

THE WORLD'S BIBLE #14

By Keith Greer

"THE SOCIAL DRINK." PART 4

While most of us can agree that drunkenness is condemned in the scriptures, where some of us disagree is in the defining of "drunkenness." Many brethren believe that the passages we have previously studied forbid "excessive drinking" only.

In discussing the use of alcohol by a Christian, 1 Timothy 5: 23 is probably the most misused passage used by many who want to "justify" an occasional drink. The apostle Paul told Timothy to "Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities."

So, as a Christian, does this mean that we should all stop drinking water and drink wine instead? Was Paul advocating social drinking?

While we could speculate, and probably quite accurately, that the water in the region might not have been healthy to drink. Timothy's health problems may have been as a result of those unhealthy conditions, those are speculations that we cannot prove from the scriptures.

There are two conclusions, however, that we can accurately draw from this passage. (1) Timothy was drinking the water which Paul told him not to do any longer, and (2) the wine that Paul told Timothy to use was a "little .. for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities". That is, whatever Timothy was to use was for his health—for medicinal purposes.

While living in Las Vegas most people (including my family) bought bottled water to drink, primarily because of the questionable quality of the local water. Our country as a whole

has very high standards concerning our water supply. We do not have to face the health problems that people do in many other countries because of bad water. Even in other countries today, there is bottled water available to buy. In the Philippines, during my preaching trips, we don't drink the local water, but bottled water is available everywhere. So, for a Christian to travel to another country and buy wine when he or she could just as easily buy water is just making an excuse for the adage "don't drink the water".

As Christians, each one of us, if we ever take any medication at all has probably taken alcohol in some form. Alcohol can so easily lead to drunkenness for the very reason that alcohol is so often used in medications—it is absorbed into the bloodstream immediately. Alcohol is not used because the alcohol itself is "good "for us, but the fact that it helps the medication act more quickly in our bloodstream.

Paul was NOT telling Timothy to go out drinking with his friends or even to keep a private bar stocked at home that others might not know about. He was merely telling him to "Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities."

We have more medications available to us "over the counter" than Paul and Timothy would have ever dreamed of. When I get a real bad cold or the flu I take Nyquil. Why? It puts me to sleep and causes the cold or flu to "sweat" out of my body. It works quickly and effectively for me. Many pain medicines have amounts of alcohol to help ease the suffering and pain one may be experiencing due to serious health issues or recovering from surgery.

As Christians today, we need to be careful about trying to use this passage to justify social drinking. Ever wonder why Timothy didn't "drink the wine on his own," but had to be instructed by Paul to do so. Could it be he thought it might be wrong to do so? ***