

## Are We Settled on Our Lees?

By Michael Clark

Often we would rather "hear" a tradition that emerges from the last outpouring, stay in that container from that point on, and just settle in on our lees. We hear the wrong thing. We should be hearing the Spirit of Jesus. We, like Moab, refuse to be poured from vessel to vessel. We refuse to go into the captivity and trials that come with the new vessel. As a result, we will never be purified for the Master's table.

Recently we were asked about the wine making process and the verse in Jeremiah that refers to wine being poured from one container to another. God in His word had a controversy with Moab because it had "settled on (its) lees."

Moab hath been at ease from his youth, and he hath settled on his lees, and hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither hath he gone into captivity: therefore his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will send unto him wanderers, that shall cause him to wander, and shall empty his vessels, and break their bottles. (Jeremiah 48:11-12, KJV)

Grape juice that is not preserved will readily ferment. This is caused by yeast. Different areas of the world have different forms of yeast that are peculiar to that area. These different types of yeast can give a taste to the wine that is not due entirely to the type of grape used. Sometimes this is desirable. The yeast and the wine are named for the wine growing areas such as Burgundy or Bordeaux in France where they are found.

There is another form of yeast common worldwide that is not desirable to the wine maker. It is called the mother of vinegar. If this yeast gets in the wine, you will end up with wine vinegar.

Yeast, therefore, is a type of the acting of the trials of God on the crushed grapes our hearts. The same trial can make one Christian bitter and the other a fine wine that is to be set before the King. We decide the outcome in our hearts by the way

we react to the testing of God sent to refine us for His purposes. A winemaker must constantly be on guard against the mother of vinegar, and take precautions so it



doesn't get in the grape juice as the good yeast is added.

In modern wine making they use something called a trap that allows the wine to breath as the yeast is working. This trap contains a liquid poison in it that the air and CO<sub>2</sub> must pass through. This kills the foreign yeast and prevents the wine from turning into vinegar. The fruit as well as the bottles must be sterilized to avoid this problem.

In the days of the Bible, they did not have this technology, so they used a fresh animal skin (Note: The requirement for the shedding of blood is even found here.) to put the curing grape juice in and sealed it. The elasticity of the new skin allowed it to expand and contract as the fermentation process went on inside, sealing the wine away from the possible contaminants in the atmosphere. This skin could only be used for this purpose once, and then it had to be discarded because it lost its elasticity. So you now see why Jesus warned us against trying to pour His new wine into the previously used container that He once honored.

As wine yeast eats the grape sugar and it secretes CO<sub>2</sub> and ethyl alcohol, turning the grape juice into wine. If the yeast dies before all the sugar is consumed it will be a sweet wine, if not it will be a "dry" wine. If the wine is bottled before the process is complete, it will be a carbonated or sparkling wine with the CO<sub>2</sub> captured in the liquid.

There is an undesirable byproduct caused both by the sediment that is in the grape juice that the yeast could not eat and the dead yeast bodies. This sediment is called dregs or lees. The alcohol secreted by the yeast eventually kills the yeast as the alcohol becomes too concentrated for the yeast to survive. These dead yeast bodies settle to the bottom with the other sediment. The wine maker must then pour the new wine off of the lees without stirring them up from the bottom. They either siphon or pour the wine into clean sterilized bottles. This has to be done a number of times to capture all the lees and make sure none are left in the wine. Cheap wines often have lees in the bottom of the bottles.

It is important to get rid of the lees because they will make the one who drinks them very sick. The wine will also be clouded and opaque. Dregs are not to be allowed in fine wines. God is very particular about His wine. He is always pouring off His people from one container to another to purify them and make them transparent and pure. We often get quite settled in and are content to have a few dead lees in our containers rather than be disturbed by the purification process that God knows we need to be ready for the wedding feast of the Lamb.

There is a story in the Gospels where God shows up with Elijah and Moses giving honor to Jesus. I find that our reaction to the Spirit's visitations is like that of Peter who said, "Lord it is good that we are here. Let us build three tabernacles..." In other words, "Let us just settle down and soak up the blessing. We have arrived, why go any further?" God always has the same reply, "This is my Beloved Son, hear HIM!" When we make a religion of Moses (law) and Elijah (prophecy), we cannot hear what he Son has to say to the Church TODAY. When we cling to the old workings of God, refusing to flow with the current move of God, we displease Him. God never nullifies the previous move of the Spirit and revelation given to the Church, but rather He adds to it. He purifies the wine as He pours it into its new container.

I am familiar with what is called the House Church Movement. In fact, I prefer meeting in a home with a group of spiritually hungry saints as a family over meeting in a large, impersonal, institutional building as do some. But, there are some who tend to be focused on the book of Acts and the way the early Church met in homes. There is a mindset that if we just meet in homes and do what the early Church did in Acts, we will capture the power and the life that they once had. I say, that this thinking is just as faulty as for today's Pentecostal Churches to focus on the Azusa Street outpouring, or the Methodists to focus on the Wesleyan Revival and make a denomination out of these. God is still saying the same thing, "Let him who has ears hear what the Spirit IS saying to the Churches." "The IS My Beloved Son...Hear Him."

We need to ask God to break us loose from our old wineskins and pour us out into His vessels of honor, making us ready for the Son. The Church, like Moab, has settled on it lees.

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God is an iconoclast. He pulls down our icons. He would rather we were fluid, willing to leave our old bottles at His command, but now we are forcing Him to "break our bottles and empty our vessels." The day of judgment has come to the Church.

The prophet Micah wrote:

Many nations shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, And we shall walk in His paths." For out of Zion the law shall go forth, And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. (Micah 4:2, NKJV)

Oh saints of God, forsake that "old wineskin" way of thinking and allow the Spirit of God to speak into your hearts His heart's desire for you. May we leave our "nations," our denomi-NATION-al thinking, and go UP to the mountain of God, the house of the Lord, and let HIM teach us of HIS ways that we might walk in HIS paths. May we hear the voice of the Lord coming down out of the New Jerusalem saying, "THIS IS MY BELOVED SON, HEAR HIM!"