



# The Tri-Cities Edifier

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## The Porch And A Rattlesnake

John Isaac Edwards

Wisdom literature instructs, “Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder” (Prov. 23:31-32). Wine and strong drink are deceptive (Prov. 20:1). Such may appear pleasant and peaceful, but their effects are horrifyingly painful! Let me take just a moment and talk to you about the porch and a rattlesnake, in light of what the wise man said.

1) The Porch. Some have been made to think that it is a sin to get drunk, but that there’s nothing wrong with a little social drinking — having a glass of wine with the gals or a beer or two with the fellas. They think that “excess of wine” (1 Pet. 4:3) allows moderate drinking. I wonder, does “excess of riot” (1 Pet. 4:4) sanction riot on a small-scale? And, who decides what is excessive? How do you know at what point you will become “drunk”? The first two words of our text — “Look not” — prohibit drinking in any amount. It’s the same kind of language used in reference to the strange woman — “Remove thy way far from her, and come not nigh the door of her house” (Prov. 5:8). In other words, stay as far away as you can. Some, however, want to get as close to the edge as they can. One might think I’m going to the drinking party, but I’m not going to drink. That’s like saying, “I’m just going to stand on her porch and talk to her through the screen door. I’m not going in her house.” Since “her house inclineth unto death” (Prov. 2:18), stay off the porch -- don’t even cross her property line!

2) The Rattlesnake. Did you notice that wine is likened to “a serpent” in our text? When I preached on this text recently, a brother showed me on his hand where he had been bitten by a rattlesnake. The fang marks looked fresh as if it happened only a few days ago. I asked, “When did this happen?” He said, “Sixty years ago.” Though he received the anti-venom and was healed of the snake bite, the serpent left its mark on him. This is true of “that old serpent, the devil” (Rev. 12:9; 20:2). Sin, though it may be forgiven, — yes, “drunkards” can be “washed,” “sanctified,” and “justified” (1 Cor. 6:9-11) — often leaves marks that last a lifetime. It may be health problems (liver disease, nerve damage, damage to the brain, cancer), unintentional injuries (car crashes, falls, burns), losses (job, spouse, children), painful memories of sacrificing things of value for the lure of liquor like those who “...have given a boy for an harlot, and sold a girl for wine, that they might drink” (Joel 3:3). It not only leaves its mark on the drinker, but there are often marks left on innocent bystanders. It’s left its mark on wives, children, families who have been victims of violence and car collisions operated by those under its influence. You need to know, before you pick up that glass of wine or put that bottle or can in your hand, that you are taking a serpent by the tail! And, as the wise man said, “...At the last it biteth like a serpent...” There’s nothing pleasant about that! That’s what the alcohol ads don’t show. No, they want you to see it moving aright, everyone seemingly having a good time. They don’t show you “the last” - when “it biteth like a serpent”. And, like a serpent’s bite, it comes suddenly and unexpectedly! But come it will, and rest assured, its bite will be excruciatingly painful and its effects long-lasting.

So, stay off the porch — don’t go near the door of her house. Stay far away from it. Don’t even look at it. That old serpent is lurking. “Be sober, be vigilant...Whom resist stedfast in the faith...” (1 Pet. 5:8).

# The Church Sign Response

Jerry Fite

The church sign read, "Baptism Saves You...Interested in How?...I Peter 3:21." The church phone rang. A female voice, determined to speak from a heart coupled with a hint of uncertainty in how her thoughts would be received, began to sound forth her problem regarding the sign. In her mind, we fellow Christians were demoting Christ. Only Jesus saves! She had been passing by the sign daily, and now, on this day, she had to take up for her Lord.

A few days prior, I was thinking about a new Scriptural statement for our sign, I wanted to encourage a response. I always make sure a Scripture reference is underlying the Scriptural thought. This time, I was direct in asking for further inquiry. I now had my prayerful response. However, it was not "how...?" but "how could you ...?" !!! With mutual respect, we listened to each other. In the end she allowed me to answer the question of "how?".

First, I wanted to ease her fears of any cultic desire on our part to promote doctrine that de-motes or supplants Jesus in any way. Jesus is the ONLY WAY unto the Father in heaven (John 14:6). We believe that the Father sent His Son "to be the Savior of the world" (I John 4:14). He accomplishes this purpose today, one "believer" at a time (I Timothy 4:10).

Establishing agreement on "Who" saves us, we were ready to examine "what" saves us? God's "grace" saves us (Ephesians 2:5). Jesus' shed "blood" redeems or saves us (Hebrews 9:12). The "Gospel" saves us (Romans 1:16). It is not grace alone that saves us, but we are saved by "grace through faith" (Ephesians 2:8). Or, when one responds to God's "grace" by "believing" the message of the "Gospel," by trusting in Jesus' "blood" for the remission of sins, the "what of salvation" joins the all-important "Who of salvation." The Spirit-led Peter teaches us that "baptism" is also one of the "what's" that connects us with Jesus, our Savior.

Peter first connects the waters of the flood in Noah's day to the waters of baptism in our day. (I Peter 3:20-21). The waters of the flood, that separated the saved from the lost, predated the waters of baptism. Peter, reminding us of the salvation of eight souls from the past flood waters, adds, "after a true likeness doth now save you, even baptism" (I Peter 3:21). The waters of the flood "struck against the waters of baptism" making them the "type" of the substantive "antitype," baptism. Peter is not saying that baptism is "figurative," but he is connecting saving- baptism in water, the antitype, with the saving of eight souls from the flood waters, the type.

Peter also reminds us of the basis for baptism now saving us: "...by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (I Peter 3:21). You know that if Jesus has not been raised, you are still "in your sins" (I Corinthians 15:17). You know the "blood of Christ" has the power to "cleanse your conscience from dead works" so you can serve the living God (Hebrews 9:14).

Faith and baptism come together in our salvation. When baptized for the remission of our sins, we are believing that we are being baptized into Jesus' death and being raised to a new life by Jesus' resurrection (Romans 6:3-4. Colossians 2:12). Peter says in baptism we are seeking "a good conscience before God" based not only upon Jesus' death, but in His resurrection as well. She said she understood and appreciated the explanation. People still read and react to signs!