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Deane, Samuel, 1784-1834.

A Sermon, Delivered Before the Scituate
Auxiliary ... 26, May, 1817.

Boston, Eliot, 1817. 15 pp.

MWA copy.

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SERMON.

DELIVERED BEFORE

THE SCITUATE AUXILIARY SOCIETY

FOR THE

SUPPRESSION OF INTEMPERANCE,

AT THEIR

FIRST ANNUAL MEETING.

IN

SCITUATE, 26 MAY, 1817.

—
BY SAMUEL DEANE, A. M.

PASTOR OF THE SECOND CHURCH IN SCITUATE.
—

BOSTON :

PRINTED BY JOHN ELIOT.

1817.

AT a meeting of the Scituate Auxiliary Society for the Suppression of Intemperance, May 26, 1817,

***Voted*—That ELIJAH TURNER, CUSHING OTIS, and CHARLES TURNER, JUN. Esquires, be a Committee to present the thanks of the Society to the Rev. SAMUEL DEANE, for his well adapted discourse, this day delivered before said Society, and request a copy thereof for the press.**

Attest,

CHARLES TURNER, JUN. *Secretary.*

SERMON.



I. COR. vi. 10.

———*Drunkards shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*

DRUNKENNESS is placed by St. Paul, in the catalogue of those vices, which exclude from the kingdom of God. By the *kingdom of God*, we understand that state of felicity in another life, which the gospel promises to the virtuous: the same of which the Saviour speaks in his description of the general judgment, Mat. xxv. 34. *Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you.* Our text requires no further explanation. Drunkenness we need not define. The severity of divine law against this vice, is founded in reason and the nature of things. The reason why it excludes from heaven, will be developed in the progress of our discourse, when we speak of its guilt, of its demoralizing tendency, and of its destructive influence, on the happiness and the best interests of man.

I. We may consider drunkenness, abstractedly, as a crime. We are undoubtedly accountable to God, for the proper use of our faculties. Any practice, therefore, which obscures our reason, blunts our perception, and impairs our power of doing good, is criminal. God has made us accountable, in some measure,

for our own lives. It is our duty to exert all our discretion to keep in order the human machine, and to lengthen out our lives. Any practice, therefore, by which we directly destroy life, or indirectly shorten it, by introducing diseases into our frame, is criminal. Perhaps we may not have been accustomed to consider *drunkenness* as *suicide*: but in what other light can we view it, on reflection? The self-murderer perpetrates his crime in a moment of frenzy, which his own imprudence or crimes often induce. The drunkard, by yielding to temptations, which he should resist, loses the control of himself. The self-murderer terminates his life by sudden violence. The drunkard procures his death by lingering poison. The ancient practice of exposing the body of the self-murderer, and denying it Christian burial, is dropped by the present age, as wanting delicacy. But whatever expressions of abhorrence are proper in regard to *suicide*, are proper in regard to *drunkenness*. We would decently inter the suicide and the drunkard, but with equal abhorrence of their crimes. The scriptures declare that *no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him*: and the scriptures declare that *drunkards shall not inherit the kingdom of God*. I will add under this head, that God has made us accountable for the well-being of society. We can, then, readily perceive the criminality of any practice, which disturbs its order, corrupts its morals, unfits its members for duty, and destroys its happiness. Man being made for society, and having social duties of the first importance, is equally as criminal in disqualifying himself for discharging his duties to men, as in breaking his duty to himself or his God. Our religion teaches us, that duties done to men, God will graciously accept as done to himself. And without doubt, a failure in these duties is regarded by him as a contempt of his authority. The drunkard, beside being delinquent in regard to social duty, has a positive influence on society of the

most baneful nature. He lures the simple to destruction. This is far the greatest evil that infests society at the present day. Compared with it, the influence of the robber, the thief, the assassin, is nothing. All these characters however are associated together in the denunciations of Paul. *They shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*

II. Let us notice the demoralizing influence of drunkenness. A person, while forming a habit of intemperance, is not aware of the length to which it may carry him. From one step to another in depravity he advances, until his moral sense is impaired, and there is no crime, which he will not commit. It has often happened, that men in very responsible stations in society, have so far depraved their understandings, and impaired their moral sense, as to become insensible to their obligations to God and men, and regardless of the sanctity of an oath. It was a wise law of Spain, providing against the detriment which society suffers from hence. The drunkard was not allowed to take the oaths of office: and no man who had been habitually intemperate was allowed to make oath in a court of justice. The influence of intemperance extends to every faculty of the human mind. It impairs the understanding or judgment. The acquirement of knowledge, the discerning of truth from falsehood, and the improvement in whatever is useful or honorary to man are hindered. It hardens the feelings; it blunts the sensibility. The most tender ties of humanity have no hold upon the abandoned drunkard. He is ready to blaspheme his God, to betray his friend, to sacrifice the peace of his dearest connexions, and to despoil of comfort and support the wife of his bosom and the children of his own body. It corrupts every good affection of the heart. All the benevolent feelings are extinguished. No enlarged views of the interests of men, or wishes for their welfare can be expected, where love in nearer relations

is lost;—and a horrid train of evil affections takes possession of the soul—hatred, anger, malice, envy, revenge, ingratitude to God and man. Even a sense of worldly decency is lost; for as you would search his heart in vain for one pang of remorse, so in vain would you contemplate his countenance for a blush.

Under this head we may notice also the demoralizing influence of drunkenness upon society. In regard to no other vice, can it be said with greater propriety, that *one sinner destroyeth much good*. Eccl. ix. 18. When the man who has stood high in the estimation of his fellows, or has been honoured with publick employment, falls into this vice, virtue, religion, and the well-being of society, receive a shock. Those who looked to him for example are led to suspect, that integrity, honour, virtue, religion, are but the vain fancies of visionaries, and have no hold upon the affections of man. The sensuality in which he has set an example becomes less odious, or is followed without fear. Where the parent has set an example of intemperance, it often occurs, that the children lose their reverence for sobriety, and imitate the father's vice. And in all conditions and ranks of men there are the circles of companions and equals, through which the contagion of vice is easily spread. Rather than desert his companions, a man will often follow an ill example. Thus the doors are opened to corruption, and society falls a prey to its sweeping torrent.

What I have said respecting the criminality and the demoralizing tendency of drunkenness, is so far from exaggeration, that observation may prove it to be but a faint picture of many living examples. It is not every drunkard, indeed, that has gone the length of all these evils. But he has advanced in crime and moral debasement in proportion to his intemperance.

We need not now inquire, my brethren, for the reason of the severity of divine law against this vice.

Surely we need not ask the reason why St. Paul declared that *drunkards shall not inherit the kingdom of God*.

III. Let us now notice the destructive influence of this vice, on the happiness and the best interests of men. The happiness of the present life, is no unworthy object of regard. For though it is far from being perfect, yet there are many enjoyments exhilarating to the heart and elevating to the spirit of man. The principal scene of human happiness is laid in domestic life, where are called into exercise all the tender sensibilities of our nature. But here the influence of drunkenness is peculiarly disastrous. Many a happy pair, having commenced their conjugal life with the highest prospects of felicity, have soon found their hopes all destroyed by this vice. The husband becomes brutalized by intemperance, and consequently an object of insupportable disgust to his partner. The children cease to look with pleasure on a parent's countenance. All salutary example and instruction they must forego :—and even the wholesome precepts of so unworthy a parent would be despised. The hope of prosperity, and even of support, is cut off. And beside this, discord, anger, cruelty, and revenge become the inmates of that house, where the gentlest affections, and tenderest offices of kindness once dwelt. The intoxicated parent sometimes becomes more fierce and cruel to his partner or his children, than the beast of prey. The lion tears not his whelps :—and the den of the savage beast, is often a scene of greater harmony than the dwelling of the drunkard.

Health is destroyed by intemperance. Some of the most acute and distressing diseases of the human body, are the common result of an intemperate use of ardent spirit. These diseases shorten life, as well as render it burdensome. There are indeed instances of persons, who advance to old age, and seem to en-

dure with hardness the effects of excess. But these instances are extremely rare, and only show the burden which their constitutions were capable of supporting. On the other hand, instances are very numerous of the young and vigorous, all whose faculties are paralyzed, and whose health and life are early destroyed. It is like the lake of Avernus, over whose deadly exhalations, few have sufficient vigour to pass.

Interest is sacrificed. Intemperance is a common prelude to the ruin of one's affairs, and to the destruction of his enterprise, his industry and his credit. Every circumstance about him, like the field of the slothful, indicates his improvidence. He loses the respect, and what is more disastrous, the confidence of his fellow men. Let him apply for employment, or let him apply for credit: he will generally be repulsed with reproaches. Or even in his distress, let him apply for charity, and men "will tell him he is a drunkard."

It alienates the affection of friends. Those who *have taken sweet counsel and gone together to the house of God*; Ps. lv. 14. those who have formed the fondest wishes for each other's welfare, have often found their social pleasure interrupted, and their hopes blasted, by intemperance. All affectionate intercourse and interchange of tender offices is lost. The drunkard is viewed with aversion, as both loathsome and dangerous, and he would cease to wonder that he receives so little respect and love, did he know, that they, who meet him, experience a shock, like the sensations of those who tread upon a serpent.

That part which a man might contribute to publick happiness, is lost by intemperance. It is a loss to society. It is a member cut off from the publick body. In short, whatever be the station which a man of this character sustains, there are many relations of life, through which distress is communicated. If his condition is low, he may bring poverty, disease and shame upon his children; he may rend the heart of a

partner; he may bring down the *grey hairs* of parents with *sorrow to the grave*. If his station is high, he is liable to add to these evils, that of poisoning more extensively the publick by his example, and hindering its welfare by his crimes. If his station is of a sacred nature, as is that of the minister of religion, he combines, with all these other evils, that of bringing reproach upon religion, of dishonouring his God, and of betraying and crucifying the cause of the Redeemer.

How deplorable are the condition and the prospects of the drunkard! Incapable of the refined enjoyments of life, and lamented and despised by his fellow beings: cut off from all improvement of his nature, and for his crimes and moral debasement under the darkest frown of heaven and the denunciations of divine truth, which declares, that *drunkards shall not inherit the kingdom of God!*

After the view which we have taken of intemperance, our attention is very naturally led to the means of suppressing this vice, or of obviating its effects. If the evil may not be completely healed, at least something may be done by attending to the suggestions of wisdom and prudence. That we may guard against so formidable an enemy to human happiness and human improvement, we must search for the avenues by which the enemy approaches, and there erect barriers and prepare for our defence. The temptations to this vice are either to be avoided or to be resisted. There are many times and places calculated to ensnare the simple, which may very well be shunned, and the danger escaped. There are also many temptations which arise from a man's constitution, business or calling in life, where safety is to be found only in a firm resolution to resist. There is much danger in frequenting those places, where the idle and vicious resort, and spend their time, their estates and their health in intemperance. Many a youth who entered only with the view of amusing himself for a few moments, has found the

contagion of example to seize him : and before he was aware of his danger, he had lost his innocence, impaired his moral sense, and fixed a habit of excess which hastened his ruin.

The publick days which call the multitude together, are seasons of danger. Friends and companions in their joy at meeting, tempt each other to excess, through a mistaken notion of civility.

Balls, if we allow them to be innocent in themselves, and gaming-parties, are also scenes, where are commenced and nourished the habits of excess. The elevation of spirits on such occasions, often throws the unwary youth entirely from his guard.

There are Christmas celebrations, which are not only altogether an improper, not to say impious notice of the day, but are seasons of training youth to excess and filling the ranks of the intemperate. In these several instances, the danger is to be avoided by flying and escaping the snares. Let such times and places be considered as the nurseries of vice, and avoided with peculiar care. The solicitous parent should admonish his child of the insidious nature of these evils. He should restrain him from those scenes of dissipation. The safety of his child may depend upon the exertion of parental authority. These are scenes in which youth delight to take their pastime, and therefore the more dangerous : they often pursue them, as *the bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life.* Prov. vii. 23.

But there are many instances in which temptation cannot well be avoided. Laborious occupations in the warm season of the year, create a thirst which strongly inclines to excess. The calling or business of a man may unavoidably bring him into company, where custom has established the frequent use of ardent spirit. Here the only means of security is, to stand upon one's guard with vigilance and resolution.

The sedentary life of the student may be considered as a continual temptation to this vice. The lassitude arising from severe application, often induces him to seek exhilaration from the intoxicating cup. Men in the most grave and solemn application of their powers, have often yielded to this temptation, and disgraced their characters. And the youth is not only tempted to seek such relief under the severity of college discipline; but even the company, the gaiety and mirth, when his task is done, are incentives to excess. Here is no safeguard but the exertion of the moral powers, and the firm resolution to *touch not, taste not, handle not*.

Sometimes there may be an inward disease creating an unnatural thirst, and disposing to excess. But this is no sufficient apology for indulgence. A man should deny himself with the greater scrupulousness, and especially since the yielding forever increases the disorder. He should seek medical aid, and guard by every possible means against his propensity,

Sometimes there may be an hereditary and constitutional inclination to this vice. It may be traced through many generations. It may be considered as a misfortune, but not as a palliation of the crime. A man of this description has seen and felt the disastrous consequences, and has the most powerful monitor before him. If his fathers have died in the dishonour attached to their brutality, he must feel the strongest reluctance to be *gathered to his fathers* in the same ignominy.

There are some who make it a part of their occupation and of their daily employment to supply their fellow men with the means of intoxication. Their situation is peculiarly hazardous. They are often induced to taste the drug, which they observe to have fascinated so many. And perhaps there is no situation more unfavourable to virtue and moral improvement than this. I cannot forbear to remark here the dis-

honour of such employment. And I am willing to hazard giving offence, when I say, that so far as a man is occupied in giving the drunkard his potion, so far is his employment the most degrading and immoral. To live by administering poison to one's fellows! It were better to depend on charity: nay, it were better to suffer the extremes of poverty and to die with hunger. And with regard to his influence on society, who is willing to encourage his neighbour's excess for the sake of gain, I will say, *it were better that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were cast into the depths of the sea.* Matt. xviii. 6.

Among the cautions which prudence suggests, is that of endeavouring to check, in its early stages, a habit of indulgence. He who unwisely believes that there is no danger in occasionally yielding to appetite, and who suffers himself a few times in the year to be overcome, will find his power of resistance enfeebled by every fall from the principles of rectitude. He will soon pass from his occasional intoxication to the daily habit of loathsome excess. The inclinations should be watched with the utmost vigilance. It was said of a very great and good man "that he could practise abstinence, but not temperance." Similar cases are by no means unfrequent. And it is the only means of safety in such instances, to renounce entirely the use of that, which cannot be used with moderation.

Those who are in the habitual use of ardent spirit, whether intemperately or not, would do well to examine the reasons which lead them to this practice. The only reason that is boldly alleged in favour of this custom is, that it is necessary to fortify the constitution in exposure to wet and cold, and heat and fatigue. But it is capable of demonstration, that spirit, by opening the pores of the flesh, is peculiarly pernicious when the body is exposed to wet. The same reasons are against the use of spirit in exposure to cold.

Warm clothing to protect, and nourishing food to invigorate the frame, are the only means of enabling it to withstand the severity of cold. And, instead of obviating the effect of heat upon the human body, it undoubtedly increases it. The greater is the degree of heat, the more danger is in its use. Experience has proved, beyond all controversy, that in the tropical climates, ardent spirit is a rapid poison. And the labourer, who seeks to repair his strength by a draught, is only taking upon himself an additional burden. It has been noticed in numerous instances, amongst soldiers and seamen, and others exposed to excessive fatigues, that the first who sink under their hardships are those, who resort to the stimulus of ardent spirit.

But it is contended that spirit is important and useful as a medicine. And I am willing to grant, that in some instances of sickness, of fainting and excessive fatigue, a moderate quantity may be useful. And in no other case : *Strong drink is to be given to him only who is ready to perish.* Prov. xxxi. 6. But even in this view it is of little importance : for it is believed that it possesses no medicinal quality, which nature has not furnished in many other things, in the use of which there is far less danger : so that were it struck from existence, no inconvenience would ensue.

But religious considerations, above all others, I would recommend as a means of guarding against this vice. Perhaps some one whose sensibility is hardened toward the refined enjoyments of the present life, may relent at the thought of the happiness of heaven. Perhaps he whom present interest or honour cannot move, may feel the force of the promises of eternal glory. Perhaps he who has ceased to blush in the presence of his fellow men, may be moved to remorse by the thought of the purity of God. Perhaps he who disregards the frowns of the wise and good below, may be checked by the thought of an offended Sovereign above. Perhaps he whom the loss of all

that men hold dear on earth, could not restrain from crime, may be touched with trembling at the declarations of divine truth, that *drunkards shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*

The last means of suppressing intemperance which I shall notice, is the associating of the friends of sobriety and virtue, and their combined efforts to discountenance this vice. There may be some who doubt the expediency of such measures. But it is not easy to comprehend how they can increase the evil. It is not easy to be believed, that there are many so depraved as to commit sin with the greater greediness, on account of the disapprobation of their friends and the sober part of the community. The persons composing the Association, which I have now the honour to address, I trust have formed no sanguine expectations of reclaiming abandoned offenders. Their condition affords scarce a ray of hope. Their moral sensibility and their respect to all that is truly worthy are lost, and the very foundation on which reformation should be laid, is torn away. Nothing however should be neglected on our part, which may tend to abate their eagerness, and to wrest the cup of poison from their hand. On ourselves, beyond doubt, our associating may have a salutary influence. *As iron sharpeneth iron, so does a man the countenance of his friend.* Prov. xxvii. 17. Our attention will be excited, and we shall often represent to ourselves the horrid features of this vice. And on the young and others, who have not formed inveterate habits, we may hope to see the fruit of our exertions. We shall endeavour to stamp intemperance with infamy. We shall call into exercise parental authority. We shall apply friendly advice. We shall administer serious admonition. I have reason to congratulate my brethren, on the prospect of the success of their benevolent designs. And I call upon those who respect the honour, the improvement, and the happiness of man, to favour the object of our as-

sociation, and to unite in exertion with us. It is an object that should be interesting to every member of the community. Those whose views extend no farther than the present honour and interest of men, would do well to join their labours with ours. They who have witnessed the floods of sorrow, which intemperance has occasioned, may unite with us, in hope of avoiding the like calamity. The solicitous parent may seek, in the object of our endeavours, the peace, the honour, and the safety of those, who are dear to him as life. The patriot may unite with us, to promote the prosperity of that country, to which his affections are espoused. And the christian may contemplate in our object, the honour of God, the salvation of men, and the advancement of the kingdom of the Redeemer. And for our encouragement, let us remember, *that he that converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.* Jas. v. 20.

AMEN.