

Condemnation of Wine

Psalms 104:15 – “And wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man’s heart.”

There are a number of passages that permit the use of wine. Positive uses of wine:

1. Offered with sacrifices (Ex. 29:40; Lev. 23:13; Num. 15:5, 10; 18:12; 28:7, 14; Deut. 14:23; Neh. 10:39)
2. For enjoyment (Psa. 4:7; 104:15; Prov. 31:6-7; Eccl. 2:3; Isa. 25:6; Zech. 9:17; 10:7)
3. Recommended by Paul to Timothy (1 Tim. 5:23)
4. Given by Melchizedek to Abraham (Gen. 14:18)
5. Used at meals (Matt. 26: 27-29; Mark 14:23)
6. Made by Jesus at the marriage feast in Cana (John 2:9-10)
7. Used in the Lord’s Supper (Matt. 26:27-29; Luke 22:17-20)

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

There are many passages that prohibit the use of wine.

Proverbs 23: 31-32 – “Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.”

Habakkuk 2:15 – “Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that putteth they bottle to him.”

Required Abstinence:

1. Of Levites while on duty (Lev. 10:9; Ezek. 44:21)
2. Of Nazarenes during their vow (Num. 6:3)

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3. Of Samson’s mother during her pregnancy (Judg. 13:4-5)
4. Of kings and rulers (Prov. 31:4-5)
5. Of John the Baptist (Luke 1:15)
6. Of pastor and deacons (1 Tim. 3:3, 8)

Chosen Abstinence:

1. By Daniel to avoid defilement (Dan. 1:8-20), in mourning (Dan 10:3)
2. By the Recabites to honor a vow (Jer. 35:6, 8, 14, 16)
3. By the Israelites in the desert (Deut. 29:6)
4. Temperance allowed the guests at Xerxes’ banquet (Esth. 1:8)
5. For the sake of the weaker brother (Rom. 14:21)

Controversy about Wine

The Bible seems then to both permit and prohibit the use of wine. But this cannot be, since the Bible cannot contradict itself. How can we solve this problem? One must look at the word “wine” in its context.

Wine was a general term for any grape juice product, even when it was still in the grape clusters. Consider:

Isaiah 65:8 – “Thus saith the LORD, As the new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, Destroy it not; for a blessing is in it: so will I do for my servants’ sakes, that I may not destroy them all.”

Fermentation is the process that changes grape juice into an alcoholic wine. It is an indication of decay (all fruit juices will ferment). Natural fermentation will result in low alcohol content. After that, the juice becomes sour – vinegar. To slow this process down, wine was stored in airtight containers (jars or leather skins).

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Modern wines, on the other hand, have a

higher alcohol content (10-14%, double that of beer) or are fortified, a process that gives them double the alcohol content of natural fermentation (14-24%). This is called “strong drink” (*sheckar* in Old Testament). It is used 23 times, and it is restrictive where it is used.

For further information, see William Patton’s classic book, *Bible Wines or Laws of Fermentation and Wines of the Ancients*.

Generally, it is easy to see from the context of individual Scriptures which form of wine is being referred to: if it is positive, it is non-alcoholic, if negative it is alcoholic. In Proverbs, alcoholic wine is referred to as a mocker and a deceiver that leads to violence (20:1-2), poverty (23:21), sorrow (23:29-30), immorality (23:33), insecurity (23:34), insensibility 23:35), and is even compared to a poisonous snake (23:32)!

Did Jesus make alcohol for the wedding in Cana? We find the story in John 2:1-11. After Jesus had changed the water into wine, the host of the feast said, “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” (John 2:10). Good wine was fresh grape juice; the fermented grape juice was of lesser quality.

Drinking, even social drinking, cannot be legitimately supported by the Bible. There is one exception to this rule, however.

Proverbs 31:6 – “Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts.”

The Bible permits the use of “strong drink” as a drug to ease the pain of a dying man or woman, or a person in great anguish. Alcohol is a sedative. Today we have more effective drugs and so do not need to use alcoholic drinks for this purpose.

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Counsel about Wine

Ephesians 5:18 – *“And be not drunk with wine wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.”*

Although there is some controversy about drinking, there is none about drunkenness. The Bible clearly forbids it.

Genesis 9:20-21 – *“And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard: And he drank of the wine, and was drunken, and he was uncovered within his tent.”*

Noah’s drinking led to drunkenness and further sin.

Galatians 5:19-20 – *“Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, **drunkenness, revellings** [drunken parties] and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”*

This is then a very serious matter: a sin that could keep a person out of heaven. A man or woman that is truly saved will not continue in this sin.

But you may argue that you can handle a little wine. How do you know that? One out of every ten people who drink become alcoholics.

The problem is *“wine is a mocker. . . deceiving.”* The first effect of alcohol on the brain is to dull the capacity for self-criticism and the sense of caution. Most social drinkers drink much more than they think. Alcohol is deceptive and very addictive. It is, after all, a drug.

Drinking often sets off a chain reaction of influences that are like tipping over the first domino. Drinking causes some to stumble, others to be offended, and many to be weakened. Remember, too, that what you do in moderation, your children will do in excess.

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As a result, the best counsel about drinking is **DON’T**.

Romans 14:21 – *“It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.”*

But what if you are already hooked? God loves you and sent His Son to die for your pardon. God then raised Him from the dead for your deliverance. He can save you and give you peace and joy – a life that can never be found in a bottle.

Why not call on Him today?



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