**ON THAT DAY, THEY WILL FAST**

Mark 2:18-22

Key Verse 20

 But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them, and on that day they will fast.

**Introduction**



 According to Wikipedia, fasting is defined as the willing [abstinence](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abstinence) or reduction from some or all [food](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Food), [drink](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Drink), or both, for a period of time. In Jesus’ days, the Pharisees fasted twice to show their religious practice. But today Jesus re-defined the meaning and purpose of fasting. Fasting was meant to be between each believer and God, not to be done for a show before men. Jesus helped some people who did not know the true meaning of fasting, to dedicate their prayer and fasting to build up right relationship with the Lord. Also Jesus helped them to be flexible like His disciples with humility and learning mind to hear and accept Jesus’ gospel teaching. In this way they were supposed to fast for the right purpose to correct themselves to come closer to the Lord, Jesus Christ with new hearts. May the Lord help each of us to grow like new wineskins to be compatible with the hearts of God and His new teaching rather than to be stuck with our own old way of thinking. Amen!

1. Read verse 18. At that time, what was the practice of John’s disciples and that of the Pharisees? Why did some criticize Jesus' disciples?

1-1, Read verse 18.

 Now John’s disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. Some people came and asked Jesus, “How is it that John’s disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees are fasting, but yours are not?”

1-2, At that time, what was the practice of John’s disciples and that of the Pharisees?

***18 Now John’s disciples and the Pharisees were fasting.***

* An absolute fast or dry fasting is normally defined as abstinence from all food and liquid for a defined period. Fasting is asked before certain diagnostic tests or general surgeries. Fasting is helpful to improve our health and to lose our weight. It is often used as a political tool.
* Fasting was mentioned in Exodus 34:28. Moses fasted to receive God’s words of covenant. “Then the Lord said to Moses, “Write down these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel.” 28 Moses was there with the Lord forty days and forty nightswithout eating bread or drinking water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant—the Ten Commandments.”
* The fast of the Jews was also commanded by God, with the Day of Atonement, one of the seven annual solemn assemblies of the Law of Moses.

Leviticus 16:29 reads,

“This is to be a lasting ordinance for you: On the tenth day of the seventh month you must deny(fast) yourselves and not do any work—whether native-born or a foreigner residing among you—

* The Pharisees also fasted on the second and fourth days of every week. (Luke 18:12) Apparently, the disciples of John were doing something similar.
* The Pharisees didn’t have disciples in the same sense as John or Jesus. The term “disciples of the Pharisees” might refer to anyone who followed the example of the Pharisees.
* Although such fasting was not part of the Law of Moses, by Jesus’ day it had become an important expression of the Pharisees’ meticulous devotion to the ceremonial law.

1-3, Why did some criticize Jesus' disciples?

***Some people came and asked Jesus, “How is it that John’s disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees are fasting, but yours are not?”***

* To the Pharisees, if Jesus’ disciples were not fasting, then it called into question their piety, sincerity and devotion toward the ceremonial law.
* Here some people came and indirectly questioned about Jesus’ attitude toward the ceremonial law.
* Jesus had already healed on the Sabbath, and his disciples had already been noticed picking grain on the Sabbath and eating without the prescribed ceremonial washing.
1. Read verses 19-20. How did Jesus respond? How did Jesus introduce the relationship with His disciples? What was Jesus referring to when he said ‘the time’? (20a) Why should they fast on that day? (20b)

2-1, Read verses 19-20.

 Jesus answered, “How can the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? They cannot, so long as they have him with them. 20 But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them, and on that day they will fast.

2-2, How did Jesus respond?

2-3, How did Jesus introduce the relationship with His disciples?

 ***Jesus answered, “How can the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? They cannot, so long as they have him with them. 20 But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them, and on that day they will fast.***

* According to Jesus his disciples were guests in a wedding banquet. It is unthinkable for them to fast.
* A guest that shows up to a banquet fasting will probably offend the bridegroom; ruin the celebratory mood of the banquet and waste food and drinks.
* Jesus is the Bridegroom who invited his guests. The disciples are honored guest who responded to his invitation, the honor is his and the joy of participating in the wedding feast belonged to them all.
* So it was an inappropriate time for the disciples to fast since Jesus was with them.

2-4, What was Jesus referring to when he said ‘the time’? (20a)

2-5, Why should they fast on that day? (20b)

***and on that day they will fast.***

* Nevertheless a time of separation from Jesus will occur when fasting will be a proper thing to do.
* When the bridegroom is taken from them they will fast. When we feel cut off from Jesus, this is a time to fast.
* When we experience sorrow or some troubles in our lives, we should fast and seek the mercy of God.
* There is a time for everything and a season for every activity under heaven (Eccl 3:1).
* The disciples will fast after Jesus is taken from them by His death on the cross and when he ascends to heaven, but while he was with them this is unnecessary.
* God is not pleased with us when we are hungry (he is not looking for some way to punish us).
* God is also not very impressed by an external show of righteousness. Those who followed the Jewish rituals of OT felt as if they were doing something for God.
1. Read verses 21-22. What other illustration does Jesus give to describe gospel work? What are new wine and new wineskins? How are Pharisees like an old garment or old wineskins? What does Jesus teach us here?

3-1, Read verses 21-22.

 “No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. Otherwise, the new piece will pull away from the old, making the tear worse. 22 And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins.”

3-2, What other illustration does Jesus give to describe gospel work?



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3-3, What are new wine and new wineskins?

* New wine is Jesus’ teaching and His gospel message. New wineskins are the hearts of those who are humbly accepting His teaching like Jesus’ disciples.
* In our modern world with new technology all kinds of synthetic fabrics have been developed that don’t shrink like the old ones did.
* During the time of Jesus, new clothing would shrink after it was washed. When it is washed, and especially heat applied in the drying process, the tension in the material is released and it returns to its original size.
* So, whenever someone got new clothes, they had to make sure they bought them a few sizes too big so that it would fit properly after washing.
* This would happen with jeans, so company came up with the idea of pre-washed jeans, which of course cost more, so that you wouldn’t have to worry about shrinkage.
* That being said, with all clothes, over time, they tend to wear down and eventually they tear.
* A garment with a hole in it needed to be repaired, but if a new piece of cloth was sewn in, after it was washed, the new patch would shrink, but the old cloth would stay the same and all the work put into fixing it would be lost because it would be ripped.

3-4, How are Pharisees like an old garment or old wineskins?

3-5, What does Jesus teach us here?

 ***“No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. Otherwise, the new piece will pull away from the old, making the tear worse.***

* The old garment could be compared to the Old Covenant, what we would call “the law.”
* Jesus was saying he didn’t just come to improve the Old Covenant; he came to replace it with something totally new. In this way he also fulfilled the Old Covenant in true sense.
* There was no way his new covenant could be used to “patch up” the old one. The Pharisees were threatened by this because their religion was based upon keeping the old laws.
* When Jesus comes into your life, His goal is not to reform you. His purpose is to transform you. We are all sinners by nature and by choice.
* To try to fix our sinful character is like sewing a new unshrunk patch on an old garment.
* In our first birth (physical) we were deformed by sin. That’s why Jesus says we need a new birth (spiritual).
* The Bible says, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” (2 Cor 5:17)
* Jesus doesn’t just patch up your old life; he gives you a new life. Jesus doesn’t just try to clean up our old hearts, he gives us a new one.

***22 And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins.”***

* Now-a-days we store wine in bottles but back in Jesus’ day, wine was stored in goatskins.
* The goat skins were removed and scraped clean on the inside, then tanned over a fire, and sewn back together.
* And just like our own skin, fresh wineskin was pliable, flexible and stretchable. When new wine was poured into it, the gas released from the yeast eating the sugar during the fermentation process would stretch the new wineskins.
* And everything would be ok, because that was the normal process. But over time, wineskins become brittle and rigid.
* If someone were to put new wine in an old wineskin that had already expanded and hardened from its original supply of wine, it wouldn’t be long before you heard a pop as the hardened skin began to crack and split.
* The wine was expanding but the old skin was too rigid to adapt to the new situation.
* What was Jesus trying to teach through this parable is that we should be aware of a hardened heart that refuses to accept new revelations of truth from God’s Word.
* For the time period, Jesus’ teaching was revolutionary. It was new. He said things they never heard before.
* His new teaching shocked and offended the religious leaders. And they couldn’t handle this new wine Jesus was offering.
* They were like the inflexible old wineskins. Their attitudes were “If it is new, it can’t be true.”
* Every time Jesus said or did something new they could almost hear the sound of straining and stretching until finally, they popped and killed the messenger instead of accepting the message. The same happens always to many today.
* Human nature rebels against the idea of anything that seems to threaten the “good old days” and the “good old ways.”
* Jesus was addressing an attitude that resists change or anything new. We all have a tendency to reject a new idea, or a new revelation of truth because we are comfortable with the old one.
* This was the Pharisees’ attitude and it is an attitude we need to guard against. Like an old, stiff wineskin, our hearts and minds can harden until we become so inflexible, we can’t accept change.
* When someone introduces “new wine” to us, we crack and split and make a mess. The Bible issues a strong warning to us about the danger of a hardened heart.
* “So, as the Holy Spirit says: “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the wilderness, where your ancestors tested and tried me, though for forty years they saw what I did.” (Hebrews 3:7-9)
* The Israelites, when faced with the new idea of going into Canaan and taking the land they said, “No. We like the old better.” Their wineskins were popping.
* For forty years they wandered in the old paths, eating the same old manna until that generation died. Why? Because they refused to accept God’s new plan. And they never got to see the promised land.
* So, the question is, whenever any new idea or concept is introduced, do we immediately reject it, or do we try to look at it objectively?
* Human nature naturally resists change. Because of this we have continuously guard ourselves against hardening our hearts. In reality, we need God to intervene in our life through the Holy Spirit to keep us flexible.
* Change is never easy, especially the older we get. But we have to be ready to change if God calls us to.
* But it doesn’t mean that we need to change just for the mere sake of change, we have core values that will never change, but things like methods and style and the like can be flexible.
* It’s when we lose sight of loving people and loving God and care more about our traditions, then that is when there is a problem.

**Conclusion**

 The gospel is a message of change and Jesus is the Lord of this change. It is a powerful and life-giving transformation in the lives of real people. Jesus changed Levi into St. Matthew, he changed wash water into sweet wine and he changed me from my old life of sin into a new creation. None of us can change ourselves even when we make a resolution we find it is not easy to keep our resolutions, but Jesus can help us. He is able to make something great out of our life. “For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God… (1 Pet 1:23).” Praise Jesus and His new wine like living Words. May the Lord help our hearts to become new wineskins to grow daily until we may reflect God’s love and mercy!

**One word: New wineskins!**