Proverbs 23:19-21

(19) Listen, my son, and be wise, and keep your heart on the right path. (20) Do not join those who drink too much wine or gorge themselves on meat, (21) for drunkards and gluttons become poor, and drowsiness clothes them in rags.

Proverbs 23:29-35

(29) Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaints? Who has needless bruises? Who has bloodshot eyes? (30) Those who linger over wine, who go to sample bowls of mixed wine. (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. (33) Your eyes will see strange sights and your mind imagine confusing things. (34) You will be like one sleeping on the high seas, lying on top of the rigging. (35) "They hit me," you will say, "but I'm not hurt! They beat me, but I don't feel it! When will I wake up so I can find another drink?"

New International Version

These verses are among those often quoted by those who believe that it is wrong to drink alcoholic beverages. They claim that this passage proves it is sin to drink wine, and by extension, any drink containing alcohol. However, this scripture does not say these things. What then does it say?

It warns that:
The excessive drinking of alcohol is a sin. The winebibber drinks too much and too often.

Improper use of alcohol is as poisonous as a snake's venom (verse 32).

God's children should avoid company with winebibbers (verse 20; see also Matthew 24:49; I Corinthians 5:11).

Poverty is just one potential negative result of drunkenness (verse 21).

Other potential—even probable—negative consequences of chronic drunkenness include woe, sorrow, contentions, complaints, bloodshot eyes, hallucinations, nightmares, addiction, lack of self-control in speech and other matters, and bodily injuries without apparent cause—the cause being forgotten because of drunken stupor (verses 29, 33-34).

We should not tarry long at wine (verse 30).

On this last warning, we know that a person who lingers where alcohol is consumed can so easily become a winebibber, or in plain, modern English, a drunkard. God, through Paul, lists drunkenness as one of the works of the flesh, warning that no drunkard will inherit God's Kingdom:

Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, licentiousness, . . . envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. (Galatians 5:19, 21; emphasis ours)

— Staff

To learn more, see:
Is It a Sin to Drink Alcoholic Beverages?

Related Topics:
Alcohol
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Sin
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