

# Do Not Drink

Proverbs 23:29-35

Introduction: I was given an article written by Dean VanDruff entitled “Should Christians Drink Alcohol.” The main premise in his article “is that nowhere in scripture is drinking prohibited.” Sadly, that same thought was repeated at the Southside church of Christ while we were there and it seems to be the understanding of many churches today. I would like to make it clear in this lesson that drinking alcohol (even one sip) is prohibited in the scriptures.

## I. Obvious condemnations of drinking.

A. Alcohol is a mocker and a brawler (Prov. 20:1).

1. A mocker is something held up to scorn, contempt or ridicule. It deceives and disappoints. It presents itself as something it is not. It is counterfeit.

2. A brawler is something that causes quarrels and fights. It is rough, noisy and generally out of control.

3. Those that drink alcohol are not wise but foolish!

B. Alcohol is condemned as harmful (Prov. 23:29-35).

C. Elders are specifically prohibited from drinking (1 Tim. 3:2-3).

1. The word temperate (NKJV) or vigilant (KJV) is from the Greek word *nepho* which means to be abstinent from alcohol.

2. The phrase “*not given to wine*” literally means an Elder cannot be “at, by, near, or with wine.”

## II. *Nepho*

A. The most direct commands in the scriptures prohibiting any consumption of alcohol is found in the Greek word *nepho* that is translated “be sober” in most English translations. It is used seven times in the New Testament. *Nepho* literally means...

1. “Drink no wine” (The Complete Biblical Library).

2. “To be free from the influence of intoxicants” (Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words).

3. The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament says it is the opposite of intoxication.

4. “To be sober, to live soberly, especially to drink no wine” (Liddell and Scott’s Lexicon).

5. “He who abstains from wine” (Stephanus’s Thesaurus).

6. “I am sober, I abstain from wine” (Bretschneider).

7. “One who does not drink wine” (Greek Dictionary of Byzantium).

8. “Abstinence from wine, sobriety” (Greek-French Lexicon).

9. “To be sober, temperate, abstinent, especially in respect to wine” (Robinson’s New Testament Lexicon).

10. “Without wine” (Younge’s English and Greek Lexicon).

11. “To abstain from wine, keep sober” (Strong’s Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries).

B. The sources are numerous! Virtually, all sources admit that *nepho* means abstinence from alcohol.

### III. We are commanded to be sober!

A. The Greek word *nepho* is found twice in 1 Thessalonians 5:6-8.

1. Paul contrasts sleeping with alertness and sobriety (vs. 6). Those of the day (i.e. Christians) are exhorted to watch (mentally alert) and be sober (abstinent from intoxicating drinks).

2. Then Paul compares sleeping at night with getting drunk at night (vs. 7). Christians (“us who are of the day”) must be sober (physically and mentally sober) as opposed to those who sleep at night and those who get drunk at night (vs. 8).

3. As Christian soldiers (using the military analogy that follows) physical sobriety is as necessary as it is to a military soldier. “Xenophon, in his *Cyropaedia* (vii. 5), represents Cyrus the great as addressing his chiefs, and reminding them that their soldiers were all wakeful and sober, while many of the Babylonians were asleep, and many of them drunken” (The Temperance Bible Commentary).

B. We find a discourse in 1 Peter 1:13-19 where we learn the necessity for sobriety.

1. Peter says, “*Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober [“Do not drink”]...* ” (1 Pet. 1:13). Peter is concerned about **conduct** in this passage. After he tells them not to drink, he encourages them to be obedient by not conforming to their lusts (1 Pet. 1:14). He says, “*you also be holy in all your conduct*” (1 Pet. 1:15); “*conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear*” (1 Pet. 1:17); “*knowing that you were not redeemed... from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers*” (1 Pet. 1:18).

2. Drinking not only impairs one’s ability to **conduct** himself faithfully to the Lord but it also impairs one’s ability to be holy. Drinking alcohol will impair salvation!

C. An interesting passage where the Greek word *nepho* is used is in 1 Peter 5:8. Peter actually uses a play on words as he describes Satan’s desire to ruin people. Again, the Greek word that is translated “sober” literally means “drink no wine.” The literal Greek translation for the word “devour” means “to drink down.”

As Adam Clarke observes, “If you swallow strong drink down, the devil will swallow you down.” In other words, Peter is telling us not to drink alcoholic beverages because Satan is looking for those he may swallow! Alcohol is not only one way to the devil, but it is one of the devil’s ways to us!

#### IV. Methe

A. The Greek word *methe* also prohibits drinking alcohol. It literally means “strong or potent drinks” (The Complete Biblical Library). The word actually refers to the drinks themselves which often results in drunkenness.

B. It would just be as valid a translation to say “drinking alcoholic beverages” as it would drunkenness in Luke 21:34, Rom. 13:13 and Galatians 5:21.

1. *“But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, [drinking alcoholic beverages], and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly”* (Lk 21:34).

2. *“Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and [drinking alcoholic beverages], not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy”* (Rom. 13:13).

3. *“Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, [drinking alcoholic beverages], 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”* (Gal. 5:19-21).

#### V. Uncleanness

A. The drinking of alcoholic beverages causes uncleanness.

1. Priests under the Old Law were prohibited from drinking alcohol because it caused them to be unholy and unclean (Lev. 10:8-10).

2. Daniel refused to drink alcohol because he understood it would cause him to be defiled (i.e. make him unclean; Dan. 1:8).

B. Uncleanness will condemn a soul (Rom. 1:24; 2 Cor. 12:21; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:3-7; Col.3:5-6).

Conclusion: It is interesting that after Paul commands sobriety from alcohol in 1 Thessalonians 5:6-8, he tells us to abstain from all forms of evil (1 Thess. 5:22). Drinking alcohol causes all kinds of evil. Drinking intoxicating drinks are prohibited in scriptures in many places and in many ways! We just need to open our eyes to the truth (Psm. 119:18-21)!

Invitation: Open My Eyes, That I May See #126