

INTEMPERANCE.

PROV. 23:29-35. – SEPT. 22.

Golden Text: – "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging, and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise." – Prov. 20:1.

INTEMPERANCE is one of the most dreadful curses afflicting humanity, and even those who are its slaves will admit the force and truth of our text. It would appear that everyone coming under its baneful influence becomes more or less its slave – the more so in proportion as he has become weak through the fall, and the six thousand years of increasing loss of physical and mental strength and vigor. Only those who realize that inherited weakness has much to do with drunkenness, can sympathize with a fallen one, or rightly appreciate why intoxicants have so much stronger influence over some than over others. But while pity and sympathy are properly called for, they must be exercised in moderation, if we would benefit the fallen and the weak. None are so weak, so degraded, as to be without some base of character; and our aim should be to strengthen and build up character, and encourage and stimulate resistance to these weaknesses, rather than too freely to condone them.

The weak and degraded should be encouraged to know that they have a will-power which will greatly assist them in the cultivation of character if they will but use it. But they and all should know that the greatest strength and stimulus to character comes from above; and that the weakest as respects depravity of the flesh, may obtain such help of heart and of intellect from the promises, exhortations, admonitions and encouragements of the Lord's Word as will make them strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. We need power and strength of our own wills every day in overcoming the weaknesses of our fallen condition;

but we need more than this, – we need "grace to help in every time of need;" and we need to learn whence it is to be obtained, and how to approach the throne of heavenly grace with confidence, so as to obtain the needed blessing.

Here comes in the necessity for an appreciation of the doctrines of Christ – to assure us that our weaknesses are understood and sympathized with by the Lord in every proper sense, and that his provision in Christ is such that he can be just and yet justify believers in Jesus; – that he can be just, and yet forgive us our sins and grant us needed strength and help in overcoming.

To those who have friends or neighbors addicted to intemperance, over whom they desire to exercise a helpful influence, we advise that they appeal to the will, to the self-respect, and to the rewards of temperance and intemperance, viewed from a worldly and social standpoint: but we advise that they go further, and urge that in view of the weakness of their own wills, as manifested by their intemperance, they should recognize that while all men need the Savior, and the help which he alone can give, yet the weaker the will the greater the need. When we are weak in the matter of self-reliance, and are thereby led to make a covenant with the Lord, and to lean upon his strength, then we are strong. – 2 Cor. 12:9,10.

We will make this lesson a short one, since we have no reason to believe that any particular number of our readers are slaves to intemperance; indeed, we know that whom the Son makes free is free indeed; and we urge upon all that the greater freedom which we receive in Christ, through a clear knowledge of the divine plan, should lead us more diligently to bring every talent and power of mind and of body *into full subjection to the divine will*, and into the service of the divine plan. And those who are imbued with this thought will surely realize that they have neither mental nor

physical powers to dissipate – that they belong to the Lord, and are to glorify him in their bodies and their spirits, which are his (1 Cor. 6:20). They will perceive that they are merely stewards, and that any misuse of talents, either through intoxication or otherwise, would be a misuse of their stewardship, and lead surely on to that condition in which the Lord could not say to them, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

But while disposed to encourage temperance, and to discourage intemperance in respect to intoxicants of every kind, we feel that the special lesson needed by the Lord's consecrated people is in respect to the intoxicating influences of the world, as they come to and affect us as "new creatures." There is an intoxication in wealth, in luxury, in ease, which tends to say to the soul, "Take thine ease; forget thy covenant of sacrifice – to walk in the footsteps of Jesus, and be dead to the world and its aims with him." There is an intoxication of pleasure, of fashion, of pride and fond desire, which appeals to the "new creature" very strongly, through various avenues of the mortal body, and seeks to intoxicate, to stupify, the new mind, to make us dull of hearing as respects spiritual things, to make us lax as respects our zeal for the Lord, for the truth, and for the brethren; and to make us covet the things that would be approved by the world, and pleasurable to our own flesh, and harmonious to the wishes and exhortations of our friends. To all of these intoxicating allurements the answer must be, No; we have sworn off, we have covenanted our lives that we shall henceforth be dead to earthly interests and alive toward God. Our joys, our pleasures, our intoxications, must be of the spiritual kind. We must become so enthused, enraptured, with the heavenly things, with the joy and **[R2873 : page 286]** peace and blessing which accompany the eating and drinking at the Lord's table, and being filled with his spirit, that the intoxications of earthly joys will have less and less attraction for us. – Eph. 5:18.

"My soul be on thy guard;

Ten thousand foes arise:
The hosts of sin are pressing hard
To draw thee from the prize."
