

## ***A Little Wine for Your Stomach's Sake***

Paul advised Timothy, *"No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent infirmities"* (I Timothy 5:23).

### **"NO LONGER DRINK ONLY WATER..."**

By this statement we learn that Timothy's habit had been one of total abstinence from wine until instructed otherwise by the apostle. This is as it should be. Solomon taught, *"Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it swirls around smoothly"* (Proverbs 23:31). Since the appearance of wine ought not to be admired, how could imbibing in the same have God's approval? Without the exception provided in the passage under consideration, wine should be abstained from.

### **"...BUT USE A LITTLE WINE..."**

In the limited circumstance in which the use of wine is permitted, its quantity must also be limited. The authorization to use wine was not to be construed as a license to become intoxicated, for drunkards will not inherit the kingdom of God (I Corinthians 6:10), as it is written, *"Do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit"* (Ephesians 5:18). Only a slight amount is here permitted for a specific purpose.

### **"...FOR YOUR STOMACH'S SAKE AND YOUR FREQUENT INFIRMITIES."**

The specific purpose for which Timothy was permitted the slight use of wine was its health benefit. It was not given as a social beverage, but as medicine. In particular, it was given for a remedy, not for prevention. Timothy was already known by Paul to experience frequent stomach trouble when the apostle suggested the use of a little wine to alleviate his ailment. The regular use of wine to prevent illness is not under consideration and is nowhere authorized in Scripture.

**- by Bryan Matthew Dockens**

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## ***Does The Old Testament Justify The Use of Strong Drink?***

Drunkenness and the consumption of "strong drink" are thoroughly condemned in the Scriptures. However, those who want to justify the use of alcohol will 'strain at every gnat' and 'swallow every camel' in an effort to prove their point.

The Hebrew word for "strong drink" is '*shekar*'. There are only two Old Testament passages that might seem to refer to it in a favorable light and, of course, the drinking advocates will seize on these:

**Deuteronomy 14:26** *"And thou shalt bestow that money for whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, for oxen, or for sheep, or for wine, or for strong drink, or for whatsoever thy soul desireth: and thou shalt eat there before the Lord thy God, and thou shalt rejoice, thou, and thine household."*

**Numbers 28:7-8** *"And the drink offering thereof shall be the fourth part of an hin for the one lamb: in the holy place shalt thou cause the strong wine to be poured unto the Lord for a drink offering. And the other lamb shalt thou offer at even: as the meat offering of the morning, and as the drink offering thereof, thou shalt offer it, a sacrifice made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the Lord."*

Does it not seem strange that God would forbid His Old Testament priests to drink while engaging in worship (Leviticus 10:9), yet tell the people they were welcome to drink during worship without regard to age or amount? It sounds strange because it is a contradiction.

Many scholars state that the drink offering was poured out and not drunk. (Notice above that Numbers 28:7 actually speaks of pouring it out.) Matthew Henry (*Genesis to Exodus, Commentary on the Whole Bible*, vol. 1), C. J. Elliott (*Numbers, A Bible Commentary for English Readers*, p 557), and Robert Milligan (*Scheme of Redemption*, p. 143) hold this view. Some even think it was used to aid in the combustibility of the sacrifices – sort of like a 'starter fluid'. It certainly cannot be proved that it was consumed by the worshippers.

1 Samuel chapter 1 provides an enlightening sort of inspired commentary on this point. The man Elkanah and his wives went yearly to sacrifice to God.

*"This man went up from his city yearly to worship and sacrifice to the Lord of hosts in Shiloh. Also the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, the priests of the Lord, were there. And whenever the time came for Elkanah to make an offering, he would give portions to Peninnah his wife and to all her sons and daughters. But to Hannah he would give a double portion, for he loved Hannah, although the Lord had closed her womb" (1 Samuel 1:3-5).*

The sharing of the sacrifice in this context indicates it is the type of offering as is described in Numbers 28:7-8 and Deuteronomy 14:26-27. But, notice this: "*Hannah arose after they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh*" (1 Samuel 1:9). She went to the tabernacle to pray and while there the high priest, Eli, accused her of being drunk. Notice Hannah's answer: "*No, my lord, I am a woman of sorrowful spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor intoxicating drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord*" (1 Samuel 1:15). Hannah had been drinking, but she had NOT been drinking any intoxicants.

Therefore, it would be false to conclude that intoxicating beverages were necessarily used for consumption in the sacrifices, or that these passages can be used as a proper justification for men to consume intoxicating drinks today.

**- by Greg Gwin**