



World Christian Fellowship

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Self-Righteous loses the opportunity!

Matthew 9:13-17

Matthew 9:9-17, *As Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, "Follow Me." So he arose and followed Him. ¹⁰Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, that behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples. ¹¹And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to His disciples, "Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" ¹²When Jesus heard that, He said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. ¹³But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.' For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance." ¹⁴Then the disciples of John came to Him, saying, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but Your disciples do not fast?" ¹⁵And Jesus said to them, "Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast. ¹⁶No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away from the garment, and the*

tear is made worse.¹⁷ Nor do they put new wine into old wineskins, or else the wineskins break, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But they put new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.”

The heart and soul of the Gospel message is that Jesus came to save sinners.

The worst, the vilest, who know it, who recognize it, who repent of it, who seek to be forgiven.

The message of Jesus was so different, it was so unlike traditional Pharisaic, rabbinical Judaism, it just didn't connect. It created confusion because it was so inward and so personal.

We don't feel much like celebrating when a tragic event has just taken place. Then, mourning is appropriate.

At the same time when a wonderful event takes place, we don't mourn but celebrate. Here Jesus explains why He and His followers are not fasting like the Pharisees and the disciples of John the Baptist do.

We don't know if this happened in actual sequence, but certainly it happens in logical sequence in the thought of the Holy Spirit.

May well have been on the very same occasion as the prior conversation.

V 14, *Then the disciples of John came to Him*

These are the disciples of John the Baptist.

Luke records that the Pharisees asked about fasting, while Mark adds that both the Pharisees and John's disciples questioned Jesus.

When John came, many people followed him. At a point in his life, he tried to transfer his followers over to Christ.

John 3:26-30, *And they came to John and said to him, “Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified—behold, He is baptizing, and all are coming to Him!”*
²⁷John answered and said, “A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven. ²⁸You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, ‘I am not the Christ,’ but, ‘I have been sent before Him.’ ²⁹He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled. ³⁰He must increase, but I must decrease.

But it’s apparent that not all did.

Even into the life of the apostle Paul we see the followers of John the Baptist.

Acts 19:3, *And he said to them, "Into what then were you baptized?" So they said, "Into John's baptism."*

Still some disciples of John the Baptist were there, who don't even know about Christ. So, apparently, these are connected somehow to John.

John, as we know from **Matthew chapter 4**, is in prison now. **Matthew 4:12**, *Now when Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, He departed to Galilee.*

These are very devout disciples of John the Baptist. No doubt deeply concerned about his imprisonment and still connected very tightly to the Pharisaic/ Judaism tradition.

V 14, *Then the disciples of John came to Him, saying, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but Your disciples do not fast?"*

Why do You and Your disciples not fast like we do?

This indicates that even in the fact that they followed John the Baptist and were close to getting to the truth, they were still stuck with their system.

Because the Pharisees believed you should fast twice a week, whereas the Old Testament only listed on fast, the Day of Atonement, **Yom Kippur**.

Leviticus 16:29-31, *“This shall be a statute forever for you: In the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, whether a native of your own country or a stranger who dwells among you. ³⁰For on that day the priest shall make atonement for you, to cleanse you, that you may be clean from all your sins before the Lord. ³¹It is a sabbath of solemn rest for you, and you shall afflict your souls. It is a statute forever.*

That was the only fast prescribed in the entire Old Testament. But they had built all this ritual and all this routine.

“They said, ‘Why do we fast, and you don’t fast?’”

In other words, what they are really saying is, “How come Your religion is so different than hours?”

The three major traditions of the Judaism.

- Giving,
- Prayers, and
- Fasting.

They had their little alms giving routines. They will give and make sure everyone knows about it.

They had their little routine during the day, when they said prayers at so many intervals, and they would stand on the corner, in the middle of the street, and do it.

They also had their routine fasts. They would look like they were fasting, with a drawn face, and they would decorate themselves so everyone would know they were fasting.

These are external, outward rituals substance of their religion.

They don't see religion as a matter of humility, sinfulness, repentance. They see religion as a matter of ceremony, as a matter of ceremony, as a matter of ritual.

The Didache, a manual of church instruction from near the end of the first century says, *Let not your fasts be with the hypocrites, for they fast on Mondays and Thursdays, but do your fast on Wednesdays and Fridays.* (7:1)

In other words, the early church sought to distance itself of the emptiness of fasting without losing the value of the practice.

Epiphanius, a bishop in Italy in the fifth century, said, *Who does not know that the fast of the fourth and sixth days of the week are observed by Christians throughout the world?*

*It is right to fast frequently in order to subdue and control the body. For when the stomach is full, the body does not serve for preaching, for praying, or studying, or for doing anything else that is good. Under such circumstances God's Word cannot remain. But one should not fast with a view to meriting something by it as by a good work. **Martin Luther.***

The Roman Catholic Church there are many people who go for the routine of going. You go, kneel, stand up, and you take the mass, and you run through the beads.

We can't carry on a conversation with them about forgiveness, repentance, and conversion because they wouldn't even know what you were speaking about. It's the routine of bowing down to a saint or lighting a candle or going through a ritual.

Protestant people who pray a little prayer at the dinner table. They own a Bible then they open it. They go to a church service. They sing a song. They go through the forms, the routines, the externals. They don't even understand the inside. They don't know what it means to be convicted of sin, to have a deep repentance in the heart.

Essentially what they are asking, *“How come Your system is so different? You don’t do what we do.”*

The Lord’s answer.

V 15, *And Jesus said to them, “Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.*

Three images/ picture Jesus gives His answer.

- 1. Wedding V 15**
- 2. New Garment V 16**
- 3. New wine V 17**

Wedding.

Jesus here referring to the attendants of the bridegroom.

In those days, a wedding would last seven days, and a man getting married would choose His best friends, and they were responsible to keep the party alive.

Promote the festivities, carry out the celebration, generate the fun, make sure everything goes well.

Wedding also compares to salvation in the scriptures.

Isaiah 54:5-7, *For your Maker is your husband, The Lord of hosts is His name; And your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel; He is called the God of the whole earth. ⁶For the Lord has called you Like a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, Like a youthful wife when you were refused,” Says your God. ⁷“For a mere moment I have forsaken you, But with great mercies I will gather you.*

Hosea 2:19-20, *“I will betroth you to Me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to Me In righteousness and justice, In lovingkindness and mercy; ²⁰I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness, And you shall know the Lord.*

Jesus says this is a wedding.

This is a celebration.

This is a happy time.

You don't expect the groom's attendants to mourn during the wedding feast.

They were carrying on their routines irrespective of what God is doing in their midst.

There is no connection between reality and your ritual.

John was in prison, but he still had disciples who followed him.

It seems that in many ways John's disciples had taken back some of their former practices. Without their great teacher

they reverted to what they knew. They had come out of a religion that fasted twice a week.

Mondays and Thursdays were the fasting days for the Pharisees and others in the land of the Israelites. Jerusalem restaurants were closed on Mondays and Thursdays because no one ate those days.

John the Baptist's disciples along with the Pharisees fasted often. Apparently, their fasting was accompanied with a spirit of mourning and sadness.

Yet, Jesus' disciples didn't appear to fast. Nor did they appear to mourn. In fact, they were all feasting with Matthew and all the scum of Capernaum.

They were feasting and celebrating!

Jesus answered the concern of John's disciples by telling them that it wasn't appropriate for His own disciples to express a spirit of mourning through a fast.

Jesus was right there, present with them. His presence was reason to rejoice and celebrate.

Jesus is saying that you have a system that is utterly external, that functions with no connection to reality. The Bridegroom is here. This calls for celebration.

The Bridegroom has come after a thousand years of dreaming and longing and hoping and waiting. Finally, He is here!

The absence of fasting in the disciples was a witness to the presence of God in their midst.

V 15, *But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.*

If you go through any religious exercise apart from an honest attitude in the heart, it is ritual and nothing more.

- If you fast just to fast,
- pray just to pray,
- go to church just to go to church,
- read the Bible just to read the Bible,
- sing a song just to sing a song,
- you have missed it.

The Bridegroom is here, and the wedding is going on. You don't cry at a wedding. You cry at a funeral.

You are happy at a wedding. I'm here with them. This is not a time for mourning.

You shouldn't be fasting unless you are fasting out of a broken heart. That's why the Old Testament only gave one fast.

That's why **Isaiah and Zechariah 7** both tell us that God does not want our fasts. He wants our love.

- Fasting will come very normally,
- Fasting will come very naturally,
- Fasting will come very genuinely,

When you have a broken heart, in prayer to seek God.

But to use anything as a means, some ritual to gain the favour of God is to miss the point.

Jesus just shows the difference between what He taught and their entire system. They just function without any meaning.

There will come a day. When Jesus died on the cross, the disciples were utterly devastated and shattered. There are times for that. But the routine and the ritual are not the issue.

So, here comes Jesus forgiving sin, and they are all happy, and the Bridegroom is there, and the forgiveness is going on, and it's joyous, and they say, "How come you don't do the Pharisaic thing?"

When Jesus says taken away, He's referring to His death and His ascension then fasting will be appropriate.

Acts 13:3, *Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.*

Acts 14:23, *So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.*

How do they relate to Jesus then?

How does their present religion relate to what Jesus's teaching?"

Jesus answers them that it doesn't relate or connect at all.

New Garment.

V 16, *No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away from the garment, and the tear is made worse.*

Some people have taken this passage and made it mean that Jesus is setting aside the law and bringing in grace.

Nothing could be further from the context.

That is not what He's saying. In fact, law and grace have always coexisted anyway.

In those days, the garments were cotton or wool, and both would shrink. If you had an old robe, and you got a big hole in

it and you take a piece of brand-new cloth, stick it in that whole and stitch it all around. As soon as you washed that garment, that new cloth shrinks, and the old fibres are going to be ripped by the strength of the new cloth.

You will end up going to get is a bigger hole.
You keep doing it, and it just gets bigger and bigger.

You can't put a new one in an old robe.
Anybody who knows that if you are going to patch an old robe, you have got to use an old piece of material.

What Jesus is saying is this that there is no way that what I teach can fit into your system.

There is no way that the message that I am giving of an internal holiness, of a real repentance, of a hard attitude can ever fit in the ritualistic system that you hold. No way.

Not only won't it connect, and your system can't contain it.

The first time God provided a new garment was way back in Genesis. God comes to Adam and Eve and finds them in shame, not knowing what to do with the pain of their sin. They were trying to cover themselves because they were embarrassed.

God comes to them and kills an animal and covers them with skin. He creates new garments for them.

A beautiful invitation that Jesus is inviting the disciples of John to look at.

There is something that Jesus is offering in terms of covering their shame. He wants to provide something new for them, something fresh. This isn't something the disciples can do on their own. They can't patch up their shame. They can't just cover it up. They need Jesus to invite them in and HIS righteousness can cover their shame.

Jesus is inviting us to put down our patching up and invite God to cloth us in his fresh grace. Jesus invites us to give up on patching up our old ways to receive His fresh grace.

New Wine

V 17, Nor do they put new wine into old wineskins, or else the wineskins break, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But they put new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved."

What they used to do in storing wine was they took the skin of an animal, took the hair off it.

Sometimes turned it inside out and they would use the neck part, where the head was cut off, as the spout. They would secure by stitching all the other openings. They would have this whole big animal hide, and they would fill it up with wine.

Now, once it had been emptied, and had hung around without anything in it, it would get very dry, because in the filling, it would stretch.

In the drying it would crack. If you refilled it again, the weight of it would just break the cracks open and you would lose it all.

So, you had to put new wine in new wineskins.

What the Lord is saying that you are system won't hold this truth. You must dump your system.

There is no connection.

The Pharisaical, Judaistic, traditional, legalistic, formal, self-righteous externalism was in no way, able to either mesh with the ministry of Christ, nor was that system able to contain the ministry of Christ.

The result:

The system had only one option:

The system had to eliminate Christ.

The only option they had was eliminate Him and they did. It's useless to try to put the two together. This is a very important point that our Lord is making. He did not come to make a few additions to Judaism. The forms of Judaism couldn't contain the message He brought.

It is not to say that the Old Testament is disconnected. Jesus came to fulfil the Old Testament. Their religion was not the religion of the Old Testament. It was a rabbinic tradition that denied the very truth of the Old Testament as He made abundantly clear in the Sermon on the Mount.

Jesus said to them that your system says you are righteous. Mine says you are vile and sinful.

No way to match those two together.

When someone comes to Christ, they have to say goodbye to a ritual system. Now, there are people in ritualistic systems, and they will confess Christ.

If it's genuine, eventually they are going to come out of that ritualistic system to the freedom of Christ, to the expression of an inward relationship.

New Covenant

In the Bible, a “covenant” is typically understood as a formal agreement between two parties.

An agreement that binds them to do certain things on one another’s behalf.

Here the two parties are God and His people.

An agreement in which He promises to bless them if they keep to the terms of the agreement, He sets for them.

One of the most significant covenants God entered with the people of Israel was announced when He delivered them from out of bondage to Egypt. He had gathered them together before Him at Mount Sinai; and told them,

Exodus 19:4–6, *You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to Myself. ⁵Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. ⁶And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel.”*

Immediately after the people of Israel consented to these words, God then gave them His law through Moses.

The law constituted the terms of the agreement that the people were to keep. But sadly, they were unable to do so.

In fact, they began to break the covenant right away and continued to break it throughout their history.

What was really needed was a new covenant one that didn't depend on our ability to keep the law. It needed to be a covenant in which its terms were fully kept for us by Another.

One in which God's law was placed in us in an internal way, and not in a way that depends on our keeping it externally.

God promises His people that a "new covenant" was soon on the way.

Jeremiah 31:31–34, *“Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—³²not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the Lord.³³But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be*

their God, and they shall be My people. ³⁴No more shall every man teach his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

What a glorious promise!

What an encouraging hope it must have given!

This new covenant has been brought into effect for us by Christ.

Matthew 26:27-28, *Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. ²⁸For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.*

Hebrews 9:15, *And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.*

What Jesus is teaching us today is that you cannot place His glorious death and resurrection as a patch on an old garment.

Application:

Three marks of a true believer.

1. He follows the Lord.

He follows the Lord.

Matthew 9:9, *As Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, "Follow Me." So he arose and followed Him.*

Luke 5:28, *So he left all, rose up, and followed Him.*

It is characteristic of a true believer that he lives a life of unquestioning obedience.

Does Matthew say anything?

No, he just gets up.

Look at Peter learns the hard way.

John 21:19-22, *This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, "Follow Me." ²⁰Then Peter, turning around, saw the*

disciple whom Jesus loved following, who also had leaned on His breast at the supper, and said, "Lord, who is the one who betrays You?" ²¹Peter, seeing him, said to Jesus, "But Lord, what about this man?" ²²Jesus said to him, "If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you? You follow Me."

A true Christian life a life of unquestioning obedience.

I don't believe a true Christian's always kicking against the traces, always despising the life of obedience, always resisting the obedience. I believe a true Christian follows the Lord.

2. True Christian feed the lost.

Matthew couldn't wait to call all the sinners together and give them Jesus.

Luke 5:29, *Then Levi gave Him a great feast in his own house. And there were a great number of tax collectors and others who sat down with them.*

Mark 2:15, *Now it happened, as He was dining in Levi's house, that many tax collectors and sinners also sat together with Jesus and His disciples; for there were many, and they followed Him.*

Look at your life.

Does the Spirit of God dwell in you?

If He does, the same compassion for the lost that exists in the heart of Christ will exist in you.

It may get cluttered and covered up by your own selfishness from time to time, but it's got to be there.

2 Corinthians 5:14-15, *For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; ¹⁵and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.*

2 Corinthians 5:18-20, *Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, ¹⁹that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. ²⁰Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.*

2 Corinthians 5, Paul talks about how motivated he is to reach the lost because of the judgment of God and because of the love of Christ in his life.

If the Spirit of Christ dwells in you, there must be that compassion.

That is why Jesus condemned the Pharisees, because they had no compassion.

You have got the sacrifice, but you just don't have the mercy.

A true believer follows the Lord and feeds the lost.

3. True believer forsakes legalism.

Forsakes legalism. We see that in the remaining part of the passage. He says no to trying to sew a new patch in an old robe, to try to fill up an old wineskin with new wine.

He sees there's no connection.

He knows you are not begun in the Spirit and perfected by the law or by some routine or some ritual. He knows you don't get entangled again with a yoke of bondage.

Do you follow the Lord?

Is your highest privilege and greatest joy and deepest desire to obey Him?

Do you feed the lost?

Do you sense the heart of God beating in your heart toward those that are outside Christ?

Do you know the difference between true worship and going to church?

I hope you do. True believers follow the Lord, feed the lost, and forsake legalism.

I hope you have come to know Him, and that those are the desires of your heart.