

**Drunkenness**  
**by T DeWitt Talmage**

"Noah planted a vineyard; and he drank of the wine and was drunken." Genesis ix, 20, 21

This Noah did the best thing and the worst thing for the world. He built an ark against that deluge of water, but introduced a deluge against which the human race has ever since been trying to build an ark-the deluge of drunkenness. In my text we hear his staggering steps. Shem and Japheth tried to cover up the disgrace, but there he is, drunk on wine at a time in the history of the world, when, to say the least, there was no lack of water. Inebriation, having entered the world, has not retreated. Abigail, the fair and heroic wife, who saved the flocks of Nabal, her husband, from confiscation by invaders, goes home at night and finds him so intoxicated, she cannot tell him the story of his narrow escape. Uriah came to see David, and David got him drunk and paved the way for the despoliation of a household. Even the church bishops needed to be charged to be sober and not given to too much wine, and so familiar were people of Bible times with the staggering and falling motion of the inebriate that, Isaiah, when he comes to describe the final dislocation of worlds, says;" The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard."

**A WORLD WIDE TEMPTATION**

Ever since apples and grapes and wheat grew, the world has been tempted to unhealthful stimulants. But the intoxicants of the olden time were an innocent beverage, a harmless orangeade, a quiet syrup, a peaceful soda water as compared with the liquids of modern inebriation, into which a madness and a fury, and a gloom, and a fire, and a suicide, and a retribution have mixed and mingled. Fermentation was always known, but it was not until a thousand years after Christ that distillation was invented. While we must confess that some of the ancient arts have been lost, the Christian era is superior to all others in the bad eminence of whisky and rum and gin. The modern drunk is a hundredfold worse than the ancient drunk. Noah in his intoxication became imbecile, but the victims of modern day alcoholism have to struggle with whole menageries of wild beasts, and jungles of hissing serpents, and perditions of blaspheming demons. An archfiend arrived in our world and he builds an invisible caldron of temptation. He built that caldron strong and stout for all ages and all nations. First he squeezed into the caldron the juices of the forbidden fruit of Paradise. Then he gathered for it a distillation from the harvest fields and orchards from the hemispheres. Then he poured into this caldron capsicum, and copperas and logwood and deadly nightshade and assault and battery and vitriol and opium and rum and murder and sulphuric acid and theft and potash and cochineal and red carrots and poverty and Death and hops. But it was a dry compound and it must be moistened, and it must be liquefied, and so the archfiend pours into that caldron the tears of centuries of orphanage and

widowhood, and he poured in the blood of twenty thousand assassinations. And then the arch fiend took a shovel that he had brought up from the furnaces beneath, and he put that shovel into that great caldron and began to stir, and the caldron began to heave, and rock and boil and sputter and hiss and smoke, and the nations gathered around it with cups and tankards and demijohns and kegs, and there was enough for all, and the arch fiend cried: “Aha! Champion fiend am I! Who has done more than I have for coffins and graveyards and prisons and insane asylums and the populating of the lost world? And when this caldron is emptied I’ll fill it again and I’ll stir it again, and it will smoke again, and that smoke will join another smoke, the smoke of torment that ascended forever and ever. I drove fifty ships on the rocks of Newfoundland, and the Skeeries and the Goodwins. I have ruined more senators than gathered this winter in the national councils. I have ruined more lords than are now gathered in the house of peers. The cup out of which I ordinarily drink is a bleached human skull, and the upholstery of my palace is so rich a crimson, because it is dyed in human gore, and the mosaic of my floors is made up of the bones of children dashed to death by drunken parents, and my favorite music—sweeter than *Te Deum* or triumphal march—my favorite music is the cry of daughters turned out at midnight on the street because father has come home from the carousal, and the seven-hundred voice shriek of the sinking steamer, because the captain was not himself when he put the ship on the wrong course. Champion fiend am I! I have kindled more fires, I have wrung out more agonies, I have stretched out more midnight shadows, I have opened more Golgotha’s, I have rolled more Juggernauts, I have damned more souls than any other emissary of diabolism. Champion fiend am I!”

### **THE NATION’S GREATEST EVIL**

Drunkenness is the greatest evil of this nation, and it takes no logical process to prove to the audience that a drunken nation cannot long be a free nation. I call your attention to the fact, that drunkenness is not subsiding; certainly that it is not at a standstill, but that it is on an onward march, and it is a double quick. There is more rum swallowed in this country, and of a worse kind, than was ever swallowed since the first distillery began its work of death. Where there was one drunken home there are ten drunken homes. Where there was one drunkard’s grave there are ten drunkard’s graves. It is on the increase. Talk about crooked whiskey—by which men mean the whisky that does not pay the tax to the government—I tell you all strong drink is crooked. Crooked Otard, crooked Cognac, crooked schnapps, crooked beers, crooked wine, crooked whisky—because it makes a man’s path crooked, and his life crooked, and his death crooked, and his eternity crooked.

If I could gather all the armies of the dead drunkards and have them come to resurrection, and then add to that host, all the armies of living drunkards, five and ten abreast, and then if I could have you mount a horse and ride along that line for review, you could ride that horse until he dropped from

exhaustion, and you would mount another horse and ride until he fell from exhaustion and you would take another and another, and you would ride along hour after hour, and day after day. Great host, in regiments, in brigades. Great armies of them. And then if you had voice stentorian enough to make them all hear, and you could give the command," Forward, march!" their first tramp would make the earth tremble. I do not care which way you look in the community today, the evil is increasing.

Is drunkenness a state or national evil? Does it belong to the north, or does it belong to the south? Does it belong to the east, or does it belong to the west? Ah! There is not an American river into which its tears have not fallen and into which its suicides have not plunged. What ruined that southern plantation? —every field a fortune, the proprietor and his family once the most affluent supporters of summer watering places. What threw that New England farm into decay and turned the roseate cheeks that bloomed at the foot of the Green Mountains into the pallor of despair? What has smitten every street of every village, town and city of this continent with a moral pestilence? Strong drink.

### **MAINE AND GEORGIA**

To prove that this is a national evil I call up two states in opposite directions—Maine and Georgia. Let them testify in regard to this. State of Maine says," It is so great an evil up here we have anathematized it as a state." State of Georgia says," It is so great an evil down here that ninety counties of this state have made the sale of intoxicating drink a criminality." So the word comes up from all parts of the land. Either drunkenness will be destroyed in this country or the American government will be destroyed. Drunkenness and free institutions are coming into a terrible death grapple.

### **HEREDITARY APPETITE**

I call attention to the facts that there are thousand of people born with a thirst for strong drinks—a fact too often ignored. Along some ancestral lines there runs the river of temptation. There are children whose swaddling clothes are torn of the shroud of death. Many a father has made a will of this sort: "In the name of God, amen. I bequeath to my children my houses and lands and estates; share and share shall they alike. Hereto I affix my hand and seal in the presence of witnesses." And yet perhaps the very man has made another will that the people have never read, and that has not been proved in the courts. That will put in writing would read something like this: "In the name of disease and appetite and death, amen. I bequeath to my children my evil habits, my tankards shall be theirs, my wine cup shall be theirs, my destroyed destruction shall be theirs. Share and share alike shall they in the infamy. Hereto I affix my hand and seal in the presence of all the applauding harpies of hell.

From the multitude of those who have the evil habit born with them this army is

being augmented. And I am sorry to say that a great many of the drug stores are abetting this evil, and alcohol is sold under the name of bitters. It is bitters for this and bitters for that and bitters for some other thing, and good men deceived, not knowing that there is any thralldom of alcoholism coming from that source, are going down, and some day a man sits with a bottle of black bitters on his table, and the cork flies out, and after it flies a fiend and clutches the man by his throat and says: "Aha! I have been after you for ten years. I have got you now. Down with you! down with you!" Bitters! Ah! Yes. They make a man's family bitter, and his home bitter, and his disposition bitter, and his death bitter, and his hell bitter. Bitters! A vast army, all the time increasing.

It seems to me it is about time for the 17, 000, 000 professors of religion in America to take sides. It is going to be an out in out battle with drunkenness and sobriety, between heaven and hell, between God and the devil. Take sides before there is any further national decadence take sides before your sons are sacrificed and the new home of your daughter goes down under alcoholism of an imbruted husband. Take sides while your voice, your pen, your prayer, your vote may have influence in arresting the despoliation of this nation. If the 17,000,000 professors of religion should take sides on this subject it would not be very long before the destiny of this nation would be decided in the right direction.

## **THE GREAT ENEMY OF LABOR**

Gather up the money that the working classes have spent for rum during the last thirty years, and I will build for every working man a house, and lay out for him a garden, and clothe his sons in broad cloth and his daughters in silks, and stand at his front door a prancing span of sorrels or bays, and secure him a policy of life insurance so that the present home may be well maintained after he his dead. The most persistent, most overpowering enemy of the working classes is intoxicating liquor. It is the anarchist of the centuries, and has boycotted and is now boycotting the body and mind and soul of American labor. It annually swindles industry out of a large percentage of its earnings. It holds out its blasting solicitations to the mechanic or operative on his way to work, and at the noon spell, and on his way home at eventide. On Saturday when the wages are paid, it snatches a large part of the money that might come to the family and sacrifices it among the saloonkeepers. Stand the saloons of this country side by side, and it is carefully estimated that they would reach from New York to Chicago.

This evil is pouring its vitriolic and damnable liquors down the throats of hundreds of thousands of laborers, and while the ordinary strikes are ruinous both to employers and employees, I proclaim a universal strike against strong drink, which strike, if kept up, will be the relief of the working classes and the salvation of the nation. I will undertake to say that there is not a

healthy laborer in the United States who, within the next twenty years, if he will refuse all intoxicating beverages and be saving, may not become a capitalist on a small scale.

### **CANNOT SOMETHING BE DONE?**

Oh, how many are waiting to see if something cannot be done for the stopping of intemperance! Thousands of drunkards waiting who cannot go ten minutes in any direction without having the temptation glaring before their eyes or appealing to their nostrils, they fighting against it with enfeebled will and diseased appetite, conquering, then surrendering, conquering again and surrendering again, and crying: "How long, O Lord! How long before these infamous solicitations shall be gone?" And how many mothers are waiting to see if this national curse cannot lift? Oh, is that the boy who has the honest breath who comes home with breath vitiated or disguised? What a change! How quickly those habits of early coming home have been exchanged for the rattling of the night key in the door long after the last watchman has gone by and tried to see that every thing was closed up for the night!

### **THE WAYWARD BOY**

Oh! What a change for that young man, who we had hoped would do something in merchandise or in artisanship or in a profession that would do honor to the family name, long after mother's wrinkled hands are folded from the last toil! All that exchanged for startled look when the doorbell rings, lest something has happened; and the wish that the scarlet fever twenty years ago had been fatal, for then he would have gone directly to the bosom of his Savior. But alas! Poor old soul, she has lived to experience what Solomon said," A foolish son is a heaviness to his mother."

Oh! What funeral it will be when that boy is brought home dead! And how mother will sit there and say,  
" Is this my boy that I used to fondle, and that I walked the floor with in the nights when he was sick? Is this the boy that I held to the baptismal font for baptism? Is this the boy for whom I toiled until the blood burst from the tips of my fingers, that he might have a good start and a good home? Lord, why hast thou let me live to see this? Can it be that these swollen hands are the ones that used to wander over my face when rocking him to sleep? Can it be that this swollen brow is that I once so rapturously kissed? Poor boy! How tired he does look. I wonder who struck him that blow across the temples? I wonder if he uttered a dying prayer? Wake up my son; don't you hear me? Wake up! Oh! He can't hear me! Dead! Dead! Dead! Oh, Absalom, my son, my son, would God that I had died for thee, oh, Absalom, my son, my son!"

### **WAITING WIVES**

I am not much of a mathematician and I cannot estimate it, but is there anyone here quick enough at figures to estimate how many mothers there are waiting for something to be done? Ay, there are many wives waiting for domestic rescue. He promised something different from that when after the long acquaintance and the careful scrutiny of character, the hand and the heart were offered and accepted.

What a hell on earth a woman lives in who has a drunken husband! O death, how lovely thou art to her, and how soft and warm thy skeleton hand! The sepulcher at midnight in winter is a king's drawing room compared with that woman's home. It is not so much the blow on the head that hurts as the blow on the heart: The rum fiend came to the door of that beautiful home, and opened the door and said: "I curse this dwelling with an unrelenting curse. I curse that father into a maniac; I curse that mother into a pauper. I curse those sons into vagabonds. I curse those daughters into profligacy. Cursed be bread tray and cradle. Cursed be couch and chair, and family Bible with record of marriages and births and deaths. Curse upon curse." Oh, how many wives are there waiting to see if something cannot be done to shake these frosts of the second death off the orange blossoms! Yea, God is waiting, the God who works through human instrumentalities, waiting to see, whether this nation is going to overthrow this evil, and if it refuse to do so, God will wipe out the nation as he did Phoenicia and as he did Rome, as he did Thebes, as he did Babylon.

Ay, he is waiting to see what the church of God will do. If the church does not do its work, then he will wipe it out as he did the church of Ephesus, the church of Thyatira, church of Sardis. The Protestant and Roman-Catholic churches today stand side by side, with an impotent look, gazing on this evil, which costs this country more than a billion dollars a year to take care of the 800,000 paupers, and the 315,000 criminals, and the 30,000 idiots, and to bury the 75,000 drunkards. Protagoras boasted that out of the sixty years of his life forty years he had spent in ruining youths; but this evil may make the more infamous boast that all its life it has been ruining the bodies, mind and souls of the human race.

### **THE POLITICIANS ARE DOING NOTHING**

Put on your spectacles and take a candle and examine the platforms of the two leading political parties of this country, and see what they are doing for the arrest of this evil, and for the overthrow of this abomination. Resolutions—oh!

Yes, resolutions about Mormonism! It is safe to attack that organized nastiness two thousand miles away. But not one word about drunkenness, which would rot this nation from scalp to heel. Resolutions about protection against foreign industries, but not one word about protection of family and church and nation against the scalding, blastings, all consuming, damning tariff of strong drink put upon every financial, individual, spiritual, moral, national interest.

### **THE POWER OF THE CHURCH**

I look in another direction. The Church of God is the grandest and most glorious institution on earth. What has it in solid phalanx accomplished for the overthrow of drunkenness? Have its forces ever been marshaled? No, not on this direction. Not long ago a great ecclesiastical court assembled in New York, and resolutions arraigning strong drink were offered, and clergymen with strong drink on their tables and strong drink in their cellars defeated the resolutions by threatening speeches. They could not bear to give up their own lusts.

I tell this audience what many of you may never have thought of, that today—not in the millennium, but today—the church holds the balance of power in America; and if Christian people—the men and women who profess to love the Lord Jesus Christ and to love purity and to be the sworn enemies of all uncleanness and debauchery and sin—if all such would march side by side and shoulder to shoulder, this evil would soon be overthrown. Think of three hundred thousand churches and Sunday schools in Christendom marching shoulder to shoulder! How very short a time it would take them to put down this evil, if all the churches of God, transatlantic and cisatlantic, were armed on this subject!

Young men of America, pass over into the army of teetotalism. Whisky, good to preserve corpses, ought never to turn you into a corpse. Tens of thousands of young men have been dragged out of respectability, and out of purity, and out of good character, and into darkness by this infernal stuff called strong drink. Do not touch it! Do not touch it!

### **A SAD STORY ABOUT “JOE”**

In the front door of our church in Brooklyn, a few summers ago, this scene occurred: Sabbath morning a young man was entering for divine worship. A friend passing along the street said, “Joe, come along with me; I am going down to Coney Island and we’ll have a gay Sunday.” “No,” replied Joe; “I have started to go here to church, and I am going to attend service here.” “Oh, Joe,” his friend said, “you can go to church any time! The day is bright, and we’ll go to Coney Island, and we’ll have a splendid time.” The temptation was too strong, and the twain went to the beach, spent the day in drunkenness and riot. The evening train started up from Brighton. The young men were on it. Joe, in his intoxication, when the train was in full speed, tried to pass around from one seat from another and fell and was crushed. Under the lantern as Joe lay bleeding his life away on the grass, he said to his comrade: “John, that was a bad very bad business, You taking me away from church; it was a very bad business. You ought not to have done that, John. I want you to tell the boys tomorrow when you see them that rum and Sabbath breaking did this for me. And John, while you are telling them, I will be in hell, and it will be your fault.”

Is it not time for me to pull out from the great organ of God’s word, with many banks of keys, the tremolo stop? “Look not upon the wine when it is red, when it moveth itself aright in the cup, for at last it biteth like a serpent and

stingeth like an adder.

### **THIS EVIL WILL BE ARRESTED**

But this evil will be arrested. Blucher came up just before night and saved the day at Waterloo. At 4 o'clock, in the afternoon it looked very badly for the English. Generals Ponsonby and Pickton fallen. Sabers broken, flags surrendered, Scots Grays annihilated. Only forty-two men left out of the German brigade. The English army falling back and falling back. Napoleon rubbed his hands together and said:

“ Aha! Aha! We'll teach that Englishman a lesson. Ninety chances out of a hundred are in our favor. Magnificent! Magnificent!” Even sent messages to Paris that he had won the day.

But before sundown Blucher came up, and he who had been the conqueror of Austerlitz became the victim of Waterloo. The name which had shaken all Europe and filled even America with apprehension, that name went down, and Napoleon, muddy and hatless, and crazed with his disasters, was found feeling for the stirrup of a horse, that he might mount and resume the conflict.

Well, my friends, alcoholism is imperial, and it is a conqueror, and there are good people who say the night of national overthrow is coming, and that it is almost night. But before sundown the Conqueror of earth and heaven will ride in on a white horse, and alcoholism, which has had its Austerlitz of triumph, shall have its Waterloo of defeat. Alcoholism having lost its crown, the grizzly and cruel breaker of human hearts, crazed with the disaster, will be found telling in vain for the stirrup on which to remount its foaming charger. “ So, O Lord, Let thine enemies perish.”