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*Rejected*  
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### NO PATCHES, PLEASE!

In many circles, patching is almost a lost art. With the development of long-wearing synthetic fabrics, it has become less necessary. Besides, only a circus clown really enjoys wearing patches. How hard it is to match the threads, so that the patched area shows as little as possible. Even with careful stitching, it is difficult to keep the patch from being obvious. And if the patch is of new material, the contrast with the old cannot be hidden.

Patching is far from obsolete in religious circles, and on the part of some is desired (but not desireable). As long ago as New Testament days, Jesus' failure to accept a patched religion was challenged. In Mark, chapter 2, the religious leaders complained about the behavior of His disciples. Why didn't they follow the prescribed form of fasting? God had instituted fasts. They should conform, said the Pharisees. Besides, they violated the sacred Sabbath by picking grain and Jesus was just as guilty, for He healed a withered hand.

The garment then in disrepair was obedience to the Law. It did not occur to them that the new teachings of the Messiah would not be a repairing of their decadent, hypocritical practice of the Law. No one objected to His healings. Even His teachings were recognized as excellent. But, in their opinion, they must include, be built on, be fastened to the Law. The Law was the only Establishment acceptable to God. The Messianic kingdom, to them, was only an earthly kingdom with Jewish supremacy.

To their complaints, Jesus replied that His teaching was new, that it would not be based on their sacrifices and offerings, that it would include both Jew and Gentile. On putting new patches on old material, He



said, all that happens is that the old tears an even bigger hole, and both the garment and new new patch are rendered useless.

"If any man be in Christ he is a new creature"(2 Cor. 5:17). Yet the urge is usually to add the gospel on to the existing, faded system. "No one," said Jesus, "puts new patches on old garments," if he is wise." Acceptance of Christ as Savior is not a patching up of the old life. Those who try to do so, find that the old life is weak, and in stress, it gives way, destroying any effectiveness of the "patch" and ruining even more the old life. The whole garment must be new. The two cannot blend, and since the patch is attached to the old as a base, <sup>the garment</sup> it is no stronger than the old *material*.

Paul, the apostle, suffered much because he taught that salvation is by faith alone and not by observance of the Law. If he had been willing to use his teaching of faith as a patch of an addition to the old, he would have found greater acceptance among his compatriots, and certainly less persecution.

But patches would not do. "Behold, all things are made new." This theme recurs often. New man, not changed man. New heavens and new earth, not repaired earth. New heart, not retrained old heart. The old cannot sustain the new. The old does not harmonize with the new, no matter how great the effort.

Even believers, unwittingly, may seek to impose the new onto the old familiar forms of religion. Usually the old is comfortable because it is familiar. Because the old is known, one experiences more security than with the somewhat frightening unknown. One's culture, be it a social or religious culture, has come to be so much a part of oneself that it is hard to distinguish truth from tradition. Friction may arise because your old garment and mine are unlike, yet, patched, we somehow expect them to emerge alike.



Jesus strengthened his argument for the necessity of something new, by His illustration of the wine bottles (Mark 2). The old cannot contain the new. The ferment, the growth, the life evident in the new, will cause the old to burst. New wine in an old, bursting bottle will be spilled out and be lost. It is not only unwise to try to put the new in or on the old -- it is disastrous, because the old is unable to sustain or contain the new, and both the new and old are ruined.

When the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, it was said that they were drunk with new wine. The onlookers were thinking of the fruit of the vine, but in a real sense, they were filled with the new wine -- that of the Spirit, and even the "bottles" had been made new. Their lives were changed. They had become new creatures in Christ. "Old things were passed away; behold, all things have become new. (2 Cor. 5:17). The life is as new as the butterfly is different from the caterpillar, as the beautiful white lily is so different from the brown bulb.

Jesus said of the shedding of His blood: "This is the new testament covenant)." The book of Hebrews says that Jesus is the mediator of the new covenant. (Heb. 9:15). The old must be discarded as a base, as a container of the new. Paul, writing to the Galatians, said that the only thing that counts is a new creation (Gal. 6:15). Entrance to the presence of the Father is by Jesus, identified as a new and living way (Heb. 10:20).

Despite the comfort of the familiar, we are relieved to know that the new life is not built on the old. We can leave it behind, with its guilts, fears, failures, weaknesses, disappointments, and discouragements. "I'm afraid I can't hold out" is an idea based on patches -- putting the new life on the base of the old, unredeemed person. "I know myself too well; I'd never make it" is a "patch" idea. We think the new man will



have the characteristics of the old. It is hard to perceive how NEW the new life will be, how different.

Christian students taking college entrance personality tests have asked, "Shall I answer as I am or as I was before I was saved?" They are having difficulty decided which is the real "me". The new man is now the existing person. The old is to be put away. God so completely makes new the fabric or wineskin in which He puts the new life that sometimes we hardly recognize ourselves. God deals with whole new material, whole new wineskins, not with new-on-old nor new-in-old.

Praise God for not patching-up the old man! Praise God for making us a new creature in Christ! And if failure has been our experience, because we have sought to put the new onto or into the old life, ~~may~~ we experience the joy of <sup>the realization of</sup> ~~being~~ a whole new creation in Christ.