

NEW WINE, OLD WINESKINS

Why the Old Self Cannot Contain the New Life

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Introduction: The Parable We've Misunderstood

Jesus told a short parable. Easy to miss. But it explains why so many Christians are stuck.

"No one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins—and the wine is destroyed, and so are the skins. But new wine is for fresh wineskins." (Mark 2:22)

Most people hear this and think: "Don't mix old traditions with new ideas."

But that's not what Jesus meant.

The old wineskin is the old self. The unregenerate nature. The person you were before Christ.

The new wine is the life of Christ. The Holy Spirit. The new creation.

And here's the problem: You cannot put the new life of Christ into the old, unregenerate self. It doesn't fit. It bursts.

The old self cannot contain the new life.

This is why so many Christians are exhausted. They're trying to live the Christian life in their own strength. They're trying to be holy through willpower. They're trying to obey God's commands using the old wineskin.

And it's not working.

The wine is leaking. The skin is cracking. They're frustrated, guilty, and stuck.

What they need is not more effort. What they need is a new wineskin.

Chapter 1: The Parable of the New Wine

Let's start with the parable itself.

Jesus said:

"No one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins—and the wine is destroyed, and so are the skins. But new wine is for fresh wineskins." (Mark 2:22)

To understand this, you need to know how wine was made.

New wine is still fermenting. It's active. It expands. It creates pressure.

Old wineskins are stiff. They've already been stretched. They've lost their elasticity. They can't expand anymore.

If you put new wine into an old wineskin, the wine expands, the old skin can't stretch, and both are destroyed.

You need a new wineskin. Flexible. Stretchy. Able to expand with the new wine.

What This Means Spiritually

The old wineskin is the old self. The flesh. The unregenerate human nature.

The new wine is the life of Christ. The Holy Spirit. The new creation.

You cannot put the new life of Christ into your old, unregenerate self. It doesn't fit. It bursts.

- You can't add Jesus to your old life. You need a new life.
- You can't just clean up your old self. You need a new self.
- You can't try harder with the same old nature. You need a new nature.

This is why so many Christians are frustrated. They're trying to live the Christian life with the old wineskin. They're trying to be holy through willpower. They're trying to obey God's commands using their own strength.

And it's not working. The wine is leaking. The skin is cracking.

The Context of the Parable

Jesus told this parable right after being asked about fasting.

John's disciples fasted. The Pharisees fasted. But Jesus's disciples didn't.

Why?

Because the old way of fasting (as a religious duty) didn't fit with the new reality of the kingdom. The bridegroom was with them. It was a time of joy, not mourning.

But the deeper point was this: The new thing God was doing could not be contained by the old religious system.

The old system (law, ritual, external obedience) could not contain the new reality (grace, Spirit, internal transformation).

The old wineskin bursts.

Chapter 2: The Old Self – What It Is

Before we can understand the new wineskin, we need to understand the old one.

The old self. The flesh. The unregenerate nature.

The Bible has many names for it. But the point is the same. It's who you were before Christ.

The Old Self Is Dead to Sin

Paul says something striking in Romans 6:

"We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, that we should no longer be enslaved to sin."
(Romans 6:6)

The old self was crucified. Dead. Put to death with Christ.

That means the old you—the one who was enslaved to sin—is gone. It's not being improved. It's not being renovated. It's dead.

The problem is, many Christians are trying to resuscitate the old self. They're trying to make the old wineskin work. They're trying to get the old nature to behave.

But the old nature is dead. Stop trying to make it live.

The Old Self Could Not Keep the Law

Romans 7 gives us the brutal diagnosis.

"For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out." (Romans 7:18)

Nothing good dwells in the flesh. Not some good. *Nothing*.

The old self wants to do right. It desires to obey. But it doesn't have the ability.

This is the old wineskin. It has the desire to hold the new wine. But it can't. It bursts.

The Old Self Is at War with God

Paul writes:

"For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot." (Romans 8:7)

The flesh is hostile to God. It cannot submit to His law.

That's strong language. The old self isn't just weak. It's at war with God.

You cannot rehabilitate something that is hostile to God. You cannot reform an enemy. You need a new creation.

What the Old Self Cannot Do

The old self cannot:

- Please God (Romans 8:8)
- Submit to God's law (Romans 8:7)
- Produce good fruit (Matthew 7:18)
- Understand spiritual things (1 Corinthians 2:14)
- Set itself free from sin (Romans 6:6)

This is the old wineskin. It cannot contain the new wine. It bursts.

And yet, so many Christians are trying to make it work.

Chapter 3: The New Self – What It Is

If the old self is dead, what takes its place?

The new self. The new creation.

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Not renovated. Not improved. *New*.

The old wineskin is gone. The new wineskin has arrived.

The New Self Is Created in Righteousness

Paul writes:

"Put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness." (Ephesians 4:24)

The new self is not just a clean version of the old self. It's a new creation. Created in righteousness and holiness.

This is the new wineskin. Flexible. Stretchy. Able to contain the new wine.

The New Self Is Alive to God

Romans 6:

"So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus." (Romans 6:11)

The old self was dead to God and alive to sin. The new self is dead to sin and alive to God.

That's the new wineskin. It's oriented differently. It's alive in a new direction.

The New Self Has a New Master

Before Christ, sin was your master. You couldn't say no. You were enslaved.

"But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness." (Romans 6:17-18)

Not free to do whatever you want. Free to serve a new Master.

This is the new wineskin. It's not lawless. It's under new management.

The New Self Is Not Sinless (Yet)

Here's where we need to be careful.

The new self is real. You are a new creation. But you still live in a fallen body. You still struggle with sin.

The new wine is in you. But it's still expanding. The new wineskin is still stretching.

This is why Romans 7 describes the struggle. The new self wants to obey. The old patterns still linger.

But the difference is: the new self can obey. It has the ability. The Spirit dwells in you.

Chapter 4: Romans 6 – Dead to Sin, Alive to God

Romans 6 is the death blow to the old wineskin.

Paul has spent the first five chapters explaining grace. We are saved by faith, not works. Righteousness is a gift, not earned.

But then someone asks the question: *"If grace covers everything, can we just keep sinning so grace can keep abounding?"*

Paul's answer is explosive.

"By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?" (Romans 6:2)

He doesn't say "try harder." He says "you died."

This changes everything.

You Were Baptized into His Death

Paul writes:

"Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?" (Romans 6:3)

Baptism is not just a ritual. It's a burial.

When you put your faith in Christ, you were united with Him in His death. His death became your death. The old you died with Him.

This is not symbolic. It's real. You died.

"We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death." (Romans 6:4)

The old wineskin was crucified. Buried. Put in the ground.

You don't try to improve a dead thing. You don't try to reform a corpse.

You leave it buried.

You Were Raised to New Life

But death is not the end.

"In order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life." (Romans 6:4)

If you were united with Him in His death, you are also united with Him in His resurrection.

You died. You were buried. And you were raised.

Not the same person. A new person. A new wineskin.

"If we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his." (Romans 6:5)

The old you is gone. The new you is alive.

The Old Self Was Crucified

"We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin." (Romans 6:6)

The old self. The flesh. The unregenerate nature. The old wineskin.

Crucified. With Christ.

Not improved. Not renovated. Not given a second chance.

Crucified.

Why? So that the body of sin might be brought to nothing. So that sin would no longer be your master.

This is not progressive sanctification. This is definitive death. The old you died at the cross.

You Are No Longer a Slave to Sin

"For one who has died has been set free from sin." (Romans 6:7)

This is the new reality.

Before Christ, you were a slave. You couldn't say no to sin. You might have wanted to. You might have tried. But you were enslaved.

Not anymore.

You died. Death breaks slavery. A dead person cannot be forced to sin.

Of course, you still sin. We'll get to that. But you are no longer enslaved. You have a choice now. You can say no. Because you died and were raised.

Consider Yourself Dead

"So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus." (Romans 6:11)

Consider. Count it as true. Reckon it. Believe it.

Not "try to become." *Consider yourself already.*

You are dead to sin. That's your identity. That's your reality.

You are alive to God. That's your new orientation. That's your new wineskin.

Do Not Let Sin Reign

"Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions." (Romans 6:12)

Notice the language. *Let not.*

This is not "try harder to stop sinning." It's "don't let sin reign."

Sin no longer has the right to rule. It's an intruder. It's trespassing.

You have authority now. You can say no. You can refuse to let sin reign.

"Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life." (Romans 6:13)

You have a choice. You can present your body to sin. Or you can present yourself to God.

Before Christ, you didn't have a choice. Now you do.

That's the new wineskin.

You Are Not Under Law, But Under Grace

"For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace." (Romans 6:14)

This is the secret.

The old wineskin was under the law. It tried to obey through effort. It failed.

The new wineskin is under grace. It obeys from life. It succeeds.

Not perfectly. Not without struggle. But genuinely.

Because the new wineskin is alive. It has the Spirit. It has the power.

Chapter 5: Romans 7 – The Struggle of the Old Wineskin

Romans 6 is the triumphant declaration: you died, you were raised, you are free from sin.

Romans 7 is the honest confession: it doesn't always feel that way.

This chapter has confused and frustrated many Christians. Paul seems to be describing a struggle that sounds anything but free.

"I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate." (Romans 7:15)

Is this the new wineskin? Is this what life in Christ looks like?

No. This is what happens when you try to live the new life with the old wineskin.

Who Is the "I" in Romans 7?

Scholars debate this. But here's the simplest reading that makes sense of the text.

Paul is describing the experience of someone who is trying to obey God's law *in their own strength*. Someone who is trying to be holy through willpower. Someone who is trying to put new wine into an old wineskin.

He is not describing the normal Christian life. He is describing the life of a person who has not yet understood that they need a new wineskin.

He is describing the struggle of trying to be good enough on your own.

The Law Is Good, But I Am Not

"So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good."

(Romans 7:12)

The problem is not the law. The law is good. It reveals God's character. It shows us what righteousness looks like.

The problem is me.

"For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh." (Romans

7:18)

The old wineskin cannot keep the law. Not because the law is bad. Because the old wineskin is dead.

The Desire Is There, But Not the Ability

This is the agony of the old wineskin.

"I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out."

(Romans 7:18)

The old self wants to obey. It really does. It desires righteousness. It longs to please God.

But it can't.

The old wineskin wants to hold the new wine. But it bursts.

This is why trying harder doesn't work. The problem is not lack of effort. It's lack of capacity. The old wineskin cannot do what it wants to do.

The War Within

"For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members." (Romans 7:22-23)

This is the civil war of the old wineskin.

Part of you wants to obey. Delights in God's law. Loves righteousness.

But another part of you is at war. Sin dwells in your members. It pulls you away. It captures you.

And you feel trapped.

"Wretched Man That I Am!"

This is the cry of the old wineskin.

"Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?"

(Romans 7:24)

Have you ever felt this way?

- You try to stop sinning, but you can't.
- You try to be holy, but you fail.
- You try to obey, but you fall.

You feel stuck. Exhausted. Defeated.

That's the old wineskin. Trying to contain the new wine. And bursting under the pressure.

What Romans 7 Is Not

Let me be clear.

Romans 7 is not the normal Christian life. It is not the new wineskin.

Paul is not describing someone walking in the Spirit. He is describing someone trying to obey the law in their own strength.

The proof? Look at Romans 8.

The very next chapter begins with:

"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

(Romans 8:1)

Then:

"For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death." (Romans 8:2)

Then:

"For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do."

(Romans 8:3)

Romans 7 is the diagnosis. Romans 8 is the cure.

Romans 7 is the old wineskin bursting. Romans 8 is the new wineskin.

Why This Matters

If you mistake Romans 7 for the normal Christian life, you will live in perpetual defeat.

You will think: *"This is just how it is. I'll always struggle. I'll never be free."*

But that's not what Paul is saying. He's saying: *"Stop trying to be holy in your own strength. The old wineskin doesn't work. You need a new one."*

The answer to Romans 7 is not try harder. It's die and be raised.

The answer is not more effort. It's a new wineskin.

Chapter 6: Romans 8 – The New Wineskin

Romans 7 is the cry of the old wineskin bursting. *"Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me?"*

Romans 8 is the answer.

"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

(Romans 8:1)

Not "try harder." Not "do better." *No condemnation.*

Why? Because the old wineskin is gone. The new wineskin has come.

No Condemnation

Let this sink in.

For those in Christ Jesus, there is *no condemnation.*

Not less condemnation. *No condemnation.*

- Not for the sins you committed yesterday.
- Not for the ones you'll commit tomorrow.
- Not for the ones you're struggling with right now.

No condemnation.

Why? Because the condemnation fell on Jesus. He took it all. There's none left for you.

This is the new wineskin. It's not built on your performance. It's built on His finished work.

The Law of the Spirit of Life

"For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death." (Romans 8:2)

Two laws at work.

The law of sin and death: this is the old wineskin. It says: obey and live, disobey and die. It crushes you because you cannot obey perfectly.

The law of the Spirit of life: this is the new wineskin. The Spirit gives life. The Spirit empowers obedience. The Spirit sets you free.

Not freedom to sin. Freedom *from* sin. Freedom to obey.

The old wineskin tried to obey through effort and failed. The new wineskin obeys through the Spirit and succeeds.

Not perfectly. Not without struggle. But genuinely.

What the Law Could Not Do

"For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do."
(Romans 8:3)

The law is good. The law is holy. But the law is weak.

Not weak in itself. Weak because of the flesh. The old wineskin couldn't keep it.

So God did what the law could not do.

He sent His own Son. In the likeness of sinful flesh. For sin. He condemned sin in the flesh.

The old wineskin couldn't deal with sin. So God dealt with sin Himself.

The Righteous Requirement of the Law

"In order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit." (Romans 8:4)

This is the new wineskin.

The law requires righteousness. The old wineskin couldn't produce it. The new wineskin can.

Not through effort. Through walking according to the Spirit.

The Spirit produces in you what the law required but you could not produce.

- Love? The Spirit produces it.
- Joy? The Spirit produces it.
- Peace? The Spirit produces it.
- Obedience? The Spirit produces it.

This is the new wine. The Spirit Himself. Expanding in the new wineskin.

Those Who Live According to the Flesh

"For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit." (Romans 8:5)

The old wineskin is flesh-oriented. It's focused on self, on effort, on performance.

The new wineskin is Spirit-oriented. It's focused on God, on grace, on surrender.

The difference is not effort. It's orientation.

Where is your mind set? On the flesh? Trying harder? Performing? Earning?

Or on the Spirit? Resting? Receiving? Following?

The Mind of the Flesh vs. The Mind of the Spirit

"For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace." (Romans 8:6)

The old wineskin leads to death. Not because God is cruel. Because it doesn't work. Trying harder in your own strength always ends in death. Burnout. Exhaustion. Defeat.

The new wineskin leads to life and peace. Not because it's easier. Because it's real. The Spirit actually produces what you cannot produce on your own.

The old wineskin is a hamster wheel. Lots of effort. No progress.

The new wineskin is a river. You stop striving and start flowing.

Hostile to God

"For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot." (Romans 8:7)

This is strong language.

The old wineskin isn't just weak. It's hostile. It cannot submit to God's law.

You cannot rehabilitate something that is hostile to God. You cannot reform an enemy.

The old wineskin doesn't need improvement. It needs death.

And it got it. Romans 6: the old self was crucified.

Now you have a new wineskin.

You Are Not in the Flesh

"You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you." (Romans 8:9)

This is your identity.

You are not in the flesh. You are in the Spirit.

Not "you should be." *You are.*

The Spirit dwells in you. That's not a future hope. That's a present reality.

The new wineskin is not something you're trying to become. It's something you already are.

The Spirit Gives Life to Your Mortal Body

"If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you." (Romans 8:11)

The same Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead lives in you.

Not a weak spirit. Not a powerless spirit.

The resurrection Spirit.

This Spirit gives life to your mortal body. Not just your spirit. Your body.
Your actions. Your obedience.

The new wineskin has power the old wineskin never had.

Led by the Spirit

"For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God." (Romans 8:14)

The new wineskin is not lawless. It's Spirit-led.

The old wineskin followed rules. The new wineskin follows the Spirit.

Not rules versus no rules. But external law versus internal leading.

The old wineskin needed a list of do's and don'ts. The new wineskin has the Spirit living inside, guiding, prompting, leading.

This is the new wine. The Spirit Himself. Expanding in the new wineskin.

Do you know the same Spirit who raised Jesus lives in you?

Are you being led by the Spirit, not just following rules?

This is the new wineskin. Not something you achieve. Something you receive.

Not something you try to become. Something you already are.

The old wineskin is dead. You died with Christ.

The new wineskin is alive. You were raised with Christ.

Live like it.

Chapter 7: Why Trying Harder Doesn't Work

We've been told our whole lives: "Try harder. Do better. Apply yourself."

And we've brought that mindset into our faith.

- Try harder to stop sinning.
- Try harder to read your Bible.
- Try harder to pray.
- Try harder to love your neighbor.

- Try harder to be holy.

And it doesn't work. At least, not for long. Not consistently. Not deep down.

Why?

Because trying harder is the strategy of the old wineskin. And the old wineskin cannot contain the new wine.

The Problem with Willpower

Willpower has its place. It's good for some things.

- Getting out of bed in the morning.
- Sticking to a budget.
- Finishing a project.

But willpower cannot change your heart. It can modify your behavior for a while. But it can't make you love what you hate or hate what you love.

Willpower is a behavioral modifier. It's not a heart transformer.

The Pharisees had incredible willpower. They fasted twice a week. They tithed meticulously. They memorized Scripture.

But Jesus called them whitewashed tombs. Clean on the outside. Dead on the inside.

Willpower cleaned the outside. It couldn't touch the inside.

That's the old wineskin.

The Exhaustion of Trying Harder

Here's what happens when you try to live the Christian life by willpower.

- You start strong. Resolutions. Commitments. New plans.
- You do well for a while. You're proud of your progress.
- Then you hit a wall. You get tired. You slip.
- You feel guilty. You try harder.
- You do better for a while. Then you slip again.
- The cycle repeats. Each time, a little more exhausted. A little more discouraged.

Eventually, you either burn out or give up. Or you lower your standards so you don't feel as guilty.

This is not sanctification. This is exhaustion.

The old wineskin was never meant to carry the weight of holiness. It bursts under the pressure.

The Law vs. The Spirit

Paul explains why trying harder fails.

"For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do." (Romans 8:2-3)

The law is good. But the law cannot make you righteous. It can only show you that you're not.

The flesh is weak. Trying harder in the flesh is like trying to lift a car with a wet noodle. It's not going to work.

What the law could not do, God did. By sending His Son. By giving His Spirit.

The Spirit is the power the law lacked. The Spirit is the strength the flesh never had.

Trying harder uses the wrong power source. It's like trying to power your phone with a potato. It might work for a second, but not for long.

The Spirit is the power source. Not willpower. The Spirit.

The Difference Between Effort and Surrender

I'm not saying effort doesn't matter.

Paul says: *"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."* (Philippians 2:12)

Effort is involved. But notice: *Work out* what God has *worked in*.

"For it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure." (Philippians 2:13)

The effort flows from what God is already doing. It's not trying harder to earn something. It's cooperating with what God is already doing.

The difference:

- Old wineskin: I try harder to make myself holy.
- New wineskin: I surrender to the Spirit who makes me holy.

The old wineskin is effort without power. The new wineskin is effort empowered by the Spirit.

The Fruit of the Spirit

Paul lists the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5.

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." (Galatians 5:22-23)

Notice: fruit of the *Spirit*. Not fruit of willpower. Not fruit of trying harder.

You can't produce love by trying harder. You can't manufacture joy through effort. You can't create peace with willpower.

These are produced by the Spirit. Your job is not to produce them. Your job is to abide.

"I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing." (John 15:5)

Apart from Jesus, you can do nothing. Nothing of eternal value. Nothing that pleases God. Nothing that lasts.

Trying harder is the branch trying to produce fruit without the vine. It doesn't work.

Abiding is the branch resting in the vine, letting the life of the vine flow through it.

That's the new wineskin.

The Rest of Faith

The writer of Hebrews talks about a rest that remains for the people of God.

"For whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his." (Hebrews 4:10)

There is a rest from trying. A rest from striving. A rest from working to earn what has already been given.

Not a rest from obedience. A rest from self-salvation.

The old wineskin is restless. Always striving. Always trying. Never sure if it's enough.

The new wineskin rests. Not in laziness. In faith. The work is done. The debt is paid. The Spirit is given.

Now we work from that rest, not for it.

What Trying Harder Produces

What trying harder in the flesh produces.

- Guilt. Because you never measure up.
- Burnout. Because the effort is unsustainable.
- Pride. Because you compare yourself to those who aren't trying as hard.
- Judgmentalism. Because you expect others to try as hard as you.
- Exhaustion. Because the burden is too heavy.
- Hypocrisy. Because you clean the outside while the inside stays dirty.
- Despair. Because eventually you realize you can't do it.

This is the fruit of the old wineskin.

What the Spirit Produces

Now let me name what the Spirit produces.

- Freedom. Not obligation.
- Joy. Not drudgery.
- Peace. Not anxiety.
- Love. Not duty.
- Patience. Not frustration.
- Kindness. Not harshness.
- Goodness. Not performance.
- Faithfulness. Not inconsistency.
- Gentleness. Not force.
- Self-control. Not self-punishment.

This is the fruit of the new wineskin.

Not because you tried harder. Because the Spirit did the work.

A Practical Test

Here's a test to know if you're operating from the old wineskin or the new.

Ask yourself: *How do I feel about my spiritual life?*

- Guilty? Exhausted? Never enough? That's the old wineskin.

- Grateful? Growing? At peace? That's the new wineskin.

Not because the new wineskin is perfect. It's not. You still struggle. You still sin.

But the posture is different. The old wineskin is trying to earn. The new wineskin is resting in grace.

The old wineskin is striving. The new wineskin is abiding.

Chapter 8: How to Live as a New Wineskin

We've talked about what the new wineskin is. We've talked about why trying harder doesn't work.

Now let's get practical.

How do you actually live as a new wineskin?

Not in theory. In real life. On Tuesday morning. In the middle of temptation. When you're tired. When you've failed. When you don't feel like it.

Here's the path.

Remember Who You Already Are

The first step is not trying to become something. It's remembering what you already are.

- You died with Christ. (Romans 6:8)
- You were raised with Christ. (Romans 6:4)
- You are a new creation. (2 Corinthians 5:17)
- You are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit. (Romans 8:9)
- You have been set free from sin. (Romans 6:18)
- You are a child of God. (Romans 8:16)

This is not your goal. This is your identity.

The old wineskin tried to become righteous. The new wineskin already is righteous. Not because of behavior. Because of Christ.

Live from that identity. Not toward it.

Renew Your Mind

Paul writes:

"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind." (Romans 12:2)

The new wineskin thinks differently.

The old wineskin thought: "I need to try harder."

The new wineskin thinks: "Christ is my righteousness."

The old wineskin thought: "I need to earn God's love."

The new wineskin thinks: "God already loves me."

The old wineskin thought: "I'm a sinner trying to be good."

The new wineskin thinks: "I'm a saint who sometimes sins."

Renew your mind. Not through willpower. Through truth.

- Read the Word. Let it reshape your thinking.
- Remind yourself of who you are in Christ.
- Reject the lies of the accuser.
- Speak truth to yourself, even when you don't feel it.

The new wineskin thinks differently. Renew your mind.

Walk by the Spirit

This is the most practical instruction in the Bible.

"But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh."

(Galatians 5:16)

Not "try harder to not gratify the flesh." *Walk by the Spirit.*

What does that mean?

It means living in constant dependence on the Holy Spirit. Listening to His voice. Following His leading. Drawing on His power.

It's like breathing. You don't try harder to breathe. You just breathe.

Walking by the Spirit is not a technique. It's a relationship. You stay connected to the Spirit throughout your day. You talk to Him. You listen. You follow.

When temptation comes, you don't white-knuckle your way through. You turn to the Spirit. *"Help. I can't do this on my own."*

And He helps.

Abide in Christ

Jesus gave the clearest picture.

"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me." (John 15:4)

The old wineskin tries to produce fruit. The new wineskin abides.

Abiding is not a technique. It's staying connected.

- A branch doesn't strive to produce fruit. It just stays attached to the vine.

- The life of the vine flows into the branch. Fruit happens naturally.

Same with you. Stay connected to Jesus. Through prayer. Through His Word. Through worship. Through community.

The fruit will come. Not because you tried harder. Because you abided.

Present Yourself to God

Romans 6 gives another practical instruction.

"Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness." (Romans 6:13)

Every day, you have a choice. You can present your body to sin. Or you can present yourself to God.

This is not trying harder. This is surrender.

- "God, I give You my eyes. Help me see what You want me to see."
- "God, I give You my ears. Help me listen to what You want me to hear."
- "God, I give You my hands. Help me do what You want me to do."
- "God, I give You my mouth. Help me say what You want me to say."

This is the new wineskin. Not striving. Surrendering.

Put Off, Put On

Paul gives another practical pattern.

"Put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires... and put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness." (Ephesians 4:22-24)

Two actions. Put off. Put on.

Not just "stop sinning." You have to replace the sin with righteousness.

- Put off anger. Put on kindness.
- Put off lying. Put on truth.
- Put off lust. Put on purity.
- Put off selfishness. Put on generosity.

The new wineskin doesn't just empty itself. It fills itself with what is good.

Not through willpower. Through the Spirit. But you have to choose. You have to act.

Use the Means of Grace

God has given us practical ways to stay connected to Him.

- Scripture. Read it. Meditate on it. Let it shape you.
- Prayer. Talk to God. Listen. Be honest.
- Worship. Sing. Give thanks. Rejoice.

- Community. Gather with other believers. Encourage. Be encouraged.
- Communion. Remember the body and blood of Christ.
- Service. Love others. Serve. Give.

These are not obligations to earn God's love. They are gifts to help you abide.

The old wineskin uses these as performance. The new wineskin uses them as connection.

Don't Go It Alone

The new wineskin is not a solo project.

You need brothers and sisters. You need people who will walk with you. Who will encourage you. Who will confront you when you're wrong.

"Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another." (Proverbs 27:17)

The old wineskin tries to be holy in isolation. It doesn't work.

The new wineskin grows in community.

Find a few people who will walk with you. Be honest with them. Share your struggles. Let them speak into your life.

Be Patient with the Process

The new wineskin doesn't become perfect overnight.

The new wine is still fermenting. Still expanding. The new wineskin is still stretching.

You will still sin. You will still struggle. You will still have days when you feel like the old wineskin.

That's okay. Don't give up. Don't go back to trying harder.

Keep abiding. Keep walking by the Spirit. Keep renewing your mind.

The fruit will come. Slowly. Gradually. But really.

"He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ." (Philippians 1:6)

God is not finished with you. He will complete what He started.

Chapter 9: The New Wine – Life in the Spirit

We've talked about the new wineskin. Now let's talk about the new wine itself.

The new wine is the life of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit dwelling in you, flowing through you, producing fruit, giving power, transforming you from the inside out.

This is what the old wineskin couldn't contain. This is what the new wineskin was made for.

The Promise of the Spirit

Before He left, Jesus promised something extraordinary.

"Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" (John 7:38)

John adds: *"Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive."* (John 7:39)

Not a trickle. Not a drip. *Rivers.*

The new wine is not a small thing. It's not a minor improvement. It's a river of living water flowing from within you.

This is what the old wineskin couldn't handle. It bursts under the pressure of rivers.

The new wineskin was made to expand. To stretch. To contain the rushing river of the Spirit.

The Spirit Gives Life

Paul makes a clear distinction.

"The law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death." (Romans 8:2)

The law gives knowledge of sin. The Spirit gives life.

The old wineskin tried to follow the law. It couldn't. The new wineskin is empowered by the Spirit. It can.

The Spirit Gives Power

Jesus told His disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they received power.

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

The old wineskin had good intentions. It wanted to be a witness. It wanted to share the gospel. But it had no power.

The new wineskin has the Spirit. And the Spirit brings power.

- Power to overcome sin.
- Power to love the unlovable.
- Power to speak truth in hard situations.
- Power to forgive when it hurts.
- Power to share the gospel boldly.
- Power to endure suffering with joy.

This is the new wine. Not willpower. Spirit-power.

The Spirit Intercedes for You

Here's something beautiful.

You don't always know how to pray. You don't always have the words. You don't always have the faith.

The Spirit helps.

"Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words." (Romans 8:26)

When you're too weak to pray, the Spirit prays through you.

When you don't know what to ask for, the Spirit intercedes perfectly.

When you're exhausted from trying, the Spirit carries you.

This is the new wine. Not your effort. His intercession.

The Spirit Seals You

Paul writes that when you believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit.

"In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory." (Ephesians 1:13-14)

Sealed. Like a mark of ownership. Like a down payment. Like a guarantee.

The Spirit in you is proof that you belong to God. Proof that your inheritance is secure. Proof that He will finish what He started.

The old wineskin had no guarantee. It was always unsure. Always wondering if it was enough.

The new wineskin has the Spirit as a seal. A guarantee. A promise.

This is the new wine. Not uncertainty. Assurance.

The Spirit Transforms You

Paul writes about the process of transformation.

"And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit." (2 Corinthians 3:18)

You are being transformed. Not by trying harder. By beholding the glory of the Lord.

As you look at Jesus—as you behold Him—the Spirit transforms you.

Slowly. Gradually. From one degree of glory to another.

Not all at once. Not without struggle. But really.

The old wineskin tried to transform itself. It couldn't.

The new wineskin is transformed by the Spirit as it gazes at Jesus.

This is the new wine. Transformation. From the inside out.

Do Not Grieve the Spirit

Paul gives a warning.

"Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." (Ephesians 4:30)

The Spirit can be grieved. Not by your imperfection. By your willful sin. By your hardness of heart. By your refusal to listen.

The new wineskin is not lawless. It's not a license to sin.

The Spirit is a person. He can be hurt. He can be ignored. He can be quenched.

But here's the good news. The Spirit is also patient. He is kind. He is committed to finishing what He started.

When you grieve Him, don't run. Repent. Turn back. He will receive you.

This is the new wine. Not sinless perfection. But a soft heart that responds to the Spirit's leading.

Chapter 10: Old Wineskin, New Wineskin

You can know all the theology and still live like the old wineskin. You can affirm the doctrine and still try harder in your own strength. You can believe you're a new creation and still act like the old one.

Switching Wineskins

If you've been living from the old wineskin, you don't need to try harder. You need to switch containers.

Here's how.

1. Admit the old wineskin doesn't work.

Stop pretending. Stop defending. Stop making excuses.

The old wineskin is dead. It was crucified with Christ. Stop trying to resurrect it.

2. Believe you already have a new wineskin.

You don't need to earn it. You don't need to achieve it. You already have it.

- You died with Christ.
- You were raised with Christ.
- You are a new creation.
- The Spirit dwells in you.

This is not a goal. This is a gift. Receive it.

3. Renew your mind.

Stop thinking like the old wineskin. Stop the "try harder" mentality. Stop the guilt cycle. Stop the performance treadmill.

Start thinking like the new wineskin.

- "I am righteous in Christ."
- "I am not condemned."
- "The Spirit lives in me."
- "I am free from sin."
- "I am a child of God."

4. Walk by the Spirit.

Stop trying harder. Start depending.

Every moment, turn to the Spirit. *"Help. Guide. Empower. I can't do this without You."*

Walking by the Spirit is not a technique. It's a relationship. Stay connected.

5. Abide in Christ.

Stay close to Jesus. Read His Word. Talk to Him. Listen. Worship. Receive His love.

The branch doesn't strive. It abides.

6. Be patient with the process.

The new wineskin doesn't become perfect overnight. The new wine is still expanding. The skin is still stretching.

You will still struggle. You will still sin. You will still have days when you feel like the old wineskin.

Don't give up. Don't go back. Keep abiding. Keep walking. Keep trusting.

God is not finished with you.