



# THE EXHORTER

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*“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts 2:40*

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## Jump Start # 1705

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**1 Timothy 5:23 *"No longer drink water exclusively, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments."***

We are going to touch upon a sensitive topic. I have never been one to steer clear of tough subjects. Avoiding things, because they may cause controversy or upset some is never a safe policy. Let's talk about social drinking of alcohol. Christians want it. This is a hot topic in many congregations. Brethren are wanting and looking for a green light so they can drink.

We have become a drinking society. It's to the point now, that you can't get people together without alcohol. A ballgame-and there is booze. A neighborhood cookout and there is booze. Even at the orchestra, there is booze. Out to eat, and here comes the wine list. At a wedding, and there is alcohol. One of these days, we'll see drinking at funerals. It's everywhere else. It's to the point, that folks can't go a couple of hours without having to have some alcohol. It's everywhere. College campuses are drowning in problem binge drinkers. With their college diploma in hand, colleges are releasing future alcoholics upon society. We are a drinking nation. And the effects and consequences are visible everywhere. Health problems...domestic problems...marriages falling apart...and those little white crosses along side of the highway that reminds us that someone was killed, often by a drunk driver. And now, God's people are joining the ranks. They want permission to drink. They feel that they are missing out and they want a verse, a sermon, a context, that will give them a green light to drink. They want God to say, "Yes, Drink."

Brethren turn to the Savior. They will say, "Jesus turned water to wine." He did. What was that wine? Was it red or white? Was Bud or Bud-lite? Was Kentucky Bourbon or was it Gin? Was it grape juice? What does the word "wine" mean? When the Bible uses the word "wine" can I substitute "Beer?" Where is the line? We know you can't get drunk. That's clear. All over the Bible, God condemns drunkenness. Is it ok as long as I get right up to the line? What is the definition of drunk? Different states have different blood alcohol reference points for being legally drunk. In Jesus' days, there was no "blood alcohol" numbers? So, how drunk is drunk? Is tipsy, but not legally drunk ok? Some will say, "just one drink." But who made up that rule? Did God? What if the state changes the definition of legally drunk? Am I putting my theology in the hands of state legislatures?

Our verse today, is yet another passage and another way some try to find good in drinking alcohol. Paul told Timothy to drink some wine. Therefore, from that I can conclude that I can drink a beer. I don't see that connection. Look at the context:

First, Timothy was sick. The verse refers to his frequent ailments and his stomach. The wine was being used as medicine. This is not the same as sitting in the stands of the ballgame and having a beer. This wasn't being drunk because Timothy liked the taste nor it relaxed him. He was sick. Can I do it for that reason? Are you sick? Look at the ingredients of cough medicine or Nyquil-alcohol is already in it. Our medicines have alcohol.

Second, Paul had to tell Timothy to do it. Timothy wasn't going to. Timothy didn't want any alcohol. Timothy was being different than the world. Drinking was not a part of Timothy's life. Had the apostle not told him to

do this, he would have never thought about drinking wine, sick or not. We have just the opposite situation today. Timothy didn't want to drink and he had to be told to. Today, folks want to drink and they are looking for an apostle to agree with that.

Third, what about wine being good for your heart? Doctors say you ought to drink wine for your heart. First, that's not a fact. The research is still out and there is some controversy about that. It's not so much the alcohol, but the chemical that comes from grapes that helps the heart. Some researchers are saying that the chemical is also found in grape juice. But, even if it wasn't, there is a leap between drinking wine for my heart and drinking for pleasure. There comes a time where we must put what is good and noble above all things. If your doctor said that you need sleep and you shouldn't go to church on Sunday, would you stay home? I wouldn't. God comes first. If the government would say that you lose your tax deduction for contributing to churches, would you stop giving? I wouldn't.

If you buy wine at the store and you are going to drink just a bit for your health, does the guy who checks you out know that? Do the people who see the bottle in your cart know that? Or, are they going to think that you are just another drinker like everyone else? Influence matters. Let your light shine. Appear as blameless and innocent in a crooked and perverse generation, is what Paul told the Philippians. If the doctor told me to smoke marijuana for health reasons, I wouldn't do it. No way.

Fourth, instead of always looking for "what's wrong with things," why don't we begin by looking at "what's right with things." What is right about drinking alcohol? Does it help my marriage? Answer that. Does it make me a better child of God? Answer that. Does it help me stand taller in my influence upon others? Answer that. Does it make me walk closer to the Lord? Answer that. I don't think so. It comes down to, "I like it," and, "It relaxes me." There is a lot of "me," in those expressions. There isn't much "God," in that thinking.

Some get real excited when they see the qualifications for deacons and they find that they are not to be given to "much" wine. They like the word much. Much means some to those who are wanting to drink. So they think it is ok. And here we go again. If that be the case, who decides how much "much" is? One glass? One can? Two? Three? Two for some but one for others? It sounds like we have become the architects of our faith. Are we reading in too much into the word "much"?

Finally, some will be very forward and bold and ask, "Is it a sin to take a drink of alcohol?" "Am I going to Hell if I drink?" What if the answer was "yes?" Would that stop you or change you? Or, would you walk away mad, like the rich young ruler who was told to sell everything he had. Would you say, "I can't go along with that?" Could it be your mind is made up no matter what anyone, including God says? But what if the answer was "No." No, it's not a sin and no you will not go to Hell. Would you drink? Would you drink knowing all the problems that come with drinking? Would you drink knowing that it's terrible on your health? Would you drink knowing that it doesn't do anything positive for me spiritually? Would you drink if it made others disappointed in you? Just because something may be right or legal, doesn't mean that I ought to do it.

Taking wine for your stomach's sake is not the same as drinking a glass of wine over dinner. What we have not even approached in this article is looking at the word "wine." In our language wine is wine. Wine is not beer and beer is not vodka. Not so, in Biblical language. The word wine sometimes is used to talk about the grape still on the vine. We would never use the word wine that way. It is used to describe the "blood of the grape," which we call grape juice. It is used to call alcoholic wine and even "strong drink." Then, on top of all of that, there is a huge difference in the alcoholic content of wine in Bible times and our wine today. We would not refer to wine today as hard liquor. Yet, our wine today is much stronger than what was used in Bible times.

Can I drink? Study the Scriptures before you make up your mind. Don't use Paul's words to Timothy, take a little wine for your stomach sake, as God's green light for you. I see nothing good with drinking. I don't drink. I've been to Europe. We were in a German restaurant where we walked in and they handed us a vial of wine to clear our palette. The only German word I knew was "no" which is nein-it is pronounced like our word "NINE." The lady handed me one and I said, "NEIN." She said, "You want Nine?" We did Europe without having a drop of alcohol. It can be done.

This is a serious matter. This demands a serious discussion. This needs to be studied. Talked about. And conclusions based upon the righteous life God wants His people to live. We walk by faith and not by sight, even in this area. Our nation is addicted to drinking. We need to be addicted to God.