

## NEW WINESKINS AND OLD WINESKINS

Matthew 9:14-38

Key Verse: 9:17

"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."

We have learned that Jesus' compassion is indeed great. Jesus' compassion had power to heal the paralytic from his paralysis and make him a new man. Why did Matthew talk so much about a paralytic and a tax collector in his gospel? When we study the Bible carefully and we study humanity through many books, we find that the paralytic and the tax collector are representative among many sinners. A paralytic is a representative sinner with his laziness and selfishness and habit of complaining, while tax collectors are powerful and active and inhuman sinners. But we cannot say which one is a worse sinner. They were disgusting and nauseating to all people in every time. But Jesus healed them with his compassion so that they would be normal people. Jesus also healed ordinary sinners like the blind and the mute. They were not ugly sinners, but they were also sinners because they could not be the normal people that God had made them to be, and they could not be a blessing to others. They burdened others whenever they appeared. The Pharisees despised and rejected Jesus because he healed these social outcasts and had compassion on them instead of making an offering to their synagogues. Jesus did not come to this world to make an offering to the synagogue but to heal the sick. One of the Pharisees asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and 'sinners'?" But Jesus, on hearing this, said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners." Jesus is the God of mercy. Jesus is the God of compassion who heals those who are useless because of their sickness. We feel empty and meaningless whenever our souls are empty of God's mercy and compassion. We are very happy when we are full of God's mercy and compassion in our souls. In today's passage Jesus continues his healing ministry.

First, John's disciples and Jesus' disciples. Some of John's disciples came to ask Jesus: "How is it that we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" (14) The disciples of John the Baptist asked this question not for the sake of questioning, but to express their unhappiness. John was very popular, so much so that he was thought to be the Messiah by many Jews. And his ministry was so crowded by people that it was like a stormy sea. But now Jesus' ministry was even bigger, and John the Baptist was imprisoned because he had rebuked Herod the Tetrarch that he stole his brother's wife. Now the morale of John's disciples was nothing but a pretense. On the other hand, Jesus' disciples' morale was like a roaring lion. When John's disciples saw Jesus' disciples, they looked presumptuous and arrogant, as though they were flying high in the sky above the clouds. But the disciples of John looked at them carefully. They were not keeping traditional rules. They were eating a huge amount, making a lot of "chop, chop, chop" crunching sounds.

The disciples of John did not know the flow of the history of the world ruled by God. John the Baptist came to this world as the forerunner of Jesus, and they were disciples of John the Baptist. Their time came; they enjoyed it and it passed away. Now the time of Jesus the Messiah came; he was healing the sick and his disciples were busy to help him line up the crowds, and sometimes, to prepare huge amounts of food for the crowds to eat together. If John's disciples had known the flow of God's time and had had a sense of history, they would not criticize Jesus' disciples for not fasting and not praying or wearing long robes. Anyway, they were sorry that time passes and history moves to someone else; it passes away and goes from this person to another person. Their real problem was that they did not know who John the Baptist was and who Jesus Christ is.

So Jesus kindly answered them, "How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while they are with the bridegroom?" It meant that John the Baptist was the forerunner of Jesus and finally our Lord Jesus Christ came as the bridegroom. As long as they were with the bridegroom, they didn't have to mourn with long faces and a stony expression.

Second, new wineskins and old wineskins. Jesus teaches the disciples of John the Baptist and all the others who were there with two more parables. The first one was a sewing parable. The second one was an old wineskin and new wineskin parable. These parables teach us a sense of history and that a man must remain always young and fresh, even though his earthly body is getting old.

Let's first think about the parable of sewing a patch. "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" (16). In other words, if a man goes to the Salvation Army and buys a 50-year old Soviet General's army uniform with many medals, outwardly it looks good. But there are several holes in the army uniform. So the fancy guy bought a new patch of unshrunk cloth and sewed it on the old, gorgeous-looking Soviet General's clothes. He tried it one time. Then the new patch and the old army uniform were all torn and the newly sewed places had bigger holes. Thus the uniform became useless. This is an illustration that new cloth cannot be sewed onto old clothes in order to make a new army uniform. If anybody sews an old army uniform, which has many holes, with new cloth, it will be completely ruined. Briefly speaking, with new cloth we should make a new suit and an old suit should be sent to the Soviet Salvation Army.

Jesus' second parable about old wineskins and new wineskins is revolutionary. New wine must be put into new wineskins and old wine into old wineskins. As we know well, new wine has expanding power. As we know well, new wineskins have elastic character. Therefore, new wine must be put into a new wineskin which has expanding capacity. If anyone puts new wine into an old wineskin, the new wine will burst the old wineskin with expanding power and both will become useless. So new wineskins must not make any compromise with old wineskins. New wine should be put into new wineskins which can endure the exploding power of the new wine. Here we learn several truths. We should not be old

wineskin Christians. We must remain as a new wineskin Christians.

In order to become new wineskin Christians, we must pray every morning that God will give us a new heart and new spirit and new compassion of Jesus Christ. We must pray that God will renew our mission daily to deny ourselves and take up our cross daily and follow Jesus. Most of all, we must overcome our mentality to remain as old wineskins. Old wineskins look good outwardly. An old wineskin contains older and sweeter wine. But it doesn't have any power and spirit to expand. So it is useless in history.

When we look back, there are many stories about new-wineskin-kind of churches that became rotten, old wineskin churches. One of the organizations which still exists was a Bible study institution. They only studied the Bible. They only tried hard to live up to the teachings of the Bible. So people of the world recognized them as an outstanding Bible institution. But one of the old-wineskin-kind of people took over this organization and wanted to make it a more rich organization. So he started a new program so that he could attract many worldly people. Immediately this organization became a game-centered organization and Bible students were rejected and cast out. Now this organization completely changed its character and activity and has become a secular organization. It has many exercise tools and swimming pools and weight control facilities. Those who go there to lose weight never lose weight because after taking a little exercise to lose weight they eat a double portion of food.

It is surprising that Harvard University was founded as a Bible school. When God blessed this school as a Bible school they did not know what to do with God's blessing. So they added several departments for humanity study. Because of God's blessing, it became a rich and famous university. And mostly children from rich and renowned family backgrounds can enter the school. But now one of the most difficult places to evangelize in the world is Harvard University.

When we study the Bible carefully, we learn that man is made from the dust of the ground and with the Spirit of God. And a man is like grass and his glory is like the flowers of the field. These days, due to the remarkable development of medicine, people live long. America seems to be covered with people more than 80 years old. Commonly, history tells us that 60 years is the full span of life for a man. But there are many who are 70 or 80, and some more than 80 years old. They are getting old but their spirit must be new by seeing the kingdom of God and repenting of their sins.

When we accumulate worldly knowledge and our hearts are not renewed every day, we become old wineskins which are completely useless to God. When we study the gospels, we find that Jesus is the God of compassion and mercy. He healed all kinds of people and taught the kingdom of God to all kinds of people equally. But Jesus clearly refuses to compromise with old-wineskin-kind of people. Our Lord Jesus Christ wants us to remain as the new-wineskin-kind of people.

Third, Jesus raises a ruler's dead daughter (18-26). "While he was saying this, a ruler came and knelt before him and said, 'My daughter has just died. But come and put your hand on her, and she will live'"

(18). A ruler was a pillar of Jewish orthodoxy. But this ruler could come to Jesus when he curbed his pride and prejudice toward Jesus. He came to Jesus and said, "My daughter has just died. But come and put your hand on her, and she will live." Though he was one of the bigoted Jews, he had marvelous faith in Jesus; he believed that Jesus could raise his daughter, who had already died. On the way to the ruler's house, a woman who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years came up behind Jesus and touched the edge of his cloak. She said to herself, "If I only touch his cloak, I will be healed" (21). She was a smelly woman because of her bleeding, and her bleeding was incurable. But she had "If only" faith. Look at verse 22. "Jesus turned and saw her. 'Take heart, daughter,' he said, 'your faith has healed you.' And the woman was healed from that moment."

When Jesus entered the ruler's house, a noisy crowd was mourning and wailing (23). What did Jesus do? Look at verse 24. "...he said, 'Go away. The girl is not dead but asleep.' But they laughed at him." Jesus raised the dead girl (25). This event demonstrates that Jesus not only forgives men's sins, but also raises the dead. Jesus is the living God.

Fourth, Jesus heals the blind and mute (27-34). As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed him, calling out, "Have mercy on us, Son of David!" (27) What did Jesus do for them? "When he had gone indoors, the blind men came to him, and he asked them, 'Do you believe that I am able to do this?' 'Yes, Lord,' they replied" (28). Jesus touched their eyes and said, "According to your faith will it be done to you." And their sight was restored (29,30). In history, Jesus is the only one who restored sight to the blind. While Jesus and his people were going out, a man who was demon-possessed and could not talk was brought to Jesus (32). Jesus healed the man so that he could proclaim the good news of great joy (33).

Fifth, pray to send out workers (35-38). The world looked hopeless. It was too sick to be healed. But Jesus did not think so. "Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness" (35). In this verse we learn that Jesus worked hard to preach the good news of the kingdom of God and heal the sick. There is no despair in Jesus. When Jesus saw many people who were hungry and wild, he did not think they were no good. He saw them with a shepherd's heart. Jesus thought they had only one problem--they had no shepherds to take care of them.

Jesus saw the world not as a battleground for survival of the fittest, but as a harvest field. Look at verse 37. "Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few.'" So Jesus tells his disciples to pray that God may send out many workers (38).

Today we learn that we must remain as new wineskins. We should never be old wineskins.