



“Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord,” James 5:7a.

Diligent Service: Business Life

Aim: To consider some of the very fruitful principles by which one may render diligent service in forwarding the kingdom of our Saviour. (A Temperance lesson.)

Covenant: We further engage . . . to abstain from the sale and use of intoxicating drinks as a beverage, and to be zealous in our efforts to advance the kingdom of our Saviour.

Text: I Corinthians 6:9-12; James 5:1-6.

INTRODUCTION—Even Christian liberty has a limit. While it is true that Christ has made us free (Galatians 5:1), this does not involve the freedom to sin, I Peter 2:16. Freedom in Christ involves freedom from sin and freedom to serve God. He who uses his freedom in Christ as an excuse to sin is perverting the gospel and inviting the discipline of God, Romans 6:1-14.

This basic principle applies to every area of life—business, social, and religious. Often men are tempted to divide between the "sacred" and the "secular" duties of life. However, the man who knows the Lord Jesus in forgiveness will find all his life takes on a sacred character. There is no area of life in which God is not interested. All is under His eye, Psalm 139.

Today, the lesson encourages the proper Christian attitude toward sin, especially the sin of “the sale and use of intoxicating drinks as a beverage.” This portion of the Church Covenant obligates each Baptist as to his position on the subject. It says the man who is loyal to his church and to his God will not drink alcoholic beverages (not even the “social drink”). It furthermore states that the faithful Christian will not sell (nor approve the sale by his vote) such drink that other men may indulge in it. There are many “wet”

communities that could be “dry” (as regards the sale of liquors of various sorts) if the Baptists would unite to make it so. This would improve the social and moral environment of any community and “advance the kingdom of our Saviour.”

EXPOSITION

1. The Fact of Sin, I Corinthians 6:9-10.

1. Sin produces guilt, verse 9a. The kingdom of God is a kingdom of righteousness. Only those who are righteous need expect to have an inheritance therein. The reason sinners are excluded from the kingdom is that they are not righteous. The guilt of sin abides upon them. Therefore, “the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” This is why salvation is so necessary. Unless men are washed from their sins in the blood of Jesus (Revelation 1:5-6) they can never see life in the kingdom, but the wrath of God abides upon them, John 3:36. The guilt abiding upon the sinner is the result of his own personal sin. All have sinned and thus all are guilty. If a man professes faith in Christ and continues to live in sin it is an evidence that he is not truly saved and thus still bears the load of his sin, I John 3:7-10. The perfect law of God has proven all men guilty before Him, Romans 3:19. He who denies the fact of personal sin and guilt is deceiving himself and making God a liar, I John 1:8, 10.

2. Sin deceives, verses 9b-10a. Paul lists various types of sin and observes that it is for these things that men stand condemned. Elsewhere he points out the blinding (deceiving) effects of sin, II Corinthians 4:3-4. The deceitfulness of sin is revealed in the debasing expressions of it. Look at the list given here. Those who sell themselves to exercise passionate lusts, self-pollution, self-abuse, anti-social behavior, evil words, and like things, think that they are “having a good time”! This is the deceitfulness of sin. Blinded to the consequences of this kind of living (broken health, loss of respect, condemnation of God) they rush headlong toward judgment “which shall devour the adversaries,” Hebrews 10:27. Satan tries to make the sinner forget the consequences of sin and thus sin works its deceitful purposes.

3. Sin brings doom, verse 10b. Paul warns the sinner shall not inherit the kingdom of God. This leaves only one other alternative — eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord, II Thessalonians 1:9. Of course, Satan and his messengers try to deny the reality of punishment of the wicked. This is only another evidence of his deceitful dealings with men. One has only to read the solemn account in Revelation 20:11-15 to know assuredly that doom awaits the sinner. (See also Daniel 12:2; Matthew

25:46; Mark 9:44, 46, 48; Luke 16:22-25; Revelation 14:9-11; *et. al.*) Only the man who closes his eyes against the testimony of God would dare expose his eternal soul to the torments of hell. They are real! They are certain! They are awaiting all who reject Jesus!

II. The Privilege of Sonship, I Corinthians 6:11-12.

1. Sonship enjoys a cleansing renewal through Christ, verse 11. While the redeemed may look back with shame upon their former condition, they are now freed from sin, servants of God, producing a life of holiness, and enjoying the full blessing of eternal life, Romans 6:22. Paul uses a three-fold expression to describe salvation. (1) Washing refers to the cleansing effected in the soul of the penitent sinner when he is saved, Titus 3:5. (2) Sanctification refers to the act of God in setting the believer apart from the world and adopting him into the family of the redeemed, Hebrews 10:10, 14. (3) Justification refers to the act of God by which the sinner is declared righteous by divine grace, Romans 5:18-19. Moreover, Paul uses a verb tense here which suggests “you have submitted yourselves” to the washing, sanctification, and justification. The sinner yields and God redeems! This is one of the privileges of Sonship.

2. Sonship brings limitations upon the believer, verse 12. Freedom in Christ is not a freedom to sin. It is to be free to obey God's will and live in service to men. Paul now refers (verse 12) to questionable activities in the life of a believer. He says there may be some of these things which are “lawful” (harmless and so not against God's commands) so far as the individual is concerned. If, however, it brings an occasion for stumbling upon another, it is not “expedient” for God's child to engage in it. (See the illustration of this principle in Romans 14:13—15:1.) No Christian has the “right” to do anything which would offend his brother, even if it is harmless to the person doing it. Sharing the spirit of Christ means to deny self for the sake of others. This necessitates definite limitations upon one's actions so as to keep a brother from stumbling, Romans 14:13. Concerning alcoholic beverages, this says the Christian must have no part in making it available to others!

III. The Dangers of Wealth, James 5:1-6.

1. Earthly riches will corrupt and perish away, verses 1-3. Those whose sale aim in life is to accumulate wealth—who have no time for God—will find how fatal is such a course. The day will come when riches will

be as useless as dust and the wealthy will stand before God as paupers. It will then be a day when men will weep and howl because of their misery. Have you ever heard someone defend the legalized sale of beer and whiskey because of the tax money it brought in? These verses remind us that there is something more important than such revenue. The more important thing is obedience to God! The sale and use of any alcoholic beverage is directly against the commands of God, Habakkuk 2:15. All that is gained thereby will perish to the dismay of men who have built hopes thereon. No wonder Jesus said men ought to lay up treasures in heaven where they will abide unto the eternal delight of the redeemed and the glory of God, Matthew 6:19-21.

2. Pleasure-filled lives will end in deep regret, verses 4-6. Gain that is gotten by ill means will surely bring back a judgment upon it. God is not unrighteous to forget nor overlook the business frauds nor unjust dealings by which many have gained their wealth. The cries of the oppressed have entered into the ears of the Lord, and He will not forget them. Fraud never pays. The life based solely upon the desire to have, will find its pleasure in sensual satisfaction. Those who so live are like animals which are fed and fattened until the day of slaughter comes. In the midst of wanton living there is no thought given of God and no preparation made for judgment. The day will come and catch sinners unawares. The end of it all will be “weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Sinful living is surely not worth what it costs.

3. A day of judgment is surely coming. God has appointed a day in which He will judge the world by Jesus Christ, Acts 17:31. This divine appointment is as certain and inescapable as death, Hebrews 9:27. It will be a day of reckoning in which men will account to God for the deeds of their lives. This is the time when the oppressor and unscrupulous man will cry out in despair. The saved as well as the unsaved will give an account of themselves to God, Romans 14:12. Each person will personally account for his own sins. What will be the answer of the man who has rebelled against the call of God in Jesus Christ? What defense will there be for the intemperate, ungodly, and guilty sinner? The only answer possible will be eternal loss. “*Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts,*” Hebrews 4:7. How would it fare with you if today were the end of the world?

QUESTIONS

1. Explain I Peter 2:16.
2. What is the Christian attitude toward alcoholic beverages?

3. What is the result of sin?
4. Identify: “Washing, sanctification, justification.”
5. Explain I Corinthians 6:12.
6. How can one preserve riches from decay?
7. What is the end of the pleasure-filled life?
8. What is the purpose of the judgment of the saved?
9. What is the purpose of the judgment of the unsaved?