

WINE AND THE BIBLE:
CHRISTIANTY'S SCANLON ERROR
Message 15

INTRO: Wine and the Bible, what a subject! Let me briefly review for us where we have been. I likened the case of wine in the Bible to the law case where Sargent Dixon was awarded a medal for bravery in a shooting incident, and Scanlon was sent to jail for shooting him. The facts seemed so obvious that nobody thoroughly investigated the case. However, an informant's whisper revealed a fact that changed the whole case. I think the one fact on which the whole case of wine in the Bible hinges is the fact that the word wine in the Bible speaks of grape juice. To find if it is fermented or not, can only be determined from the context.

So we looked at all the most difficult passages in Scripture in light of that fact and found some amazing things. Yes, Jesus made wine. But the complications created by saying it was fermented wine, I believe, far exceed any questions caused by viewing it as grape juice. I think the evidence very clearly points to the view that He made about 120 gallons of the choicest wine of all, the untrodden juice that first drips into the vats!

Let me add something here. I have mentioned that I have been asked on several occasions why we do not use real wine at communion. Well, you understand by now that we view grape juice as real wine. But as I have given this whole topic more thought, I have come to another conclusion. To serve fermented wine for communion is an endorsement of social drinking. This is worth thinking through. How can we, as a church, serve fermented wine at communion and then counsel our people to total abstinence?

Well, we are in the process of looking at evidence against the use of alcohol, and I plan in this message to finish the last point of the last point! By now you may be saying, "Does he not have one good thing to say about alcohol?" The answer is that I have not yet found one good thing about alcohol. I have found volumes of bad things, not only from Christian writers, but non-Christian as well.

So let us conclude this series with a look at the last three points of argument against the use of all alcohol consumption.

K. The Logical Or Rational Argument

I think the Bible encourages us to be logical. I know of nothing more logical than the Bible and Bible doctrine. Salvation can be reasoned out from the Word of God. The Lord said in the OT, "Come, let us reason together..." Salvation can be reasoned. I do not know of anything more logical than the Bible, and I do not know anyone more logical than God. Christianity is a reasonable faith. And in all honesty, considering alcohol logically, if alcohol is a poison and a drug and kills and murders, how could God approve the consumption of just a little of it? How could He approve of that, of which if you drink a little, it will affect your mind and you will begin to lose control? The answer of course is most simple: He could not and did not, and it's time we correct our view of Him.

My daughter found an article on internet on grapes, called "Great Grapes." It deals with the health aspects of grapes and no question, grapes and grape juice are healthy. But the article has a section called "The French Paradox." Apparently France has a heart disease rate that is 60% lower than ours, and the question is why that is so. Here is a statement from the article, "How is it that a diet high in fat is partnered with a slender and healthy population? This is the French paradox" (contradiction). Then it goes on to say, "One difference between our diets is the amount of red wine consumed by the French. Many believe that it is the alcohol in wine that balances high fat intake." So, the question is, is alcohol good for a person? Well listen to this article as it goes on, "However, recent studies have noted that it's more likely the purple grapes from which red wine is made that can improve heart health." The article further states, "Research strongly supports grapes as a heart healthy food." The article then goes on to give evidence that grape juice is very good for the blood. From my studies, I have found nothing good in alcohol at all, but I have found a lot of information on the health benefits of grapes, from skin to seed.

But let me raise another French paradox. Why is it

that when someone comes to our house and we offer them a pepsi, tea, or coffee etc... and they say, "No thanks. I don't drink coffee ect..." that we are not in the least offended. But when we go to France and say, "No thanks, I don't drink wine" they are offended. Why?" I think here is the real French Paradox: If it is so good, why are you offended by those who don't drink it?

David Wilkerson says that when he sent a team of converts to France and they testified how the Lord had delivered them from prostitution and dope, they rejoiced. But when they shared how they were delivered from alcohol, they didn't want to hear it. He writes, "Some of the pastors in Paris, France, were deeply offended when I refused to drink their wine." Later he says there is an alarming rate of alcoholism among Christians in Europe. Now why are they offended when Christians don't drink their wine?

Let me ask another question: Why is it that when our local hockey players play, and they have a social drink afterwards, why does it generate an awkward silence when someone turns down a beer, but if they turn down a pepsi, it's no problem. Think about it. There is something there.

I have an article from internet titled "The Healthier Life - Home". It is a health alert on pterostilbene and claims they have found health giving properties in wine, pies and jam. Now it is very interesting to me that when benefits are found in grapes, these benefits are almost always attributed to wine. The facts are, these benefits are there just as much, and sometimes to a greater degree in the grape juice. But the wine is given the credit.

However, this article does close on an honest note. It says, "(Green grapes probably contain some of the compound - but far less than the darker grapes.) And if you were thinking of also picking up a bottle of red wine - well, don't let me stop you - but you should know that pterostilbene apparently does not survive the wine-making process. But we can keep that just between us." How do you like that bit of honesty? However, let me say this, it is the resveratrol that may be the reason for the French

Paradox, we have spoken of earlier. What is instructive is that resveratrol is not in the fermentation but in the grape juice. An internet article on parenting teens which wrote of resveratrol says, "Resveratrol is found in grapevines. It occurs in the vines, roots, seeds and stalks, but its highest concentration is in the skins."

Now when you assess all this information logically, all Scripture aside, is there any good reason to argue for social drinking? On the other hand, there are plenty of reasons to argue against it, even if you lay Scripture aside.

L. The Testimonial Argument (Ask Leonard to come.)

I suppose that if we were to amass the evidence from testimonies of those who grew up in alcoholic homes, or those who have fallen captive to alcohol, we would not have time to finish this series. I wonder how many testimonies we could gather of the good social drinking has done for people and homes? We probably would not have many testimonies to that.

I have asked for one only, and that from Leonard Driedger. I know we will have trouble doing this in the few minutes that we have, but I have a few questions to ask Leonard.

1. Leonard, were you an alcoholic or a drug addict? (Both. One goes with the other.)

2. Would you say that this statement is true? Alcohol is the gateway to drugs? (Yes, alcohol glamorized but leads to drugs and hell.)

3. Have you listened to the message I did on John 2 where Jesus made wine? (No?) So tell me, do you think He made fermented wine?)

4. Leonard, last summer a lady died while mowing the lawn. Would you mind telling us who she was and how she died?

5. In a statement or two, what advice would you give to parents and young people about social drinking of alcohol?

M. The Holy Spirit Argument

Now you see, the third Person of the Triune God is called the **Holy** Spirit. He is not just 'a' spirit, or even 'the' Spirit of God. He is known as **the Holy Spirit**. And if we are God's children, then God's Spirit bears witness with our Spirit in things pertaining to God.

I want to read for you here a short chapter from David Wilkerson's book titled, "Sipping Saints." The chapter I want to read is called, "My Inner Witness."

There is something deep within me that cries out against even the thought that Christ Jesus ever drank or produced alcoholic beverages. If I had no Scripture or scientific evidence to support me, what I have seen with my own eyes—and what I feel in my heart—would be enough.

I walk into a Brooklyn hospital ward to visit a fifteen-year-old boy dying of alcohol poisoning. I see a lad going into a dark eternity, diseased, broken, and mindless. His eyes are sunken in their sockets—his cheeks are bony and hollow—his inner parts are in decay, his liver filled with corruption—his complexion is pallid and his hair is matted. Victor started drinking cheap wine when he was less than ten years old. By the time he was fourteen, he walked the streets of the Bowery like all the other burned-out alcoholics. He slept on the street, covered with newspapers for a blanket.

Victor died in that overcrowded hospital without a friend to his name. He was just one of many such nameless young men and women who die of alcoholism in our big-city hospital wards. But when I look into their dying faces, as I look with horror at the devastation caused by alcohol, as I pray over their emaciated bodies—something cries out in me, "Oh, God—Your Son Jesus could never have created a drink that does this to kids. Jesus could never have served a drink to His friends that can ruin people in this way."

Try it once! Go to any city morgue and look at the remains of teenagers who were killed in a car crash—a result of drunken driving. Witness those teenage bodies being laid out on slabs, while weeping parents identify their remains. You, too, will get angry as I do. You, too, will wonder how any God-loving, life-respecting Christian can even touch a drop of alcohol. How dare we identify Jesus and Paul with such destruction and horror? How dare Christians drink the same beverage that spreads death and terror across the nation?

Try sitting in the lobby of a motel late at night watching the parade of drinking patrons coming and going to and from clubs and bars. It is so depressing. In that crowded, smoke-filled room are huddled a restless group, trying to find happiness from a bottle. For hours they sit and drink. The divorced are in there trying to drink away their sense of failure. The traveling salesman is getting stoned, hoping to alleviate his loneliness and mediocrity. Young marriages and singles dance and sway in drunken stupors, forcing themselves to enjoy what they know will end as a night of emptiness and depression. With every drink, they get louder and bolder. They find a few hours of courage to face a life of fear. I watch in amazement as these people who talk so much about enjoying their happy hours get up and run to the rest rooms—to vomit.

I watch those potbellied men burping their way to the men's room—and the ladies staggering into the ladies' room—and I want to weep. Their eyes are so sad; their joy is phony; it seems they are crying out for help. They make such fools of themselves. They stagger out of those rest rooms, wipe off their mouths, then march right back into the bar to start all over.

Closing time is the most hideous spectacle of all, as the patrons stagger through the lobby to their cars in the parking lot. They act like frightened little animals being forced to leave the security of their feeding place. The thought of those drunken drivers careening down the highways is terrifying. They can hardly walk, let alone drive an automobile on our busy streets. I have witnessed these horror parades many times. And the more I see them, the more my

heart tells me that the sinless Son of God could never be a part of such a world. Jesus would not put a drink into a hand that could lead to drunkenness. Suppose Christ had served up fermented wine at the wedding of Cana. If but one celebrant had too much and left that wedding reception and went out, causing an accident on his journey home—what would he tell the court magistrate? Would he say, "Jesus did it! He made this really good wine; I had a little too much—I got smashed. It all happened at the home of a friend of his mother, Mary."

Go to the Mardi Gras in New Orleans. Watch the hordes of drunken celebrants staggering through the streets. Look at all the homosexual "queens" strutting around in drag, holding beer cans in their hands. See the thousands of young students falling over each other in drunken stupors. Listen to the parade marshal toast "the god of alcohol." Thousands, from all across the world, gather to drink and celebrate. The streets are wild with music, dancing, carousing and drunkenness. At times, it seems as though hell has spilled over its borders, and everyone is worshipping wine, whiskey, and women.

If you are an overcoming Christian, it would make you very sick just to see it happen before your eyes. The sight of multitudes openly flaunting drunkenness is too much for tender hearts to comprehend. But one thing is sure—Jesus Christ is even more appalled. I know God is grieved by it all, because I sense a bit of His grief in my own heart. I know, beyond any shadow of a doubt, Jesus and alcohol do not mix. He is offended by what it is—by what it does to men—and by any identification with it.

The Bible warns against drinking. The historical facts prove it is deadly harmful. And my heart tells me it is sinful! My inner witness tells me Jesus came to deliver us from such wickedness and not to produce and encourage its use.

Jesus made fermented wine? Paul used and recommended it? Not in a million years! The Holy Spirit within me confirms the conviction of my heart. I have the witness of God's Holy Word, the proof of science, and

the convictions of my inner man. I need no other proof. ~ David Wilkerson

CONCLUSION: And with that I am ready to bring this series to a close. You see, at the outset of this series I told you the story of Dixon and the policeman, Scanlon. We read that Dixon's case was a bang on winner. The conclusions were so obvious that he simply needed to be sentenced, and so he was. Then came the whisper of an informant. A new fact was brought to light which, once investigated, indicated that what had seemed such an easy case before, now turned all the original evidence that had been against Dixon, against the police officer. And when it was thoroughly investigated, it was found that Dixon was innocent, and Scanlon, who had been awarded a medal for bravery, lost his job as a policeman.

Also at the outset of this series, I assigned you the job of judge or jury, your choice, on the wine in the Bible case. Here was the statement under trial: **The Bible allows for Christians to drink alcoholic beverages with moderation.** So, let me ask you, have you remained unbiased throughout these messages? The time to make a decision is now.

I have made every effort to give a clear and reasonable defense against every major passage that might seem to indicate that drinking alcohol is OK if it is done in moderation. I have made every effort to be objective with the Scriptures that are used to argue in favor of social drinking. I have sought to give facts as much as possible, in every area, and now is the time for you as judge or jury, to pronounce a verdict in your own lives. For moms and dads, it is time to make a decision for your family.

And so, let me ask: Is there some way to conclude such a negative series on a positive note? Yes, I believe there is. You see, the wine that was a blessing from God was unfermented wine. And the good news is this wine, especially that which is made from red grapes, is very good for people, health-wise. And we have the Biblical permission to freely drink it! It will be good for your blood system, and it may even reduce certain types of cancer. And, oh yes, by the way, if you have certain kinds of stomach problems, remember the biblical remedy to drink a little wine for your stomach's sake.