Elder's Corner

No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; or else the new piece pulls away from the old, and the tear is made worse. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine bursts the wineskins, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But new wine must be put into new wineskins."
(Mark 2:21, 22)

These words were uttered by our Lord and Savior **Jesus Christ** in response to criticism from the scribes and Pharisees. After seeing **Levi** (Matthew) collecting taxes, our Lord asked him to leave his **tax office** and **follow** Him **(Mark 2:14).** We can assume that Matthew was probably well to do because of his position and therefore we assume his house was probably large, providing room for him to throw **a great feast (Luke 5:29)** for his fellow **tax collectors** and sinners. The ever-present scribes and Pharisees were hovering nearby, wondering how our Lord could lower Himself to eat with tax collectors and sinners, something that they would never lower themselves to do. Word of their criticism reached Jesus:

> **When Jesus heard it, He said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance." (Mark 2:17)**

The legalistic ones who heard our Lord's words had no concept of **grace** and mercy. In the prologue of his gospel, the Apostle John introduces one who would bring necessary change:

> **For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. (John 1:17)**

The legalists, the scribes and Pharisees, had perverted **the law,** which Paul called **good** in **Rom. 7:16,** into something that he referred to later as **the ministry of condemnation (2 Cor. 3:9).** They were using **the law** as they perceived it to condemn **Jesus** for even daring to do such a thing. In their minds, seeing a **physician** was the last thing that they needed, because they were **well.** THEY KEPT THE **LAW**! (As they perceived it.) Because extending **grace** and mercy to needy ones was a foreign concept to them, they felt **the tax collectors** and sinners did not deserve a **physician.**

In **Mark 21, 22** above, our Lord **Jesus Christ** used an easy to understand parable to demonstrate on how **the law,** as it had come to be in His day, was completely incompatible with Himself and what He brought, as seen in **John 1:17** above. **The law** had been changed from what it was originally—God's moral, civil, and ceremonial guidelines for man, that through its observance man might glorify and please the One who gave it to him. The Pharisees and scribes had changed it and added a multitude of traditions that had to be obeyed by the children of Israel to please them, by keeping all of the added traditions. Under the scribes and Pharisees, **the law** had become a shrunken piece of **cloth. The grace and truth** that **Jesus** brought would rip **the law** apart if joined with it. In addition, the legalists had turned **the law** into something resembling an old dried out inflexible **wineskin** that would not be able to endure the **new wine** that the Lord **Jesus Christ** was about the bring, His promise of **the Holy Spirit (John 15:26),** who would burst asunder the dried-out **wineskins** of legalistic Judaism. **Jesus** was warning that there could be no mixing of the two, just as Paul would write later, **"And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work (Rom. 11:6).** And later yet, the author of Hebrews wrote to those who were still beholden to **the law, "In that He says, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away" (Heb. 8:13).** John MacArthur summarizes these verses well, "Jesus did not come with a message to patch up their old system. He came to totally replace it"[1]

Many who read this may have come from or may still be in a system the resembles the Judaism of our Lord's day—a mixture of **works**, law-keeping, and faith (think Roman Catholicism), that Paul warned against in **Rom. 11:6. The new covenant** that is referenced just above was ratified by the Lord **Jesus Christ** with His **shed blood** offered at Calvary **(Luke 22:20; Heb. 9:18).** When He died it went into effect **(Heb. 9:16, 17)** and the author of Hebrews writes:

> **And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. (Heb. 9:15).**

Considering all the above, Lord, I pray that this verse may well summarize this article and encourage all that read it to come to the throne of **grace** and receive **Jesus Christ** by faith alone:

> **Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, (Rom. 5:20).**

Maranatha!

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[1] John MacArthur, *Mark 1–8*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2015), 132.