

New Patches

No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; otherwise the patch pulls away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear results. No one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost and the skins as well; but one puts new wine into fresh wineskins.

(Mark 2:21-22)

This parable, as Luke's account terms it, is about what is proper or correct behavior. Jesus' statement was provoked by a question regarding the fasting of John's disciples and the lack of fasting on the part of Jesus' disciples. Jesus explained this by showing that it was proper—John's disciples had reason to fast but that His own disciples had no reason—it was not correct for His disciples to fast since He was still with them.

Jesus then proceeded to illustrate the correctness of things. One of his illustrations had to do with the handling of wine. Wine bottles were made of animal skin, generally, the skin of a goat. The new wine, would by its nature, expand the skin, stretching the skins. Old wineskins had already been previously stretched. If new wine was put into old skins the expansion of the new wine would burst them. This was not the correct thing to do. Also, Jesus illustrated the correctness of things with putting new patches on old garments. To patch an old garment with a new patch which had not been pre-shrunk would make the garment pucker and tear, and ruin the garment. Just as in the case of the wineskins, this was not the correct way to do things.

It seems that this same principle can be applied in many areas. Perhaps one of the most important uses of this principle has to do with the correct way of using the gospel. God's word is flawless, to be sure, and it is expansive—it is for everyone. However, men constantly try to patch what is old with something new, even though no patch is needed. As you can observe, this makes for ruined garments and wineskins.

Patching With Traditions

First of all, be careful not to patch the gospel with traditions. It is just as incorrect to do this as it is to put new patches on old garments. This makes the gospel noneffective. *“But you say, ‘Whoever says to his father or mother, ‘Whatever I have that would help you has been given to God,’ he is not to honor his father or his mother.’ And by this you invalidated the word of God for the sake of your*



tradition” (**Matthew 15:5-6**). It is a terrible thing to make the gospel of none effect—to invalidate it—the gospel is the means of salvation (**Romans 1:16**).

Furthermore, patching the gospel with traditions perverts or changes the gospel. The gospel is no longer the same even as the old garment is no longer the same when it is patched with a new patch. *“I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!”* (**Galatians 1:6-8**). It is an awful thing to patch the gospel with traditions, as this makes us be accursed.

Patching With The Law of the Old Covenant

Further, let us be careful lest we patch the gospel with the law God gave through Moses to the children of Israel. It is just as incorrect to do this—patching the new with the old—as it is to put new patches on an old garment. The law of Moses ended, together with whatever it permitted or required: things relative to fasting, mechanical instruments of music in worship, burning candles, Sabbath day worship, and so many other things with which many people have been prone to patch the gospel (**Colossians 2:14; Romans 7:1-4; Ephesians 2:14-16**). Jesus Christ is a superior spokesman and lawgiver who gives a new law (**Hebrews 7:12; 10:9-10**). In this law is found many things which were also in the law of Moses, but they are binding upon us because Christ commanded them—not because they were part of the old covenant. It is just as incorrect to add parts of the law of Moses to the gospel as it is to put new patches on old garments. As with traditions, this perverts the gospel and makes the one so doing to be accursed (**Galatians 1:8-9**).

Patching With Opinion

Also vital—be careful not to patch the gospel with opinion. It is just as incorrect to do this as it is to put new patches on old garments. This will make even our worship to be vain and of no profit. *“BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN”* (**Matthew 15:9**). What a meaningless effort men make when they patch the gospel with their opinions.

The Correct Thing—Don’t Patch!

The correct thing is to hear, understand, believe, and follow that which was given by God—don’t exceed the gospel (**1Corinthians 4:6**). The correct thing is to do this, neither add nor subtract (**Revelation 22:18-19**). Without any doubt, this is the correct thing—don’t patch!