

## #376 Kingdom: Overcoming The Wineskin Problem

We have entered a period when the “stretching and flexibility of the inner life” will be absolutely essential if we are to participate in the next restoration of God. When there is no continuous change within us there will be no real growth or development in our spiritual man or a progressing eternal vision. It is my opinion that the Kingdom Government within, when diligently followed, will demand a continuous stretching, adjusting, rectifying, enlarging and daily change in the inner man. If this “discipline is not our experience we could be in deep trouble.

Heb 12:5 and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, "MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD, NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM; 6 FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES."

Heb 12:7 It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom *his* father does not discipline? 8 **But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.**

This indicates that the Father is intricately and intimately involved in our inner life **IF** we are legitimate children of God. He disciplines us SO we can share His Holiness. Without this “Divine Discipline” there will always be a large gap in our spiritual development and a stunted growth in our inner life. This discipline is not in the outer man because the natural man does not share in God’s holiness. To assume this discipline is the same as “discipline by the leaders” is gross ignorance. These are two different realms.

In the new Charisma Magazine, January 2008, one of the largest churches in the USA reported that “church services” are NOT causing the believers to grow or develop a spiritual life. Their conclusion is that each believer must become a “self feeder.” This means that we can no longer expect the pulpit ministry to feed us and every believer must take responsibility for their own growth. For many years now the “hope for a maturing church” was in establishing multiple programs that provided something for everybody so everybody could be involved in some church activity. It was thought that the busier the believers were in church activities, the more they would grow. Now Willow Creek Church (about 20,000 believers) realizes this is just not meeting their expectations and people are leaving because they are in a static growth situation.

The reason is apparent. Outward activity does not build up the inner life. Programs can never feed the inner man. Since growth is not in the intellect or in the muscles of our body all this physical exercise and activity, required by these programs, do nothing to develop or feed the inner man. The “food” of the new inner man is limited to John the sixth chapter but without first having a developing inner man he has no idea HOW to eat from Christ OR drink His blood. It is clear that Moses was not expected to go out every morning and gather up the manna for each family and feed them. Each family was responsible to gather their own manna. This “system” that man has designed which we “call church” has assumed the believers are totally dependent upon its “leaders” to feed them and provide for all spiritual areas of their life. All they are expected to do is pay their tithe and show up for the meeting.

Exo 23:14 "Three times a year you shall celebrate a feast to Me. 15 "You shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread; for seven days you are to eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you, at the appointed time in the month Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt. **And none shall appear before Me empty-handed.**

Exo 23:16 "Also *you shall observe* the Feast of the Harvest of **the first fruits of your labors from what you sow in the field**; also the Feast of the Ingathering at the end of the year **when you gather in the fruit of your labors from the field.**

This "seeker friendly church system" that man has built has promoted a "gospel of grace" where NOTHING is required of us except to believe something about Jesus. In this "foreign gospel" the believer can appear before God empty handed and he doesn't need to labor in his own field OR gather in what he sowed in HIS FIELD because the grace of God covers his apathy, laziness and spiritual shallowness. These lukewarm believers, in seeker friendly churches, are assured that Jesus will not vomit them out of His body because they are "believers."

These "denominational believers" are quick to extol the virtues of their pioneers that suffered to establish their denomination and testify to how they have faithfully held to the traditions of these pioneers. They easily point out the "old landmarks" that identify their group. However, their testimony is about some other persons faith and perseverance. They have no height or depth or width or breadth of personal testimony, or personal vision, no reaching forward to new realms of growth, no pressing toward the mark of the upward call of God themselves. They merely hold to a dead outward form that one day may have had life but now everything is just the deadness of the letter. Few realize their spiritual life is in a prison of stagnation and that "this time" is the ONLY time we have to come to maturity and to fulfill the purpose of God for our life.

Every time the natural man has taken hold of the work of God, even in times of revival, the work soon fossilizes, and is turned into a creed, an order, a form, an organization, a denomination, a sect or into a community with leaders. These "leaders" turn spiritual things into a formula to be followed by the believers. It is no longer a good excuse to say "But God always has a remnant who seek God." The "remnant" is not even a broad testimony to the world that Christ raised from the dead and is now seated at the right hand of God. God is expecting a corporate group of manifested sons who are conformed to the very image of His Only Begotten Son.

My theory now is that NO EARTHLY ORGANIZATION will be able to usher in the next restoration. The first thing it would try to do is prevent it OR imprison it. In church history most restorations that began as a new heavenly vision soon became an earthly institution that tried to continue by human zeal and through man's intellect and cleverness.

Our focus now is upon the development of the new inner man and the growth of the inner life of Christ in us. It seems clear now that until there is a nucleus of spiritual persons who have grown into the next dimension of His Life that a new restoration by God would soon turn into more earth dirt. The next restoration of the Holy Place Life and Ministry will require a sovereign stretching, a new spiritual flexibility, and an greater inner capacity in the new inner man { to hold and manifest Christ}. This dimension of Life is unknown to us at the present time.

When we stay under the Government of the Kingdom we will never arrive at a fixed place or to a place of no further light or revelation. In the Kingdom, TRUTH is always unfolding and a revealing of new realms that were unknown to us before. Someone recently told me that “truth is now fixed, final and written down for us in scripture.” Their concept is that doctrines are now established that can never be changed. Since “doctrines” vary all over the entire spectrum from denomination to denomination, we wonder which groups doctrines are fixed and cannot be changed.

It is true there is an ABSOLUTE TRUTH that is set in stone. These truths include what Christ has purchased for us, man’s sin and the Father’s Eternal Purpose ETC. However, there has always been the unfolding of God’s truth and the unveiling of a progressing revelation and increase of vision throughout church history. These truths are not just objective reality, they must also become our subjective experience and become an experiential reality our inner life.

Therefore, development must be by our appropriation and experience of these truths and by an epignosis [true knowledge] of God. There must be genuine growth and experiential inner reality. This will require that we become much more flexible and be ready for the enlargement of our inner man and the growth of His Life in us. It is my opinion that the inner graces of God and the validity of the Spiritual gifts depend upon this flexibility and a continual enlargement and adjustment in the inner man. It seems that “flexibility” is the key to drastic changes in our experience and diversity in our thinking and the enlargement of our understanding and the growth into a new spiritual stature of the inner man.

This seems clear in 2 Peter 1 that each of the “add ons” will require an enlargement in our inner man to experience more of His Divine nature.

2Pe 1:4 For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them **you might become partakers of the divine nature**, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.

2Pe 1:5 Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, **in your faith** supply moral excellence, and in *your* moral excellence, knowledge; 6 and in *your* knowledge, self-control, and in *your* self-control, perseverance, and in *your* perseverance, godliness; 7 and in *your* godliness, brotherly kindness, and in *your* brotherly kindness, love. 8 For if these *qualities are yours and are increasing*, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

To include and experience these 7 attributes in our FAITH will certainly enhance our Christian Life. This will require an inner flexibility and a continual stretching, along with the enlargement of the inner man. If we are to grow up into the “measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” there can be NO stopping point where we can be confident that at last we have attained full stature so now we can relax. Outward “positions, titles and recognition” is nothing without a growing inner man.

It seems very clear now that even if we add 20,000 new souls to a “seeker friendly group” but they are living in a static faith and nothing is being added of these Christian virtues to their Christian Life, that we can hardly call this a successful church. Of course NO ENTRANCE will be made for them into the Kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

2Pet 1:10 Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; **11 for in this way the entrance**

into the **eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.**

As revealing and clear as this principle of the Kingdom is presented, there is very little emphasis upon the actual experience of these 7 essential things in the visible church. Of course some may present these things as “ideals” or doctrines but not as DEMANDS of the Kingdom.

Why is this “demand” ignored in the visible church? For many it is because of an old perception of grace that covers our lukewarmness, apathy, shallowness and our casual attitude toward God. This “doctrine of grace” has been set in stone by the traditions of men. Grace has become an inflexible doctrine that cannot be altered to include the necessity of growing in grace and the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. It cannot be adjusted to include the demands of the Kingdom or the demands for development and maturity of the inner man.

The “OLD DRY WINESKIN” problem has invaded the visible church in EVERY generation. Inflexibility, and the inability to stretch to receive and assimilate a new truth plagues the church again today. It is my opinion that the Gospel of the Kingdom must by-pass each of these groups that cannot or will not adjust, stretch or change to respond to more light.

Mat 21:43 "Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you, and be given to a nation producing the fruit of it.

To inherit the Kingdom We MUST produce the fruit of the Kingdom. Super grace concepts rejects this DEMAND because it is not seeker friendly. They say this was only spoken to Israel and not to the church, meaning those that believe something about Jesus. The theory is that “producing fruit” is only “WORKS” and no one is saved by works. This ignorance results in a blindness that cannot see the difference between forgiveness of sins and the Kingdom of God. For them, once you put the blood upon the door posts in Egypt you are automatically in Canaan or once you have your sins forgiven you are automatically in the Kingdom of God.

Act 14:22 strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, "Through **many tribulations we must enter the kingdom** of God." 2Thes 1:5 *This is* a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you may be considered **worthy of the kingdom of God**, for which indeed you are suffering.

Most of the “light” that God brought into the denominational churches during the Charismatic Renewal was brought into the “Old Wineskin Church System” and the system locked it up, starved it and killed it in a few years. No evidence of that “light” can be seen today in the old wineskin groups.

Within about 3 years of 1968, every denomination had been invaded and affected by the Charismatic Renewal but the greatest opposition was from “seminary trained pastors” and the “old pillars of the church system” that refused to change. They rejected any invasion of NEW LIGHT because their doctrines and experience were set in stone. They held to the “light” received by the founders of their work, many years before. Some reacted violently against any change so those with a new experience had to leave their church. Many of those that “left” survived but those that “stayed” died.

My point is this; This same situation still exists today and the next restoration will be met with violent

opposition, rejection and cries of heresy. Every denomination began as a “new work” sometime. They also faced opposition but now they have become old and inflexible and now they provide active opposition to any new work. This “present opposition” confirms to us once again that ONLY those who have a clear revelation and are consecrated to God and His Eternal Purpose will pay the price to participate in this next restoration. If history repeats itself, we will only have a short period of opportunity to take a few steps forward into this restored truth BEFORE it becomes inflexible again. The leaders of this restoration will soon begin to resist and condemn any further truth.

One thing we have noticed is that the Kingdom is so diverse and it is not so clearly revealed that the natural man can even recognize it or understand it with his intellect. For this reason it will be more difficult to turn it into a denomination, or a movement or to establish the Kingdom as a fixed doctrine. I cannot recognize anything that we could call “the doctrine of the Kingdom of God.” Of course the Jehovah’s Witnesses have already created that doctrine! They have created an earthly Kingdom that exists in a Kingdom Hall. This false Kingdom has made the true Gospel of the Kingdom irrelevant to multitudes of believers who think all Kingdom teaching is false.

Dominion Theology and Reconstruction Theology have reduced the Kingdom down to putting Christians in civil government, in judgeships, and law enforcement so they can establish moral law and the order of the Kingdom on earth. The rationale is that during the reign of Constantine the judicial system was so corrupt that he appointed bishops from the church to be judges. Since this pattern continued from time to time in other generations it is assumed that is still God’s plan for His Kingdom. If the Kingdom was of the earth realm that might work. IF Bishops were really converted to the Kingdom Government that might be a better plan. However, fallen humanity functions exactly the same if they function in fallen civil government or in the fallen church government. Fallen man can only function at the earth level and is subject to all of the world of corruption.

Even if every past generation depended upon the church to provide civil

government and to be judges of other men, that is still NOT the Kingdom Of God. Since the Kingdom is NOT of this realm we shouldn’t try to limit the Kingdom to this earthly realm. The Kingdom of Heaven had no beginning and it has no end. Therefore, it cannot be attached to this earthly realm which will pass away. Even if this whole earth passed away, the Kingdom would still stand, unchanged, because it is not of this realm.

Like The Father, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, the Kingdom must come to have the preeminence in everything that touches our lives. We really can never separate any of these because they are of the same God. It is foolish to try to separate God from His Eternal Government because when you see one you see the other.

There are those today that have a doctrine that assumes; “Yes, someday we will all have to serve God and be obedient but, thank God, now we are living under grace and are free to do our own will and whatever pleases us!” For them the Kingdom is just another Christian cliché. Now, since Scofield figured it out, there is another doctrine that the Kingdom is not for the church age but ONLY for Israel during the Millennium. Once these “doctrines” are set in stone [unchangeable] they become part of the structure of that church. Even if we can prove by many scriptures that their doctrine is false, they can still not change because the foundation of their church would be shaken and peoples faith would be in

jeopardy.

Once a doctrine is set in stone, any departure from that doctrine will be treated as heresy by that denomination. The danger is that their man made “doctrine” can never be adjusted or modified or stretched to receive more or greater light.

Incorporating these fixed positions is what results in what we call “the Church Establishment.” However, the “restoration” will need to quickly make the change to another viewpoint that we will call “the Christian Establishment.” This recognizes that not ALL “Church Establishments” are actually “Christian Establishments.” This is clear, of course, in the cults but not so clear among those groups that are considered as dead but “orthodox.”

We may understand from of past church history that the “Church Establishment” can never change because its concepts, doctrines and practices are set in stone. We are defining the “Establishment” as a group in a church system that is exercising power and influence over matters of policy, opinions, function, doctrines and limits what is acceptable in that group. We identify these groups as the ones who are resisting any change and always insist upon the status quo and adopting a “safe position.”

We are trying to make a distinction between this “church group identity” and what we are calling “Christian Identity.” Hopefully, this “Christian Establishment” that exists today will be flexible enough to adjust to the next restoration. In past church history there was always a remnant that was able to make the transition. This group today MUST continually grow and remain flexible and be ready to receive more and greater light on a progressing basis. We are using the term “identity” to show the various characteristics associated with “True Christianity.” Whatever is truly Christian will be growing and manifesting His Life. A fossilized “church establishment” can remain in that condition for centuries, having an outward appearance but dry and dead within. People will still gravitate toward these “comatose institutions” because they are safe and orthodox.

There appears to always have been a remnant that set out, in each generation, to make the church truly “Christian.” The greatest numbers of those who are currently “church members” may already be inflexible and no longer moldable, stretchable, or adjustable. They may be unable to extend their vision beyond the here and now. Their “traditions” may already prevent them from growing in their inner life or be able to participate in more light. Their understanding may no longer be capable of expanding to accept new truth.

Many “ministries” now are feeling helpless to continue on in this “system” until they see some change in their effectiveness in maturing the saints. Many have thought they could “feed the flock of God” with straw sermons, or an intellectual message or more sophisticated programs. Many thought if I can only get the saints to pray and fast and study their Bible more, they will grow. It is obvious that the intellectual and informational approach in ministry has failed to mature the saints.

It is not difficult to list all the ways we have failed in maturing the saints but it is not clear what we now need to do to rectify the problem. The danger is that we may try to resurrect or modify the old systems and begin again. Maybe this nearly universal confusion over how the church should function has frustrated the believers who seek for spiritual growth and caused many to just stay home. There must be a reason for all this apathy, lukewarmness and indifference that we see.

My theory now for “the function of ministry” is to just focus upon imparting vision, purpose, need for consecration and the necessity for each of us to fulfill our calling before God. Then when the seekers take responsibility for their own development we must leave the rest up to them to seek God for how to do that. I realize this is still a very abstract theory. However, I recognize that my earthly calling is JUST the doorway into my eternal and higher calling to be a manifested son of God. No matter how frustrating this earthly calling is, it IS the doorway into a higher calling. Therefore, we cannot give up and quit.

An essential part of the next restoration is to remain teachable [ as well as flexible, adjustable and stretchable] because we haven’t been this way before. We have NO EXPERIENCE in this dimension and we don’t “know” anything. We enter into this realm as babies or at best little children.

We glibly talk about the “manifest sons” but quickly demonstrate our “manifest limitation and manifest failure.” We talk about “experiencing reality” but then find very little reality in the inner life. We talk about God disciplining us as sons but then act like bastards and not sons. We talk about being raised up and seated with Christ in the heavenly realm but our feet are covered with dust. We talk about spiritual authority but no one pays any attention to us. We boldly tell people to just open your mouth and God will fill it but we stumble around and say nothing. The ministry seems more and more like a big joke but there are more people are crying than laughing. We tell people they need to take up the cross but we complain and run from it. We speak about spiritual gifts but then quickly manifest out natural abilities. We are confident to preach about the living and abiding Word of God that dwells in us but then we speak out garbage. We speak about the wonderful light of the Lampstand that illuminates our inner man but then we stumble in the darkness. We preach confidently about the faith of the saints of Hebrews 11 but then we faint in unbelief.

We forcefully preach about the living stones that God is building into a spiritual house to offer up spiritual sacrifices to God but then we isolate ourselves from other Christians and stand alone. We speak to a pile of denominational stones and then speak about a building made by God as if a pile of stones and a building was the same thing.

It is little wonder that most of us have lost all credibility with the church, with the saints and with the world. Oh, wretched man that I am!