

Freedom vs Wisdom Part 3: Alcohol and the Christian Life: S. Swartz

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Selected Scriptures

- In Isaiah, the subject of wine is mentioned at least 26 times. Positive Mention: generally, wine is mentioned being enjoyed during the future promise for Israel when Christ reigns from Jerusalem, Isa. 25:6-9, 62:8 (V1-12), Amos 9:13-14. Negative Mention: Isa. 5:11-12, woe to those who pursue strong drink. V13, exile is coming to those drunk with excess and who forget the Lord's word. Isa. 5:20-22, it continues that these wicked men call evil good and good evil and are mighty at drinking strong drink. Isa. 24:9-11, during the Great Tribulation, instead of repenting of their sin and calling out for mercy, they'd rather drink, and they cry out for wine, instead of salvation. Isa. 56:9-12, the watchmen (shepherds) are blind and desire only to drink the days away with strong drink. They have turned away from the Lord.
- **Freedom vs. Wisdom, Alcohol and the Christian life**: Paul commands believers in Eph. 5:18, "And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation (wastefulness, recklessness), but be filled with the Spirit."
- As well in Romans 14:13-16, we are to avoid anything which might cause our brother to stumble.
- There is **no** command in Scripture against drinking wine. But drunkards are warned that they will not enter the Kingdom of God, 1 Cor. 5:11, 6:9-11, Gal. 5:21.
- Alcoholism doesn't exist. Scripture calls it drunkenness. It is a sin that men and women can repent of and turn from. It is not a disease that renders the user a victim. Drunkenness can be overcome.
- Wine's Use in Scripture: It is seen encouraged for medicinal purposes by Paul to Timothy, 1 Tim. 5:23. Jesus turns water into wine, John 2. Jesus was offered sour wine on the cross, John 19:29. Passover utilized 4 cups of wine, which would expose the drinker to excessive alcohol during a Holy Day if it were strong drink or not diluted sufficiently.
- Strong Drink is condemned across all Scripture. In this age, humanity doesn't handle alcohol well.
- **6 Counselors Concerning Wine and Alcohol**:
 - 1) **Counsel of Reality**: Wine in Scripture was mixed wine with water. Generally, a 10 to 1 ratio. The strongest wine that many would keep would be a 3 to 1 ratio. Strong drink was unmixed wine and had a higher alcohol content.
 - a. **You cannot make a fair comparison between Jesus' time and ours with regards to wine.**
 - b. **Drunkenness is evidence of being an unbeliever.**
 - 2) **Counsel of a Worshipper**: Num. 6:1-4, those that take the Nazirite Vow, wouldn't even eat grapes during their vow. An example is Samson (Judg. 13:5-7) and Samuel (1 Sam. 1:11). The vow was a consecration to the Lord. Wine could alter their judgement. Wine was avoided to keep a clear mind. We are commanded to have a transformed mind (Rom. 12:2), to think lovely and pure thoughts (Phil. 4:8-9), and to rejoice always and give thanks in everything (1 Thess. 5:16-18).
 - a. **Can you still be a true worshipper and drink wine?**
 - b. **What if it impairs your judgement? Can you rejoice always if you drink wine?**
 - 3) **Counsel of a Priest**: Lev. 10:1-3, Nadab and Abihu offered strange fire before the Lord. God tells Moses who speaks to Aaron, "God will be treated as holy and glorified before all the people."
 - a. **Why were Nadab and Abihu unable to discern between holy and unholy offerings?**
 - b. Lev. 10:9, Aaron and his sons are warned never to drink wine or strong drink before entering the tent of meeting, or they would die.
 - c. A qualified elder is one who is not addicted to wine, 1 Tim. 3:3 Tit. 1:7.
 - d. Priests in the millennial temple must not drink wine before entering the inner court, Ez. 44:21.
 - 4) **Counsel of a Leader**: Daniel 1:5-17, Daniel refused wine and meat and instead ate vegetables with water. The Babylonians didn't mix their wine with water and offered their meat to idols. Daniel and his friends abstained from those foods. They honored the Lord and relied upon His commands to be a light to the nations. Daniel was given great insight and wisdom from the Lord because of His commitment to honor the Lord in Babylon.

- 5) **Counsel of a Father:** Prov. 19:29 & 20:1. Judgements are for scoffers, 19:29. Wine is a mocker, 20:1. The word mocker & scoffer are the same word. A mocker or scoffer is one who boasts, brags, and is arrogant. Strong drink a brawler. A brawler is noisy, loud, tumultuous, bringing out the worst in someone. It is unwise to be controlled by wine or strong drink. We are to be careful.
- 6) **Counsel of a Mother:** Prov. 31:1-9, is a warning from mother to a royal son (King Lemuel). She gives two warnings:
- Don't give your life and goodness to women, V3.
 - Alcohol is not for kings, rulers, and leaders. It might cause them to pervert justice for the weak, V4-5.
 - Rehoboam listened to the counsel of his young friends, 1 Kings 12:8. Likely these young men spent more time in drunkenness than sobriety. Their actions caused the splitting of the kingdom of Israel.

Ask these questions concerning your liberty with alcohol:

- **You have the liberty to drink wine, but is it worth it?**
- **You have the liberty to drink wine, but why do you?**
- **You have the liberty to drink wine, but will it help you accomplish great things for the Lord?**
- **A guiding principle is found in Ephesians 4:17-20, to no longer walk in futility as the Gentiles walked.**
- **Don't be given over to sensuality (lewd behavior) for the practice of impurity and greediness.**

Further Discussion and Application

In reflection on the commands of Paul in 1 Thess. 5:16-22. How can alcohol prohibit our ability to keep these commands? What do we need to be watchful for as we pursue Christ? Quenching the Spirit is a command in verse 19. How do we stop the work of the Spirit in our lives? What is the fruit that we should be bearing from Gal. 5:22-24? Which fruits are impacted negatively by the excessive use of alcohol?

Which counsel of the 6 given in the sermon impacted you the most? Did you agree with them all? Did you disagree with any of them? As you have thought about why you might disagree or differ with the message, did you settle on your liberty as a believer as the reason you are allowed to enjoy wine? Did you settle on "eat, drink, and be merry," as a reason? What examples support your view of the use of wine?

As you examine the dangers of strong drink and drunkenness found throughout Scripture, what bounds do you put on using alcohol? How will those rules keep you from excess? What is sanctification? Do we grow more and more into the likeness of Christ? How does the use of alcohol help us to do that?