***Intemperance Evils
Romans 13:11
RO170-01***

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Open your Bibles, please, to Romans 13:11-14. Our subject is "The Consummation of Salvation," and this is segment number 3.

**Signs of the End Times**

This past week, another major piece has fallen into place in the mosaic of world conditions preparatory for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Those of you who are thinking and looking and observing and paying attention, you could not help but notice that giant piece fall into place. The terrorist organization known as the Palestine Liberation Organization has in exile declared the existence of the nation of Palestine on the territory of the West Bank, west of the Jordan River, now occupied by the nation of Israel, and in which the capital city of Jerusalem is located. The Arabs have declared that that is now the territory of an independent nation of Samaria (Judea), and that they intend to take it, and they intend to make Jerusalem their capital, and they want the Jews out of the city.

Now you have another major point of enormous world friction. Another factor has been interjected into this Jewish-Arab conflict which is going to further world antagonisms toward the Jew, and is going to make even more necessary than ever before a protector for the Jewish people. Standing in the wings, you cannot help but begin to see, in more distinct outlines, the antichrist. If the rapture is to be in our lifetime, and in all likelihood it will be, then that antichrist is alive on this earth already. He, too, is very much interested in observing this piece of the mosaic of the picture of the end times having fallen into place, because it puts him in the position to come into prominence in a dramatic way as a man of peace.

There is no greater point of friction in the human race today than this conflict between Jews and Arabs. What kind of a statesman indeed would it take to be able to bring peace between those two factions? And how indeed would he be honored by all the nations of the world if he could pull that off?

In Romans 13:11, the apostle Paul has called upon believers to be aware of the nature of the period of history in which they live. That period of history has been dramatically changed this very week by the declaration of that independent Palestinian state. We live in a time that is unique in the history of the world, and we live in a time which is unique in conditions which are conducive to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. That means that, seven years before that Second Coming, our rapture to meet the Lord in the air will take place. The apostle Paul, therefore, in this chapter, has been telling us that it is time for Christian believers to wake up spiritually, and to realize how close they are to phase three of their salvation, when they are actually in the presence of God, totally cleansed of the sin nature, and they experience ultimate sanctification.

The final confirmation of the believer's salvation comes nearer every day until, suddenly, either through your personal death, or through the rapture of the church and our meeting the Lord in the air, we will find ourselves before God and before the Judgment Seat of Christ, where our lives as Christians will be evaluated for the quality of rewards we have stored in heaven. Most Christians have very little interest in investing their lives in God's service, and we have been, in this congregation, like any place else. Christians have very little interest in investing their lives in God's service, and therefore, they are quite at ease in the devil's world because they are quite preoccupied with themselves, and with their own ambitions. They do not understand that what Paul is telling us here is oh so true.

You are so near to coming into the presence of God, that only a mindless person would not sit down and say, "I have to think about this very seriously, and make some very definite priorities in my life in pursuing the eternity I'm about to enter. Every Christian indeed needs to live each day as if he had a terminal disease, so that any day might be his last chance to store his treasures in heaven through serving our Heavenly Father. If Christians would live like that, the society in which we live would indeed be dramatically changed and influenced.

**Satan's Dominion is Nearly Over**

The night of Satan's domination over the human race, however, is nearly over, and the day of the reign of Jesus Christ is nearly at hand. Christians, therefore, should consciously cast out of their lives every evil work of Satan, and every evil work which is condoned and accepted by our society. That is not easy to do because you become acclimated to the evil that is all around us; that is everywhere justified; and, that everybody is doing, and nobody considers offensive and objectionable. Therefore, you have to come back to the Word of God and say, I must look at this through God's eyes so that I know what is really evil, and what is really OK.

**The Christian Lifestyle**

The Christian's lifestyle should therefore be appropriate to one who is a child of God; who possesses the light of Bible doctrine; and, who indeed is a member of the royal family of God. Christians should live as royalty, not as commoners. The spiritual Christian, for that reason, is never at ease in the devil's world because he is not part of that spiritual blindness. A Christian who is sensitive to the time in which he lives, and to the nature of our society, is always a little uncomfortable in it. You don't like to listen to the language of the people about you. You don't like to go to work and get fouled up with everything you hear and everything that is suggested. You don't like moving through a society which makes light of the grossest kinds of evil. You are not comfortably at home in the devil's world, and therefore you really do not particularly want any of its favors.

**Christians are Warriors**

For this reason, the Bible compares Christians to warriors. We are soldiers of Jesus Christ because we are in combat with the world in which we live. We are in the angelic warfare with Satan and his demonic hosts, and we have been told that we should put on the weapons of light, which God has provided for this daily combat. These weapons of light for spiritual combat are detailed for us in Ephesians 6:11-18. And we looked at them last time.

**The Weapons of Light**

We found that what God has provided for you to survive in the devil's world, and to engage in combat (offensive combat – attacking combat), not retreats, and not delaying actions, but confronting the enemy, first of all, is the belt of truth. This is Bible doctrine stored in your human spirit through the system of intake into the human spirit by the grace system of perception. If you don't know what those words mean, you haven't been around here to be instructed, but they are words of enormous importance. Get some tapes on the subject. The second thing is the breastplate of righteousness, which refers to experiential sanctification – just living as a person who does right in God's eyes. Then the third item was the shoes of the gospel of peace, which refers to motivation to go into spiritual combat, because one has peace with God relative to his personal salvation. So, you are at ease about eternity for you after death. You cannot serve God comfortably if you're not sure where you're going to end up on the other side. These shoes of the gospel of peace motivate you to go into battle.

Then there is the shield of faith, which is belief in the inerrancy of the Bible, and thus total confidence in what it teaches, so that you may refute what Satan says with the Word of God. There is the helmet of salvation, which is the protection of the believer's mind with the divine viewpoint of Scripture to protect him from the human viewpoint of humanism and of legalism. There is the sword of the spirit, which are the principles of God's truth, which are revealed in doctrine, by which you attack Satan and all sin and all error the world. Finally, how to use all these elements of the armor of light is the tactic of prayer. This is the technique of spiritual combat to achieve victory through the use of the weapons of light.

So, that brings us to Romans 13:13. Here is the great issue that Christians are facing today. Each person in the human race today may choose salvation by grace through Jesus Christ, and thus enjoy God forever in heaven. Or each person may choose to reject God's grace salvation, and to suffer torments in hell with Satan forever. You're free to do either one. No one is going to shove you in the heaven. No one is going to shove you into hell. You stand up here while you're still breathing, and you make the decision. When you stop breathing, there's no return. The decision you make here (that you make on this side) sticks on the other side.

Those who have chosen Jesus Christ, however, should also follow through by putting on a lifestyle of godliness befitting their place of spiritual enlightenment. This is the Christian's proper uniform of the day. It is a uniform designed for spiritual combat in the angelic conflict. The children of light are in conflict with the children of darkness, and their lifestyle uniforms distinguish them. We spot the child of light, by the uniform he wears in the lifestyle he lives. We discover the children of darkness in the same way. We tell them apart by their lifestyle uniforms.

**Most People don't Expect Christ to Return**

Many Christians today are spiritually sound asleep relative to the Lord's return, and they are angered if you try to wake them up. If you try to prod them, and if you try to alert them, they get downright offensive and indignant about it. Most people, in effect, just don't expect Christ to return.

**Uniformitarianism**

In 2 Peter 3:3-14, Peter tells us that the time is going to come when people are going to make fun of the idea that Jesus Christ is ever going to come back to this world. And they are going to argue this on the basis of what we call today "uniformitarianism" – that everything that we see happening in nature today, and the principles of how everything works in nature today, is the way it has always worked, without any interruption. And it's interesting that the people that Peter is describing are uniformitarianists, who say that everything works by natural laws, and therefore, there are no miracles. Well, the uniformitarianists are mistaken, because God interrupted one time with that dramatic flood, and Peter points that out to them. He says, "You're wrong. Things do not always go along on natural laws, because there's a God out there capable of miracles of interjecting Himself. That was the argument – that for you to say that somebody who died physically, as Christ did, could ever be brought back to life, and sent up to heaven, and then, centuries later, be brought down to earth, that's a miracle; and, there are no such things as miracles, we are told.

So, Peter is pointing out that those people have made a very great mistake. But he also points out that because they believe that, that there is no God to face, and there are no miracles that are possible, therefore, they live immoral lives. They are indifferent to the Scriptures. And that particular passage of Scripture puts into clear perspective the problem that we face today, even among Christians who do not live consciously from moment-to-moment in the reality of the return of Jesus Christ.

**The Judgment Seat of Christ**

We Christians are to use our weapons of light in the present night battle to drive back the forces of evil on earth. When the Lord Jesus returns, the fight is over. Until then, we fight the good fight of faith. With our weapons of light, we can produce divine good works each day of our lives. And our lives on earth are short at best. So, our meeting with the Lord really is at hand. For us, then, the battle is over. And we will be facing our debriefing at the Judgment Seat of Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:10 and Romans 14:10 both point out that all we Christians must one day cross over to the other side, and stand before the Lord Jesus Christ, and be judged for how we lived our lives as Christians. That will not deal with whether we are going to heaven or not. Our salvation is never in question. But our rewards will then be determined.

All that Paul has been pointing out, and the perspective that he has been trying to give us on life is well summarized in 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11, and we'll read that as a summary. Here's what the apostle Paul is trying to tell us as Christian soldiers who live in the present evil age in which Satan is dominant, and which all of society is pursuing satanic objectives.

**The Day of the Lord**

1 Thessalonians 5:1: "But of the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I write unto you, for you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night." The day of the lord begins with the tribulation period. It goes through the 1,000 years of the millennium, and then it closes with the creation of the new heaven and the earth. The day of the Lord is a technical term in the Bible. He's talking about the time when the rapture has taken place, and then in comes the final judgment of God upon this earth.

Verse 3: "For when they shall say." This is society just before the rapture, and the beginning, then, of the tribulation era. Here is what the political and social and economic world will be saying: "For when they shall say peace and safety, then sudden destruction comes upon them as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that that they should overtake you as a thief." That's right. When we are told by our political leaders that disarmament moves have been made which are bringing peace upon this earth, we Christians, who are in the light, know that that's a lot of bunko. We know that disarmament has never brought peace to people in the history of the world. And we know that what is being set up is the condition for the final destruction of mankind, to be prevented only by the arrival of Jesus Christ. We are not taken in by that delusion.

Verse 5: "You all are the sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of the darkness. Therefore, let us not sleep, as do others. Let us watch and be sober-minded." And he is talking to Christians. Isn't that terrible? Christians are spiritually sound asleep, and out of touch with what is going on in life, while they muddle around with all the trivialities and the low priorities that preoccupy them during the day.

Verse 7: "For they that sleep, sleep in the night; and, they that are drunk are drunk in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for a helmet, the hope of salvation, for God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ." That's a comforting verse, because that verse tells us that we are not going to go into the tribulation as Christians. God has not appointed us to that period of wrath, but has appointed us to be caught up out of it, to obtain the salvation (our ultimate salvation; our ultimate sanctification; and, our final cleansing of the sin nature by being taken into the presence of Jesus Christ.

"Who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. Wherefore, comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also you do." Paul says, "The fact that you know that the end of our destiny is all happiness, and it's all great, no matter what trials we take in the meantime: support each other; comfort each other; and, encourage each other to stay on the job, and to maintain that position that is befitting the children of light.

**Let us Walk Honestly**

So, the apostle Paul, in Romans 13:13 says, "Let us walk honestly." The word "walk" here looks like this in the Greek Bible. It's the Greek word "peripateo." "Peripateo" here means "to behave." It refers to your outward conduct. It is in the Greek Bible in the aorist tense, which means that your life, as a whole, should be characterized by something. It is active voice, which means that you yourself are the one who is going to live like this, and make the decisions. But it is in the subjunctive mood, which means that it's only potential. A lot of you are never going to do this. But the admonition is that this is what we should do.

"Let us behave ourselves in a certain way," and the way that we are to behave ourselves is described as "honestly." The Greek word is "euschemonos." "Euschemonos" means "in good form." Therefore, we get the idea of "decently and properly." This word is used in 1 Corinthians 14:40. It is used in 1 Thessalonians 4:12. In both places, it calls upon Christian people to act properly, and to act decently. And the apostle Paul puts this in the first person plural: "Let us" (including himself), because the apostle Paul knows, as he has written in 1 Corinthians 10:12, "Let him among you who is a Christian, who thinks that he stands (that he's solid in what is godly and right and morally correct) be careful." Those of you who think that there are some things that you would never do are the ones who are prime candidates to do them. Consider yourself fully capable of every evil that the sin nature appeals to you with.

So, the apostle Paul says, "Let us (all of us) behave ourselves in a decent manner as in the day." The word "day" means the general condition of daytime. It is not some specific day, but just general light conditions. People seek darkness, the Lord Jesus pointed out on one occasion, so that they can do what is evil. People who are going to do what is evil wait for night. John 3:19-20 point that out to us: "And this is the condemnation that light is come into the world (in the person of Jesus Christ), and men love darkness rather than light (because their deed are evil). For everyone that does evil hates the light, neither comes to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved." That's why we have some people who are not sitting here in this auditorium today. They finally found so much light poured upon them out of the Word of God, and no compromising of identifying it, that it made them so uncomfortable. And rather than change their dark and evil ways, they choose to stay out of the light, as if that is going to change anything.

We Christians should live as people who were under the observation of both God and a hostile world. We should live as those who are being observed by everyone, whether you are or not. Imagine everyone being able to see your personal home conduct; your personal social life; your personal entertainment habits; and, your personal business practices – all of the elements that we move through a day, often out of observation of anyone else. This is what the Holy Spirit is trying to tell us. Don't live one way where people see you and put on a front, but live in a way that is decent and right, because God is always there to observe. Christians are enlightened by the Word of God, so they have a divine viewpoint frame of reference on life to guide their conduct before an observing Holy God in a hostile world.

Christians usually hide their worldly conduct because they're ashamed of it, and rightly, they should be. Walking in the light of God is a pathway, however, of inexpressible joy and satisfaction in the long run. When you do right, as per the standards of God, whether anybody sees you or not, you will find, it is a way to maximum happiness in life. Christians are called to the highest kind of decency, which is biblical morality.

Our pattern of life on earth should be the same kind that we would live walking the streets of heaven. "Agape" love in a Christian, we have learned, produces moral conduct which is reinforced by our awareness of the Lord's presence, and of His soon return, and our accounting to Him.

So, we translate the first part of verse 13 in this way: "Let us behave decently, as befits people of the daytime."

Then he proceeds to describe a wrong lifestyle. He defines proper Christian conduct with three couplets – two words put together in a certain category. These are samples of the kind of worldliness that Christians are to avoid, and which I'm sad to say, it's amazing, you find, that Christians engage in. Paul expresses decent conduct with negatives, just as God does when He gives us the ten commandments. He expresses proper Christian product by saying, "Don't do certain things." Do not be bowled over by somebody who attacks the negative approach to truth. Those who object to discrediting something by negative statements are really complaining about the fact that their evil ways are being exposed in such a way that people understand them now. So, people will be on guard against that thing. Painful truth can be made very clear through negative statements.

We've just come through a presidential campaign where there was a lot of howling and breast-beating over negative campaigning. Do you know what they were complaining about? When you put things in a negative light, and say, "This is what this person should not be," everybody understands it. And the politicians get hopping mad when you say, "This is what you should not be," because then you're specific. When you say, "This is what you should be," you can slither away in a lot of directions. But when you say, "You should not be this," it makes it very clear.

So, here we have some samples of evils. These were mentioned among those that were the most commonplace and widely accepted in New Testament society, especially where these practices were commonplace in the city of Corinth, from which the book of Romans was written. So, the apostle Paul had only to look out the window. He had only to walk the streets of Corinth at night. And he was observing all these things. And the sad part was that some of the Christians were being participants in these evils. And he says, "You shouldn't do that. You should be walking as people who are in the light, unashamedly proud of what you do as a member of the royal family of God."

So, Paul names here some of the grossest sins. But you should remember that even if your sins are not so repulsive, they still are sins, and fall in the same category of rejection.

**Works of Darkness**

In Romans 13:12, we read, "The night is far spent (that is the time of Satan's control over the earth); the day is at hand (the time of the Lord's return in taking charge in the millennium). Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness." The apostle Paul is now going to tell us six works of darkness that no Christians should ever be guilty of,

1. **Intemperance Evils**

Category number one belongs to intemperance – intemperance evils.

* 1. **Carousing**

The first one he says is: "Not in revelings." The Greek word is "komos." This Greek word refers to "a boisterous orgy of merrymaking." We would use the word "carousing." In classical Greek language, and in New Testament times, this is the word which was used to describe a nighttime procession of drunken men walking through the streets; boisterously carrying on in their merrymaking; and, holding a torchlight parade after a feast. They are walking through the streets, singing praises to Bacchus, the god of wine, or to some other deity. They proceed to the homes of their friends with their revelry, and the thing continues late into the night, interrupted only by occasional vomiting along the way, as they're having a wonderful time together celebrating. The apostle Paul says, "Christians should not be part of that kind of carousing.

1 Peter 4:3 says, "For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the gentiles." We Christians, when we were unsaved gentiles, have done all the evil that we ever need to do: "When we walked in lasciviousness; lust; excessive wine; revelings; carousings (there is the word); and, abominable idolatries." So, it was commonplace for Christians to live like this before they were born again. The same word is used as one of the works of the flesh in Galatians 5:21.

* 1. **Drunkenness**

The second part of this couplet of intemperance evils is the word "drunkenness." The Greek word is "methe." This refers to inebriation from consuming alcohol. The Bible is very clear that believers should never be drunk. Proverbs 23:29 has this to say: "Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contention? Who has babblings? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine. Look not upon the wine when it is red, when it gives its color in the cup, when it moves itself aright. And at the last, it bites like a serpent and stings like an adder. Your eyes shall behold strange things. Your heart shall utter perverse things. Yea, you shall be as he that lies down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lies upon the top of the mast (swaying and staggering). 'They have stricken me,' you shall say, 'and I was not sick. They have beaten me, and I did not feet it. When shall I awake? I will seek it yet again.'" After going through this kind of a drunken stupor: swaying; disoriented; and, being beaten up: "When I awake, I'll go to seek it again." Now that is really mindless – to be drinking, and be drunk. And it's sad.

I remember on one occasion being taken out to a restaurant by a Christian family, and they ordered a carafe of wine. As the meal progressed (and it was a nice restaurant, and a splendid dinner), the first carafe was drunk down. They ordered a second one. And I could literally see, on the eyes of the people sitting around the table, the glistening of the eyes beginning, as the alcohol in that wine was beginning to take effect, and the silliness was beginning to be evidenced. And here we are, Christians, and I'm the visiting preacher, and they're taking me out to dinner, and they're sitting down there, doing exactly what the Scripture says. This is not decent for Christians to live in this way. This is what people of darkness do.

**Alcoholism**

However, in the ancient world, the drug of alcohol was widespread, and it was accepted as the thing to do. Drunkenness is a commonplace experience, and people seek it for some comfort in life. But the problem is that no one knows whether you have that particular genetic lineup that is going to cause you to go from taking a little social drink, and becoming an alcoholic.

Isaiah 5:11 observes that when it says, "Woe unto them who rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; who continue until night, till wine inflames them." Anybody who knows anything about inebriation knows that this verse is a verse which is describing an alcoholic. The first thing he does when he gets up in the morning is to hit the booze. He does it all day long. The last thing he does at night before he falls into sleep in a drunken stupor, is to hit the alcohol. And when he gets up in the morning, he can't wait to start again.

The problem that confronted Paul was that some New Testament Christians were doing the same thing. As a matter of fact, in the book of 1 Corinthians, the Corinthians church was noted for its moral disorders and disorientation. They had the custom of having a meal. They called it a love feast. And they would have a meal Sunday evening before they observed the Lord's Supper. And Paul says, "I'm getting reports back on you people in Corinth that I can't believe. People who are coming through are telling me that a number of you are coming through the feast, the meal before the Lord's Supper; you're bringing your wine with you; and, you're getting drunk. So, when you come to the Lord's Supper, you're stewed, and you're coming there in a plastered condition." Paul says, "There has to be something wrong with you people, not to know that that is not decent Christian conduct.

In 1 Corinthians 11:21, Paul says to them, "For in eating, everyone takes before other his own supper. And one is hungry and another is drunk. Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I do not praise you." Paul says, "At least have the decency of getting plastered at home if you're going to do that. Don't come into the church congregation before the Lord's Supper, and join us at the evening meal, and do this."

It is the Bible that makes it very clear to us that we Christians are to be filled with the Holy Spirit as the source of our power, and the source of our exhilaration. We are not to be filled with alcoholic spirits. Ephesians 5:18 and Proverbs 20:1 point that out.

However, I realize that we live in a world that considers hanging one on as being cute and sophisticated. But the Word of God says that that is the degrading conduct of slobs. And don't ever be impressed with it. And those of you who are younger are going to be the ones who are under pressure. Develop your own personal manhood and womanhood such that your peers are not going to intimidate you, because you refuse to share in their alcoholic adventures, because they will consider you unsophisticated because you will not join them in doing something that is great fun.

In Isaiah 28:1-8, Isaiah had to fight a lot of alcoholism in the Jewish people, which was causing a lot of their spiritual problems. Isaiah says, "Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards with Ephraim, whose glorious beauty is a fading flower, which are on the head of the fat valleys of those who are overcome with wine." Have you ever seen a woman who is a lush? And maybe you had known her when she was a beauty? Or seen pictures of her? And then you see her in her degraded, sloppy, piggish, drunken, stupored condition? That's what Isaiah say is talking about: a wilted flower: "Behold, the Lord has a mighty and strong one who, like a tempest of hail and a destroying storm, like a flood of mighty waters overflowing, shall cast down to the earth with the hand. The crown of pride, the drunkards of Ephraim, shall be trampled under feet. And the glorious beauty, which is the head of the fat valley shall be a fading flower. And like the early fruit before summer, which when he that looked upon it sees it, while it is yet in his hand, he eats it up. In that day shall the Lord of Hosts be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem a beauty, unto the residue of His people. And for a spirit of justice to Him that sits in judgment, and for strength to those who turned the battle to the gate. But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink, are out of the way. The priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink."

**Political Leaders Should not even Drink**

I must confess that in my boyhood days, especially as a teenager, I found it very offensive to find myself in the presence of my religious leaders who were sitting around at a party, drinking it up together, and having a lot of fun as a group of boys. The people I was seeing standing there before the altar on Sunday were sousing it to get up during the week at some party. Here is what Isaiah is saying. The thing has become so bad that even our religious leaders are drinking. It is in Proverbs 31 that Lemuel the king is told that he must not, as the head of a government, ever take alcoholic beverages. The Word of God forbids a political leader from ever drinking alcohol. Then it goes to explain why: because he's making decisions that affect the lives of thousands of people. And if he should be drunk, and if he should be disoriented at some critical point, you can see what could happen.

Can you imagine the priest; the prophet; or, the preacher, who has infinitely more responsibility on him than any political leader ever had? Anything a political leader does is, in a few years, wiped out, and shredded, and gone, and done with. There's very little he can do that's ultimately a great tragedy, because it's only in time. But the spiritual leader does that which affects peoples' eternity. And I would think that one would conclude from the forbidding of political leaders' use of alcohol, that certainly the preacher would equally be in that category.

"They have erred through drink. They are swallowed up of wine. They are out of the way through strong drink. They err in vision. They stumble in judgment. For all tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean." Isn't that a nice picture? I think that's a nice picture of the spiritual leaders sitting there, sleeping at their vomit-covered tables. Don't try to pretend that these sophisticated ads are people using alcohol have any dignity attached to them. It is gross. It is only the lowlife form that thinks that that's attractive.

**The Bible does not Forbid Drinking Alcoholic Beverages**

Now, having said that, I am not telling you that the Bible forbids the use of alcoholic beverages. It does not forbid that. It forbids drunkenness. The problem, in our day, is that alcohol is not just an incidental. It is the core of pervasive activity. Every time people get together, and every time somebody comes (you see it on television all the time): somebody walks into somebody's house and sits down, and the host says, "Well, would you like a drink?" I always think they're going to say, "Yeah, I'll have a glass of water. Do you have a cold coke? Yeah." No. Right away, it's a drink. Then they have this beautiful little bar here with all these bottles on it, and all the juices that are there, ready to flow. In our day, it's not a small thing. It is a major activity of people. Therefore, drinking is something that you cannot just dismiss on the basis that the Bible does not forbid you to do that.

The line is very thin today between drinking and drunkenness. It is very close, and it is touch-and-go. I think you ought to think twice before you are so de rigueur, and you are so much a person of the world, that you can carry your alcohol, and you let your children see it. You just might have a son or daughter who can't handle it. And I would not pretend to them that what they're doing is the course of wisdom. The course of wisdom is to avoid it. But the Bible does not prevent you from doing it if you choose.

Now the whole point of this is that drunkenness is self-destructive, and it can happen to anybody who uses alcohol – even a person who is not an alcoholic. All he has to do is go too far. The party carries on too long, and suddenly, a person is in a position of doing what is destructive.

This past week, we saw a car being dredged up out of the water. Four dead teenagers were soaked to the gills with alcohol, out having a good time. They probably didn't intend to go over the line. But once you're on a high roll, it's easy to do. Then when they got into a lethal weapon like an automobile, they just drove right over the edge of the dock, and sent themselves into eternity in a watery grave. It was a wonderful climax to an evening of great fun.

Proverbs 23:29 points out this very principle to us. Drunkenness is self-destructive and it can happen to anyone at any time who uses the stuff: "Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contention? Who has babbling? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine. They that go to seek mixed wine. Do not look upon the wine when it is red; when it gives its color in the cup; or, when it moves itself aright. At last, it bites like a serpent, and it stings like an adder."

It looks good. It has a beautiful bouquet; aroma; texture; and, smell – all those words they use with alcohol, and particularly wine. But ultimately, it has the venomous bite of a serpent.

The worst thing about this, that concerned the apostle Paul, is that the Christian who is drunk is not prepared for the any-moment return of Jesus Christ. In Luke 21:34, the Lord says, "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life, so that the day of the arrival of Jesus Christ comes upon you unawares." It is a terrible condition to be in.

So, the first two evils that the apostle Paul says are not befitting people like ourselves who are Christians, members of God's royal family, and who live in the enlightenment of spiritual understanding, are intemperance evils. And he gives two examples: going around carousing and merrymaking; and, secondly, going and getting drunk.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1988

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