

WINE AND THE BIBLE:
CHRISTIANTY'S SCANLON ERROR
Scripture: John 15:1-8
Message 7

INTRO: I have taken the position to defend the view that the Bible condemns all use of fermented wine and fully approves the use of unfermented wine. I have concluded that both fermented and unfermented grape juice are called wine and both fermented and unfermented fruit juice are called shaykawr. I have concluded that tirosh does not mean wine, but fruit.

In the last message I sought to give you a picture of Israel in Bible times and the importance of the vintage and proposed that in the vintage season they produced thousands upon thousands of gallons of grape juice. Since I have come to the conclusion that alcoholic wine is forbidden by the Word of God, I also have to concede that in order for that to be true there must have been ways to preserve this juice without allowing fermentation to take place.

I will take the bulk of this message from William Patton's book, that is available in our library now called, "Bible Wines or The Laws of Fermentation." Now this book was published almost 200 years ago. He writes, "My interest in the cause of temperance was awakened by the evidence which crowded upon me, as a pastor in the city of New York of the aboundings of intemperance. The use of drinks was then universal. Liquor was sold by the glass at almost every corner. It stood on every sideboard, and was urged upon every visitor. It was spread upon every table, and abounded at all social gatherings. It found a conspicuous place at nearly every funeral. It ruled in every workshop. Many merchants kept it in their counting rooms, and offered it to their customers who came from the interior to purchase goods. Men in all the learned professions, as well as merchants, mechanics, and labourers, fell by this destroyer..." (back cover).

He says in the book, "I soon found that the concession so generally made, even by ministers, that the Bible sanctions the use of intoxicating drinks was the most impregnable citadel into which all drinkers, all apologists for drinking, and all venders of the article fled. This compelled me, thus early, to study the Bible patiently and carefully, to know its exact teachings" (pg. 8). I suppose

then, that it is through these studies that the book, "Bible Wines or the Laws of Fermentation" was born.

Today we are fast approaching another time when liquor is a common substance even in Christian homes. Some have concluded that grape juice could not be kept long before it fermented. The natural conclusion then is that in the Bible wine always refers to fermented drink. Let me give you an example. The "New Bible Dictionary", on page 1254 says this, "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...".

That is, I believe, a Scanlon error. It is an un-researched error. And it seems to me that the reason greater research was not done is because the writers are convinced the case is so obvious it is open and shut. But that is not so as we will see in this point. So, having seen in our last message the need for preservation because of the abundance of wine produced in Bible times, we now go to point B., the methods of preserving wine.

B. The Methods of preservation

As we begin our consideration of methods of preserving juices without fermentation, let us begin by asking these questions: 1 What are the scientific laws that govern fermentation. 2 Can fermentation be avoided so as to preserve grape juice or any other fruit juice in its sweet condition?

1. The scientific laws

Patton says, "Proffessor Donovan, in his work on 'Domestic Economy' mentioned three methods by which all fermentation could be prevented: 1 Grape juice will not ferment when the air is completely excluded. 2 By boiling down the juice, or, in other words, evaporating the water, the substance becomes a syrup, which if very thick will not ferment. 3 If the juice be filtered and deprived of its gluten, or ferment, the production of alcohol will be impossible (Anti Bacchus, p. 162)."

Patton then goes on to say, "Dr. Ure, the eminent

chemist, says that fermentation may be tempered or stopped: 1 By those means which render the yeast inoperative, particularly by the oils that contain sulphur, as oil of mustard as also by the sulphurous and sulphuric acids. 2 By the separation of the yeast, either by the filter or subsidence. 3 By lowering the temperature to 45 degrees. If the fermentation mass becomes clear at this temperature and be drawn off from the subsided yeast, it will not ferment again, though it should be heated to the proper pitch (Anti Bacchus, p. 225)."

Patton then says, "Baron Liebig, in his 'Letters on Chemistry', says: 'If a flask be filled with grape-juice and made air-tight, and then kept for a few hours in boiling water, THE WINE does not now ferment' (Bible Commentary, xxxvii."

Patton then concludes like this: "The unalterable laws of nature, which are the laws of God, teach these stern facts: 1 That very sweet juices and thick syrups will not undergo the vinous-fermentation. 2 That the direct and inevitable fermentation of the sweet juices, in hot climates with the temperature above 75 degrees, will be the acetous. 3 That to secure the vinous fermentation the temperature must be between 50 degrees and 75 degrees, and that the exact proportions of sugar gluten and water must be secured. 4 That all fermentation may be prevented by excluding the air, by boiling, by filtration, by subsidence, and by the use of sulphur.

2. Methods of preservation

Now let me mention something here first, that I think is sometimes misunderstood. It is common to think that by letting juices ferment, they are thereby preserved. But, as I understand it, fermentation is not a means of preserving grape juice; it is the slow process of decay or spoilage. My wife and I visited a winery this summer to see first hand what goes on in a vineyard. The wines produced in that vineyard were good only from two to three years. After that they deteriorated and spoiled. However, the

preservation of grape juice keeps it sweet.

There is much evidence, not only from Patton's research, but from the quotes he gives, that in Bible times they had ways and means of preserving wine without fermentation.

I want to mention something else to you as well. Not only did they have ways of preserving juices, but they had ways of preserving the fruit itself. This was a new discovery to me and I discussed it with some of my wife's family. And one of them, a trucker, said that he had spoken with a truck driver who hauled lime to fruit growers. The fruit growers would put their fruits that they would store for some months into an airtight building. The nice fresh fruit was put into the building with lime. Then the doors were shut and the lime would take all the oxygen out of the building and some months later, when the stores called for fresh fruit they unsealed the doors, and there was the fruit, as fresh as could be.

As I was studying all this, I came across a quote by Patton from Josephus, the Jewish historian who wrote shortly after the time of Christ. He records the fall of Masada. I have visited Masada, and took much of the following information from the booklet I received there on the history of Masada.

About 100 years before Christ, Masada, which is a high rocky mountain with a flat top, close beside the Dead Sea, was fortified by the Maccabean king, Alexander Jannaes. Then 40 years before Christ, the Herod mentioned at Christ's birth, built a royal sanctuary way up on top of Masada. He stored all kinds of food there and made cisterns to collect water so that he would be able to live up there for years, if need be, without ever coming down. 66 years after the birth of Christ, some Jewish zealots overpowered the Roman garrison stationed on Masada, and took over this fortress.

For seven years they held this formidable rocky mountain. But Rome invented a way to take over.

When the Jews, almost a thousand of them, who were in the fortress saw that they would be taken they all took their own lives. Rather than be enslaved to Rome, they all died in one day at their own hands. From that event comes the now famous saying among the Jews, "Masada shall never fall again."

Listen to Josephus' account of their food storage: As for the stores laid up within this fortress, it was still more wonderful on account of its splendor and long continuance; (296) for here was laid up grain in large quantities, and such as would subsist men for a long time; here was also wine and oil in abundance, with all kinds of vegetables and dates heaped up together; (297) all which Eleazar found there when he and his Sicarii got possession of the fortress by treachery. These fruits were also fresh and fully ripe, and no way inferior to such fruits recently harvested, although they were little short of a hundred years {a} from the storage of these provisions [by Herod], till the place was taken by the Romans; nay, indeed, when the Romans got possession of those fruits that were left, they found them not rotted all that while; (298) nor should we be mistaken, if we supposed that the air was here the cause of their enduring so long, this fortress being so high, and so free from the mixture of all earth-born and muddy particles of matter.

Now that may be exaggerated, I do not know, but there is no question that the Jews had provisions to live for a number of years without ever coming off that highly elevated fortress. That much history clearly attests. By the way, last week I gave a quote from McClintock and Strong on the huge size of grape vines that had been found in Israel. My son-in-law listened to that and said later that he and my daughter had seen grape vines almost as big as I had described. If you would wish to see them later, I have pasted these pictures in the foyer of the church for you to look at. I now have no trouble believing the information in those quotes.

Patton says that William Whiston, the translator of Josephus says this in a footnote to Josephus account, "Pliny and others confirm this strange paradox, that provisions thus laid up against sieges will continue good an hundred years, as Spanheim notes upon this place" (pg. 17). I checked this footnote out and confirmed it. Then he says, "Swinborn says 'that in Spain they also

have the secret of preserving grapes sound and juicy from one season to another'" -Bible Commentary, p. 278."

Again he writes, "Mr. E.C. Delavan states that when he was in Florence, Italy, Signor Pippini, one of the largest wine manufacturers, told him 'that he had then in his lofts, for the use of his table, until the next vintage, a quantity of grapes sufficient to make one hundred gallons of wine; that grapes could always be had, at any time of the year, to make any desirable quantity; and that there was nothing in the way of obtaining the fruit of the vine free from fermentation in wine countries for any period. A large basket of grapes was sent to my lodgings, which were as delicious, and looked as fresh, as if recently taken from the vines though they had been picked for months.' -Bible Commentary, p. 278." Then Patton adds, "Rev. Dr. H. Duff, in his Travels through the South of Europe, most fully confirms this view. -Nott, London Ed. p. 57, note."

If in Jesus' day, and before, they had methods of storing fruit in a fresh way for a long time, it should not be surprising to us that they could store preserved juice for years. That there were methods of keeping fruit and fruit juices for considerable lengths of time is too clear to deny. So we must not fall into the error that unfermented wine was not available many months after the vintage.

So, having said all that, let me give you several chosen quotes from Patton on each of these methods of preserving wine in an unfermented state. First, by boiling or letting the water from the juice evaporate:

Quote 1: "By boiling, the juice of the richest grape loses all its aptitude for fermentation, and may afterwards be preserved for years without undergoing any further change" (pg. 19).

Quote 2: " 'The property of organic substance to pass into a state of decay is annihilated in all

cases by heating to the boiling point.' The grape-juice boils at 212 degrees; but alcohol evaporates at 170 degrees, which is 42 degrees below the boiling point. So then, if any possible portion of alcohol was in the juice, this process would expel it. The obvious object of boiling the juice was to preserve it sweet and fit for use during the year" (pg. 20).

Quote 3: "The juice or liquor pressed out of the ripe grapes is called vinum (wine). Of it is made both sapa and defrutum, in English cute, that is to say, BOILED WINE, the latter boiled down to the half, the former to the third part" (pg. 19).

Quote 4: "in Italy and Greece it was common to boil their wines" (pg. 20).

There was another method called filtration.

Quote 5: "By filtration, the gluten or yeast is separated from the juice of the grape. Whilst the juice will pass through the filtering implements, the gluten will not, and being thus separated, the necessary conditions for fermentation are destroyed.

Quote 6: Listen to this quote taken by Patton from Pliny: "The most useful wine has all its force or strength broken by the filter" (pg. 25). Then Patton says this: Others hold that the true rendering is: 'For all the sick, the wine is most useful when its forces have been broken by the strainer" (pg. 25).

Quote 7: "Captain Treat, in 1845, wrote: 'When on the south coast of Italy, last Christmas, I enquired particularly about the wines in common use, and found that those esteemed the best were sweet and unintoxicating. The boiled juice of the grape is in common use in Sicily. The Calabrians keep their intoxicating and unintoxicating wines in separate apartments. The bottles were generally marked. From enquiries, I found that the unfermented wines were esteemed the most. It was drunk mixed with water. Great pains were taken in the vintage season to have a good stock

of it laid by. The grape juice was filtered two or three times, and then bottled, and some put in casks and buried in the earth - some kept in water..." (pg. 26).

Let us consider another method called subsidence. In this method the juice is kept at a temperature below 45 degrees. The gluten settles to the bottom and the juice which is separated from the gluten like this will not ferment.

Quote 8: "Pliny...when speaking of a wine called Aigleuces, that is, always sweet, says, 'That wine is produced by care.' He then gives the method: 'They plunge the casks, immediately after they are filled from the vat, into water, until winter has passed away and the wine has acquired the habit of being cold'...Being kept below 45 degrees, the gluten settled to the bottom, and thus fermentation was prevented" (pg. 27).

Quote 9: "Columella gives the recipe, 'Gather the grapes and expose them for three days to the sun; on the fourth, at mid-day, tread them; take the mustum liximum; that is the juice which flows into the lake before you use the press, and when it has settled, add one ounce of powdered iris; strain the wine from its faeces, and put it into a vessel. This wine will be sweet, firm or durable, and healthy to the body" (pg. 27).

Well, Patton gives a number of other recipes. But let us consider yet another method called fumigation.

Quote 10: "Dr. Ure states that fermentation may be stopped by the application of admixture of substances containing sulphur; that the operation consists partly in absorbing oxygen, whereby the elimination of the yeasty particles is prevented. Adams in his Roman Antiquities, on the authority of Pliny and others says, 'that the Romans fumigated their wines with the fumes of sulphur; that they also mixed with the mustum, newly pressed juice, yolks of eggs, and other articles containing sulphur. When thus (it was refined) it was poured into smaller vessels or casks and

covered over with pitch and bunged or stopped up" (pg. 29).

Quote 11: "Miller's Gardener's Dictionary, article Wine, says: 'The way to preserve new wine, in the state of must, is to put it up in very strong but small casks, firmly closed on all sides, by which means it will be kept from fermenting. But if it should happen to fall into fermentation, the only way to stop it is by fumes of sulphur" (pg. 29).

CONCL: And so, in conclusion, we have considered the basic laws of fermentation and a number of ways in which unfermented grape juice could be preserved. We thus have a rather significant amount of information that confirms that both in Jesus' day and earlier and later, the ancients had ways of keeping wine unfermented and that it was considered a precious commodity. Those who hold that grape juice could not be kept long without fermentation certainly do not have historical evidence on their side. We should also learn from today's information, how important sweet, unfermented drinks were in Bible times. To think that all grape juice was soon turned into intoxicating drink is certainly a Scanlon error.

I read this quote from Dr. David Hocking in last week's message, "Christians sometimes try to snow people on their views about wine. I have watched in 24 hours fermentation take place. So if you want me to say that there is no fermentation for months, find yourself another boy." David Hocking believes in total abstinence from alcohol, and yet has committed a Scanlon error.

For anyone who is interested in studying this further, I will be making available to you in the church library the book by Patton from which I have quoted so much. I could give you many other quotes of verification, but would rather make this available to those who are interested through the book called, "Bible Wines or The Laws of Fermentation" by William Patton. If you would like to order your own copy you may go to the website www.bethelbaptist.ca or e-mail info@bethelbaptist.ca. Or you may write Bethel Baptist Print Ministry; 4212 Campbell St. N., London, ON, N6P 1A6.