

WINE AND THE BIBLE:
CHRISTIANTY'S SCANLON ERROR
Message 12
Acts 2:1-15

INTRO: Where are we in our series? Well, we are in the passages which are the strongholds for those who hold that the Bible allows for social drinking. I have recently spoken to two young men, freshly delivered from alcohol. I asked them what they thought of social drinking. Well, there was not the slightest question in their minds that social drinking was the beginning of the slide into Satan's net. From there, all evil becomes potential through this one.

The passages we have been looking at are also passages that create some difficulty for those who hold that all consumption of alcohol is wrong. We have last considered John 2, and what a passage that is. I trust it became evident in that message what kind of wine Jesus made and how incredible the miracle was that Jesus performed in Cana. It was His first miracle. Now the miracles He performed were to give evidence of who He truly was, and that is the Messiah. If He had created fermented wine, to me, that would be evidence that He was not the Messiah. But to make 120 gallons of the best wine by His word, that does give evidence that He truly is the Messiah.

This morning we want to continue our study of these difficult passages by going first to the account of the crucifixion of Christ, and the drinks He was offered after He was nailed to the cross.

H. Matthew 27:34: Luke 23:36; John 19:28-30

So we go now to the crucifixion of Christ. In John 19:28-30, as Jesus hung on the cross, He said "I thirst". And they offered Him 'sour wine' (NKJV) and it says He received it. Did Jesus here drink fermented wine?

Well, as I put the Gospel account together, on three separate occasions Jesus was offered something to drink when He hung on the cross. The first is in Matthew 27:34 and Mark 15:23. Matthew says, "they gave Jesus vinegar mixed with gall; when He had tasted it He would not drink it." Mark says of the

same event, "they gave Him vinegar mixed with myrrh; He received it not" (Mark 15:23).

I want to add a note on another passage of Scripture, one I felt for years may have given some ground for certain very depressed individuals to drink some fermented (read Prov. 31:6-7). I considered that if a person was very depressed and could not seem to come out of it, that possibly a little intoxicating drink might be OK. In this sense it would be medicinal. However, Bill McLeod in his booklet, "Wine the Mocker" writes: Criminals condemned to die were given a pain-deadening potion consisting of wine and other drugs. Jesus was offered this, as in Mark 15:23..." (pages 22-23).

So I began to wonder if this had any substance to it. So I went to the commentaries and there is good evidence for this view. Adam Clarke writes, "We have already seen, that inebriating drinks were mercifully given to condemned criminals, to render them less sensible of the torture they endured in dying. This is what was offered to our Lord; but he refused it." This comment is verified by others. So in light of this further research, I see that I made an error on this passage. I now believe that not even Proverbs 31:6-7 gives any right to drink fermented drink.

Well, Scripture says Jesus did not receive this drink. There is a reason why Jesus did not receive this drink. That is because it contained, I believe, the poison of alcohol, or gall, as Psalm 69:21 says. We have looked at this before and noted that alcohol is a food, and Psalm 69 calls the gall food. But Psalm 69 says Jesus would not take it, and He did not. It is because it comes from the vine of Sodom, namely the sugar of the grape turned into poison.

The second occasion where Jesus is offered a drink is in Luke 23:36 which says, "...the soldiers also mocked him, coming to Him and offering him vinegar, and saying if You are the king of the Jews, save Yourself." Now how would offering Jesus vinegar mock Him? Well, according to Psalm 22:15, one of the agonies of the cross was that His tongue clung to His jaws. He was parched with thirst. And in this Psalm these soldiers around Him are likened to the strong

bulls of Bashaan (Psalm 22:12-18). How did offering Him vinegar mock Him? The text does not say that He took any. It may even be that they mocked him by holding it before Him, but where He could not get at it. We do not know as the text does not tell us.

The third time Jesus is offered a drink is in John 19. And it is called vinegar but it is not further described. Kittle's Theological Dictionary of the New Testament says, "Jn. 19:28ff. attributes the initiative to the saying of Jesus: 'I thirst,' and traces in the incident a fulfillment of the saying in Ps. 69:21 that the innocent sufferer is given vinegar to drink. The stupefying drink in Mk. 15:22-23 and Mt. 28:34 is quite a different one" (pg. 701). Roberston's Word Studies; John Gill's commentary; Adam Clarke's commentary and others verify that this drink Jesus accepted was different from the earlier one which He rejected.

Now Psalm 69:21 says, "They also gave Me gall for my food.." and this, we saw earlier, He refused. Then the Psalm says, "And for my thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink", and of this He took some. And this was the last Scripture to be fulfilled, so Scripture records that Jesus then said, "It is finished!" So, to conclude this point we can only say that the drink Jesus took on the cross was not fermented wine, for this He refused.

I. Acts 2:13

Let us begin by reading Acts 2:1-15. As in a number of previous passages, if one is not alert, this passage can easily lead us to a Scanlon error. Let me first point out how Christianity's Scanlon error is propagated by good and godly men. Vines dictionary says that wine here, and I quote, "...denotes sweet 'new wine,' or must, Acts 2:13, where the accusation shows that it was intoxicant and must have been undergoing fermentation some time." So Vine has concluded from the accusation against these 120 disciples, that this wine must have been in the process of fermentation for some time.

Let me go to another source. I have read this quote for you before from the NBD which says on page 1254,

"The term 'new wine' does not indicate wine which has not fermented, for in fact the process of fermentation sets in very rapidly, and unfermented wine could not be available many months after the harvest...". Well, we are here 8-10 months after the vintage, so of course, this must speak of fermented wine. We have seen in a message earlier that the conclusion that grape juice could not be kept many months without fermentation is a considerable error, which historical studies soundly refute.

Now let us begin by taking note that the word translated 'new wine' here is not oinos, but gluekos. This word occurs only once in the NT. But the word glukus, from which this word comes occurs 4 times in two passages. Let me read those passages for you:

James 3:11-12: Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening? Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh. (KJV sweet).

Revelation 10:9-10 And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey. And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter.

So what is gleukos in Acts 2:13? Sweet wine! And we know that sweet wine is not fermented, because fermentation turns the sugar into poison, and it loses its sweetness. The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary says, "...gleukos, new, sweet wine; or grape juice..." (pg. 894).

Now we must ask ourselves this pertinent question: Why did these mockers say, "They are full of sweet wine?" Why did they NOT say, "They are full of oinos?" I believe it is because they full well knew that Jesus and His apostles never drank fermented wine. Now I want you to notice something else, carefully. It says these men were mocking! Let me put what they were saying into understandable English.

Here they come upon the disciples speaking in all kinds of languages they don't understand. To them it is gibberish. To them it sounds like a bunch of drunks. And knowing their strong stand against alcohol, they say, "These guys are full of grape juice all right! Give me a break! Something must have gone wrong with this sweet wine!" In our day we might say something like this, "These guys had too much pepsi all right!" That would be mocking. You see, they are mocking them about the sweet wine. What they really meant is that they are drunk. That is why Peter said, "They are not drunk as you suppose."

J. 1 Corinthians 11:21-22

So we go now to 1 Corinthians 11:21-22 (read). Let me first, briefly give the historical situation. It appears it was a practice in the early church to have a love feast when they had communion. This may have been a development from the Jewish Passover meal, which was a meal. So in Corinth, it appears that some came with a lot of food, while some of the poor sat there with longing eyes. So Paul says in verse 20, "Therefore when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper. For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of others; and one is hungry and another is drunk."

Now here, it appears, that these folk brought fermented wine to this love feast and some actually got drunk. But if there had been actual drunkenness before the Corinthian communion service, would we conclude that Paul would treat it this lightly? In chapter 6:9-10, Paul has taught that the drunkard would not inherit the kingdom of God. If they had actual drunks at their communion service, would Paul not have instructed to excommunicate such persons? (See 1 Cor. 5). No doubt he would have.

So, what do we have here. The word translated *drunk* is the same as the word we had in John 2 which I believe should be translated 'satiated'. Here is what Paul is saying. "For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of others; and one is hungry and one is satiated." So, what this passage means is, while some are still hungry, others have already had their food and filled themselves with drink.

K. 1 Timothy 3:3; 3:8 and Titus 1:7; 2:3

Let me begin this section by reading for you the four passages in the pastoral epistles that make up this point:

1 Timothy: 3:2-3: 2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; 3 Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous;

1 Timothy 3:8: Likewise *must* the deacons be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre;

Titus 1:7: For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre;

Titus 2:3: 3 the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things--

Now the implication of these passages seems clear enough. It is this: to have some wine is acceptable, even for pastors. But pastors should not be given to wine, that is, they should not be addicted to it or drink too much. And deacons and older ladies should not be given to much wine. To drink some wine is acceptable, even for deacons and older ladies, but they should not drink too much wine.

So, first we want to consider what the ramifications are if these passages refer to fermented wine. The original word for the words translated 'given to wine' in 1 Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:7 is *paroinos*. This word indicates someone who is always by the wine. John Gill says to not be given to wine means to be, "One that does not sit at it, or is continually drinking it..." The Dictionary of NT Theology says in volume 1 page 514, "paroinos (drunken) occurs occasionally in Hellenistic Greek, and in Jewish literature... In all such cases it is used of persons who are drunken or addicted to wine. It is the distinctive word for drunkenness in the Pastoral

Epistles, occurring twice there but nowhere else in the NT."

Then, the words, "...not given to much wine..." in 1 Timothy 3:8 and Titus 2:3 are literally, "...not enslaved to much wine..." Again we have someone addicted to wine.

So, let us take the view, for a moment, that these passages, do in fact speak of fermented wine. So, pastoral candidates are not to be given to wine and deacon candidates are not to be enslaved to much wine. What are the logical implications of such a conclusion? The logical implications are that it is to be expected that there will be many in the church who do not qualify for the position of pastor because they are addicted to wine and get drunk on a regular basis. Only those who have overcome such problems qualify for the ministry. The logical conclusion from the instruction that deacons are not to be enslaved to much wine, is that those who are not deacon candidates may be enslaved to much wine. 1 Timothy 3:8 and Titus 2:3 says that deacon candidates or older ladies are not to be given to much wine. These words literally mean to be enslaved to wine. So if we are talking about fermented wine, shall we conclude that those who are not deacon candidates and younger women may be enslaved to wine?

You see, if these passages refer to fermented wine, then we have to conclude that it is to be expected that a good number of people or younger ladies will be drunks or addicted to wine. Therefore the men do not qualify for the ministry.

And so, as I see it, the Scanlon error is to simply immediately accept, without further investigation that the wine spoken of in these passages is fermented wine. "But", you will say, "do you think then that this passage teaches that those who qualify for the pastorate are only to be given to a little grape juice? Do you think that deacons should not be given to much grape juice? Do you think that older women should not be given to much grape juice? Whatever could be wrong with drinking a lot of grape juice?"

Well, let me give you William Patton's argument

first. He holds, as I do, that this passage speaks of grape juice. Now it is a most natural question to ask, "How can this refer to grape juice? Can a person drink too much grape juice?" That question is so logical, as to almost refute the notion altogether, without further research. But Patton writes, "In previous pages, we have seen that those who were dissipated and voluptuous preferred wine whose strength had been broken by the filter (unfermented), because it enabled them to drink largely without becoming intoxicated. They used various methods to promote thirst. These voluptuous drinkers continued at times all night at their feasts."

Patton then quotes the Bible commentary like this: "Excessive drinking, even of uninebriating drinks, was a vice prevalent in the days of St. Paul, and corresponded to gluttony, also common - excessive use of food but not of an intoxicating kind." Patton then concludes like this, "Paul was simply guarding the deacons against a vice of the day."

So the argument is that drinking unfermented wine, and overdoing it, was a problem in NT times. So Patton has suggested that Paul views this kind of drinking as out of keeping with Christian practice.

I want to suggest a slightly different view, but holding with Patton that the wine in this passage speaks of grape juice. These passages are among the most difficult for me to answer. They are difficult whether one sees the wine as fermented or unfermented. So, let us begin by making a few observations. We have here in these passages a host of exceptional qualifications for pastors, deacons, and a few for older ladies in the church. We have in these qualifications, areas in which many church members may struggle, and that it is to be expected. These passages teach us that those who struggle in these various areas, do not qualify to be pastors or deacons.

These exceptional qualities are things like having their families in good order. That is an exceptional quality. They are to be of good behavior, able to teach etc.. Now those are exceptional qualities. To be addicted to wine, or be enslaved to much wine, that

is an exceptional sin, one that bars people from heaven.

I think that the Jews false accusation of Jesus, that He was a winebibber, and the instruction that a pastoral candidate is not to be given to wine, and that deacon candidates are not to be given to much wine, all refer to the same thing. I think a modern similarity would be one who is always by the coffee or by the tea, or whatever other socializing drink may be in common use. And the stigma that goes with it is that it generates talk, and gossip becomes a problem.

One of my brothers said he had come to the conclusion that maybe it was OK to have a social drink. Then one day he saw a pastor sitting with a group of people and he tipped back a beer, and the picture seemed so out of keeping that he was brought up short. Now what do you think of someone who is always in the coffee shop with a bunch of guys. Does it speak to you of an outstanding characteristic for a pastor? I think that is possibly what is in view here.

So, go with me to Titus 2 for at least some evidence for such a view (read 2:3). The older women were to be reverent in behavior. And what was the chief area that indicated reverent behavior for older women? Well, they were not to be slanderers. Slandering here, is harmful gossip about other people. And I think it may well be that the clause '...not give to much wine...' which immediately follows this phrase, is that which lends itself to harmful gossip. So I think that in this passage we have the clause, "not given to much wine" as epexegetical or a further explanation of, "not slanderers". In other words, the instruction to not be slanderers is further explained by the clause, "not given to much wine."

Whatever explanation is given of these passages, the result must be that what we have is an exceptional Christian trait. Not being addicted to wine, or not being given to much wine is not an exceptional Christian characteristic; that should be expected of every Christian. To be addicted to wine or enslaved to much wine is a sin that must be repented of and

quit entirely for every believer, for drunkards will not inherit the kingdom of God.

CONCL: And so, in conclusion, did Jesus drink fermented wine on the cross? No, He refused it. He did drink another drink which we believe was not fermented. And so, all in all, none of these passages condone the use of alcohol except Proverbs 31:6-7, and that only when a person was about to be killed as a punishment. And we saw that Jesus rejected even that drink.

In Acts 2:13, we certainly have no ground for drinking alcoholic drinks. The passages in Timothy and Titus are more difficult. However, if we take these passages as referring to fermented wine, now our difficulties are not at all alleviated. As a matter of fact, if they refer to fermented wine, then it is acceptable Christian behaviour to be addicted to alcohol, but it does disqualify one from being a pastor or deacon. And older ladies should not be enslaved to wine either.

It seems to me, whatever conclusion one comes up with, the wine in these passages cannot refer to fermented drinks.