

Paul's Philosophy of Taking a Little Wine in 1 Timothy 5:23 and Drug Abuse Among Nigerian Youth

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Dates:

Received: 27 Feb., 2024

Accepted: 30 Mar., 2024

Published: 06 May, 2024

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Competing interests:

The author(s) declares that he/she has no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced him/her in writing this article.

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**Abstract**

Studies have shown that misconceptions of taking alcoholic wine, harmful substances and drug abuse among Nigeria youths have reached an alarming rate. Most young people are addicted to taking harmful substance as a routine. Drugs are good, though with minimal side effects when recommended by a medical practitioner to patients. It was discovered that drug abuse has plugged the youths of Nigeria into various criminal acts and unruly behaviour. It is against this backdrop that the researcher employed the interpretation of Paul's philosophy of taking a little wine in 1 Tim 5:23 and proffer strategies that could curb drug abuse among youths in Nigeria. It discovered that Paul's admonishment does not encourage drug abuse. The study found out that the family, government, religious organizations, various non-governmental organisations, peer groups, and youth forums have major roles to play in ameliorating the effects of drug abuse among the youths. The study recommended and concluded that Nigerian youths should be made to understand that drugs are meant to be taken as medicine especially with prescription. This is in line with Paul's admonishment in 1 Tim 5:23 take a little wine for your ailment.

Keywords: 1 Tim 5:23, Paul's Philosophy, Taking a little wine, Drug Abuse, Nigeria Youths.

Introduction

Research shows according to Oche (2023) that the rate at which the youth in Nigeria abuse substance is very alarming since substances to be abused are more readily available. Olaniyi (2020) opines that substance use has been of tremendous benefit to mankind. Nevertheless, it has also been acknowledged that its inappropriate use can cause incalculable harm not only to the users but to the larger society. This implies that it sets both the abuser and its environs in great danger hence the need to keep addressing this topic constantly. Olaniyi (2020), in the same vein, stresses that in the present Nigerian society, drug abuse is widespread. This is mostly seen among the youth. Some of these substances may come in form of tablets, capsules, syrups or soluble. Examples of such are codeine, tramadol, frenor, Alabuku among others. Some people sniff, swallow, inject or ingest them in the quest for euphoria. In addition, substances such as eskey, crake, marijuana and many others mostly initiate in the users the ability to commit crimes. In support of this, Adegboro (2014) asserts that the use of illicit drugs has been linked with anti-social behaviours and criminality for many decades. Alcohol and marijuana feature prominently on the list of substances abused. Adegboro (2014) further reports that violent behaviour like sexual assault and violent crimes were common among those addicted to substances. It is against this backdrop that this study employed critical historical approach of biblical exegesis, using Paul's philosophy in 1 Tim 5:23 of taking a little wine to proffer strategies that can curb drug abuse among Nigerian youth. Exegesis in biblical studies is the method of doing a critical biblical interpretation of the text of study (Goman, 2009). Its application to a particular context is called hermeneutics. As such, the exegesis is applied to the issues of drug abuse in Nigeria to show its lessons. Some recommendations are given in the work in line with the findings of the exegesis.

Conceptualising Drug Abuse

According to World Health Organization (WHO) Substance abuse refers to the harmful or hazardous use of psychoactive substances, including alcohol and illicit drugs. Psychoactive substance use can lead to dependence syndrome— a cluster of behavioural, cognitive, and physiological phenomena that develop after repeated substance use and that typically include a strong desire to take the drug, difficulties in controlling its use, persisting in its use despite harmful consequences, a higher priority given to drug use than to other activities and obligations, increased tolerance, and sometimes a physical withdrawal state (Oche, 2023).

Drug abuse, also known as drug addiction, is defined as chronic, relapsing brain disease that is characterized by compulsive drug seeking and use, despite its harmful consequences. The initial decision of drug taking is voluntary but repeated uses leads to its addiction and addiction of any form is dangerous (Alhassan,2023). From the foregoing, Alhassan (2023) further discloses that it has become rampant among the youth. It starts with the mere habit of smoking of cigarettes by the youth. Gradually, it degenerates into drug abuse. Drug Abuse is one of the banes of modern society. It is found in all regions of the society, including rural and urban areas. It is seen among the poor and the rich, men and women, young and old (Osiwa,2020).That is to say it is most overwhelmingly practised by young boys and girls especially in schools and most educational and technical institutions. Thus, drug abuse is a problem in almost all the countries of the world. John (2023) widely attests that for common people, it is a weakness of character and the moral theologian may see it as a matter of vice while as sociologists see it as a social problem. It is considered sin by religious people and as a crime by law enforcement groups. The psychiatrist can describe it as a personality disorder problem. The alcoholic's anonymous groups and the treatment centers call them patients and alcoholism (Oche,2023).

Exegesis of 1 Tim 5:23.

(A) Researchers Translation of the Text

<p>1 Tim 5:23 Μηκέτι ὑδροπότει, ἀλλὰ οἶνω ὀλίγω χρῶ διὰ τὸν στόμαχον καὶ τὰς πικνάς σου ἀσθενείας.</p>	<p>Take no longer wine but put a little wine for your stomach and your constant ailments.</p>
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Addressing a Wrong notion issue in 1 Tim 5:23

Paul's admonition that his missionary son is to a little wine for his frequent infirmities has raised series of concern in Christendom. Questions have also been asked as to whether Paul was contradicting himself, having spoken of an overseer in 1Tim 3:8 to be temperate and blameless. Does his instructions lead the young growing minister to sin and thereby constituting defilement and intoxication of highest order? (Macdonald 1995). Even in the Old Testament times (Lev.10:9 and Ezek 44:21) the priest and Levite and their sons are forbidden from taking wine or strong drinks while performing their priestly ordinances and rites. Paul also collaborated the above assertion when he declares that Timothy should not participate in the sins of others and should keep himself pure (1Tim 5 :22). The Greek phrase used in the verse captures it correctly "κοινωνε" (*koinónei*) which is a verb in the imperative present active of the second person singular from *kiononeo* meaning having share or partaking in something. So, Paul was advising Timothy not to partake or have share in the sins and should keep himself pure. This instruction is in line with the one given to Old Testament priest to keep themselves

pure. τήρει is used here as a verb imperative present active second person singular.

Paul was actually considering Timothy's ecclesiastical office at Ephesus having admonished him in 1Tim 4:12 that he should not allow anybody despise his youth. He is supposed to live by example before his congregation both in creed and conduct (Bruce, 2008). One might have wondered why Paul will instruct Timothy to take a little wine for his stomach and infirmities? It appears Paul suddenly remembered Timothy's ill- health and difficulties and as a young minister under authority, was waiting for his mentor's endorsement before taking a little wine. This is for his healing and to protect the faith of the believers so that they will not be offended by what Timothy is drinking or eating. Gill (1980) supports the fact and maintains that Paul's advice of "taking a little wine was not for pleasure, intoxication and hilarious living but for edification of a weak body and improving a health that has been attacked by ailments.

Close Reading of the Text

1Tim. 5:23 is divided into three parts. These are:

(A) Taking a Little Wine

The wine to be taking from the above phrase suggests that if taken in larger quantity, it can cause intoxication and misbehaviour that is unbecoming of the minister of the gospel. Gills (1980) was of the opinion that Paul's philosophy is based on taking a little proportion of wine. The main purpose of mixing little wine with water is to dilute the intoxicants. The Greek word little is rendered ὀλίγω (*oligō*) adjective normal dative masculine singular no degree from (*oligō*). It means few or small.

The intent is that such quality small wine mixed with water is more of curative tendencies than enjoyment and hilariousness. The statement also implies that water alone was no longer affective in curing Timothy's health trauma. Probably people with less severe cases in Timothy 's community have been using only water to resolve their stomach disorder and frequent infirmities. However, timothy's sickness has gone severe as Nute (1988) points that he is waiting for a superior and authoritative permission from Paul to use a little wine mixed with water to cure himself. From every indication lesser superior counselors from Timothy's community might have been encouraging him "to take little wine for his sickness but Timothy was at a cross road because of his leadership position, degree of consecration and not to diminish the faith of new converts in the Ephesian church. Paul's admonition cleared the air and save Timothy the higgledy-piggledy of his health and leadership stand (Macdonald,1995).

(B) Faith and Medication that Resolve Stomach disorder

Timothy's firm belief in taking only water can no longer carry him because of his stomach disorder. Afterall, it seemed Paul believed that drinking only water was the source of Timothy's ailment. A close reading of the text suggests that Timothy prefers taking only water and this may have worsened his ailment, and news of his practice got to Paul. Paul being

conscious of his pastoral assignment at Ephesus and the danger of his stomach ill health, instructed him to begin to mix a little wine for his own good (Barn's,1998). In mediterranean practices and belief, alcohol was believed to fight stomach problems by destroying bacteria or pathogens that found in water. Writers like Plutarch, the Talmudists, and Hippocrates had shown the curative power of wine (Fee, 1984). In this way, mixing alcohol with water would help cure Timothy's ailment which, believably, was stomach related. This is also an indication that medication should be sought by Christians when sick. Irekamba (2015) complements the above claim by stating that the Christian faithful will not be keeping religious creed to the rejection of the use of drugs to cure ailments, and adherence to medical prescriptions more especially when such ailment is a terminal case.

It is pertinent to note therefore that as Christian pilgrims, most especially leaders, one is not supposed to die in 'active service' because of ignorance or the rejection of drug in curing ailments. Paul was fully aware of how Timothy was dear to him and was not ready to lose him because of a stomach disorder and constant infirmities which mixing a little wine with water can resolve (Huston (2014) in the same vein believes that adding a little wine to water has made the mixture a medicine as against strong alcoholic beverages like beer and other intoxicating substances. Paul's recommendation was to cure an acute stomach problem for Timothy's effective pastoral service. Gills (1980) espouses that the stomach problems may be indigestions. Hence these indigestions medically can cause an acute ulcer or swollen stomach which is not far from Liver inflammation and other associated disease which might affect the brain arousing from stomach disorder

(C) Resolving a Frequent Infirmity for a Healthy Christian Service

Frequent infirmities and constant body trauma affect a healthy Christian service. Paul believed Timothy's commitment to service is not supposed to be interrupted by constant infirmities. The Greek word *πυκνάς* (*puknas*) means adjective accusative feminine meaning frequent, often and numerous. The stomach sickness, by the implication of being frequent, might become cancerous or something else and could have transferred to other parts of the body if not for Paul's pastoral intervention (Macdoland,1995). The stomach houses the internal organs and closely associated with the liver, intestine, pancreas, kidney etc. So, Paul's admonition is that Timothy should take a little wine to stop the stomach ailment from becoming chronic. It occurs often and Timothy can no longer manage it privately hence Paul's public admonition in his letter for him to take a little wine for his constant infirmities. Henry (2001) admits that this may be as a result of body weakness occasioned by hard studies, frequent ministrations and indefatigable pains and labours, Timothy endured in the cause of spreading the gospel. The intake of a little wine mixed with water will therefore help alleviate Timothy's stomach problems. In this way, the mixture becomes not an abuse of drug but as an experienced fatherly prescription to an obedient

son and partner in ministry to resolve a frequent stomach ailment for an effective pastoral work in Ephesus and elsewhere.

Summary of the Exegesis

Paul's admonition of taking a little wine is clearly an authoritative and superior drug prescription to a young active Christian leader. It is not drug abuse because it was for curative purposes. The wine is not taken for pleasure or hilarious purposes, but for the resolving and curing of a constant health challenging infirmity. Timothy's pastoral dignity, integrity and long term effectiveness in ministry was Paul's uttermost concern when he instructed him to take little wine for his stomach and numerous infirmities. This was not for pleasure.

Cases of Drug Abuse among Nigeria Youths

Nowadays some drugs are no longer used as medications which were their initial essence. Rather, some of them are used 'as food', and once it is used in this form, it amounts to drug abuse (Alhassan,2023). Research has proven that this practice is common among the young ones, even in Nigeria (John, 2023). According to Sumaina, (2016), and Oche ,(2023) about 40% of young adults in the country are involved in substance abuse in several locations in Nigeria. Substances such as cocaine, heroin, alcohol, marijuana, tobacco have however been revealed as the most common drugs abused by this category of people. Amosu, Ige & Ajala, (2010) & Olarewaju, (2023) opine that more worrisome is the continued increase in the use of alcohol and other substances such as Indian hemp, nicotine, ecstasy and other amphetamines among students in tertiary institutions in the country which seem to be gaining momentum every day.

The personal and societal negative impact of drug abuse can never be overstated. Agwogie, (2020) opines that recent cases of rape in Nigeria may be linked to the abuse of drugs by the youth. This collaborated by Usman (2022) who believes that such actions are products of intoxicated from drug abuse. Often, the victims are blamed either for their inappropriate dressing or for not being sensitive enough. Rarely are the personalities and mental health of the culprits thoroughly examined. While it may not be totally out of place to consider indecent dressing and other issues as risk factors, it is vital that a close look is taken at issues concerning the culprits that constitute threat of rape and other social vices in our society (John,2023). One of these is drug abuse.

In another context, Olaniyi (2020) notes that crimes and deviant behaviours bring about insecurity in any society and remain part of the major impediments to development in any nation. A society thrives when criminalities and social menace that could threaten its security are controlled (Oche,2023). Nwanegbo et al., stress that security is evidently the pillar upon which every meaningful development could be achieved and sustained. Iwerimie Jaja et al., posits further that without law and order, there would be no stability and sustainable development in any society. Victims of crimes and social vices suffer the loss of lives and property which can retard socio-

economic development in the country. Considering these findings, there is need to examine recent real life cases of rape in Nigeria to help validate this fact.

Agwogie, (2020) notes that recently there were cases of rape, one was that of a 25 year old young man who raped an 85 year old grandmother in Niger State. His excuse was that he was drunk. The same relates with that of a 25 year old who raped another 70 year old grandmother in Ogun State purported to be under the influence of alcohol (Agwogie, 2020 & John, 2023). Another case was reported of a man who slept with his two daughters for years, especially when under the influence of alcohol (Olarenwaju, 2022). While it is difficult to estimate the number of rape cases in Nigeria in a year, a report credited to Women at Risk Foundation stated that over 10 thousand girls are being raped in Nigeria daily. In another report credited to the Minister of Women Affairs, about two million girls and women are raped annually in Nigeria. These figures appear to be on the high side, but when compared with some risk factors that contribute to sexual violence, they may not be out of place. They show the fact that there is nexus between drug abuse, criminality and other social vices such as rape, cultism, thuggery, racketeering, larceny, armed robbery, brutality/aggressive behaviours, disordered social relationship, unwanted pregnancies, unguided early marriages and prostitution.

Therefore, beyond the issue of rape and other social vices, everyone and the society is now at risk of the negative impact of drug abuse in Nigeria. For example, according to the National Drug Use Survey and Health in Nigeria (2023), 14.3 million (14.4 percent) of Nigeria's population between the ages of 15 and 64 years use at least one psychoactive substance, excluding alcohol and tobacco. This figure is higher than the global average by about 10 percent. Out of this population, 20 percent have drug use disorders. This is also higher than the global average by 11 percent. According to the report, some of those who use drugs have been arrested for drug-related offences. These include burglary, sex work, shoplifting and theft, among others. Regrettably, most individuals with drug use disorders who, ordinarily should be provided with appropriate drug treatment, are on the streets either abandoned by their families or, could not access treatment due to the very limited drug treatment facilities in Nigeria or the high cost of treatment which in most cases is beyond the reach of an average Nigerian(Oche,2023).

Accordingly, John (2023) posits that even though alcohol was excluded in the national drug use survey, recent studies have raised concerns about the increasing rate of the use and abuse of alcohol with the attendant economic, social and medical adverse effects upon the individual, family and community. Alcohol is now more readily available, in small sachets but with extremely high concentration. It is the most commonly used psychoactive substance across the six geo-political zones. It is cheaper and appears more attractive to the young ones since they are hawked on the streets and sold

at any pub in the street(Alhassan,2023). With this, the case of social vices in Nigeria especially drug abuse being the architecture, the situation is not only alarming but needs immediate intervention by different institutions that have the society and its environs at heart. John ,(2023) further notes that persons under the influence of psychoactive substances have perceptual distortions, emotional imbalance, issues with self-discipline, in a state of confusion, paranoid and suffer irritability. These could induce social vices. What these tell us is that the need for urgent steps to be taken to address the issue of substance abuse and mental health in Nigeria.

Hermeneutics of 1 Timothy 5:23 And Drug Abuse Among Nigeria Youths.

a) An Authoritative Prescription from a Godly Father

Paul's admonition was authoritative and was not misleading. Both Timothy and the congregation under him have respect, reverence, and honour for Paul. They have no option than to accept his instruction on Timothy taking a little wine mixed with water for his ailment. Also he was given such instructions to save life. So, Timothy, who is sick, will be healed and have more opportunities of living long to serve God in Ephesus and beyond.

The family, church and the government are all called by the text to take active role in watching over the youth to avoid drug abuse. Sometimes, drug abuse is the product of parent's failings in the roles. Lack of monitoring by parents could lead young people into the abuse of drugs. Parents are called to watch over their children in firm and godly way like Paul did to Timothy. The text also calls parents to advice their children and wards on the dangers of drug abuse as Paul advised Timothy on the use of alcohol mixture with water. The government is also called to rehabilitative roles as far as drug users are concerned. The are called by the text to put important measures in place to rehabilitate drug users in Nigeria. Preventive measures are also advised by text to be take by the government as far as drug abuse is concerned.

b) Prescription of a Little Wine for Healing and not for Pleasure

It has been reiterated in this paper that little wine diluted or mixed with water reduced the strong alcoholic content of the wine which was given to Timothy. The alcoholic content is for healing purposes and not for pleasure (Huston,2014). The youth are to note this. The wrong notion that Paul supports wine taking and/or its abuse in the text has been shown to be false. In this way, the text calls the youth to shun drug abuse of any form. They are to avoid abusing drug of any form. The government, in the same vien, is called to take some concerted efforts in reducing the rate of drug abuse among Nigeria youth. Seminars should be organised by government agencies in schools and colleges on the dangers of taking drugs and other related substances as addictions and food instead of medical prescriptions by authorized, government medical established personnel and establishments (government approved hospitals, certified pharmaceutical shops).

Paul's recommendations were to save the life of Timothy who was useful to him and God who called him for a long term valuable evangelical service. In the same vein, the idea of curbing drug abuse among the youth and discouraging intakes of substances, strong drinks and hard drugs is to save the country's future glory and gains. The youth are the tomorrows' future of any country and they are supposed to contribute their own quota in leadership positions and other valuable political and economical sectors. On this note, Agberotime (2020) & Oche (2023) are to be commended when they insist that the danger of drug abuse and large intakes of some harmful substances are being done by the youth and emerging adults of Nigerian population which has far reaching effects on the social moral concern of the society and the nation's optimal economic growth. It means that in such a country where drug abuse is on the increase is heading towards moral, political and economical doom (John, 2023).

In line with Ayotobi (2013) & Oche (2023) points, this work believes that parents, policy makers, religious organisations, traditional rulers, communities, law enforcement agencies, parents, family, school institutions, government have a role to play if the war on drug abuse is to be won in Nigeria. These agencies are tasked by this paper to admonish the youth of the dangers of drug abuse, monitor and rehabilitate those overtaken by the menace (drug abuse) and fashion out strategies towards curbing the problem among the Nigerian youth. These agencies, will serve like Paul in our study text, who prescribed taking a little wine to Timothy as needing a medicine for resolving constant infirmities and not as food, strong drinks and hard substances that can lead one into addictions and constant involvement in crime and criminality.

Conclusion

It becomes clear that there is no part of the world that is free from the curse of drug addiction. Drug abusers have become a serious social problem which has affected millions of people including the youth. Drug abuse has deterred lives of millions of drug addicts throughout the globe, as it has forced them to live a miserable life, where they cannot distinguish between 'life and death.' This work has taken a cue out of Paul's admonishment to Timothy on the use of water mixed with alcohol to address the problem of drug abuse in the country. It has shown the need for parents, policy makers, religious organization among others are tasked by the text to fight drug abuse in the country. It has shown to the youth that the misconceived belief that 1Tim 3:25 encourages the use of alcohol or any form of drug is false. On the contrary, the texts discourages drug abuse in strong terms.

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