

Fresh Wineskins

by Richard E. Bieber

The sermon emphasizes the importance of keeping our hearts and lives fresh by constantly listening to and walking in Jesus' words, and avoiding the danger of becoming old wineskins by mixing old wine with the new.

Scripture: Matthew 7:24, Matthew 9:13, Luke 5:37, Luke 8:20, John 8:31, 2 Corinthians 4:16, Galatians 3:1

Topics: "Spiritual Renewal", "Revival Teaching"

Description

Richard E. Bieber preaches about the importance of maintaining a fresh revival in our spiritual lives, emphasizing the need to continually be renewed by the living Word of Jesus to avoid becoming old wineskins. He contrasts the responses of Caiaphas, who rejected the Messiah, with Cleopas, who recognized and followed Jesus. Bieber warns against mixing old religious practices with the new wine of Jesus' teachings, urging believers to remain tender towards the Word, quick to repent, and obedient to God's commands.

Transcript

Who ever heard of a stale revival? One of the primary marks of a revival is its life, its immediacy. Suddenly everybody is conscious that God is among us. Jesus, the Crucified, is risen and alive in our midst! His word is convicting our hearts, bringing us to repentance and breaking chains that have held us captive for years. But will this freshness last? After all, everything in our world seems to harden and crumble with the passing of time. Our bodies age. Our bones become brittle.

When Jesus pours new wine into fresh wineskins, as he does in every revival, he expects the wineskins to remain fresh. The new wine of his word never ages. And that word has the power to keep us fresh: "So we do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed every day"

(2 Cor 4:16).

Paul's wineskin remained fresh because he knew how to participate in a daily revival. He allowed the word of his Master to renew him day by day. And our wineskins will do the same as long as we make sure they are filled only with new wine—Jesus' word.

But what happens to many believers is that after a while they begin mixing a bit of old wine with the new. Old wine is any religious idea or practice that we substitute for a personal, obedient relationship with Jesus. For instance, if you find yourself evaluating believers on the basis of their view of the rapture, the

formula they use to baptize people or whether their approach to prayer is the same as yours, you have begun mixing old wine with the new. And that old wine (of fleshly religion) will cause your wineskin to harden. If you can look at a woman and identify the depth of her commitment to Jesus by her jewelry, you have begun mixing old wine with the new. Your wineskin is becoming brittle.

Caiaphas, the high priest, was looking for the Messiah. Since his childhood Caiaphas had prayed that the Messiah would come in his lifetime. He was expectant.

When John the Baptist burst on the scene, Caiaphas was curious. Scouts were sent to question him.

"Are you the Messiah?"

"No."

"Are you Elijah?"

"No."

"Are you the prophet Moses foretold?"

"No."

"Well then, who are you? Give us an answer for those who sent us."

"I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, ' Make straight the way of the Lord '" (Jn 1:23).

Caiaphas heard about Jesus, the Nazarene, how he healed the sick and cast out demons. But how could he be the Messiah? He healed people on the Sabbath. He ate with tax collectors and sinners. He didn't purify his hands before the meal.

The scouts came in for a closer look, just as Jesus was having dinner with Levi the tax collector. "Why do you eat with tax collectors and sinners? And how come the disciples of John fast and offer prayers, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but your disciples eat and drink?"

"And Jesus said to them, 'Can you make the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? The days will come, when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days.... No one puts new wine into old wine skins; if he does, the new wine will burst the skins and it will be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed. But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins'"

(Lk 5:34-35, 37-38).

Caiaphas, the high priest, prayed for the Messiah to come. When at last the Messiah stood before him, Caiaphas sent him to his death. Caiaphas was an old wineskin. He could not handle the new wine.

There was a man named Cleopas. He too was looking for the Messiah. When Cleopas met Jesus, he saw what Caiaphas could not see. He saw light as he watched Jesus heal the sick, bring good news to the poor and call sinners to repentance. Convinced that this was the Messiah, he threw in his lot with

Jesus and followed him.

Then it all fell apart. Thursday night Jesus was arrested by the temple police. Friday morning Caiaphas turned him over to Pilate to be killed. Now it's Sunday evening, and Cleopas and a friend are on their way to Emmaus to get away for a while. A stranger joins them on the road, listens to their conversation.

"Why are you so upset?" he asks.

"Haven't you heard the things that went on in Jerusalem this Passover?"

"What things?"

"Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, how our priests and rulers had him condemned to death and crucified. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel."

"O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and enter into

his glory?"

Now they draw near the village. The stranger appears to be going further. "Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent." They sit down to eat. The stranger takes the bread, blesses it, breaks it and gives it to them. And

their eyes are opened, and they recognize him (see Lk 24:13-31).

Caiaphas met the Messiah and sent him to his death. Cleopas met a stranger on the road, who spoke the living word to him. Cleopas welcomed that word into his heart and met the risen Lord. Caiaphas was an old wineskin. Cleopas was a fresh wineskin.

An old wineskin is religious. It may fast and pray and adhere to all the rules that old wineskins love. But it will not listen to the Messiah's call for repentance. It hardens its religious heart against the living Word. To the old wineskin all Jesus can say is, "Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice'"

(Mt 9:13).

A fresh wineskin is tender toward the Word. It humbles itself and becomes like a child before the Master. It is quick to confess its sin and to repent. It obeys when the Master commands it to give and forgive and show mercy.

As the new wine of the kingdom begins to flow in our revival, it searches for fresh wineskins. Old wineskins cannot contain it.

But surely God can see that we are fresh wineskins. Haven't we been praying for this revival for years? Haven't we committed ourselves to serving this revival in any way that God may choose to use us?

Yet, there lives in each of us a Caiaphas, as well as a Cleopas. The Caiaphas in us is looking for the Messiah to come as fire from heaven, but he has a fixed idea of how this is to happen. Our Caiaphas may be "Spirit filled" and acquainted with every move of God across the land. He knows for sure that the Spirit of God cannot possibly be alive in that primly dressed little man with every hair in place, adorned with a spotless clerical collar.

The little man in the clerical collar stands up to speak. His voice is thin. His hands are trembling. You mean we're going to have to sit through an hour of this? The Caiaphas in us is only half attentive, while the woman in front of us starts to sob. Come now, she must have a problem. Across the aisle old stone-face begins to rock like a pious Hasid.

The atmosphere around us is charged with the presence of God, as a living word pours from the mouth of the prim little man in the clerical collar. But we are deaf to it, because the Caiaphas within us has succeeded in hardening our hearts into

brittle wineskins that measure people by standards which have nothing to do with the kingdom of God.

A wineskin remains fresh by constant vigilance. The Caiaphas in us must give place to Cleopas, as we repeatedly choose, with an act of the will, to repent and become children before the Master. We need to make sure that we put only new

wine in our wineskins: his word. "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free"

(Jn 8:31-32).

Paul's letter to the Galatians was written to keep their wine skins fresh. Paul had given the Galatian believers the new wine of Jesus' gospel. But other teachers had come into those churches and were adding "works of the law" to the gospel of

grace. Paul used extreme language to warn these men and women about what was happening to them. "O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun with the Spirit, are you now ending with the flesh?" (Gal 3:1-3).

The book of Galatians is a timeless word of warning to wine skins that have made the mistake of mixing some old wine with the new: don't add anything to the gospel of grace in Jesus Christ. Don't substitute tradition, church work, Christian activism or anything else for simple obedience to the commands of Jesus.

Every one then who hears these words of mine and DOES them will be like a wise man who built his house upon the rock.

Matthew 7:24, emphasis added

And he was told, "Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, desiring to see you." But he said to them, "My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and DO it."

Luke 8:20-21, emphasis added

There is no reason why we should not remain fresh the rest of our days on earth. Jesus' words are Spirit and life. All we have to do is keep listening to them and walking in them day by day.

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net