

The Evil of Drunkenness

THOUGH wine has its social usefulness of cheering up the heart of man, it bites like a snake and has demoralizing effects on those who take it too much. Drunkenness is said to be voluntary madness. And the fact that no drunkard has a place in God's glorious, everlasting Kingdom clearly explains the dangers to which a person who indulges in excessive drinking is exposed. According to The American Peoples Encyclopedia, "Drunkenness is legally the lack of mental coherence and self-control which is produced in a person by drinking intoxicating liquors to excess. Although a single act of intoxication is properly described as drunkenness, a drunkard or inebriate is usually one who habitually consumes an excess of intoxicating liquors."

In the first place, we wish to dismiss the argument of some people that it is a sin for a Christian to drink. There is no law in the Holy Bible that prohibits drinking but it becomes a sin when it is done in excess. The Psalmist speaking about the providence of God towards mankind, declared among other things: "He (God) causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth; and wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart." (Psalm, 104: 14, 15) And King Solomon also stated that "wine maketh merry". – Ecclesiastes 10: 19.

We can as well recall that the first miracle of Jesus Christ was his turning of water into wine at a marriage feast in Cana of Galilee. He commanded that the governor of the feast should be served with the wine. (John 2: 1-11) If it were a sin to drink wine Christ would not have produced it miraculously for anyone to take.

What is more, because of the medicinal properties in wine, St. Paul advised Timothy to take a little of it. Said he: "Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities." - 1st Timothy 5: 23.

Some drunkards often encourage themselves by this advice of St Paul in their self-indulgence. Such people are only fooling themselves. St. Paul did not tell Timothy to take much wine. Rather, he told him to take little, and even condemned excessive drinking. He admonished: "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit." - Ephesians 5: 17, 18.

Detestable Indulgence

Drunkenness is fraught with evils. This is well known to men, yet many are not wise enough so as not to become its victims. Certain people who were once known for their brilliance and who would have attained greatness in their careers have been brought to ruin by drinks. Those whose progress in life have been impeded by drunkenness within living memory are very many. Among young men and women it has also been one of the causes of untimely deaths. Like the canker-worm it has eaten deep into the fabric of the social life of this country as in many other parts of the world.

To drink excessively is now a common practice associated with some social pride among the worldlings. Some pot-bellied "good mixers" actually boast of their capacity to empty six bottles of beer or more at a sitting. In the hotels and pubs and at social gatherings this class of people are found surfeiting themselves on alcoholic drinks. The upshot of this detestable indulgence is that some become physically weak, dizzy and stupid.

Doctors have proved that alcohol is harmful to the human body. And drunkenness is produced by

an overdose of alcohol that is taken and it thus results in loss of memory, deterioration of character, carelessness in personal appearance, hoarse voice and so forth. Dr. A. C. Selmon, in his work, *The New Health and Longevity*, stated: "Alcohol is a powerful poison which in man's body is destructive to both mental and physical processes. The central nervous system is the first to feel its effects. Long before the drinker begins to stagger and feel uncertain on his feet, his brain processes are slowed down. Memory and mental concentration are impaired...Alcohol impairs judgment and reduces mental restraint and self-control. Many criminals drink liquor before doing their wicked deeds. It dulls their sense of right and wrong. – Many youths are led into sin while under the influence of alcohol. Those who wish to have full control over their behaviour should surely abstain from the use of all intoxicating beverages. Alcohol may do serious damage to the stomach, liver, blood- vessels, kidneys and nervous system. It lowers the resistance of the body to disease, especially those diseases affecting the lungs such as pneumonia and tuberculosis."-Pages 91-92.

Disadvantages

A man who is addicted to drinks gives more consideration to the "pleasure" he gets in that form of self-indulgence than to the economic affairs of his family. Some people spend large sums of money on drinks every month. And when the income of an addict is not enough to meet his drinking demands, he plunges into debts. This may be the beginning of the sorrows of a whole family. God's inspired word through Solomon the wise man is: "Hear thou, my son, and be wise, and guide thine heart in the way. Be not among wine-bibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh: for the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags." – Proverbs 23: 19-21.

Drunkenness, for its spiritual, economic and social disadvantages, has led to the breaking of marriages where the wives could no longer endure the daily misconducts and acts of irresponsibility of their husbands, and the -hardship consequent upon their drinking habits. Concerning alcoholic drinks, the Modern Medical Counselor has this to say: "Drinking alcoholic liquor is another dangerous habit. Some persons come to be so completely under its power that they will deprive themselves and their families of necessary food, clothing, and shelter in order to buy liquor. They will even steal or rob to get it. What does it do to the body? It benumbs the brain and makes one do and say foolish things. In cold places it makes one feel warm, so that the danger of freezing to death is greatly increased. It makes one feel strong when he is weak, so he tries to do things that are too hard to do. It impairs his judgment and makes him insensible to danger, so he takes needless risks and causes accidents to himself and to others."

Drunkenness is the cause of certain motor accidents. How many people have died before their time under such circumstances no one can tell. An American neurologist once said, "Just a drink or two and the safe driver is turned into a reckless traffic menace!" We can rightly imagine the fate of 20 or more passengers in a motor vehicle that is driven by a man who is completely under the control of alcohol. According to Dr. Selmon, when a person takes alcohol, activities involving speed and accuracy are carried on with reduced efficiency. He added: "Even a small amount of alcohol lowers reaction time, that is, the ability of muscles and nerves to react quickly. This is the chief reason why it is so dangerous for drivers of motor vehicles or aeroplanes to indulge even in a small amount of alcoholic liquor. Even one bottle of beer impairs the sense of distance, slows reactions, and lessens judgement. When large amounts are taken, drivers become reckless, because although alcohol reduces efficiency it gives the individual confidence and he feels that

he is very alert mentally and physically, well able to accomplish his task.”-The New Health and Longevity, Page 91.

Dr. Leonard Goldberg of Sweden's Caroline Institute was reported to have carried out experiments in order to know the effects on driving of light drinking – just a few beers or whiskies. In the long run, he concluded that “even a slight amount of alcohol caused a deterioration of between 25 and 30 per cent in the driving performance of expert drivers”. This was contained in an article on “What Two Drinks Will Do to Your Driving” by Don Wharton in the Readers' Digest of December 1964.

He showed clearly that alcohol slows down reactions, and creates false confidence. He quoted New Zealand's Road Code: “A little alcohol has the double effect of making him drive worse and believe he is driving better.” He stated that alcohol affects vision. impairs concentration and dulls judgment; and that it “makes drivers talk more and causes their attention to be more easily diverted”. He then drew his readers' attention to the slogan: “If you drive, don't drink. If you drink, don't drive”.

Madness

When a person is drunk he is unable to distinguish right from wrong because the influence of alcohol has overshadowed him and seized his power of reasoning. He talks and acts foolishly without shame. The condition in which some people return home from social gatherings when they are drunk is often shameful and annoying. Some have to become heavy loads for others to carry home with shirts and coats rumpled and trousers soaked with urine. Some vomit on their beds and do lots of things. to embarrass their relatives. wives, children and friends. And when they become sober they often find themselves looking so much dejected and worn out. Yea, King Solomon did say: “Wine is a mocker. strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.” – Proverbs 20 : 1

There was a gentleman who on his return home from a party, because he was drunk, administered a nasty knock on the head of his daughter who ran to embrace him, and spat or. the face of his wife who showed up in love to welcome her darling. It is in this respect drunkenness is voluntary madness. In fact, sometimes a person who is drunk misbehaves worse than a mad man. If a mad person comes across a pit on his way he can safely pass by its side but a drunkard in his usual reckless abandon may fall into it and get himself seriously wounded. Medical authorities are unanimous on the point that alcoholism does damage to its victims and that the symptoms of “acute alcoholism amount to mental derangement”. Although a victim may not like to admit this, it is obvious that he is temporarily not in his right mind. Such a person who is alcoholic can be cured only by the help of God and through prayer.

Here is an authoritative opinion from the Modern Medical Counselor:

“Chronic alcoholism lowers ethical, social, and moral standards and often permanently weakens the intellectual powers. Alcoholic addicts become untruthful, quarrelsome, and often unreasonably suspicious of infidelity in their marital partners. They fairly often have attacks of persistent hallucinations. They “hear voices” accusing them of sexual perversions or threatening to kill them. They may apply to the police for relief from fancied persecutions.”

The book adds: "Successful treatment of alcoholism is difficult. The patient's will may become so weakened that even though he is deprived of alcohol for several weeks he cannot keep himself from going back to it when freed from restraint; and, in spite of the fact that he thinks he wants to be free from the habit and has sought treatment on his own initiative, he will lie and use deceit without limit to obtain access to alcohol at the very time when he is under treatment... Di'fine aiti obtained through prayer has conquered alcoholism in many cases."-Page 517. (Emphasis ours) And turning to the Scriptures there is abundance of proofs in regard to the be effects of alcohol. King Solomon asked: "Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes?" (Proverbs 23: 29) He himself answered: "They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine."-Verse 30. The king then warned: "look not thou upon the wine when it is red. when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things. Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea. or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast. They have stricken me, sha1t thou say. and I was not sick: the v have beaten me. Pond I felt it not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again." – Proverbs 23: 31-35.

When a person is drunk he is exposed to various dangers. Any valuable thing or money in his possession can easily be stolen from him. It is possible for his enemies to pounce on him and do him harm or even kill him without the least resistance. In the case of a woman, evil men may take undue advantage of her being under intoxication and get her raped. Or she may be improperly dressed as to expose her nakedness in public. What a shame! This can be so because she is not responsible or in her right mind. The Bible states: "Whoredom (illicit sexual act) and wine and new wine take away the heart." -Hosea 4: 11.

The evil of drunkenness was seen in Lot who had carnal knowledge of his two foolish daughters when they made him drunk. (Genesis 19: 30-38) Notwithstanding the circumstances that pushed Lot's daughters into that action, they were unjustified. The law of God is against whoever makes his neighbour drunk so as to see his or her nakedness. As it is written: "Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that putteth thy bottle to him, and makest him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness!"- Habakkuk 2: 15.

Sometimes at midnight and after, we find men and women from pubs especially in the big cities roaming aimlessly and staggering along the streets under the control of alcohol. There are some of them who pass the nights in smelly gutters and look like demented creatures. Yet this is what some people call "high life"!

"Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish," said King Solomon, "and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts. Let him! drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more." (Prov, 31: 6, 7) But the point is that the poverty and misery .are not removed but forgotten only for a while. And in Isaiah 5: 11,22-23, it is written: "Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them! Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink: which justify the wicked for reward. and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him!"

Finally, we must emphasise once again the fact that drunkenness is one of the evils that can make a person not to enter God's Kingdom of eternal glory, peace and happiness. (Galatians 5: 19-21) And St, Paul wrote: "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?...neither fornicators, nor idolaters NOR DRUNKARDS, shall inherit the kingdom of God,"-1st Corinthians 6: 9. 10.

Abstinence from excessive drinking is one of the characteristics of a truly converted Christian, His old playmates may jeer at him for not being in their company yet he must maintain his integrity, knowing that it is those who speak evil of him that will be judged by Christ Jesus. On

this score. St. Peter stated: "For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, EXCESS OF WINE, REVELLINGS, BANQUETINGS, and abominable idolatries: wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you: who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead." – 1st Peter 4: 3-5.

The evils of drunkenness as clearly shown in this Sermon cannot be overstated. It is wise to abstain from alcoholic drinks altogether and whoever drinks in moderation is not a sinner. But we should keep in mind always this apostolic exhortation: "The night is far spent, the day is at hand; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly as in the day; NOT IN RIOTING AND DRUNKENNESS, NOT IN CHAMBERING AND WANTONNESS, NOT IN STRIFE AND ENVYING. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof," -Romans 13: 12-14.