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Beverly E.C.C., Chicago, IL

“PATCHES AND WINESKINS”

Luke 5:36-38

? *How much of Jesus do you want?*

● {Lk 5:1-11} Simon Peter and Andrew want *a lot* of Jesus, so much that when Jesus says “**from now on you will fish for people,**” they leave their boats and tackle and clientele – “**everything**” that represents material security – “**and [follow] him.**”

● {Lk 9:58} Another man wants *some* of Jesus, but not enough to go with him when he says, “**Foxes have holes and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.**”

? *How much of Jesus do you want?*

● {Mt 4:21-22} James and his brother John want *a lot* of Jesus. “**When Jesus [calls] them,**” they immediately leave not only their boat but also their father Zebedee, and follow Jesus. They do not cut their family ties, but they do leave home.

● {Lk 9:58} Another man wants *some* of Jesus, but not enough to leave home. When Jesus says, “**Follow me**” he replies, “**Lord, first let me go and bury my father.**” In all likelihood his father has not yet died; for all we know, he might not even be seriously ill.

? *How much of Jesus do you want?*

● {Lk 5:27-28} Levi the tax collector wants *a lot* of Jesus. When Jesus says, “**Follow me**” he “[gets] **up,** [leaves] **everything**” – his tax booth and his fortune, along with his wicked ways – “**and [follows] him.**”

● {Lk 18:18-22} Another “**man of great wealth**” wants *some* of Jesus, but not enough to act on his instruction to “**sell [all] you have and give to the poor... Then come, follow me.**”

? *How much of Jesus do you want?*

□ Please turn to Luke 5:36-38. In these two parables the Lord contrasts the freshness of his kingdom with the staleness of the status quo; he also speaks to our question.

■ Verse 36 {TNIV}: “**No one tears a piece out of a new garment to patch an old one. If they do, they will have torn the new garment, and the patch from the new will not match the old.**”

No one does this with literal garments. But countless people do it in the spiritual realm.

They want Jesus to love them no matter what, without expecting them to love people they don’t like.

They want Jesus to forgive their sins, without requiring them to forgive others.

They want Jesus to give them a second chance, without insisting that they extend mercy to others.

They want Jesus to call them up to heaven in the future, without calling them to holiness today.

They want Jesus to give them a happy family life, without taking his place at the center of it.

They want Jesus to grant them physical health, without claiming lordship over their body.

They want Jesus to make them rich, without holding them accountable for what they do with the money.

They want Jesus to be with them in a crisis, without expecting to have an ongoing relationship in the good times.

They want Jesus to honor them, without asking them to honor him with obedience, worship, and service.

To put it another way they want *some* of Jesus. But God the Son {Php 2:7-8} “**made himself nothing... and became obedient to...death on a cross,**” not to patch up the holes in our old lives, but to give us new ones.

○ Galatians 3:26-27: “**in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have *clothed yourselves with Christ.***”

○ Ephesians 4:22-24: “**You were taught...to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.**”

○ Colossians 3:9-10: “**you have taken of your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.**”

“**Put on the new self, which is being renewed,**”
 “**created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.**” “**All of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.**”

Christ Jesus is not an accessory to augment one’s wardrobe. If we receive him on his terms, he *is* our wardrobe.

? *How much of Jesus do you want?*

■ On to verses 37-38 {TNIV}: “**People do not pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the new wine will burst the skins; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, new wine must be poured into new wineskins.**”

Bottles in first century Palestine are made of animal skins. As new wine ferments, it releases carbon dioxide gas. New bottles are supple enough to give with the pressure; old bottles are less resilient and tend to burst.

The life that Jesus gives is like new wine: it swells and expands, and we must be new and flexible to grow with it. If we are not, we will be torn apart and the life will “**run out**” of us.

I speak with the voice of experience.

I invited Jesus into my heart when I was 5 years old. I knew that he was born, died and was raised from death so I might have forgiveness of sins and eternal life. (I say *I* instead of *we* because my faith was highly individualistic.)

I saw that Christianity must make a difference in one’s life, so I resolved to be *the* best person: I would attend church 3 times a week, without complaint; I would pray and have devotions; I would learn everything a believer must know; I would be nice and polite; I would obey the rules everywhere I went; and I would not swear, smoke, drink alcohol, or fornicate.

My doctrine was, mostly, not too far off the mark. My moral principles were, by and large, commendable. Nevertheless, something essential was missing: grace.

Don't get me wrong: I "knew" and affirmed that {Eph 2:8-9} **"it is by grace [we are] saved, through faith – and this not from [ourselves], it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast"** – yet I myself was not living by the grace of God.

Sure, I relied on Christ to bridge the gap between God and me – maybe as much as 90 or 95% of that gap. Yet I felt, thought, and behaved as though my survival depended on filling the rest of it myself. I wanted *some* of Jesus, but not enough. (Or, maybe, I thought that Jesus was not enough.) I wanted Jesus *plus* my hard work.

Sure, I believed the Lord is merciful; but I did not completely trust that he would be merciful to *me*. I had to make darn well sure that he had no choice but to accept me. I wanted *some* of Jesus, but not enough. I wanted Jesus *plus* my own goodness.

In other words, I was trying to pour the new wine of the Gospel into the old wineskin of works righteousness.

It did not work.

I was unable to live up to my impossible standards. I was inconsistent in my devotions. I knew far less than I thought I did. I was courteous to outsiders, but at home I was impatient, grouchy, and self-centered. My thought life was less than pure.

I became increasingly frustrated. I despaired of achieving the perfection that I believed God was demanding of me. I hated him as a tyrant and myself as a failure. I was torn apart, and I could feel the life leaking out of me.

I came to the end of my rope. My life was in the balance.

When I let go God caught me, and his grace he saved me. He made me new, and then he poured the life of Jesus into me.

My "old wineskin" was works righteousness. Yours might be something else. Whatever it is, you have been trying to pour the Gospel into it.

It is insufficient. You cannot put the wine of new life into that old skin; keep trying long enough and you will be torn apart and it will run out of you. Allow the Lord to give you a new wineskin, and to fill you with his new wine.

"No one tears a piece out of a new garment to patch an old one. If they do, they will have torn the new garment, and the patch from the new will not match the old."

"People do not pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the new wine will burst the skins; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, new wine must be poured into new wineskins."

This is the Word of the Lord.