

Prov. 23:29-35; Mt. 26:26-29; Wisdom and Wine's Use I. The Danger to Avoid II. Wine's Proper Use Today III. Wine's Joyful Use Tomorrow

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, as we have been seeing the book of Proverbs is incredibly diverse and also specific in how it applies wisdom to our lives. Those who fear the Lord have and seek wisdom- and wisdom sets guidelines for a blessed life today and a blessed life tomorrow. One of the postures of wisdom is that of a parent warning their child to be careful in their use of things in this world. We must have a proper perspective as we look at the blessings God has given us. So today we see Wisdom and its teaching on wine's proper use. Wine and alcohol have a checkered past- at times the church has forbid its use and at other times celebrated its use. I know of a time when a pastor felt he had to hide the wine he purchased when people from church visited him. And growing up- there were two Christian schools near my home. One was known and the home of the drunk kids and the other was known as the home of the druggy kids. I found out that around 27% of Americans over 18 years old have engaged in binge drinking at least once a month. So about 1/2 of Americans get excessively drunk over once a month. Well, today Jesus comes to the church to teach her on the proper use of this gift from God. Jesus instructs us how to view and use wine within the church.

I. The Danger to Avoid

We start by considering the dangers to avoid when it comes to how we view and use wine. Proverbs is not giving us a 12-step program for those who are already addicted- rather it functioning like a warning light! Danger- don't go this way! Avoid the excess and be free from slavery! Wine is a gift from God- that has its proper place as we will see in our next point. But the wicked man turns something that God has created good into something evil- and idol that enslaves. Since alcohol used to excess creates a high- a buzz- it captures the heart. And in the end, mankind purses and served a created thing instead of the one, True God! Proverbs sets the context for us in 20:1- wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler; and whoever is led astray by it is not wise. Wine talks big- a drug man boasts and brags. Strong drink makes one roar and rage- which leads to trouble and strife! How many fights do not start with a drunk confrontation? How many car accidents couldn't be avoided if people would only know

when to stop. As 20:1 concludes, those who are led astray by it are not wise. The phrase is “Lo Hakam” the opposite of wisdom- they have no understanding. Wine is by its excessive use deceptive. Returning to our text in 23:31. It starts off smooth as silk- it goes down easy and gives great pleasure. But in the end it bites like a snake and stings like a scorpion. It starts as a sparkling cup with a fragrant aroma- but in the end it clouds your mind and blurs your vision. Look at what Proverbs reveals about the drunkard. In v. 29 it gives sorrow and woe. Which drunkard can say that they were proud of all they did the night before? Because as v. 33 says you see strange things, you say wicked and perverse words, you stagger and stumble. You get beaten and bruised but you do not feel it until the next day! Not only will they wake up with a headache, they will have to deal with the consequences of their foolish actions. Alcohol can rob of both time and money. Today you can watch hours of foolish drunks who act worse than a child. Even beloved sports players who lose everything because their restraint was lost upon the indulgence of alcohol. What starts as a fun game with so-called friends ends up with red eyes, fat bellies and empty wallets. Hollywood even makes movies that poke fun of the drunk- one who goes to Vegas and wakes up the next day married to a person they only just met. Or in the next last week, a British couple purchased a hotel in Sri Lanka while they were drunk. For some in our world all they do is talk about wine or beer or their mixed drinks. But as we will see, God has a better- a more lasting purpose for our lives! Drunkenness undermines your reason and slurs your speech. It leads to many other sins like brawling, debauchery, fighting and lewdness. But as Christians we are called to live decent and holy lives! So as 31:4 says, do not crave it- it is not for kinds to drink and forget! Be wise and sober! Or as Eph. 5:18 says, do not be filled with wine but rather be filled with the Holy Spirit! The fact is, drunkenness undermines spiritual holiness and weakens our resolve against sin! As Noah himself could testify in Gen. 9, a wrong use of wine leads to shame and dishonor. Noah planted a vineyard and ended up drunk, exposed and shamed. But let the people of God be chaste, holy and moderate!

II. Wine’s Proper Use Today

Jesus has set us free from slavery to wine- from addiction to things of this world! Those addicted to wine are seeking some joy- some high! The buzz is their focus and the highlight of their week! But Christians have been redeemed for a higher and more lasting purpose! The drunkard's buzz lasts only for a minute and leads to regret and shame! While a Christian's joy lasts a lifetime and leads to a holy life of being filled with the Spirit! But that does not mean that wine has no place, we can use it as a gift of God for the purpose of glorifying God and enjoying the blessings God has given! In Psalm 104:15 we find that wine is given to gladden the heart of man. And in Ecc. 10:19 we read that a meal is given for enjoyment and wine to make life merry! Wine is given as a gift from God to bring a warm joy and a glad heart! Wine has its place in feasting and celebration! Jesus was not ashamed to provide abundant wine at the wedding at Cana in John 2- turning water into the really good wine for the sake of joy and pleasure of the wedding guests! We have the freedom to enjoy wine without the sting! Enjoying a cup of wine with your spouse or a glass of Champaign at a wedding- we can enjoy these without fear and regret! Enjoying the fellowship that goes with it- without the fear of dealing with unwise consequences the next day! Jesus exhorts us to moderation- just like with food- we can enjoy it without being enslaved and addicted to it! Wine also has a medicinal use- as Timothy is encouraged to drink a little wine for the sake of his stomach issues and illness in I Tim. 5. Wine can soften the blow- when enduring pain or even on the brink of death- wine can take off the edge of the pain as Prov. 31:6 says. But in enjoying this wine properly, we must guard our hearts as well. The church leaders are not to be addicted to much wine in I Tim. 3. And the chaos in the Corinthian church in I Cor. 11 was centered around the fact that the rich were getting drunk at the LS while the poor had no wine at all. The fact is, Christians do have the liberty to enjoy alcohol in moderation. Free to enjoy it or free to abstain from it. We can receive it and enjoy with an eye to glorifying God by it! As I Cor. 10 says- whatever you eat and drink do it all to God's glory. So you can drink a glass of wine to God's glory! But also we called to guard our hearts so that alcohol does not become the center of our life- so that we do not live in the constant craving for it!

III. Wine's Joyful Use Tomorrow

But as we take a step back, we can see that wine has an important roll in the history of redemption as well. Wine is a sign of prosperity and increase- of receiving the blessings of God made evident upon the land! In the OT, the land flowing with milk and honey was the land of abundant vineyards that Israel possessed without planting them. Wine also is found as a part of Israel's thanksgiving- used in offerings as seen in Dt. 12 where the Israelites could eat grain and drink wine before the Lord. Wine comes to represent the abundance that God promises to His people- an abundance that Jesus Christ secures! Listen to Jeremiah 31: They shall be radiant over the goodness of the Lord in Zion- over the grain and the wine. Or again in Isaiah 25- on this mountain the Lord will make a feast for all people- a feast of rich food and of well aged wine. The Passover Celebration takes up this theme of wine since during that feast they would have 4 cups of wine. Now wine was considered the drink of nobility and freedom. In Jewish circles, the 4th cup of the Passover is linked to Exodus 6 where 4 terms of deliverance and rescue are applied to the Israelites. The final cup which was the Cup of Thanking and Blessing or the Cup of the Kingdom is the cup of wine that Jesus held and blessed in Mt. 26. It is this 4th and final Passover cup that was used to institute the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. So that as the church celebrates the LS in I Cor. 11, we are drinking His blood as we drink the wine- blessing the sacrifice of Christ and being nourished unto eternal life. Wine teaches us that we need to be joined to Christ by faith in order to be fed, nourished and blessed! Only those who trust in Christ can truly be blessed with joy, comfort and lasting happiness! But the wine we receive at the LS is a sign which points to the reality. As Mt. 26: 29 concludes, Jesus said I will not drink the fruit of the vine with you again until that day when I drink it with you in My Father's Kingdom. The wine of the LS is preparatory and partial- giving way to full and complete when Jesus returns on that last day. Or as Rev. 19 says, the groom and His bride will sing and rejoice- celebrating the Wedding Supper of the Lamb- with new wine that never runs out! So the wine we drink in the LS is a foretaste of the blessed wine we will enjoy with Christ for all eternity!

To conclude, as you can see wine can have a good use in our daily lives- but it also has a blessed use in the history of redemption. We do need to be careful how we use alcohol in our daily practice because it can addict and enslave. Isaiah warns in Isaiah 5- woe to those who are heroes at drinking wine and valiant in mixing drinks. But

that does not mean we cannot enjoy it! Like many other things, wine can be used to glorify God and enjoy His blessings. Jesus instructs us how to view and use wine within the church. So let us use and view it rightly- with an eye to enjoying abundantly for all eternity!