

Spiritual Drunkenness

By

Richard Owen Roberts

Published by
International Awakening Press
P.O. Box 232
Wheaton, Illinois 60189 U.S.A.

Copyright 1993
by
Richard Owen Roberts
All Rights Reserved

Permission is granted to copy, or duplicate, this Pamphlet, as long as it is copied in its entirety, and that it is distributed at no cost. Consequentially, this pamphlet may never be sold, or have any money or remuneration, charged for it.

Printed in the United States of America

ISBN 0-926474-08-01

All Scripture quotations are from the New American Standard Bible.

*Related videos and books are available for your complimentary use at the
Richard Owen Roberts Online College of Revival, located at www.collegeofrevival.org*

The substance of this message was delivered at the Texas Baptist Men's Cedars of Lebanon Conference, at Mount Lebanon, September 6, 1992, and at a day of fasting and prayer at Trinity College and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois, January 21, 1993.

Spiritual Drunkenness

Jeremiah 13:12-17

Some may wonder, "Who is this who writes out of the prophecy of Jeremiah and seeks to focus attention on the peculiar subject of spiritual drunkenness?"

For reasons that I cannot explain, I became concerned about revival when I was a boy of about twelve. I determined then to read everything I could find on the subject. I have been pursuing that commitment ever since. However, as the years passed, I gradually realized that my interest in revival had moved from my heart to my head. There was a certain sense in which I was almost a walking encyclopedia on the subject, but had someone invited me to a serious revival prayer meeting, I would probably have made some excuse for not attending. Then, by the grace of God, after some years of treating revival academically, God brought me to a point of real smashing in my own experience—a deep, deep breaking—and what had risen to my head went back to my heart. I now write, not so much of what I have learned academically, but rather out of my heart and, I believe, out of the heart of God also.

The Proposition

Before opening Jeremiah thirteen, let me set before you the proposition: **When God is angry with His own people because of their unforsaken sin, He may force them into a state of spiritual drunkenness.** Is this a doctrine with which you are familiar? You may consider what I am about to say something of a novelty, It is strange truth, isn't it. In my travels as an itinerant preacher, I suppose the most common objection offered to what I say is, "We never heard that before." In the event that your mind operates that way, let me recommend to you a sermon on this theme preached by no less a father of this nation than Thomas Sheppard, in a sermon entitled *Wine For Gospel Wantons*, preached in Boston in 1645. I will not write anything in this article that will be out of harmony with what Sheppard and other founders of this nation believed, taught, preached, and practiced.

But again, before looking at Jeremiah, let me emphasize the righteous judgments of God. Tragically, we have forgotten some important things that our fathers knew well. Strangely, when we use the term judgment we usually think of something in the future, but it was not so earlier. If you have a serious interest in theological literature and have pursued the writings of early American preachers, you may know that one of the most magnificent reservoirs of great American theology is found at Harvard University. Perhaps you have explored the Sprague Collection in the Widener Memorial Library at

Harvard. William B. Sprague, its collector, pastored for many years in Albany, New York. He gathered together a vast array of American sermon material in pamphlet form. In his collection are hundreds of fast day and solemn assembly sermons. Over the longest period of American history there was at least one officially called day of fasting and prayer every single year. The Thomas Sheppard sermon was one of these fast day sermons. This early literature abounds in the understanding that when God is grieved with His people, He brings them into immediate judgment.

The way some people today think, you might suppose God is handicapped and unable to intervene momentarily in the affairs of men and must await some final day when He makes all things right in bringing His people to judgment. But the proposition set in front of you makes it clear that **when God is angry with His people because of their unrepentant sin, He may bring them into a forced state of spiritual drunkenness immediately.** Clearly, we need to learn to distinguish between those eschatological judgments which are still out in front of us and the righteous judgments of God that happen on a day-to-day basis.

If you have made a serious biblical study of divine judgments, you are aware that these contemporary judgments are of two types: final judgments and remedial judgments. There are many illustrations of each in Scripture—the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira are powerful examples of a final judgment. The term *final* is used in connection with a judgment in which God brings sudden death upon a person or a people without giving them any further opportunity for repentance. Peter made no appeal to Ananias or Sapphira and offered them no opportunity for repentance. He leveled the charge against them and the judgment fell suddenly as a bolt from heaven. Scriptural incidences of this type of judgment are numerous—including such events as the earth opening up and swallowing many, and times when the Lord let one of His enemies destroy tens of thousands of His own people in a single day.

But in His gracious mercy, God often introduces remedial judgments, or gracious, corrective judgments, judgments where there is room and opportunity and incentive for repentance. Joel 1:1 to 2:27 records a remedial judgment in the form of a dreadful plague of locusts that came upon Israel in four great waves and which was accompanied by an awful drought. A solemn assembly was called, and a deep and blessed time of corporate repentance and renewal resulted. Psalm eighty describes an extensive remedial judgment in which God withheld His blessing because He was provoked with His people's prayers, giving them tears to drink in great measure, breaking down the hedge of protection which had been about them, letting them become the laughingstock of their neighbors, even turning His face from them. The remedial effect of the judgment is seen in the broken-hearted lament of the Psalmist which focus on the words, *O God, restore us, and cause Thy face to shine upon us, and we will be saved.*

My proposition declares that forced spiritual drunkenness at the hand of God is a remedial judgment. In facing this truth we need to clarify in our minds how God operated. God is holy, and it is beyond His ability to look with favor upon sin. The Scriptures make it plain that when we sin we are to immediately judge ourselves and put that sin away. If we do not judge ourselves, God will judge us. We have a powerful illustration of this in the life of David, who obviously did not repent of His sin with Bathsheba and his arrangement of the murder of her husband in a timely way. The evidence shows that David lived in those sins, unrepentant, for not less than nine

months. Does that mean he went scot-free for that long period of time? No! Clearly, if you have read Psalm 32, Psalm 38, and Psalm 51, you are well aware that David was under divine judgment from the moment he first sinned and did not judge himself. In Psalm 32 he speaks of his body wasting away and of his vitality being drained away as with the fever heat of summer. He speaks of his groanings all the day long and of the heavy hand of God upon him. In Psalm 38 he says that God's arrows have sunk deep into him, that there is no soundness in his flesh and no health in his bones because of his sin. He acknowledges that he is benumbed and badly crushed and groans because of the agitation of his heart. Even the light, he acknowledges, has gone from his eyes. In Psalm 51 he pleads that God may wash him thoroughly from his iniquity which is ever before him, that God will enable him again to hear joy and gladness, that the Lord will let the bones which He has broken rejoice, and that all of his iniquities will be blotted out. When you read his accounts you get the sense that he was living in a very parched, desert-like experience because he did not deal quickly with his own sins.

God always judges sin when it occurs. Our duty is to judge ourselves immediately when we sin. If we do not, God is not helpless. He Himself will judge us. According to New Testament principles, not only are we to judge ourselves when we sin, but our churches are to judge us if we fail to do so. Thus, if we do not put away our sin as it occurs and our churches do not deal with the unrepentant as they are required, God will judge both us and our churches. This is not something God may do; it is something He always does. At this very moment, the church in the English-speaking world, having sinned against God and having failed to judge itself, is under the judgment of God. What is that judgment?

Consider again the proposition: **When God is angry with His own people because of their unforsaken sin, He may force them into a state of spiritual drunkenness.** This is the teaching set before us in Jeremiah 13. There are two similitudes in the first seventeen verses. The first similitude (verses 1-11) deals with a linen waistband. Whether this is an actual incident that occurred or a vision that the prophet experienced is something we will leave for others to debate. Whether indeed the prophet took a long journey of some seven hundred miles to the River Euphrates, as some interpreters believe, or whether he went just a little distance from home to bury the linen waistband, is again something that men better qualified than myself can deal with. As I read the passage, this is what I see. The prophet is ordered by God to buy a new linen waistband. It is not just a belt to secure his clothing but something he wears touching his flesh, perhaps like an apron or a loincloth covering his private parts. It was doubtless what we would refer to as underwear. He was to wear it for an unstated period of time which we are lead to believe was not brief. At an appointed time he was commanded to take that garment that he had worn and had not washed, in faithfulness to the instruction from the Lord, and to bury it, apparently in a moist place. Another period of time lapses and then he is commanded to go and dig it up. When he does so, what he discovers is exactly what you would expect. A piece of underclothing worn for weeks or even months and never washed must certainly rot when buried in a damp place.

Thus the prophet had an illustration that God wanted His people to feel. Just as Jeremiah wore this garment close to himself, God wanted them to understand that He drew His people close to Himself. But they, tragically, like the waistband, remained in an

unwashed state. And because of their refusal to listen to His Word (verse ten), because they had gone after other gods, He judged them by sending them into exile. And just as the linen garment rotted when it was in exile, so the Lord indicates to the people, this will be their end as well. We are plainly informed in verse nine that the purpose God has in this is to destroy that which is most obnoxious in His sight—the pride of Judah and the great pride of Jerusalem.

The second similitude is particularly upon my heart at this time—the similitude of spiritual drunkenness set forth in verses twelve to fourteen. Notice the words please:

Therefore you are to speak this word to them, thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, "Every jug is to be filled with wine." And when they say to you, "Do not we very well know that every jug is to be filled with wine?" Then say to them, "Thus says the Lord, 'Behold, I am about to fill all the inhabitants of this land—the kings that sit for David on his throne, the priests, the prophets and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem with drunkenness! And I will dash them against each other, both the fathers and the sons together,' declares the Lord, 'I will not show pity nor be sorry nor have compassion that I should not destroy them.'"

Imagine it! Spiritual drunkenness forced by God Himself. Lest someone think this an isolated passage, may I indicate to you that there are numerous other passages of a similar nature. Let me give you just a sampling.

Psalm 60:1-3: *O God, Thou hast been angry; O restore us. Thou hast made the land quake, Thou hast split it open; heal its breaches, for it totters. Thou hast made Thy people experience hardship; Thou hast given us wine to drink that makes us stagger.*

Isaiah 51:17: *Rouse yourself, rouse yourself! Arise O Jerusalem, you who have drunk from the Lord's hand the cup of His anger; the chalice of reeling you have drained to the dregs.*

Isaiah 63:6: *And I trod down the peoples in My anger, and made them drunk in My wrath, and I poured out their lifeblood on the earth.*

Jeremiah speaks of this same mode of judgment in the twenty-fifth chapter, verses 15-17 and in verse 27 as well: *For thus the Lord, the God of Israel, says to me, "Take this cup of wine of wrath from My hand, and cause all the nations, to whom I send you, to drink it. And they shall drink and stagger and go mad because of the sword that I send among them." Then I took the cup from the Lord's hand, and made all the nations drink, to whom the Lord sent me. Then the prophet adds: And you shall say to them "Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, 'Drink, be drunk, vomit, fall, and rise no more because of the sword which I will send among you.'"*

The gentle Psalmist writes in 75:8: *For a cup is in the hand of the Lord, and the wine foams; it is well mixed, and He pours out of this; surely all the wicked of the earth must drain and drink down its dregs. The patriarch Job speaks of drinking of the wrath of the Almighty (21:20). Even the Revelation of John (16:19) refers to the cup of wine of God's fierce wrath.*

From these Scriptures and others not cited, it is evident that the forcing of nations to drink of the cup of the wine of God's wrath can be either a remedial or a final judgment. In the passage in front of us in Jeremiah thirteen it is clearly remedial. Weigh the words of verses sixteen and seventeen: *Give glory to the Lord your God, before He brings darkness and before your feet stumble on the dusky mountains, and while you are hoping for light He makes it into deep darkness, and turns it into gloom. But if you will not listen to it, my soul will sob in secret for such pride; and my eyes will bitterly weep and flow*

down with tears, because the flock of the Lord has been taken captive. Surely here is a call to repentance.

Let me set in front of you the proposition again: **When God is angry with the prayers of His people because of their unforsaken sin, He may force them into a state of spiritual drunkenness.**

In verse twelve the prophet is plainly commanded: Speak this word to them, thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, *“Every jug is to be filled with wine.”* The people regarded that as such a trite statement that their response to the prophet is a haughty one. Can’t you just see the dignified, well-known, and earnest prophet saying: Every jug shall be filled with wine. And the listening people arrogantly responding saying: “oh, good night, Jeremiah, if you can’t say anything more important than that, if you don’t know anything more significant to tell us than that the jugs are to be filled with wine, why don’t you just keep be still! We know perfectly well that every jug is to be filled with wine.” Ah, yes, of course they knew that. But what they didn’t know was what the Lord meant when He said, *Every jug shall be filled with wine*, for He was not talking about skins or bottles, but about them. Whenever the Lord indicates He is about to act in a divine judgment we better be careful that we do not respond with a haughty spirit.

The prophet had to make it plain to them that when he said *every* he meant E-V-E-R-Y. *Then say to them, Thus says the Lord, “Behold I am about to fill all the inhabitants of this land—the Kings that sit for David on his throne, the priests, the prophets and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem—with drunkenness!”* Yes, every jug shall be filled with wine. *And I will dash them against each other, both the fathers and the sons together*, declares the Lord, *I will not show pity nor be sorry nor have compassion that I should not destroy them.*

The Cause of Spiritual Drunkenness

Having now completed these introductory matters, let me put in front of you this exploratory question, “What is the cause of spiritual drunkenness?” I trust you are learning, as I am, how urgent it is that we distinguish between those sins which are fruits and those sins which are roots. When men and women meet for a day of prayer and confession, it would be a tragedy if the only things dealt with were results and not causes. Our great problem with God is not merely what we do; our great problem is what we are. We must repent not only of having sinned but of being sinners.

Have you learned to distinguish between root sins and fruit sins? It is not uncommon these days for men in ministry to be taken in adultery. Some of them have even appeared to repent of this sin, but it would be a rare instance when adultery was the root sin. It is most always the fruit. One can repent of the fruit and yet leave in place the root. And if the root sin is still there, other sins will soon appear. In dealing with fornicators and adulterers and others in various forms of sexual sins, it is most common for them to explain why they committed the sin. For instance, a man said to me, “If you knew the woman that I am married to you would understand why I had to find someone else. Even God Himself never intended me to be saddled with that miserable little wife.”

Underneath almost all our sins there are deeper causes—roots. The root of a great many sins is pride. After all, the very essence of sin is self. It is me versus God. If

in repentance I have only dealt with the result, but have never gone to the cause, my repentance is without eternal significance.

If you contemplated my earlier statement that God is especially grieved with the prayers of His people when they come from unrepentant hearts and that He may indeed give them tears to drink in great measure as a result, you will understand that people often repent of the fruits of sin while the roots of sin are still in place in the life. While I am not seeking to declare definitively what the roots of sin are, I can name the three root sins that appear in this passage: pride, stubbornness/rebellion, and unbelief. These are the very root sins Jude addressed in his epistle, especially in verses five to eight. If you have studied it lately you will know why I say this.

In this passage there is simply no question as to the real cause of God forcing the people into a state of spiritual drunkenness. Did you notice how many times throughout the chapter the issue of pride comes to the fore. In verse nine it is as plain as it can be: *Just so I will destroy the pride of Judah and the great pride of Jerusalem.* In verse twelve we read: *Do we not very well know that every jug shall be filled with wine.* Here is arrogance indeed! In verse fifteen it says: *Do not be haughty, for the Lord has spoken.* And verse seventeen states: *If you will not listen to it, my soul will sob in secret for such pride.*

Stubbornness is clearly pointed out in verse ten: *This wicked people, who refuse to listen to My words, who walk in the stubbornness of their hearts...* Verse eleven speaks of their rebellious hearts when it says: *But they did not listen.* Verse fifteen emphasizes the problem in calling to them: *Listen and give heed.*

The third root of sin made so clear in this passage, the root of unbelief, is evident in verse ten where it is said they *have gone after other gods to serve them and to bow down to them.* Verse twenty-five states, *...You have forgotten Me and trusted in falsehood.* Verse twenty-seven declared, *As for your adulteries and your lustful neighings, the lewdness of your prostitution on the hills in the field, I have seen your abominations. Woe to you, O Jerusalem! How long will you remain unclean?*

We need to pause and ask, "Are there roots of sin in place in our lives?" And because none of us live purely private lives, but all have at least some corporate responsibilities, the question needs to be asked, "Are there root sins still in place at the College, at the Seminary, in the churches, in the denomination, in the corporate communities where we live and work?" The proposition I have been setting in front of you declares that *when God is angry with His people because of their unrepentant spirit over sin, He brings them into remedial judgment,* and the judgment He brings them into may very well be that of spiritual drunkenness.

The Effects of Spiritual Drunkenness

Let us just think about the words: spiritual drunkenness. Have you ever watched carefully the conduct of a drunk person? It is pretty well known. It doesn't require a genius to enumerate the characteristics of the drunk and so let me proceed to do so.

1. Drunken persons walk with great unsteadiness of foot. This doesn't need explanation does it! We all know that when a person is stopped on suspicion of drunk driving police may order him to walk the white line on the side of the road. He

may reel, stagger, and stumble, but if he is drunk he will not be able to walk that straight line.

Obviously, in the passage before us, the Lord is not speaking about physical drunkenness but spiritual drunkenness. Thus I ask this question: “is it possible that our churches are under the remedial judgment of spiritual staggering? Is the church reeling? Does the church find it easy to walk the straight and narrow?” I don’t know where you have been and what you have seen, but I don’t mind telling you that I have convincing evidence that the church is staggering and reeling like a drunkard. She rushes in one direction after another, tripping over her drunken feet, in pursuit of one novel doctrine and then another. She staggers about looking for some new method or innovation that will help her cause and doesn’t even know she is reeling. If you tell her that there was a time when the church had a voice in the world for good but that the world now has a voice in the church for evil, she looks at you through bleary eyes wondering why you speak so foolishly. If you insist that the church is much more influenced by the world than the world is by the church, she slobbers over herself as she stumbles away from godly counsel. In these tragic days, much of the church scarcely knows what the straight and narrow way is and certainly has no capacity to walk it.

2. Drunks are tragically affected by muddled thoughts and an inability to think clearly. A drunken man will think and believe things that are absolutely absurd. The mind of the drunk plays tricks on him. He thinks he has spoken brilliantly and yet no one can even imagine what he said. He sets forth as truth things that are obviously lies. He may be informed of matters of great consequence affecting his life and that of his family for years to come, but he pays no attention to what is said; instead he seeks to focus his addlepatated [mentally muddled or lacking in common sense; confused] brain on some speck in the air which he is trying to grasp.

When I examine the words a drunken church is offering a hell-bent world I am often flabbergasted by the sheer nonsense that is set forth as gospel. One of the most unbelievable things ever declared in the history of the world is that a man can deny Jesus Christ as Lord, accept Him as Savior, and be a Christian. What tragic foolishness. Who but a drunk could ever make statements like that. And yet it is one of the prevailing opinions in the church today, and there are people ready to die for that kind of muddles theology. Oh, the tragedy of those who cannot even see what a mockery of the Almighty God such teaching makes. They acknowledge that because God is sin-hating and righteous He is unable to receive unrepentant sinners into His presence and must consign them to an eternal hell. They then turn right around and have this very same God saving the unrepentant sinner from the penalty of hell without saving him from his problem which made hell necessary. Such thinking is not only perfectly ludicrous but wickedly wrong. Spiritual drunkenness—when the mind is impaired and the thoughts are muddled, and things are set forth as truth which are nothing but a lie—is a tragic state indeed. Surely, when people are believing such absurdities, you can feel nothing but great pity and compassion for them and realize they are under the judgment of God.

3. Persons who are drunk suffer severely impaired judgment. A drunk is unable to ascertain reality, and thus, when he is driving, he cannot judge the speed of his own car or the speed of cars coming toward him; he doesn’t know his own location

on the road, and he certainly doesn't know the location of others. Drunken persons are frequently guilty of gross exaggerations, and much of what they say must be taken with a grain of salt. A drunk may treat an honorable woman like a harlot and a harlot as his own mother. His judgment is so impaired he cannot follow directions, and while in that state, his own life is in frequent danger and those around him can never be secure.

What but spiritual drunkenness can explain the conduct of so many church-goers who listen to searching truths and severe biblical warnings from the lips of God's faithful messengers, and before their feet have even left the pew, their mouths are engaged in conversation concerning sporting events, the weather, dinner, or whatever, and all that God has said to them in the service is lost to their souls forever. When I hear pastors of some of our so-called evangelical churches say, "You can't practice church discipline today. Someone might sue you," I know their judgment is severely impaired. What does it matter if someone sues you? If God gives an order, why should I raise such nonsense as a protest against God? What but spiritual drunkenness can account for the wildly exaggerated reporting of today's churches and workers. What of the evangelists who leave a church meeting claiming hundreds of converts when the angels of heaven have had not one single occasion to rejoice over lost ones turning to the Savior in that place. Look the church over and on every hand you will discover irrational judgments being handed down, things that are being done that are so wrong you would say to yourself, surely they know better! But no! They don't know better! Just as a drunk doesn't know better when he is driving down the road swerving and weaving in and out, thinking that he is doing a marvelous job; suddenly he crashes and several are dead, and he says, "It wasn't my fault. I didn't do anything wrong." That's the condition of the church today—grievously impaired judgment. I listen to Christian leaders who are saying "The world has brought us into this terrible mess. If the world would only just get straight!" No, don't kid yourself; the world is only doing what you would expect them to do. What is strange about a sinner sinning? It is the church that has brought the world to this dismal day in which we now live—a church whose judgment is badly impaired because God Himself has forced it into spiritual drunkenness.

4. Drunks are often incoherent and irrational in their speech. It is often loud and slurred and difficult if not impossible to understand. A drunken person may extemporize for twenty-five minutes and yet not say one single thing that has meaning and significance. Often their singing must be characterized as bawdy for their words can be vile and their tunes raucous. Much of what you hear the drunk say just leaves you standing there in grief.

And what about the church? Do you think the church has become more spiritual than it used to be? The bawdy [dealing with sexual matters in a comical way; humorously indecent] conduct that takes place in many so-called places of worship is almost beyond imagination. And what about irrational speech? We have listened to men preach, have concentrated on what they were saying, have tried to follow their every word, and have gone away saying, "Maybe he understood what he said, but I certainly did not." And the world itself, in innumerable instances, hasn't the faintest notion of what the church thinks it is saying. Even when you can understand what is said, groans may be forced from you as you realize the preacher's inability to distinguish between what he does and thinks and what God does and says.

5. Drunken persons are given to unprovoked fighting and abusive conduct.

There is a combativeness, a rage, a fierceness that seems to characterize the drunk. Many a dear woman has described her husband as a sweet-spirited and mild-mannered man when sober, but a raging, wild beast when drunk. The stories of drunken sons who have beat their praying mothers to death are among the most awful in all literature. A significant number of the murders being committed around us every year are the direct result of excessive alcohol in the brain. Who could ever even estimate the permanent injuries, both physical and mental, that the wives, the husbands, and the children of drunkards receive every single day of the year.

Would it be unjust to say that this spirit of combativeness and rage characterizes much of the church? What a tragedy that so many churches have their very beginnings in conflict. We live in a day when churches are splitting right and left, a day when Christians are battling one another over matters so inconsequential you wonder how they could possibly generate any heat on the subject; and yet when it comes to a truly critical issue, there are multitudes of the same supposed Christians who act as if it were of no concern whatsoever to them. What about the countless numbers of local church situations where there are members who won't speak to one another or members who always leave the sanctuary through a door other than the one where the pastor stands? And what about the jealousy and meanness of spirit that exists on inter-denominational levels? I ask, "How do you explain the circumstances in the church today if you reject the proposition before us?" If there was ever evidence of spiritual drunkenness, it is in the contemporary church!

6. Drunks very frequently suffer from the loss of natural inhibitions and restraints, resulting in unjustified self-confidence, in boasting, in shameful conduct including exposing one's nakedness, urinating in the street, and all those general qualities of shamelessness which the Scriptures deplore.

Consider the matter of dress in today's church. The attire or lack thereof in which people enter the sanctuary of God leaves some of us almost dizzy in amazement and certainly suggests nothing short of drunkenness. The boasting that takes place in denominational circles and among evangelicals in their gatherings is distressing indeed. The English-speaking nations of the world are in the midst of one of the most tragic moral and spiritual declensions of all time and yet we have prominent leaders telling us the church is thriving and has never been stronger or more vibrant. Have you ever attended a meeting where the arrogance was so evident you declared to yourself, "This meeting makes me sick at heart. It is the last such meeting I will ever attend. I cannot stand all this godless boasting." Some pastors have given up attending their local ministerial meetings merely because there is so much of the wicked spirit of one-upmanship there. Boasting, pride, arrogance, the loss of natural modesty and decorum, these are the qualities of drunkenness, never the qualities of godliness.

7. Drunks are often slovenly in appearance and personal hygiene. A drunk will deck himself out in what he supposes beautiful attire, thinking he has never looked better in all his life, not knowing that his filthy trousers are unzipped, his shirt torn down the front, his tie halfway around his neck and over his shoulder, and his hair

matted life a bird's nest. He may have vomited all over himself and wallowed for hours in his own filth without any awareness or concern. He can be foul and stinking without the faintest notion of the repulsiveness of his appearance and stench.

It used to be understood that the Church of Jesus Christ was to be a bride, without spot and without blemish, but that description hardly fits much of what poses as *church* today. To a significant degree, it is nearly impossible to discern the church from the world. As far as can be told, the divorce rate in the church is virtually the same as the divorce rate in the world, as are the adultery rate, the fornication rate, and the abortion rate. In some so-called Christian institutions, the percentage of practicing homosexuals and lesbians exceeds that of the percentage in the world. Abortion, substance abuse, child abuse, and sins of every form seem rampant in major segments of the church. Some of our preachers are licentious men who live in the very depth of their iniquities while busily exhorting others to holiness. The world laughs at Christianity, mocking the church for its hypocrisy and belittling it for its vanishing impact of society. Meanwhile, the church responds by denouncing the world for its stupidity and wickedness, not even realizing that its own loss of ability to serve as salt and light is the precise cause of calamitous circumstances in which we all totter toward final judgment. Oh, how awful to be drunk and not know it! Oh, the tragedy of appearing blemished before God and man while still blaming others for the degenerating condition of society!

8. Frequent drunkenness nearly always results in alienation—alienation from those who are nearest and dearest—wives, children, parents, life-long friends. And of course the alienation results in increased longing for still more and more alcohol.

There is a tremendous amount of alienation occurring in the church. Oh, the tragedy of living in a time, like that of the prophets, when the person most likely to be excommunicated from their church is the person who incessantly calls for the church to repent. In a given church there may be dozens of people living in vile and loathsome open sin, and nobody will do anything about them. But let some God fearing believer come along and call for church discipline, and not just mention it but press hard on the issue, and that person will probably be removed from the membership of the church. Fervent believers are not infrequently considered troublemakers and branded as judgmental. Persons these days who take a strong stand for Christ and for the purity of His church frequently pay an awful price. Oh, the pity of the alienation of spiritual drunkenness, when in our staggering about, in our vomiting on ourselves, in all our vile conduct, we isolate from us those who would call us to true repentance.

9. Sluggishness and prolonged drunken stupors are the regular results of drunkenness. Drunks fall asleep at the most inopportune times and in the most awful places. In a desperate moment, when their total senses should be fully responsive, they nod their heads, crumple in the dirt, and sleep as an innocent child. Drunkards can lose all memory of entire blocks of their lives, having no knowledge of where they lay or how long they lay there.

Here we are, living on the very brink of what is probably the greatest crisis of modern times, and the church is nodding its head, folding its hands, and slumbering yet a little longer. All around the church, and not infrequently within the church, destruction proceeds at a terrific pace while multitudes of watchmen that God appointed

to stand upon His wall not only fail to shout the alarm but slumber peacefully at their posts. Thousands of our preachers see their greatest duty as providing a little more comfort for a church already so comfortable that you would suppose they were engaged in a sleeping contest. The ladies of the church may gather in a business meeting where the most important decision made is to use pink napkins rather than yellow at the homecoming banquet while an entire world gasps for a single drop of the Water of Life. The men's group meets on Saturday to discuss the best techniques for fishing in the local lakes while the Gospel nets lie unused on the decks of the good ship Grace. The preacher appears at his stand on the Sabbath morning and in sleepy tones discourses politely on some half-believed event from the past without any conscious concern for a multitude of parishioners languishing on the benches before him, soon to enter a Christless eternity. Oh, the tragedy of the drunken stupor that has befallen the church.

10. I finalize this assessment of the characteristics of the drunken by pointing out that drunkards have an awful ability not only to destroy the lives of those around them but their own bodies as well. They may do this by bringing on themselves such diseases as cirrhosis of the liver and other ills associated with their dissipation. They do this by greatly endangering their own life and safety in their drunken reveling, fighting, staggering about, driving, etc. You may remember with grief the awful account that appeared in the newspapers across the land some years ago when one of our famous healing-evangelists died of acute alcoholism in a San Francisco hotel room.

Need I set before you evidence that a drunken church, like a drunken individual, leaves a wake of destruction behind it, and if it persists in its wickedness, death itself will occur? Did Judah and Jerusalem heed the cry of Jeremiah? Will the church hear the warning now?

Perhaps you are unready and/or unwilling to accept this analysis of the condition of the church. But surely you realize that there has to be some accurate explanation for the tragic condition into which the evangelical church has fallen. Do you have a better explanation than this? Absolutely the best interpretation to be found anywhere is the old-fashioned biblical interpretation declaring: *When God is angry with His own people, because of their unrepentant sin, He turns them over to remedial judgment, and that remedial judgment may be or may include spiritual drunkenness.* The evidence is overwhelming that we are in fact under a dual judgment from God: we are under the judgment of spiritual drunkenness, forced at God's hand; we are also under the remedial judgment of the withdrawal of God's face of favor from our churches.

The Cure for Spiritual Drunkenness

Please focus again on the issue of root sins and particularly the three root sins in this passage: pride, stubbornness/rebellion, and unbelief.

Who can deny the overwhelming evidence that our churches are guilty of great pride? Are not many of us guilty of this same sin as individuals? God Himself has shown our guilt on more than one occasion, but few have put away this loathsome sin. Our problem, however, is not so much that we think ourselves innocent of the sin, as it is that we regard the sin of pride as so common and of such small consequence that we do not

concern ourselves unduly with it. Oh, the evil of the human heart. Oh, our capacity for deceiving ourselves. Some of us have, by the grace of God, made some little progress in conquering sins of the flesh, but oh, the grievous error of sins of the spirit. In this passage it is crystal clear that God's accusation against His people was not for sins of the flesh but sins of the spirit. I ask you concerning your own heart, "Is it possible that you are in the grip of pride?" Pride is described as a B-R-E-E-D-E-R sin. When pride is in place it breeds numerous other sins. We need not only to examine our own hearts for pride, but we need thoughtfully and prayerfully to examine the corporate lives of the institutions with which we are connected and to ask, "O God, have you been forced to bring us under remedial judgment because of pride?"

It is terribly sad to observe, as one travels and speaks from place to place, how many churches and schools consider themselves the greatest and the best. God is not going to let this pride pass unnoticed. He can't! His very nature forbids it! He always holds the proud in heart at a distance. He only draws near the broken and the contrite. *For thus says the high and exalted One who lives forever, whose name is Holy, I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with the contrite and lowly of spirit, in order to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite* (Isaiah 57:15). Would you enjoy personal revival? Do you yearn for it? Do you pray for it? While God won't draw near to the proud in heart, He finds the broken and contrite irresistible. Brokenness and contrition are like giant magnets drawing God toward the humble. Have you dealt with pride? Is it gone from your personal life? Have you put it away corporately?

What about stubbornness? It is a grievous problem as far as God is concerned. Do you remember the words Samuel was forced to speak to King Saul: *For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry* (I Samuel 15:23). Some say, "It is true I have a rebellious and stubborn streak, but you should know my father," implying its inconsequential nature. It may be inconsequential in your sight, but in the sight of God stubbornness and rebellion are likened to witchcraft and idolatry—sins no serious believer could ever regard as minor in the eyes of God. Is there stubbornness in you? Do you have a rebellious streak?

What about unbelief? The Bible clearly teaches the necessity of waiting on God, seeking His face, humbling ourselves, praying, and looking to Him to do great and mighty things; but unbelief rushes in where angels fear to tread and says, "Lord, I just conceived of this great work that I am going to do for you, now bless it." All around the world churches are being built not on prayer, not on waiting on God, but on novelty methods and theologies. Many leaders have even hired Philistines to tell them how to run God's church. In multitudes of places the prayer meeting has either been eliminated or left to a handful of elderly saints who still need something to do in the church and are too old or too traditional to catch up with the times. Sheer unbelief is at the very heart of much of what the church is and does these days.

The proposition set before you, based on the text of Jeremiah thirteen and developed in harmony with the whole tone of Scripture, declares that when God is angry with His people because of their unforsaken sin, He may force them into a state of spiritual drunkenness. The evangelical church is staggering about and behaving itself as only a drunken church can! As if that were not enough, God has turned His face from us because we turned our faces from Him.

Notice these potent words: *Listen and give heed, do not be haughty, for the Lord has spoken. Give glory to the Lord your God before He brings darkness and before your feet stumble on the dusky mountain and while you are hoping for light He makes it into deep darkness and turns it into gloom. But if you will not listen to it, my soul will sob in secret for such pride, and my eyes will bitterly weep and flow down with tears* (Jeremiah 13:15-17).

Why does the prophet speak so pathetically? Because he knew something that Judah and Jerusalem did not know. Possibly you don't know it either: **an unheeded remedial judgment will, in God's time, turn into final judgment.** When God forces His people into a state of spiritual drunkenness it is not because He has abandoned them forever but because He wishes to provide them evidence of their grievous departure from Him and time and place for full and lively repentance. Countless numbers have already perished in their sins while a drunken church has dissipated its energies and slumbered through its opportunities. How many more must suffer the agonies of uncontrolled lusts lashing the world while the church takes its ease in error? When will we hear the voice of God calling us, *Listen and give heed, do not be haughty?* When will we, in the deepest possible repentance, flee from all those sins that have forced our righteous Maker to turn us into those made drunk on the wine of His fierce wrath? Will we force God to turn our present gloom into deep darkness, or will we repent while His voice of mercy sounds in our ears?