

The Question:

Proverbs 31:6-7 says:

“Give strong drink to him who is perishing, and wine to those who are bitter of heart.

Let him drink and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more.”

Does this verse mean it’s okay for believers to drink alcohol when facing sorrow, pain, or hardship?

Understanding the Context – The Old Covenant and Physical Solutions:

To interpret this properly, we must consider the dispensational context. Proverbs was written under the Old Covenant, a time

when God’s dealings with humanity were largely external and physical (Hebrews 8:6–13). Under that covenant, people often turned to physical remedies for emotional and moral issues—including the use of strong drink to dull grief and suffering.

It’s similar to how they were permitted to divorce or marry multiple wives—not because it was God’s ideal, but because of the hardness of their hearts.

Jesus clarifies this:

Matthew 19:7–8

They said to Him, “Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?”

He said to them, “Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.”

God tolerated certain human practices in the Old Testament, but they never reflected His original design. The temporary provision

to allow strong drink for those in sorrow was just that—a temporary allowance, not a divine endorsement of alcohol as a lasting solution.

Limitations of Alcohol as Comfort:

The thinking behind Proverbs 31:6–7 was that someone overwhelmed by grief might use alcohol to forget their pain, especially during severe distress like death or deep poverty. Even Job’s story (Job 1–2) shows the depth of grief humans face. But the relief from alcohol is fleeting. Once the drink wears off, the pain returns. Alcohol doesn’t heal, it numbs—and only for a short time.

This highlights an important theological truth: Fleshly solutions cannot resolve spiritual or emotional problems.

God’s Better Solution in the New Covenant – The Holy Spirit:
With the coming of Christ, God introduced a new and better covenant (Hebrews 8:6), bringing lasting spiritual transformation through the Holy Spirit. Jesus offers not a temporary escape from

sorrow, but living water that satisfies the deepest longings of the soul.

John 7:37-39

“If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.

He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.”

But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

The Holy Spirit brings what alcohol cannot: true comfort, lasting peace, freedom from sin, and inner joy.

The Day of Pentecost – The Spirit Misunderstood as Wine:

When the Holy Spirit was poured out at Pentecost, the joy and boldness experienced by the disciples caused some onlookers to think they were drunk. But Peter corrected them:

Acts 2:15-17

“For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day.

But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

‘And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God,
That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh...’”

This wasn’t the intoxication of wine—it was the overflow of the Spirit.

A Clear Command Against Drunkenness:

In the New Testament, believers are commanded not to seek emotional escape or joy through alcohol, but to be filled with the Holy Spirit:

Ephesians 5:18

“And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit.”

Paul draws a clear contrast: drunkenness leads to spiritual and moral collapse, but being filled with the Spirit brings life, order, and purpose.

Proverbs 31:6–7 is not a command or justification for alcohol use in times of sorrow. It’s a reflection of an older, less complete way of dealing with pain, rooted in the Old Covenant. Under the New Covenant, we are offered something far better: the Holy Spirit, who brings real healing and lasting joy.

Just as polygamy and divorce were permitted but not ideal, alcohol may have been tolerated—but it is not the believer’s source of comfort today. That role now belongs to the Holy Spirit, the Comforter (John 14:26).

Let us, therefore, understand the times we live in and walk according to God’s perfect will.

“The Spirit helps us in our weakness...”
—*Romans 8:26*

What Does “Give Strong Drink to Him Who Is Perishing” Mean?

God bless you

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