

‘New Things on the Old Path’: Holy Spirit’s Matt. 13:52 Command for the Church Today

Which is better, the old or the new? The debate rages year by year. Without a doubt, there exists a tension in the kingdom between the new and the old. This tension isn’t necessarily harmful. It can indeed be healthy. Honoring the past need not get in the way of moving forward. Jesus said that a person trained in kingdom truth is, “...like a man who is master of the household who brings out of his treasure new and old things” (Matt. 13:52b).

Too often they are considered mutually exclusive in the church today. Some hold on religiously to what they believe to be “old standards.” These are often sincere and wonderful people who are convinced that the method is as holy as the message. They refuse to update their style and methods with the times. Because of their tradition, they lose the power to engage this generation in a meaningful manner.

Others, under the guise of “updating,” fit so well with the current culture of the world that it is difficult to discern any difference. These became so worldly while the world became churchy, and now many don’t know the difference at all. But it is the difference that makes a difference. The church is more than a social club. Worship services must be more than mere concerts and gatherings for feel good, inspirational speeches. The church is made up of those called out from the world to be a separate people (2 Cor. 6:17). We are children of the light; God dwells in us, and His glory will manifest through us.

Not Either/Or but Both/And

Like most things, we try to make the issue an “either/or” proposition when in reality, it is a “both/and.” God is into

newness and new things. He declares, "Look! I am making all things new" (Rev. 21:5b). Isaiah prophesied, "Do not remember the former things nor consider the things of old. See, I will do a new thing, now it shall spring forth; shall you not be aware of it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert" (Isa. 43:18-19). The Lord always desires to lead His disciples into newness of life: new dimensions of favor, blessing, love, kingdom understanding, impact and anointing. The future awaits you, but the way is forward.

The Past Prepares You

To move forward requires an intentional decision to leave the past behind. You cannot live in past pains or even past victories and step into your future. Those who fixate on their past, discover their future looks much the same. The past makes a wonderful guidepost, but it must never become a hitching post that keeps us anchored to what used to be and prevents us from experiencing what is and what lies ahead in God's providence.

A driver behind the wheel of a car who chooses to gaze into the rearview mirrors will undoubtedly wreck. We glance backward, but we look forward. The place where you set your gaze determines the destination at which you arrive. We dare not choose to live in the comfort of memories when God has a glorious vision for our future. The choice is ours! The past must never become the post to which you hitch your life. Corrie Ten Boom, of *The Hiding Place*, said it this way, "This is what the past is for! Every experience God gives us, every person He puts in our lives is the perfect preparation for the future that only He can see."

Ever Forward, Never Backward

Your preferred future is forward. Jehovah is never getting "back" to anything. He declared the end from the beginning and is moving all of history toward His expected future. (See Isa.

46:10 and Jer. 29:11.) Paul expressed the same truth beautifully when He wrote, “Brothers, I do not count myself to have attained, but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal to the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:13-14). As Tolkien wrote in *The Hobbit*, “Go back?” he thought. “No good at all! Go sideways? Impossible! Go forward? Only thing to do! On we go!” We choose to move: Ever forward, never backward.

New Things on the Old Path

But moving forward doesn’t mean the past doesn’t contain any value for us. In fact, we must be sure that as we move forward, we do not move off truth’s foundation. The same Lord who spoke about forgetting the past and experiencing the new, also said, “Stand in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths where the good way is and walk in it, and you shall find rest for your souls” (Jer. 6:16). Isaiah echoes this sentiment when he says God’s men and women will be known as “Repairer of the Breach” and “Restorer of Paths in which to Dwell” (see Isa. 58:12).

He is the Lord of the “new thing.” But He reveals His newness on the “old path.” The call of God ever forward is never a departure from the sure and certain foundation laid out in the truth of His Word. We build upon what is built. Paul says, “Let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 3:10b-11).

Update the Truth?

We must search our hearts to make certain the message we preach and the principles we live by are rooted in the truth of God’s Word. These are days of great deception. Days which Paul predicted when he wrote, “But evil men and seducers will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived” (2 Tim.

3:13). And again, “For the time will come when people will not endure sound doctrine ... they will turn their ears away from the truth and turn to myths” (2 Tim. 4:3-4).

God isn't looking for anyone to relay the foundation. He isn't accepting applications for editors to rewrite biblical truths. He is looking for finishers, those who will live out the revelations that the apostles declared in these modern times. Truth never changes or goes on sale. While the truth doesn't change, presentation and style do change. The message remains the same, but the methods must be updated.

The Way Forward

The call for us is to present a balanced expression of His grace and truth. We are called to display the old and new treasure of God to our generation. Not one or the other but both. Let's move forward into the future God has for us and impact our world with His power while remaining true to the foundation of truth upon which the church is continuing to be built! Ever forward, never backward! {eo}

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