

The Encouragement Newsletter

Newsletter #1 -2010

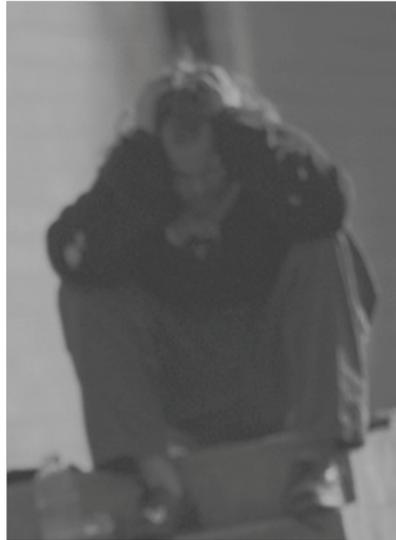
Be Sober!

Def.—Alert; Self-Controlled;
Rational; Steady

As I thought about the topic “Be Sober, I thought about the fact that I have never experienced being intoxicated or drunk with alcohol. This is not to say that I have done everything right in my life. I needed and need Jesus like everyone else. I just did not go down that path. I have, however, been in the presence of those who were drunk with alcohol. I have also seen the affects of alcoholism within my family and it is not a pretty picture. The book of Proverbs provides so many scriptures on the results of drunkenness. According to Proverbs 23:29—35, when one is drunk, there are many manifestations—contentions, complaining, wounds, hallucination and red eyes. Other physical manifestations are discolored lips and a smell that is not too appealing. Drunkenness alters behavior, thinking and natural responses. Mentally, one may not be aware of their surroundings, behavior or what is spoken. The drunkard may not even be aware of their clothing or lack thereof.

My husband is a law enforcement officer, with hours, days and months worth of stories about the behavior intoxicated persons or as he calls them, individuals “under the influence” of alcohol. The behavior he describes is both comical and sad. One story I recall is of a lady he pulled over that he suspected was under the influence of alcohol. He asked her to do a sobriety test that required her to walk placing one foot in front of the other, heel to toe. She started out fine, but then starting skipping down the dark road. He yelled, “Come back here!”. Some have been asked to say the alphabet and begin reciting, but end by singing- “Now I know my ABC’s; next time won’t you sing with me”. Those are some of the comical stories, but then there are the sad ones about the destruction and death caused by drivers under the influence of alcohol.. I have written this to paint a picture of drunkenness versus being sober. Of course, being sober is the opposite of being drunk and it is an indication of being alert, conscience, aware and clear in the head.

One does not need to get drunk with alcohol to experience drunkenness and this is the type of intoxication I have experienced. We all can experience a type of drunkenness with life. Life’s issues can be so weighty that we are intoxicated with them. We worry and say, “How am I going to make it?”; “Will this work out?”; “Will my chil-



So then let us not sleep,
as others do, but let us
be alert and
SOBER.
I Thessalonians 5:6

Be of **SOBER** spirit, be on
the alert. Your adversary,
the devil, prowls around
like a roaring lion, seeking
someone to devour.

I Peter 5:8



dren be ok?”; “Will my family be ok?”; “I did not plan to be here at this time in my life with so much turmoil”; “I gotta be successful in my career and work excessive hours to make it to the top.”; “Will I have a job?”; “Will I be accepted”; “What about my image”; the list goes on and on. These are the cares of the world we all have to contend with because we are human, but we do not have to be drunk with them. According to Dictionary.com, the definition of drunk is 1) being in a temporary state in which one’s physical and mental faculties are impaired by an excess of alcoholic drink and 2) overcome or dominated by a strong feeling or emotion. To be intoxicated is synonymous with the definition of drunk, but maybe a little more detailed. It means - 1) affected by a substance that intoxicates; drunk; inebriated and 2) mentally or emotionally exhilarated.

Driving under the influence means the alcohol is in control, but we can drive through life living under the influence of cares and concerns and exhibit the same behavior of one under the influence of alcohol. We can function under the influence of many things that we are so drunk with them that we cannot see clearly, comprehend or rationalize soberly and our thoughts, responses and behavior do not correspond with soberness. We complain, become contentious or hallucinate because we do not transform the mind. (See Romans 12:1-2)

In living under the influence of life’s issues, we can be so drunk that the passion for Jesus becomes extinct. The flames of fire for the Lord, that you once had, are no longer kindling. The wick is not burning. We are living in a time where there is pressure all around us to climb the ladder, make the money, compete with others to rise to the top and do what we can to make ends meet, but we should not be drunk or intoxicated and no longer trusting God. We must remain sober because the enemy’s modus operandi is to pressure us to live in a drunken state,

bringing us under the influence of whatever will suck out the passion for the Lord Jesus Christ. I Peter 5:8 states, “Be of SOBER spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour”. He is a liar that has come to steal, kill and destroy by using a slow and subtle process of influencing us to drink in the lies that are designed to ultimately destroy us.

There are many things we need to do in order to become and/or remain sober. But, I want to look at the parable Jesus spoke to His disciples. The parable, found in Mark 4:3-20, is about how the Word (Seed) of God is sown and the different responses after hearing the word.

Seed (Word) is Sown beside the road (4:3-4, 14-15)

This happens when the Word is sown and heard, but it goes in one ear and comes out the other. This is one who will sit and listen, but nothing spoken registers because there is no understanding. The enemy is like a bird walking around and waiting to devour the seed.



He sends thoughts that fly like birds in the mind that eat up the seed sown. It is eaten by the birds of doubt, fear, discouragement and excuses. The result is the same behavior and lifestyle because the seed never hits the heart. Remember, seeds always have the potential for growth and development. If the ground is properly tilled, the seed will produce, but in this case, the seed (Word) was sown in, but was snatched away just as fast as it was heard.

Seed (Word) is Sown Among Thorns (4:7, 18-19)

This one hears, but the word is choked out and there are no results. The Biblical definition of the word choke is—to strangle completely; to drown and to crowd. Therefore, to choke is to cut off the breath and breath represents life.

Yearly, many farmers, gardeners and landscapers clear the land, remove thorns and anything else that will keep that seed from going into the ground and growing. Thorns, also known as briars will cause pain when you touch them. As a child I remember calling them “sticka’ briars”. When they touched my skin, I



remember a stinging pain because the sticka’ briars are so hard and all I could do was scream, OUCH!!

Seed (Word) is Sown on Rocky Ground (4:5-6, 16-17)



Naturally, where there are more rocks than soil, the seed cannot be planted properly. In this case, the seed (Word)

is heard and the seed sprang up immediately. The response is excitement and joy after hearing the Word, but it does not go deep within the heart. It is good to get excited, but another step must be taken. The seed (Word) must be watered and cared for so that it will not remain on the surface. If not, the pressure that comes as a result of the word cannot be withstood because there is no depth. The pressure is like the baking sun that scorches and withers what grows. To water the Word, it is necessary to meditate on it, study it further and allow it to go deep within your heart and mind.

I heard someone say, “The Word invites conflicts”. There are times when affliction (trial) or persecution (harassment because of belief) will arise after the Word is heard. Oftentimes, it occurs immediately after you have rejoiced or wept over the Word. This is a test to see if you believe, trust or will do what has been heard. (See James 1:22) The test will prove if the word will work for you or if you will allow the word to work. Can you and will you stand firm on what has been heard? Will you move forward on what it says or will there be the pressure of fear? If what you hear is only a “good word” that caused excitement and after a few days the thrill is gone—the thrill of a conference, a “revival” or a regular weekly gathering—then the seed has fallen on rocks. If there is no firm root in God, all of what has been heard will not go down deep into the heart to become an anchor.

Seed sown on rocky soil will never be fruitful.

Thorns will choke out (strangle completely, drown and crowd) the Word (Seed) for three reasons- 1) Worries of the world or age (See Romans 12:2); 2) Deceitfulness of riches; and 3) Desire for other things. These things will cause a hard heart, full of thorns, and a hard heart will not receive anything of God, unless it is changed. (Zechariah 7:12)

Now let us explore this deeper.

Thorns of worries of the world or age- The hearers that are bogged down with cares are those who hear the word, but the cares are the thorns that keep the word from entering the heart. The scripture states in Philippians 4:6—“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God”. We are admonished in I Peter 5:6 to humble ourselves and cast all of our cares upon Him. What are the cares, concerns or worries? Well, they are finances, safety, health, children, family, employment and the basics of life. The things mentioned on page one. The cares of the world can cause discouragement and a heap of negative emotions and the word will miss your heart.

In Matthew 6:25-34, Jesus tells us not to be worried about life. He then compares His care for us to his care for birds, lilies and grass of the field. He does not want us to worry. Gentiles (*signifies those who do not know the Lord*) seek these things, but our heavenly Father knows that you and I have need of all these things. He wants us to seek FIRST His Kingdom and His righteousness and the things will be added. Verse 34 closes this chapter by saying—“So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own”.

Thorns of Deceitfulness of Riches- Something that is deceitful is hallow, false, illusory and tricky, versus something that is honest and genuine. A few illusions about riches is that it has the potential to make one believe that problems will go away with money, one will be accepted and gain desired status desired. There are so many “get rich quick” schemes and pyramids schemes— All with the promise to make one rich. People are running to this meeting and that meeting to get motivated to sell a product of some sort. Or, running to establish themselves in an endeavor. I am not saying being rich is a sin, but it is deceitful when it takes our heart away from our First Love. If the involvement in the endeavor to gain wealth will pull you from the Lord, then you are treading on very dangerous ground. Some are avid lottery players. The deceitfulness of this is the promise that you will “hit it big” one day. It may take years, but the illusory promise causes one to believe and hope the big one is coming and it may be “this time”. Have some hit it big...? Yes, but we who name the name of Christ should not be found in a lottery line in any liquor store or corner mart buying lottery tickets. Our source is not in the lottery line....

In the same chapter, Matthew 6 verse 19 specifically tells us “Do not store up for yourselves treasure on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal”. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal: For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also”. Further, verse 24 says— “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth”— *wealth personified as an object of worship.*

Thorns of the Desire for other things- Having desires, as found in Psalms 37:4, is not a sin, but in the context of Mark 4:19, the word desire means, “lust and coveting”. If you read this parables in the King James Version of the Bible, you will find that this part of the verse says, “Lust of other things”. All that is in the world is Lust of flesh, Lust of eyes and Pride of life and it is all going to pass away (1 John 2:16-17). There is this lust for other things that seeks to attach itself to all of us. Lust is the total opposite of love. The Lust for other things will pull us away from Love. The word says that “God is Love”. Thus, it pulls us away from God and all that is of godly. Whenever we crave anything more than the One Who died for our sins and wore a crown of thorns on his head, we are in serious danger of judgment. In Numbers 11:4,31-34, the children of Israel desired flesh or lusted after flesh so much they complained and complained to Moses. Finally, God gave them what they wanted and it was coming out of their nose. They wanted flesh (quail) more than manna (the bread that came down from heaven). When we desire other things and reject what God is giving, we become guilty and are like the children of Israel and we will be unfruitful. Like the children of Israel, we will continue in a cycle of defeat, going around and around in the wilderness, taking 40 years to take a trip that should have only taken a few days.

God wants us to have the best things in life, but why store up temporary treasure and desire temporary treasures more than eternal. Our life here on earth is temporary and when this life is over we will live eternally. He already wore the thorns why should we have our hearts covered with thorns, keeping His word from being planted in our hearts. Remove the thorns.

Seed (Word) is Sown on Good Soil (4:8, 20)

This is what we need to strive for every time the word comes to our ears. In this instance, the planted seed grew up to bear fruit— 30, 60 and 100 fold. There was increase because the hearers did two things—1) heard the word and 2) accept it. How many times have you walked away and did not hear or accept the word. I have been guilty. The word tells us in James 1:22 to be doers of the word, not hearers only, deceiving ourselves. “Doing” the word is acceptance in action. Saints that are sober will bear fruit and find themselves bearing fruit according to St. John 15:2. Believe me, there is a process to bearing fruit spiritually, just as there is a process to bearing fruit naturally. The process is called pruning. The farmer will constantly cut off and pull up anything that will hinder proper growth of the planted seed., which is the natural pruning process This is what St. John 15:2 is about—the spiritual pruning process. A few years ago I was watching my husband prune a tree and some bushes in our yard. I found out something so amazing. As he cut back the limbs and shaped the tree and bushes, a pleasant aroma came from them. The Holy Spirit spoke to me and said, “This is what happens to you as I prune you. You become a sweet smelling savor (*fragrance or aroma*) in my nostrils”. (See *II Corinthians 2:14-15*) Hearing the word and accepting the word is a type of pruning because it will cut off excess baggage, root out and pull away mindsets, behaviors that keep us from bearing fruit.

So, this is the place I desire strongly. The place of hearing and accepting the word not rejecting it. What about you? It is not always easy, but in the end we will bear much fruit—a GREAT Harvest!



Now how does this tie in with the title—Be Sober? We all must be alert and recognize the ground our hearts represent when the word of the Lord is sown by pastors and other instructors of the word of God. The sowers are responsible for properly sowing the word, but it is the personal responsibility of each hearer to prepare their heart to receive the word or the seed sown. We are bombarded with messages of receiving a harvest of “things” - a car, bigger house, more money, things that are temporal. However, the greatest desire should be to know God and build on things eternal. Week after week, sowers are seeking God’s face in order to sow the right seed (the word) that will properly ground the hearers, but there is the subtle pressure to constantly have to come up with tricks and amusements to keep some hearers coming back, who want entertainment, junk food and not nothing spiritually nutritious, that will cause proper spiritual growth. These type of hearers desire drive through sermons...a #1— Super Size...please.

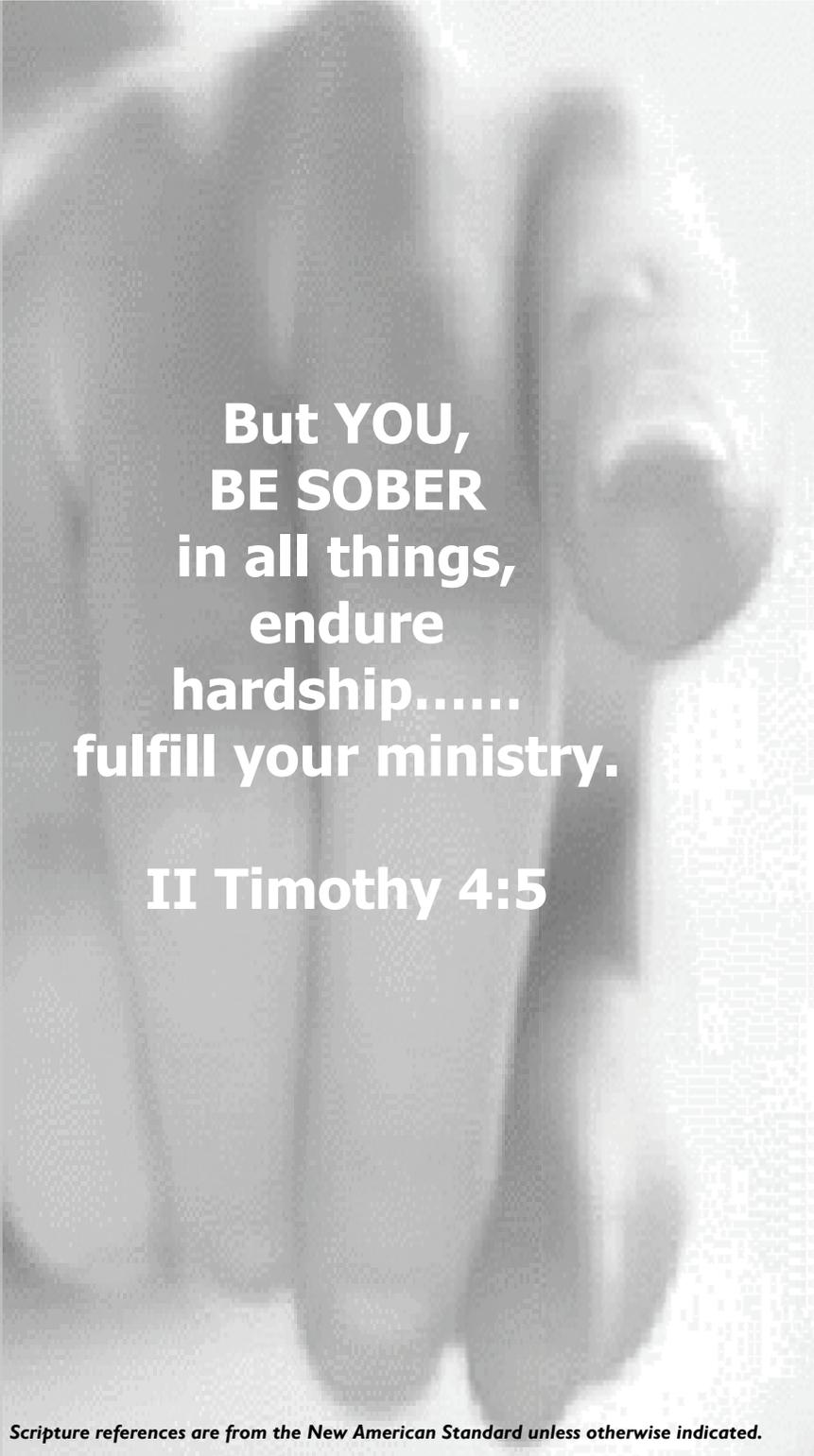
We desperately need to be spiritually grounded and rooted. So, my encouragement to any reader responsible, in any capacity, for sowing the word is to keep seeking the Lord for messages that will anchor the hearers. Messages that will cause change and make steady hearers, who will not be tossed and turned by every wind — the latest good sounding revelation, a catchy cliché or religious fad. The fluff will not help anyone stand in the time of trouble. We desperately need those who will proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ without apology and without compromise.

The role of the hearers is heart preparation and then action. The sower cannot make the hearer “do” anything. James 1:22 tells us not to be hearers of the word only, but to be doers. We must all seek the Father and have a heart that is tender, not hardened with thorns or covered by rocks. We have already concluded that seeds will not grow on a hard soil because the seed cannot penetrate. So, as a hearer, take heed how you hear. Pay close attention to the condition of your heart. How do you hear? Once you hear, what do you do? Is there a harvest of good works, good character and changed behavior?

After reading this parable over and over again and looking at the four ways the seed falls, I believe it is possible to go from one level of hearing to the next so that the seed can fall on good soil. This is not magic, it is a process and the process is the steps to maturity. We must consciously posture ourselves to hear and accept the word of the Lord. Then, and only then, will our fruit remain under the pressure and conflicts of life.

Lastly, to all the saints, BE SOBER in mind and in heart. There is a pressing need, in this generation, for us to be alert and aware of the adversary who has the job of making us totally discombobulated, confused unfocused and drunk; keeping the word (seed) from falling on good ground and prevent us from bearing eternal fruit. So, be on guard, alert, self-controlled, rational and steady—**BE SOBER!**

**“HE WHO HAS EARS TO HEAR,
LET HIM HEAR”**



**But YOU,
BE SOBER
in all things,
endure
hardship.....
fulfill your ministry.**

II Timothy 4:5

Scripture references are from the New American Standard unless otherwise indicated.

...BUT LET US ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER-AND ALL THE MORE AS YOU SEE THE DAY APPROACHING - HEBREWS 10:25

Jesus Christ is the Author & Finisher of My Faith
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If this newsletter has been an
Encouragement to you, please let me know by e-mailing me
at - hisminstrl@yahoo.com. I would love to hear from you.