***Timothy - PH07-01

Advanced Bible Doctrine - Philippians 1:1***

We are in the book of Philippians and we are looking once more at the opening greeting which dealt with the servants of Jesus Christ. Timothy is associated with Paul in this greeting to the Philippian church as a fellow bondslave (which is what the word "servant" means) of Jesus Christ. Paul has viewed Timothy as his spiritual son in the Lord, and between these two men there developed a warm affectionate companionship in the Lord's service. Timothy was reared on the Old Testament because he had a Jewish mother and grandmother both of whom later became Christians. Relative to Timothy's spiritual heritage, his positive volition made him a highly qualified Christian worker. So Paul looked upon him with great hope and great anticipation.

**Timothy's Potential**

So we're going to look first of all at Timothy's potential. Paul was very strongly impressed by young Timothy on the second visit to Timothy's hometown of Lystra. He recognized that Timothy had a positive response to the Word of God. 2 Timothy 1:5 speaks about Timothy's unfeigned faith. The Greek word is "anupokritos." "Anupokritos" comes from the Greek word which was used of a reply of an actor on a stage. Consequently, this word from which "anupokritos" comes from came to mean simply a pretense, or a hypocrisy. We get our English word "hypocrite" from it. The Greek word begins with "a" which is a negative in the Greek, and that indicates that Timothy was not a pretender. Timothy was not a hypocrite. Timothy was a genuine person.

Now the old sin nature drives every Christian young person to putting on a pretense spiritually. He will participate in spiritual activities while inwardly he will have his mental reservations, and he will be negative to spiritual instruction. As a youngster goes into the teenage bracket, he is almost psyched by everybody around him, especially by other teenagers, that inwardly he should be a negative personality toward what he is being told by his elders; by his spiritual leaders; by the pastor-teacher; and, by his parents. Also, outwardly he is to put on a front. He is to be hypocritical.

The youth of today like to speak about not being hypocritical. They like to speak about being genuine, but by and large they're as hypocritical as the elders that they hold in contempt. They just have different ways in which they are hypocrites, not the least of which is the pretense that they know what life is all about, and that they can come to an understanding and a wisdom on their own. Of course, that is a hypocrisy in itself because their performance does not confirm that they had that innate wisdom.

So the old sin nature within a young person is just pressuring him to be the opposite of what we read in Scriptures that Timothy was--unfeigned faith. Most kids today are pretenders. They put on a feigned front. Timothy was genuinely responsive to the Word, and Paul saw it. At the time of Paul's second visit to the Lystra, remember that Timothy was an older teenager. When we say Timothy the youth, we're not talking about some little junior age kid which is a beautiful wonderful age. A youngster who is in the junior age, especially when he's at the top, he is the most winsome; he is the most attractive; and, he is the most receptive, and you just want to eat him up he's so nice. He is just nothing but reception, cooperation, and responsiveness from start to finish. But very often that is not true as the years go by and they move into the upper teenage bracket. Timothy at this time was not a junior boy. He was an upper teenager.

I should in all fairness point out that some kids only appear to be negative or only appear to be deceptive. Their actions can cause us to say, "Oh, he's acting hypocritical. He's not being genuine." However, their actions are often the result of poor judgment. You should take that into account. Or they just may be in a condition of dumb innocence, and they will do something innocently that is fraught with dangers and hazards, or that has implications that, in their youth, they have never attached those implications to it. So it would be wise when you look at a youngster that you do not be too quick to declare that he is not being genuine, but to take into account his youth and his poor judgment. That may be the answer.

Paul placed a great value in the fact that Timothy had been taught the Word of God from childhood. He pointed this out in 2 Timothy 3:15. The reason Paul stressed this is because Timothy's mental attitudes of divine viewpoint had been set from the time of his youth, and from the time that he was a little boy. His mental attitudes had not been set by the human viewpoint of cultured paganism. If parents are doctrinally weak or negative to the local pastor-teacher, they are a source of very bad ideals and attitudes and of values for the children. So as a child grows up, he has to eventually look at himself, and he has to evaluate the climate in which he was reared. A child who is reared in the climate of the world's values, because his parents are uninformed of doctrine or they are negative to it, those young people are going to come to Christian adulthood with certain limitations upon maximum effectiveness in Christian service and in their personal lives. They will have a built-in loser quality about them.

**What if Our Parents Were Wrong?**

Consequently, coming from that background, they will have to come to the point where they evaluate what their parents were able to give them. In all sincerity; in all dedication; and, in all integrity, their parents only were able to go so far, or maybe they moved them in the wrong direction. One of the greatest hindrances to correcting our childhood values is the painful recognition that our parents were wrong; that our parents were limited in what they were able to bring to us; and, that our parents had qualities negative toward the virtues of the Word of God that they themselves could not lick. Consequently, it passed on to the youngster.

We told you in the last session about the parent who can't respect privacy because she's a rooter. They can't keep their nose out of other people's business, and they like to pompously portray themselves as being the custodians of everybody else's virtue; everybody else's good manners; and, everything else. A child who grows up in that kind of a home is going to have a hard job learning privacy; not to encroach upon the privacy of other people; and, learning to invest his life in his own business.

You're going to have to painfully say, "My mother was a rooter, and I am not going to be that kind." Or, you're going to have to say, "My dad was never able to balance the wonders of the American free enterprise system and the marvels economically that it provides for us. He was never able to balance that with a Christian maturity that he could handle his prosperity, so he became a materialist, and he felt that this was the epitome and the touchstone of having arrived in life and having accomplished something. He liked the great structure of material things that he was able to establish around himself, and this became his sense of values." You may have to recognize that your dad lacked spiritual maturity in that respect. It is very painful to recognize, especially if your parents were church people, that they were spiritually disoriented.

Timothy had things straight. He had a pagan father, but this apparently did not bear major influence because the mother and the grandmother were in there with doctrine and with the Word of God, and this boy was stabilized. It is no small thing when Paul meets Timothy, and looks at him in this second visit to Lystra, that he takes into account that this kid from his very childhood has been oriented to divine viewpoint. That means that he is free of having to re-adjust a lot of his thinking. That's the point. This boy is already straight. This boy is ready to go on into adulthood without having to disentangle himself from a lot of misconceptions.

This was also evident by the fact that Timothy had a good reputation among the Christians who knew him. In Acts 16:2, Luke observes for us, "Timothy was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and it Iconium. Both in his hometown of Lystra and the neighboring town of Iconium, the people bore a warm and unreserved testimony to his character. The negative and deceiving youth is an offense to people who have spiritual discernment, and they will spot him for what he is. However, as they looked upon Timothy, they said, "Now this is an open unfeigned servant, a youngster who responds to the Word of God. This guy is genuine. This guy is the real thing." It was a warm commendation.

In other words, it was the people in a variety of relationships with Timothy that had their finger on the pulse of this kid's life. It's one thing to move in the circle of church; it's one thing to move in the front you put on for your parents; and, it's one thing to move in a certain area of social relationships where you keep on a certain pretense--that hypocrisy of devotion to what is the Word of God and to what are right principles, but it's something else to move in that inner circle among your friends where you are seen for what you really are. Well, Timothy's reputation and character could be warmly commended. That was because he was teachable. He was willing to take good advice.

There is this idea that your best interests are served if you prepare yourself and psych yourself to be on-guard and in reserve to anything that's brought to you by someone who is older than you. The idea is to always view them as a threat to your well-being. This again is human viewpoint, and it is a fool's role. You may learn from your own mistakes. That's the hard way. Or you may learn from the mistakes of others and preserve yourself from a lot of grief by the good advice of people who have crossed the road before you.

Timothy was obviously a person that those who knew him well could commend because he took the advice of those who knew what they were talking about. I grant you that there are some people whose advice you should not take. However, Timothy obviously knew the Word of God. He had a complete trust in God in his daily life. Consequently, we don't get any picture that Timothy was the pushy scheming kind of character out to get his own rights and his glory--often at the injury of others. Nothing is so loathsome than somebody who is a Christian who is pushy and glory-centered, and is willing to get that by being mean and cruel and stomping over other people in order to secure the rights that that individual thinks he's entitled to. Timothy would never have been commended had he been that kind. This is easy to spot. It is an offense to both Christian and non-Christian when you have this kind of a person.

Well, Paul recognized Timothy's potential for Christian service. So Acts 16:3 tells us that, "Him (that is, Timothy) would Paul have to go forth with him." Paul decided, "I'd like this young man to join me on my team of associates here in foreign missionary enterprise." This is part of the job of those of you who are older and more mature Christians. That is to spot the potential of younger believers, and to help to guide them into the Lord's service. This is taught in 2 Timothy 2:1-2 where we are to transmit what we know to those who are younger who are to transmit to others. Titus 2:3-5 also stresses that those who are older have upon them the responsibility of spotting the potential of those who are younger.

Paul writes in Titus 2:3, "The aged women likewise, that they be in behavior as becomes holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things, that they may teach the young women to be sober-minded; to love their husbands; to love their children; and, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the Word of God be not blasphemed."

If you are an older woman (and I don't mean that you are decrepit. I just mean that you are an older woman and mature in the Word of God.), you have upon you the responsibility of teaching younger women. In the process of this, you discover that younger people sometimes act rashly and without the best of judgment. But that is exactly what Paul is telling Titus that the older women are supposed to be teaching the other women--how to be stable; how to use good judgment; how to proceed to perform their functions within the home and in the Lord's service.

Paul had had a sad experience as you know on his first mission tour from which he had learned how vitally necessary it is to have associates on whom he could depend. One needs dependable assistance if the Lord's work is to get done. You know that Satan created a great hindrance on the first missionary tour by getting to John Mark and causing him to desert in the process of that tour. Acts 15:37-38 tell about that sad incident. So Paul knew what it was to be in the field and to be left shorthanded. He also knew how most Christians are preoccupied with their own circle of chosen interests. In Philippians 2:19, Paul says, "But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy shortly unto you that I also may be of good comfort when I know your state. For I have no man like-minded who will naturally care for your state, for all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.

This was in the back of the mind of the apostle Paul when he came to Lystra and he sat in that assembly of believers; he looked at the young people there; he looked at this guy named Timothy; and, he spotted something very significant. He took into account his background, his early training, and the orientation to God's point of view. These were all of the things that had already propelled this boy toward maximum effectiveness and the fulfillment of his own life and in the Lord's service. He knew from his own sad experience what it was to be in the field and to be shorthanded when Christians decided to desert instead of standing by and following through on the mission. Do your deserting after the mission is over if you're going to do that.

**Our Youth**

So we in this local church are to incorporate, as Paul did, promising prepared youth into the local church ministry to exercise their spiritual gifts. I am aware of the fact that when this is done, sometimes even by the very older Christians who do the most mouthing about the fact that we need to bring in the young blood, that these Christians find a way of being resentful of the younger believers when they come in and they really take hold. Oh, they don't mind some young believer sitting around and going through little Mickey Mouse motions. However, when some young believer comes in and really begins shouldering responsibility and taking charge, then it is strange how some older Christians can suddenly discover that they are not really so interested in seeing the young blood move in and take over.

This is because the young people are sometimes heavy-handed. They have a zeal, and they have a lack of experience. However, if you are a grace-oriented mature believer, you'll never be disturbed because some young person is a little heavy-handed, and in his zeal, he gets a little pushy. You simply take it in stride, and you don't take it personally. You don't get your eyes on people. You keep your eyes on the Lord and on the mission to which He has called you; you take those lives; you kind of channel them; you close them in; you deal with the chain of command of authority; you give your advice; and, above all, you commit it to the Lord. God has his ways of straightening out. The result will be that the Lord takes people who may seem to be very unpromising, as was the case with John Mark, and brings them to the place where they become some of the gems of Christian service, as was the case with John Mark. For Paul later wanted Mark on the team for he found him very profitable.

I would caution you not to jump to conclusions about some youth who, because of his zeal, seems to be more promising than he is. Let the spiritual caliber demonstrate itself over the long haul. One thing over two decades in the ministry has taught me is that we are forever plagued with Christians who are gung-ho, and they are off to go, and they're very zealous. However, when they get into the hard grind of Christian service and the hard grind of spiritual combat, they get tired very quickly and they drop out. So it would be wise, before you make too much over somebody, hopefully and potentially in the Lord's service, that you see what happens over the long haul.

**The Old Sin Nature**

Also, always remember that (I don't care who it is), every believer has an old sin nature, and every believer is prone to the deterioration of his spiritual maturity structure. This makes us all potential spiritual dropouts. There is not a person who is not a potential spiritual dropout. I don't care how active you are or how involved you are. You are a potential spiritual dropout because you have an old sin nature, and because your spiritual maturity structure is always being maintained or being torn down--one or the other. Wherever you stand in spiritual maturity, you have an old sin nature. So always remember that a person who is someone that you lean on heavily in the Lord's work at a certain point in time can fail you completely. After you've been in this business as long as I have, finally the Lord teaches you this. It's a hard lesson to learn because we are by nature inclined to gravitate toward trustworthy human beings.

In spiritual combat, like any combat, you find yourself leaning on the people that you're in the fray with, and God has to teach you sometimes the hard way not to trust any believer. You may trust what God has done in that believer. You may trust what the Lord has developed. You may trust what the believer is permitting the grace of God to form in his life, but don't trust any believer. He has an old sin nature, and the time will come when he himself can collapse like a balloon, and there you are leaning on somebody instead of leaning on the Lord. Do you have the picture? If you want to keep your face out of the mud, don't lean on people. Don't depend on individuals. Don't depend on their zeal and their speech and their plans and their promises. You learn to depend and to trust the Lord. Whoever is around who is a comrade in the Word of God who is also trusting the Lord and leaning on the Lord, you will find an able assistant and associate and companion in the Lord's work. As long as you both keep the old sin nature under control, and as long as you both keep the spiritual maturity structure maintained, you will go on in effective testimony for the Lord.

You can take that out of experience and out of the demonstration of the Word of God, or you can start leading and trusting heavily on some individual, and you will find that God will jerk people out of your life until you finally learn that you are dependent on the Lord. That is the epitome of grace orientation.

Timothy, consequently, under Paul's hand, moved into quite a ministry. First of all, Paul prepared him for the missionary service that he was interested in incorporating Timothy into. Paul removed from Timothy a possible hindrance. In fact, it would have been a major hindrance to Timothy having a hearing among the Jews. Remember that when Paul went to a town, the first thing he would do, in keeping with the scriptural principles of the Jew first, he would go to the synagogue. That was his point of contact. He would take off from there. Timothy had a gentile father, but he did have a Jewish mother. Nationality among the Jews was determined by the mother's side. So in the eyes of the Jews, Timothy was a Jewish boy. However, Timothy, because he was born into a pagan gentile home, had not experienced the religious right of circumcision.

So Acts 16:3 tells us that Paul himself took Timothy and circumcised him in order to prepare him to confront the Jews in the various places that they would be visiting. For if the Jews discovered that Timothy, a Jewish boy because of his mother's side, had not performed this very important right in the eyes of the Jews, they would have considered him a gentile dog, and they would not have eaten with him, nor would they have given him a hearing in the synagogue. So Paul removed this hindrance from the beginning. Then 1 Timothy 4:14 describes for us the ordination service that Paul held for Timothy in which a group of elders were brought together from the various local churches so that they formed a council of elders. 1 Timothy 4:14 says, "Neglect not the gift that is in you which was given you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery." The word "presbytery" there is "council of elders."

Now the elders did not impart spiritual gifts to Timothy. What they did was recognize the spiritual gifts that he had that qualified him for missionary service--to do the work of an evangelist, and also primarily (which was Timothy's field), to be a teacher of the Word. At times, he could perform as a pastor-teacher in a local work which Paul had placed under his charge and for him to shape up. So this was a formal recognition of Timothy's spiritual gifts, and the elders laid hands on him and committed him to this work.

His destiny and missionary service, as a matter of fact, had been prophetically declared. Somewhere along the line, 1 Timothy 1:18 tells us that in those early times of the New Testament church, when people had the gift of prophecy, somebody along the line looked at Timothy and said, "That boy is going to be greatly used of God in missionary service." He will be used among the gentile world by God to bring the Word of God to that segment. This had been prophetically declared about Timothy. Paul, taking all these things into account, went through the steps of preparation.

This is true for all of us. If you want to be fruitful in the Lord's work, it takes preparation. Some people think, "Here I am. I'm a Christian. I have the gift of teaching. Because I have the gift of teaching, I can stand up and start teaching." No you can't. You can't take any spiritual gift and start functioning within until that spiritual gift has been prepared and until that gift has been trained. I know some people who hold going to seminary in contempt: "If God has called me to preach, all I need is the Bible and the Lord, and I don't have to go to a seminary to exercise my gift." Well, all that you'll do with the Bible and the Lord is to demonstrate how smart the Lord is and how dumb you are. That's what you'll be sharing with people--your ignorance. You have to take a gift and sharpen it. You have to prepare for the service that you're going to do.

So before Paul took Timothy into the work with him. As much as Timothy had preparation background, he did certain things in order to prepare him for this work. Timothy was knowledgeable in the Word and he was a good teacher. However, Paul took him through these steps in order to prepare him; charged him with the high duty of Christian service; and, committed him to the dangers and trials of missionary service. Under Paul's guidance, we find in the Word of God that the service of Timothy was fruitful. Acts 16:4-5 describe some of the results of his investment.

Well Timothy proved to be a faithful bondslave of Jesus Christ. For example, he stood by spiritual leaders. Philippians 2:19-22 tells how only he, at one time, stood with Paul (2 Timothy 1:15). Timothy stood by his spiritual leaders. He didn't undercut them. He didn't badmouth them. He didn't pretend that they did not have weaknesses and problems themselves to cope with. Timothy honored the lines of authority in the Lord's work. Paul was God's choice, and Paul was in charge. Timothy honored the fact that Paul was in charge of the team. Therefore, he faith-rested and he did his service as unto the Lord. There may have been times when he wondered whether the apostle Paul knew what he was doing--whether Paul was really making the right move. However, Paul was in charge, as of the Lord's provision. Therefore, he committed that chain of command to the Lord.

The carnal Christian has his eyes on the frailties of people, so he has much pious gossip and much complaint. You don't have to prove to us that there is nobody on this earth who is good. We might as well establish it once and for all. We don't need your pious gossip or your complaints, as believers, to prove to us that everybody has an old sin nature, and therefore everybody has his weaknesses. We already know that, and we learn that by watching you, among other things. So it would be well for you to remember that about yourself, and you would not be so ready with your pious gossip and complaints about how the Lord's work is being conducted by someone else. Each of us in our own way is an offense.

Timothy respected Paul's spiritual gifts; his discernment; his experience; and, his sacrifices. Consequently, Timothy was able to respond to the spiritual quality that Paul was able to bring into his life. Timothy wasn't interested in just responding to the mediocrity in his own old sin nature. Timothy accompanied Paul on his missionary tours. He was often dispatched to stabilize various churches. He was with Paul on most of the second missionary tour. He spent over two years with Paul teaching at Ephesus. He traveled with Paul on his last trip to Jerusalem. He comforted the apostle during his first Roman imprisonment. At times, he worked alongside Paul and acted as his agent when Paul was in prison. No one else was more united with Paul in spirit and in soul, or as genuine and unselfish and dedicated to the cause of Christ as was Timothy.

Furthermore, Paul could trust the judgment of Timothy. This is one of the greatest things when you can have someone who is associated with you in the Lord's work whose judgment you can trust. It is so good when you can say, "Now I know that this person is going to come up and face a situation and he will come to conclusions such as I would come to." In Philippians 2:19-20, Paul says, "For I have no man like-minded." Paul could trust the judgment of Timothy and the decisions that Timothy would make. Timothy was such a close associate to Paul, that on Paul's second Roman imprisonment, and Paul's last days on earth, he called for Timothy to come to his side (2 Timothy 4:6-9). He sought his spiritual son's comfort and companionship as the end of life approached for Paul. Only Luke was in Rome with Paul at this time, 2 Timothy 4:11 tells us. We don't know whether Timothy ever got to Paul on his second imprisonment before Paul was executed, but Paul certainly wanted him there.

He viewed Timothy as the prime replacement for himself in the New Testament church work. So Paul wrote 2 Timothy to his young associate, knowing that it was all over. As far as Paul's ministry was concerned, it was at an end. So Paul sat down and said, "I've got to write this letter now to Timothy. He has to take over. He has to carry the ball." In 2 Timothy, we have a doomed man's dying words; his dying advice; and, his dying commitment for the work of the Lord that he loved, and for the work that he had given his own life for. He found in Timothy a loving child, and he served with Paul as a son serves with his father. Philippians 2:22 has that very affectionate expression, "But you know the proof of him (that is, Timothy), that as a son with the father, he has served with me in the gospel." Here was Christian love between two mature Christian men on the highest plain.

Paul urged Timothy, in his final words to him, to be bold in the work of the Lord. He appealed to Timothy to stand by sound doctrine which had been taught to him, and to reject the appeals to get current. 1 Timothy 6:20-21 give us this caution from the apostle Paul that Timothy be not carried away with getting himself current, but stand by his sound doctrine. In 1 Timothy 6:20, Paul says, "O Timothy, keep that which is committed to your trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of knowledge falsely so called: which some professing have erred concerning the faith."

It is always tempting to a young person, especially after the older stabilizing hand may be off the scene, to move on; to get current; and, to get up to date so as not to be old-fashioned. However, there is one thing that is always current, and that is the exposition of the Word of God. When God's Word has been accurately explained, it is current. Paul called upon Timothy to be a spiritual pacesetter as a youth (1 Timothy 4:12). He told him to be a pacesetter in his speech, to be fitting and ennobling; in his conduct, to have a good conscience and a good influence; in his love, an attitude free of bitterness and to be kind; in doctrine, a human spirit full of "epignosis" (knowledge); in faith, confidence in God, faith resting; and, in impurity, the right use of his body and of his soul.

Timothy advanced in spiritual maturity beyond many of his peers. Paul called upon him for soldier-like service in the face of hardship. In 2 Timothy 2:3, Paul called upon him to act as a good soldier of Jesus Christ and to endure hardship. One of the things about a good soldier is that he does not desert in battle. He is to keep on the job even in the face of negative volition and rejection by others. Timothy also was to take steps necessary for his physical well-being in order to stay in the fight. In 1 Timothy 5:23, Paul says, "Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent infirmities." He was told on this occasion to take steps necessary for his physical well-being.

One thing is obviously of utmost importance in combat, both physical and spiritual, and that is that you don't get shot down. Equally important is that you don't lose your troops. If you're going to be a spiritual leader, one of the first things you want to learn as much as possible is that you don't get shot down, and try to preserve your troops from being shot down. Satan's technique is to always thin the ranks of those who are in divine good production service, and to swell the ranks of those who are in human good production. Churches which are cranking out human good, he swells those ranks. Churches which are producing divine good, he thins those ranks because it makes it harder for that volume of divine good to be produced by thinning the ranks.

It is not always possible to prevent losses. Obviously, personal volition cannot be overridden. If some believer decides he's going to act like a kook, and he's going to be negative, he will shoot himself down in spite of all that you can do to prevent it. In spite of all the training and warning that you gave him on how to act when he gets in combat, he'll act a fool and get himself shot down. However, the first principle is to try to preserve yourself and the troops. For this reason, Paul told Timothy (who had a gastric disorder--a stomach problem) to take wine in a medicinal sense.

**Drinking**

I must pause to stress to you that this is not justification for taking a little nip once in a while in order to sustain yourself in the Lord's service. We have had people who have fought that too. The Greek word "oinos" for "wine" is used of non-alcoholic as well as of alcoholic grape juice. It is used of fermented and non-fermented juice. The Word of God does tell us that drunkenness is forbidden. Drunkenness and excessive drinking are sins which are forbidden by the Word of God (Proverbs 20:1, Proverbs 23:20, Romans 13:13, 1 Corinthians 5:11, 1 Corinthians 6:10, 1 Peter 4:3, Ephesians 5:18). The Bible is very clear to lay off the booze and to avoid drunkenness.

We have several case histories in the Bible of disastrous results which followed drunkenness to give us an understanding of why God views drinking alcohol beverages with great concern. We have the case of Noah in Genesis 9:21. We have the case of Nabal in 1 Samuel 25:36-37. We have the people of Ephraim in Isaiah 28:1. We have Lot's case with sexual relations with his own daughters as the result of his drunkenness in Genesis 19:32.

Proverbs 33:4-7 does recommend the use of wine in a medicinal sense as a sedative. It speaks about one with a heavy heart. This is somebody who is in deep affliction. It is somebody who is bordering on being psychotic or neurotic, and alcoholic fermented wine can act as a sedative, and it is recommended for that use.

There is a biblical prohibition, however, on drinking for certain people. First, Proverbs 31:4-5 forbids anybody in any governmental office from using alcoholic beverages. Our president was out of line when at a recent reception, he stood up there and the butler brought him his glass of champagne, and he had a toast. While it was very magnificent, and everybody shouted, "Here, here," he was violating the Word of God with the booze on that occasion because he happens to be the head of this nation, and the Bible says that the president of the United States cannot use alcoholic beverages. Proverbs 31:4 says, "It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine, nor for princes strong drink." That's even worse than wine. "Lest they drink and forget the law and pervert the justice of any of the afflicted. Give strong drink to him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that are of heavy heart," as we looked at just now. "Let him drink and forget his poverty. Remember his misery no more."

This is for those who are in a psychotic condition. But if you are a king; you are a governmental ruler; you are a Congressman; or, you are a governor, you are forbidden by the Word of God to use alcoholic beverages for the reason that it impairs judgment, and it creates a sense of euphoria in the face of the enemy. It makes us wonder how much of our American destiny has been frittered away by people who have been sharing the bottle with our dear friends the Communists, and got a euphoric attitude that all was well, and we're all great comrades, because of the effect upon judgment by the alcohol. It doesn't take many drinks to affect one's judgment. The effect, as a matter of fact, takes place with the very first drink. So many lives can be endangered by government leaders drinking. That's the point of the wisdom of Proverbs. It is saying, "Kings, don't drink."

The biblical prohibition also extends to those who are in positions of church leadership. 1 Timothy 3:3-8 and Titus 1:7 stress the fact that pastor-teachers are not to indulge in alcohol: elders; deacons; Berean Youth Club leaders; Sunday school teachers; or, wherever you are a leader in spiritual things, you are forbidden by the Word of God to use alcohol. There is a great hazard in this as you are involved in the lives of weaker Christians, and drinking by one spiritual leader even in moderation is a very bad influence on the flock. Drinking excessively is the result of trying to sublimate some pressure that the individual is not able to cope with, and he ought to be turning to the Word of God to cope with that pressure.

Please remember that wine is the result of fermentation. When you leave a bottle of grape juice out in the open, and you come back and it smells funny, and it smells a little like alcohol, it's because it has begun to ferment. Fermentation is a variation of leaven. It is a yeast-working process. Consequently, we know that the wine used at the Passover feast was not alcoholic wine because it would have thereby violated the Old Testament law of no leaven present in that ceremony. Leaven is a symbol of sin. So we know that the wine was the boiled wine or the new wine which was grape juice--not fermented. So we know that the grape juice that was used at the First Lord's Supper was non-fermented. That's why it is a violation, again, of the Word of God, and of the leaven principle to use real wine in a service. You should not use alcoholic wine in the Lord's Supper service.

You need to teach your children the gross effect of alcohol on a human being--the impulsive irrational behavior that it creates. It makes that person a hindrance to himself and a hindrance to other people, let alone the physical diseases to the organs of the body that drinking creates.

However, having said this, and having brought the Word of God to your attention concerning leadership and alcohol, I don't want you to think on the other hand that because you don't drink you are spiritual, and that you lay some great virtue upon the fact that you don't take a nip once in a while. As a matter of fact, perhaps some of you would be a lot more pleasant if you did, but you're going to have to solve your problem some other way.

Drinking is not the issue in salvation: "Oh, I'm going to become a Christian. Yes, I'll accept the Lord just as soon as I can stop this drinking." That is a false concept. The issue in salvation is acceptance of Christ as your Savior. You and I as believers have to be sympathetic with people who are used to drinking who become believers. It is not easy for them to stop the practice. It is not easy for them to go out of the unsaved life into the Christian life and stop drinking, and you should not imply that they are unspiritual because they drink. They will be in sin if they are drunk, or if they're government leaders and drinking, or if they are spiritual leaders and drinking, because they are violating the principles of the Word. However, you should not imply that they are not spiritual; that they have not confessed their sins; and, that they are not in the inner circle of fellowship.

Also, the fact that some prominent Christians drink is no justification for the practice in society today. So don't come up to me and tell me about how Martin Luther drank, and how Calvin drank, and how certain other people (some of the more recent spiritual great religious leaders) have wine with their meals. Don't come up and tell me about that because that doesn't prove anything. That's no basis upon which to justify drinking in our society today. It's a real problem in our society that is different perhaps than in times past. In any case, drunkenness is not a sickness. It is a sin (1 Peter 4:3-4, Galatians 5:21). There are certain spiritual principles that do come into play relative to a person drinking. In other words, what I'm saying is that I can't tell you that you can't take a glass of wine with your meal. I am telling you reasons why it's bad to do so, and why, in certain conditions, you cannot do so, and the hazards potentially to you and your children even when you have the freedom and the right to do so. There are four basic factors that govern your decision in this matter which we will take up next time.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1973

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