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BE TEMPERATE IN ALL THINGS
- PROVERBS 23:29-35. - MAY 8. -

Golden Text: – "At the last it biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder." – V. 32.

WHILE it cannot be said that the Bible commands total abstinence from intoxicating liquors, it can be said that everywhere from Genesis to Revelation it reprobates drunkenness and points us to its debauching effects as injurious both physically and spiritually. We think probably that the climatic conditions of the centers of civilization and the nerve tension of our day make the evils of intemperance specially grievous at this time. These facts would fully justify us as followers of Jesus and the Apostles should we go beyond them in urging absolute total abstinence as respects all alcoholic liquors. Special emergencies and conditions require to be specially met.

As, for instance, while Adam's children being nearly perfect could and did intermarry, nothing of the kind would be wise or in any sense justifiable now because the great depravity of our race through heredity has so prefaced our natures along certain lines of our weaknesses that even for two cousins to marry is dangerous as respects the sanity of their posterity. In other words, circumstances alter cases. In the interim of nearly nineteen centuries undoubtedly great changes have taken place along certain lines and the wisest and noblest of humanity are practically agreed that in our day, at least, alcoholic beverages are extremely unwise, extremely injurious. They are dangerous for the strong of character, and awful, irresistible temptations to the weak, who should have the encouragement of the strong in the bearing of their burdens of hereditary weakness. The amount of crime and sin which directly and indirectly are traceable to the influence of

alcohol should make all good people stand in awe of it and use their influence in opposition to it. In this we are not condemning all those who more or less participate in the stream of crime and sin produced by alcohol. Doubtless amongst those who manufacture and dispense these beverages there are, as well as amongst those who own stock in distilleries and breweries, persons of noble minds, who would rather do good than do evil. By some process of reasoning which we do not fully comprehend they throw the responsibility off their own shoulders upon the shoulders of their weaker brethren and sisters of the human family. Unquestionably money is at the bottom of the traffic. As the Apostle declares, "The love of money is the root of all evil."

THE DRUNKARD'S PORTRAIT

In today's Study Solomon the Wise gives us the picture of the drunkard – redness of eyes; woe; sorrow; contentious; complaining. He advises, "Look not thou upon the wine when it is red and giveth color to the cup and goeth down smoothly. At last it biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder." It would appear that there is a charm or enticement connected with alcoholic stimulants which gradually wastes the strong and quickly enthralls the weak of will. The wise man associates the demoniacal power of liquor with its twin-sister, fleshly desire and general immorality, saying, "Thine eyes shall behold strange women and thy heart shall utter perverse things." He adds, "Thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea [like floating wreckage] and as he that lieth on top of the mast" – in imminent danger of destruction. He describes the condition of those who become beastly drunk. They are unconscious of injury and seem to have their chiefest pleasure in unconsciousness, so that, upon recovering from one debauch, their desire is to seek the stimulation again. Thus are the chains of slavery to a most degrading habit gradually forged and manhood gradually enslaved and earthly prospects, not to mention heavenly hopes, go glimmering.

It is written in the Scriptures, "No drunkard shall inherit the Kingdom of heaven" – no drunkard, therefore, can hope to be a member of the Body of Christ, the elect [R4601 : page 135] Church. Thank God, this no longer means to us his utter perdition, but it does signify great loss. We are never to forget, however, that, having once been a drunkard and having turned from that deplorable condition, the individual would be a drunkard no longer. Let us remember that only "overcomers" are promised a share in his Millennial Throne and Kingdom. He who loses the mastery of his flesh to the extent of being a drunkard is certainly not an overcomer and not at that time in line for joint-heirship with Christ. The President of the United States expressed the following sentiment: "To a man who is actively engaged in reasonable work, who must have at his command the best that is in him, at its best – to him I would, with all the emphasis that I possess, advise and urge, 'Leave drink alone – absolutely.' He who drinks is deliberately disqualifying himself for advancement. Personally I refuse to take such a risk. I do not drink."

When Mr. Taft expressed this he was Secretary of War, and evidently did not disqualify himself for advancement by his total abstinence. General Frederick D. Grant, an outspoken total abstainer, said: "Drink is the greatest curse of Christendom, because practically all crime and all disaster are the result of it. Ninety-five per cent – I will make it no less – of desertion and acts of lawlessness in the Army is due to drink. Vice is simply drink in another form. Whoever heard of a saloon completely divorced from the 'White Slave Traffic,' or a house of infamy without a bar? You may tell the young men that General Grant does not drink a drop of liquor – has not for eighteen years – *because he is afraid to drink it.*"

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