

New Wineskins
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We are in a sermon series called All Things New. It's based on Revelation 21:3 where God says, "*Behold, I make all things new.*"

I'm preaching today on New Wineskins. My text is Matthew 9:14-17.

Then John's disciples came and asked Him, "How is it that we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" Jesus answered, "How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast.

No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch will pull away from the garment, making the tear worse. Neither do men pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved."

In our text, John's disciples asked a question about fasting. Remember, John the Baptist was a prophet preparing the way for Jesus. He was bridging the gap between the Old Testament and the New.

And John's disciples wanted to know why Jesus was doing things differently than they did. Jesus let them know that He was not there to do things the same way they had always been done! He did not come to earth to just patch up the old covenant; Jesus came to usher in a new kingdom with a new covenant. He came to bring radical change!

And it's the same for us. Jesus did not die for us just to patch us up – He came to make us new! Jesus is all about change! This passage in Matthew gives us some keys to change.

1- Don't put new wine in old wineskins

In ancient times, people did not have plastic or glass bottles. They used animal skins to make containers for liquids. When new wine was put into a new wineskin, it would expand as it fermented and the wineskin would expand with it. But when new wine was put into an old wineskin, the wine would expand and the brittle wineskin would burst.

New wine represents a fresh move of the Holy Spirit.
 Wineskins represent the structure that contains the Spirit.

When Jesus came on the scene – His teaching, His power, His anointing did not fit in with the old religious structure and traditions.

The new wine requires a new wineskin, or structure. A new way of doing things. This reminds me of the Charismatic movement in the 1970's. Many of us in denominational churches received the baptism in the Holy Spirit and we wanted to bring that new wine into our churches. That was usually not well-received because the old wineskins could not contain the new wine. That resulted in division, so new churches started to contain the new wine.

Wineskins are the way we do church. People tend to be one or the other: all Spirit or all structure. The all Spirit people think the structure people are too rigid. The all structure people think the all Spirit people are too out of control.

But Jesus said we need both in Matthew 9:17: *Pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.* Jesus wants us to have the new wine and the structure to contain it!

This is true in our individual lives. For instance, you can see this on family vacations when some people want to plan it all out in advance and some just want to take it a day at a day. That's a huge problem until everyone's mature enough to realize you need some structured days and you need some free days.

Instead of complaining about your differences, thank God for it! Without structure you would just lay around and not do anything. Without freedom you would come home worn out from your vacation! You need the wine and the wineskin!

It's the same way in church. Some churches lean more toward structure and others lean toward new wine. At GFC, we want the balance of Spirit and structure. Our worship team shows up to church with a structured list of songs and a structured way the songs should be sung. But they also flow with the Spirit. Your pastors show up prayed up and studied up and ready to preach. We have a structured outline with points. But we flow with the Spirit as he leads us during the sermons.

My point is this: both Spirit and structure are needed.
 All Spirit without structure can be a wildfire.
 All structure without Spirit is no fire.
 All Spirit without structure can be a flood.
 All structure without Spirit is a desert.
 We need both – new wine and new wineskins!

And by the way, a multi-ethnic church is a new wineskin. For centuries, churches have been the most segregated places on earth! It takes a new way of believing and behaving to change that!

The thing God really put on my heart to share today is that too many people are losing the new wine God pours into them because they don't change their wineskin.

Too many people get set free then lose their freedom.
 Too many people overcome an addiction then relapse.
 Too many people get a revelation, then in a short time forget it.
 Too many people get right with God, then backslide.
 Why is that? They are still trying to operate with an old wineskin!

Remember – wineskin is structure. It’s the way you do life. It’s the foundation you build your life on – and if that foundation is anything other than Jesus – you will fall.

Think about people who overcome an addiction. Many of them do so through a 12-step group like AA. What do those groups offer them? A new wineskin! That wineskin is made up of new beliefs, new ways of behaving and a new community to support you in the process of change.

If you get free of an addiction because you went to rehab, but then you get out and go back to your old wineskin – your old friends, your old way of thinking, your old way of coping and doing life – you will probably relapse! This reminds me of what Jesus said in Luke 11:24-26

When an unclean spirit comes out of a man, it roams through waterless places looking for rest, and not finding rest, it then says, 'I'll go back to my house where I came from.' And returning, it finds the house swept and put in order. Then it goes and brings seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and settle down there. As a result, that man's last condition is worse than the first.

When that demon comes back and finds the same old structure – he comes right back in! Yes, the structure has been cleaned out – but if the same old beliefs and behavior remain – it leaves the door wide open to the devil.

Getting free is one thing – staying free requires a new wineskin. So, how do you change wineskins?

When Jesus spoke about wineskins, He was responding to a question about fasting. He addressed the questioners’ mindsets, beliefs and actions regarding fasting. The new wineskin Jesus was talking about was a new paradigm, a new mindset, new beliefs, new behaviors and new motivation for behavior.

In effect, Jesus was saying, “You cannot put new ideas into old belief systems and mindsets. You cannot get new results with old behaviors and the same old motivations that have not really motivated you at all.”

This is why most New Year’s resolutions do not work! You are trying to put new wine in an old wineskin. You will never attain new behaviors with old beliefs because what you do is based on what you believe. That’s why true change always involves repentance! Repentance is not feeling bad about what you did. Repentance literally means a change of mind that leads to life change!

It takes a new mindset and beliefs to hold new wine. That's why Romans 12:2 says:

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

The essence of repentance is letting go of your misbeliefs – anything that does not line up with the word of God – and replace it with the truth of God's word. Then our unhealthy or ungodly behaviors can be replaced with healthy, godly behaviors. This is why Jesus said:

2- Don't put a new patch on an old garment

Jeans with holes in them are stylish now, but when I was growing up they were not. If you were poor like my family was, when you got a hole in your jeans, your mom put a patch on it.

What Jesus is saying in this verse is that you cannot put an unshrunk patch on an old garment because when you wash the garment, the patch will shrink and tear the garment.

By the way - when you put a patch on a hole in a garment - the hole is still there - it is just covered up! And many people try to cover up the holes in their hearts. But cover ups are only a temporary solution. They don't really fix the problem.

Covering up goes all the way back to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. When they sinned, Genesis 3:7 tells us the first thing that they did was:

They sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

Sin always results in blame, shame and cover ups. Shame looks for ways to hide, escape, cover up. Here's some common fig leaves, or cover ups:

Denial	Withdrawal	Isolation	Talkativeness	Defensiveness
Lying	Criticism	Anger	Perfectionism	Passivity
Blaming	Addictions	Acting superior / better than others		

None of these things are helpful. None of these things really fix our problem. It's like putting a band aid on cancer. All you're doing is covering, not curing. All you're doing is hiding, not healing. Remember, you are as sick as you are secret!

True healing requires forgiveness, and forgiveness requires confession, and confession requires you to open up, not cover up! It requires you to get real, not conceal. It requires you to tell the truth, not stretch the truth. Also, according to Hebrews 9:22

Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

That's why Genesis 3:21 says:

The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.

Not only did the garments cover them, but to make garments of animal skin required the sacrifice of that animal. That meant there was the shedding of blood. God showed us from the beginning that our cover ups are inadequate.

We need something greater! We need the blood of Jesus! Romans 13:14 says:

Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

In other words, you must choose bloody clothes over dirty clothes!

That reminds me of an ermine – which is a small animal like a weasel found in the northern region of the northern hemisphere. It is known for its beautiful fur. In summer, its coat is a rich chocolate brown. But in the winter, the color changes to a pure white.

For centuries, European rulers and judges wore garments lined with the white fur of an Ermine. The story behind that custom is one of the most unusual practices of the animal kingdom.

The ermine seems to realize the beauty of its coat and takes great pride in maintaining it. In fact, the ermine's most unusual characteristic is its hatred of anything that might soil its fur. Hunters who know this will fill the burrow of an ermine with filth and wait with their dogs for the furry animal to return to its home.

Once the ermine spots the dogs, the snow-white creature will dart for the safety of its burrow. But the ermine will not enter the safety of its home if that home has been soiled with dirt. Rather than flee into the burrow, the ermine will fight the dogs to the death.

Now get this: an ermine would rather die with a blood-stained coat than live with a dirty one. That's why the Ermine's fur was used on the robes of rulers and judges. The pure white fur is a symbol of the purity of justice and law.

Now think about this for a moment: the ermine's instinct for purity outweighs his survival instinct. The ermine possesses something every child of God needs: the realization that personal holiness is a value worth fighting for. And we must be people who fight for moral purity with the blood of Jesus rather than live with moral impurity. That's no doubt why Apostle Peter wrote these words in 1 Peter 1:15-16

But just as He who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."

We must never forget that we're involved in a spiritual battle. We must daily guard our minds from anything that would compromise our purity.

Now here's one thing I know – none of us are perfect! All of us have issues! All of us struggle with impure thoughts, actions and attitudes! Well – some of us struggle! Some of us have given up the fight. We don't think we'll ever be free so we just accept the filth in our lives. We choose to live with the dirt rather than fight. Obviously, that kind of thinking will never get you free!

To be free you must decide not to just accept your sin. You must fight with the blood of Christ that cleanses you from all sin!

Do what Jude says in verse 23: *Hate even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh.* Too many of us no longer hate sin. We excuse it. We make room for it. We no longer fight it. We cover it up. We put a patch on it! But Jesus did not come to just patch up our lives, He came to give new life. Besides, you can't patch over selfishness, lust or anger. You can't patch over unforgiveness. You can't patch a sinful nature – you need a new nature. You need a whole new wardrobe!

We see examples of this all through the Bible!

To get Elijah's double portion anointing, Elisha had to tear up his own clothes and put on Elijah's cloak.

To defeat Goliath, David had to take off Saul's armor.

When the Prodigal son returned home, his father cleaned him up and gave him some new clothes.

I don't know where you are today. But if you are off track and away from God - it's time to change your clothes! Ephesians 4:22-24 tells us:

Put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

With God's help, we can change. Change requires repentance – renewing our minds – and replacing the old man with the new.

When we are born again, the Bible says the old person we were is dead and we are now a new creation.

However, the old man's ways are ingrained in us, we have habits and ways of doing things that must be put off. New habits must be put on. You need a change of clothes!

Christ changed clothes so that we can change clothes. What do I mean by that? 2 Corinthians 5:21 says:

God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.

Christ – who is righteous – clothed Himself in sin – our sin – so that we might clothe ourselves in His righteousness.

What a deal – when we put on Christ:
 We put off the old and put on the new!
 We give Him our sin – He gives us His righteousness!
 We give Him our death – He gives us His life!
 We give Him our filthiness – He gives us His holiness!
 We give Him our addiction – He gives us His freedom!
 We give Him hate – He gives us His love!
 We give Him our depression – He gives us His joy!
 We give Him our fears – He gives us His peace!

Aren't you thankful that Jesus doesn't want to just sew some patches on our messed up lives! He wants to give us new life, new wine, new hope, new everything!

I want to close by asking you, "Has your walk with God become stagnant and stale?" Maybe it's time for you to receive some new wine.

Listen, we all need new wine!
 We need a fresh move of the Spirit in our lives, families and church.
 What can we do to receive that new wine?
 Desire it - Ask for it - Open yourself up to a fresh filling of the Holy Spirit today!