

What Does Jesus' Call Mean For Me?

Mark 2:15-28
December 13,2009

Jesus and a man in a booth. Mark 2:13-17

1. The conversion of Levi (Matthew) v. 13-14 Jesus finds Levi sitting at his tax-collection booth and invites him to become a disciple.
2. The celebration by Levi v. 15-17 He invites many friends to dinner so that they might meet Jesus.
 - a. The background of these guests. V. 15: Many are notorious sinners in the community.
 - b. The bitterness against these guests. V. 16: The Pharisees are outraged at this, demanding to know why Jesus associates with such sinners!
 - c. The basis for these guests. V. 17: Jesus explains that He has not come to call the righteous to repentance but sinners!

The final two criticisms 2:18-28. What the Pharisees think Jesus should be doing.

1. The say He is not observing fasting. V. 18-22
 - a. Their rebuke. V. 18: They want to know why Jesus' disciples don't fast when their disciples do.
 - b. His response. V. 19-22
 - aa. Wedding guests do not fast while the bridegroom is with them. V. 19-20
 - bb. No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. V. 21
 - cc. No one puts new wine into old wineskins. V. 22
2. They say He is not observing the Sabbath. V. 23-28
 - a. Their rebuke. V. 23-24: He is allowing His disciples to break off heads of wheat and eat the grain on the Sabbath.
 - b. His response. V. 25-28
 - aa. David was given consecrated bread, which was lawful only for a priest to eat. V. 25-26
 - bb. The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath, and Jesus is the Master of the Sabbath. V. 27-28.

Sinners

Isolation to Engagement. Mark 2:15-17 SIN, degrees of

Roman Catholic theology distinguishes between mortal and venial sins. A mortal sin removes your justification, and if you die with unconfessed mortal sin on your soul, you will be sent to hell. Venial sins do not destroy your justification, and only reduce your rewards or add to your time in purgatory. The Reformation rejected this system because of its works-orientation, but did not reject the idea of degrees of sin. John Calvin said that all sin is mortal in the sense that it deserves death, but no sin is so severe that it can destroy the grace of justification.

Tabletalk, April, 1990, p. 34.

Judging Sinners and Others

In 1884 a young man died, and after the funeral his grieving parents decided to establish a memorial to him. With that in mind they met with Charles Eliot, president of Harvard University. Eliot received the unpretentious couple into his office and asked what he could do. After they expressed their desire to fund a memorial, Eliot impatiently said, "Perhaps you have in mind a scholarship."

"We were thinking of something more substantial than that...perhaps a building," the woman replied. In a patronizing tone, Eliot brushed aside the idea as being too expensive and the couple departed. The next year, Eliot learned that this plain pair had gone elsewhere and established a \$26 million memorial named Leland Stanford Junior University, better known today as Stanford!

Today in the Word, June 11, 1992.

We sometimes criticize others unfairly. We don't know all their circumstances, nor their motives. Only God, who is aware of all the facts, is able to judge people righteously. John Wesley told of a man he had little respect for because he considered him to be miserly and covetous. One day when this person contributed only a small gift to a worthy charity, Wesley openly criticized him.

After the incident, the man went to Wesley privately and told him he had been living on parsnips and water for several weeks. He explained that before his conversion, he had run up many bills. Now, by skimping on everything and buying nothing for himself he was paying off his creditors one by one. "Christ has made me an honest man," he said, "and so with all these debts to pay, I can give only a few offerings above my tithe. I must settle up with my worldly neighbors and show them what the grace of God can do in the heart of a man who was once dishonest." Wesley then apologized to the man and asked his forgiveness.

Daily Bread, July 20, 1992.

Fasting and Feasting Mark 2:18-22

Thoughts on fasting: In Scripture we see several purposes for fasting. It's part of the discipline of self-control; it's a way of sharing that we depend on God alone and draw all our strength and resources from him; it's a way of focusing totally on him when seeking his guidance and help, and of showing that you really are in earnest in your quest; it's also, at times, an expression of sorrow and deep repentance, something that a person or community will do in order to acknowledge failure before God and seek his mercy.

We tend to think of fasting as going without food. But we can fast from anything. If we love music and decide to miss a concert in order to spend time with God, that is fasting. It is helpful to think of the parallel of human friendship. When friends need to be together, they will cancel all other activities in order to make that possible. There's nothing magical about fasting. It's just one way of telling God that your priority at that moment is to be alone with him, sorting out whatever is necessary, and you have cancelled the meal, party, concert, or whatever else you had planned to do in order to fulfill that priority.

James Packer, Your Father Loves You, Harold Shaw Publishers, 1986, p. 14.

While we are on the subject, let me give you a few thoughts concerning this matter of fasting.

1. Fasting is nowhere commanded in the Bible. But, it is not forbidden either.
 2. Fasting is taking time that would normally be spent eating, sleeping, or enjoying some other physical pleasure, and using that time for prayer, Bible study and meditation.
 3. Fasting is the result of proper spiritual priorities. The meat of the word and pure moments of fellowship with God are far more important than our physical needs. Fasting acknowledges this priority.
 4. Fasting does not impress God and it does not persuade God.
 5. Fasting only has merit if it is being used to seek God's face for a time of personal spiritual growth.
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JESUS AND HIS RESPONSE

A. v. 19 **An Explanation** – Jesus responds to their criticism by talking about a wedding. Weddings in those days were nothing like they are today. Now, as soon as the wedding wraps up, the newlyweds leave on their honeymoon. In Jesus' day, things were different. As soon as the wedding was over in those days, the newlyweds hosted their families and friends in a week of celebration. They would spend seven days feasting and being treated like a king and queen.

Life in those desert lands was difficult at best. People worked from sunup to sundown just to survive day to day. When that wedding came, the married couple was treated like royalty for a week. It was the best week of their lives and they enjoyed it to the full.

Jesus tells His critics that His presence among His people is like that of a bridegroom among his friends. It is not a time for mourning, self-denial and sadness. It is a time for celebration and gladness. To be sad, to mourn, to fast while the Lord was present would be out of character with what the Lord was doing in those days.

There are a couple of lessons that we can glean from this verse.

- The Jews were so caught up in their rituals and their traditions that they missed the blessed reality right before them. Had they known Who Jesus was, they would have ceased their fasting and joined in on the feasting!

Sometimes we are guilty of the same thing! We do the church thing out of habit and fail to recognize the presence of God that is with us all the time, **Heb. 13:5; Matt. 28:20; 18:20**. If we could ever learn to recognize His constant presence with us, it would transform every moment of our lives. We would cease our growling and complaining and we would walk in joy. We would see a change in the way we came to church. We would come looking for Jesus. We would come to worship!

- The fasting of the Jews may have impressed those who saw them, but it did not impress the Lord! He knew that their hearts. He knew they were not seeking Him and He knew that they were still trapped in their sins.

The good things we do in the name of religion and worship are nothing but hypocrisy if they are not done out a heart that is sincerely seeking the Lord. Singing hymns, going to church, preaching, teaching, etc, all become hypocritical if they do not arise out of a genuine desire to worship and glorify the Lord!

From Legalism to Liberty Mark 2:23-28

The Illustration Of The Containers – The next illustration Jesus uses would also have been understood by all who heard Him speak that day. Jesus uses an image of wine bottles. Glass and plastic bottles did not exist in those days. Ancient people often used the skin of a goat as a container for their wine.

When a goat was killed, the skin was cut around the neck and the legs and pulled off the body in one piece. The leg openings would be sewed shut and sealed. And what had been the goat's neck would be used as a spout. The hide would be partially tanned. Then, this hide could be used as a wine bottle, or a wineskin. The hide was very elastic and would expand as the wine fermented inside.

These wineskins dried out over time and became brittle. If new wine was poured into an old wineskin and began to ferment, the old wineskin couldn't stretch to accommodate the gases put off by the fermenting wine and would burst. The wine and the wineskin would both be lost. Thus, the tragedy would be twice as great. The only fit container for new wine was a new wineskin.

Again, the spiritual principle is clear. Judaism, with its rituals and rules, could not contain the ministry and message of the Lord Jesus Christ. He did not come to pour the new wine of His Spirit into hearts that were trying to please God by keeping the rules and traditions of men. Jesus came to give new life to lost sinners. He came to take the old wineskins of our flesh and make us new by His power. When He has transformed us through the new birth, we are ready to receive the new wine of His Spirit. Only one who has been saved by grace and is born again is a fit container for the Spirit of God!

A lot of people have Oak Trees in their yards. They provide great shade in the summer months, but they are aggravating. Those trees do not lose their leaves in the fall. The dead, brown leaves hang on those limbs until spring time comes.

When spring comes, the sap rises in the tree. The new buds begin to push out from the end of the branches, and the old leaves are forced to fall away. The new life in the tree expands and causes that which is dead to fall away!

That is exactly what Jesus wants to do in our lives! The old ways of sin and self will hang on for as long as they can. Religion, religious rituals and the traditions of men will not repair your old man; those things merely hold him down for a little while.

When Jesus moves in, He creates a new life within you. The new life He places in you begins to work its way out of you. Before long, what the Lord has done on the inside becomes clear on the outside as He changes the old man into a new creature for the glory of the Lord. The new wine of Jesus on the inside will burst the wineskin of the old man on the outside. This old flesh cannot contain the work of God in the heart!

As Jesus fills the wineskin of our lives, He stretches us to new limits. The inner pressure of His presence displaces unneeded things and fills every area of our lives. This new life is so powerful, so dynamic and so different that the old wineskins of religion and old ways of living must give way to the new life He places within us.

Let me make it clear that Jesus did not come to destroy the Law, He came to fulfill it, **Matt. 5:17**. Jesus filled full the moral law in that He kept it to the letter. Jesus filled full the ceremonial law in that He was the absolute perfect fulfillment of every type, symbol and sacrifice. Jesus filled full the judicial law in that He was the perfect embodiment of justice. When He comes in, He comes with such fullness that there is no desire for the old garment or the old wineskin.

It's like an acorn. You can take a rock or a hammer and smash an acorn, or you can plant that same acorn and let it germinate into an oak. Either way, the acorn is destroyed. If you smash it, it is gone forever. If it grows into an oak, it has achieved its fullest potential.

Jesus comes into our hearts not to place us under the yoke of the Law, but to enable us to live out God's perfect will through the power of the Holy Ghost. Jesus doesn't smash us under the Law; He places His Law within our hearts and helps us achieve God's best in our lives. He comes in to enable us to live our lives to the glory of God. The Law could never do that!)