

CHAPTER 10

The Bottle And You

Just suppose there were one-hundred-fifty million cows in America. Let's suppose there is an industry doing a great business selling a certain kind of hay. This hay, called Old Scarecrow, made entirely from locoweed, is alluringly described as a blend of old straw aged in the cornfield. As a result, cows by the millions turn from their sober diet of alfalfa and begin chewing Old Scarecrow.

Now let's suppose that this stuff makes the cows do silly things such as running into barbed wire fences, jumping off bridges or running into automobiles--so much so that five-hundred thousand are killed or injured every year.

Suppose milk production is cut down because the users of Old Scarecrow lose fifty million "cow-days" a year.

Suppose the life expectancy of the cows who chew it regularly is reduced by an average of 12 per cent. Suppose that it makes four million of the cows so sick that much of the time they are useless, and suppose that for every one that is cured, the industry makes ten more Old Scarecrow addicts.

Suppose that caring for the victims of Old Scarecrow required 80 per cent of the farmer's time. And now, just suppose that in spite of all this, the merchants of this fatal fodder are allowed to advertise the stuff in every pasture, so that on almost every fence there appear large pictures of contented *Cows of Distinction* munching away on Old Scarecrow. And suppose that the manufacturers of Old Scarecrow are making a tremendous profit out of all of this trouble and the tragedy they cause the farmer. How would you expect the farmers to take to all this?

The above illustration is taken from *Looking At Life's Relationships* by Marvin W. Kanengieter and Edith Quinlan, Baptist Publications, 1973, pages 138-139 and originally taken from *The Michigan Temperance Foundation*, written by Rev. Robert W. Moon.

Would the farmers be alarmed?

The reality and seriousness of the above illustration does not apply to cows at all, but to people who are being destroyed by alcohol, AND YET, VERY FEW SEEM TO BE ALARMED!

The Choice--Be Wise Or Be Deceived

According to Proverbs 20:1, a person can be easily D_____ (tricked, fooled) by wine. According to this verse, who is a FOOL (not wise)?

Does God want us to be wise or foolish (Ephesians 5:17)? _____ Look at the very next verse (Ephesians 5:18). According to this verse the wise person is the one who is *not* _____ but who is _____ . We know how a person can get drunk, but how can a person be filled with the Spirit (Gal. 5:16)?

What should we look for in a person's life as evidence that he or she is truly Spirit-filled (Ephesians 5:19,20,21)?

Do you really want to drink? What great offer and invitation did the Lord Jesus give to thirsty people in John 7:37-39?

God's Portrait Of A Drunkard

The Book of Proverbs tells it like it is! In Proverbs chapter 23 God has given us a very accurate portrait of a drunkard. The better we understand this passage, the less likely it is that we will be deceived by the bottle ourselves. Let us consider this important passage verse by verse:

1. Drinking Violates God's Command (Proverbs 23:20).

In Proverbs 23:20 God gives a command: "Be _____ among winebibbers." It could have said, "Don't be a winebibber!" but it says, "Don't even be *among* them!" In Proverbs 23:31 we are commanded not to even _____ upon the wine!

Can you find a command in Ephesians 5 that applies to drinking? Verse _____ Can you find a command in Romans 13 that applies to drinking? Verse _____ Not only should we obey God, but we should also listen to our parents' advice (see Proverbs 23:19-20,22,26). A wise parent gives wise advice and a wise son or daughter listens to it! A wise parent will give plenty of warning about the dangers of the bottle.

Consider Deuteronomy 21:20-21. What other sins are associated with drunkenness (see verse 20)?

Drunkenness is hardly ever the *only* problem a person has. The real, root problem of drunkenness is often a stubborn and rebellious heart.

2. Drinking Robs Its Victims (Proverbs 23:21).

According to verse 21, the drunkard shall come to _____. Drinking robs a person of money that could be put to better use. If you could have the full price for every bottle or beer can that you see along the roadside, just think how rich you would be! How much does a six-pack of beer cost? How much does a bottle of wine cost? Alcohol is a booming business!

Drinking also robs a person of valuable time. According to Proverbs 23:30, many people tarry _____ at the wine. This means they spend a long time drinking. According to Isaiah 5:11, how long do some people spend drinking? _____
Time is a valuable possession (compare Ephesians 5:16). Let's not drink it away!

Drinking also robs a person of health and real happiness. Excessive alcohol is harmful to the body and brain, and as we will see, it brings much sorrow and woe. As believers we are to G_____ God in our bodies (1 Corinthians 6:20). The bottle certainly does not help us to do this.

3. Drinking Causes Sorrow and Woe (Proverbs 23:29-30).

What is the answer to all of the questions asked in Proverbs 23:29? _____ Actually, Proverbs 23:29-30 could be called "the drunkard's mirror." It shows the drunk person as he really is. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow once wrote a poem of warning:

**Touch the goblet no more!
It will make thy heart sore
To its very core!
Its perfume is the breath
Of the angel of death,
And the light that within it lies
Is the flash of his evil eyes.
Beware! Oh, beware!
For sorrow, sickness, and care,
All are there!**

4. Drinking Poisons (Proverbs 23:32).

According to Proverbs 23:31, drinking appeals to the eyes and a person is tempted to partake. The wine is red and sparkling and it looks so good! It goes down so smoothly! But God says, "Don't even look, much less taste!" (Compare verse 31.) It promises pleasures that it can never give. Don't even look at the stuff. You will never slide downhill if you stay away from the slippery slope! The alcoholic drink may seem so good at first, but there is a terrible BITE to it (verse 32)!

Of course, if it were to bite at first, who would touch it? Alcohol poisons the body and the brain. Most of us would not think of picking up a snake and letting its poisonous fangs get hold of our flesh, yet so many are willing to experience the bite of the bottle. How can we be so self destructive?

How many people would fly if they knew there was a chance of one in ten that the plane would crash? The chances of airplanes crashing are certainly not that high--far from it; but if they were, undoubtedly many people would refuse ever to board another plane. And yet the chances of an occasional or moderate drinker becoming an alcoholic are in fact ONE IN TEN!

5. Drinking Arouses Passions (Proverbs 23:33).

Wine does not bring out the best in a person; it brings out the worst. It inflames sinful passions and excites lust. It allows the mind to express itself in an unrestrained way. Proverbs 23:33 describes a person "under the influence." What does he see?

_____ What does he utter?
_____ God wants us to be self-disciplined in mind and

body and under His control. The fruit of the Spirit is temperance or SELF CONTROL (Galatians 5:22-23). Paul kept his body and mind under strict discipline (1 Corinthians 9:27).

6. Drinking Exposes One to Dangers (Proverbs 23:34).

Read verse 34. If I were on the top of a mast, I would be quite concerned. I would hang on for dear life lest I be hurled into the sea. But here is the drunkard lying up there. Is he concerned? _____ He wouldn't know danger if it slapped him in the face! He is not worried at all! How does this apply to drunks driving down the highway?

See 1 Kings 16:8-10. Was Elah very alert to the danger that faced him? _____ This was the last time Elah ever got drunk!

7. Drinking Never Satisfies (Proverbs 23:35).

Read verse 35. When this drunkard awakes, what does he want?
_____ He never has enough! He is never satisfied! Drinking is very serious because it is very habit forming. The alcoholic is HOOKED! He is caught! He does not have the bottle. Instead the bottle has him. What's more, his body keeps crying out for more and more!

Wine in the Bible

There are several important things that must be understood about the use of the word "WINE" in the Bible.

[See the final note at the end of this chapter.]

1. The Meaning of "WINE" today.

Today when the word WINE is used, it refers to an alcoholic beverage made from grape juice which can make a person drunk if a sufficient quantity is consumed. The term "WINE" today refers to fermented grape juice. Today if we want to speak of unfermented grape juice we do not use the term "WINE." We use the term "grape juice." *WINE* refers to a fermented, alcoholic, intoxicating drink; *GRAPE JUICE* refers to an unfermented, sweet, non-alcoholic beverage.

2. The Meaning of "WINE" in Bible times.

The Bible words for WINE--*OINOS* (Greek) and *YAYIN* (Hebrew)--are generic (general) words that refer to the juice of the grape whether it is fermented or unfermented. It may refer to fermented, alcoholic wine or it may also refer to unfermented, sweet, grape juice. There are those who teach that the term "WINE" in the Bible *always* refers to fermented wine, but this is

not true. The term "WINE" *sometimes* refers to fermented wine, but it also can refer to unfermented grape juice. For example, the juice of grapes which has just been squeezed or treaded out of the grapes is referred to as "wine" (Isaiah 16:10; Proverbs 3:9-10). Freshly squeezed juice from grapes is obviously not alcoholic. It is sweet grape juice.

3. There is a kind of "WINE" that is approved of God and given to man as a blessing to be enjoyed.

The following passages show that "WINE" was a blessing from God to be enjoyed by man: Genesis 27:28; Deuteronomy 11:13-14 (compare 7:9-13); Deuteronomy 33:28; Psalm 4:7; Song of Solomon 5:1; Isaiah 55:1; 65:8; Jeremiah 31:10-12; Hosea 2:9-10 (God will remove His blessing of wine); Joel 1:10 (God's curse involves the removal of wine); Joel 2:18-19; Amos 9:13-14 (the blessings of the Messianic age). One passage which clearly presents WINE in a positive light as a blessing from God is Psalm 104:14-15, "He 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." Wine is a beverage given by God to man to MAKE GLAD the heart of man. Often in the Bible wine is used as *a symbol of joy*.

4. In sharp contrast to our previous point, the same word is used in other Bible passages in a negative way. In such passages "WINE" is condemned by God who strongly disapproves of its use.

The clearest and strongest passage which prohibits the use of WINE is Proverbs 23:29-35 which we have already studied in this chapter. See also the following passages which denounce the use of wine and strong drink: Proverbs 20:1; 31:4-5; 23:20; 4:17; Habakkuk 2:5; Eph.5:18; etc.

5. Since the Bible does not contradict itself, we must conclude that there are two kinds of wine mentioned on the pages of the Bible.

There is the WINE that God approves and which is given as a blessing from God. This beverage is nourishing and sweet and refreshing. It is the fruit of the vine. It is sweet, unfermented, non-alcoholic grape juice. There is also the WINE that God condemns which has become a great curse to man. This is fermented, alcoholic wine which results in drunkenness.

6. The ancients knew how to preserve WINE in its unfermented state for long periods of time.

Those who say that WINE in the Bible was always fermented argue that in the ancient world it was impossible to preserve the grape juice unfermented because people did not have the technical knowledge or the means to prevent fermentation. This is not true. The ancients, including the Jews, knew how to keep grape juice from fermenting. This was accomplished by 1) boiling the juice down to a syrup, or 2) by separating the fermentable pulp from the juice of the grape by means of filtration, or 3) by placing the grape juice in sealed jars which were immersed in a pool of cold water or 4) by fumigating the wine jars with sulphur before sealing them. The ancients also knew how to preserve fermented WINE to prevent it from becoming acid, moldy or bad-smelling.

7. The Lord Jesus did not approve or sanction the use of fermented, alcoholic WINE.

A) The Wedding at Cana (John 2).

The WINE that Jesus created on this occasion was sweet, refreshing, unfermented grape juice. Shame on those who say that the Lord produced between 120 and 160 gallons of alcoholic wine for the wedding party and guests. To say such a thing presents an enormous moral problem. How could the sinless Son of God provide such a large quantity of intoxicating wine for the use of those gathered together for this occasion? He would be then encouraging drunkenness. Perish the thought! On the contrary, the Lord Jesus, the Creator, provided these people with the freshest, sweetest, most refreshing juice of the grape that they had ever tasted.

B) The Communion Cup (Matthew 26:27-29).

This drink is called "the F _____ of the V _____" (Matthew 26:29). This was not fermented wine, but unfermented grape juice. Fermented wine is not the natural "fruit of the vine" but the unnatural fruit of fermentation and disintegration. According to Matthew 26:29, the communion WINE is the same WINE that the Lord will drink with His disciples in the KINGDOM, and it is unthinkable that alcoholic, intoxicating beverages will be in use during the kingdom age.

Please note: Not all believers would be in agreement with these seven points. There are some that believe that all wine in the Bible is alcoholic and that what the Bible condemns is not so much the *use* of wine but the *abuse* of wine. They also point out that the wine used in Bible times was often more diluted than wines that are commonly in use today. It should be noted that discerning believers who hold to this position recognize that in our society today, where problems with alcohol abound on every hand, it is the better course of wisdom to totally abstain. "It is good neither to eat meat, nor to drink wine, nor anything by which thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak" (Romans 14:21).

