

A Light in the Valley

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Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)

Wine in the Bible: How Fermentation Was Prevented

by: Ryan Hasty

Wine in the bible is spoken of as a blessing in its unfermented state and as an intoxicant in its fermented state. Many do not realize that those living in biblical days were able to keep their wine from fermenting and in fact did so regularly. How did they accomplish this in an age without refrigerators? There were 3 primary methods:

First, they boiled their wine down to thick syrup. Boiling grape juice causes the water to evaporate leaving behind a concentrate with such a high level of sugar that fermentation was impossible. Syrup in this state could be preserved for years. Whenever they wanted to drink this unfermented wine, they would mix a small amount of this syrup with water much like we do with our Kool-Aid. Different ratios were used depending on the type of grape, the age of the syrup, the temperature of the water, and even the season.

Prov 9:1-5 – “Wisdom has built her house, she has hewn out her seven pil-

lars; she has prepared her food, she has mixed her wine; she has also set her table; she has sent out her maidens, she calls from the tops of the heights of the city: ‘Whoever is naive, let him turn in here!’ To him who lacks understanding she says, ‘Come, eat of my food and drink of the wine I have mixed.’”

The above verse refers to the mixing of wine as “wisdom” whereas Prov 20:1 refers to a person intoxicated by wine as not being wise. The contrast is clear. Boiling grape juice to prevent it from fermenting and then mixing with water to enjoy as a beverage is incumbent of wisdom and was a blessing from God.

Aristotle – “The wine of Arcadia was so thick that it was necessary to scrape it from the skin bottles in which it was contained and to dissolve the scrapings in water.”

Horace – “There is no wine sweeter to drink than that of Lesbos; it was like nectar . . . and would not produce intoxi-

cation.”

Second, those living in biblical times had developed methods to filter wine and remove its strength. While pressing out the grape, they would use a bag called a “sacco” that captured the fermentable substances, allowed the juice from the pulp to flow through, and then collected it in a vase below the bag. Several historians mention this method as in use during biblical times as well as the fact that one of primary reasons they did this is because unfermented wine tastes better.

Pliny The Younger – “The most useful wine has all its force or strength broken by the filter.”

Plutarch – “Wine is rendered feeble in strength when it is frequently filtered. The strength or spirit thus being excluded, the wine neither inflames the brain nor infests the mind and passions, and is much more pleasant to drink.”

This is the testimony of two non-Christian Gentiles confirming that filtration causes wine to taste better because its strength is removed. But they are merely confirming what we already know. Beverages like grape juice begin fermenting when they are going bad, not when they are getting better. Alcoholic beverages are an “acquired taste” purely for the effects produced in the body by the alcohol and not because it tastes good.

Third, they were able to refrigerate and seal wine. Grape juice kept at 45° or less cannot ferment. If it is kept cool long enough, the gluten settles at the bottom and the juice can be skimmed off of the top where it can never ferment even if warmed. We know from archeology that they stored this kind of wine in caves, under water, and in the ground where it was cooler. So even without refrigerators, they still had the means to keep wine cool. They also kept their containers air tight by corking the bottle and then sealing it with pitch. The Jews also poured olive oil on top to seal the juice from the air. In the 1960s, a sunken ship was discovered at the bottom of the Mediterranean that had containers of wine dating back to the Roman Empire. The containers were sealed so well that water from the sea had not penetrated them.

With multiple ways of preventing fermentation, this is further proof that wine of biblical times was not necessarily alcoholic, but could easily be preserved and enjoyed as a refreshing alternative to water and a blessing from God that provided joy and not intoxication.

Wine in the Bible: Fermented Wine

by: Ryan Hasty

Though the ancients of biblical times were able to preserve and enjoy wine in an unfermented, nonalcoholic state, wine was also produced for the purpose of fermentation. What were some of its purpose?

First, the water of Palestine could be dangerous to drink; in fact, many in our day still suffer and die from dysentery after drinking unsafe water in third world countries. An effective method of killing the bacteria in water during ancient times was to mix it with alcoholic wine. The alcohol would then kill the pathogens in the water rendering it safe to drink. This appears to be the reason behind Paul's admonition to Timothy to take a "little" wine for his stomach's sake rather than drinking water exclusively (1 Tim 5:23). Even in these cases, however, the wine was greatly diluted (<http://www.4truth.net/fourtruthpb.aspx?pageid=8589951962>).

Second, alcoholic wine was used as an antiseptic to clean wounds. We find the Good Samaritan applying this kind of wine to the wound of the injured man in Luke 10:34. It would not be inconceivable for a person to keep alcoholic wine in his possession for emergencies such as this much like how we carry with us a first-aid kit when we travel.

Third, alcoholic wine was used to ease the suffering of a dying man. Prov 31:6 – "Give strong drink to him who is perishing..." In the absence of our modern day morphine and other opiates, strong drink would serve the same purpose. The Roman soldiers attempted to give Jesus wine mixed with myrrh in order to dull Jesus' pain, though He would not take it (Mark 15:23).

Fourth, alcoholic wine would be drunk as a standard beverage, though heavily diluted with water. The ratio of water to wine varied likely due to the strength of the wine in question. Homer's *Odyssey* mentions a ratio of 20 to 1. Pliny, a first century historian, refers to a mixture of 8 to 1 (*Natural History*). Athenaeus (AD 200) in "The Learned Banquet" cites ratios of 3 to 1, 4 to 1, 2 to 1, and 5 to 2. He mentions 3 to 2 as being "strong." Mnesthus of Athens stated, "Mix it half and half, and you get madness; unmixed, bodily collapse." The 2nd century writer Plutarch said, "We call a mixture 'wine,' although the larger of the components is water." Both the Greeks and Romans referred to the drinking of unmixed wine as intemperate and

something only Barbarians would do (Will Durant, Caesar and Christ, p. 71). Clement of Alexandria (late 2nd cent.) said, "It is best for the wine to be mixed with as much water as possible..." (Instructor II, ii, 23.3-24.1). Hippolytus (A.D. 215) and Cyprian (A.D. 250) mention the same practice.

How strong was strong in ancient times? Roman Falernian grape juice would get as high as 15% ABV, but the sugar of Palestinian grape juice would only ferment up to 4% ABV naturally. For it to exceed 4%, additional yeast in the form of dates, figs, beans, pears, pomegranates, wormwood, myrrh, etc. would have to be added. Yet once it reached 10% ABV, the alcohol would kill any additional yeast and halt additional fermentation. Only with the invention of distillation in the 13th century could alcoholic content be increased due to the addition of ethyl alcohol.

Here's the point: ancient Roman morals, generally speaking, were exceptionally wicked. Yet when using alcoholic wine as a beverage, their standards of diluting it compared to our modern day distilled alcoholic beverages reveal that everything from our modern day beer to liquor would be considered strong drink. And with so many warnings against strong drink in scripture, Christians would be wise to avoid them altogether. And if we are not willing to do so, we must be ready to concede that the standards of sobriety of ancient pagans were much more stringent than that which the bible demands.

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Conclusion

God has provided three progressive forms of motivation to encourage us to obey His will. Depending on the temptation and our maturity, certain inspirational thoughts will be more effective. A person deciding whether to become a Christian will probably be more strongly motivated by the fear of hell and the hope of heaven. Realizing that the fate of a person's eternal soul hangs in the balance is a sobering motivation to wake up and make the right decisions. As we mature spiritually and better understand God's love, our conviction to obey God grows and becomes more steadfast. Eventually, we should choose to do what is right, even for those who neither appreciate it nor reciprocate our love. We must learn to love as God loved us. All of these motivations provide powerful inspiration for appreciating God and strongly desiring to obey His will for us.

Receiving the Word

by: Chadwick Brewer

“And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.” - 1 Thessalonians 2:13

There are many hindrances for us receiving the word of God. Sometimes we just don't have the time. With our very busy lives of work, school, family, and down time, the word of God is often not on our minds. Sometimes we don't like what it says. Sometimes we want to only find what we already believe in its pages.

Paul points out that it's the word of God not the word of man. It is not a collection of clever sayings or quotable quotes, but it is a message from the all knowing, all seeing, and benevolent God. What a great blessing we have to know our Creator and to know His love for us.

James tells us to receive with meekness the implanted word which is able to save our souls. Not only do we get to know our God by His words, his words also hold the key to salvation. What is so important in our lives that we are too busy to receive the word of God? It is not our job to impose our beliefs on the Bible, but it is the Bible's job to alter and change our lives. If we don't like what it says, that's because we are in the wrong, and that is never a comfortable place.

Let us see the word of God as it is, the word of God. Receive it and allow it to shape and mold your life so that it can save your soul.

Study Opportunities

Sunday Bible Study: 10:00 AM
Sunday Worship Assembly: 11:00 AM

Meeting At

Homewood Suites of Bozeman
1023 E Baxter Ln,
Bozeman, MT 59715

Everyone Welcome!

Why Should I Care?

by: Trevor Bowen

Whenever someone reads any article, the first question often asked is, “Why should I care?” He or she may continue this thought process by asking, “What motivation should I have for studying, or even skimming, this article?” Maybe when you read an article about trying to live according to God’s will, you also ask yourself these questions. From the Bible, we know that these questions are both important and relevant. The Lord first recognized their importance and provided three progressive answers to our question, “Why should I care about God’s will and obeying Him?”

Fear of Hell and Hope of Heaven

The most basic motivation that the Bible offers is the threat of punishment if we do not obey God; however, the wrath that awaits us is not an immediate punishment in this life. Though disobedient people face consequences in this life, the ultimate and final punishment will be executed on the last day - eternal separation from God in hell:

“... When the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power” (II Thessalonians 1:7-9; see also Matthew 5:27-30; 10:28; 13:40-42; 25:41-46; Romans 2:5-9)

Not only does God motivate us through the fear of hell, He also encourages us through the promise of eternal rest in heaven with Him:

“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. “In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.” (John 14:1-3; see also Matthew 5:12; 25:31-40, 46; II Corinthians 5:1; Revelation 21:1-22:5)

It is because of these basic motivations that most people become Christians. However, as we mature, God provides other forms of motivation that should encourage us to do His will.

Sense of Duty

As we grow and learn more about God, His power, and His majesty, we begin to appreciate the debt that we owe Him as our Creator.

“God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He worshiped with men’s hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us.” (Acts 17:24-27)

Since He has given us life, we owe Him our service, but more importantly, we should also feel indebted because He paid for our ruined souls with the sacrifice of Jesus upon the cross:

“Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.” (I Corinthians 6:19-20) (see also I Peter 1:15-19)

Therefore, we are obligated to God for giving us life twice. The first unrepayable debt is our creation, and the second is our opportunity for spiritual restoration through Jesus’ blood.

The Noblest Motivation - Love

The responsibility that we may feel toward God is not the final motivation that a mature Christian should realize. Ultimately, Christians will grow to the point that they appreciate the love and sacrifice that God made for us through Jesus’ death.

“For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:6-8)

“In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. ... We love Him because He first loved us.” (I John 4:10,19)

As a Christian grows and becomes more like Jesus, our example, he or she will be motivated to obey God out of their love for God and for others. This is the noblest motivation.

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Daily Bible Reading

August 2019

August 1	Genesis 1-3	August 16	Genesis 27:30-29:30
August 2	Genesis 4-5	August 19	Genesis 29:31-31:21
August 5	Genesis 6:1-8:19	August 20	Genesis 31:22-32:32
August 6	Genesis 8:20-10:32	August 21	Genesis 33-35
August 7	Genesis 11-13	August 22	Genesis 36-37
August 8	Genesis 14-16	August 23	Genesis 38-40
August 9	Genesis 17-18	August 26	Genesis 41
August 12	Genesis 19-21	August 27	Genesis 42-43
August 13	Genesis 22-23	August 28	Genesis 44-45
August 14	Genesis 24	August 29	Genesis 46-47
August 15	Genesis 25:1-27:29	August 30	Genesis 48-50

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