

The New Wine

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the need to come to the end of our own strength and allow God to break us, so that we can experience the new wine, the life of Jesus, and walk in the light of God.

Scripture: Isaiah 30:15

Topics: "Dependence On God", "New Covenant"

Description

Zac Poonen emphasizes the significance of recognizing our limitations and the futility of relying on our own strength, illustrated by the miracle of turning water into wine at the wedding in Cana. He explains that the old wine represents life under the law, which ultimately runs out, prompting us to seek the new wine of the new covenant that God desires to give us. Poonen encourages believers to come to the end of themselves, allowing God to break down self-reliance and reveal His power in our weakness. He highlights that true victory comes not from human effort but from a deep relationship with God, leading to a life transformed by His grace. The sermon calls for a humble acknowledgment of our need for God, urging us to seek His face for the new wine that brings spiritual renewal and fellowship with Him and others.

Transcript

At the marriage in Cana, where Jesus was present, the old wine ran out. The old wine was made with human effort, over a period of many years - but it could not meet the need. This is a parable of life under the law - the old covenant. The old wine runs out; and the Lord has to wait until it runs out before He can give us the new wine. "For the Lord God says: Only in waiting for Me will you be saved. ... but you say, We will get our help from Egypt (human strength)! So you will be chased by your enemies. .. And the Lord is waiting for you (to come to an end of yourself) and to come to Him, so that He can show you His love; He will conquer you to bless you. ... Blessed are all those who wait for Him to help them" (Isa. 30:15-18 Living Bible). When we have tried and tried and tried to live in victory and failed repeatedly, this is the lesson that God is trying to teach us: "You cannot have victory in your own strength." As long as you are under the law, you will be ruled by sin. The chief work that God seeks to do in each of His children is to break down the strength of self totally. Jesus waited for the old wine to run out, at Cana, before He did His miracle. He is waiting now for our strength to come to an end. All our failures and defeats are meant by God to bring us to the end, for He can manifest His power perfectly only in our weakness (2 Cor. 12:9). We can see the strength of self in the moments of temptation and provocation, when we react with bitter words, angry expressions, self-justification, criticism and judgment of others, unforgiving attitudes, a grabbing-love for material things, fighting for our rights and our reputation, seeking vengeance etc. These and other similar

attitudes show how strong self still is in us - the old wine has not yet run out; and Jesus waits on the sidelines doing nothing for us.

If only we allow God to break us, if only we would humble ourselves and gladly accept death to our rights and reputation, how quickly He could lead us into life under the new covenant! All the trying circumstances, frustrations and disappointments, heartaches etc, that we go through are meant by God to bring the strength of our self down to zero. This was how God dealt with Job. Finally Job reached that zero-point where lying on his face in the dust, he said, "Lord, I am nothing. (I am zero.) ... I lay my hand upon my mouth in silence. ... I had only heard about you (second-hand) before, but now I have seen you and I loathe myself and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 40:4;42:5,6). This is what happens when God has finally broken us and given us a revelation of Himself. The same Moses, who once thought himself to be so capable (at the age of 40), when broken by the vision of God (40 years later) says, "Lord, I can't speak. Send someone else" (Ex. 4:10,13). The same thing happened to the great prophet Isaiah when he saw God's glory. He said, "My doom is sealed, for I am a foul-mouthed sinner" (Isa. 6:5). Daniel says that when he saw the vision the Lord gave Him, that his strength left him. He came to a zero-point (Dan. 10:8). When the Spirit-filled apostle John, after having walked with God for 65 years, saw Jesus on the isle of Patmos, he fell at His feet as a dead man (Rev. 1:17). Such has always been the experience of all who have seen the glory of the Lord! Their face is in the dust and their mouth is shut. When God can bring us to that place, it is but a quick task for Him to give us the new wine, the life of Jesus, the divine nature, the pre-eminent blessing of the new covenant sealed through the blood of Jesus. Oh that we might all come there quickly and live in that place - with our face in the dust before God - all our days! For there is a development in this life from light to light (Prov. 4:18), from glory to glory (2 Cor. 3:18). John speaks of "Walking in the light" (1 Jn. 1:7). There is no standing in the light, but rather a walking - a progression closer and closer to Him in whom there is no darkness at all. Thus the light shines brighter and brighter upon us and we become more and more conscious of the hidden sins that lurk in our flesh, which we were not aware of in earlier days; and the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all those sins.

Thus it is, that the closer we come to the Lord, the more aware we become of sin in our own flesh, and less and less of the sin in others around us. We no longer desire to throw stones at the woman caught in adultery, for we are aware in Jesus' presence, of the sin in our own flesh, and we cry out, "O wretched man that I am", rather than "O wretched woman that she is" (Rom. 7:24). Adam pointed a finger at his wife, even while standing before God (Gen. 3:12). But the Lord made him aware of his own sin (3:17). This is what the Lord will do for us too. And this is really the test of whether we have just a religion and some doctrines or whether we are living before the face of God Himself. Has the wine run out in our personal life, our married life or our assembly life? Then it is about time that we sought the Lord's face and acknowledged our need honestly. He alone can give us the new wine! The new wine in Cana was not produced by human effort. It was the supernatural work of God. So too can it be in our life. He will write His laws in our heart and mind, making us to will and to do His perfect will (Heb. 8:10; Phil. 2:13). He will circumcise our hearts to love Him and cause us to walk in His commandments (Deut. 30:6; Ezek. 36:27). This will be as much His work as the new wine produced in Cana was His work. This is the meaning of grace. We cannot produce the life of Jesus - even if we try for a lifetime. But if we bear in our body "the dying of Jesus" (the taking up of the cross each day, the dying to our ego, our self-will and our rights and reputation), God promises to produce the new wine of the life of Jesus in us (2 Cor. 4:10). We are to run this race looking unto Jesus, comparing ourselves with Him alone, all the time. Thus alone will there be a constant cry from our hearts, "O wretched man that I am" - for we shall be constantly aware of how unlike Jesus we are, even when we have come to a life of victory over conscious sin. "Those who compare

themselves with other believers are spiritual idiots" (2 Cor. 10:12) for that is the surest way to spiritual pride and a hundred-and-one other evils. We can never be in danger of spiritual pride as long as our eyes are fixed on Jesus and we compare ourselves with Him constantly. The Holy Spirit shows us the glory of Jesus in the mirror of God's word and then only can He conform us to that likeness (2 Cor. 3:18). Paul said that he had only one goal that he pressed on towards - not the conversion of the lost, but "the upward call of God (to become like) Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:13,14). And then he said, "Let us who are perfect (in our conscience, living in victory over conscious sin) have this same attitude (of pressing on towards total perfection, total likeness to Jesus)" (Phil. 3:15). This is the mark of the spiritually mature Christian. Service for God, evangelism etc, - all take a secondary place to this goal, in the life of the mature man of God.

John also tells us that it is through such a walking in the light of God that we can have fellowship with one another (1 Jn. 1:7) - not only fellowship with God, but also fellowship with other believers in perfect unity. The reason for this is very simple. The one who is walking in the light of God, living before God's face, will always be aware of his own shortcomings and will be living in a constant self-judgment, and will not have anything to accuse other brothers of. Thus there can never be any strife between any two brothers who are walking in this pathway. This is the narrow way to life that, Jesus said, few find (Matt. 7:14). Judgment begins at the house of God even for the righteous, because in God's house, God dwells in unapproachable light (1 Pet. 4:17,18; 1 Tim. 6:6). "Who can live with the consuming fire? ... He who walks righteously (facing up to the truth concerning himself)" (Isa. 33:14,15). This was the sin of the leader in the church at Laodicea that he did not live in this constant self-judgment (and it is easy to slip into that error when you become a leader) and thus did not know that he was 'wretched' (Rev. 3:17). May we so live before God's face all our days, so that we live in constant brokenness and constant self-judgment crying out "O wretched man that I am". Thus even when we reach the heights of holiness that a saved sinner can reach on earth, we shall still say (sincerely and honestly, without any false humility) "I am the very least of all the believers. ... I am the chief of sinners" (Eph. 3:8; 1Tim. 1:15). Thus we shall have a fellowship with other believers who walk the same way and gradually our mutual fellowship will become more and more like the fellowship that the Father and the Son have with each other (Jn. 17:21). This is the new wine Jesus desires to give us.

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