Spiritual Inertia

Sir Isaac Newton is famous for three laws of physics. His first law states that an object in motion remains in motion unless acted upon by an unbalanced force, and an object at rest will stay at rest unless acted upon by an unbalanced force. This is the law of inertia and it means that objects RESIST CHANGE in motion.

We can ascribe this same law to human behavior. Humans display inertia on all levels: physical, academic, emotional, psychological, and spiritual. The bottom line: we all RESIST CHANGE. Sometimes, this is for the better. However, many times it is not.

A story is told as follows:

> No one tears a piece out of a new garment to patch an old one. Otherwise, they will have torn the new garment, and the patch from the new will not match the old. And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the new wine will burst the skins; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, new wine must be poured into new wineskins. And no one after drinking old wine wants the new, for they say, "The old is better."[1]

There are two parts to the story. The first relates to clothing and the second to wine containers. In both illustrations, the message shows the incompatibility of "new" things with the old. There are countless examples of this in our lives. If we are honest and self-reflective, we will find that we RESIST CHANGE almost automatically even when the change is necessary and right.

Louis Pasteur made the claim that illnesses came from invisible germs. The backlash was so strong that he was excommunicated from the International Chemistry Society in the late 1800's. Eventually, he, along with other open-minded contemporaries, discovered bacteria and viruses, leading to new sanitation conventions that have saved billions of lives!

An expression used in the early 1900's was "That will happen the day a man lands on the moon." At that time, there was no possibility for people to fly, neither enter outer space, and certainly not go to the moon. When the thought became more than just a whim, people strongly resisted, especially when millions of dollars were spent while people were suffering in their daily lives.

At one time, immigrants, blacks, women, and minorities were not allowed to vote, to own property, to have any influence in the country's affairs. Each of these endured extensive and severe resistance along with inequity, inequality, discrimination, oppression, and murder.

Going back to the story, no sensible person would cut a piece out of a brand-new garment to patch a worn out old one. Doing so ruins the new garment (you've torn it) and fails to repair the old one properly because the new cloth will not match in strength, texture, or appearance. Therefore, the new MUST BE received on its own terms, not as a patch for the old.

In the ancient world, wine was stored in animal skin bottles (wineskins). Fresh, new wine was still fermenting and therefore expanding as gases formed. New wineskins were flexible and could stretch to accommodate that pressure. Old wineskins had already been stretched and had

become hard, brittle, and inflexible. If you pour new fermenting wine into an old wineskin, the pressure will burst it, and, therefore, the new wine is lost.

The final line in the story, "The old is better" has significant meaning. In relation to wine, people often equate old wine as better than new. This may be true in some circumstances, but often new wine is better, depending on what you desire. However, the issue here is not about taste or preference, but about SPIRITUAL INERTIA. People resist change even to the point of killing each other and sometimes even allowing themselves to die. How many people died because they believed in slavery, because they upheld the Nazi Aryan doctrine, and on and on.

Jesus Christ was God coming to earth as a man some 2000 years ago. The Bible records the incredible life, death, and resurrection of this God-man. Jesus lived for 30 years with little recognition, but for 3+ years He ministered. He preached the good news of God's kingdom, He performed thousands of miracles (healing the deaf, blind, sick, lame, and even raising the dead), and He preached God's message and salvation from town to town. One observer said that all the books in the world at that time could not contain all the things Jesus did.

The Bible is the most reliable book in history. It is and always has been (since publications began) the best-selling and most published book in the world. Yet, people resist it and its message. This is spiritual inertia! Jesus would heal a person, yet his enemies immediately plotted to kill Him. Again, this is spiritual inertia!

History shows the same tragic resistance to change. Jesus Christ came out of love and mercy to forgive, heal, and save all people. Yet, people refuse to repent nor appreciate such a wonderful offer. Jesus stated that there is no Jew, no Gentile (non-Jew), no male, no female, no slave, no free, no circumcised, no uncircumcised, or any other distinction among people in His church (Galatians 3:28; Colossians 3:11). Yet, people have divided over non-essential doctrines and practices, forming factions and sects, allowing enmity, legality, formality, etc. to supersede love and unity. This is inertia.

People often malign Christians claiming that they are hypocrites and may be right because we all resist change. We can claim to know Jesus, but remain in our old ways and thinking. But how about you? Will you remain in your old ways and thinking even after God sent His Only Son, Jesus Christ, to offer salvation and change in your life? Or will you let inertia be the order of the day?

> God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him. Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. (John 3:17-19)

God offers an exclusive gift to each one of us. "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12). Will we resist it or accept it? Will we accept it on God's terms or resist and only accept it on our terms. To accept God's terms means we deny our own lives and attempt to obey God through His scriptures and His Spirit.

[1]Luke 5:36-39