

A New Creation

Matthew 9:14-17

I. Jesus didn't come to patch up the old covenant.

- A. Why don't your disciples fast?
 1. The Pharisees and John's disciples both fast.
 2. This is a spiritual discipline we have practiced as part of our religious tradition. Why don't your followers fast?
- B. Jesus' first illustration: The Patch
 1. You don't patch an old garment with new unshrunk cloth.
 - (a) Because the unshrunk cloth will shrink and worsen the tear.
 - (b) A simple interpretation: new and old don't always work together.
 2. The old garment is like Old Covenant Judaism.
 - (a) The Old Covenant was based upon the Mosaic Law.
 - (b) But people are unable to follow God's Law.
 - (c) We fall short.
 - (d) Jesus didn't come to patch up the Old Covenant with the Gospel.
 3. The New Covenant and the Gospel are based upon grace.
 - (a) Jesus came to bring to light a wholly different path to righteousness.
- C. Jesus' second illustration: New wine needs a new wineskin.
 1. You don't put new wine in an old wineskin.
 2. As the wine ferments, gases cause expansion.
 3. Old wineskin can't handle that pressure. They burst.
 4. In the Hebrew culture, wine represented life and blessing.
 - (a) The Gospel of grace will bring new life and blessing.
 - (b) But it is not a reformation of Old Covenant Judaism.
 - (c) It is something that is entirely different.
 - (d) It needs to be poured into a new structure.
 - (e) It's a whole new way of relating to God.

II. The problem with a covenant of Law is that it confuses people.

- A. It tends to turn people into legalists.
 1. Legalists are people who think righteousness is rule following.
 2. Legalists think they achieve righteousness by keeping laws/rules (emphasis on they achieve).
 - (a) It's something they do by working at obeying the Law.
 - (b) So, it focuses on self-effort, on earning of God's approval.
- B. The default setting of the heart is works righteousness.
 1. We think we are supposed to earn salvation by merit, by morality.
 - (a) That's what religion is, man-made systems of earning salvation.
 - (b) That's what Israelites turned the Old Covenant into.

- (c) Many of us were raised in pseudo-Gospel religion, systems of works righteousness.
- (d) We thought we were Christians.
- (e) We thought we were earning salvation by our good lives.
- C. What legalists don't understand?
 1. What separates us from a holy God is our unholiness.
 - (a) God is perfectly holy, flawless.
 - (b) His nature is altogether different than ours, set apart.
 - (c) He is so holy that unholiness cannot exist in his presence.
 2. For us to get back into his presence we must be as holy as he is.
 - (a) We must be absolutely righteous.
 - (b) But we can't get there by following Laws and rules.
 - (c) The reason is because we can't keep the Law. We sin.
 3. The only way that can happen is by grace (2 Cor. 5:17).
- III. Why didn't Jesus have his disciples fasting?
 - A. At first, he needed to emphasize relationship by grace.
 1. If you emphasize rules to someone coming out of works-based righteousness, you'll just make them more religious.
 - (a) You'll make Pharisees, self-righteous legalists.
 2. When you emphasize "the don'ts" you don't communicate grace. The gospel releases us from the burden of Law.
 - B. What we need is a new beginning with a new nature (new wine).
 1. It begins with a shift in trust.
 - (a) In works righteousness, we were trusting in ourselves.
 - (b) The Gospel calls us to trust in Jesus and his sacrifice.
 - (c) This calls for surrender. We must give in to God's way.
 2. When we do that everything changes. We are reborn.
 - C. Spiritual rebirth is a re-creation (II Corinthians 5:17).
 1. God raises our spirit from spiritual death (Ephesians 2:1,4-5).
 - (a) The Living God, the Life Giver, gives us spiritual life.
 - (b) Religious efforts can't do this. The Creator does it. (John 1:11-12) (Galatians 6:15).
 - D. John's nativity (John 1:1-4).
 1. What is he reminding us of? (Genesis 1:1-3)
 - (a) Genesis 1 speaks of God creating.
 - (b) John 1 uses the same language, "In the beginning..."
 - (c) Why? Because we were created through the Word.
 - (d) The Word became flesh, to redeem and re-create us.
 - (e) He came with life (zoe) so that we could live again.
 2. A new wineskin
 - (a) A new creation. A community of new creations.
 - (b) A new awareness: Righteousness by grace through faith.
 - (c) A new temple: God living in us.
 - (d) A new calling: (I Peter 2:9-10).