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A MOTHER LOOKS AT DRINKING

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On Sunday nights, we have been using our devotional worship period prior to Family Bible Hour to study through Proverbs 1-9. This section of the book of Proverbs is unique in that it is written from the perspective of a father; it contains advice from a father to his son. Proverbs therefore begins with the advice of a father; interestingly (and probably by design), it ends with the advice of a mother: “The words of King Lemuel, the utterance which his mother taught him” (*Proverbs 31:1*).

One of the things that King Lemuel’s mother wanted her son to know about was the danger of drinking alcohol. To help her son avoid the temptation alcohol, she described three aspects of a person who drinks.

The person who drinks alcohol is not one who maintains respect from and power over others. “It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine, nor for princes intoxicating drink” (*Proverbs 31:4*). Alcohol has a dastardly influence upon those who drink it – men who are kind hearted and favored by friend and family become opposites of themselves under the influence of alcohol. Some grow overly happy, while others grow overly sad; some grow angry to the point of fighting, while others fall into a stupor from which they cannot be awakened. No matter what a person’s response is to alcohol, it is not favorable. Drunkards will follow drunkards, but no sober-minded person wants a drunkard as his leader. If a drunkard cannot judge his own actions, how can he be expected to judge the actions of another? He cannot; hence wine is neither for princes nor kings (or anyone who seeks to lead and influence others).

The person who drinks alcohol forgets the laws of the land and the laws of God and brings himself under condemnation. “Lest they drink and forget the law, and pervert the justice of all the afflicted” (*Proverbs 31:5*). Still referring to kings, Lemuel’s mother realizes that kings who drink alcohol will forget the law and pervert the judgment that has been entrusted to them; because they cannot control themselves, they will not control their responses to others. Anyone who drinks alcohol (not just kings) forgets the law, and ignores and defies the ordinances of God and man. Many police officers can testify to the fact that many law breakers are under the influences of some drug – and in many cases that drug is alcohol. The Christian who drinks will forget the laws of man and the laws of God – both of which will bring the wrath of God.

The person who drinks alcohol is rightly pictured as perishing and bitter in heart. “Give strong drink to him who is perishing, and wine to those who are bitter of heart. Let him drink and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more” (*Proverbs 31:6, 7*). One cannot look at these two verses for their face value, forgetting both the immediate context and the Biblical context. “Give” here carries the meaning of “letting such be typical.” It is a contrast to the previous statement – wine is not for kings, but rather, for those who are ready to perish and those who have bitter hearts. If you want to find yourself among this crowd, Lemuel’s mother says, drink, and forget your responsibilities to God and man. However, the reality is that even when one does this, one will awake from drunkenness to find the same problems that alcohol helped him or her forget; in fact, the problems will probably be compounded by the time, respect, and influence lost because of drinking. Alcohol is never a solution; it is only a means to more problems.

As the apostle instructs, the things recorded for us in the Old Testament were written and preserved for our learning (*Romans 15:4*). What can we learn from this description of a drinker, given by Lemuel’s mother? We can learn quite simply that alcohol has no place in the Christian’s life – it will cause one to lose influence among men, it will cause one to lose influence to God, and it will place one among the poor and dying. Drinking alcohol is not for kings and it is certainly not for Christians.