

Proverbs 23:35

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again.

Analysis

This verse concludes the drunkenness warning with tragic irony. The drunk speaks: 'They have stricken me... and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not' (הִכְּנוּנִי בַל־חָלִיתִי הִלָּמוּנִי בַל־יָדָעִיתִי/hikkuni val-chaliti halamuni val-yada'ti, they struck me—I didn't become ill; they beat me—I didn't know it) describes alcohol's numbing effect. Physical harm goes unfelt due to intoxication. This seems advantageous but is actually dangerous—pain signals injury requiring attention. The drunk's final words reveal addiction: 'when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again' (מָתַי אֶקִּיץ אוֹסִיף אֲבַקֶּשְׁנָהּ עוֹד/matay aqitz osif avaqshennu od, when will I wake up? I will add—I will seek it again). Despite misery, injury, and consequences, the drunk plans to drink again. This depicts addiction's enslaving power. Paul warns: 'be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess' (Ephesians 5:18). The Greek ἀσωτία (asotia, excess/debauchery) indicates ruinous wastefulness.

Historical Context

Alcoholism isn't modern—ancients recognized addiction's power. Proverbs 23:29-35 describes it clinically: woe, sorrow, wounds, redness of eyes (verse 29), impaired judgment (verse 33), disorientation (verse 34), numbness to injury (verse 35a), and compulsive drinking despite consequences (verse 35b). The description matches modern addiction patterns. Ancient Near Eastern cultures struggled with drunkenness. Babylon's fall came during drunken feast (Daniel 5:1-4). Persian kings made foolish decisions while drunk (Esther 1:10-11). Greek symposia

celebrated intoxication. Roman banquets often became drunken orgies. Early Christians lived in cultures where drunkenness was normalized, making Paul's commands countercultural. Church history records both alcoholism among Christians (requiring discipline) and temperance movements (sometimes legalistic). The biblical pattern is clear: drunkenness enslaves and destroys; sobriety liberates and honors God.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. Do you see addictive patterns in your life—alcohol, substances, behaviors—where you return despite negative consequences?
2. How does recognizing addiction as slavery (not merely weakness) change your approach to breaking free?
3. What role can Christian community play in helping you overcome enslaving habits?

Interlinear Text

הֵכּוּ וְנִי	בִּל	חֲלִיתִי	הֵלֵמוּ וְנִי	בִּל
They have stricken	H1077	me shalt thou say and I was not sick	they have beaten	H1077
H5221		H2470	H1986	
מִתְּיָדִי וְיָדִי עָלָי	מִתְּיָדִי	אֵלֶּיךָ יְיָ	אֲבַקֵּשׁ נָוֹ	עוֹד:
me and I felt	H4970	it not when shall I awake	it yet	I will seek
H3045		H6974	H3254	H5750
			H1245	

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 56:12 (Parallel theme): Come ye, say they, I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink; and to morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant.

Jeremiah 5:3 (Parallel theme): O LORD, are not thine eyes upon the truth? thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return.

Proverbs 26:11 (Parallel theme): As a dog returneth to his vomit, so a fool returneth to his folly.

Proverbs 27:22 (Parallel theme): Though thou shouldest bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him.