Temperance:
The Praise of the Contented Heart

He had been a respected judge. He now lived in poverty. He was appreciative of every offer of help, food and clothing that came his way. He had exchanged his robes of judicial office for the rags of a tramp. He was the slave of that which had robbed him not only of his dignity but also of his wealth and shelter. Shackled by the chains of alcoholism, he wept as his regular visitors, a young couple sang with him his favorite songs including “Jesus is the Sweetest Name I Know”. What a portrait of contrasts, and so reminiscent of Romans 7:15 NIV “For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do”. This tragic situation plays out in so many lives throughout the world. Alcohol is addictive and it destroys.

In contrast, early in 2007, newscasts were filled with the tragic news of the unnecessary death of a young woman who died from drinking too much water! Can that be possible? As part of a radio contest, she drank an excessive amount of water and was found dead at home later that same day. The autopsy revealed no other cause but water intoxication. Water, although essential for life and usually harmless, can kill when taken in excess.

The illustrations above show that unhealthful things ought to be completely avoided, and healthful substances and practices should be used in moderation. We need a special measure of God’s grace and discernment to do this. The experience of Noah illustrates this point. Noah achieved the notoriety of being the first named drunkard in the Bible. How sad – a man with his regard for righteousness and a friend of God – blemished before the universe through wine. The wine produced from Noah’s vineyard had taken away his judgment and placed him in a position of embarrassment. He had not even been aware of his condition until he was later told about it.

For what do you want to be remembered? Do you always want to have clear thinking and discernment? The mind is the channel for communication, and must be kept free from toxins and substances that may cloud reason and judgment.

As of the year 2007, alcohol is estimated to cause almost 1.8 million...
temperance in this sophisticated age. It is often thought easier to not even
early church and caricature the whole issue we avoid mentioning the word
movements and organizations that focus particularly on alcohol and tobacco.
Him our all including faithful stewardship in the use of our bodies.
belong to ourselves; we have been redeemed and belong to God and owe
honor God with your body.” (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20, NIV) We indeed do not
ourselves. “You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore
bodies are, in fact, temples of God. What a privilege and responsibility.
The Bible talks of the importance of the body as a dwelling place.
This abode is not only for our own benefit, thoughts, plans and actions; our
bodies, in fact, temples of God. What a privilege and responsibility.
The philosophy of many today is that our bodies belong to us and we
can do with them as we please. Some may justify this approach even further
by adding the argument that in so living they harm no one but themselves.

True temperance teaches us to dispense entirely with everything hurtful, and to use
judiciously that which is healthful.
( Ellen G. White, Child Guidance, page 398)

Solomon also warns against the effects of alcohol, specifically wine and beer. From his observation and possibly even experience, he describes how
alcohol changes and modifies behavior, usually leading to regrets. The Biblical descriptions of alcohol consumption mostly reveal inappropriate
and undesirable behaviors, and warn against these.

The Bible records instruction, experience, and warnings that help us make wise choices regarding alcohol use. Before any scientific description
of the negative effects of alcohol on the fetus (fetal alcohol syndrome), Samson’s mother was warned not to take alcohol during her pregnancy.

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The data used in most of the studies that showed apparent benefit
included in the control (non-drinking) groups individuals who were previous
alcohol drinkers; some of these had stopped drinking because of alcohol-
related health problems. These same control groups, in general, were in
poorer health than the drinkers. Reanalysis of the data, correcting for these
defects in study design, showed no demonstrable health benefits to moderate
drinking, compared to the non-drinkers. Further, sub-analysis of the groups
studied showed that those in the moderate drinking group who had originally
been thought to have better health outcomes differed in other ways from
the control group. They had better diets, exercised regularly, were of a
higher socio-economic status, and had better access to healthcare. This set
of circumstances is well-known to be associated with improved health and
longevity. The health benefits studied were not due to moderate drinking, but