

Beacons of the Bible

Drunkenness

By [Henry Law](#)

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"After the Flood, Noah became a farmer and planted a vineyard. One day he became drunk on some wine he had made and lay naked in his tent." Genesis 9:20-21

How frightful is this spectacle! Man lies bereft of reason--stripped of consciousness--impotent to think--powerless to act--degraded lower than the level of the beasts--wallowing in the sink of filthiness. Who is this man? Many feelings urge us to turn aside--to look away--to close our eyes. The sight of sin cannot but distress. It is the misery of earth, that it resounds with evil sounds, and presents vice at every turn. But this scene meets us in the Bible-page. Therefore we must pause and ponder. The Spirit cloaks not the dreadful fact. No screening mantle hides. It is exposed to open light. Readers are bade to mark it. The Beacon is divinely raised. It may not be ignored. The Church in every age must fix on it a mourning eye.

This man is Noah. How lovely in his early record. Amid a world of wickedness, he shone as a ray of purity. While earth seemed one vast wilderness of sin, he bloomed a fragrant flower, and showed the fruitful branches of a healthy tree. His first mention proclaims him as beloved of God. "Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord." Genesis 6:8. Distinguishing mercy enriched him with choice favor. His elevated conduct proves this heavenly preference. It follows, "Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God." Genesis 6:9. Analyze this character. He is "just." Therefore faith reigned in his heart. It is a foremost principle of truth, "The just shall live by faith." Noah is entitled "just." Therefore he lived by faith. This grace is a fruitful tree. It was so in Noah's case. He was sincere and upright amid the crooked of his age. He strove against the downward stream. He took each step in holy fellowship with God. He sought heavenly guidance. He leaned on heavenly support. Thus he boldly trampled down sin. Thus he moved Zionward in the narrow way of life.

When hearts are filled with truth, the lips cannot be mute. Hence valiantly he preached. Earnestly he warned. Plainly he taught. Faithfully he denounced sin. Regardless of reproach and ridicule, he uplifted the Gospel-torch. He called the dead to rise and live. He told of wrath just ready to descend--of judgment near--of the sure wages of transgression--of all the terrors of avenging justice. He showed

both by type and word the only refuge.

This and much more flows fully forth, from his next title, "Preacher of righteousness." 2 Pet. 2:5. While he thus lived and labored, wondrous revelations cheered his soul. God visited this favored child with intimations of the coming end. He was instructed to frame a saving home. He believed and prepared the ark. When the set time had come, what frightful marvels terrified his sight! He saw the falling deluge--the panic of the doomed world--the misery of multitudes vainly battling with death--the waters swelling over drowning crowds, He heard their agonizing cries, until silence brooded over lifelessness. How would he tremble at the fruit of sin! How would he bow in reverence before God rising to take vengeance! But he saw and heard, realizing *his own deliverance*. While others perished, he was preserved. While wrath slew masses, it spared him. His humble heart would doubtless confess, 'By grace I am thus saved!' How would his rapturous praise bless the Giver of such unmerited distinction. How would his supplicating lips implore, that mercy's shield might ever guard him!

The time arrives for departure from the ark--he treads again earth's solid pavement. He stands on the ground cleansed of its defiling inhabitants. His gratitude again would burn in joyful blaze. His heart's one pulse would throb with adoration. His lips would pour forth an overflowing stream of warm thanksgiving. This is inscribed on his earliest act. Before he rears a dwelling for himself, he builds an altar to the Lord. The God of his grace--his mercies--his rescue--his salvation--merits and receives his instant worship. On this altar he piles many victims. Each represents the one sacrifice for sin. Each proves, that in lively faith he looked to the atoning Lamb of God. Each tells, that he well knew and truly loved the Gospel-hope.

How beautiful is this view of pious faith! Heaven always smiles on faith. It was so then. It is so now. It shall be so, until all faith's work be ended. God seems now to open wider the treasury of heaven, that richer blessings may crown his servant. He constitutes him lord of the earth, and of earth's fullness. And lest the fear should ever arise, that falling showers might swell into another flood, he gives assurance of security. He adds a brilliant witness in the skies. A rainbow of varied hues spans the skies--a seal of the covenant of safety from watery ruin. "God said unto Noah, This is the token of the covenant, which I have established between me and all the creatures upon the earth." Genesis 9:17. Was ever man so encircled with favors? Surely these *golden chains* will bind him to unbroken walk with God.

Alas! the thought arises as a bright morn, soon to be obscured with clouds. *Noah was but man*. Filled indeed he was with copious streams of grace. But still he was but man. And the word is ever true, "Verily every man at his best estate is altogether vanity." Ps. 39:5.

He now proceeds to cultivate the ground. The deed was right. The labor was his

duty. God does not call His servants to idleness or ease--to folded arms, and slumbering sinews, and unemployed powers. Sloth is the mother of all evil--the nurse of frightful crime. It must not sit down in faith's household. Adam is placed in the garden "to dress it and to keep it." Genesis 2:15. The Gospel-precept is, "My son, go work in my vineyard to-day." "Not slothful in business," is the believer's rule. View Noah, industrious in his vineyard, and frown not on commendable toil.

The earth made rich returns. The trees brought forth abundantly. The luscious juice presented wine to renovate the strength and to restore the worn-out frame. Here was precious blessing. Let thankfulness receive, and moderation moderately use. Let the cup be sanctified with holy praise.

But ah! this is a world of snares. To be beyond temptation is to soar high above this earth. Beneath the flower the viper lurks. The pathway is beside a precipice. The goblet may beguile. The use may exceed bounds. In the deep draught there is poison. Overmuch brings death. There is no mercy incapable of abuse. There is no privilege, which may not be misused. The cheering wine may make a drunkard. The strengthening bowl may hurl a saint from his high pinnacle. Could it be so with Noah? Fact must be heard. The record cannot be erased. Noah "drank of the wine." Who can blame this! God gave the wine as a legitimate support. But the misery is here. "He drank of the wine and was drunken." Who will not sigh! Who can restrain the pitying tear! Alas! that such a sin should foully stain so great--so good a man! But it is so. His sun goes down behind this darksome cloud. This miserable blot pollutes the beauty of his name. This vile transgression soils his pure career. The day cannot be cancelled. The deed cannot be recalled. Intoxication was incurred. Concealment cannot hide it. The sin was done. Noah--the glory of the ancient world--the first fruits unto God of the new world is dishonored, as the first drunkard. "He drank of the wine and was drunken."

All sin is frightful in its nature--fearful in its course--destructive in its outcome. The devil kindles it. God hates it. Wrath pursues it. But where is the sin so pregnant with all evil as drunkenness? Mark its effects upon its miserable victims. It puts out the lamp of reason. It quenches the light of every faculty. It cripples every power. It destroys each spark of consciousness. Behold the besotted man. His eyes possess no more the property of clear perception. His ears receive not the true sound. His feet refuse to lead him in straight paths. His tongue gives vent--at best to folly--more frequently to blasphemy, and every vileness. Ah! what a spectacle! No beast is so degraded. No fiend outside hell's confines can be more foul. He lies contemptible below contempt. He is a powerless victim open to all assaults. The walls are broken. The gates are open. None guard the portals. All foes may enter in. There is no vigilance to discern approaching destruction. There is no arm to ward it off.

Amnon lies murdered. Absalom's vindictive heart arranged the scheme.

Absalom's servants gave the deathful wound. But Amnon's hands received the stupifying bowl, and thus laid bare his bosom for the blow. "Absalom told his men, 'Wait until Amnon gets drunk; then at my signal, kill him!'" 2 Samuel 13:28. He was smitten and he fell. His soul awoke from drunkenness in realms where sleep can sleep no more.

Behold Israel's king Elah. He is in Tirzah, in the house of his steward Arza. The feast is splendid. The goblets sparkle with enticing wine. He sits high in the banquet, "drinking himself drunk." The crowned drunkard is defenseless. Zimri enters and spares him not. He falls into the grave of drunkenness. He goes hence to meet a drunkard's doom. 1 Kings 16:9.

Benhadad, king of Syria, invades Israel. Mighty is his army. Victory seems near. Who can resist the overwhelming troop! But the 'God of battle' leads on His people. Israel's little company advances against the invading host. Now mark the state of the insulting Syrian. "Benhadad was drinking himself drunk in the pavilions--he and the kings--the thirty-two kings, that helped him." Thus their power was gone. Vain the sword--the spear--the horse. A drunkard cannot use his own resources. So the Syrians are destroyed with a great slaughter. Drunkenness strips them of their power, and renders them an easy prey--1 Kings 20:16.

Who has not pondered Belshazzar's evil end! The Babylonian monarch "made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand." "While he drank the wine," he rushed into enormous *sacrilege*. He called for the consecrated vessels of God's temple. They drank wine from the *holy* bowls. In mad idolatry they praised the gods of gold and silver--of brass--of iron--of wood--and of stone. But now what terrors seize the besotted monarch and his guilty guests! The Lord from heaven by a fearful miracle announced the kingdom ruined, and the king rejected. "And in that night was Belshazzar, king of the Chaldeans, slain." Dan. 5:30. Thus drunkenness uproots kingdoms, and slays kings.

Ahasuerus stands forth guilty of childish folly. When did this silliness occur? Was not excess in wine the moving cause? It is recorded, "When the heart of the king was merry with wine," he gave the indecent order--Esther 1:10.

Who has not mourned the holy Baptist's cruel murder? But what brings in this dreadful crime? Herod on his birthday made a supper for his lords, high captains, and chief rulers of Galilee. Reason was extinguished by the exciting revelry. The oath was rashly sworn. The savage order was sent forth. The Baptist lies a mangled corpse. His head is placed upon the platter--a fit dish for such a feast! Oh! wine, what have you done? "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging." Prov. 20:1.

But drunkenness pollutes not only the high halls. It is not restricted to *royal* robes

and *golden* bowls. It is not limited to station, climate, or place. It spares not humble dwellings. It cruelly invades the village--the hamlet--the rural lanes--the crowded alleys. But wherever it appears, it comes a heartless and destructive pest. Unhappiness in every form attends its steps. Sickness, and withered frames, and early death are its sure fruits.

Whoever would contemplate wretchedness--let him mark the wretched drunkard. Whoever would see misery--let him enter the drunkard's home. Whose are the trembling limbs--the feverish pulse--the aching head--the restless mind--the gnawing remorse--the hardened heart--the reckless disregard of reputation--the stifling of conscience? These woes are the drunkard's lot. He is unhappy, and the cup is his relief. He drinks again to lull remorse. He awakens to deeper sorrow, and to drink the more. The more he drinks, the more he thirsts. Disease soon shows its face. The bodily and mental powers fade. Trembling imbecility follows. So the drunkard goes downhill to a drunkard's grave.

Whose is that wretched home? Poverty and filth have the possession. Neglect and squalidness occupy it as their own. The wife, unaided and downcast, with weeping eye and broken heart, sees hopeless poverty. The children, famished--naked--untaught--proclaim the shameless father's hardened heart. The wages, needful to sustain them, supplies the parent's poison. This is a drunkard's home.

It may be that some drunkard's eye reads this. If so, most mighty Spirit, make this entreaty mighty for his rescue! Friend, stop. Cast down the murdering cup. Taste not another drop. Touch not. It is sure ruin. Enter no more the haunts of sure destruction. To stop may be recovery of health--of name--of character--of happiness--of competence--of peace. To advance is recklessly to dig your early grave; and, what is worse, to fasten endless torment on your soul. Friend, stop. The devil strives to lead you on. He has succeeded hitherto. But he cannot compel you. Resist, while yet you may. Withstand your cruel foe. Friend, stop. The holy Savior yet may save you. His glorious prerogative is to receive sinners. He never casts the coming suppliant out. Your sins are frightful. But He can pardon all. Your heart is hard. But He can soften it. You are in fearful case. But He can snatch you as a brand from the burning. Renounce your vice--resolutely--at once. Turn, and you may be rescued from sin--from hell. Turn, and you yet may enter heaven.

But drunkenness assumes a darker phase, as linked with Noah. An aged--a long-tried--an experienced saint is entrapped in this snare. No warning can be louder. It speaks with trumpet-tongue. We learn, that no advance in grace can raise above the devil's far-extending arm. No lengthened walk with God mounts to a path above his reach. Holiness of many years screens not from Satan's assaults. While flesh is the tabernacle, there is danger. While earth is the home, it will be haunted by this untiring foe. There is no moment when the watch-tower may be left. The constant attitude must be the bended knee. The arm must ever wield the sword of the Spirit, which is the eternal Word. The shield may not be laid aside.

Believer, open your eyes widely to your real position. Bright indeed are your hopes. The Lord, who bought you, watches you with unfailing love. The angels are your guards. The Spirit is your teacher. The Word is your text-book. Heaven is your final home. Your eternity is glory. You will not fail finally. "He who has begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Phil. 1:6. Your God will perfect that which concerns your soul. But still Satan never ceases to hate and tempt. Draw then nearer and nearer to the sheltering side of your beloved Lord. Let your eyes ever gaze upon the cross. The more you see redeeming blood, the more you will abhor iniquity. Trust not, however, to previous grace. It was sufficient for its day. But each day needs its own supply. This help is ready. The treasury is open. Approach by faith. Go in by prayer. Receive heaven's bounty. Seek, also, in all things to be conformed to Jesus' image. He was "holy--harmless--undefiled--separate from sinners." Heb. 7:26. Above all, feast on the precious promises--so will you cleanse yourself "from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." 2 Cor. 7:1.

But still remember, that each day is full of peril. Therefore never cease to watch. Do not forget, that in one unguarded moment a terrible downfall may occur. Think, also, that one false step brings terrible disgrace on your good reputation, and causes hell to laugh, and all the enemies of God to revel in blaspheming sneers. Your sin may ruin multitudes. Therefore, for your soul's sake--as you love Jesus--as you desire the progress of His truth--as you would cause the Gospel to be honored, be very careful--abstain from evil's contact--let your light shine brightly.

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