

## **I SUFFER NOT A WOMAN**

### *Part One*

Well, tonight I'm going to talk about something very controversial. So tighten your seat belts. What I share will probably stir up a hornet's nest, but I think it's about time someone tackled this issue and took a stand for the truth. But first, some background.

Last week I talked about finding the proper balance between the *twin errors* of legalism and false security. Those of you who were there may remember that at one point, someone mentioned something about believers going to a "*Christian*" bar, and the subject of alcohol came up. I briefly shared my view of drinking alcohol. Then I mentioned that I felt led of the Lord earlier that week to put up an article about Christians and drinking, with links to a few books that discuss this issue in great detail from a Biblical perspective.

After I posted that article, a brother who had listened to the Sunday message, and who also read the book on Wine on my site, sent me an email and shared a few of his concerns with me. He was very gracious. His first concern was that I was slipping into "legalism" over this issue—which I thought was rather ironic, since I had shared on Sunday how I have never been involved in religious *legalism* and therefore, have no great tendency to teach it or over-react *against it*.

Be that as it may, I assured this brother in an email that I was *not* slipping into legalism over the issue. I told him that the Spirit convicted my heart concerning *abstinence* as soon as I came back to Jesus, and that for most of the 25 years that I have been walking with Him, I've never really spoken out against drinking or made it a big issue. I never tried to put my convictions on others, basically because I thought my view on alcohol was just *my* personal conviction, given to me by the Holy Spirit.

Of course, one of the reasons I felt that way was because I thought the Scripture was not clear about the issue one way or the other. So I figured, hey, if God didn't give us a clear word on the subject, then we should leave each other free to follow our own conscience regarding the matter. I had no idea the Scripture actually took a very clear position, and that this position was the same as what the Holy Spirit showed me many years prior.

Once the Lord opened my eyes to the truth, naturally, my whole view of the subject changed. I no longer believe it's a matter of personal conviction or spiritual liberty, any more than I could believe gossiping, envying, or any other work of the flesh is a matter of personal conviction.

I also explained that my motive for putting that article up and making the book available was very simple. I believe *the Scripture* is against drinking alcohol—period. If this be true, then it doesn't matter what people say or think about it. It is wrong. And just because the Holy Spirit hasn't been able to prick someone's conscience and show them it's wrong, that doesn't mean it's not wrong. Many Christians do things every day that are clearly against the Scripture, and they don't feel bad about it at all. Based on that fact, they don't see those things as wrong, even though the Scripture clearly says they are wrong. Therefore, I'm not really interested in what people *feel* about the whole issue. I'm only interested in what God says about it—and I have become convinced He says it's wrong.

I also believe *some* Christians drink because they just assume (as I did), or else they have been taught by pro-moderationist pastors, that the same God who said drinking alcohol is *evil* in one place (and tells us not to even look at it or touch it), turns around and says it's a *blessing* in other places (and encourages us to drink it)! They *don't realize* the Scripture takes a very clear position on alcohol, and it's a negative one.

The other thing I have been made keenly aware of is that the excuse most Christians use for drinking—that Jesus Himself made and drank alcoholic wine—is not only false, it's wicked because it makes Jesus a *sinner*. One of the prime examples drinking Christians use to justify partaking of alcohol is the account where Jesus turned the water into wine.

In this account, the governor of the feast clearly suggests that the guests were “well drunk” when he said: “*Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now*” (John 2:10). If the people at that wedding were “well drunk” on fermented wine, then they were also well on their way to being intoxicated. And if the wine Jesus made was of even better quality in terms of alcohol (ie: if the term “best wine” = the strongest alcoholic content), then Jesus was a *partaker* in the sin of drunkenness.

The apostle John said if we even wish someone who is preaching error “God speed”, we are a partaker with them in that error. “*If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds. (II. John 1:10-11).*”

The principle is clear: if you agree with those who are in error or sin, if you wish them well, and especially if you encourage them and help them, then you are a partaker in their sins. So it matters not whether Jesus Himself partook of the wine He made. If it was fermented, He was saying “God speed” to the intoxication process that must have been well under way for most of those people. He was a partaker in their *sin* of drunkenness.

So you see, this issue goes far beyond the simple question of whether or not a Christian believes God has given him/her the liberty to drink alcohol in moderation, or occasionally. I don't know one drinking Christian who believes Jesus didn't partake of alcohol. I've never heard a drinking believer stand up and say: “*Hey, I'm convinced that Jesus never partook of alcohol. But I still feel God has given me the freedom to partake of it*”. Oh no!

Everyone who drinks, tries to use Jesus as a justification for it. In so doing, they are dragging His name down to the level of our own human corruption and lust. In short, they are *accusing* Jesus of being a sinner.

Now if you feel free to take alcohol, that's between you and God. But I want to warn every Christian who partakes of alcohol to STOP using the Lord Jesus as a justification for what you are doing! You are taking the Lord's name in vain.

If Jesus was accustomed to partaking of fermented wine “in moderation”, He surely would have accepted it while He was in agonizing pain, hanging on the Cross. If ever there was a proper and acceptable time to take a little alcohol, it would have been then. But the Scripture is clear: He refused fermented drink even while hanging on the Cross. As a matter of fact, in both Matthew and in Mark, we have an account of Jesus being offered *two kinds* of drink. The first He clearly rejected; while it *seems* like He accepted the second one.

*They gave him vinegar to drink **mingled with gall**: and when he had tasted thereof, **he would not drink**.....And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink.*

*Matthew 27:34 & 48*

*And they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but **he received it not**.....And one ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink, saying, Let alone; let us see whether Elias will come to take him down.*

*Mark 15:23 & 36*

Neither of these accounts *actually* say the Lord received the second drink. But since they both clearly say He rejected the first one, it seems probable that He accepted the second one; else it would have been recorded that He rejected them both. The first drink was sour wine that was either fermented or was drugged in some way to kill the pain. This the Lord rejected. The second drink was just unfermented, sour wine.

Listen, if you believe Jesus made alcoholic wine at the wedding, if you believe He drank alcoholic wine at the Last Supper, if you view all the verses which call wine a blessing as a reference to alcoholic wine, then you need to stand up and **boldly** preach the *goodness* of alcohol! Quit talking about “not stumbling your brother”! That’s hypocritical. Do you think Jesus cared about “stumbling His brother” if He made 500 gallons of *additional* alcohol so the ones who were almost intoxicated could go on and get totally wasted?

If Jesus drank fermented wine, then drinking alcohol isn’t just acceptable, it should be encouraged. If the “Cup” at the Last Supper was filled with alcoholic wine, then everyone should be encouraged to use fermented wine during the breaking of bread at church.

The problem with Christian drinkers is that they act like the wine and alcohol companies do: hypocritically. What does the alcohol industry tell you? They tell you to drink up. Every time you turn around you see a commercial, a bill board, a sign, an ad in the paper, in magazines, etc, telling us how wonderful alcohol is. They show us happy people with beer cans and wine bottles. Then they turn around and warn us to “drink responsibly”.

Drink responsibly?

Please!

If alcohol companies really wanted to help us “drink responsibly” they would put ads in the paper or commercials on TV that show all the people who have been hit by drunk drivers, who only have *half* their faces left, or are crippled for life, or are dead. When it comes to alcohol, people who say—“Drink up; have fun; but don’t overdue it”—are hypocrites. Especially when they know it only takes *two* drinks to turn you into a pile of bloody flesh on the highway.

That’s the way I feel about Christians who say Jesus drank alcohol and God approves of drinking, but then turn around and say we must be sure not to “get drunk” or “stumble our brother” when we drink. That’s hypocrisy.

By the way, speaking of not getting drunk: just how intoxicated do you have to be before you are considered drunk in the eyes of *God*? Yes, man has *his* standards of alcohol content. But are man's standards the same as God's standard? Do you really want to take that chance? What if in God's eyes, *one* glass of wine makes you drunk? Wouldn't *that* be a bummer on Judgement Day? To find out that you were a drunkard in His eyes and cannot enter the kingdom?

But getting back to this brother's email, his second, and I think *main* concern, was that the author of the book I was recommending was a retired Seventh Day Adventist scholar, and as such, he naturally referred to Ellen G. White's contributions to the whole subject. He said that while the book was well written, he was disturbed to see the writer use Mrs. White as a source for championing abstinence, since Satan used her to bind her followers in some of the most legalistic chains in modern church history. Then he asked if the writer of the book was really being led by the Holy Spirit, why would he use a *woman's* teachings to validate it, since we all know that "*God does not put authoritative ministry giftings into women*"?

When I read that, I got the distinct impression that even if Ellen G. White had *not* been a false teacher, even if she would have been the most Biblically sound teacher on the planet, this brother would still assume she was false, simply because she was a woman who moved in an "authoritative ministry gift".

So in my response, I assured him that I agree that Ellen G. White was a false teacher and that I have no sympathy towards the SDA organization. But I also had to be honest and let him know that his view of women in ministry did strike me as just a wee bit on the *legalistic* side, since God has used women throughout the history of both the Old Testament Church and the New Testament Church in ways I'm sure he would not approve of.

In the Old Testament, where woman were not simply "in submission" to men but were basically *the slaves* of men, there were still occasions when God chose to use a woman to do a man's job, so to speak. One instance would be *Deborah*. Certainly being a Judge over the nation of Israel (which included *many* men) and also, being a General over the army of Israel (which were *all* men), would have been frowned upon by this brother, and by multitudes like him, who are loath to have a woman in "authority" over them.

His reply was cordial and respectful, but he maintained his position that it's never God's will that women have authority over men. Regarding my comments about Deborah, his reply was that he always looked at the book of Judges as kind of a manual of what *not* to do. In other words, the situation with Deborah was an anomaly. It was abnormal. It was a major exception to the general rule. He pointed out that both the Lord and Deborah tried to get Barak to take his role as a man, but Barak sinned and the glory was given to Deborah. This brother was very confident that the Scripture says a woman should *never* be in authority over men—and this view is held by probably the majority male believers today.

Well, is it true: *God does not put authoritative ministry giftings into women*"?

How many this chat room think it is?

I think this view came about the same way the whole idea of "drinking in moderation" came about—by wrongly dividing the word of truth (ie: Scripture). The apostle Paul said: *Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly*

dividing the word of truth (II. Tim. 2:15). The key word there is “study”. It takes more than a simple reading of a few verses to get the *whole* picture on any subject being discussed in the Scripture. I can point you to various verses which, when isolated and cut off from the rest of what the Scripture says regarding that same subject, will produce serious error. When people do this they are *wrongly* dividing the word of truth. They take one aspect of an issue and make that one part the whole view.

It’s very important *how* we approach the Scripture when we “study” to show ourselves approved. Most people come to the Scripture with a certain doctrinal view or theological agenda, and they search the Scripture to find verses which support that view or agenda. Very few come to the Scripture with a genuinely open heart, or a humble spirit, and seek only to be instructed in the truth by the Holy Spirit. And the more volatile or divisive the issue is, the *less* people are apt to simply seek the truth on the matter.

Consequently, those who agree with the brother who wrote me that email will not be blessed by what I am about to share. In fact, they may be angered by it. Though it is not my intention to make people angry or stumble anyone, if that is the outcome of speaking the truth, so be it.

Hopefully, there will be some who hear this word who are not so cemented in their views and positions that they automatically reject it out of hand. Hopefully, some who hear what I share will go back to the Scripture and take a long, hard (an honest) look at the issue from the perspective of the *whole counsel* of God’s Word, and not just from the perspective of a few “key” verses that are so often quoted.

So as we get into this, I’m not going start off by trying to explain why I believe these key verses don’t really mean what so many ministers claim they mean. Rather, I’m gong to approach the issue from a completely different direction.

In the New Testament, there are *ninety* church leaders mentioned by name. Of that number, depending on how you view them and what Bible translation you uses, twenty of these names were women. In Romans chapter sixteen, Paul greets twenty-six people by name, as well as several unnamed; and the churches that were meeting in homes. He closes the book of Romans with greetings from nine believers who were with him in Corinth when he wrote the letter. Please notice in the following verse the names of two people:

*Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellowprisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.*

*Romans 16:7*

A very *insignificant* statement, is it not? Paul simply mentions two people who “are of note among the apostles”. But more books and doctrinal essays have been written about these two people, and about what Paul really meant here, than you can imagine. This little verse that seems so insignificant has caused a fire storm of controversy in Seminaries and Bible Colleges for centuries. Do you know why?

The reason is because “Junia” is the name of a *woman*; and it seems like Paul is calling this women an “apostle”. If this is the case, people who have been confidently boasting that God

would never put a woman in a position of spiritual authority are dead wrong. Naturally, scholars have been deeply divided regarding the correct interpretation what Paul said here. The women-can-preach camp maintains that Junia was both a woman and an apostle. The no-women-in-authority camp have attempted to prove that Junia was a man; or if they can't accomplish that, they at least try to show that Paul wasn't really saying these two people were actually apostles, but were merely *known by* the apostles. So the first issue that must be resolved is *the gender* of the person named Iounian. The second issue that needs to be resolved is the correct interpretation of the Greek phrase: "*episemioi en tois apostolois* (ie: "of note among the apostles").

When you begin to look at this whole issue, the first thing you will notice is that it makes a big difference which Bible translation you use. If you are using the King James, the New King James, or the New Revised Standard Version, the name you will see is "Junia", which is a female name. If you are reading the New International, the New American Standard, or various other versions, the name you will see is "Junias", which is a male name.

This is because *Iounian* appears only once in the Greek New Testament, and it can translated as male (Junianus; or Junias in its contracted form), or female (Junia), depending on where the accent is located. The way it was translated depended entirely on the *theological views* of the translators. Those who were biased against women in ministry translated it as Junias; while those not so biased translated it as Junia. After looking at both sides of the argument, I believe Junia was indeed a woman, and that Paul said she was an apostle.

~ The female name, Junia, occurs more than 250 times in ancient Greek and Latin texts, while the (purported) male name, Junias, is not attested anywhere.

~ For the first seven centuries of the church's life, Greek manuscripts did not use accents. However, when accents did become common practice in the manuscript tradition, without exception they identified the name as feminine. There is no suggestion in Christian writers of the first thousand years of the church's life, or for several centuries later, that the person in question was a man. All extant early translations of the New Testament transcribe the name as a feminine form. With only one exception, Greek New Testaments from that of Erasmus in 1516 to Erwin Nestle's edition of 1927 print the name with the accent that indicates the feminine form.

~ It's common knowledge that the church fathers were not exactly "women's libbers"! Their attitude towards women could be described as negative *at best*. Yet despite their negative attitude towards women, theologians as diverse as Origen, Ambrosiaster, John Chrysostom, Jerome, Theodoret, John Damascene, Peter Abelard and Peter Lombard, all assume that the partner of Andronicus is a woman by the name of Junia. Chrysostom, who lived in the 4th century, wrote: "*Oh! How great is the devotion of this woman, that she should be even counted worthy of the appellation of apostle!*" (Homily on the Epistle of St. Paul the Apostle to the Romans XXXI).

In view of this overwhelming evidence in favor of understanding the name in question to be that of a woman, why have so many scholars come to the conclusion that Junia was a man? The answer is easy. The person in question is not only described as an apostle, but as an a "prominent" apostle. The attitude of biased translators is logical and simple: Since a woman could not have been an apostle, the woman who is here called apostle could not have been a woman!

The second question regarding this passage is whether Andronicus and Junia were actually apostles, or just highly regarded "by" the apostles. Grammatically, some scholars say both meanings are possible. But it is interesting to note that while different Bible translations are divided on how to translate *Iounian* (whether male or female), they all basically agree concerning the meaning of *episemoi en tois apostolois*. The Greek term "en", which means "among", is used over 90 times in the New Testament and the vast majority of those times it means *to be part of* something or some group. To be "among" the apostles meant just that: to be among them; to be one of them.

Just this one verse would give some *much needed* balance to the all-too-familiar passages that are continually bandied about in defense of depriving the sisters of any real ministry to the body of Christ—but there are other passages too.

Those who talk so righteously about women not teaching men choose to remain ignorant of many well established facts, both from with the Scripture, and from Church History. It is not at strange for God to use women in very prominent roles among His people

Anyone ever heard of *Athaliah*, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, who reigned as queen over Judah for six years (II. Kings 11:3; II. Chron. 22:12). I already mentioned *Deborah*, who was a prophet of God, a judge over Israel for 40 years, and a general over Israel's army (Judges 4:4-5). How much spiritual authority do you think comes with the office of prophet, judge and general? Quite a bit, I would assume!

Several other female prophets are mentioned in the Old Testament—*Miriam* (Ex. 15:20), *Huldah* (II. Kings 22:14; II. Chron. 34:22), and *Noadiah* (Neh. 6:14). We also see a husband and wife *team* of prophets—Isaiah and his wife (Isa. 8:3). In Huldah's day, the male High Priest sought her counsel and the people of Israel—including the men, God forbid!—came to her to receive the word of the Lord, just like they did from any other prophet. How much "spiritual authority" do you think her ministry carried? Again, the answer is quite a bit.

The prophet Joel talked about a time when both "your sons *and daughters* will prophesy ... and even on the male *and female* servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days" (Joel 2:28-29). We see this fulfilled in the New Testament through the *four daughters* of Philip (Acts 21:9). And don't forget *Anna* who was a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher (Luke 2:36).

If we are honest, we will have to admit that these women were granted spiritual authority by God Himself, to guide, to instruct, to lead, and even (God forbid!!) to govern men.

Now turn with me to Acts, chapter eighteen.

*Now a certain Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by race, an eloquent man, came to Ephesus; and he was mighty in the scriptures. This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spake and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, knowing only the baptism of John: and he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. But when Priscilla **and** Aquila heard him, **they** took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more accurately.*

*Act 18:24-26*

Apollos was not an ignorant, unbelieving Gentile pagan. He was a Jew; he was mighty in the Scripture; he was an eloquent speaker, he was fervent in spirit; he had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and he taught accurately the things concerning Jesus. I would say that qualified him as being a minister with spiritual authority. But he had need of further spiritual equipping. So the Lord sent him a man and wife *team* of ministers named Priscilla and Aquila. Paul says THEY took Apollos aside and expounded unto him the way of salvation more accurately. That means they BOTH “taught” Apollos.

If Paul would have had the attitude that so many men have today, where they are always making sure they don’t let a women “teach” them anything, you can be sure he would have singled out Aquila (the Husband) when recounting who it was that *instructed* Apollos.

*I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea: That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also.*

*Romans 16:1-2*

Phebe being said to be simply “a servant” is (I believe) another example of women in leadership. Phoebe was much more than a “servant”. Paul’s word translated here as “servant” is the word for “*deacon*”, which is translated as such in his letter to the Philippians (1:1). Phoebe was an official in the same way that this word is used of elders, bishops and ministers. The word used of her is the same word Paul used *of himself* and others in ministry who preached Jesus Christ (I. Cor 3:5; Col 1:23).

Phoebe came from Cenchrea, which was the port of Corinth and she was probably won to Christ during Paul’s year and a half ministry in Corinth. Paul goes on to say that she was someone *special*. She had been a “succourer” of himself and other Christians. The English word succourer is a translation of the Greek word: “*prostatis*” (pros-tat’-is), which means a patroness or a protectress. In Latin the word is “*patronus*”, and it speaks of the *legal* representative of the foreigner.

So Phoebe somehow was the legal protector of the Christians at Cenchrea. In the Old Testament, this noun is used of officials in charge of the work of the King (I. Chron 29:6) and of chief officers “*who ruled over the people*” (II. Chron 8:10). In its verb form the word means “to be at the head of, *to rule*, to direct” and it is used of those who “rule” in the church (Rom 12:8; I. Thess 5:12; I. Tim 5:17). What all this means is that Phoebe was a woman in the early church holding a position of leadership, and who used her influence to help Paul. She was exercising a ministry of leadership.

I don’t have time to go through all the various verses which expose the current attitude towards women as bankrupt, but they are there, I assure you. It’s just like the Eternal Security delusion. People can cut and paste together all kinds of verses to make a (supposedly) iron-clad case for Eternal Security. But the fact is, Paul and the other apostles were constantly making all kinds of statements that, while not directly addressing that issue, nevertheless *destroy* the whole idea of Eternal Security. For example: in several places Paul states he was wondering if the ones who had accepted the Gospel under his ministry, were still in the faith. Such a question demonstrates that he did not believe they

were eternally secure. The very fact that he warns people who he believes are true Christians about *not* falling away, reveals that he did not believe in Eternal Security. You can't hide the little expressions that are all through his letters, which show that he did not believe, or teach, the lie of Eternal Security.

It's the same way with the I-suffer-not-a-woman-to-teach error. You can quote *I. Cor. 14:35* and *I. Tim. 2:11-12* all you want. But you will never be able to hide Paul's true view of women in ministry because it comes out in *unguarded* statements. If Paul had the attitude that so many of today's men have, he would not have been caught dead saying some of the things he said in the course of his everyday, casual conversation.

Just like today's men do, he would have been *very careful* with his words. He would have made sure that nothing he said could possibly be construed as an approval for women ministering to men, or women have any kind of spiritual authority over men. But the fact is, just the opposite is the case. Paul makes all kinds of statements that reveal that he is not like today's men. If your heart is open to the truth, you will begin to see Paul's true attitude as you read the New Testament.

*For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.  
There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is  
**neither male nor female**: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.*

*Galatians 3:27-28*

*To Be Continued*