

Luke 5:33 to End. Christ Explains by Parables Why His Disciples Did Not Fast.

by Favell Lee Mortimer

Jesus explained why his disciples did not fast through several parables, illustrating their joy, weakness, and the gospel as the best wine.

Scripture: John 16:2

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Gospel Message"

Description

Favell Lee Mortimer delves into the parables shared by Jesus to explain why His disciples did not fast like the Pharisees, highlighting the joy and closeness they experienced while following Him, and preparing them for the trials and afflictions that would come. Through various parables, Jesus illustrated the disciples' present weakness as new converts and the need for spiritual growth to endure future challenges. He concluded with a parable emphasizing the superiority of the gospel, offering forgiveness, eternal happiness, and salvation to all who believe in Him.

Transcript

This is a difficult passage, and it has been explained in different ways; so that we can scarcely forbear wishing that our Savior himself had given an explanation of these parables. Yet surely he would not have left them unexplained, if it were not possible by attentive consideration to unravel their meaning.

It was the disciples of that imprisoned saint, John the Baptist, who inquired why the disciples of Jesus never fasted. The Pharisees fasted often. As one of them boasted in his prayer, "I fast twice a week." These fastings were part of that righteousness by which they excited the admiration of the people, and by which they hoped to purchase heaven. John the Baptist had not taught his disciples to fast with such views. It was in grief for their sins that they fasted; and it was with the same holy feelings John himself fasted. Jesus, however, did not fast openly--how much he may have fasted in secret we know not; but he was seen to eat and drink in the usual manner, and on that account was called a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber. We know this accusation was false, and that the holy Jesus set an example of temperance, as well as of every other virtue. Once, when very weary, he refused to eat, saying, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." And at other seasons he "had no leisure so much as to eat," (Mark 6:31.)

The Lord related several little parables to explain his reasons for not teaching his disciples to fast. In the first parable he compared himself to a bridegroom. This was a title that John himself had given him, saying, "He who has the bride is the bridegroom." The Church was the bride--Christ was the bridegroom. The disciples, the ministers, were compared by Jesus to the children of the bride-chamber, or to the friends of the bridegroom, who could not mourn at the wedding. The disciples were too full of joy to fast when they were following their Master from place to place, witnessing his miracles, and listening to his discourses. But the days would come when they would no longer enjoy the presence of the bridegroom, and when they would be called to endure heavy trials, to suffer hunger and thirst, and to be in fastings often.

Jesus prepared his disciples, just before he left them, for the afflictions that awaited them. He said, "The time comes that whoever kills you will think that he does God service," (John 16:2-4.) And he added, "These things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you." In the same manner he often now protects a new convert from heavy trials. It is very common to find the entrance upon a religious course fraught only with delight--the new convert is sometimes inclined to think that he shall weep no more, but pass his days in a course of uninterrupted usefulness and joy. But trial comes at last.

The homely employment of mending garments was the subject of one of the Lord's parables. Everyone who has ever repaired woollen garments, knows that it would be unwise to mend them with stiff unprepared cloth. Another parable was taken from the eastern custom of putting wine into bottles of skins. These skins, when they were old, were unfit for new wine, because they were then too weak to bear its fermentation. These two parables seem to have a similar meaning. Did they not allude to the present weakness of the disciples? They were new converts, and not able yet to suffer great trials. For though garments and skin-bottles are strong at first and weak afterwards, it is just the contrary with believers; they are weak at first and strong afterwards. Peter was so weak at first, that he was induced by a few scornful speeches to deny his Master; but he was so strong afterwards, that he was able to bear crucifixion for his sake.

The Lord concluded his discourse with another parable--"No man also having drunk old wine, immediately desires new--for he says, The old is better." The gospel is like the best wine. Jesus gave this wine to the weeping penitent, when he said, "Your sins are forgiven you." He gave it to his beloved disciples when he said, "In my Father's house are many mansions--I go to prepare a place for you." He gave it to the dying thief, when he said, "Today shall you be with me in Paradise." Has he given it to us? He has offered it to us. These are his words--"Look unto me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth," (Is. 45:22.) If we have obeyed this call, and believed in Jesus with our hearts, then we have tasted the best wine; then we enjoy true happiness, and shall enjoy it forever; for "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." To whom does this blessedness belong? Not to those who are striving by their good works to gain God's favor, but to those who "believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification."

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