

Jesus – The King of the Jews #22

Pardon for the Paralytic

Matt 9:1-8

Introduction:

1. The most distinctive message of Christianity is that sin can be forgiven.
 - a. That is the heart and lifeblood of the gospel, that men can be freed from Sin and its consequences.
 - b. Christianity has many doctrines, but its supremely good news is that sinful man can be fully cleansed and brought into eternal fellowship with holy God. That is the message of [Matthew 9:1-8](#).
2. Matthew has been focusing on various miracles of the Lord, all of which are meant to demonstrate Jesus' divinity.
 - a. His miracles fulfilled the OT prophecies of the Messiah
 - b. Matthew's presentation of the miracles of [chapters 8](#) and [9](#) reveal Jesus' credentials as the divine Messiah.
 1. Jesus heals a leper with the touch of His hand ([8:3](#)), He heals a centurion's servant without having seen him ([8:13](#)), and then heal Peter's mother-in-law of a serious fever ([8:15](#)).
 2. Next He went beyond physical afflictions and demonstrated His power over the kingdom of Satan by casting out many demons with a word ([8:16](#)), by demonstrating His power over the great natural forces by stilling the storm on Galilee ([8:26](#)), and by again demonstrating His authority over Satan by casting out a legion of
3. Here our Savior deals with sin, the root of all man's physical and spiritual troubles and misery as well as the cause of his separation from God
4. Only He has power to remove the pollution and guilt of sin in those who trust in Him.
5. The Great Physician not only can heal the sick, still the storm, and cast out demons, but can bring to the human soul the thing that it needs most: forgiveness of sin.
6. Two miracles of healing by Christ, recorded in the Scriptures, concerned people who were paralyzed.
7. We noted one of those miracles in [Matthew 8](#); now we note the other miracle in this chapter of Matthew.
8. This incident is best known for the making of a hole in the roof of a house to let the stretcher or bed roll with the paralyzed man on it down into the house for Christ to heal.
9. Matthew, unlike the other Gospel accounts of this miracle, does not report the roof incident, thus many Bible readers often do not realize that this account of healing is the same one as the famous one involving the hole in the roof.

I. Faith – vs 2a

A. The Place – vs 1

1 And he entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into his own city.

1. The coming to the place
 - a) *At the end of chapt 8 the people asked Jesus to leave after casting out the demons from the men*
 - b) *When you do not want God around, He will leave.*
 - c) *But His leaving will be judgment.*
 - d) *Not having the presence of God is a great curse on society.*
 - e) *Moses so valued the presence of God that he did not want to travel without God's presence*
[Ex 33:15](#) *And he said unto him, If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.*
 - f) *Our nation thinks it is so smart getting God out of government / schools. But it will only curse our nation.*

BYZ [Matthew 9:1](#) Καὶ ἐμβὰς εἰς τὸ πλοῖον διεπέρασεν καὶ ἦλθεν εἰς τὴν ἰδίαν πόλιν.

2. The city in the place - *"His own city"*
 - a) *This is Capernaum.*
 - b) *Christ moved there from Nazareth at the beginning of His ministry when Nazareth rejected Him (Luke 4:30,31).*
 - c) *Christ worked many miracles in Capernaum, but they did not respond well to the miracles and as a result they later received a severe anathema from Christ (Matthew 11:23).*

B. The Person – vs 2

2 And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith...

- The person needing the healing was a man who was unable to come to Christ by himself.
 - The stretcher carriers could not get into the house so they went upstairs and dismantled the roof to let the paralyzed man down
1. His case -- *"A man sick of the palsy"*
 - a) *The man was paralyzed ("palsy" means paralyzed).*
 - b) *Because the paralytic (paralutikos) had to be brought to Jesus lying on a bed, his paralysis obviously was severe*
 - (1) He may well have been a quadriplegic.
 - (2) No wheelchairs or other such equipment were available to those who could not walk, and they had to rely on others to carry them around.
 - (3) Cripples have always suffered social stigma and neglect, but in the Jewish culture of Jesus' day the stigma was made immeasurably worse by the belief of most Jews that all disease and affliction was the direct result of someone's sin.
 - (4) That Christ addressed the case in terms of pardon from sin implied that sin was the root cause of the man's problem.
 - c) *All physical maladies are not a result of sin, but some are.*
 2. His carriers
 - The afflicted man was carried to Jesus by others.
 - a) *Compassion of the carriers. "They brought to him"*
 - (1) Three times in this chapter, healings come about because of the concern of others for the afflicted.
 - (2) Others either pleaded with Christ for the miracle or brought the afflicted to Christ for the miracle.
 - (3) In either case wisdom is seen in bringing men to Christ for their needs.
 - b) *Character of the carriers. "Seeing their faith."*
 - (1) It is especially noted that those who brought this paralytic to Christ were men of faith in Christ.
 - (2) You do not bring people to Christ, if you do not have faith in Christ.

II. Forgiveness – vs 2b

2b... said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.

A. The Priority of the Forgiveness – vs 2

1. The forgiveness of sins comes before the healing.
2. Forgiveness of sins is more important than physical healing.
3. You can get to heaven in spite of a sick body, but you cannot get to heaven without forgiveness of sins.
4. Physical healing is not to be ignored, but spiritual healing has a much higher priority
5. People are quick to request prayer for physical healing, but few pray for spiritual health.

B. The Pleasure in the Forgiveness – vs 2

"Be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee"

1. *Good cheer - Tharseō (take courage)* refers to subjective courage, that which is deep and genuine—in contrast to *tolmaō*, which refers to outward boldness.
 - a) *Tolmaō would be characterized by gritting the teeth to help endure pain or whistling in the dark to stave off fear.*
 - b) *It is the kind of courage that tries to master fear by sheer will power and determination.*
 - c) *But tharseō represents the courage that eliminates fear.*

BYZ Matthew 9:2 Καὶ ἰδοῦ, προσέφερον αὐτῷ παραλυτικὸν ἐπὶ κλίνης βεβλημένον· καὶ ἰδὼν ὁ Ἰησοῦς τὴν πίστιν αὐτῶν εἶπεν τῷ παραλυτικῷ, Θάρσει, τέκνον· ἀφέωνταί σοι αἱ ἁμαρτίαι σου. Tharseō (take courage) refers to subjective courage, that which is deep and genuine—in contrast to *tolmaō*, which refers to outward boldness. *Tolmaō* would be characterized by gritting the teeth to help endure pain or whistling in the dark to stave off fear. It is the kind of courage that tries to master fear by sheer will power and determination. But *tharseō* represents the courage that eliminates fear. Jesus was saying, "Don't be afraid, because you no longer have anything to be afraid of."

προσέφερον verb ind imperf act 3pp from προσφέρω (1) active *bring to*; passive *be brought to*; (a) with the accusative of person *bring* someone to someone (MT 4.24); as a legal technical term *hand over, bring before* a magistrate (LU 23.14); (b) with the accusative of the thing *bring, offer, hand* something to someone (MT 22.19); (2) of offerings, gifts, sacrifices, prayers to a deity *present, bring, offer* (MT 2.11; AC 7.42; HE 5.7); (3) passive with the dative of person *deal with, treat, act toward* (HE 12.7)

2. Jesus was saying, "Don't be afraid, because you no longer have anything to be afraid of."
3. Nothing brings so much pleasure as the forgiveness of one's sins, and nothing will bring so much pain as unforgiven sins.
4. Forgiven sins result in the ultimate pleasure of heaven.
 - a) *Aphiēmi, the verb behind **are forgiven**, has the basic idea of sending or driving away, of doing away with*
 - b) *Unforgiven sins result in the ultimate pain of eternal hell fire.*
 - c) *The world is going after the wrong pleasure, for they are forever seeking the pleasure of sin—such pleasure will not last but will condemn the soul to hell.*
5. When missionaries in northern Alaska were translating the Bible into the language of the Eskimos, they discovered there was no word in that language for forgiveness. After much patient listening, however, they discovered a word that means, "not being able to think about it anymore." That word was used throughout the translation to represent forgiveness, because God's promise to repentant sinners is, "I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more" [Jer. 31:34](#).
6. When I was in college I was asked to visit a girl in the hospital who had been accidentally shot in the neck. The bullet severed her spinal cord and she was paralyzed from the neck down. I had never met the girl but was told she was a cheerleader at her school and had been very active and vivacious. When I came into the hospital room she was lying on a sheepskin pad, unable to do anything but speak. After we talked a while she confessed that, if she were able, she would commit suicide, because she did not want to face a future of helplessness. I presented Christ to her and, after some questions and discussion, she received Christ as her Lord and Savior. I went back to visit her several times, and one day she said to me, "I can honestly say now that I'm glad the accident happened. Otherwise I may never have met Christ and had my sins forgiven."
7. Forgiveness of sin is God's greatest gift because it meets man's greatest need.
 - a) *Sin is a transgression of God's law ([1 John 3:4](#))*
 - b) *It defiles His image in man, staining his soul with Satan's image ([John 6:70](#); [8:44](#)).*
 - c) *Sin is hostility and rebellion against God ([Lev. 26:27](#); [1 Tim. 1:9](#)).*
 - d) *It is ingratitude toward God ([Josh. 2:10-12](#)), is incurable by man himself ([Jer. 13:23](#)), affects all men ([Rom. 3:23](#)), and affects the total man ([Jer. 19:9](#)), body, mind, and spirit.*
 - e) *It brings men under the dominion of Satan and the wrath of God ([Eph. 2:2-3](#)), and it is so persistent in the heart of man that even the regenerate person needs to continually fight against it ([Rom. 7:19](#)).*
 - f) *It subjects man to trouble ([Job 5:7](#)), emptiness ([Rom. 8:20](#)), lack of peace ([Isa. 57:21](#)), and to eternal hell if he does not repent ([2 Thess. 1:9](#)).*

BYZ Matthew 9:3 Καὶ ἰδοὺ, τινὲς τῶν γραμματέων εἶπον ἐν ἑαυτοῖς, Οὗτος βλασφημεῖ.
βλασφημεῖ. verb ind pres act 3ps
 from βλασφημέω
speaking injuriously, (1) in relation to people *slander, revile, defame* someone's reputation (TI 3.2); (2) in relation to God *blaspheme, insult* (MT 26.65); (3) in relation to the things of God, such as the gospel message (TI 2.5), one's way of life (RO 14.16) *speaking evil about, revile*; (4) in relation to supernatural beings, as angels and heavenly dignitaries *speaking evil about, insult* (JU 8); (5) in relation to idols regarded as divinities *blaspheme, insult* (AC 19.37)

III. Fury – vs 3

3 And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth.

- Whenever a good work is being done, there will always be the naysayers to criticize.
- Such was the case here

A. Culprits in the Fury – vs 3 - "Certain of the scribes"

1. Much criticism of Christ came from religious sources as it still does today.
2. And the "scribes" being the critics remind us that Satan likes to have his evil proclaimed and embraced by men who are in high position and are highly respected of men, as were the scribes.

B. Claim in the Fury – vs 3 - "This man blasphemeth"

1. Only God can forgive sin; so if Christ forgives sin, then He must be God.
2. But the scribes did not believe in the Deity of Christ, so they claimed He blasphemed in forgiving a man his sins.
3. Their criticism of Christ only revealed their great unbelief

IV. Forensic – vs 4-6a

4 And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? 6 But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins...

A. Cognizance of the Fury – vs 4

"Jesus knowing their thoughts"

1. The protesting of the scribes in this case was done in their thoughts not in their talk.
2. But Christ, being God, is omniscient, which means He knows what is in the mind of man as well as what is in the mouth of man; so He knew of their evil accusation of Him.

B. Condemnation of the Fury – vs 4

"Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?"

1. Saying their thoughts were evil, Christ condemned their fury
2. They were not thinking right about Christ, and He exposed it for all to hear.

C. Challenge for the Fury – vs 5

5 For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk?

1. The emphasis is on "say" not "do."
2. You can "say" a person's sins are forgiven but saying arise and walk will quickly test your veracity.
3. No one can see if sins are forgiven or not, but they can certainly see if a person walks or not.
4. Healing can only take place if the source is removed
5. The issue in this challenge is the Deity of Christ.

D. The Proof of the Pardon – vs 6-7

1. The proof of the Deity of Christ was in the healing of the man.
2. It was irrefutable proof - the critics could not deny the miracle
3. The miracle manifested the forgiveness of the man's sins.
4. But the critics still did not believe in Christ. Evidence does not always end unbelief.
5. Evidence shames unbelief but does not always stop unbelief.

V. Force – vs 6b-7

6b... (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house. 7 And he arose, and departed to his house.

A. The Command – vs 6-7

- As was often the case in Christ's healing miracles, a precept or command was involved in the healing of this paralytic.
- 1. The specifics of the precept – vs 6
- The precept for the afflicted had at least three parts to it.
 - a) Rising part. "Arise."
 - (1) Christ is in the rising business.
 - (2) He lifts men. Sin lowers men.
 - (3) Preachers and churches need to lift the standard rather than lower it through compromise.
 - b) Rolling part. "Take up thy bed."
 - (1) This was not a wooden bed like our beds but more of a roll that was stretched out.
 - (2) Thus the precept was not without responsibility for the healed one.
 - c) Returning part. "Go unto thine house."

BYZ **Matthew 9:4** Καὶ ἰδὼν ὁ Ἰησοῦς τὰς ἐνθυμήσεις αὐτῶν εἶπεν, Ἵνα τί ὑμεῖς ἐνθυμεῖσθε πονηρὰ ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν; ἰδὼν verb ptc aor act nms from ὁράω - (1) transitively; (a) of sense perception see, perceive, catch sight of (MT 24.30); go to see, visit (HE 13.23); (b) as seeing what is being communicated supernaturally see (LU 1.22); passive become visible, appear (AC 16.9); (c) in an experiential way as coming to knowledge see, experience, know, witness (JN 1.50); (d) of mental and spiritual perception perceive, take note, recognize, find out (AC 8.23); (2) intransitively; (a) look at someone (JN 19.37); (b) predominately used in warnings and instructions see to (it) (MT 27.4); take care (lest) (MT 18.10); look out for, watch out, be on guard (against) (MT 16.6); elliptically ὄρα μὴ don't do that! (RV 19.10)

ἐνθύμησις what one is thinking about or pondering on reflection, consideration, thought

BYZ **Matthew 9:5** Τί γάρ ἐστιν εὐκοπώτερον, εἰπεῖν, Ἀφέωνταί σου αἱ ἁμαρτίαι· ἢ εἰπεῖν, Ἐγείραι καὶ περιπάτει;

BYZ **Matthew 9:6** Ἵνα δὲ εἰδῆτε, ὅτι ἐξουσίαν ἔχει ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἀφιέναι ἁμαρτίας- τότε λέγει τῷ παραλυτικῷ- Ἐγερθεὶς ἄρον σου τὴν κλίνην, καὶ ὑπάγε εἰς τὸν οἶκόν σου.

- (1) Not a glamorous command, but one that said we are to live our Christianity in the home.
 - (2) No one would know better the greatness of his healing than those in his own home, who knew full well his paralytic condition.
 - (3) Thus the best testimony of the healing would be in the home, not on the stage in public.
2. The submission to the precept – vs 7
"He arose, and departed to his house"
- The man wisely submitted to the command of Christ.
 - a) Capability for submission
 - (1) The command was given to one who could not at the moment of the giving of the command fulfill the command; but as it is with all God's commands, He gave the power to do the command.
 - (2) Do not complain about God's commands being too hard or impossible to do.
 - (3) If God gives the command, it can be done.
 - b) Completeness of the submission. *"He arose, and departed to his house."*
 - (1) The man did what Christ told him to do. Matthew does not record the man taking up his bed, as commanded, but Luke does ([Luke 5:25](#)).
 - (2) So we know the man obeyed completely unlike the leper whose healing was recorded in the last chapter.

BYZ **Matthew 9:7** Καὶ ἐγεροθεὶς ἀπῆλθεν εἰς τὸν οἶκον αὐτοῦ.

BYZ **Matthew 9:8** Ἰδόντες δὲ οἱ ὄχλοι ἐθαύμασαν, καὶ ἐδόξασαν τὸν θεόν, τὸν δόντα ἐξουσίαν τοιαύτην τοῖς ἀνθρώποις.

VI. Fear – vs 8

8 But when the multitudes saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men.

- The reaction of the people was not as noble as it may appear to the casual reader.

A. The Disbelief – vs 8

1. That they "glorified" God simply means they believed it was Divine power that worked the healing.
2. Because of the later rejection of Christ by the people, this reaction of the people to the miracle does not indicate they were converted, only that they were amazed. They were moved emotionally but not spiritually.

B. The Disrespect – vs 8

"Had given such power unto men"

1. The word "men" says volumes about their unbelief in Christ.
2. They missed the lesson completely.
3. They were still calling Christ nothing more than a man. They did not see the issue of Deity in the healing and forgiveness.

C. The Disregard

1. The people focused only on the healing, no mention is made of the forgiveness of sins which was the greatest work.
2. Their interest was only in the healing.

VII. THE PUBLICAN'S CONVERSION – vs 9-17

- The only incident in Matthew's life that is recorded in Scripture is his conversion/calling to be Christ's disciple which is recorded in this text.
- Matthew's calling was under much different circumstances than the other disciples' calling. All do not have the same circumstances in their conversion and calling.

A. The Occupation at the Conversion – vs 9

"Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom"

1. Matthew was a publican (tax collector), and *"receipt of custom"* speaks of his office or table where he solicited people to pay their taxes.
2. Tax collectors were notorious for their habitual evil of graft. But he and Zacchaeus, another tax collector ([Luke 19:1-10](#)), were notable converts to Christ.
3. The occupation of Matthew emphasized his need of conversion, and also showed the grace of God in conversion.

B. The Opportunity for the Conversion – vs 9

"As Jesus passed forth from thence"

1. Matthew had a passing opportunity to be a follower of Christ, and he did not let the opportunity pass by without using it for his conversion and calling.
2. Procrastinators who let opportunity pass by without taking advantage of it, will suffer great loss.
3. Especially is this true spiritually—procrastinators fill hell not heaven. *"Now is the day of salvation"* ([2 Corinthians 6:2](#)).

C. The Object of the Conversion – vs 9

"Follow me"

- When Christ called Peter, Andrew, James, and John the same *"Follow me"* command was given ([Matthew 4:19](#)).
1. The Savior in the object – vs 9 - *"Me."*
 - a) *The conversion/calling of Matthew would cause his life to revolve around Jesus Christ.*
 - b) *Our salvation and our service must focus on Him to be valid.*
 2. The submission in the object
 - a) *To follow Christ means to submit to His will.*
 - b) *He is the leader and decides where to go and what to do.*
 3. The separation in the object
 - a) *To follow Christ meant separation from others. Not many are following Christ.*
 - b) *You will, therefore, be separated from many people.*

D. The Obedience in the Conversion – vs 9

Matthew responded well to the call from Christ. His obedience is instructive.

1. The standing in the obedience – vs 9 - *"He arose"*
 - a) *You always rise when you follow Christ. Sin lowers but the Savior raises.*
 - b) *The people you follow will either cause you to rise in character or be lowered in character, depending on their relationship to Jesus Christ.*
2. The submitting in the obedience – vs 9 - *"Followed him"*
 - a) *This submission to the calling evidenced the validity of Matthew's conversion.*
 - b) *We are justified in questioning professed conversions when the so-called converts do not obey the commands of Christ.*

E. The Outreach After His Conversion – vs 10-13

- After Matthew followed Christ, he commendably endeavored to reach others for Christ.
1. The supper in the outreach – vs 10

"And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples"

- a) *All three synoptic Gospels report that Matthew made a supper for the outreach after his conversion; but Matthew, in modesty, does not name himself in his Gospel as being the one who made the supper in this outreach.*
2. The sinners for the outreach – vs 10

"Many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples"

 - Matthew had a good crowd at the supper.
 - a) **First**, the cognizance of the sinners. Matthew, because of his occupation as a tax collector, would know "many publicans and sinners" who could be invited to the supper.
 - b) **Second**, the compassion for the sinners. As soon as Matthew began following Christ, he had a compassion for his acquaintances to come to know Christ. Salvation precedes and prompts evangelism.
 - c) **Third**, the confession before the sinners. Matthew was no secret disciple. He confesses his faith openly and unashamedly before his old cronies.
3. The scorning of the outreach – vs 11

"When the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?"

 - Always is there opposition to the work of the Lord; and, as we have noted earlier, it often comes from religion; for Satan likes to hide his evil under the cloak of religion—it makes his evil more acceptable to people and thus more effective.
 - a) **First**, the indirectness of the scorning. "They said unto his disciples." So often critics use the indirect method of criticizing. Dissidents in church often do not go to the pastor but to some deacon or other officer. This is to gain support for their criticism and also to bring schism among the friends of the one the dissidents are attacking. It is cowardly conduct that shows the corruption in the critics' character.
 - b) **Second**, the indictment in the scorning. "Why eateth your Master with publican and sinners?" The rules of the religious leaders were to scorn the association with anything that was tainted. The critics, of course, ignored the fact that they were also associating with publican and sinners by coming to the supper to snoop (the cultural habits of the day and the construction of dwellings made this snooping possible).
4. The support of the outreach – vs 12
 - Christ responded forcefully to the critics in support of the outreach.
 - a) **First**, the awareness in the support. "When Jesus heard" ([Matthew 9:12](#)). The critics sneaky criticism of Christ did not work, for Christ "heard." He is omniscient and not only "heard" but knew their thoughts.
 - b) **Second**, the argument in the support. "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick" ([Matthew 9:12](#)). A physician must come in contact with the sick, if he is to bring healing to them. This does not condone mixing with the world but denounces the "holier than thou" critics who would pervert this contact as failure in separation.
 - c) **Third**, the admonishing in the support. "Go ye and learn what that meaneth" ([Matthew 9:13](#)). Christ admonishes the perverted practices of His critics by telling them they need to learn some basic principles about reaching sinners.
 - d) **Fourth**, the accusation in the support. "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice" ([Matthew 9:13](#)). This was a rebuke of the religious leaders who were particular about sacrifices and other incidentals in the law but lacked the great principle of compassion for needy souls ([Matthew 23:23](#)).

e) **Fifth**, the aim in the support. "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" ([Matthew 9:13](#)). Unlike the religious leaders of that day, Christ came to save sinners. The outreach of Matthew was for that purpose. But the religious leaders were too concerned about faultfinding to convert sinners.

F. The Opposition From His Conversion – vs 14-17

1. The question about fasting in this text is a follow-up of the criticism of the Pharisees about Christ associating with publicans and sinners in this supper at Matthew's house.
2. Both the Pharisees' criticism and the fasting question represent opposition to Christ.
3. The Pharisees' opposition was directed at the outreach of the conversion. The opposition involving the fasting question represents opposition to the entire ministry of Christ.
4. It reflected opposition to the way of Christ which He represented. The conversion/calling of Matthew embraced Christ's way and provoked questions.
5. The criticism of Christ's conduct and that of the disciples involved no high moral principles but rather a behavior that did not follow the traditions of the religious system of the Jews.
6. Much criticism in conduct is like that in every age. People are more upset if you do not abide by men's rules than if you do not abide by God's rules.
7. The asking in the opposition – vs 14
"Then came to him disciples of John, saying... Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?"
- The question simply expressed opposition to Christ disguised as a spiritual perplexity.
 - a) Problem in the asking. "Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?"
 - (1) The problem involved fasting. The disciples of John and the Pharisees fasted often but Jesus' disciples did not fast at all. Fasting was a prominent form of outward piety in Judaism; but in the law, God only commanded it to be done once a year ([Leviticus 16:29](#)). Hence the frequency of fasting was simply an outward show of piety. The emphasis in Judaism was on externals not the heart. The question was an indirect criticism of Christ, for it is implied that He did not teach His disciples to fast according to the religious traditions of the day.
 - b) **Second**, the people in the asking. "Disciples of John." They were not alone in this questioning. Other Gospel accounts indicate that the Pharisees were also involved. The Pharisees had evilly influenced some of John's disciples, for John was now in prison.
 - c) **Third**, the pride in the asking. "We and the Pharisees fast oft." This question of criticism was filled with pride—they were fasting often compared to Christ's disciples who did not fast at all. Those whose religion is largely based on keeping externals are the most prone to pride.
8. The answer for the opposition
 - In summary, the answer to the question says Christ is not an additive to the present religious system but is a brand new entity. He is not STP that you add to your car to make it run better, but He is a new car. You cannot mix law and grace, for they are incompatible. Christ gave three illustrations in answering the question about fasting.
 - **First**, the custom in the answer. "Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them?" ([Matthew 9:15](#)). John the Baptist had used this example to illustrate the superiority of Christ to John ([John 3:29](#)). The disciples were with Christ. Why mourn and fast when you are with the Savior? But the problem for the critics here is that they did not deem Christ as the bridegroom.
 - **Second**, the cloth in the answer. "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 9:16](#)). This new cloth

is unshrunk cloth and after some washings would shrink and cause the material to come apart. The illustration simply shows the incompatibility of law and grace and of the religious traditions of the day with Christ's teachings.

- Container in the answer. *"Neither do men put new wine into old bottles; else the bottle break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish"* ([Matthew 9:17](#)). The "bottles" are wine skins. New wine in old and weakened wine skins would break the wine skins when the new wine ferments. It is simply another illustration that shows the law and grace do not mix, Christ's teachings and the traditions of Judaism do not mix.