

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Luke 5: 33-39

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. Today, we will continue reading Luke chapter 5, verses 33 to 39.

Earlier we saw that through the salvation of the tax collector Levi, he invited Jesus to his house and held a great feast with many sinners and tax collectors eating and drinking together. As a result? Those scribes and Pharisees who had been constantly observing Jesus raised two questions.

The first question was about His person: they complained that Jesus was eating and drinking with sinners and tax collectors. According to their concept, Jesus should have separated Himself from them, or even rebuked them sharply and then ignored them. But Jesus' answer was excellent: "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance." Because those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick do. And their second complaint against Jesus was about lifestyle.

Verse 33: "Then they said to Him, 'Why do the disciples of John fast often and make prayers, and likewise those of the Pharisees, but Yours eat and drink?'"

It was as if they were saying, We live very strictly; we fast frequently, not eating or drinking. Not only us, but even John's disciples do the same. Yet Your disciples come here and eat and drink.

In response to this question, Jesus gave two different answers. The first answer was the parable of the bridegroom and the friends of the bridegroom; the second answer was the parable of new cloth on old garments and new wine in old

wineskins. The former parable has a time-specific application, while the latter parable still applies even today.

The Pharisees strictly observed the Old Testament law regarding fasting, which we can understand. But why were there disciples of John? We need to look at John 3:24. At that time, it says that John the Baptist had not yet been put in prison, and verse 25 mentions John's disciples—these were followers of John. They were debating with the Jews about purification rites. As a result, they came to John and complained to him, saying: "Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified—behold, He is baptizing, and all are coming to Him." It seems these disciples of John felt a bit of jealousy. It appeared that after Jesus began His work, many people were going to Jesus.

Verses 3:27-28, John's answer was excellent. He said: "A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven. You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, 'I am not the Christ,' but, 'I have been sent before Him.'" (John knew he was that voice in the wilderness.) Verse 29: "He 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."

John the Baptist clearly understood that Jesus was the central figure, Jesus was the bridegroom, and he himself was the friend of the bridegroom, merely the supporting role. He was preparing the atmosphere there before the bridegroom began His ministry. Then, when he heard the bridegroom's voice, he rejoiced greatly, and his joy was fulfilled.

He added a very important statement: "He must increase, but I must decrease." But church history proves that this statement is not easy to practice. Any spiritual giant who has been greatly used by God seems reluctant to decrease afterward. Although John's ministry did decrease, those who followed John the Baptist formed a group known as the disciples of John.

If we say the Pharisees were religious people under the Old Testament, then the disciples of John can be said to be religious people under the New Testament. Jesus' first answer to them actually continued what John the Baptist had said.

Verse 34: "And He said to them, 'Can you make the friends of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them?'"

Jesus likened Himself to the bridegroom, and His disciples to the friends of the bridegroom. In Jewish custom at that time, during the wedding feast, while the bridegroom was present, he would enjoy the feast together with his companions.

Verse 35: "But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them; then they will fast in those days."

Jesus was already prophesying. Today, while I and My disciples are together, we enjoy it; but one day I will be taken away, I will go the way of the cross, I will be hung on the cross for the sins of all, I will leave them, and on that day they will fast.

Actually, what Jesus said here was completely fulfilled in the years that followed. Until one day, after Jesus died and rose again and ascended to heaven, the disciples were all in the upper room in Jerusalem, fasting and praying together for ten days. Then, when Pentecost came, God poured out the Holy Spirit, and they no longer needed to fast. This passage has historical fulfillment.

From a spiritual perspective, whenever you have Jesus Christ with you, you should fully enjoy those experiences of being with Christ. But sometimes God places you in certain circumstances to learn to rely on God and look to God in those situations; at such times you need to fast, to lay down some of your legitimate rights, and to look to Him and rely on Him alone. Then Jesus spoke another very meaningful parable.

Verse 36: "Then He spoke a parable to them: 'No one puts a piece from a new garment on an old one; otherwise the new makes a tear, and also the piece that was taken out of the new does not match the old.'"

New cloth has not yet been washed; the first time it is washed and dried, it shrinks, and the shrinkage creates great tension. If you tear a piece from a new garment to patch an old one, first, the new garment is torn; second, the new piece and the old cloth do not match, and it may even tear the old cloth further.

God has absolutely no intention of having us patch old garments with new cloth. After we are saved, God wants us to put on a completely new garment. God does not do patch-up work. In the Bible, garments often symbolize a person's conduct. God does not want us, after being saved, to go back to observing those Old Testament regulations of "do not touch, do not taste." Instead, by the leading of the Holy Spirit, we are to live a completely new life.

Just like Nicodemus in John chapter 3, who was himself a teacher of the law and knew he could not fully keep the law. He always thought Jesus came to teach him better lessons so he could keep the law more perfectly. But Jesus told him: "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit, and that which is born of the flesh is flesh." What you need is a new spirit, a new life, which produces a new way of living.

Verses 37-38: "And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine will burst the wineskins and be spilled, and the wineskins will be ruined. But new wine must be put into new wineskins, and both are preserved."

New wine is still fermenting; when it ferments, it produces a lot of gas, and this gas will burst old wineskins. Because wineskins that have been used for a long time lose their elasticity, and the carbon dioxide produced during fermentation will burst the old wineskins. This wine symbolizes life—fresh, living life full of power. This dynamic life cannot be confined by Old Testament regulations, just like old wineskins.

If new wine is put into old wineskins, the final result is that the old wineskins are completely burst. Therefore new wine must be put into new wineskins. Jesus clearly told these scribes and Pharisees: The era has changed; the Old Testament has passed; I have come to bring in a completely new covenant. This new covenant

is based on life—this life is full of power and cannot be bound by Old Testament regulations. If you forcibly use old wineskins—that is, Old Testament regulations—to restrict this new life, those old regulations will be broken, and the old wineskins will burst. This new life will inevitably bring a completely new way of living, just like this new garment.

We old people have old conduct; the purpose of God giving us this brand-new life is not to improve our old conduct, because that is impossible to fix. God wants us to put off the old man and put on the new man; this new man is a completely new way of living, entirely based on the new life God has given us. No longer based on Old Testament rituals, laws, and various regulations, but living out a life full of power through spiritual life. This life is no longer based on Old Testament ceremonies, laws, or various regulations. But new wine must be put into new wineskins.

Verse 39: "And no one, having drunk old wine, immediately desires new; for he says, 'The old is better.'"

Jesus also took the opportunity to point out their problem: You do not want to change; you are living in a rigid form of religion. You are accustomed to drinking this old wine and do not want to taste the new wine: the heavenly power brought by heavenly life, bringing a completely new way of living. And you always say the old is better.

Let's pray: May God help us to realize that the fresh and living life God has given us can lead us to live a completely new life. May we learn to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit every day, through daily Bible reading and prayer, to know how God wants to lead us to live a new life today. May we be willing to lay down various past understandings—old, traditional, unsuitable religious practices—and be willing to follow the Lord's fresh leading every day in a living way. May God's life have a way in us, so that we can also live a completely new life that matches the grace by which we were called. Lord! Bless my life today. Thank You! We pray in the holy name of Jesus Christ.