

## Proverbs of Solomon – Proverbs 23:17-35 (Drunkards)

**Most** of this chapter of proverbs is **self-explanatory** – to people who are **relatively mature** – **particularly for Christians** – people whose **eyes** have been **opened by the grace of God**. Most mature **Christians** have **no problem understanding** what the Holy Spirit is saying. But what about **new saints** – people who have just spent 20 years in a moderately **licentious life-style**? What about **kids** in their **mid-teens** – who are **just now** being **tempted** with **adult-type sins**? They **may not see** the **dangers of alcohol** and **sexual immorality**. They need to be **warned**.

I'd like us to **engage our imaginations** at least for the **introduction** to this message, and maybe beyond that. **Picture King Solomon, laying aside his crown**, as he sits with **three or four** of his **oldest sons**. **Don't visualize** the palace **throne room** or even in the **king's office** with the big fancy **desk**. This takes place in the **family living room** with a big **fire blazing** on the hearth. The setting is **casual** and **friendly**, and there is **some give and take**, even though we **only** have **Solomon's words recorded**. I think it **might help us** to maintain this picture, if we **break apart** and **rearrange** this collection of proverbs.

**Solomon begins at a point where he has been many times before.**

**Verse 22** – *“Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old. Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding. The father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice: and he that begetteth a wise child shall have joy of him. Thy father and thy mother shall be glad, and she that bare thee shall rejoice. My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways.”*

It is a **heart-breaking** and **sad fact**, but **many kids** eventually come to **think** they are **wiser** than their **parents**. They **picture themselves** growing up in a **society** which is **different** from that of Mom and Dad – back when they were teenagers. They think of their **parents** as **forgetful of their past**; **jealous** of their kids and **mean-hearted** because of that jealousy. But the **fact is**, as you all know, those **parents love** their children and **fear** the **dangers** which **they clearly see** and **understand**. Parents are **prone to worry** about their children, and **praying** for them is **not enough**. From time to time they **must speak** to them, **setting** them down, **turning off** the cell phones, **pulling out** their **ear buds** in order to talk to them.

**Solomon looked at these sons of his and recognized in them the danger of ENVY.**

**Verse 17** – *“Let not thine heart envy sinners: but be thou in the fear of the LORD all the day long. For surely there is an end; and thine expectation shall not be cut off.”* **Last week** we considered the subject of **envy** in a **general sense**, but tonight let's put it in the **context** of the **rest** of the **chapter**, whether it was **meant** to be that way **or not**.

**Some** of the **friends** of these royal brothers, may have had **liberty** to **“party”** every week or every other night. **Some** of their acquaintances may have gone to **dances**, to **private homes** where the parents are gone, and where they had **access to liquor**. Some of them **openly praised the buzz** they got from **alcohol** or **drugs**. Some of them **laughed** at these sons of **royalty**, **encouraging** them to sneak out of the palace to join them. **They** may have **said** to them, *“Your father may be king, but you are nothing but slaves. Escape the chains of that palace and have some fun with us Friday.”* Perhaps **Solomon could sense** in his sons a **growing envy** of the **sinful lifestyle** of their friends. *“They don't have to go to church; they can wear whatever clothes they want; they can drink and smoke.”*

This experienced father replied, *“I not only urge you to fear the Lord all the DAY long – but all WEEK long, And there are a great many other things to fear if you follow this siren's call of jealousy and envy.”* And then he **began to teach** them about some of those **other fears**.

**Fear the dangers of alcohol.**

**Verse 19** – *“Hear thou, my son, and be wise, and guide thine heart in the way. Be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh: For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags.”* Not only is **liquor expensive to buy**, but it can **rob the drinker** of his **incentive to work**, creating even **more poverty**. And **with that alcohol** may come **extremes in other areas** – like **excessive food** and **wild parties**. **Liquor** to excess is **guaranteed** to produce **poverty**.

**Verse 29** – *“Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine.”* So, *“Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.”*

Do you **remember** me mentioning the **garter snake** I caught when I was a kid – I was about ten or so. **I decided** that it would make a **good pet**, so I kept it in a 5 gallon bucket, feeding it little frogs. I would **carry it** around, draping over

my shoulder or across my arms in front of my chest. I would use it to **scare the girls** and to **impress my friends**. **My snake** and **I got along pretty well** for a couple days, probably because the poor thing was **stupefied by my affection**. But finally it **came to its senses** and **awoke** to its **true nature**; it decided it had **enough of me**. So it **bit me, teaching me** that I **wasn't as smart** as I thought I was. And telling me it was an **untamed, wild animal**. For a while, **I enjoyed its color** and the **way it moved**; I liked its **little tongue** and the **way it ate**. But **“at the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.”** **I brought upon myself “wounds without cause,”** and some **rather angry “redness of eyes.”** I suppose a **ten-year-old might be forgiven** for his foolishness, but **not a thirty-year-old drinker**. **He should know** that he will be **bitten eventually**.

I can hear, as **Solomon leans** towards his sons, uttering the words of **verse 34** – **“Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast. They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again.”**

**“Boys, you may think that those wild rides at Disney World are fun. And someone might tell you that the buzz of wine is just the same, but it is not. When you can't stand up straight because you are drunk; when it feels like your world is spinning; When you can't see straight, because you've filled yourselves with liquor, you will eventually regret it.”**

On any given **Saturday night** at the **ER**, of all the people brought in with **knife** wounds, **gun-shot** wounds, or **simply beaten up**, how many have **NO alcohol in their blood**? Sure, **the man who stabbed** him was **drunk**, but very likely **so was the victim**. And that drunkard, **even if** he has **not been attacked** by other drunks, often ends up the **next morning** sick and feeling abused. It's called a **“hang over,”** but that is **euphemistically unrealistic**. In a relatively short time that man **may become so addicted** to the wine, and **so immune** to the hang over, that **despite the painfulness** of the following day, he says, **“I will seek it yet again.”**

**Sadly, the evil effects of drugs like alcohol and marijuana, reach beyond the immediate.**

They reach **beyond** the **impaired ability to drive the car**, which brings about accidents and thousands of deaths every year. They go **beyond** the **impairment of rational thought** and the resultant **loss of productivity and jobs**. The results go **beyond the damage** brought about to the **liver**, the **brain** and other parts of the body. One of the problems of **drunkenness** is that it **leads to other sins, compounding the problems** with alcohol itself.

**Is it coincidental** that **interspersed** between verses **exposing** and **condemning wine** and **drunkenness** we have statements like **Verse 27** – **“For a whore is a deep ditch; and a strange woman is a narrow pit. She also lieth in wait as for a prey, and increaseth the transgressors among men.”** **Verse 33** – **“Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things.”**

**Why** are the warnings about **wicked women scattered** among **warnings** about **alcohol**? **Isn't it** because **some sins open the door** to other sins? **Where** are the sons of Solomon **more apt to find a whore** or a **harlot**? At a **tavern** or the **temple**? At the **place that sells wine** or the place that **sells groceries**? Who is **more apt** to be caught in the **web** of a **whore**? – the **clear thinking** and **clear seeing soul** or the one with the **bleary eye-sight**? **Whose eyes** are more apt to **“behold strange women?”** Who is **more apt** to fall into a **deep ditch** or a **narrow pit** – a **sober man** or someone **high on pot**?

Should we be **surprised** to find in this chapter the **condemnation of theft or murder**? These are **not mentioned**, but would we be surprised if they were? **How often** does the **murderer** have to **muster up the courage** for his crime with a few stiff **drinks first**? **Doesn't wine increase** the probability of hearts to **“utter perverse things”** – **lies or blasphemies**?

As **Solomon fields a few questions** from his boys, and as he **expresses** some of the things he has **learned** about **wine-abuse**, hopefully they are listening. Solomon prays that they will be spared the penalties of alcohol and its related sins. He knows that **“the father of the RIGHTEOUS shall greatly rejoice: and he that begetteth a WISE child shall have joy of him. Thy father and thy mother shall be glad, and she that bare thee shall rejoice.”** **Abstemious children** – kids who abstain from the things of the world **bring godly parents great joy**. And they bring to themselves a great many blessings as well.