

Luke 5:39

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

No man also having drunk old wine straightway desireth new: for he saith, The old is better.

Analysis

No man also having drunk old wine straightway desireth new: for he saith, The old is better—This final verse completes Jesus's parable about wineskins (5:36-39), adding a psychological observation missing from Matthew and Mark's accounts. The Greek eutheos (εὐθέως, straightway/immediately) emphasizes the instinctive preference: **The old is better** (ho palaios chrestos estin, ὁ παλαιὸς χρηστός ἔστιν)—literally "the old is good/pleasant."

Jesus diagnoses human resistance to the new covenant: people comfortable with old religious systems (Judaism's traditions) resist the gospel's newness not from theological evaluation but from habitual preference. The scribes and Pharisees questioning Jesus's disciples' practices (5:33) illustrated this: their objection wasn't that fasting is biblical but that Jesus's approach didn't match their traditions. The verse functions as both explanation (why the Pharisees resist Jesus) and warning (don't let tradition-preference blind you to God's new work). It anticipates later conflicts: Jesus healing on Sabbath (6:1-11), eating with sinners (15:1-2), and ultimately the Jewish leaders' rejection of Messiah despite prophetic fulfillment.

Historical Context

First-century Judaism had developed extensive oral traditions (later codified as Mishnah and Talmud) interpreting Torah's application. These traditions—fasting practices, ritual purity laws, Sabbath regulations—had become so central that they

often overshadowed Scripture itself. Jesus consistently challenged tradition's authority while affirming Torah's authority (Matthew 5:17-18), provoking conflict with religious leaders invested in the status quo.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. What 'old wine' (comfortable traditions or familiar religious practices) might you be preferring over Jesus's challenging new covenant demands?
2. How can church traditions become obstacles to embracing fresh moves of God's Spirit, and how do you discern between preserving truth and resisting change?
3. In what ways does this verse challenge both religious traditionalism (preferring old) and novelty-seeking (rejecting old) by pointing to the substance of Christ Himself?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	οὐδεὶς	πιὼν	παλαιὸς	εὐθέως	θέλει	νέον·
also	No man	having drunk	The old	wine straightway	desireth	new
G2532	G3762	G4095	G3820	G2112	G2309	G3501

λέγει	γάρ	Ο	παλαιὸς	χρηστότερός	ἐστιν
he saith	for	G3588	The old	better	is
G3004	G1063		G3820	G5543	G2076

Additional Cross-References

Hebrews 11:39 (Parallel theme): And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise:

Jeremiah 6:16 (Parallel theme): Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein.

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