

**“No Longer Drink only Water, but Use a Little Wine for the
Sake of your Stomach and of your Frequent Illnesses”
(I Timothy 5: 23)**

**PhD Assistant MIHAI CIUREA,
University of Craiova,
ciureamihaijr@yahoo.co.uk**

Abstract

This famous verse 23 from the fifth chapter of the First Pastoral Epistle, written by St. Paul for his very close disciple, Timothy, has long been a source of controversy. Timothy was afflicted with a stomach illness, the nature of which is not precisely known. The Apostle of Gentiles obviously suspects “bad water” as the source of the young bishop’s problem. The apostle is not instructing Timothy to abstain from water entirely; rather, for medicinal purposes the youth was enjoined to mix with his water a “little wine”. The use of wine was a widely recognized remedy for some illnesses among both Jews and Greeks, as reflected in the Hebrew Talmud, the writings of Hippocrates, Plutarch, and Pliny the Elder. Wine was often helpful in settling stomachs and preventing dysentery. Paul could also see in Timothy a “false asceticism” due to the influence of the “false teachers” at Ephesus, which has to stop proximately. On the other hand, this passage can hardly provide any comfort for those who desire to engage in the pleasurable consumption of beverage alcohol. Imbibers rarely drink just a “little,” nor do they dilute their wine with water. The Holy Fathers and Writers of the Church (such as Clement of Alexandria and St. John Chrysostom) wrote about the abuse and the moderation when it comes to drinking wine within an authentic Christian life. Furthermore, ancient wines were not nearly as potent as today’s fortified wines. Finally, this personal passage reveals the great love and concern of Paul for his young companion in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.