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"Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise" (Proverbs 20:1).

The Drink of Deception

Lesson Subject: Intoxicants delude the unwary.

L35. Date: July 1984. **Text:** Proverbs 20:1; 21:17; 23:19-21, 29-35; 31:4-5. **Topic:** Alcohol; Wine.

Remember the Tylenol scare when someone put poison in a few tablets of the pain formula years ago? (1) Seven people died in three days. (2) The news media covered the story nationally. (3) The public was warned. (4) Federal agencies intervened. (5) All suspected products were removed from the shelves.

Consider beverage alcohol. (1) Almost seventy people die daily because of it. (2) The news media give no national attention to the story. (3) The public is not warned. (4) Federal agencies do not intervene. (5) The products are not removed from the shelves. (6) Those who manufacture, transport, store, and sell the product are not held responsible for the damage done. How strange!

The scope of the problem of drinking and alcoholism is staggering. At least eighteen million Americans are alcoholics or problem drinkers. In September, 1973, Brigadier General Leslie R. Former, Chief of the Army's Alcohol and Drug Policy division, told a congressional committee that 36 percent of the army's officers and 70 percent of its enlisted men are considered heavy and problem drinkers. More new alcoholics become addicted each year than those who are rehabilitated; so the total grows by half a million each year. Alcoholics and problem drinkers (who are pre-alcoholics) in America now outnumber the combined population of the states of Alaska, Arizona, Delaware, Hawaii, Idaho, Maine, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Dakota, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Utah, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wyoming.

When we speak of "drug abuse," we should remember that the most widespread and damaging form of drug abuse in America today is beverage alcohol.

I. PHYSICAL EFFECTS

There are an estimated eleven million addicted alcoholics in the United States today. Alcoholism is the number three health problem in the nation.

A. Traffic accidents are greatly increased by use of alcohol. Two beers, two four-ounce glasses of wine, or two mixed drinks can impair driving ability by 25 percent — enough to turn a near miss into an accident. The amount of alcohol consumed and the bodily weight determine the degree of impairment. It takes one's body an hour to burn out each drink he takes. Fresh air and black coffee do not make one a safe driver.

B. Birth defects, called the "fetal alcohol syndrome," are caused by alcohol consumed by expectant mothers. Alcohol reduces the blood's ability to carry oxygen to the unborn child; so any drinking, even in the first few weeks of pregnancy, may be risky. The surgeon general of the United States has warned: "Pregnant women should avoid alcoholic beverages."

C. Damage is done to organs of the body by alcohol. Alcohol goes directly into the blood stream and damages the liver, kidneys, heart, and brain. Some physicians believe that every drink a person consumes kills some brain cells. Chronic alcoholics often suffer structural brain damage. Drinking is just behind heart disease and cancer as a cause of death in the United States. Heavy drinking can lead to congestive heart failure, and it increases the risk of cancer of the mouth, throat, and esophagus. Cirrhosis of the liver is probably the most common alcohol-related cause of death.

When one remembers that his body *"is the temple of the Holy Spirit,"* it becomes evident that sins against the body are sins against God (I Corinthians 6: 19). When one remembers that he is to *"glorify God in (his) body, and in (his) spirit, which are God's"* (I Corinthians 6:20), the magnitude of the sin is compounded.

There is the medical recognition of what is called "alcoholic insanity." It occurs when the drink depresses the function of the brain where values are compared; thus, a person is unable to distinguish right from wrong due to the intoxicant. For some, this is a temporary condition until the effects of the drink are worn off. But in many instances X-rays show that the brain actually shrinks and a permanent form of mental deterioration is suffered.

"What fools men are to put into their mouths that which will steal away their brains" (anonymous).

II. ECONOMIC FACTS

The American Business Men's Research Foundation reports that society is paying more than three dollars in expenses for every one dollar it receives in public revenue from alcoholic beverages. The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism reported in 1971 that the cost of alcohol related problems was \$25.37 billion, while the public revenues were \$7.96 billion.

Some \$9.35 billion is lost in production of goods and services because of drinking. Another \$68.3 billion was the cost of health care in illness caused by alcohol consumption.

Statistics show that about 40 percent of the motor vehicle deaths were attributable to alcohol across the nation. What did that cost?

Alcoholism programs cost another \$640 million. Crime costs are almost beyond estimation. Alcohol misuse was related to the following crimes in the percentages of each case shown: murder, 64 percent; assaults, 41 percent; forcible rape, 34 percent; other sex crimes, 29 percent; drunkenness, 100 percent; disorderly conduct, 100 percent; drunk driving, 100 percent; and vagrancy, 100 percent.

The social welfare costs are astounding. The Family Court of New York City noted that 40 percent of the problems brought to it are directly or indirectly related to problem drinking.

Does it cost the non-consuming citizen? Indeed it does! Who provides the two-dollar cost above income? Much comes from the citizen's tax money. Your taxes are higher. Your automobile insurance is higher. The merchandise you purchase is higher because of increase in cost of production. You pay every day for the "privilege" of some to drink liquor.

III. SOCIAL PROBLEMS

A. Alcoholism is the number three public health problem in the United States today, numbering in the millions of cases. It ranks second as a cause of suicide. It accounts for 60 percent of admissions to mental hospitals. It costs industry nearly seven billion dollars per year. It is far more widespread than any other form of drug abuse. It is involved in one half of

all crimes. It is directly fatal to eleven thousand persons annually outside of violent deaths and highway fatalities. It contributes to cirrhosis of the liver, which is the fifth leading cause of death of men between the ages of forty-five and fifty-five. It contributes greatly to the problem of poverty. It contributes significantly to family troubles and emotional disorders. It contributes to malignant endoplasms, degenerative heart disease, disease of the digestive system, home accidents, and homicides. It afflicts 10 percent of the adult drinking population of our country. .

B. Consider the problem of drunk or drinking drivers. They kill one American every twenty minutes, around the clock. They maim or cripple five thousand people each day. (There were eleven million disabling injuries from accidents last year, and alcohol was a major contributor.) They cause 800,000 highway crashes annually. They are the largest single contributors to highway fatalities.

Some psychiatrists and psychologists call the dependence on alcoholic intoxicants "death on the installment plan," or "suicide by inches."

C. Consider alcoholism's effects on future generations. Years ago there were two families who lived in the United States: the Edwards family and the Jukes family. The head of the Edwards family was a Congregational preacher. The head of the Jukes family was an alcoholic. A careful historical tracing of the two families, including about 1200 descendants of each line, gave the following revelation.

In 1900 there had been traced 1394 descendants of Jonathan Edwards, the preacher. There was not a pauper among them. There were over 100 ministers and missionaries, 13 college presidents, 60 or more physicians, 60 or more authors, 100 lawyers, 75 army officers, and 295 college graduates.

Of the Jukes family line, living in America in 1915, 310 were paupers, 600 were feeble-minded, 300 were immoral women, 140 were criminals, 7 were murderers, not a one among them was a soldier, not one had a common school education, only 20 had learned a trade, 10 of these were in prison, and the family had cost the state \$2,500,000.

Mr. Edwards' descendants had filled literally hundreds of places of honor, such as ministers of Christ, judges, governors, magistrates, and educators. In contrast, the Jukes' line, in direct descent, had produced just about the same number of notorious people, jailbirds, infidels, atheists, and enemies of society of all classes.

It reminds one of the biblical statement, "*Them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed*" (I Samuel 2:30).

IV. BIBLE TEACHING

Does the Bible speak on the subject of beverage alcohol? Indeed, it does! There are more Scripture verses concerning drinking than can be found on the subjects of adultery, laziness, swearing, stealing, Sabbath-breaking, cheating, hypocrisy, pride, or blasphemy.

There are many instances in the Bible where men drank intoxicants, but these are never set forth as examples for us to follow. The Bible is filled with warnings instead.

Drinking corrupts relations of parent and child (Genesis 9:20-27; 19:30-38). It is forbidden for a man of God (Leviticus 10:8-11; Numbers 6:3; Jeremiah 35:5-8, 14; Luke 1:15). It produces rebellion in children (Deuteronomy 21:20; Habakkuk 2:5). It will deceive people (II Samuel 13:28, 29; I Kings 16:8-10; 20:13-21). It attacks one's moral integrity and leads to other sins (Esther 1:5-22; Proverbs 23:33; Hosea 4:10, 11). It shows a lack of wisdom (Proverbs 20:1).

Furthermore, drinking brings sorrow and loss (Proverbs 21:17; 23:21, 29, 30, 32). It is habit-forming (Proverbs 23:35). It is forbidden political leaders (Proverbs 31:4, 5; Ecclesiastes 10:17; Daniel 5:1, 2; Hosea 7:5), and spiritual leaders (Isaiah 28:7). The reason is that it produces spiritual insensibility (Daniel 1:5, 8, 16; 10:3; 5:4; Luke 21:34; Amos 6:3-6). A woe is pronounced upon those who imbibe (Isaiah 5:11, 12, 22; 28:1, 3).

God warns against any use of alcoholic beverage (Luke 12:45; Romans 13:13; 14:21; I Corinthians 5:11). It may promise much, but it is empty (Ecclesiastes 2:3). It brings the judgment of God upon the drinker (I Samuel 25:36-38; Daniel 5:25-28; I Corinthians 6:10).

The Christian must have nothing to do with alcoholic beverage. He must not participate in the manufacture, transportation, storage, or sale of it. It is wrong to lead another person to drink (Habakkuk 2:15). *"Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise"* (Proverbs 20:1).

QUESTIONS

1. What is "beverage alcohol"?
2. Why is it a habit-forming narcotic drug?
3. What are its effects on newborn infants?
4. What are its effects on bodily organs of an adult?
5. Why is alcohol an economic problem?
6. How does it cost you for others to drink?

7. What social problems do you see in beverage alcohol?
8. How is I Samuel 2:30 related to drinking problems today?
9. What does the Bible say about drinking?
10. How can you help in this battle for sobriety?