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California State Senator

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Wine is a Mocker by Dutch artist Jan Steen c. 1663

AS YOU KNOW I FREQUENTLY FREQUENT the book of Proverbs. Of the 66 books of the Bible, this one is perhaps the most applicable for those choosing to live their lives under scrutiny in the capital. Solomon, King of Israel, is instructing his son, Rehoboam, on how to live skillfully in governmental leadership. It follows then that much can be gained from the topical study of this book. *Alcohol and Office* is one of those subjects that needs special consideration. Read on, my friends.

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Weekly Bible Studies

CABINET: 7:00 AM Wednesdays, Location Undisclosed. *Light Refreshments Served.*

SENATE: 8:00 AM Tuesdays, Rotating Offices of Senators. *Hot Breakfast Served.*

HOUSE: 9-10 PM Tuesdays Capitol Hill Club, Main Dining Room. *Dessert Served.*

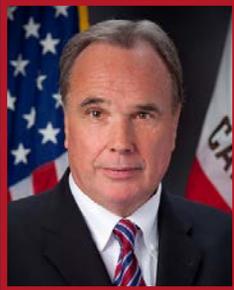




■ ENDORSEMENT

Mike Morrell

California State Senator



“I APPRECIATE RALPH DROLLINGER and Capitol Ministries. The Bible studies go in-depth on issues we as legislators face daily; always referring back to the foundational principles contained in the Scriptures. And for this I am grateful.”

— Mike Morrell
California State Senator

Mike Shreve is CM’s Ministry Leader to the California State Legislature.



Mike Shreve

I. INTRODUCTION

LONG AGO, WITH THE HELP of one of my seminary professors, I began outlining and developing theologically the 31 chapters of the book of Proverbs. This OT book contains 915 Proverbs which my professor had already divided into six main divisions for exhaustive study:

1. Spiritual Wisdom
2. Personal Wisdom
3. Family Wisdom
4. Intellectual Wisdom
5. Marketplace Wisdom
6. Societal Wisdom

I then developed 87 subcategories and exhaustive outlines under these six main divisions. What came out of this three-year exercise are studies for Public Servants that will afford you an opportunity to grow in personal wisdom in many pertinent, practical areas. This week, under the category of Personal Wisdom, we tackle *Alcohol and Office*.

What follows is all that Proverbs has to say about alcohol. As much as this beverage is available in the capital community — especially during free receptions and dinners — it can become your greatest enemy. It can lead to ruin. A special word is in order here: do not partake of everything that is “free.” It is not in your best interest. Do not be like the kid in the candy store without self-control. The surrealism of the capital environment coupled with being away from home can corrupt you faster than you think.

Remember the words of the Apostle Paul who said, *I discipline my body and make it my slave . . .* (1Corinthians 9:27). I have noticed that those without personal discipline do not function well here, especially when it comes to booze and food. Here is what Solomon had to say regarding alcohol to his son who would someday lead the nation.

II. THE PRESENT FRUITS OF FERMENTATION

20:1 Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, and whoever is intoxicated by it is not wise.

Biblical history records that since the days of Noah (Gen. 9:21) the love of wine and strong drink have deceived and shamed many. *Mocker* has the idea of scoffing and *brawler* carries the meaning of being violent, loud and uncontrollable. These are the fruits of the fermented grape, so to speak. What’s doubly sad is that these characteristics overcome a drinking individual before he is aware of it, all the while failing to deliver the pleasure he is seeking.

Noah is an example of one who drank excessively from his own vineyard. He soon lost respect and dignity in the sight of his inner family. Notice the extrapolation of this fact in Proverbs 23:29-35:

Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has complaining? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who linger long over wine, those who go to taste mixed wine. Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it goes down smoothly; at the last it bites like a serpent and stings like a viper. Your eyes will see strange things and your mind will utter perverse things. And you will be like one who lies down in the middle of the sea, or like one who lies down on the top of a mast. “They struck me, but I did not become ill; they beat me, but I did not know it. When shall I awake? I will seek another drink.”

One’s governing reason is lost when alcohol is used wrongly. In place of reason are lust, appetite, and passion. As a result, the heart *utters perverse things*. It’s not surprising that in the New Testament, the Apostle Paul commands, *And do not get drunk with wine* (Ephesians 5:18).



III. THE FUTURE FRUITS OF FERMENTATION

The effects on the overall direction one charts for his or her life is a secondary result of indulging:

23:19-21 Listen, my son, and be wise, and direct your heart in the way. Do not be with heavy drinkers of wine, or with gluttonous eaters of meat; for the heavy drinker and the glutton will come to poverty, and drowsiness will clothe one with rags.

So much of Proverbs talks about how those whom you choose to fellowship with will affect your life. Proverbs 4:14-17 states:

Do not enter the path of the wicked and do not proceed in the way of evil men. Avoid it, do not pass by it; turn away from it and pass on. For they cannot sleep unless they do evil; and they are robbed of sleep unless they make someone stumble. For they eat the bread of wickedness and drink the wine of violence.

Hanging out with wicked people quickly loosens one's attachment to instruction. Cultivating such relationships quickly forsakes the way of God. The results over the long term are a lack of personal productivity, *poverty*, and *clothing one's self with rags*. Skid row serves to illustrate this truth; a majority of those on our nation's streets suffer from alcoholism. The following Proverb underscores this:

21:17 He who loves pleasure will become a poor man; He who loves wine and oil will not become rich.

Herein is a biblical insight that should guide policy formation on the same.

THE ROOT SOLUTION TO POVERTY HAS MORE TO DO WITH THE FORMATION OF CHRIST'S

CHARACTER IN INDIVIDUALS THAN IN MEETING THEIR PHYSICAL NEEDS

Woefully inadequate are policies to overcome poverty that do not take into account the aforementioned Solomonic truths. This insight also underscores why the institution of the Church is so much better equipped to handle the plight of poverty than is the institution of the state: The former is designed by God to address the issues of the heart, where, in a majority of cases, the real problem lies.

IV. FERMENTATION AND LEADERS

31:4-5 It is not for kings to drink wine, or for rulers to desire strong drink, for they will drink and forget what is decreed, and pervert the rights of all the afflicted.

In the book of Esther, King Xerxes was drunk and ordered his wife to come before his eunuchs *to display her beauty to the people and the princes*. (1:11). When King Herod asked for the head of John the Baptist, it was in the middle of a feast (Mark 6:21). Both serve to illustrate the truth of this Proverb in terms of state leadership. The drunkenness of Elah, King of Israel, and Ben-Hadad, King of Syria (cf. 1Kings 16:8-9; 20:16; cf. Hosea 7:5) serve to illustrate the same.

When rulers — both kings and priests — desire strong drink, they *forget what was decreed and pervert the rights of all the afflicted*. It follows that one of the qualifications for spiritual leadership in the Church is that leaders *not be addicted to wine* (1Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7). No leader, in any of God's ordained institutions, can afford to have a mind clouded by substance. The point of this principle is that such behavior in a leader negatively impacts others. The leader must have a higher standard.

Often throughout Scripture, drunkenness and adultery, or other sexual sins appear side by side indicating the quick downward

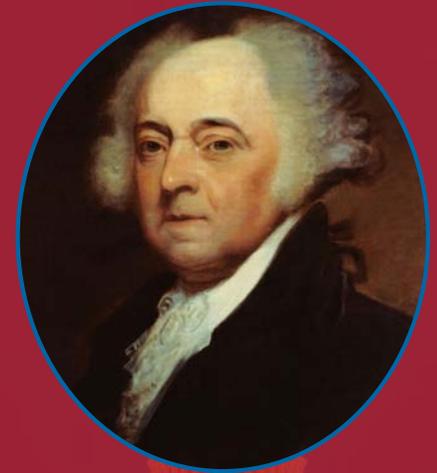
VERSE OF THE WEEK

1 Corinthians 10:31

Whether, then, you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.



John Adams



“Men must be ready, they must pride themselves and be happy to sacrifice their private pleasures, passions and interests, nay, their private friendships and dearest connections, when they stand in competition with the rights of society.”

— John Adams, second President of the United States; signer of the Declaration of Independence; judge; diplomat; one of two signers of the Bill of Rights.

John Adams, letter to Mercy Warren, April 16, 1776



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spiral for both secular and sacerdotal leaders who practice substance abuse. It leads to shameful activities; intemperance is unseemly as it turns a leader into a beast. And to lose respect in leadership is to lose leadership. Guard it! Keep your integrity at all times — you were elected to serve others, not indulge yourself!

Notice that the following Proverb directly proceeds from the previous one listed (31:4-5):

31:6-7 Give strong drink to him who is perishing, and wine to him whose life is bitter. Let him drink and forget his poverty and remember his trouble no more.

Whereas drink is not for kings, it does have its use. Psalm 104:15 states wine which makes a man's heart glad. Such is illustrated by the Samaritan who gave drink to the wounded traveler in Luke 10:34. Paul prescribed it to his ailing understudy, Timothy, stating No longer drink water exclusively, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments (1Timothy 5:23).

Conclusively, to drink wine was not a sin in the OT (cf. Deuteronomy 14:26) but drunkenness was (cf. Isaiah 28:7). So it is in NT times. This teaching of Proverbs regarding wine is illustrative of selflessness. Rather than personally indulging, one can prescribe alcohol prudently for medicinal and other conservative purposes when necessary. Here then is the principle of self-denial and service of others.

V. CONCLUSION

Scripture does not state hard and fast that any consumption of alcohol is sinful. But it does repeatedly warn against the sin of drunkenness and its results. The stakes are much higher as this principle relates to leaders. Nothing should be practiced that impairs one's ability to reason and judge with biblical precepts. Therefore, the leader's standard should be higher — not only because he deals in intellectual property, but for reasons of example. Consider 1Corinthians 10:31, Whether, then, you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

May God give you self-control and great wisdom when it comes to alcohol.

Handwritten signature of Dan Patrick

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