).

<sup>7</sup> Eric T. *Teetotaler: Why are People Who Don’t Drink Called This?* Culinary Lore. Published November 13, 2016. Accessed December 6, 2019. <https://culinarylore.com/drinks:origin-of-the-word-teetotaler/>

<sup>8</sup> Some think the idea is that every morning and every evening the Israelites served the LORD a meal of bread, wine, and meat. “DRINK OFFERING,” MED, 198. [https://accordance.bible/link/read/Mounce\\_Expository#3479](https://accordance.bible/link/read/Mounce_Expository#3479)

<sup>9</sup> What is a drink offering? Accessed Dec 5, 2019. <https://www.gotquestions.org/drink-offering.html>