

Old and New Treasures

What is better: the old or the new? When it comes to wines, the experts say “The old is better” (Luke 5:39). When it comes to the Christian life, the apostle Paul encouraged his readers to “Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast - as you really are” (1 Cor. 5:7). Here the new is better. As our memory fades, comparisons between old and new become more difficult. About 3000 years ago king Solomon wrote: “Do not say, ‘Why were the old days better than these?’ For it is not wise to ask such questions” (Eccl. 7:10). Clearly there is no general virtue in itself in being ‘old’ or in being ‘new’.

When a Jew turned to Christ, he was faced the challenge of using both the new and the old: “Therefore every teacher of the law who has been instructed about the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old” (Matt. 13:52).

When it comes to God’s unchangeable revelation, we are urged to “contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints” (Jude 1:3). We are to trust and build on the old and firm foundation of God’s word. That is called faithfulness. But as time progresses, tastes, cultures and forms

change. We called to speak the same timeless truth into new situations, the same revelation but with new words. Life itself forces this challenge on all local churches and ministries.

As you face the challenge of change, avoid the simplistic formulae used by some: that everything new must be good or that everything old must be good. May the Lord help us to benefit from the new without losing what is true. May we be like that converted Jewish teacher “who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old.”

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