

Why God Will Not Waste His Spiritual Wine on an Untested Church

At first glance, it's easy to think Paul left something out of this key passage: "For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, neither angels nor principalities nor powers, neither things present nor things to come, neither height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God" (Rom. 8:38-39a). He doesn't refer to the past but only to the present and future. Since God's Word doesn't miss anything, the omission must be purposeful.

Through Jesus' blood, the old has been eradicated, so the present and the future remain. But we often become either too focused on the future or hung up on the past.

When we fixate on the future, we miss the importance of now, but the way we navigate the present will likely determine our future. In the story of sisters Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42), Martha was concerned with being hospitable, but Mary was drawn to sit at the feet of Jesus. Mary's choice in her present impacted her future. Unlike Mary, many of us don't embrace the present because we are locked up with the past.

I believe the church is currently being tested, not for punishment but for future promotion. This promotion is the capacity to allow a greater weightiness of the glory of God that is coming in the future. If the present is preparing for what is to come, we should pay closer attention to our response in the now.

Jesus is building His church, and only He has the right to define what that should look like. In Matthew 11:12 (NKJV), Jesus said, "From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by

force.” He was speaking about John, whose ministry consisted primarily of preaching repentance and baptizing. Jesus is contrasting the transition of the ministry of John into the kingdom of God. John preached about the kingdom but never entered it. Jesus commended John for past ministry and then pointed to the present.

Unless we see it through Jesus’ eyes, His statement that the kingdom of God is experiencing violence “and the violent take it by force” is hard to grasp. In this passage, violence does not refer to what we might think in the English vocabulary. In the Greek, it is *biadzo* and implies the idea of crowding out. The King is applying pressure to crowd out anything not identified with the King and His kingdom.

In the same way, crowding or pressure is coming to the church to eliminate anything that cannot withstand the weightiness of His future glory. Luke 5 compares old and new wineskins. The old wineskin no longer has the ability to expand, so wisdom dictates not to place new wine in the skin that can no longer support the expansion of future wine. God is a good steward of His own spiritual wine so as not to waste it upon an untested church.

These points will help us in this testing:

1. **Keep your purpose and mission front and center.** In everything, magnify Jesus and His Word above the crisis or problem. We empower what we magnify.
2. **Communicate without fear or complaint.** Being fearful and complaining tend to extend our testing period.
3. **Remind others of the benefits of testing.** Second Corinthians 4:17 (MEV) says, “Our light affliction, which lasts but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”

So what is the Holy Spirit saying to the church during this time of testing?

1. **The church must boldly define its mission without rant or rancor.** This is not the time to conceal what God wants us to say. Extend beyond organizational growth.
2. **Our focus must be deeper than doctrine and on the one in whom we believe.** We need a personal encounter with Jesus, the Word we know and trust.
3. **The church will demonstrate the kingdom with signs, wonders and miracles.** “But if I cast out demons with the finger of God, no doubt the kingdom of God has come upon you” (Luke 11:20).

As Pastor Ken Adams says, “Jesus started the church the way He wanted it, and now He wants the church the way He started it.”
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