

WINE AND THE BIBLE:
CHRISTIANTY'S SCANLON ERROR
Message 13

INTRO: Let me briefly catch us up to where we are in this series. We have looked at the views regarding wine in the Bible: Some wine is ok, or It is all wrong, or some wine is ok but it is not wise; or don't bother me with the facts. Then we looked at the various words used for wine in the Bible. Next we saw that in Bible times they had methods of preserving grape juice for long periods of time without fermentation. Then we considered that not all texts that indicated people were 'merry' from drinking wine, meant they were feeling the spirits of fermented wine.

This morning we want to conclude the sixth point of our studies, in which we are dealing with the difficult texts that seem to allow for the consumption of at least some fermented wine. We have one passage to look at and that is 1 Timothy 5:23. After this I will introduce us to the seventh, and final section of this series, where we will tie everything together.

So we begin by turning to 1 Timothy 5:23 (read).

L. 1 Timothy 5:23

1 Timothy 5:23 is the last of the difficult passages we will be considering in this series, and it is Paul's instruction to Timothy, to no longer drink only water, but to drink a little wine for his stomach's sake (1 Tim. 5:23). Now it does not take a rocket scientist to figure out that this instruction is for health reasons. It is a familiar fact that Europe is known for water that causes stomach problems. As a matter of fact, that is the excuse of the French for drinking so much wine. One would almost think that grape juice were not an option for the French.

However, Paul's instruction to Timothy to drink a little wine is, no doubt, medicinal. One of our pastors many years ago, viewing this as fermented wine, always said, "All right. So you drink wine for health reasons. Then you must surely take it like medicine, and that is by the teaspoon full."

But why are we to think that this passage speaks of fermented wine? Is the fermentation in wine good for the stomach? Dr. David Hocking says that fermentation decreases the value of grapes for health reasons, and he says that Israeli doctors will advise pure grape juice for stomach problems.

Listen again to this quote taken by Patton from Pliny which I have read for you in an earlier message: "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).

One of the things that has become abundantly clear to me in all my research is that fermentation in wine is bad for people. It is a poison and a drug. Another fact that has become equally clear to me is the health benefits of grapes, especially red grapes. What I have read over and over is that the red grapes are the best for health benefits. Even grape seeds are used as medicine. Now the benefit in grapes is largely the antioxidants that they have. Two of these are pterostilbene and resveratrol. There is considerable value to the heart, and possibly cancer prevention from these antioxidants. I will deal more with the health benefits of grape juice in a later message. We might simply say here that the wine recommended to Timothy was simply grape juice.

And so, in conclusion to these difficult passages, I want to take you back to the Scanlon story. The evidence that Dixon shot Scanlon was so obvious it needed little investigation. But an informant whispered the truth about Scanlon's pen gun and new investigation began. This is what the writer says, "At the same time, I started my own investigation, studying the crime scene, interviewing witnesses, talking with Dixon, and examining the physical evidence. As I thoroughly checked out the case, the strangest thing happened: all the new facts that I uncovered—and even the old evidence that had once pointed so convincingly toward Dixon's guilt—snugly fit the pen gun theory" (Page 11).

I think that so it is with wine in the Bible. A host

of difficulties fall away once we understand that the word 'wine' in itself in Scripture does not necessarily mean fermented wine, and that in Bible times they used unfermented grape juice, and it was called wine.

VII. EVIDENCE AGAINST THE USE OF ALCOHOLIC WINE IN THE BIBLE

We are now ready to begin our seventh and last point in this series, which I have titled, "Evidence Against The Use of Alcoholic Wine In The Bible". Here I want to give a number of points outlining the various arguments I see against the use of alcoholic drinks in the Bible, drawing my conclusions from all we have covered up to this point. There may well be some overlap between some of these points, yet they all have some differences and thus constitute another point.

A. The Scriptural Argument

The first argument against the use of fermented drinks I have called the Scriptural argument. By that, I mean the Bible can be used to argue that it does not condone social drinking. Many passages of Scripture are used by those who hold to total abstinence, to prove that one should not drink fermented drinks, the majority of which I must say in all fairness, are used wrongly. For example, example, many argue from Leviticus 10, that because the priest was not to drink fermented wine when he did the service of the tabernacle, that that forbids all use of alcohol. However, if we agree that he was forbidden to use alcohol while in the service of the tabernacle, by the same token we must admit that he is allowed to drink fermented drink when he is not serving in the tabernacle.

There is very little actual evidence in Scripture that speaks directly against what we call social drinking. Drunkenness, or excessive drinking clearly is condemned. It is a very serious sin in Scripture. I think it may be that the Scriptures do not clearly condemn alcoholic drinks because the results of its social use so obviously end up in its sinful use, that it should be abundantly evident from natural revelation that it is not good. The actions of

alcohol on the body so obviously teach that godly people should not take part in it, that it is hardly necessary for God to tell us so.

It is something like the teaching on the existence of God. You see, the fact that there is a God is so obvious that the Bible never seeks to prove it. Anyone who denies there is a God, would not change his mind though the Bible sought to prove it. In the same way, it seems to me that those who do not see the very obvious results of social drinking in the long run, may be hard to convert, though the Bible did say so. But, when the Bible describes alcohol as a poison, and natural revelation teaches us it is a drug, do we then need further instruction not to drink it? That should be enough.

But, having said that, I believe there is at least one Scripture that does soundly condemn all use of alcoholic drinks. This is a very powerful passage that condemns the use of all alcohol in absolutely no uncertain terms. This passage leaves no room for doubt. Turn to Proverbs 23 (read 29-35). In 29-30 we have cause and effect. The effects are given first: Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has complaints? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? There we have six sad effects of something. Six is the number of man. And what is the answer to those six questions? It is one and the same thing! It is the one who consumes alcohol (read verse 30). Here in verse 30 we have the cause.

By the way, let me give you some information on what causes redness of eyes. Michale P. Dunlap, Clinical Psychologist, writes about this in an internet article called, "Biological Impact Of Alcohol Use". Here is what he says, "One effect of drinking alcohol is 'blood sludging' where the red blood cells clump together causing the small blood vessels to plug up, starve the tissues of oxygen, and cause cell death. This cell death is most serious, and often unrecognized, in the brain. With this increased pressure, capillaries break, create red eyes in the morning, or the red, blotchy skin seen on the heavy drinker's face. Blood vessels can also break in the stomach and esophagus leading to hemorrhage, even death." I might add that from this we should have

rather conclusive evidence that the redness of eyes given as a blessing in Genesis 49 can certainly not be due to the use of alcohol, otherwise our God is no longer holy.

Back to Proverbs. Note that in verse 31 we have a command. It is not a command to not drink alcohol. It is much stronger than that. It is to not even look on an alcoholic beverage. It says, "Do not look on THE wine." Does that mean all wine? No, it is on THE wine. And what wine is THE wine? It is the wine that is red; the wine that sparkles in the cup; the wine that swirls around smoothly. The wine that causes redness of eyes. This describes only one wine, and that is fermented wine. And the command is to not even look on it, never mind not to drink it!

You see, THE wine, this kind of wine, does bad things. It causes woe. It causes sorrow. It causes contentions. It causes complaints. It causes wounds without cause. It causes redness of eyes and a hangover. And then, according to verse 32, at last it bites like a serpent, and stings like a viper. Not surprising, because it comes from the vine of Sodom. It has grown in the sick soil of Gomorrah. You see, these grapes produce gall, or poison, or venom, such as serpents and vipers have.

Here, in this passage, ALL alcohol is forbidden as plainly as could possibly be necessary. So we can say that the Scriptures condemn all consumption of alcohol.

Let me make one more point here. I have read those who say that the Bible nowhere condemns drinking alcohol, it simply teaches moderation or responsible drinking. There is at least one conclusive passage that condemns the use of alcohol as we have seen earlier (Proverbs 23:29-35). But, giving this view the benefit of the doubt, I ask, can it be proved that the Bible condones social drinking? Of course, we immediately say, "Jesus made wine." But can we prove it was fermented? Can it be conclusively shown that God endorses moderate drinking? Can it be shown that Jesus made fermented wine? The facts are it cannot be conclusively proved! The facts are, I believe, that no text of Scripture proves that

drinking alcohol with moderation is acceptable to God. We have simply drawn our conclusions from the difficult passages we have considered earlier. No text of Scripture gives God's OK on drinking a little alcoholic drink. But, we do have at least one very clear passage that condemns even looking at fermented drink, never mind drinking it!

B. The Argument From Biblical Words

Let me give you another argument against the use of alcohol. I believe a study of some key words with regard to our topic, would go a long way in clearing up this whole topic. For example, if yayin, which is translated wine, were translated grape juice every time it occurred, we would not so easily be led into thinking a little fermented wine is acceptable. Yet, historically, I believe it can be proved that an accurate rendering of it in English would be 'grape juice'. If that were done, only the context would then determine if the grape juice there mentioned is fermented or sweet. That is the case in the Bible.

The word shawkawr is translated as 'drunk' when it means, as I understand it, to be satiated. Of course someone satiated with fermented drink is drunk, and then it could well be translated drunk. But to conclude that it means 'drunk' wherever it occurs is, I believe, an error that leads to another error.

The error a wrong view of the word shawkawr leads to is found in the word shaykawr. Probably shaykawr was translated as 'strong drink' because the verb shawkawr was viewed as meaning 'to be drunk', but such is, I believe, not the case.

Again, in the NT, the word methuo, is taken as speaking of being drunk with alcohol in every case. Again, that is an error, as I see it. It could be translated in the same way as shawkawr in the OT. It means to be satiated. Only the context can indicate if that means satiated with alcohol and thus drunk, or satiated otherwise.

Again, a study of the word 'gluekos', new wine, indicates that it does not mean fermented wine, as some so readily believe.

So, a study of key words, I believe, goes a long way to leading us to the right view on wine in the Bible.

C. The Scientific Argument

Further, I believe that modern science should help us to realize we have committed a Scanlon error when it comes to alcohol. Science tells us that alcohol is both a poison and a drug. Recently I was in the Fort Vermillion RCMP office. On the counter for free distribution to the public was a Magazine called, "SOS Children's Safety Magazine." In a section on 'Teen Drinking' was a subheading called, 'Get the Facts'. Well, listen to this fact according to this article: Alcohol is a drug." You see, like it or not, a social drinker is a social druggie. We just don't put it in those words, but those are the facts. Science instructs the non-Christian police force to warn young people by giving them these facts, facts we are sometimes not even aware of in the Church.

If we believe that a limited amount of alcohol is Okeyed by the Bible, then we say that doing drugs a little has the green light from God. But what does the Bible say about drugs? Well, let me tell you which word in the Bible speaks of drugs. Turn to Galations 5:19-20 (read). In verse 20 the NKJV has the word 'sorcery' and the KJV has the word 'witchcraft'. The original word is 'pharmikia'. We get our word, 'pharmacy' from this word and it means drugs. A pharmacy is, as we well know, a drug store. Alcohol is a drug. Like poison, it is one of the few drugs that is legalized. A consumer of alcohol is a druggie. If we study this word in the Bible and then learn that alcohol is a drug, I do not see how anyone could approve social drinking, for social drinking, in all honesty, is social drugging. Furthermore, alcohol is the gateway to other, heavier drugs.

David Hocking, quoting Rachel Kelly, U.S.A. Today, says, "Alcohol is a drug, a sedative, a depressant, It is a mood and mind altering drug that slows down people's reflexes. Alcohol is a narcotic, a poison. Anyone who has consumed enough to be impaired is one who has overdosed on that drug. It is not the falling down drunk who is killing people on the highways,

it's the social drinker, the person who has been out to lunch, who's returning from a ball game, has had a couple of beers and gets in the car to drive. It is the social drinker, the person who can afford both to drink and to drive. It is not the poverty-stricken person in the ghetto who's causing this carnage. It's the social drinker, the person who has money. It's the cocktail crowd, it's the kid coming back from the prom, or graduation party, or just an event when he told his parents it was party time. 'We've got to reduce the amount of permissible blood-alcohol level if we're going to deal seriously with the carnage of drunken driving,' we're told. But the real answer lies in educating our nation not to drink, not even to start. Total abstinence is the only answer and everybody knows it. Everybody is crying about the carnage on the highways, but thousands of parents stand by and let their kids drink themselves to death. By our example we encourage them to do so. We permit our young people to be brainwashed by alcohol advertising, with its constant insinuation that drinking results in having fun, being athletic, or sexy. The parent's position has to be one thing and one thing alone: teaching children what is right and wrong, including what is wrong about alcohol, and abstaining themselves, and urging their children to do the same.

Furthermore, scientifically alcohol is a poison. When alcohol enters the body, the body immediately begins to fight to expel this poison. And this poison, in a matter of moments, attacks every vital organ in the body, including the brain. Science and human logic, all Scripture aside, would be all the evidence needed to condemn alcohol altogether. Yet thousands upon thousands of Christians defend and use it!

D. The Legal Argument

Let me follow that up with a legal argument. It is the task of the RCMP to keep our country and our roads safe. John Ryan, the British Association of Accident and Emergency Medicine has said, "I cannot underestimate the importance of alcohol in the workload of emergency departments - we would be out of business if it was not for alcohol."

In Britain alcohol is linked to 65% of all suicide attempts; 76,000 facial injuries a year, 23% of child neglect calls to national help-lines, 39% of fires and 15% of drownings. Huge percentages of sexual violations occur because of alcohol. And it is the task of the law, to keep these things in check.

David Hocking, quoting Dr. Robert Fischer, says, "The general public has long accepted the proposition that small amounts of alcohol are in fact not harmful to the user. Recent research however, indicates that this is not the case at all. Studies now prove that a blood alcohol level of .035 can be reached with only one drink" (most states define intoxication at .10) "and that one drink results in immediate decline in visual acuity and in the execution of simple and complex muscular tasks. Small amounts of alcohol affect hand-eye coordination more than mental and verbal activity. This means that a person may be unaware of impaired performance, a situation that normally results in tragedy on the road, as we all know. Recent statistical scientific studies on these matters have established a direct relationship between the moderate, and seemingly harmless use of alcohol, and breast cancer. In one study recently, consumption of only two thirds of a can of beer per week increased the risk of cancer in women by 40%; three drinks per week increased it by 50%, and more than three drinks per week of just beer alone, increased the cancer potential of 60%. Over the last fifteen years a number of researches in the United States and abroad have now seen that what passes for social drinking today in many parts of the world is fraught with vile medical hazards. Among them now provable are the following: liver problems, including sclerosis, hypertension, cancer of the digestive tract, fetal damage even before confirmation of pregnancy, and the impairment of sober intellectual capacities. Surveys done on students in nine different colleges, with different interests and majors, done with their attitudes towards alcohol have revealed an outstanding change. In 1950, 98% believed that drinking alcohol was wrong. In 1961, just ten years later, the figure had dropped to 78%, but amazing to all of us who read the statistics, in 1982, only 17% of the students said drinking was wrong."

I read somewhere that 1 in 10 people who have one drink become an alcoholic, and 1 in 10 alcoholics commits suicide. Amazing that we should need Scripture to prove that alcohol consumption is wrong, when, many non-Christian policemen know it is a deadly killer.

CONCL: So we conclude this message. When Paul encouraged Timothy to drink a little wine for his stomach's sake, he was, I have no doubt, speaking about unfermented wine. Today it is a prescribed cure by Israeli doctors.

Then I gave a Scriptural argument against the use of alcohol, as given in the Bible. Many texts are wrongly used, I feel, by those who promote total abstinence, but their end conclusion is right. However, there is a passage of Scripture that soundly refutes all use of alcohol and that is Proverbs 31. Furthermore, I believe if the words translated 'wine' and words translated drunk or strong drink were translated true to the text in which they are found, we would not so easily be led to condoning the use of alcohol.

Modern science has well established that alcohol is both a poison and a drug. These facts simply verify that what is condoned in the Bible is unfermented wine. When you look at alcohol from the perspective of the law, whose task it is to keep our highways safe, and our young women safe, you realize immediately that if alcohol were removed, the task would be immensely reduced.

And last, and very simply, all facts considered in light of the revelation of our Almighty and holy God, how could the Bible condone social drinking? I conclude that it is our sinful nature that has led us to allow it, not God Almighty.