

# "Old Paths" Baptist Ministries

*Presents*

## What Does The Bible Have To Say About Drinking **Wine?**



The following is a summary of a most interesting book called, Bible Wines and the Laws of Fermentation by William Patton. It originally was written by Mr. Patton in the mid 1800's and then was reprinted by Challenge Press in the 1960's. Although we may not agree with some of the things that he says in the book, it nevertheless contains much good material which we may use to combat the evils of the scourge of intoxicating beverages. Generally speaking, where quotation marks are used hereafter they will denote quotes from his book.

Mr. Patton wrote this book to help people understand the evils of drink as outlined in the Bible and to combat the misunderstandings of some concerning the subject of wine and drinking as mentioned in the word of God. Generally speaking, some people defend the subject of drinking under the idea that because the Bible mentions wine in many different texts that God sanctions the use of intoxicating beverages. The miracle of Jesus turning the water into wine (John 2) is probably the most misused text to defend the idea that God sanctions the drinking of intoxicating beverages.

Mr. Patton collated every passage that he could find in the Bible on the subject of wine and drinking. This led him to divide the teaching of the Bible on wine and the drinking of it into three broad categories:

1. Passages where wine is mentioned with no mention of its character.
2. Passages where wine is associated with "misery," and is "the emblem of punishment and of eternal wrath."
3. Passages where wine is "mentioned as a blessing, and with corn and bread and oil -- as the emblem of spiritual

mercies and of eternal happiness."

These three categories are in keeping with Bible's teaching on many subjects. One teacher of long ago made this wise statement about the proper method of understanding the Bible on any one subject:

*"We are not to expect in every place (in Scripture) the whole circle of Christian truth, and that nothing is proved by the absence of a doctrine from one passage which is clearly stated in others: for all things are not taught in every place."* In other words, to put it simply, compare Scripture with Scripture to get the whole teachings of the word of God on any given subject.

Therefore, when we take an honest look at the many passages in the Bible on the subject of wine, we must come to the same conclusion as Mr. Patton - that there must be *"two kinds of wine."* I agree with Mr. Patton's conclusion. However, there are some who would ever and always assign the same meaning to a word no matter where it is found and no matter what the context. In other words if the Bible uses wine to indicate a drink which cause drunkenness in one passage then it must mean the same in all passages where it is used. I thoroughly disagree with this strange logic. By that same logic then every word in every passage would always have the same meaning. Baptism would always mean baptism in water. Church would always mean a local church, etc. etc. To do this is to do injustice to the study of Scripture. Tempt does not always mean to tempt to do wrong. Walk does not always mean the physical act of walking with our body. Conversation does not always mean the act of conversing person to person. World does not always mean the physical globe that we live upon. We are always to study the context of the Scriptures in order to understand them correctly. That is why we are told to ["study to shew ourselves approved unto God."](#)

Mr. Webster is careful to note these distinctions in his dictionary. For most words there are several ways that they can be used. "A text without a context is a pretext." Remember that truth.

.Patton's inquiry into this subject may be divided into three parts.

1. He does extensive research into the way that grape juice is used to produce both intoxicating and non intoxicating

beverages. Intoxicating drinks are produced by vinous fermentation. Vinegar is produced by acetous fermentation. He documents thoroughly the exacting conditions under which wine is made. He shows clearly that juice from grapes must be processed in certain ways and conditions must be exactly right before wine is produced through vinous fermentation. If those conditions are not met, then the grape juice will not be intoxicating. He also shows that the ancients knew clearly the methods and most often employed the means by which grape juice would be processed in order to prevent vinous fermentation. He states, "The laws of fermentation are fixed. There must be saccharin (sugar matter) and gluten (yeast). The temperature of the juice must not be allowed to go below 50 degrees or above 75 degrees. The juice also must be of proper consistency." Outside of these conditions the juice will not produce an intoxicating beverage (wine).

2. Then he spends much time showing from the Bible texts that only the context of the verses can really demonstrate whether the Bible is talking about good (non-intoxicating) wine or bad (intoxicating) wine.
3. He then takes many of the texts used by those who would try to justify drinking and shows, in context, why the Bible must be talking about non intoxicating beverages.

What may we conclude from an honest look at the Bible and the extensive research done by Mr. Patton? I believe that we must conclude that the Bible only uses the word wine in a good sense when it is talking about non intoxicating drinks. I also believe that the Bible only uses the word in a bad sense when it is talking about intoxicating drinks.

I believe that God's word and His works will never conflict. So in the case of wine, with so many admonitions against drinking intoxicating beverages, in every case where wine is used as a source of blessing, comfort and libation to God, it can only mean non-intoxicating wine.

In the case of **John 2**, I quote from Mr. Patton on page 77:

- *"Can it be seriously entertained that Christ should, by His miraculous power, make alcohol, an article proved not to be found in all the ranges of His creation? Can it be believed that He, by making alcohol, sanctions the use and the giving of it to His creatures, when He, better than all others, knew that it, in the past, had been the cause of the temporal and eternal ruin of myriads, and which, in all the ages to come, would plunge myriads upon myriads into the depths of*

*eternal damnation? This festive occasion furnishes no sanction for the use of the alcoholic wines of commerce at weddings at the present time, much less the use of them on other occasions."*

In summary:

1. The use of the word wine can mean either a non-intoxicating or intoxicating drink. We must look at the context to determine the correct interpretation.
2. God would never contradict His word with His works.
3. Intoxicating beverages have no place in a Christian's life.