

Luke 5 Chapter Study

INTRODUCTION

As we come to ch. 5, Jesus has begun His public ministry in the northern region of Galilee.

As we've seen in past studies, His work began in a fashion that was already well established in Galilee.

He was using the *rabbinic model*, in which He first established Himself as a rabbi, then would take on disciples & travel the land teaching.

This was a model of ministry already in place in Galilee at that time, with a handful of well-known & highly respected rabbis who were making the rounds.

This rabbinic model was really only something they practiced in the north, in Galilee.

In the southern province of Judea, Jerusalem & the temple dominated the intellectual & religious landscape.

Rabbis had far less influence because the priests controlled things.

But in the north, the *rabbi* was the chief religious & social figure. According to the pattern of discipleship, a disciple who'd excelled at his lessons & demonstrated authority in handling the Scriptures would graduate into *being* a rabbi when he turned 30.

Luke tells us in 3:23 that Jesus was about 30 when He began His ministry.

And what He did was to take the role of being a rabbi by teaching the people at every opportunity.

It didn't take long for the people to realize that Jesus was *different*; His teaching carried an authority they'd not encountered before.

After working His way through some of the towns of Galilee & establishing Himself as a bona-fide rabbi, the next step would be to select disciples.

VII. The Galilean Ministry 4:14-9:50

E. The First Disciples Called 5:1-11

¹ So it was, as the multitude pressed about Him to hear the word of God, that He stood by the Lake of Gennesaret, ² &

saw two boats standing by the lake; but the fishermen had gone from them & were washing *their* nets.

Jesus is in Capernaum on the NW shore of Lake Gennesaret.

The more popular name for this body of water is “Sea of Galilee.”

But it’s not a sea – it’s a freshwater lake.

It’s been referred to as the “Sea of Galilee” because it’s the ***dominating feature*** of the northern region of Israel known as ***Galilee***.

So it’s the Sea – *of Galilee*. In the same way we might call Lake Casitas, the “lake of Ojai.”

The real name for the lake was Gennesaret, which means “harp” because the lake is shaped roughly like one.

Capernaum drew it’s name from it’s most famous resident – the prophet Nahum.

Capernaum is “Kapher-nahum” = village of Nahum.

Because the fishermen were cleaning their nets, we know that it is still morning when Jesus comes to the water’s edge.

A crowd has already gathered, & because they’re getting a little pushy Jesus takes advantage of one of the two boats that are beached nearby.

³ Then He got into one of the boats, which was Simon’s, & asked him to put out a little from the land. And He sat down & taught the multitudes from the boat.

V. 2 says the fishermen were cleaning their nets over by the net racks.

But when they saw this crowd move over toward where their boats were moored, they watched closely.

When Jesus stepped into his boat, Simon would of course come over to see what was going on.

As he approached, Jesus asked if he’d shove off from shore a bit so He could get a little distance from the pressing crowd & take advantage of the opportunity to teach.

Simon Peter agreed, probably feeling privileged that a rabbi would grace him with His presence in his boat.

Simon pushed the boat into the water, hopped aboard, rowed out several feet, then dropped the rock anchor over the side & tied off the rope to keep the boat from drifting.

Once secured, Jesus sat down & taught. And of course, Simon was right there listening to the whole thing.

He heard what everyone else did – the unmistakable ring of truth & powerful sense of authority with which Jesus spoke.

Jesus' words opened whole new realms of possibility.

They painted a picture of a life filled with indescribable joy.

When other rabbis taught, people were *impressed* with their learning & wisdom, but they were *intimidated* by their vast intellect.

When Jesus spoke, people were *inspired* by the vision of glory He presented.

Far from being *intimidated*, they *yearned* to enter in to all God had for them.

4 When He had stopped speaking, He said to Simon, “Launch out into the deep & let down your nets for a catch.” 5 But Simon answered & said to Him, “Master, we have toiled all night & caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net.”

The time for teaching is over. Jesus turns to Simon & says, “Let’s go fishing.”

Now – as we saw on Sunday, as a seasoned commercial fisherman, Simon knew all about when & how to fish.

They fished at night when the tilapia rise from the cooler water of the depths to feed along the shoals near shore.

The net they used was a dragnet that needed to be used in shallow water where it could touch bottom & trap the fish.

Two boats were usually used with at least 4 men.

Two would row while two fed out the net.

The net was like a long curtain with a top & bottom slip-rope through loops.

The top edge of the net had floats & the lower edge had weights so it would drop quickly to the bottom.

The boats would deploy the net by rowing parallel to the shore until the net was all the way out.

Then they would circle back toward each other making a closed circle with the net.

Once the boats met up, they would drop anchors & begin hauling in the rope that formed the bottom of the net. This closed the bottom of the net.

Once the bottom rope was secure, they would haul in the top rope.

Any fish caught in the net would eventually spill into the boats.
The fish would then be placed into baskets.
Now, a good catch from this process was a couple to a several dozen fish.
A night's fishing meant going through this lengthy & tiring process 3 or 4 times.

At Jesus' invitation to go fishing, Simon let Him know they'd already been fishing & caught *nothing*.

What Jesus was asking him to do was not some simple or each thing.

- 1) Loading the dragnet back into the boat would be a chore.
- 2) Deploying the net with one boat could be done, but it was way harder than using two boats.
- 3) Going fishing at this time of day & in these conditions was simply a waste of time.
 - a) Their fruitless night of fishing meant the fish had moved to some other area of the lake.
 - b) And even if there were fish in the area, by now they've gone back to the cooler water of the depths of the lake, way beyond the reach of their nets.
 - c) Jesus told them to drop their nets in the deep; that's not where fishing is done, it's done in the shallows.
- 4) Simon knows that if he rows out now & drops his net where Jesus had told him to, he's going to look like a total fool to all the other fishermen on shore.

As *illogical* as Jesus' words are on the surface, as Simon had listened to Jesus teach the crowd, his heart had been stirred & faith had been kindled in him.

So in simple obedience, after voicing the reasoning of his own fisherman's wisdom, he called for his brother Andrew to bring the net, & they launched out once again.

Think about Simon's condition at this point.

He's tired & disappointed in the previous night's failure.

He knows that according to everything he understands about fishing this is a pointless waste of time.

In fact, he's running the risk of being the laughing stock of his peers for a long time.

6 And when they had done this, they caught a great

number of fish, & their net was breaking. ⁷ So they signaled to *their* partners in the other boat to come & help them. And they came & filled both the boats, so that they began to sink.

Question: Where was Jesus when all this took place? In Simon's boat.

What was Jesus doing? I think we get the idea that He was just sitting there serenely in the bow watching the whole thing; maybe grinning as He filled their nets with fish.

I don't think Jesus was just sitting there while they did all the work.

Phil. 2 tells us that Jesus came as a servant *to serve*.

I'll bet He helped set the net & haul in the ropes.

Peter & Andrew were tired from a night of back-breaking labor, so certainly Jesus helped them.

His years in Nazareth as a carpenter & mason would have toughened his hands & strengthened his back & arms so hauling in the catch would not have been something too difficult for Him.

This picture of Jesus *working with them* is important because it teaches us that He wants to be an intimate & vital part of everything we are & do.

He doesn't just want to be the One we *listen to* when we go to church with the crowd.

He wants to step into our boat – into our homes, marriages, parenting, into our jobs, our school.

He wants to *use* our home, jobs, & schools as the place to show the relevance & power of His Word.

But then He wants us to *take Him at that Word*, no matter how backwards, contrary, or opposite to the world's wisdom it appears, & simply do what He says. As we do, we'll find that *He makes it work*, just as He did for Simon.

He isn't some far off deity Who sits on His heavenly throne & waves His fingers to make things work out for us.

He's here, now – right beside us working with us laboring at the task of life.

Were Simon & Andrew working hard as they fished? *Yes*.

Was it their skill or work that created the results? *No*.

It was God's blessing – based on His favor & grace; It had **NOTHING** to do with Simon's skill or work!

But it took his faith, manifested in His participation, to ***appropriate*** the blessing.

Jesus wants to step into your boat & bring a blessing unlike anything you've ever known.

That blessing has nothing whatsoever to do with your skill or whether or not you deserve it.

Whether we're talking about your marriage, your job, your studies, whatever.

Jesus wants to bless you because of Who ***He*** is – the God of blessing.

And while that blessing is all of God's grace & nothing whatever about you – you can only appropriate the blessing of God by a radical obedience to Him, just as we see in Simon here.

Simon enjoyed Jesus' blessing because he obeyed His command to go fishing.

Simon didn't say, "Hey, if you want to bless me, then cause a school of fish to swim up & jump into my boat while I lay on the shore & sun-bathe."

Some people have the idea that God's grace means they can live a lazy & sloppy spiritual life & God will bless them ***in spite of***, or even ***because of***, their laziness.

They do not obey God, but expect Him to bless them.

They think obedience to God is ***work***, & work they know, is ***contrary*** to grace.

So they sit around & do ***nothing*** & expect God to pour out his riches on them.

That attitude is very far from what the Bible teaches about grace.

Grace ***enables & empowers*** obedience, it doesn't negate it.

Who was the Apostle of Grace? Who's teaching in the NT gives us the clearest explanation of what it means to be ***saved by grace***?

Paul.

Okay, listen to what Paul says about grace & work in 1 Cor. 15:9-10 . . .

9 For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of

God. ¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am, & His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

Don't miss what Paul is saying here. It's the very thing Simon experienced that day on the Lake of Gennesaret.

While we cannot *earn* God's favor & blessing *by* our work or obedience, His grace ought to empower our work & motivate our obedience.

What Paul is saying here in 1 Cor. 15 is that *because* God loved Him & had promised to be with Him, he knew what he did would *succeed*.

Because he'd *already received the grace of God*, his work was *bold* because it came from the confidence of God's blessing.

Let me use an example: In the Greek legend of Achilles, Achilles was *virtually* invincible because of divine protection.

This created such *confidence* he went into battle *utterly sure* he would win.

He wasn't lazy or sloppy as a warrior; he fought vigorously precisely because of his confidence of success.

You & I can have absolute confidence to know that nothing can come into our lives that isn't allowed or ordained by God, & intended by Him to conform us into the image of Christ.

As long as we're *obeying* God, we can live *boldly* & energetically, confident God's grace is on us & will bring us success.

Let me use another example – You find a time machine & travel 5 years into the future.

You come back to the present with a clear knowledge of what will happen in the next 5 years.

You take your savings of let's say, \$10,000, & invest it in stocks you know are going to grow rapidly.

You're not going to sit back & do nothing, smug in your knowledge of the future.

You're going to zealously invest & turn your knowledge into tangible profit.

That is precisely what each of us ought to be doing with our lives.

We don't know what the future holds, but we know Who holds the future.

Obedience to Him is the investment plan for a successful life.

Like Simon knew fishing, you may think you know how to live.

Listen to Jesus – Do what He says, no matter how foolish it may appear.

Then watch Him fill your boat, you life with His blessing!

[Pitch for Crown's business owners fellowship. Doing business by the Book.]

8 When Simon Peter saw *it*, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" 9 For he & all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish which they had taken; 10 & so also were James & John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men."

There is so much to learn here. If you weren't here Sunday when we covered this, get the CD.

Tonight what I want to focus on is how when Simon's faith paid off in the blessing of God, it opened a new reality to him in which his whole perspective on life changed.

This ought to have been a time of wild celebration because it was the greatest success of his career.

Every man desires for the big catch, the big game, the great score, in his career.

There's that "mark of success" that defines *every* vocation.

For the NFL player it's the gold ring.

For the NHL player it's the Stanley Cup

For the actor or actress it's the Oscar. The musician, it's the Grammy.

For the Real Estate agent it's the highest commissions for the year.

For the salesperson it's top sales in the company.

For politicians, it's the Presidency.

But what almost always happens is that when a person attains this prize, they discover the satisfaction they *thought* it would bring *isn't there*.

Knee-deep in a success Simon couldn't have imagined, he came to realize that as sweet as this moment was, there was something far more important, far more urgent & pressing, than fishing. And it

centered on Jesus.

It hit him like a log to the side of his head – Jesus was much more than a rabbi.

He was The Lord.

And Simon couldn't help but see who & what he was *in comparison*.

You know why Simon urged Jesus to depart?

Because he didn't want Jesus' reputation sullied by fraternizing with the likes of him!

He's saying, "Lord, don't hang out here with me because it's not going to help You any. I'm scum."

Contrary to so much of what modern psychology says, accurate self-awareness does not come by introspection.

It doesn't come by comparing ourselves to other people, evaluating our accomplishments against theirs.

We only know ourselves rightly when we see ourselves in relationship to God.

Simon thought he was an okay guy up till this point.

But when he compared himself to Jesus, he realized that he was far from the man he needed to be.

Take careful note what Jesus said to Simon the *moment* Simon *admitted & confessed* his sin.

"Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men."

When we take the conviction of sin the Spirit is bringing our hearts & verbalize it through confession, Jesus speaks the word of forgiveness & comfort.

Then He lets us know that far from being sinners – He changes us & makes us into something new. A new person with a new orientation to life.

11 So when they had brought their boats to land, they forsook all & followed Him.

In v. 10, Luke leaves out something Jesus had said to Simon.

He said, "**Follow Me**, & from now on you will catch men." [Mt 4:19, Mk. 1:17]

That's why when they got back to shore, they left all, because now they had a new career – following Jesus.

As we've saw in our study in Mark 2, guys like Simon, Andrew, James, & John were *not* the kind a rabbi would typically take as

disciples.

That they were fishing meant they were wash-outs from the discipleship school of Galilee.

If they were disciple material, they would have been working with a Torah teacher at one of the yeshivas.

That they were fishing meant they'd not proven themselves to have the kind of skills needed to be a disciple, so they'd entered the family business of commercial fishing.

The deepest desire of every young boy in Galilee was to prove himself capable enough to be selected as the disciple of some notable rabbi.

One of the most disappointing moment in life came when the torah teacher would tell a young student, "Son, nice try, but you're cut."

Once a student graduated from the Torah teacher, he would have to pick which rabbi he wanted to follow- then he would go & petition the rabbi to let him join his band of disciples.

Most candidates were sent home by the rabbis.

When Jesus called Simon & his friends to follow Him, they heard an invitation that was utterly unimagined.

If the catch of fish had been a surprise – this was even more so.

There was never any question in their minds about if they should follow Jesus or not.

With a simple invitation, Jesus restored a childhood dream to them, one they didn't have to think twice about answering.

The same invitation Jesus issued them, He extends to you & I.

F. A Leper Healed 5:12-16

12 And it happened when He was in a certain city, that behold, a man who was full of leprosy saw Jesus; & he fell on his face & implored Him, saying, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean." 13 Then He put out His hand & touched him, saying, "I am willing; be cleansed." Immediately the leprosy left him. 14 And He charged him to tell no one, "But go & show yourself to the priest, & make an offering for your cleansing, as a testimony to them, just as Moses commanded."

There is so much going on here.

First of all, this man's leprosy was *advanced* –that's what it means when it says he was "*full*" of leprosy.

At this point the disease has caused bulbous tumors all over his body.

His hair has fallen out in patches & his ears, fingers & toes are mere stubs.

Second, it would take many years for him to have come to this state.

Since the law required him to stay away from contact with others, it's been a long time since he's known the kindness of another human's touch.

The first thing we read Jesus did was to touch him.

Third, Jesus told the now healed man to keep his healing quiet but to go & show himself to the priest & to perform the offering the Law proscribed for a healed leper.

The reason Jesus told him to do this was because Leviticus assigned the diagnosis of leprosy to the priests.

They were the ones who were to perform the tests to see if something was indeed leprosy.

When & if a leper was healed, then a specific ritual was to be performed to mark the healing.

Here's the deal, while the priests all diligently learned the ritual, in their knowledge, it had never been done because leprosy had never been healed.

Jesus told this guy to keep quiet until he'd gone to the priests because He knew once word got out about the healing, there would be such a brouha, getting the guy *to* the priests would be difficult.

Jesus wanted the priests in Jerusalem to become aware of Who He was & what kind of power He possessed.

What better way to do that than a bunch of cleansed lepers.

Every one of them would be a powerful testimony to the identity of Jesus.

15 However, the report went around concerning Him all the more; & great multitudes came together to hear, & to be healed by Him of their infirmities. 16 So He Himself often withdrew into the wilderness & prayed.

Despite Jesus' warning to the healed leper to keep it quiet, word got out & soon the crowd seeking after Him became so great it was difficult for Him to stay in town.

The urgent press of people seeking the touch of God moved Jesus to spend even more time alone with God.

I want to share with you that while I've always known the importance of getting away from time to time to be alone with the Lord – in light of what I see the Lord doing, I'm setting aside more time to get alone with God & just seek His face.

G. A Paralytic Healed 5:17-26

17 Now it happened on a certain day, as He was teaching, that there were Pharisees & teachers of the law sitting by, who had come out of every town of Galilee, Judea, & Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was *present* to heal them.

Mark 2 tells us Jesus was still in Capernaum when this took place.

Word about Jesus has spread throughout Israel & many of the religious leaders have come to check Him out.

Jesus was demonstrating His authority by healing the infirm.

18 Then behold, men brought on a bed a man who was paralyzed, whom they sought to bring in & lay before Him.

19 And when they could not find how they might bring him in, because of the crowd, they went up on the housetop & let him down with *his* bed through the tiling into the midst before Jesus.

The house Jesus was in at the time was packed. There was not room for anyone else.

These men were determined to get their paralyzed friend to Jesus & figured the only way to do it was by breaking through the roof.

The houses of the Middle East have flat roofs with access to them by an external set of stairs or a ladder,

These guys hauled their friend's pallet up onto the rooftop, then began digging through the roof.

Once the hole was wide enough, they lowered the pallet into the room where Jesus was.

20 When He saw their faith, He said to him, **“Man, your sins are forgiven you.”**

That phrase, “He saw their faith” has always fascinated me. How do you *see* faith?

Isn't faith an *internal* thing? Doesn't it mean "belief?" So how can you "see" faith?

Actually, *real* faith always manifests itself through our choices & the actions we perform.

Faith isn't just *intellectual agreement* with something.

Faith involves *trust*, a reliance on what's believed.

And *that* is going to effect the choices we make.

This is something the secular humanists just don't get.

They say it's fine if people of faith want to believe in God.

But they say we must keep our faith *private, to ourselves*.

They simply don't understand the nature of faith.

Faith, *Biblical* faith means reliance on God & obedience to His Word.

Faith isn't just for Church on Sunday mornings, it's for our homes Sunday nights, schools on Mondays, malls on Saturday, an jobs Monday-Friday.

It's even for our politics.

But Jesus' remark to the man seems out of touch with the man's obvious need.

The guy's paralyzed. Wouldn't a word of healing be the right thing here?

Why does Jesus tell the man his sins were forgiven?

Think about it – who else has Luke told us was in the room?

Pharisees & teachers of the law form all over the nation.

They've come to figure out just Who He is. He gives them the answer they've been looking for.

21 And the scribes & the Pharisees began to reason, saying, "Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

Exactly! They are precisely right in their theology about God – only He can forgive sin.

Where they blew it was in not drawing the right conclusion about Jesus.

You see, they were trying to figure out who He was.

When He announced the paralyzed man's forgiveness, He was telling them who He was – God.

This was an unmistakable claim to deity. They knew it & were outraged – but only because they *refused* to consider that Jesus

could be God.

22 But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, He answered & said to them, “Why are you reasoning in your hearts?”

This had to be terribly disconcerting – He’s reading their thoughts!

They hadn’t said a thing out loud – this was all an internal dialog that was going on in each of them. But He gives voice to their thoughts.

I hate it when someone says, “I know what you’re thinking,” then goes on to say something that has no connection to what I was thinking at all.

Jesus didn’t just say this to them as a rhetorical introduction to what He wanted to say.

He *really* knew what they were thinking, & it ought to have been one more evidence to these guys who He was.

After exposing their thoughts, He asked -

23 Which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Rise up & walk’?

It’s easier to *say*, “Your sins are forgiven” because no immediate outward evidence of forgiveness is necessarily required.

But if you say to a paralyzed man, “You’re healed,” & he doesn’t move – then you’re a fraud.

But Jesus knows that far more important than this man’s *physical* healing was his healing from spiritual death.

This man’s outward symptoms of paralysis were but a shadow of the deeper paralysis of his soul, which Jesus had just removed by virtue of His forgiveness.

And so that everyone there would realize what had taken place *inside the man* was real – Jesus then moved to heal the body as well.

24 But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins”—He said to the man who was paralyzed, “I say to you, arise, take up your bed, & go to your house.” ²⁵ Immediately he rose up before them, took up what he had been lying on, & departed to his own house, glorifying God. ²⁶ And they were all amazed, & they glorified God & were filled with fear, saying, “We have seen strange things today!”

By “all” in v. 26 we ought to assume the Pharisees & Torah teachers who were there were included.

In Acts 15 we find a good number of the Pharisees had become believers in Christ.

Some of them may have been those who were in that room that day in Capernaum.

H. Levi Called to Be a Disciple 5:27-32

27 After these things He went out & saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, **“Follow Me.”** **28** So he left all, rose up, & followed Him. **29** Then Levi gave Him a great feast in his own house. And there were a great number of tax collectors & others who sat down with them. **30** And their scribes & the Pharisees complained against His disciples, saying, “Why do You eat & drink with tax collectors & sinners?” **31** Jesus answered & said to them, **“Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. 32 I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.”**

We covered these verses Sunday, as well as this story in depth when we were in Mk 2.

I. Jesus’ Method is Questioned 5:33-39

33 Then they said to Him, “Why do the disciples of John fast often & make prayers, & likewise those of the Pharisees, but Yours eat & drink?”

Part of the discipline John the Baptist followed was a highly ascetic lifestyle.

In Ch. 1. we saw that in order to prepare for his ministry, John left the comforts of Judean city-life to spend time in the wilderness, where he wore a camel-hair tunic & ate bugs & wild honey.

This was in keeping with his mission to prepare the people of Israel for the Messiah by calling them to radical repentance.

It wouldn’t make much sense for him to call them to repent of the ease of a dead religion if he himself were living it up in luxury.

John practiced what he preached, & of course, so did his disciples. They fasted often as a sincere way to demonstrate a desire to see God move.

This fasting was accompanied by long times of prayer when they would plead with God to show mercy.

The Pharisees also fasted, but for a very different reason than John & his disciples.

They fasted every Monday & Thursday from sunrise to sunset.

And to let people *know* they were fasting, they put white ash on their face so they would look like they were suffering in great pain.

They had the attitude that *true religion* is *painful*.

You're not godly unless you're suffering.

Along with their fasting they would pray at sets times each day;

Noon, 3 & 6 PM.

No matter where they were, they would stop, lift up their eyes & hands to heaven & make long eloquent prayers.

Many Pharisees planned it so they'd be in a crowded place when prayer time came.

They wanted to be seen & heard by others & esteemed as great & godly men.

Jesus' disciples didn't follow the same patten of rigorous fasting & long prayer sessions & the critics wanted to know why.

Jesus was presenting a picture of what it means to be goodly that was defying their traditions & they didn't like it.

There is little that will more raise people's ire than to mess with their religious traditions.

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

No one fasts at a wedding feast – NO ONE.

To do so was an utterly unthinkable thing for that time.

A Jewish wedding celebration was the one & only time when most rules went out the window & people were allowed to cut loose & just indulge – not in sin, nor anything immoral, but in just enjoying the joys of life.

There was lots of music & dancing; lots of eating & drinking

No work! Just laughter & fun that lasted from 4 to 7 days!

This is why it was such a scandal when the ran out of wine at the wedding in Cana.

Without wine, a serious damper would fall on the festivities.

Jesus was likening His incarnation & presence among His disciples to

a groom's presence to a wedding feast.

This was a time to celebrate, not fast.

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

Jesus is referring to the time when He will return to heaven & the disciples will see Him no more.

Then they will fast. They will fast then because fasting is an important part of spiritual development.

Through fasting we learn the discipline needed to rein in the flesh & walk in the spirit.

Jesus used this question of the critics to teach them an important lesson about when God begins a new work . . .

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, & also the piece that was *taken* out of the new does not match the old.

In thinking about clothes, which is better, a new garment or an old one?

The new one!

So you don't cut up a new garment to make a patch for an old one.

By doing so, you *ruin* the new – & you don't *help* the old.

Because the new cloth will shrink when you wash it, it will tear away from the patch & just add insult to injury for the old garment.

Besides, the two pieces of cloth don't match.

The new piece just makes the older garment look all that much older & shabbier in comparison.

Jesus adds another parable -

37 And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine will burst the wineskins & be spilled, & the wineskins will be ruined. 38 But new wine must be put into new wineskins, & both are preserved. 39 And no one, having drunk old *wine*, immediately desires new; for he says, 'The old is better.' "

Which is better, new or old wine?

Generally, in our day, the older the wine the better.

But in the ancient world, older wine was only good to a point.

Left in a *wineskin* for too long, it went *bad*.
New wine was sour – it needed to ferment & age before it became fine.

In the process of fermenting, it let off gas that would stretch the wineskin.

An old skin had already been stretched to it's limit; if you put new wine in it, it would split & spill the wine.

So new wine was always put in a new, unstretched skin.

Jesus' point in these parables was to challenge the comfortable religious traditions of His critics who wanted to know why He wasn't doing things they way they were accustomed to.

There way was like an old thread-bare garment that was ragged & needed repair. But they liked it the way it was.

Like the 40 year old guy who's got a favorite T-shirt he wore when he was 16.

It's got holes everywhere, is faded & stained, but it's so comfortable, he wears it all the time though it looks ridiculous!

That was the religion of the Pharisees.

They realized Jesus had authority & power, but they didn't like the way He used it or the things He said that contradicted their ideas.

So they tried to get Him to *change*, to keep all the *good stuff*, like the healing & His cool command of the scriptures, but just plug into their system.

They wanted Him to patch the holes in their popularity & influence with the common people.

But Jesus didn't come to patch their deal – He came to do something completely new.

The new wine He was bringing needed a new structure.

What Jesus said to the people of that day is equally true today.

When the Spirit moves in a new way, new structures are often developed in response to God's leading, new wineskins to contain the new work/

As God is moving in a new way among us, we all need to be sensitive to how the Lord is leading us.

Be encouraged that as the Lord moves on your heart & you sense His calling to begin some new ministry – go for it.