

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).