

NEW WINE, INTO NEW WINESKINS

Mark 2:18-28 (Key verse: 2:22c)

"No, they pour new wine into new wineskins."

In today's passage we learn about wine. Don't worry if you have not much experience about wine. Do not also use this passage as an excuse to go start drinking wine in order to learn about wine. What is important is not the actual wine, but what new wine and wineskins are used to illustrate. In this passage new wine refers to Jesus and the new wineskins refers to our hearts which can be filled with new wine. May we learn in what sense is Jesus new wine and why our hearts have to be new wineskins. Amen!

Jesus ministry had gained momentum at this stage, just last week Jesus cleared the paralytic from his sins and healed him. He then also called Levi a tax collector and set some evening dinner with him and other tax collectors. In both of these instances, the teachers of the law started to be bothered by Jesus. First, they questioned how could Jesus forgive sins, that only God could forgive sins. Second, they complained that Jesus was eating with tax collectors and sinners (16). They had started to persecute Jesus' ministry. And now in this passage we will see how they question Jesus regarding fasting and the Sabbath law. All of this is a result of the status of their hearts condition, they refused to be new wineskins so they may experience new wine from Jesus. May we learn one word of God so that our hearts may be turned into new wineskins. Amen!

First, **new wine, Jesus Christ, we can live joyful lives no need to fast.** In verse 18 we see that some people came and questioned Jesus, "how is it that John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees are fasting, but yours are not." They were not questioning Jesus methods because they truly wanted to understand, rather they were questioning because Jesus was gaining too much influence and recognition. Jesus and his disciples were gaining more followers while at the same time, they were a group that seemed to be destroying the laws, traditions and customs in the Jewish society. That is why they asked sharply, "why do you not fast?" How did Jesus respond?

Look at verse 19, "Jesus answered, "How can the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? They cannot, so long as they have him with them." Jewish wedding feasts were exceptional. They lasted a week and nobody would fast during those days. There would be joy all over and thus wedding houses and feasts were excluded from fasting law. Neither John's disciples and the Pharisee's disciples fasted in a wedding house. By using this example Jesus said that his disciples did not have to fast because they were in a wedding party with the bride groom.

What does it mean that Jesus disciples are with the bridegroom? Jesus is commonly compared to a bridegroom in the bible. Isaiah 62:5 says, "As a young man marries a maiden, so will your sons marry you. As a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you." Apostle Paul said that, preaching the gospel and saving God's flock are like serving as a matchmaker between the Christ and God's flock (1Co 11:2). This then meant that, by Jesus saying, "they are with the bridegroom," Jesus proclaimed that he is the prophesied Christ, and that they had been saved. Therefore, tax collectors, sinners and the disciples, all those who are with Jesus, actually need not fast at all. No law is needed for those who accept Jesus as their Christ and believe in Him. In fact the law cannot save people. A weak and evil man cannot keep all the laws. In order for the man to be saved, he must accept Christ Jesus and believe in Him. This is the only way for a weak and evil person to be saved. Once you believe in Jesus and receive salvation you do not need any kind of laws.

The Pharisees did not know this good news, the Gospel. They were still crushed under old laws and filled with hatred those who did not keep the law. They had no joy in their life of faith. Like we learned last week from Shd Desmond's message, unless we accept we are sinners, we will always depend on the law and on doing good works to feel good about ourselves, a form of self righteousness. We will become like the Pharisees who did not know the joy of salvation which comes by meeting Christ Jesus. Our life of faith is not a sorrowful, tragic and serious thing like fasting. Rather, it is a happy, joyful and pleasing life, like being in a wedding feast. Once we believe in Jesus and gain salvation, we can freely enjoy the joy of salvation.

In our ministry, we must not condemn and blame each other, instead, we must understand and embrace each other. We must not be crushed under the legalized sense of duty, rather, be filled with joy and thanksgiving. We must not pretend to be very serious as if we are only walking in the thorny path of suffering. We should make an honest, truthful ministry. It is my prayer that our fellowships, our Bible study meetings and our Sunday worship service may not be a gathering of serious Pharisees filled with hypocrisy, but become a feast of sinners who have met Jesus Christ. Amen.

However, as verse 20 says, the time would come when Jesus would be taken from his disciples through his death on the cross. Jesus knew that on that day they would fast (20). To Jesus' disciples, having a relationship with him is most important, more than anything else. When we feel distant from Jesus, we should fast. Sometimes, when we commit sin either intentionally or unintentionally, we lose joy and feel miserable, no matter what we do. When King David committed the sin of adultery and murder, he lost the joy of salvation. He confessed, "When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long...my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer." Then he said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord." And the Lord forgave all his sins, and his joy was restored (Ps 32:3-5,11). If our

relationship with Jesus becomes distant, whatever the reason—committing sin, loving the world, being overwhelmed with problems, becoming weary, or something else, we need to restore our relationship with Jesus as a first priority. At that time, we need to fast. It may concern more than food, like fasting from watching television, or from Internet use. Through this kind of fasting we can restore our relationship with Jesus and be joyful. Let's accept Jesus as our bridegroom and be joyful always.

In proclaiming the gospel, Jesus was beginning a new work. It was not a continuation of Judaism; it was a new beginning. Gospel work and Judaism are essentially different, and cannot be mixed together. In order to explain this, Jesus used two analogies. First, in verse 21, he said, "No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. Otherwise, the new piece will pull away from the old, making the tear worse." These days, many people deliberately wear ripped and torn garments; it is stylish. But in Jesus' day, only very poor people wore torn garments.

Jesus used another analogy, in verse 22, lets us all read verse 22, "And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins." These days, wine is packaged in bottles. But in Jesus' day it was kept in the treated skins of animals which were woven together into a container. New wine undergoes the process of fermentation, unlike old wine. Thus, new wine has power of fermentation. If you put new wine into a bottle and put a cork on it, the bottle will explode later because the wine is actively fermenting. Likewise, old wineskins had no flexibility, and thus could not endure the powerful fermentation of new wine. They would ultimately burst. That is why new wine must be out inside new wineskins.

Here Jesus compared himself and his gospel to new wine. Jesus gospel has the power of fermentation, that is, vitality and life. The gospel has enough vitality and power to completely change a man, drive out demons, cure a leper, make a paralytic get up and walk, and change Levi, a tax collector into Saint Matthew. If the gospel comes into our hearts, it does not leave us unchanged. We groan as Apostle Paul did, "what a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death" (Rom 7:24)? Not only that, we are moved by the grace of forgiveness, and develop an earnest desire and courage to begin a new life.

However, what if our hearts are old wineskins? In other words, what if we do not accept ourselves as sinners? What if we do not throw away our sinful desires? What if we are afraid to suffer and be discouraged by our new decision? Then we will burst, unable to endure the expanding power of the Gospel. Some people leave, saying, "I came to suffer more due to Bible study." In order to justify their sins and desires, they blame others by distorting the truth saying, "The Bible is wrong. Shepherds are wrong. The Church is a problem."

Those who persist to their desires and are unwilling to change, can never endure the power and vitality of the Gospel. They can never enjoy a truly blessed and joyful life of salvation. To see an example of such people, look at the Pharisees. They heard Jesus words and teachings but were stubborn and did not want to repent and obey. They chose the most convenient path, a path that fed their human centered feelings. They kept to their laws and vested authority. Ultimately, they criticized how tax collectors and sinners had changed. They blamed Jesus out of jealousy. Such are those people, instead of rejoicing in seeing how God is working in the hearts of others, they become jealous and become overly critical feeding only their egos and pride. They would even gather people of the same mind so they feel justified of their hearts of old wineskins. The Pharisees became spiritually dead even though they appeared active in religious activities. Attended bible studies, came to Sunday worship services and participated wherever they could. However, remained old wineskins because they refused new wine, our Lord Jesus Christ.

We must be careful not to be old wineskins, but new wineskins. We must get rid of our selfish desires and pride. In particular, we should throw away our stereotypes and our laws: "I am going to get tired or die if don't sleep for 8 hours." "I am going to die of shame if I do not have a girlfriend." "if I do not act now over my heart desires towards this girl, I am going to live a miserable life, she is the one, one, one one from God. But am going to keep it a secret." Or "I am going to die of boredom if I do not play online games or watch obscene movies." We must have a humble attitude, a willingness to learn, renew ourselves and grow. Even the new generation can become old wineskins, if they are unwilling to learn. No matter how old a person is, if they are humble as a child and willing to listen and repent from their sin, they are a new wineskin. No matter how distinguished one may be, if they cannot listen to Jesus and repent, they are old wineskins and cannot contain the new wine. It's a life principle and does not matter how one feels or how convenient it would be to put new wine into old wineskins, if you did, you would loose the new wine. It is my prayer that we may become new wineskins so that our hearts may be fresh all the time and our lives may be full of the power and vitality of the gospel.

Second, **Jesus is lord of the Sabbath, the new wine is here.** As Jesus had defended his disciples against criticism about fasting, he now defends them from legalism regarding the Sabbath law. One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and as his disciples walked along, they began to pick some heads of grain. The disciples were always hungry. Subconsciously their hands reached out and began to pick some heads of grain, rub them together to remove the husks, and eat them, munching and crunching, saying, "Ah! Tasty!" Suddenly, the Pharisees, who were hiding in the fields, popped up and said, "Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?" (23-24). Why was this such a big deal to the Pharisees? They thought Jesus' disciples broke the Sabbath law. They had three pillars of faith and culture in Israel: temple worship, the Torah and the Sabbath. These were all related to their identity as a chosen people.

How did Jesus defend his disciples? He answered, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need?" (25) By saying, "Have you never read," Jesus exposed the Pharisees' lack of real Bible understanding. Then Jesus defended his disciples by explaining a Bible story from God's point of view. He said, "In the days of Abiathar the high priest, he [David] entered the house of God and ate the consecrated bread, which is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions" (26). Here we learn from Jesus two things.

Firstly, Jesus considered his disciples as precious as David. In a time of crisis, David once ate consecrated bread, which was lawful only for the priests to eat. The high priest understood David and allowed this. It was because he knew God's heart of mercy on the needy. God did not rebuke David regarding this matter. It was because David loved God with all his heart. So he was known as a man after God's own heart (Ac 13:22). **God sees the heart (1 Sa 16:7b).**

Secondly, Jesus valued man's life more than the law. In verse 27 he said to them, "**The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.**" After finishing the creation of heaven and earth, God rested on the seventh day. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy (Gen 2:2-3). God did not rest because he was tired after hard work. He rested in order to commemorate what he had done. He also blessed the Sabbath for the benefit of people—for our spiritual, mental and physical restoration. God gave the Sabbath so that we may stop ordinary work and come to God.

Then Jesus declared, "**So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath**" (28). This means that Jesus is God who created the heavens and the earth, including the Sabbath. Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath. Jesus is the head of the church (Col 1:18). Jesus is the Lord of our lives. So in order to keep the Sabbath we should first of all accept Jesus as Lord in our hearts. We should love him, worship him, listen to his word, and serve as Jesus wants us to serve. Christian life is not a matter of engaging in many kinds of activities. It is to follow Jesus, love him, listen to him, and to have an intimate relationship with him. In this way we can be made into new wineskins and can experience new wine. Then, whatever we do, we do out of love for Jesus, and we can learn of him and grow to be like him. Then true joy and peace come into our hearts. Jesus invites, "**Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest**" (Mt 11:28). Let's accept Jesus as the Lord of our lives and love him and serve him with all our hearts, even though we make many mistakes. Amen!

In conclusion, I can relate very well with the Pharisees, when I was a young believer I used to debate a lot with others about the Bible. I read and studied the bible everyday, I loved to read the bible. Of course, I believed that I was trying to point them to Jesus and correct their wrongs. However, deep down all I was doing was to actually validate myself, that I was right and they were wrong. I realized this, because whenever I would win a debate I would be very happy. Even when I started having bible studies with msn Jacob, my main motivation was so that I would prove his bible knowledge wrong. It was not to learn and become new wineskin. Rather I was an old wineskin appearing all holy making sure I did not fall into what I considered serious sins, sexual immorality, stealing and so on. I even remember though I believed Jesus died for me on the cross, I still struggled to see myself as a sinner. I was always seen as this good boy by my parents and my community. How was I a sinner I would reason with myself. However, my sin was actually humanisms, I relied on pleasing people for joy and fulfillment rather than in pleasing God. In other words I would even compromise obeying Jesus over obeying person. And this what exactly happened, I fell into sexual immorality during my third/fourth year of study because I wanted to please the lady and not let her down. After my sin, I became heart broken because now I had no excuse I had committed a sin I fully regarded serious. For the first time I saw myself as a wicked man who needed a savior. It was for the first time In my life that I could full understand why Jesus died for me on the cross. I was a sinner who could not save myself from pleasing people and living before people. I was a wretched sinner worse than Judas, Barabbas and the thief on the cross. I did not even feel worthy to attend church and be in the presence of God and God's people. I did not want to contaminate anyone. However, I could be consoled and experience something new and refreshing through Psalm 51, as I go through few of the verses, "*1Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. 2Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin....10Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. 11Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. 12Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me....17My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise.*" From then on I believe the lord has been renewing my heart into new wineskin, so that my joy and validation may rest in Him first and foremost beginning with the gospel. It is my prayer that we live a life of repentance so we may daily experience new wine our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. May our hearts be transformed into new wineskins so that the fermentation process of new wine, our lord Jesus Christ, may turn us into powerful men and women of faith whose salvation is their joy. Amen!