

Alcohol

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Part 1

Today, we're going to talk about alcohol, and we're going to turn to some experts on the subject—country music singers. Here's a song that pretty much tells you all you need to know about what alcohol does.

*I can make anybody pretty
I can make you believe any lie
I can make you pick a fight
With somebody twice your size*

*I been known to cause a few break ups
I been known to cause a few births
I can make you new friends
Or get you fired from work*

*And since the day I left Milwaukee
Lynchburg and Bordeaux, France
Been making the bars lots of big money
And helping white people dance
I got you in trouble in high school
But college, now that was a ball
You had some of the best times
You'll never remember with me
Alcohol*

*I got blamed at your wedding reception
For your best man's embarrassing speech
And also for those
Naked pictures of you at the beach*

*I've influenced kings and world leaders
I helped Hemmingway write like he did
And I'll bet you a drink or two that I can make you
Put that lampshade on your head*

*'Cause since the day I left Milwaukee
Lynchburg and Bordeaux, France
Been making a fool out of folks just like you
And helping white people dance
I am medicine and I am poison
I can help you up or make you fall
You had some of the best times
You'll never remember with me
Alcoholⁱ*

Part 2

When you get drunk, you make stupid decisions. You pick fights with guys bigger than you. You make a fool of yourself. You do stupid things because alcohol impairs your judgment. Brad Paisley isn't telling us anything new. It was written down for us in Proverbs, chapter 20, verse 1, and chapter 23, verses 29-35.

Wine is a mocker and beer a brawler;
whoever is led astray by them is not wise.

Who has woe? Who has sorrow?
Who has strife? Who has complaints?
Who has needless bruises? Who has bloodshot eyes?
Those who linger over wine,
who go to sample bowls of mixed wine.
Do not gaze at wine when it is red,
when it sparkles in the cup,
when it goes down smoothly!
In the end it bites like a snake
and poisons like a viper.
Your eyes will see strange sights
and your mind imagine confusing things.
You will be like one sleeping on the high seas,
lying on top of the rigging.
“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?”

There's no question that drinking makes you stupid. It's no sin to be stupid; but is it a sin to get drunk and be stupid on purpose? The apostle Paul says it is. He said so in his first letter to the Corinthians, chapter 5 verse 11 and chapter 6 verses 9-10.

But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a **drunkard** or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat.

Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor **drunkards** nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

In chapter 5, verses 19-21 of his letter to the Galatians, Paul told them that their drunkenness would keep them out of heaven.

The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; **drunkenness**, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

You might think that, although it is a sin to get drunk, it isn't a sin to take a drink or two. If so, you would be right. We read in Leviticus chapter 10, verses 8 and 9.

Then the LORD said to Aaron, "You and your sons are not to drink wine or other fermented drink whenever you go into the Tent of Meeting, or you will die.

Apparently, even the priests were permitted to drink wine, as long as they weren't on duty. The Bible doesn't condemn drinking, as long as you don't get drunk.

The problem is, how can you tell if you are drunk or not? Some states say that if your blood alcohol level is 0.8 you are too drunk to drive a car. Other states say your blood alcohol level has to be 1.0 before you are considered to be driving under the influence. If your blood alcohol level is 0.9, can you really get drunk or sober simply by crossing the state line?

Clearly, intellectual performance and physical performance don't suddenly change from normal to impaired suddenly. There is a gradual degradation in performance as blood alcohol increases. States simply pick an arbitrary value for legal convenience to avoid arguments about whether or not the defendant is really drunk or not. It is easier to measure blood alcohol than to devise tests of coordination and mental acuity to determine if one is sober or drunk.

States differ in their definitions of driving under the influence; but the more important question is, "What is God's criterion for drunkenness?" Is it 0.8 or 1.0 or some other value? Unfortunately, the Bible doesn't tell us. So one might reasonably ask, "How much can I drink without being guilty of sin?"

You have to use good judgment to make that decision and decide when to stop. The problem is that drinking alcohol impairs your judgment, so you can't reliably make that decision while you are drinking. After a drink or two you might think you are still sober enough to take another drink, but you might actually be drunker than you think. After a few more drinks, you may realize you are drunk, but you just don't care any more.

This country song describes the problem perfectly:

*He was sittin' at the bar, sippin' on a regular Coke
We were drinkin' and smokin' and makin' him the butt of our jokes
We all said, "Man, what happened to you? Why can't you just have a few?"
He said, "I would if I could, but it's probably best that I don't."*

*Cause the more I drink, the more I drink
Yeah, I'm the world's greatest lover and a dancin' machine
I get loud, I get proud....and it gets worse
Well if I have one, I'll have thirteen
Naw, there ain't no in-between
Cause, the more I drink, the more I drink, the more I drink.*

*A couple of cold ones, and somebody hands me a shot.
Hell, even buck-tooth and bow-legged women start lookin' hot
And pretty soon I'm bummin' cigarettes and sweet talkin' some big brunette
Yeah, once I get on a roll, ain't no tellin' where I'll stop*

*Cause the more I drink, the more I drink
Yeah, I'm the world's greatest lover and a dancin' machine
I get loud, I get proud....and it gets worse
Well if I have one, I'll have thirteen
Naw, there ain't no in-between
Cause, the more I drink, the more I drink, the more I drink.*

*Man, if I have one, I'll have thirteen
And they can't get me off the karaoke machine,
The more I drink...the more I drink.
Yeah, the more I drink, the more I drink, the more I drink. ⁱⁱ*

Part 3

In Biblical times there weren't very many beverage options. Soda pop, iced tea, and Gatorade had not been invented yet. Grape juice was a nourishing drink, but after it sat around in wine skins for a while it gradually fermented and turned into wine. New wine wasn't very alcoholic and wasn't intoxicating. Old wine was a different story. One couldn't really avoid drinking some at least partially fermented grape juice. God knew that, and permitted the Jews to drink in moderation.

Today there is no need to drink anything alcoholic. There are many non-alcoholic beverages to choose from. There is no need to drink anything alcoholic and take the risk of becoming intoxicated. Taking that first drink is a needless risk. If you stay away from alcohol completely you don't need to worry about whether your blood alcohol level is low enough to avoid a DUI. You don't need to worry about doing something you would never do if you were sober.

Total abstinence is clearly the best choice. Drinking any amount of alcohol starts to make you clumsy and stupid. The more you drink, the clumsier and dumber you get. Everybody knows that.

So, why do people do it? The answer, not surprisingly, is in yet another country song.

*She put him out like the burnin' end of a midnight cigarette
She broke his heart, he spent his whole life tryin' to forget
We watched him drink his pain away a little at a time
But he never could get drunk enough to get her off his mind
Until' the night*

*He put that bottle to his head and pulled the trigger
And finally drank away her memory
Life is short but this time it was bigger
Than the strength he had to get up off his knees
We found him with his face down in the pillow
With a note that said, "I'll love her till I die"
And when we buried him beneath the willow
The Angels sang a whiskey lullaby*

*The rumors flew but nobody knew how much she blamed herself
For years and years, she tried to hide the whiskey on her breath
She finally drank her pain away a little at a time
But she never could get drunk enough to get him off her mind
Until' the night*

*She put that bottle to her head and pulled the trigger
And finally drank away his memory
Life is short but this time it was bigger
Than the strength she had to get up off her knees
We found her with her face down in the pillow
Clinging to his picture for dear life
We laid her next to him beneath the willow
While the Angels sang a whiskey lullaby ⁱⁱⁱ*

Part 4

People drink because they hope it will help them escape from their problems; but as that song said, you can't drink away loneliness or guilt. The only cure for loneliness and guilt is found in Jesus. As long as you look to alcohol as the solution to your problems, you won't look to Jesus, and you will never find the answer.

As bad as it is to make a drunken fool of yourself for no reason at all, it is even worse to turn to alcohol to solve your problems. Alcohol never makes your problems go away. Alcohol just creates even more problems for you.

If you are dependent upon alcohol, you will always be dependent because alcohol will never take your burdens away. The only solution to your problems is to turn them over to Jesus rather than the bottle.

If you don't have any Christian background, you probably don't know how to turn to Jesus. But probably have some Christian friends who do. They can help you find victory through Jesus. Ask them for help.

If you don't have any Christian friends, you no doubt know the location of at least one Christian church. There are plenty to choose from around here. Just pick one. Any Christian minister will be glad to help you reach out to Jesus instead of the bottle.

Here's our final observation about alcohol from yet another popular country singer.

*Standing at the back door
She tried to make it fast
One tear hit the hard wood
It fell like broken glass
She said sometimes love slips away
And you just can't get it back
Let's face it*

For one split second

*She almost turned around
But that would be like pouring rain drops
Back into a cloud
So she took another step and said
I see the way out and I'm gonna' take it*

*I don't wanna' spend my life jaded
Waiting to wake up one day and find
That I've let all these years go by
Wasted*

*Another glass of whisky but it still don't kill the pain
So he stumbles to the sink and pours it down the drain
He says it's time to be a man and stop living for yesterday
Gotta face it.*

*Cause' I don't wanna' spend my life jaded
Waiting to wake up one day and find
That I've let all these years go by
Wasted*

*Oh I don't wanna' keep on wishing, missing
The still of the morning, the color of the night
I ain't spending no more time
Wasted*

*She kept drivin' along
Till the moon and the sun were floating side-by-side
He looked in the mirror and his eyes were clear
For the first time in a while*

*Hey, yeah,
Oh, I don't wanna' spend my life jaded
Waiting to wake up one day and find
That I've let all these years go by
Wasted*

*Oh I don't wanna' keep on wishing, missing
The still of the morning, the color of the night
I ain't spending no more time
Wasted^{iv}*

Part 5

Life is short. Every hour you spend wasted is an hour of your life that is wasted. You can't get it back.

In John 10:10, Jesus says,

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it more abundantly.

Alcohol steals your life. Jesus can give you your life back; and give it to you more abundantly. Isn't that what you want? Don't you want your life back?

If you really want to stop drinking, Jesus will not only forgive your sin—He will give you the power to overcome your sin. Whiskey only offers the illusion of strength. Jesus offers real strength and real solutions to your problems.

Once Jesus has helped you overcome whatever is troubling you, you won't need drugs or alcohol to make your life tolerable for a little while. Don't settle for the temporary peace of a drunken stupor—enjoy the lasting peace of victory through Jesus.

Alcohol never makes things better; but Jesus always does.

ⁱ Brad Paisley, "Alcohol"

ⁱⁱ Blake Shelton, "The More I Drink"

ⁱⁱⁱ Brad Paisley & Allison Krause, "Whiskey Lullaby"

^{iv} Carrie Underwood, "Wasted"