

New Cloth, Old Garment: Tradition vs Faith

Matthew 9:14-17

If you remember two weeks ago we were studying Matthew chapter 9. We saw how Jesus chose Matthew, who was a publican and an outcast in society, to follow him and become His disciple.

Jesus ate with publicans and sinners, and the pharisees couldn't understand why we was doing that.

Jesus responded to the pharisees by saying "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick."..."I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

The pharisees thought they were righteous because they kept the traditions and rituals of the law. But they failed to realize that they were sinners just like the publicans.

They established their own righteousness, therefore they did not see themselves as sick and needing a savior.

We know that salvation only comes through faith in Jesus Christ. We have no righteousness on our own. He gives us His righteousness when we believe in Him.

We are picking back up in Matthew 9, right after Jesus ate with the publicans and sinners...

Matthew 9:14-17 Then came to him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not? **15** And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast. **16** No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse. **17** Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved."

Who were the disciples of John?

Disciples of John = John the Baptist's disciples. People that followed John. Remember John the Baptist was pointing everyone to Jesus Christ.

A lot of times people become followers of men and ignore the message that the man is proclaiming. Not saying John's disciples were lifting John above Jesus, but that does happen a lot. (1 Cor 3)

They came to Jesus asking him this question:

"Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?"

Jesus then proceeds to give these three different parables:

The parable of the children of the Bridechamber and the Bridegroom, The new cloth and the old garment, The new wine and the bottles.

Before we talk about these parables and what they mean, We need to understand what fasting is.

They asked Jesus, why do we fast often, but your disciples do not fast?

What is Fasting?

Fasting is the act of voluntarily abstaining from food or drink for a period of time.

People choose to abstain from eating and sometimes drinking for a time and there are various reasons why people fast.

You can split fasting into two major categories, Spiritual Fasting and Non-Spiritual Fasting.

Non-Spiritual fasting is usually done for physical or health reasons. For example:

Intermittent Fasting – Skipping meals or limiting eating windows, for weight control, metabolism, or energy levels.

Medical Fasting – Abstaining from food before surgeries, blood tests, or medical procedures.

This type of fasting is non-spiritual and done for physical reasons.

Spiritual fasting is the type of fasting that we most commonly see in the Bible.

Spiritual fasting is when you abstain from eating or drinking as an intentional act of humbling yourself before God. It's done to consecrate, intercede, mourn, grieve, or make petitions to the Lord.

I want to show you some examples of Spiritual fasting throughout the Bible, and we can see that it is done for different purposes. We don't have time to go through all of the examples, but I want to show you a few.

Please go back and study the word fast in the Bible. It's a great Bible study. You can go on our website (truewordsbaptist.org/kjv) and do a search for "fast" and it will pull up all the verses that contain fast in its different forms. Fasting, fastest...

Fasting for Consecration

Exodus 34:27-28 And the LORD said unto Moses, Write thou these words: for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel. **28** And he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments.

This is the first time in the Bible that we see the concept of fasting or abstaining from food or drink.

Moses did not eat bread or drink water for 40 days while he received the ten commandments from God.

This is obviously a supernatural fast because a human cannot survive more than 3 to 4 days without water.

Moses was consecrated (set apart) and sustained by God for the purpose of receiving the covenant, the ten commandments.

Fasting for Mourning and Petition

If you know your Bibles, the tribe of Benjamin, (one of the twelve tribes) committed a very wicked sin in Judges chapter 19. So the other 11 tribes all gathered together to go up against Benjamin.

Judges 20:25-28 And Benjamin went forth against them out of Gibeah the second day, and destroyed down to the ground of the children of Israel again eighteen thousand men; all these drew the sword. **26** Then all the children of Israel, and all the people, went up, and came unto the house of God, and wept, and sat there before the LORD, and

fasted that day until even, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD. **27** And the children of Israel inquired of the LORD, (for the ark of the covenant of God *was* there in those days, **28** And Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, stood before it in those days,) saying, Shall I yet again go out to battle against the children of Benjamin my brother, or shall I cease? And the LORD said, Go up; for to morrow I will deliver them into thine hand.""

This is the first time in the Bible that the word fast is used in the context of abstaining from food.

The children of Israel went up several times against Benjamin, but they were being defeated.

They were mourning and fasting before the Lord. In other passages it refers to this behavior as "afflicting your soul". They were humbling themselves before God and asking Him if they should go up against Benjamin again.

God told them to go up against them one more time and he would deliver them into their hands.

Another example of fasting for mourning and petition...

The story of David and Bathsheba. David committed adultery, he sinned against the Lord. There were great consequences that David had to face for his sin.

""**2 Samuel 12:15-17** And Nathan departed unto his house. And the LORD struck the child that Uriah's wife bare unto David, and it was very sick. **16** David therefore besought God for the child; and David **fasted**, and went in, and lay all night upon the earth. **17** And the elders of his house arose, *and went* to him, to raise him up from the earth: but he would not, neither did he eat bread with them.""

David was burdened and sorrowful because the child was sick. He fasted and laid on the ground all night. After the child eventually died, David worshiped God and ate again. His servants were confused why he was not eating while the child was alive, but he ate after the child died.

""**2 Samuel 12:22-23** And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell *whether* GOD will be gracious to me, that the child may live? **23** But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.""

Fasting is done out of a heavy heart, humbling yourself before God and petitioning the Lord usually in an urgent matter.

""2 Chronicles 20:2-4 Then there came some that told Jehoshaphat, saying, There cometh a great multitude against thee from beyond the sea on this side Syria; and, behold, they *be* in Hazazon-tamar, which is En-gedi. **3** And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. **4** And Judah gathered themselves together, to ask *help* of the LORD: even out of all the cities of Judah they came to seek the LORD. ""

There was a great army that was coming up against Judah, and King Jehoshaphat feared and sought after the Lord. He proclaimed a fast throughout all of Judah so that everyone would humble themselves and seek help from God.

God fought the battle for them and they had victory over the enemy.

Fasting for Guidance and Protection

Ezra was leading a group of exiles from Babylon back to Jerusalem. They were carrying treasures for the temple and they had to travel a long, dangerous road.

""Ezra 8:21-23 Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river of Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance. **22** For I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way: because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him; but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him. **23** So we fasted and besought our God for this: and he was intreated of us. ""

Even though the road was dangerous, Ezra did **not ask the king for soldiers or horsemen** to guard them against enemies.

Because he had told the king, *"The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him; but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him."*

Asking for soldiers would look like Ezra didn't really trust what he had just testified about God's power.

"So they fasted and besought God for this: and he was intreated of us." Meaning he answered their prayer.

God heard their prayer and gave them safe passage.

Fasting to Intercede for Others

This is again going back to Moses. If you know the story the Children of Israel made a golden calf, and they worshipped the calf. It was a wicked sin before God...

""Deuteronomy 9:16-19 And I looked, and, behold, ye had sinned against the LORD your God, *and* had made you a molten calf: ye had turned aside quickly out of the way which the LORD had commanded you. **17** And I took the two tables, and cast them out of my two hands, and brake them before your eyes. **18** And I fell down before the LORD, as at the first, forty days and forty nights: I did neither eat bread, nor drink water, because of all your sins which ye sinned, in doing wickedly in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger. **19** For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure, wherewith the LORD was wroth against you to destroy you. But the LORD hearkened unto me at that time also.""

Moses fasted for another 40 days and 40 nights because of the sin that Israel committed and he interceded and begged God to not destroy Israel. God hearkened unto Moses.

These are just a few examples of Spiritual Fasting throughout Bible. There are many others, like Jesus fasted in the wilderness for 40 days, Esther and the Jews fasted, Daniel, the people of Ninevah, Paul.

Fasting was done in a very serious manner, often out of sorrow or grief. With a heavy heart and a burden to humble oneself before God. Asking God urgently to answer requests, or to have mercy, or to receive guidance, strength, or deliverance.

Should We Fast Today?

Now that we have a picture of what fasting should look like, I want to look at what fasting should not look like.

A question that some people might have is, should we be fasting today as Christians?

The answer to that is yes, we should fast. But spiritual fasting should never be done out of ritual, or tradition, or just out of habit.

This is exactly what the Pharisees were doing. Fasting was more of a ritual or a tradition based on the law, rather than having a proper attitude and humbling themselves before God and seeking Him for help.

The Problem

Many Christians fast today, and many Churches promote fasting, but what usually ends up happening is that the fasting becomes a platform to elevate themselves and to show others how spiritual they are.

Fasting becomes a very carnal practice.

For example, some churches will set apart a month out of the year as a "Daniel Fast" where they encourage the church members to abstain from meat, rich foods like breads and treats, and just eat fruits, vegetables, legumes, nuts, and water; Just like Daniel when he abstained from the King's meat.

The problem with this is that the act of fasting becomes the main focus, and people do not focus on the purpose of the fast. Which is humbling yourself before God and making petitions to the Lord with a burden and heavy heart.

It becomes more of a competition to see who can lose the most weight. Who can go the longest without eating sugar. People like to talk about how hard the fast is and how they can't wait to eat real food again. Those things are carnal and vain and it's a very wicked thing to do to turn fasting into a show of how spiritual you are.

God made fasting an ordinance for Israel on one day out of the year. That was the day of atonement.

""Leviticus 16:29 And *this* shall be a statute for ever unto you: *that* in the seventh month, on the tenth *day* of the month, ye shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, *whether it be* one of your own country, or a stranger that sojourneth among you: ""

What ended up happening was that people turned this into vain tradition, and it started to be done for the wrong reasons.

""Isaiah 58:1 Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins. ""

""Isaiah 58:3 Wherefore have we fasted, *say they*, and thou seest not? *wherefore* have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labours. ""

""Isaiah 58:4 Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as *ye do this* day, to make your voice to be heard on high. ""

This same behavior is going on today. The Jews still afflict themselves on Yom Kippur. The fasting is done for outward appearances. There is no inward turning to the Savior, Jesus Christ.

""Matthew 6:17-18 But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; **18** That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.""

Jesus is warning not to fast for appearances and to seek praise from man. The whole point of fasting is to do it unto the Lord.

""Luke 18:9-14 And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: ""

I love that it tells us exactly why Jesus is speaking this parable. He's speaking it to those who are trusting in themselves. The ones that think they are righteous on their own.

10 Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. **11** The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men *are*, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. **12** **I fast twice in the week**, I give tithes of all that I possess. **13** And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as *his* eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. **14** I tell you, this man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

So this sums up the mindset of the Pharisees. In Matthew 9, John's disciples were asking why do your disciples not fast as often as the Pharisees. Jesus reveals their heart here in Luke 18 and tells us exactly why they were fasting. They were fasting to show others how righteous they were, but in reality they had zero righteousness.

So let's go back to Matthew 9 and look at those parables that Jesus spoke now that we have some context.

""Matthew 9:14-15 Then came to him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not? **15** And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the

days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast.""

Remember, fasting is supposed to be done in mourning and seeking God.

The children of the bridechamber are often known as groomsmen in our day. They are the closest friends of the groom.

In this parable Jesus is the bridegroom. His disciples are the children of the bridechamber.

Jesus is saying, why would the children of the bride chamber mourn while the bride groom is present. In other words, while Jesus is on earth with his disciples, it's a joyous time, it's not a time for mourning and fasting.

But when the bridegroom is taken, that is a time for mourning and fasting. We know that Jesus was taken and crucified on the cross. That was a sorrowful time.

He continues with another parable...

""Matthew 9:16 No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse.""

""Matthew 9:17 Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved.""

At first glance you might think, what does this have to do with fasting? New Cloth and Old garments, New Wine and Bottles Breaking.

In order to understand this, let's think about the context of the Pharisees. They thought themselves to be righteous. They were all about keeping traditions and rituals without actually understanding the meaning behind the things they were doing.

Their fasting was done out of habit and not obedience. In the past, God commanded them to afflict their souls on the day of atonement, but those ordinances turned into tradition. They fasted multiple times a week to show themselves to be righteous and keepers of the law.

But they failed to realize that Jesus Christ came to fulfill the law because they would never be able to keep it themselves.

Based on this, here is my best understanding of this parable. This is the conclusion that I came to after studying it and I encourage you to study it for yourselves and let me know if you think it means something different.

The new cloth and the new wine in these parables are referring to Jesus Christ and the New Covenant.

The old garment and the old bottles are referring to the old covenant and the Law.

Reread verses 16 - 17

The old covenant was not able to make anyone perfect...

Hebrews 10:1 For the law having a shadow of good things to come, *and* not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect."

Hebrews 8:6-7 But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. 7 For if that first *covenant* had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second."

Hebrews 8:13 In that he saith, A new *covenant*, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away."

The law revealed man's sin and his inability to meet God's standard of righteousness. That's why Jesus didn't come to patch up the old system. He brought a completely new covenant that makes people perfect through faith in Him.

You don't sew a piece of new cloth onto an old garment—it will only tear worse. And you don't pour new wine into old bottles—they'll burst.

In the same manner, you cannot combine faith in Jesus with the deeds of the law.

Galatians 2:21 I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness *come* by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."

Romans 3:28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law."

In simple terms, John's disciples were wondering, why weren't Jesus' disciples keeping the traditions of fasting like the Pharisees? That's a very holy and righteous thing to do in their eyes.

Jesus shows them that combining the new with the old will not work.

""Matthew 9:16 No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse.""

""Matthew 9:17 Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved.""

True holiness and righteousness can be found only in Jesus Christ alone without the deeds of the law.

So the question for you today...

Are you trying to patch Christ onto a self-righteous life?
Are you trusting in your works, your traditions, your fasting, your outward rituals to make you right with God?

Or have you truly put on the new man by believing in the one and only Savior, Jesus Christ.

Closing Thoughts

We learned a little bit about fasting this morning. Fasting is important in our lives as Christians, but it should only be done out of humility and when we are mourning, grieving, making petitions before God, consecrating ourselves, interceding for others, seeking help from the Lord.

And we have many of those examples for us in scripture of proper Spiritual Fasting.

Fasting should never be done out of tradition, ritual, or habit.

In Matthew 9, we've seen a powerful truth unfold — that Jesus didn't come to patch up an old system of rituals and self-righteousness. He came to bring something entirely new. He came to bring **life**. He came to bring **grace**. He came to bring **salvation through faith**, not tradition.

The Pharisees and even John's disciples were clinging to something that was passing away — an old covenant that could never truly make anyone perfect. They were fasting, But they were doing it out of habit, out of pride, or out of a false sense of holiness — not out of a broken and humble heart before God.

Jesus told them plainly: **“New wine must be put into new bottles.”**
You can't mix grace and law. You can't mix faith and works. You can't mix the righteousness of Christ with the filthy rags of human effort.

“2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”

Understand Jesus Christ makes all things new when you believe in Him. When you die, you immediately go to heaven not because of you, but because of His righteousness that he gives us.

Let's Pray