



WELCOME TO BIBLE HOUSE OF GRACE

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Putting New Wine into Old Wineskins.

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Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Putting New Wine into Old Wineskins.

How should a church handle change? What do you do when the younger generation, or a group in the church wants to change the music, a teaching, a tradition, a custom or the format of the service, but the older generation of the church or the founding group is resistant to the change. Should they make the changes regardless and view the fallout as collateral damage, to achieve the greater goal and be in tune with the modern era or should they remain as they are so as not to have anyone hurt or even worse still leave. Whether the change takes place or not one section of the assembly is going to be in disharmony with the other. Simply because if the changes are made the group that is resistant to the changes will be hurt and may even leave, but if the changes are not made the section of the church that is in favour of making the changes will be disappointed and may even feel they have to leave for the sake of their spiritual growth. What does the Bible say about Handling this Kind of Change? To find the answer let's look at the following two verses.

Jesus said:

- No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth (new cloth) on an old garment, for the patch (new cloth) tears away from the (old) garment, and a worse tear is made (in the old garment or cloth) (Matt. 9:16).

Jesus is saying that no one puts a piece of new material on old material, because the new material will rip away from the old material and make the rip even worse in the garment.

Again, Jesus says:

- Neither is new wine put into old wineskins. If it is, the (old) skins burst and the (new) wine is spilled and the skins (old wineskins) are destroyed. But new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved (Matt. 9:17).

Jesus is saying no one puts new wine into old wineskins because if the old skins burst the new wine is spilled and the old skins are destroyed, new wine must be put into fresh wineskins, so that both are preserved.

NOTE: in this context, old wineskins do not refer to the chief priests, scribes and Pharisees (the hypocrites). The focus is upon those who have been and still are truly faithful to God under the Old Testament Jewish Covenant.

Jesus is telling his disciples not to try and take the Old covenant away from the Jews who have been faithful to it and God for over four thousand years. If the disciples pull down what the older generation has grown up with, or try to force their new teachings onto them, they are likely to destroy the faith of the Jews who have been faithful to God throughout their life. Jesus is saying take the New Covenant to people who want to hear it and who are without God, the sinners and tax collectors etc., because it may destroy those who have been faithful to God under the Old Covenant. Remember Old Testament faithful Jews were saved by having faith in the:

- The Promised seed of the woman of Genesis 3:15.
- The prophet Moses said was to come like him (Duet. 18:5).
- The promised seed of Abraham.
- The promised seed of David.
- The Messiah the Christ the prophets spoke of that the Scriptures proclaim.

Added to these the author of Hebrews tells us that it was by faith that Abraham went with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise to live in the Promises Land, for he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God (Heb. 11:9-10). While Jesus was on earth the Jews were still under the law, it was a time of enormous change, during this time many Jews accepted Christ, but continued in their Jewish customs and traditions. Jesus is saying allow these faithful Jews to continue in their cultural traditions that they have been raised in for over four-thousand years. This is because whatever religious custom or tradition we practice outwardly will not add to our salvation, but it will not destroy it either providing our faith and trust is in Christ and not in the outward religious customs and traditions we maybe upholding. The following is a practical application of how this principal can be applied to the question, "How should a church handle radical change of what it has held from the beginning of its conception when there is a danger of causing strife and tension amongst the congregation and even worse of some brothers and sisters falling away especially when:

- It may alienate some who have been faithful from the beginning and are resistant to the changes.
- It has the potential to cause strife and contention amongst those who desire the change and those who are against to the change.

From what Jesus is saying concerning old and new wineskins it seems that that the best way to handle a radical change that cannot be made without causing others harm is to start a new church. Start another fellowship with those who are wanting the change and then add new disciples and new converts to that group, this way both churches will have what they want and there will be peace and harmony. Added to this the Spirit of God is able to flow freely amongst both assemblies simply because there will be no contention or strife in either group, both churches will be in harmony with those who belong to their group. Another advantage of this method of change is that the new group will more than likely attract new converts that the old group probably wouldn't, but it leaves the established group in place to continue to grow and attract those that the new group may not appeal to. In all difficult situations the biblical principle is to strive for peace with everyone, for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord (Heb. 12:14). If there is no peaceful and harmonious way of making a change without upsetting those that have been faithful to God then it is far better to start a new group and avoid causing bitterness, contention, strife and alienating faithful brothers and sisters simply because some want to change what other faithful believers have grown up with and have become accustom to.

Ponder the following thoughts: we often think church splits are a bad thing, but I wonder, which is more effective in the community, one mega church made up of thousands, and catering for only one style or group of people and located in only one area of the community, meaning many will have to travel long distances to attend or multitudes of smaller groups located throughout the community and accepting each other's different styles traditions, customs and format of service realising and understanding that each one will be catering for a particular or different group in the surrounding community.

CHURCH SPLITS OUTSIDE THE WILL OF GOD

When church splits are a result of self, ego, pride or greed and the lust for power, or because someone wants to be the top dog, it will be destructive. Any split done in strife, contention, bitterness and that causes others harm are certainly not done in the will of God.

CHURCH SPLITS WITHIN THE WILL OF GOD

When a church recognises that some in its group want to move in a different direction and realise that if that change is made amongst its existing members it is going to alienate and hurt others so rather than cause strife and contention within the existing assembly they give their blessing and agree to support and help those wanting the change to establish another church in a different area that split will bring about God's blessing on both groups. Doing anything in peace, grace and love is acceptable to God and a good testimony to the name of Jesus and a good witness to the community. This principle can be applied to changing a custom, tradition, teaching or even the format of the service. The principle of the wineskins is:

- If something is going to cause harm to others find the way of peace.
- If something is going to cause strife and contention, find the way of peace.

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.

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