

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 5/17/92 PM
Proverbs 20:1 "Dealing with the Temptation of Alcohol"

Intro: The statistics are staggering... From an article I read in US News, Nov 30, 1987 entitled, "Coming to Grips with Alcoholism," consider this:

- 2 out of every 3 adults in America drink
- 2 out of every 3 H.S. seniors have drunk alcohol within the past month; 5% drink daily; 40% of 6th graders have tasted wine coolers
- By age 18, a child will have seen 100,000 beer commercials
- The economic costs to society of alcoholism and alcohol abuse are estimated at nearly \$117 billion a year--including \$18 billion from premature deaths, \$66 billion in reduced work effort, and \$13 billion for treatments.

And consider this. Here is the observation of the US News writer, "Whatever the cause, excessive drinking is taking a heavy toll on American life." (57)

- Alcohol is a factor in nearly half of America's murders, suicides, and accidental deaths. In all, it claims 100,000 lives per year, 25 times as many as illegal drugs combined.

- Nearly 18 million adults in the US are problem drinkers according to the government's latest report on alcoholism and alcohol abuse.

- According to Gallup, 1 family in 4 has been troubled by alcohol. That's the highest incidence of problem drinking in 37 years.

We are plagued by a problem. And yet the problem of alcohol abuse is more than cold statistics on a piece of paper. Alcohol causes real pain for real people. Perhaps you, and undoubtedly someone close to you, have been scarred by its subtle destructive power.

Illust:

Lots of people are addressing the problem these days. Educators. Politicians. Civil authorities. Social workers. They all have something to say about the problem, and what they think is the remedy.

Q: What does God have to say about the alcohol?

Q: Does God's Word have practical counsel for us in this relevant, contemporary issue? Yes. We'll see it tonight. In Proverbs.

Proverbs is a book designed to make us wise. God gave the Israelites the Law at Sinai--"Thou shalt/thou shalt not." Then God gave the Israelites the Prophets. Their appeal was clear and to the point--"Thus saith the Lord." The prophets like Samuel and Elijah and others called the people of God to live obedient lives, obedient to the Law of God.

But what does obedient living look like in real life. That's where the wisdom literature came in, namely Proverbs.

What's the purpose of Proverbs? It's a Guidebook for Living.

1:1-3 "The proverbs...to receive the instruction of wisdom..."

Proverbs is a book about Wisdom.

James Stitzinger, prof at the Master's Seminary, "Wisdom is the skill of demonstrating a life governed by the truth of Scripture." (Masterpiece, May/June 90, p 15)

The motto of Proverbs is: Fear God.

1:7 "The fear of the Lord..."

Define: "To fear God is to respect Him enough to care what He says and be afraid enough to submit to His authority." (Stitzinger)

"It's been said that fearing God includes every aspect of the believer's life: believing (Ex 14:31), knowing God (Ps 119:79), being humble before God (Pr 22:4), trusting God (Ps 115:11), serving God (Josh 24:14), listening to God (Ps 66:16), worshiping God (Ps 96:9), obeying God (Dt 5:29), and hating sin (Ex 20:20)...If we fear God, His attitudes become our attitudes; His will becomes our will; His goals become our goals; His feelings become our feelings." (Masterpiece, ibid)

Last Week:

Key: If I am going to be wise in life, I must learn how to overcome temptation!

Key verse...

Pr 16:17 "The highway of the upright is to depart from evil; he that keeps his way preserves his soul." (NIV "The highway of the upright avoids evil; he who guards his way guards his life.")

Proverbs helped us do 2 things.

I. Identify Temptation

II. Overcome Temptation

Transp: 7 temptations identified in Proverbs

One of those 7 temptations is having such a destructive impact on our society, we want to devote the entire study in Proverbs to it tonight.

Q: How can we deal with the temptation of alcohol?

There's no doubt that alcohol abuse is a major problem in our country today. But ironically, it's also a controversial issue in Christianity. That strikes me. In a day when the world starting to recognize the hazardous effects of alcohol consumption, Christians are arguing about whether social drinking is right or wrong!

I think there are 2 extreme positions being promoted today. Some go to the Bible and assert...

1. I think the Bible says alcohol is inherently evil.
2. I think the Bible says that it's a matter of personal liberty.

The argument goes like this. One says, "Doesn't Eph 5:18 say, Be not drunk with wine"? The answer, "Yes, but it says, Don't be drunk with wine. It doesn't say, "Don't drink wine." And to be honest in interpreting the text of Scripture, that person is right. What Paul has in mind is intoxication--Don't get sauced with the bottle.

Some sincere Christians have trouble with this too. They want it to be black and white. When Jesus turned the water into wine, was it real wine (Jn 2)? I don't

have a problem saying it was. Noah made wine. Wine was used by Abraham and Melchizedek (Gen 14:18). And catch this, God even commanded the Israelites to offer wine as a drink offering (Ex 29:40). The Bible says that wine could have medicinal purposes (I Tim 5:23).

The Psalmist blesses God in Psalm 104 for all the things He has done for His creation: He laid the foundations of the earth (5), takes care of the birds (12), sends the rain to nourish the ground (13), causes the grass to grow (14). And for what else does the Psalmist bless God?

Ps 104:14-15 "He gives the herb for the service of man, that he may bring forth food out of the earth, and wine that makes glad the heart of man, and oil, to make his face shine, and bread which strengthens man's heart."

Objection: Someone could say, "See, people in the Bible used wine. Are you going to try to tell me that the Bible forbids me to drink wine?"

Let me answer with this question: "Does the Bible forbid me to have two wives at a time? Does it? Well then, what about Jacob? He had 2 wives and 2 concubines, yet God blessed him. And what about David? He had a handful of wives, yet God blessed him. And Solomon? 1000 women, yet blessed by God."

Key: In the Bible, by His grace, God worked with people where they were, in the culture in which they lived. Because God tolerated certain things does not mean He approved of them.

Besides that, we need to keep in mind a very important distinction. We live in a different culture than did the biblical characters. In that culture, there was often a lack of purified water. A lack of advanced medication. We live in a totally different culture. We live in a culture where a major contributing factor to our social ills is alcohol. Alcohol contributes more than anything else to traffic fatalities. Alcohol is often involved in cases of child abuse, spouse abuse, and the overall disintegration of the home.

My Conviction: I want to tell you straightforward, right up front. Based on application of biblical principles, and in light on the horrendous effects of it in our culture, the drinking of alcoholic beverages has no place in my life, not even social drinking.

Why not? Not because I can point to a verse in the Bible that forbids drinking. But because the Bible teaches that drinking is not the WISE THING TO DO WITH YOUR LIFE.

Illust: I don't know of any verses that forbids me to jump off a bridge...

Proposition: Let's see 2 passages in Proverbs tonight that teach us that drinking is not the wise thing to do with your life.

I. Proverbs 20:1

20:1 "Wine is a mocker..."

This verse tells us 3 truths about alcohol.

1. Wine is a mocker.

2. Strong drink is raging.
3. Whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.

1. Wine is a mocker.

"mocker"--from same Heb word as 19:29, "scoffers". From the word "to scorn." In that verse, notice the parallelism. A scoffer is also likened to a what? A "fool."

20:1 says this. Wine is a mocker. It's a scoffer. It's a scorner. It's something that fools you.

Illust: We've all heard the boasting, "Well, I'm a real man. I know how to handle my drink! I'm in total control."

Oh really? Prov says, "Look out. You don't know what you're dealing with. Wine is a mocker, a clever deceiver.

Alcohol is a great deceiver in our day. Its temptation is powerful.

Illust:

Alcohol is a mocker.

2. Strong drink is raging.

"strong drink" = intoxicating drink

"raging"--to murmur, growl, roar; be boisterous (growl like a dog, Ps 59:6)

Strong drink has a destructive influence on the one who takes it. Prov says taking a glass in hand is like locking yourself in a room with a growling dog!

3. Whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.

What is the goal of the book of Proverbs? To make us WISE people.

Do you want to know a sure way NOT be wise? Tip the bottle. Alcohol is deceptive. It blinds you to reality. It misleads. It mocks. The person who partakes is deceived.

Illust: Deception... (Jeremiah, 42) Preacher and SS Superintend on Isle

Problem: The world doesn't say alcohol is deceptive. In TV ads. In magazine ads.

Illust:

Tran: Now let's look at the second passage in Prov.

II. Proverbs 23:29-35

Notice the rhetorical questions...

V 29 "Who has woe...sorrow...contentions...?"

And the answer?

V 30 "They that tarry long at the wine..."

Q: What things are associated with alcohol in v 29?

A: Woe. Sorrow. Contentions. Babbling. Wounds. Red eyes.

Since alcohol has the potential to produce those things in our lives, what's the wise thing to do? Rather, NOT to do?

V 31 "Look not thou upon the wine when it is red..."

What's the warning? Stay away from intoxicating beverages! Stay away from those drinks that have the potential to control you, and could potentially ruin you. Why? Listen to what it could do to you...

1. It could cause you pain (32).

V 32 "At last it bites like a serpent, and stings like an adder."

2. It could deaden your senses, and set you up for moral failure (33).

V 33 "Thine eyes shall behold strange...perverse things."

3. It could rob you of stability in life (34).

V 34 "You shall be as he that lies down in the midst of the sea..."

4. It could consume your life (35).

V 35 "They have stricken me... I will seek it yet again."

How pathetic! I cringe at the hopelessness of the last phrase of v 35, (NIV) "When will I wake up so I can find another drink?"

Illust: Story of journalist Nan Robertson (US News). She confessed, "You know alcoholics drink for every reason they can possibly find. Your life is structured around alcohol. I used to..."

That's what alcohol can do to you and me. It could cause you pain, set you up for moral failure, rob you of stability in life, and consume your life.

Now, why would you want to drink it?

Key Lesson: Proverbs makes this clear--A wise person will not be captivated by the temptation to drink alcohol. The hazards are too great.

Q: How can I overcome the temptation?

Illust: Horse and buggy days... Drunk who hitched his horse by the tavern, and wondered why he kept falling to temptation!

Discussion: