

## **CRITICAL ANALYSIS ON THE MEANING OF LITTLE WINE IN THE BOOK OF 1 TIMOTHY 5:23**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The study is entitled the “**critical analysis on the meaning of little wine in the book of 1 Timothy 5:23**”. This topic was selected after realizing in Christian denominations different understandings on the verse, which not only causing problems on their behavior, but also abusing their Christianity. Misunderstanding of a single Bible verse sometimes results to the terrible heresy which might be solved only if Christians would critically analyze and compare that Biblical verse with others, and consider the context and translation from original Bible languages. 1 Timothy 5:23 is one of those verses needing a critical analysis for a better comprehension. What is seen in this verse is that, Paul advised Timothy not to use only water but also “a little wine”. Thus the following questions were the object of this study: Does wine always mean fermented? If Paul here mentioned non-fermented which is allowed to be used by Christians, why little not much? The main objective of this study is to critically analyze this verse in order to have clear understanding on its meaning. Secondary data such hard and soft copy documents were used as research instruments. And information collected was critically analyzed using the original Bible languages context and different Bible translations. Finally, the conclusion was elaborated basing the supported analysis.

**Keywords:** A Wine and a little wine.

## Introduction

If you ask most Christians, why they drink alcohol many will answer that the Bible does not prohibit the use of alcoholic drinks as long as it does not lead to drunkenness. In their view, moderate use of alcohol is acceptable. Great number of them are using what is written in 1Timothy 5: 23(NIV) which says: "Stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses, as a proof which confirms their way of using alcohol.

Through ages, different people tried to understand this verse in different way and this is why different interpretations are being raised. Almost every religious system has its own meaning according to their doctrines about alcohol.<sup>1</sup>

There are many texts in the Bible disapproving the use of alcohol (Leviticus 10:8-11; Judges 13:3, 4; Proverbs 31:4, 5; 23:31-33; 20:1; 1 Timothy 3:2, 3). At the same time there are texts that show wine as a blessing from God to be enjoyed (Genesis 27:28; 49:10-12; Psalm 104:14, 15; Isaiah 55:1; Amos 9:13; John 2:10-11). How can the Bible both condemn and approve the same thing? If we believe that all scripture was inspired by the Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 3:16) there should be no contradiction in the teaching of scripture.

Even though people considered what is written by Paul in 1Timothy 5:23 as a good example for those who want to drink wine, we have another verse "Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it swirls around smoothly; 32 at the last it bites like a serpent, and stings like a viper. 33 Your eyes will see strange things, and your heart will utter perverse things". This verse of Proverbs 23:31-33 is a strong warning of not drinking wine. When the Bible tells believers to not even look at wine, why would it turn around and say you can drink a little bit? This passage in Proverbs indicates that there is something wrong with fermented wine itself and not the quantity consumed.<sup>2</sup>

Nowadays in many Christian denominations, there are different understanding about what is written in 1Timothy 5:23 - "Be no longer a drinker of water, but use a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent infirmities".

This is one of the most popular verses in the Bible because of how many critics arise about this verse. For some, the term which was used about "wine" has different meaning. They also have Biblical verses which are disapproving the use of alcohol (Leviticus 10:8-11; Judges 13:3, 4; Proverbs 31:4, 5; 23), this is good example that can be used to allow them to drink alcohol. The verses they are using as support for using wine, those verses are explaining wine as blessings from God to be enjoyed (Genesis 27:28; 49:10-12; Psalm 104:14, 15; Isaiah 55:1; Amos 9:13; John 2:10-11). For others this verse has another meaning: 31-33; 20:1; 1 Timothy 3:2, 3).

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<sup>1</sup>. Rick, Wester, Meyer. *Is Little Wine Good for the Soul?* Amazing Discoveries, 2009, p 2

<sup>2</sup>Robert P. Teachout, "The Use of 'Wine' in the Old Testament" (PhD dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1979).

By considering these verses from the Bible and analyzing different critics from scholars, we will find the real meaning of this verse and have real understanding about this verse.

### **Objectives of the study**

1 Timothy 5:23 “Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thin often infirmities.” NKJV, this is one of the difficult verse in the Bible. The people have various interpretations about this verse. The word “wine” which appeared in this verse brings some confusions; for some it is alcoholic wine while others it is not the alcoholic one.

The purpose of the research seeks to analyze the data in order to find what the real meaning of that wine which is written in 1 Timothy 5:23 is, according to what the Bible and other commentaries say about it. The research focuses on giving the answers on the following questions.

What is the kind of little wine which Paul refers to, when he told Timothy to use it instead of using only water? Is it fermented (alcohol) or non-fermented one (grape juice?).

### **Methodology**

As it might be, the research followed a well –built way and precious documents. The aim would be reading many documents (Christian mainly), such books, articles, and magazines which are related to our topic. We have also analyzed the different views of scholars focusing on those who dealt the same subject.

### **Discussion on 1 Timothy 5:23**

This part gives the details of how many writers commented on the use of little wine as it is written in 1 Timothy 5:23.

In this study, we do not use our own understanding or our ideas for explaining what is written in 1 Timothy 5:23 “little wine” but we just quoted the different authors with their different books they wrote. The wine was used in different place, different time with various people. By considering these aspects, we will see how scholars gave their comments about the instructions Paul gave Timothy and allowed him to drink little wine. The different understanding about this verse provides the three main position views. We have moderationist views, abstentionist view and prohibitionist view.

### **The Moderationist View**

According to Samuel Bacchiocchi in his book “*Wine in the Bible*“, the moderationist view maintains that while Scripture condemns the *immoderate use* (abuse) of alcoholic beverages, it does approve their *moderate use*. This view is defended by many authors as we are going to see them down here. The moderationist view rests on the fundamental assumption that the Bible knows *only of fermented wine*, which it considers a divine blessing to be freely enjoyed with moderation. Recent research, as we shall see, has challenged the “one wine” theory, by

showing that the Hebrew and Greek words (*yayin* and *oinos*) which are uniformly rendered “wine” throughout the Scripture, can refer to either *unfermented grape juice* or to *fermented wine*. According to this theory, any condemnation of wine in the Bible refers not to the *kind* of wine, but to the *amount* consumed.<sup>3</sup>

The great number of early church fathers had this view of moderationist. They accepted that if fermented wine was used for good purpose nothing wrong with it. See how they explained what is written in 1 Timothy 5:23 when Paul gave Timothy the advice of using little wine because of his infirmity.

**Ambrose wrote:**

We must drink it then not for the sake of pleasure, but because of infirmity, and therefore sparingly as a remedy, not in excess as a gratification<sup>4</sup>.

**Chrysostom wrote:**

He does not however allow him to indulge freely in wine, but as much as was for health and not for luxury (Homily 16 on 1 Tim). Chrysostom, in a sermon specific to 1 Tim 5:23, elaborates upon how wine can be taken for health and not luxury. When he says this, he specifically says that the benefit of drinking wine is that it affects our temperament positively. He contrasts this pleasant buzz with drunkenness:

For wine was given us of God, not that we might be drunken, but that we might be sober; that we might be glad, not that we get ourselves pain. “Wine,” it says, “makes glad the heart of man...” It is the best medicine, when it has the best moderation to direct.

Wine, when used in moderation and not for drunkenness, brings healing:

Wine was given to restore the body’s weakness, not to overturn the soul’s strength; to remove the sickness of the flesh, not to destroy the health of the spirit

Paul’s Point: Drink Wine Because People Are Annoying. The real gist of what Paul is saying in 1 Tim 5:23 is, “When dealing with annoying people all day, drink a little wine to calm down and relax.” The reference to Timothy’s “stomach and frequent ailments” is likely the feeling we get in our stomachs when we are stressed. So, if the wine does anything in Paul’s mind, it helps Timothy deal with the stress.<sup>5</sup>

**Jerome wrote:**

Notice the reasons for which the permission is given, to cure an aching stomach and a frequent infirmity. And lest we should indulge ourselves too much on the score of our ailments, he commands that, but little shall be taken...He evidently feared that Timothy

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<sup>3</sup> Samuel Bacchiocchi, *Wine in the Bible, Biblical Perspective*, Berrien Springs Publishing, Michigan (2001) p.34

<sup>4</sup> Craig Truglia; Bottoms Up! The meaning of “use a little wine, blog at wordpress.com.” p.5(2017) <https://orthodoxchristiantheology.com/2016/05/21>

<sup>5</sup> Ibid p.5

might succumb to weakness, and might prove unequal to the constant moving to and fro involved in preaching the Gospel. It may appear that, their belief was unlawful to drink enough to get a pleasant buzz. But, is this what they are saying? It is important to understand just how the ancients thought wine promoted good health. This will help us understand how they viewed a pleasant buzz as something different than purposeful drunkenness.

The ancients believed that our emotions were governed by humors (which literally means “fluids” in Latin) in our bodies. To them, wine played a role in affecting the chemical equilibrium of bile and other bodily fluids which supposedly affect how we feel emotionally and physically.

We can see this in the secular medical “textbooks” of the time. According to Galen’s Method of Medicine Book XII: Therefore, the best wines are those that are naturally sharp and no longer have any perceptible astringency due to their age, but have a heat that is very clear, for they will do everything we require for those in whom the cardiac orifice of the stomach is picrocholic, since they are pleasant to take, facilitate digestion and distribution, mitigate the badness of the humor, bring about a state that is hot, and strengthen the cardiac orifice of the stomach (Source).<sup>6</sup>

**Clement of Rome (died 100)** said: "Seeing, therefore, that we are the portion of the Holy One, let us do all those things which pertain to holiness, avoiding all evil-speaking, all abominable and impure embraces, together with all drunkenness, seeking after change, all abominable lusts, detestable adultery, and execrable pride. The earliest references from the Church Fathers make it clear that the early Church used in the Eucharist wine - which was customarily mixed with water. The Didache, an early Christian treatise which is generally accepted to be from the late 1st century, instructs Christians to give a portion of their wine in support of a true prophet or, if they have no prophet resident with them, to the poor."<sup>7</sup>

**Clement of Alexandria (died c. 215)** wrote in a chapter about drinking that he admired the young and the old who "abstain wholly from drink," who adopt an austere life and "flee as far as possible from wine, shunning it as they would the danger of fire." He strongly warned youth to "flee as far as possible" from it so as not to inflame their "wild impulses." He said Christ did not teach affected by it. "...the soul itself is wisest and best when dry." He also said wine is an appropriate symbol of Jesus' blood. Even those who are "moored by reason and time" (such that they aren't as much tempted by drunkenness after a day's work), he still encouraged to mix "as much water as possible" in with the wine to inhibit inebriation. For at all hours, let them keep their "reason unwavering, their memory active, and their body unmoved and unshaken by wine."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> Christian views on alcohol – Wikipedia  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian\\_views\\_on\\_alcohol](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_views_on_alcohol)

<sup>8</sup> Ibid

9. Dr. Phil Norrie “*Wine and Health through the ages with special reference to Australia*”, Sydney, 2005

According to Dr. Phil Norrie in his thesis “*Wine and Health through the ages*”, he said that “Wine is man's oldest medicine”, having been used as such by the medical profession for over 5,000 years. Until recently the anti-alcohol lobby has had the high moral ground promoting alcohol and wine consumption in terms of doom and gloom. Research over the last decade has turned this view around so that now most members of the medical profession view the consumption of a moderate amount of wine in a favorable way, to the point now that it is not only looked upon as causing no harm, but actually for most being beneficial. If one examines the history of the use of wine as a medicine this is not a new idea, but one that has been rediscovered and given credibility due to current research findings.<sup>9</sup>

### **Expository Notes with Practical Observations on the New Testament**

Note here, 1. There is a lawful use of wine to support nature, not to clog it; to cure infirmities, not to cause them: drink it Timothy might medically, and no doubt for cheerfulness and alacrity, that the body might be more fit and expedite for duty: Use a little wine for thy stomach's sake.<sup>10</sup>

Note, 2. That our meat and drink should be fitted for the preservation of health, rather than for the gratification of our appetite; the former is Christian duty, the latter is brutish sensuality.

### **Calvin's Commentary on the Bible**

”No longer drink water” (Vs. 23). There are some who conjecture that this sentence, which breaks off the train of thought, was not written by Paul. But we see that Paul was not so anxious about keeping up the close connection of a discourse, and that it was very customary with him to intermingle a variety of statements without any arrangement. Besides, it is possible that what had been formerly written in the margin of the Epistle afterwards found its way into this passage through the mistake of the transcribers. Yet there is no necessity for giving ourselves much trouble on that point, if we consider Paul’s custom, which I have mentioned, of sometimes mingling various subjects. What is said amounts to this, that Timothy should accustom himself to drink a little wine, for the sake of preserving his health; for he does not absolutely forbid him to “drink water,” but to use it as his ordinary beverage; and that is the meaning of the Greek word ὕδροποτεῖν.

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<sup>10</sup>Burkitt, William. "Commentary on 1 Timothy 5:23". Expository Notes with Practical Observations on the New Testament. <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/wbc/1-timothy-5.html>. 1700-1703.

But why does he not simply advise him to *drink wine*? For when he adds, a *little*, he appears to guard against intemperance, which there was no reason to dread in Timothy. I reply, this was rather expressed, in order to meet the slanders of wicked men, who would otherwise have been ready to mock at his advice, on this or some such pretext: “What sort of philosophy is this, which encourages to drink wine? Is that the road by which we rise to heaven?” In order to meet jeers of this kind, he declares that he provides only for a case of necessity; and at the same time he recommends moderation.

Now it is evident that Timothy was not only frugal, but even austere, in his mode of living; so much so as even not to take care of his health; and it is certain that this was done, neither through ambition nor through superstition. Hence we infer, that not only was he very far from indulging in luxury and superfluities, but that, in order that he might be better prepared for doing the work of the Lord, he retrenched a portion even of his ordinary food; for it was not by natural disposition, but through a desire of temperance, that he was abstemious.

How few are there at the present day, who need to be forbidden the use of water; or rather how many are there that need to be limited to drink wine soberly! It is also evident how necessary it is for us, even when we are desirous to act right, to ask from the Lord the spirit of prudence, that he may teach us moderation. Timothy was, indeed, upright in his aims; but, because he is reproved by the Spirit of God, we learn that excess of severity of living was faulty in him. At the same time a general rule is laid down, that, while we ought to be temperate in eating and drinking, every person should attend to his own health, not for the sake of prolonging life, but that, as long as he lives, he may serve God, and be of use to his neighbors.

And if excessive abstinence is blamed, when it brings on or promotes diseases, how much more should superstition be avoided? What judgment shall we form as to the obstinacy of the Carthusians, (114) who would sooner have died than taste the smallest morsel of flesh in extreme necessity? And if those who live sparingly and soberly are commanded not to injure their health by excessive parsimony, no slight punishment awaits the intemperate, who, by cramming their belly, waste their strength. Such persons need not only to be advised, but to be kept back from their fodder like brute beasts.<sup>11</sup>

### **John Trapp Complete Commentary**

“Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach’s sake and thine often infirmities”. Ver. 23. Timothy, living among the luxurious Ephesians, was so abstemious that the apostle is fain to prescribe him physic. Hypocrites will be chaste only in the mountains where no women are, and sober in Scythia where no vines are; but Lot was chaste in the

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<sup>11</sup>Calvin, John. "Commentary on 1 Timothy 5:23". "Calvin's Commentary on the Bible".  
<https://www.studydrive.com/commentaries/cal/1-timothy-5.html>. 1840-57.

midst of Sodom, and Anacharsis temperate among the debauched Athenians. The faithful in the world are like a pearl in a puddle; they lose nothing of their virtue, though amidst the vicious; like heavenly salamanders, they remain unscorched in the fire; like fishes, they retain their freshness in the salt waters.

But use a little wine] “Modice, hoc estmedice, pro remedioparcius, non pro deliciisredundantius”, saith Ambrose; who also somewhere relateth of one Theotimus (a good name but a bad man) that he was so far from taking St Paul’s advice, that having a disease upon his body, and told by the physicians that unless he drank less wine he was like to lose his eyes, Vale lumen amicum, " Farewell, sweet eyesight," said he, choosing rather to lose his sight than his sin; so will many their souls; being like affected to their base lusts, as the panther is said to be to man’s dung, which it exceedingly desireth and maketh after<sup>12</sup>.

### Cambridge Greek Testament for Schools and Colleges

23. ἀγνεία does not refer only to bodily purity and discipline; it is rather concerned with purity of intention and singleness of life. This may however be misapprehended, and to avoid any mistaken inference from σεαυτὸν ἀγνόντῆρει in the direction of undue asceticism the Apostle parenthetically adds *Be no longer a water-drinker, but use a little wine.*

ὕδροποτεῖν (only here in the N.T., but a common word) is not equivalent to ὕδωρ πίνειν; it means to drink water *habitually*, to be a ‘total abstainer’ from wine (cp. Daniel 1:12 LXX.). This it appears Timothy had been (for such is the force of μηκέτι; cp. Romans 6:6; 2 Corinthians 5:15), possibly under Essene influences (see Philo *de Vit. cont.* 4), but more probably by way of protest against the sin of drunkenness, which the injunctions in 1 Timothy 3:3; 1 Timothy 3:8 suggest was a crying evil at Ephesus, if the ἐπίσκοποι themselves needed to be warned against it. We have other warnings of a like nature at Romans 13:13; Galatians 5:21; Titus 2:3; 1 Peter 4:3. But what is commended to Timothy is *temperance* in the use of wine, not *total abstinence* from it: οἴνω ὀλίγωχρῶ, in contrast with οἴνω πολλῶ deprecated in 1 Timothy 3:8.

διὰ τὸν στόμαχον. στόμαχος does not occur again in the Greek Bible, but is, of course, a common word. Wetstein aptly cites Libanius *Epist.* 1578, πέπτωκε καὶ ἡμῖν ὁ στόμαχος ταῖς συνεχέσιν ὑδροποσίαις; cp. Pliny *Hist. Nat.* XXIII. 22.

καὶ τὰς πυκνὰς σου ἀσθενείας, *and thine oft infirmities.* St Paul uses ἀσθενεία of his own bodily infirmity at Galatians 4:13; πυκνός does not occur again in his letters, but cp. Luke 5:33; Acts 24:26; 2 Maccabees 8:8. Timothy is here described as a man of weak health, for whom the ascetic life would be dangerous and unwise.

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<sup>12</sup>Trapp, John. "Commentary on 1 Timothy 5:23". John Trapp Complete Commentary. <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/jtc/1-timothy-5.html>. 1865-1868



It is obvious to remark how improbable it is that such a precept as this, and introduced thus parenthetically, should occur in a forged letter. Like 2 Timothy 4:13 it is a little touch of humanity which is a powerful argument for the genuineness of the Epistle in which it is found.

The duty of careful enquiry into the character of ordains. 1 Timothy 5:23 was parenthetical, and the general subject is now resumed: character is difficult to judge, therefore do not (a) hastily accept (1 Timothy 5:24) or (b) hastily refuse (1 Timothy 5:25).<sup>13</sup>

### **The Bible Study New Testament**

23. There is no connection in language between this and the previous verse, but we may imagine one in Paul's mind. He bids Timothy keep himself pure, and then there arises the image in his mind of the actually pure character of Timothy; his persistent abstinence, for instance, from wine, which is, indeed, injuring his health and so is overdone.

Drink no... water—rather, be no longer a water drinker, that is, exclusively. From these words it is clear that, 1. Timothy was totally abstinent from all that could intoxicate; 2. It took an apostle's authority to induce him to cease abstinence; and, 3. St. Paul authorized the use of alcohol only as medicine.<sup>14</sup>

### **The Bible Study New Testament**

**But take a little wine.** Probably the false teachers prohibited the light wines that were then used. Compare notes on 1 Timothy 4:3; Colossians 2:16; John 2:10. This gives some indication of Timothy's state of health. The Expositor's Greek Testament has Paul saying: "I do not mean you to practice a rigid asceticism; on the contrary, I think that you are likely to injure your health by your complete abstinence from wine; Song of Solomon, *be no longer a water-drinker*, etc." Johnson says the water of that region is not good, and he spent a fearfully sick day at Ephesus in 1889 because of the water there.<sup>15</sup>

Wine was the common drink of the Jews, enjoyed with meals and shared with friends (Gen. 14:18; Jn. 2:3). It was also an essential part in the worship of the people of God in both Testaments.

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<sup>13</sup>Commentary on 1 Timothy 5:23". "Cambridge Greek Testament for Schools and Colleges".

<sup>14</sup>Ice, Rhoderick D. "Commentary on 1 Timothy 5:23". "The Bible Study New Testament". <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/ice/1-timothy-5.html>. College Press, Joplin, MO. 1974.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid

The “drink offering” consisted of wine (Ex 29:40; Lev. 23:13) and the people of God brought wine when offering sacrifices (1 Sm 1:24). The Jews even kept wine in the temple (1 Chr 9:29). In Isaiah 62:9 the people are blessed by the Lord in such a way as is depicted in drinking wine in the sanctuary before the presence of God. In Deuteronomy 14, we read:

You shall tithe all the yield of your seed that comes from the field year by year. And before the LORD your God, in the place that he will choose, to make his name dwell there, you shall eat the tithe of your grain, of your wine, and of your oil, and the firstborn of your herd and flock, that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always. And if the way is too long for you, so that you are not able to carry the tithe, when the LORD your God blesses you, because the place is too far from you, which the LORD your God chooses, to set his name there, then you shall turn it into money and bind up the money in your hand and go to the place that the LORD your God chooses and spend the money for whatever you desire—oxen or sheep or wine or strong drink, whatever your appetite craves. And you shall eat there before the LORD your God and rejoice, you and your household. And you shall not neglect the Levite who is within your towns, for he has no portion or inheritance with you (Deut. 14:22-27).

Wine was used in celebrating the Passover and is used in celebrating The Lord’s Supper in the New Testament (Lk. 22:7-23; 1 Cor. 11:17-32). For more information, read my blogpost, It was also used medicinally, to help the weak and the sick (2 Sm 16:2; Prov 31:6; 1 Tim. 5:23).

It isn't a stretch to say that God likes wine. It was associated with life, God’s blessing, and God’s Kingdom. In Judges 9:13 we read that wine is that “which *cheers God and men.*” Psalm 104:15 portrays wine similarly, saying that wine “makes man’s heart glad” (Ecc. 10:19; Is. 55:1, 2; Zech. 10:7). (See). Even the future fulfillment of the Kingdom of God will be characterized by the abundance of wine (Is. 25:6-8; Amos 9:13).<sup>16</sup>

### **The Abstentionist view**

By explaining what is written in 1 Timothy 5:23, some scholars have view of abstentionism. Dr. Samuel Bacchiocchi said “Many conservative Christians recognize the problems inherent in the moderationist view, and consequently they espouse what we shall call the “abstentionist view.” This view maintains that although God approved the moderate use of alcoholic beverages in Bible times, today it is preferable for Christians to abstain from them because of the many serious social and health problems related to alcohol consumption. The abstentionist view is held, as noted earlier, by Billy Graham.”

Among the recent studies supporting this view are the reports on the use of alcoholic beverages released by the (former) Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod, Harold Lind sell’s book, *The World, the Flesh and the Devil*, and Arnold B. Come’s, *Drinking: A Christian Position*.

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<sup>16</sup>Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*

According to this view, abstinence is not a matter of explicit Biblical teaching, but rather of prudence in view of the devastating impact of alcohol consumption in our society.<sup>17</sup>

Abstentionists believe that although alcohol consumption is not inherently sinful or necessarily to be avoided in all circumstances, it is generally not the wisest or most prudent choice. While most abstentionists do not require abstinence from alcohol for membership in their churches, they do often require it for leadership positions.<sup>18</sup>

Those who have this view bring another idea of allowing some to drink and preventing other not to drink because of the level that someone has.

### **The Adventist Abstentionist View.**

The Seventh-day Adventist Church upholds the abstentionist view, but on a somewhat different ground. It believes that God did not approve but merely permitted the use of alcoholic beverages. As stated in the newly released book *Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . .* “Scriptural stories involving the use of alcoholic beverages may give the impression that God approved their use. However, Scripture also indicates that God’s people participated in social practices . . . that God certainly did not condone. In interpreting such Scriptural passages, it is helpful to keep in mind that God does not necessarily endorse all that He permits.”<sup>20</sup> In its comment on Deuteronomy 14:26, *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* explicitly affirms: “. . . Thus it was with ‘wine’ and ‘strong drink.’ Neither was strictly prohibited, except to those engaged in religious duties, and perhaps also in the administration of justice (Lev 10:9; Prov 31:4,

5) . . . In times past God often ‘winked’ at the gross ‘ignorance’ responsible for practices He could never approve.”<sup>21</sup> By viewing alcoholic beverages as permitted (though not approved) by God in past times of ignorance and perversion, Adventists find it necessary to appeal primarily to health reasons for their position on abstinence. An example is the Fundamental Beliefs 21, which deals with Christian behavior. It states: “Since alcoholic beverages, tobacco, and the irresponsible use of drugs and narcotics are harmful to our bodies, we are to abstain from them as well.”<sup>19</sup>

### **Commentary Critical on the Whole Bible - Unabridged**

Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities. No longer - as a habit. This injunction to drink wine occasionally modifies "keep thyself pure." The presbyter and deacon were to be "not given to wine" (1 Timothy 3:3; 1 Timothy 3:8). Timothy perhaps had a tendency to ascetical strictness (cf. note, 1 Timothy 4:8 : cf. the Nazarene vow, Numbers 6:1-4; John Baptist, Luke 1:15; Romans 14:21). Paul modifies the

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<sup>17</sup> I Christopher R. Hutson, *A little wine and Greco-Roman youth* p.91

<sup>18</sup>(Christian views on alcohol – Wikipedia n.d.)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian\\_views\\_on\\_alcohol](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_views_on_alcohol)

<sup>19</sup> Ibid

preceding "keep thyself pure." 'Not that I enjoin that purity which consists in asceticism; nay, no longer drink only water, but use a little wine, as is needed for thy health' (Ellicott). The Essenes avoided wine, especially in their weekly festival. Alford thus: Timothy was of a feeble frame (note, 1 Corinthians 16:10-11), timid as overseer, where vigorous action was needed: Hence, Paul exhorts him to take means to raise his bodily condition. God commands believers to use all due means for preserving health, and condemns, by anticipation, the human traditions which among various sects have denied wine to the faithful.<sup>20</sup>

### **Expository Notes of Dr. Thomas Constable**

Paul may have realized that the process of elder discipline that he imposed on Timothy would have been hard on him physically as well as emotionally. According to this verse, Timothy suffered from frequent illness. Consequently, the apostle prescribed a little wine for medicinal purposes. Since Paul's instruction was for medicinal purposes, this verse contributes nothing to either side of the debate over the use of wine as a beverage.

"The words imply that Timothy was a total abstainer from wine." "We must remember that wine was one of the chief remedial agents of those times in which the science of medicine was in its infancy among Greek physicians."

This verse is a personal parenthesis in the flow of Paul's argument about sinning elders.<sup>21</sup> According to Adam Clarke Commentary, "Drink no longer water, but use a little wine" - this verse has the following meaning; "The whole of this verse seems, to several learned critics and divines, strangely inserted in this place; it might have been, according to them, a note which the apostle inserted in the margin of his letter, on recollecting the precarious state of Timothy's health, and his great abstemiousness and self-denial. I believe the verse to be in its proper place; and, for reasons which I shall adduce, not less necessary than the directions which precede and follow it. But it may be necessary to inquire a little into the reasons of the advice itself. The priests under the Mosaic law, while performing sacred rites, were forbidden to drink wine: Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die: it shall be a statute forever through your generations; Leviticus 10:9; Ezekiel 44:21. It was the same with the Egyptian priests.

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<sup>20</sup>Jamieson, Robert, D.D.; Fausset, A. R.; Brown, David. "Commentary on 1 Timothy 5:23". "Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible - Unabridged". <https://www.studydrive.net/commentaries/jfu/1-timothy-5.html>. 1871-8.

<sup>20</sup>Constable, Thomas. DD. "Commentary on 1 Timothy 5:23".

It was forbidden also among the Romans, and particularly to women and young persons. Plato, *De Legibus*, lib. ii., edit. Bip., vol. viii., page 86, speaks thus: Ἀρ' οὐνομοθετησομεν, πρωτονμεν, τους παιδας μεχριζετωνοκτωκαιδεκα τοπαραπαν οινουμηγευσται; - μετα δετουτο, οινουμενδηγευσθαι τουμετριου, μεχριτριακοντα ετων - τετταρακοντα δε επιβαινοντα ετων, εντοιςξυσσιτιοιςευωχηθεντα, κ. τ. λ. "Shall we not ordain by law, in the first place, that boys shall not, on any account, taste wine till they are eighteen years old? In the next place, we should inform them that wine is to be used moderately till they are thirty years old."<sup>22</sup> This whole passage is one of great value to the cause of temperance. Timothy was undoubtedly in the habit of abstaining wholly from the use of wine. Paul knew this, and he did not reprove him for it. He manifestly favored the general habit, and only asked him to depart in some small degree from it, in order that he might restore and preserve his health. So far, and no further, is it right to apply this language in regard to the use of wine; and the minister who should follow this injunction would be in no danger of disgracing his sacred profession by the debasing and demoralizing sin of intemperance.<sup>23</sup>

Abstinence from wine was commendable among pagans, Jews and Christians, so that this command to "drink a little wine" would hardly constitute an effective polemic. Nor is it a weak-kneed compromise with the dominant culture. Rather, inasmuch as medicine and philosophy were closely related in antiquity, we should not be surprised to see a bit of medical advice tossed into a section of moral exhortation. If we understand Timothy's abstinence as an exercise in purity, then we can see that his drinking "a little wine," including drinking for medicinal purposes, could also function as part of his own exemplary behavior, in this case demonstrating appropriate use of wine. By his exemplary behavior, the youthful Timothy gains credibility in his administration of his duties toward older men.<sup>24</sup>

### **The Prohibitionist View**

The commentators of 1 Timothy 5:23 some of them have the view of prohibition. They said that Paul could not commend Timothy to drink wine while he knew that it was fermented (full of alcohol). The prohibitionist view maintains that the apparent contradiction between the Biblical approval and disapproval of the use of wine can best be resolved by recognizing that the same Hebrew and Greek words for wine (*yayin* and *onion*) can refer both to unfermented grape juice and to fermented wine. Consequently, the "wine" God approves of is uniformly unfermented grape juice and the "wine" He disapproves is fermented and intoxicating. According to this view alcoholic beverages are prohibited in Scripture as unfit for human consumption. To partake of them is not only unhealthy but also immoral, because it represents the violation of a Biblical principle designed to ensure our health and holiness.<sup>25</sup> Groups adopting prohibitionist positions include the Southern Baptist Convention and Seventh-day Adventists. The former group resolved that their "churches be urged to give their

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<sup>22</sup>Clarke, Adam. "Commentary on 1 Timothy 5:23". "The Adam Clarke Commentary  
<https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/acc/1-timothy-5.html>. 1832.

<sup>23</sup> Albert Barnes, Commentary on 1 Timothy 5:23

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid

full moral support to the prohibition cause, and to give a more liberal financial support to dry organizations which stand for the united action of our people against the liquor traffic.<sup>26</sup>

### Supporters of this view

According to SDA Commentary on this verse, the author said “**Drink no longer water**”.

In Paul’s day as now, the water in many localities was often unsafe for use. Physical ailments such as dysentery, often due to contaminated water, were common occurrences. Consequently, other ways to quench thirst were recommended.

**Wine** Gr. Oinos- some commentators believe that Paul here advocates the temperate use of fermented wine for medical purposes. They call attention to the fact that wine has through the centuries been used. Others hold that Paul refers to unfermented grape juice, their reasoning being that he would not give advice inconsistent with the rest of Scripture, which warns, against the use of intoxicating beverages (see Prov.20:1;23:29-32).<sup>27</sup>

Dr. Samuel Bacchiochi said “Defenders of alcohol consumption often refer to the apostle Paul’s admonition to Timothy, a young minister, as permission for its use.” No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach’s sake and your frequent infirmities (1 Timothy 5:23). People suggest that there is nothing wrong in wine itself or Paul would not have counseled Timothy in this way. First of all, Paul is not recommending believers in general to drink freely of wine for pleasure, but that Timothy himself should use a 'little' wine as a medicine. The Greek word is 'use', not 'drink.' We find this translation in the Kutsalİncil translation of the New Testament. The word 'use' emphasizes that this is medicinal use of "wine" and not as a beverage. The practice of mixing one part of grape juice to two, three, five or more parts of water was common in the ancient world. Especially when we remember that grape juice was preserved in those days by boiling it into a thick syrup (molasses). When they wanted to drink juice they would simply add water. Now let’s see if the "wine" mentioned was alcoholic or non-alcoholic.

It is generally assumed by readers that the "wine" in this verse was alcoholic. As we have seen earlier, *oinos* can be either wine or grape juice. Which was it? First, if we want to maintain a consistency with other parts of scripture (e.g., Proverbs 20:1) it makes sense that Paul would be referring to grape juice. Timothy was a young minister and Paul advised Timothy on the subject of appointing church leaders:

This *is* a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work. 2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; 3 not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; 4 one who rules his own house well, having *his* children in submission with all reverence 5 (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?); 1 Timothy 3:1-5.

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid

<sup>27</sup> Ellen G. White, SDA Bible Commentary vol. VII P.314

A minster that drinks wine would be acting contrary to Paul's counsel and setting a wrong example for others. Of course, there are other reasons to understand that Paul was referring to grape juice and not wine.<sup>28</sup>

**New Living Translation (NLT)** Don't drink only water. You ought to drink a little wine for the sake of your stomach because you are sick so often. In its comments on 1 Tim 5:23, the author said "It is unclear why Paul gave this advice to Timothy. Perhaps contaminated water had led to Timothy's indigestion, and so he should stop drinking only water. Whatever the reason, this statement is not an invitation to overindulgence or alcoholism."<sup>29</sup>

Ellen White suggests that Paul recommended pure grape juice to Timothy as medicine for his stomach ailment: Fermented liquor confuses the senses and perverts the powers of the being. God is dishonored when men have not sufficient respect for themselves to practice strict temperance. Fermented wine is not a natural production. The Lord never made it, and with its production He has nothing to do. Paul advised Timothy to take a little wine for his stomach's sake and oft infirmities, but he meant the unfermented juice of the grape. He did not advise Timothy to take what the Lord had prohibited.<sup>30</sup>

Donald Guthrie said "Drink no longer water means not that to abstain altogether from water drinking but is to cease from doing so exclusively. It may be that contaminated water had contributed to Timothy's indigestion and so the apostle suggests a remedy. The verse shows Timothy to be a man of delicate health, and is one of the incidental touches, which help the modern reader to feel sympathy with him. It is an intimate touch quite natural to the apostle when writing to a close associate, but strange indeed if written by pseudonymous writer."<sup>31</sup>

Prohibitionists such as Stephen Reynolds and Jack Van Impe hold that the Bible forbids partaking of alcohol altogether, with some arguing that the alleged medicinal use of wine in 1 Timothy 5:23 is a reference to unfermented grape juice. They argue that the words for alcoholic beverages in the Bible can also refer to non-alcoholic versions such as unfermented grape juice, and for this reason the context must determine which meaning is required.<sup>32</sup>

As to sum up, in this study it was discovered that we have different understanding about the interpretation of "Drinking little wine as it was written in 1 Timothy 5:23. Thus in this section we have three main points of view. Those views are as follow: Moderationist view, Abstentionist view and Prohibitionist view.

Although we have three main points of views of the scholars who analyzed 1 timothy in literal way, we have other author who explained this verse in spiritual way. For him what

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid

<sup>29</sup>Tyndale NLT Bible p. 2064

<sup>30</sup>Ellen G. White, (Bible Echo, September 4, 1899

<sup>31</sup>Donald Guthrie, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, The Pastoral Epistles

<sup>32</sup>Christian views on alcohol – Wikipedia

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian\\_views\\_on\\_alcohol](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_views_on_alcohol)

Paul meant, was not a physical wine and physical water. Paul was talking about Spiritual manner. For him each single word of that verse might be explained in spiritual way.

Let us use his own quotation; “Paul did not mean to drink wine physically here in 1 Timothy: “No longer drink water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.” 1 Timothy 5:23 Drinking water means to wash away sins (or dying to sins as in baptism); drinking wine means to do good works. Context agrees: in vs. 24-25 it talks about sins and good deeds. The reasoning is found in John chapter 2, where Jesus turns water into wine. Turning water into wine means resurrecting from death to life. If water symbolizes death (MT 3.16), and wine symbolizes life (jn 2.3), then this fits the context of 1 Timothy: it says that to take hold of what is truly life, we should do good works. As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.” 1 Timothy 6:17-19 the stomach symbolizes the heart (see Matthew 12:40, belly being heart). The heart receives the Lord (Romans 10:9), and the Lord is life (John 14:6), meaning that Timothy needed in his heart life.

A sick heart is deferred of hope, whereas a desire fulfilled is a tree of life (pr 13.12), meaning that Timothy’s hope of life was being deferred. He needs to have good works to take his hope and fulfill his desire. A sick heart may also mean lack of joy (Lamentations 5:15, 17, Jeremiah 8:18).

Paul is saying that Timothy only abstains from evil but doesn’t do well. Abstaining from evil is right, except he needs to move forward. He needs to do well for the sake of his sick, joyless, and unfulfilled heart so that he could take hold of what is truly life, and life means healing, joy, and fulfillment.”<sup>33</sup>

### **Contextual Analysis**

The interpretation of using of little wine might be understood if we know the reason why Paul wrote this first letter to Timothy. What were the main purposes which caused Paul writing this letter to Timothy? Who is Paul? Why did he prefer to write this letter to Timothy? Who was Timothy according to Paul? Is there any relationship between Paul and Timothy? And if it was there, was it spiritual or physical relationship? What is wrong with Timothy that caused Paul to write to him? Where did Timothy live? When was this message written in which context? These questions are helpful to make us understand the meaning of what is written in 1 Timothy 5:23.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>Interpretation of 1 Timothy 5:23 about drinking wine over water

<sup>34</sup> Ellen G, White, SDA Bible commentary, Philippians to Revelation Vol. 7 p.285



According to what Donald Guthrie wrote in his book "The Pastoral Epistles", he described Paul as follows: "Following his general usage, Paul commences with a declaration of his own authority in order to make unmistakable the authority of the message he teaches. His design is semi-official as well as personal, for Timothy himself would need no such reminder of the apostle's authority. The word **apostle** must be given its more restricted but more frequent meaning of membership of apostolic circle. It may well be that some at Ephesus had questioned Paul's authority, and his claim to this title would therefore immediately correct any misconceptions about his official position in the church."<sup>35</sup> Briefly this quotation answered the question who is Paul in this book.

The author continued to explain close relationship between Paul and Timothy, and was spiritual relationship not physical one. The apostle's description of Timothy as a genuine son of faith for that is significance of the Greek word *gnesios* (translated as own) is striking the evidence of the intimate Christian relationship between the two men. There was nothing spurious about Timothy standing in the faith. He was thus a recognized representative of his spiritual father. The father-son terminology to express the master-disciple relationship was widespread in contemporary society, especially in the mysteries as Dibelius shows.<sup>36</sup>

In SDA Bible commentary, the author described Timothy like this: "This epistle was written to Timothy while he was a pastor of the Ephesian church, and is composed primarily of instructions addressed to him as a leader of the church."<sup>37</sup>

## Historical Background

**Timothy** (Greek: Τιμόθεος; *Timotheus*, meaning "honoring God or "honored by God" was an early Christian evangelist and the first Christian bishop of Ephesus, who tradition relates died around the year AD 97.

Timothy was from the Lycaonian city of Lystra in Asia Minor, born of a Jewish mother who had become a Christian believer, and a Greek father. The Apostle Paul met him during his second missionary journey and he became Paul's companion and co-worker along with Silas. The New Testament indicates that Timothy traveled with Saint Paul, who was also his mentor. Paul entrusted him with important assignments. He is addressed as the recipient of the First and Second Epistles to Timothy.<sup>38</sup>

This historical relationship between Paul and Timothy is one of mentorship. Timothy is first mentioned in Acts 16:1. His mother Eunice, and his grandmother, Lois, are mentioned in 2 Timothy 1:5. All that we know of his father is that he was a Greek, not a Jew (Acts 16:1).

Paul's second visit to Lystra is when Timothy first connected with Paul (1 Timothy 1:2; 2 Timothy 3:11). Paul not only brought Timothy into the faith but he was Timothy's main

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<sup>35</sup>Donald Guthrie, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, The Pastoral Epistles p. 55

<sup>36</sup>Ibid p. 56

<sup>37</sup>Ibid

<sup>38</sup>[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint\\_Timothy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Timothy)

mentor in Christian leadership (Acts 16:3), having done church planting and missionary journeys together. Timothy would have received his authority to preach in churches directly from Paul who of course was the greater known and accepted of the two and an apostle. Timothy's official position in the church was one of an evangelist (1 Timothy 4:14) and he worked with Paul in Phrygia, Galatia, and Mysia, Troa, Philippi and Berea (Acts 17:14) and continued on to do even more work in Athens, and Thessalonica for the church (Acts 17:15; 1 Thessalonians 3:2) not to mention his work in Corinth, Macedonia, Ephesus and greater Asia. Timothy was also noted for coming to Paul's aid when Paul fell into prison (Philippians 1:1, 2 Timothy 4:13). It is noteworthy that, despite not being required due the ruling of the Jerusalem council, Timothy took circumcision himself in order to be a better witness among the Jews. According to church tradition he was loyal to Paul's wishes and stayed and worked in Ephesus until he finally suffered a martyr's death himself.<sup>39</sup>

If, however, "the pastorals are best understood against the background of the second century, the evidence in the letters relative to church order ... clearly reflect a time when apostle and prophet have been succeeded by bishop (and archbishop?) and/or elder in a stabilized church organization fully committed to an authorized succession of ordained ministers. The local churches are no longer lay churches, nor are their needs now taken care of simply by itinerant missionaries. There is obviously hierarchical organization both in the local and ecumenical church. The chief function of the bishop (or archbishop?) is to transmit and maintain the true faith."<sup>40</sup>

The Pastorals are distinguished from all other New Testament letters in that they are addressed ... to a special functional class within the church, namely, the professional ministry. Thus these letters occupy the unique distinction of being not simply the only letters in the New Testament to be addressed primarily to clergymen, but also of being in this sense the first extant pastoral letters—that is, letters written by a pastor to pastors—in the history of the church.<sup>41</sup>

## Authorship

According to the Bible, the Book of 1 Timothy was written by the apostle Paul (1 Timothy 1:1). But we also need to see what other scholars said about the authorship of I letter of Paul to Timothy. Like other Pastoral epistles, the first epistle which was given to Timothy was also written by apostle Paul even though there were some scholars who firstly denied the authorship of Paul.

According to SDA Bible commentary vol. VII, the epistle itself identifies Paul as the author of it (reference is in chap 1.1 of 1Timothy)<sup>42</sup>. It is the same as what Donald Guthrie said in

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid

<sup>40</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First\\_Epistle\\_to\\_Timothy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Epistle_to_Timothy)

<sup>41</sup> Retrieved from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First\\_Epistle\\_to\\_Timothy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Epistle_to_Timothy)

<sup>42</sup> *SDA Bible commentary vol 7*, Review and Herald Publishing Association, Washington DC 1980, p.285

Tyndale New Testament Commentary. He showed that the authorship of Paul was supported by the salutation in each Pastoral letter and by undisputed testimony of the church. But he told us that some scholars might also attribute this letter to Luke because of the close linguistic of the Pastorals with Luke/Acts.<sup>43</sup>

When we read in SDA Bible Commentary Vol. V, they accept the Pauline authorship of Pastorals with some criticism; fortunately those criticisms were given answers in that Commentary.

Although the other epistles bearing Paul's name are generally recognized by critical scholars as being authentically Pauline, many critics reject the Pauline authorship of 1 and 2 Timothy and to Titus. Following are the chief arguments set forth by certain scholars in support of view that Paul was not the author of these epistles.

### **Date and Place**

For making what you are saying to be clear, we also consider the place and the date things were written. When you consider these, you really have a real information about something.

It is the same as what Paul said to Timothy, location and time might be presented before going in deep.

The dating of 1 Timothy depends very much on the question of authorship. Those who accept the epistle's authenticity believe it was written soon after Paul left Ephesus, which he did twice according to the Acts of the Apostles. This dates the epistle to either about the year 58 or 59, or about the year 64 or 65 AD. Those who have maintained the former opinion, among others, are Theodoret, Benson, Zachariae, Michaelis, Schmidt, Koppe, Planck, Grotius, Lightfoot, Witsius, Lardner, Hug, and Prof. Stuart. The latter opinion, that it was written after Paul's first imprisonment at Rome, is maintained by Paley, Pearson, L'Enfant, LeClerc, Cave, Mill, Whitby, Macknight, and others.<sup>44</sup>

Secular historians generally place its composition sometime in the late 1st century or first half of the 2nd century AD, with a wide margin of uncertainty. The text seems to be contending against nascent Gnosticism (1 Tim 1:4, 1 Tim 4:3) which would suggest a later date due to Gnosticism developing primarily in the latter 1st century. The term Gnosis ("knowledge") itself occurs in 1 Timothy 6:20. If the parallels between 1 Timothy and Polycarp's epistle are understood as a literary dependence by the latter on the former, as is generally accepted, this would constitute a *terminus ante quem* of AD 130–155. However, Irenaeus (writing c.AD 180) is the earliest author to clearly and unequivocally describe the Pastorals.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, Inter-versity press, England p.48

<sup>44</sup>[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First\\_Epistle\\_to\\_Timothy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Epistle_to_Timothy)

<sup>45</sup>Ibid

The earliest known writing of 1 Timothy has been found on Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 5259, designated in 2017. It comes from a leaf of a codex which is dated to the 3rd century, but some said that The Book of 1 Timothy was written in A.D. 62-66.<sup>46</sup>

Some information in the Pastoral Epistles has led to the suggestion that these letters were written during what may have been Paul's fourth missionary journey. Acts ends not with Paul's death, but with his house arrest in Rome (Acts 28:16, 30-31). While the late-first-century writing *1 Clement* suggests that Paul was martyred in Rome, it does not link his martyrdom with the imprisonment recorded in Acts 28. The fourth-century Church historian Eusebius preserved a tradition that Paul was released from that imprisonment, continued his missionary labors, and was martyred by Nero on his second visit to Rome. This tradition is supported by Philippians and Philemon, which, if they were written during the Roman imprisonment recorded in Acts 28, provide evidence that Paul expected to be released (Phil. 1:25-26; Philemon 1:22), as well as by the Pastorals themselves. A fourth missionary journey and a second imprisonment after the one recorded in Acts 28 combine to form the most probable setting for the Pastorals.

If there were two imprisonments in Rome, Paul was released from his first around A.D. 62. According to later tradition he was martyred by Nero, who died in A.D. 68. Under this scenario, 1 Timothy, composed while Paul was still in the midst of his fourth missionary journey, was probably written during the earlier part of this period, between A.D. 62 and 64. Paul may have written from Macedonia (1 Tim. 1:3) in northern Greece.<sup>47</sup>

According to what is written in SDA Bible Commentary vol.6, the first letter to Timothy was written after the fourth journey of Paul, and so may be dated about a year following his release, probably A.D. 64.<sup>48</sup>

## Theme

This epistle was written to Timothy while he was a pastor of the Ephesian Church and is composed primarily of instructions addressed to him as a leader of the church. Accordingly, is classified as pastoral epistle. In it Paul admonishes Timothy to conduct himself in a manner pleasing to God and helpful to the flock over which God has placed to him, and delivers to him a solemn charge to preach the Word and to defend its teachings. This epistle reflects a rather fully developed plan for the church organization and administration. Emphasis upon doctrine in 1 Timothy and the other pastoral epistles (see 1 Tim 4:6,13,16; 2 Tim 3: 14-17; 4:14; Titus 1:9; 2:1,7) is illustrated by the fact that of the 21 times the Greek word for doctrine(*didaskalia*) is found in NT, 15 times appear in 1& 2 Timothy and Titus.

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<sup>46</sup> <https://www.gotquestions.org/Book-of-1-Timothy.html>

<sup>47</sup> Dr. Joseph R. Nally. Overview of the Book of 1 Timothy, Retrieved from <http://thirdmill.org/answers/answer.asp/file/41735>

<sup>48</sup> SDA Bible commentary vol 6, Acts to Ephesians, Review and Herald Publishing Association, Washington DC 1980, p.107

Though Paul seems to have felt himself closer to Timothy than to his other associates, the inference may be drawn from this epistle that Timothy was a man of mild temperament and not so aggressive as Paul might have wished. Surely the apostle encourages his younger companion in the ministry to more vigorous leadership. The close relationship between Paul and Timothy accounts, for the free, frank manner in which the apostle expresses his desires, admonitions, and purposes to the pastor of Ephesus, and doubtless explains the consequent lack of systematic order. The epistle was apparently written, point by point, as successive aspects of ministerial activity came to the apostle's mind.

First Timothy is a practical letter containing pastoral instruction from Paul to Timothy (cf. 3:14,15). Since Timothy was well versed in Paul's theology, the apostle had no need to give him extensive doctrinal instruction. This epistle does, however, express many important theological truths, such as the proper function of the law (1:5–11), salvation (1:14–16; 2:4–6); the attributes of God (1:17); the Fall (2:13,14); the person of Christ (3:16; 6:15,16); election (6:12); and the second coming of Christ (6:14,15).<sup>49</sup>

### **Purpose of the Author**

According to what we found on internet, Paul wrote to Timothy to encourage him in his responsibility for overseeing the work of the Ephesian church and possibly the other churches in the province of Asia (1 Timothy 1:3). This letter lays the foundation for ordaining elders (1 Timothy 3:1-7), and provides guidance for ordaining people into offices of the church (1 Timothy 3:8-13). In essence, 1 Timothy is a leadership manual for church organization and administration.<sup>50</sup>

### **Audience**

First and Second Timothy were written to the man whose name they bear. Timothy was a native of Lystra, a Roman colony in the province of Galatia. His father was a Gentile and his mother a Jew (Acts 16:1). Little is known about his father, who apparently never became a Christian, but his mother and grandmother were probably converted to Christianity as a result of Paul's visit to Lystra on his first missionary journey (2 Tim. 1:5). Timothy had from his childhood been instructed in the Jewish Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:14-15), and these two women were undoubtedly influential in Timothy's own conversion to Christianity.

When Paul returned to Lystra on his second missionary journey, some of the Christians called his attention to a young believer named Timothy, and Paul decided to take him along on his journey (Acts 16:1-3). Since Paul would be evangelizing Jews, he circumcised Timothy according to Jewish custom (Acts 16:3). Paul and the elders of the Church also laid their hands upon Timothy to set him apart and equip him for ministry (1 Tim. 1:18; 4:14).

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<sup>49</sup> <https://www.gty.org/library/bible-introductions/MSB54/first-timothy>

<sup>50</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.gotquestions.org/Book-of-1-Timothy.html>

Timothy traveled with Paul throughout most of Paul's second and third missionary journeys (Acts 17:14-15; 18:5; 19:22; 20:4-6), and apparently for part of his fourth. He seems to have become Paul's protege, and Paul spoke of himself as Timothy's "father" (Phil. 2:22) and of Timothy as his "son" (1 Tim. 1:2, 18; 1 Cor. 4:17; 2 Tim. 1:2; 2:1). As Paul's coworker, Timothy served as his representative in the Churches of Thessalonica (1 Thess. 3:2, 6), Corinth (1 Cor. 4:17; 16:10), Philippi (Phil. 2:19, 23), and Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:3).

If Timothy had a fault, it was that he was burdened by what Paul characterized as a "spirit of timidity" (2 Tim. 1:7). Paul felt it necessary to ask the Church in Corinth to receive Timothy in a manner that would set him at ease (1 Cor. 16:10-11). In his letters to Timothy, Paul exhorted him not to let anyone despise him on account of his youth (1 Tim. 4:12), not to neglect the spiritual gift that he had received (1 Tim. 4:14), and not to be ashamed to speak out boldly for the gospel (2 Tim. 1:8).

Apart from the enigmatic statement in Hebrews 13:23 that Timothy had been "released" (presumably from prison), little is known about what happened to Timothy after the writing of 2 Timothy.<sup>51</sup>

First Timothy was one of only four letters in the New Testament written by Paul to individuals. The others are 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon. Timothy was the only person to receive two individual letters from Paul in the New Testament. Timothy was from Lystra, in modern-day Turkey, the son of a Greek father and Jewish mother. Timothy's mother, Eunice, and grandmother, Lois, were also believers (2 Timothy 1:5). They had raised him to know the Old Testament (2 Timothy 3:15). He was converted to Christianity by Paul (1 Timothy 1:2). In Acts 16:1-5, we learn that believers in Lystra and Iconium spoke well of Timothy. Paul wanted to take him on his missionary journey, but Timothy was not circumcised. Paul circumcised him and they traveled together on Paul's second missionary journey. Timothy would be with Paul during his first Roman imprisonment. When 1 Timothy was written, however, Timothy was in Ephesus, serving as a leader among the various house churches that existed then. His work included evangelism, teaching, reading Scripture, appointing elders and deacons, and standing against false teachings. Paul wrote to him, likely from Macedonia, to encourage his faithful service to Christ. Timothy served some time in jail for his faith, and was later released (Hebrews 13:23).<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup>Dr. Joseph R. Nally. Overview of the Book of 1 Timothy, Retrieved from <http://thirdmill.org/answers/answer.asp/file/41735>

<sup>52</sup>Survey of 1 Timothy, <https://www.bibleref.com/>

## Interpretation of 1 Timothy 5:23

The interpretation of “Drink no longer water but use a little wine“ as suggestion Paul gave to Timothy his spiritual son, as it is described by different scholars with different understandings need to be well analyzed because of the confusion which is remained in the minds of Bible students. The aim or purpose of this study is the exegetical study of what could be the real interpretation of this passage among the more meaning we have from different Scholars. The study deals with the establishment of the text, analyzing of grammar and significant words, the theological contexts of the passage and to come up with the conclusion of this analysis. All these will help us to know what authors were trying to communicate to immediate audience.

### Establishing the text

In 1 Timothy 5:23, Paul was giving Timothy the advice of drink little wine because of his infirmities. We are going to see how different versions from English and even in Greek version.

**GRK:** ὕδροπότει ἀλλὰ οἶνον ὀλίγον χρῶ  
Stop drinking only water

Verb - Present Imperative Active - 2nd Person Singular

Strong's Greek 5202: From a compound of hudor and a derivative of pino; to be a water-drinker, i.e. To abstain from vinous beverages.

χρῶ (chrō): and use

Verb - Present Imperative Middle or Passive - 2nd Person Singular

Strong's Greek 5530: To use, make use of, deal with, take advantage of.

ὀλίγον (oligō): a little

Adjective - Dative Masculine Singular

Strong's Greek 3641: Puny; especially neuter somewhat.

οἶνον (oinō): wine

Noun - Dative Masculine Singular

Strong's Greek 3631: Wine. A primary word (yayin); 'wine'.

ἀλλὰ (alla): instead,

Conjunction

Strong's Greek 235: But, except, however. Neuter plural of allos; properly, other things, i.e. contrariwise.

διὰ (dia): because of

Preposition

Strong's Greek 1223: A primary preposition denoting the channel of an act; through.

τὸν (ton): your

## **In English versions**

### **1 Timothy 5:23 NIV**

<sup>23</sup> Stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses.<sup>53</sup>

### **1 Timothy 5:23 ESV**

<sup>23</sup> No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments<sup>54</sup>

### **1 Timothy 5:23 NKJV**

<sup>23</sup> No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent infirmities.<sup>55</sup>

### **1 Timothy 5:23 International Standard Version**

Stop drinking only water, but use a little wine for your stomach because of your frequent illnesses.<sup>56</sup>

### **1 Timothy 5:23 American King James Version**

Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for your stomach's sake and your often infirmities.<sup>57</sup>

According to different English versions which are given above, ESV and NKJV used “No longer drink only water” while NIV and ISV used “Stop drinking only water.”

## **Grammatical analysis**

### **Study of important words: “ὕδρωπότει (hydropotei)”: Stop drinking water**

This word was used by Paul because in his day, as now, the water in many localities was often unsafe for use. Physical ailments such as dysentery, often due to contaminated water were common occurrences.

.οἶνον (oinō): Wine: Some commentators believe that Paul here advocates the temperate use of fermented wine for medicinal purposes. Others hold that Paul refers to unfermented grape juice, their reasoning being that he would not give advice inconsistent with the rest of Scripture, which warns against the use of intoxicating beverages.

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<sup>53</sup> NIV

<sup>54</sup> ESV

<sup>55</sup> NKJV

<sup>56</sup> ISV

<sup>57</sup> AKJV



ἀσθενείας: Often infirmities: Apparently Timothy was frequently ill. A body frequently beset with infirmities is not attractive advertisement for any kind of health reform.<sup>58</sup>

### Lexicon

Verb - Present Imperative Active - 2nd Person Singular

Strong's Greek 5202: From a compound of hudor and a derivative of pino; to be a water-drinker, i.e. To abstain from vinous beverages.

χρῶ (chrō): and use

Verb - Present Imperative Middle or Passive - 2nd Person Singular

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ἄλλὰ (alla): instead,

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Strong's Greek 235: But, except, however. Neuter plural of allos; properly, other things, i.e. contrariwise.

διὰ (dia): because of

Preposition

Strong's Greek 1223: A primary preposition denoting the channel of an act; through.

τὸν (ton): your

Article - Accusative Masculine Singular

Strong's Greek 3588: The, the definite article. Including the feminine he, and the neuter to in all their inflections; the definite article; the stomach στόμαχον (stomachon) Noun -

Accusative Masculine Singular Strong's Greek 4751: The stomach. From stoma; an orifice, i.e., the 'stomach' and καὶ (kai) Conjunction Strong's Greek 2532: And, even, also, namely.

Your σου (sou) Personal / Possessive Pronoun - Genitive 2nd Person Singular Strong's Greek 4771: You. The person pronoun of the second person singular; thou. Frequent πυκνάς

(pyknas) Adjective - Accusative Feminine Plural Strong's Greek 4437: Frequent, often, much. From the same as skenopoios; clasped, i.e. frequent; neuter plural frequently. Ailments

ἀσθενείας (astheneias)<sup>59</sup>

And thine often infirmities - ἀσθενείας astheneias- Weaknesses or sicknesses. The word would include all infirmities of body, but seems to refer here to some attacks of sickness to

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<sup>58</sup>Siegfried H. Horn, *Seventh Day Adventist Bible Dictionary* (SDABD), rev. ed. (1979), s. v.7p.314

<sup>59</sup>[https://biblehub.com/1\\_timothy/5-23.htm](https://biblehub.com/1_timothy/5-23.htm)

which Timothy was liable, or to some feebleness of constitution; but beyond this we have no information in regard to the nature of his maladies.<sup>60</sup>

### Structure of the Text

When I analyze the verse 23 of 1 Timothy chapter 5, I find that there is a close connection between these verses with other verses, but the solution might lie in the precise meaning of pure in verse 22. It may be that the apostle feared lest his injunction 'keep yourself pure might be interpreted too rigidly as exhortation to ascetic practices, and he wished to make clear that 'purity' was not synonymous with abstention. Paul advised Timothy to mind Timothy's weak health, and thinks it helpful to draw attention to the medicinal value of wine.

**Drink no longer water:** is to abstain altogether from water-drinking, but is to cease from doing so exclusively. It may be that contaminated water had contributed to Timothy's indigestion and so the apostle suggests a remedy. The verse shows Timothy to be a man of delicate health, and is one of those incidental touches which help the modern reader to feel greater sympathy with him.

### The literal analysis about 1 Timothy 5:23

The authors have criticized the little wine as alcoholic or fermented beverages but the strong ideas that can contract their ideas is in proverbs 20:1, it is written: "Wine (Yayin) is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise". It makes sense that when Paul advised Timothy to use little wine as it is written in 1 Timothy 5:23 would be referring to grape juice. This verse gave warning for those who are drinking and showed them as unwise people. If the Bible said that is immature to do something Paul would not commit that mistake of being unwise because of giving bad advice to Timothy by using wine which is fermented. Another strong idea is in what Paul said himself. This *is* a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work. 2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; 3 not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; 4 one who rules his own house well, having *his* children in submission with all reverence 5 (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?); 1 Timothy 3:1-5.

A minister, pastor, teacher or other one that drinks wine would be acting contrary to Paul's counsel and setting a wrong example for others. Paul was referring to grape juice and not wine.<sup>61</sup> To be wise is something you and I need. It does not concern for only ministers like Timothy but every Christian has to be wise. It is mandatory for us to be so.

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<sup>60</sup>Barnes, Albert. "Commentary on 1 Timothy 5:23". "Barnes' Notes on the New Testament".

<sup>61</sup> Ibid p.

We are not allowed to use alcoholic beverage or fermented wine; whatever circumstances we are in, God is in control. We have to take care of our bodies by using what are healthful and helpful for us.

There are two Hebrew words used translated as "wine" in our English Bible. The first word is the Strong's word and is the Hebrew word, "yayin". This is alcoholic wine. The second word is the Strong's word. It is the Hebrew word "tiyros". This is non-alcoholic grape juice or sweet wine. This is the type of wine that would have been used at Passover (non-alcoholic wine). This kind of wine is often called in the Bible "new wine"<sup>62</sup>.

The new wine (tiyros) is what can be considered as non – fermented or grape juice wine which is allowed to be used. The left wine (yayin) is fermented which were condemned by the Bible. According to these information of the Bible itself and Seventh Day Adventist Bible commentary, it is clear that the wine which Apostle Paul referred to in 1Timothy5:23 is not fermented but grape juice which is also called unfermented.

### **Theological meaning of 1 Timothy 5:23**

Based on previous step of exegesis in this research, translation, grammatical analysis I have found that the verse written in 1 Timothy: “No longer drink water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments”, 1 Timothy 5:23 has the following meaning: The Bible uses the word wine to refer to both an alcoholic fermented beverage as well as unfermented grape juice. According to Isaiah 65:8, the new wine is found in a cluster and there is blessing in it. Through harmful beverage like alcoholic nothing good can come from it. That is why in proverbs 20: 1, there is curse for those who use fermented wine. If there is curse from fermented wine, blessing comes from another side and it is in what we read in Matt 26:29.

This is obviously the unfermented, freshly squeezed juice of the grape. Referring to the communion wine served, Jesus told His disciples that He would not participate in the service again until He “drank it new with them in the Father’s kingdom” (Matt. 26:29).

The communion wine representing Christ’s pure, undefiled Blood must be unfermented since fermentation is a sign of sin. In 1 Timothy 5:23, Paul encourages Timothy to use a little wine or grape products for his stomach’s sake. Unfermented grape juice has healthful properties for the body. Indeed, there is blessing in the freshly squeezed juice of the grape (Denman 2010).<sup>63</sup> Paul is saying that Timothy only abstains from evil but doesn’t do well. Abstaining from evil is right, except he needs to move forward. He needs to do well for the sake of his sick, joyless, and unfulfilled heart so that he could take hold of what is truly life, and life means healing, joy, and fulfillment.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Eddie Chumney, Wines in Biblical Times

<sup>64</sup> Ibid

It is not contrary with how we are living today. Big number of today are struggling with illnesses that come from drinking contaminated water while others are using fermented wine as remedy which they are given by Paul but neither contaminated water nor fermented wine none of them can give healthy life. Good life comes from abstaining from evil and doing well for the sake of our body.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

In this study entitled “Critical analysis about the meaning of little wine in the book of 1 Timothy 5:23”, the following questions were objected:

What kind of the little wine Paul suggested Timothy to drink? Wasn't fermented (alcoholic) or non-fermented (non-alcoholic)? If it is non-fermented why did he require Timothy to drink little, not much?

In providing clear information on the mentioned verse, the study introduces the problem of differences in interpretations of scholars provided on the verse. In this study the researcher has shown that “not use only water but use little wine” as advice Paul gave to Timothy has raised different opinions on which the following theories were made: Moderationist view, abstentions view, Prohibitionist view and other person who explained in Spiritual view.

Again the study emphasized on how various commentators commented on the objected verse in detail. According to the various ideas of scholars, three main points of view were examined, such as (a) Moderationist view which supported the use of wine alcoholic and non-alcoholic highlighting a blessing from using it (b) Other scholars supported the abstentionist view. For them to drink alcoholic beverage like wine is not a sin; thus, they are condemning those who are drinking except for the exemplar Christian such as Church Elders, Deacons, Deaconesses, bishops, or pastors who according to them, they might avoid such drinking as it is written in the Bible that “it is not allowed for Priests to use wine in their life” (Ezekiel 44:21) (c) Prohibitionist view is another view which is also supported by scholars. The supporters of this view are denying that the little wine which was used here is an alcoholic but simply a grape juice, new wine, and sweet one. For them nothing good comes from alcohol because it makes people to be addicted no matter how little it is. To them, instead the new wine, grape juice might be a blessing; thus, it might be used as a healthful beverage that is why Apostle Paul advised Timothy to use little wine even though he may not use it before. Seeking to provide a clear information, the contextual analysis of the whole first Epistle of Paul to Timothy was made in this study. The reason was simply to have a well understanding and be able to have correct information about what is written in 1 Timothy 5:23. And from that, main elements of this epistle of Paul to Timothy were highlighted such as authorship of the letter, the recipient, date and place, the main theme and purpose of the letter.

The study ended with an analysis and the interpretation of “using little wine in 1 Timothy 5:23. As found, three different views; Moderationist view, Absentionist view, Prohibitionist view were clearly analyzed in the context of the verse. After deeply analyzing

the passage in those three views, the prohibitionist view was supported. In addition, while doing the analysis, Greek Lexicon and Hebrew words were used together with different English Bible Versions. As discussed above, the findings showed that to drink alcohol is prohibited, on such extent, that it is even a sin to taste one cup. After analyzing this verse 1 Timothy 5: 23, it was discovered that this is a real position according to what is supported with the Bible from its original language explanation about the wine (oinos). As seen nowadays, alcohol is a primary cause of deadly car accidents, ungodly behavior, fornication, adultery, domestic abuse, murders, and birth defects or miscarriages; on that extent, it can't be recommended for godly people.

Many will say that it's ok to drink when you just want to have a good time, but that you should never get drunk. For people who say so, where do they draw that verse in the Bible? Satan always tries to blur the lines between sin and morality. Some people can get addicted to alcohol after just one drink, and having that first drink with a group of friends who can potentially lead to a life of alcoholism and misery.

As the conclusion, Paul was not going contrary to the testimony of the scripture and condemning alcohol as a beverage for believers. He was counseling a very conscientious young minister who was only drinking water as a beverage to maintain high purity in everything, just like the priests of Old Testament. But Paul suggested that if he drank a little grape juice with his water, it would be a good for him since nothing was wrong through using soft drink like grape juice from grape.

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