

Mark 2:18-22 — "Conflicts Over Fasting; Rejoice in the New Fullness of Christ!"

What the bridegroom is to the bride, the Lord Jesus is to the souls of all who believe in Him. He loves them with a deep and everlasting love. He takes them into union with Himself. They are "one with Christ and Christ in them." He pays all their debts to God. He supplies all their daily need. He sympathizes with them in all their troubles. He bears with all their infirmities, and does not reject them for a few weaknesses. He regards them as part of Himself.

— JC Ryle

Background to Mark 2:18-22

- Mark 2-3 we have an account of 5 ***conflict*** accounts. The Jews are in conflict with Jesus in 5 episodes:
 - 1. forgiveness of sins (2:1-13)
 - 2. fellowshiping with unclean (2:14-17)
 - **3. question over fasting (2:18-22)***
 - 4. working on sabbath (2:23-28)
 - 5. healing on Sabbath (3:1-6)

In particular, remember the context of Mark 2:14-22:

- (1) **how** is one saved (v.14);
- (2) **who** can be saved (v.15-17);
- (3) **what is it** to be saved? (v.18-22) = **answer (2:18-22)**: a new way of life; a celebratory, completely new, internally transforming, Christ-enthraling way of life!

THESIS — We will study 2 extremely life-altering declarations!:

1. Jesus' coming is Celebratory
2. Jesus' Gospel is Exclusive

I. JESUS' COMING IS CELEBRATORY! (18-20)

- **Bridegroom - 'with them' (2x)**
 - A. Christ your bridegroom **LOVES**.
 - B. Christ your bridegroom **DIED** for you.
 - C. Christ your bridegroom **PROTECTS**.
 - D. Christ your bridegroom **RETURNS**.
 - E. Christ your bridegroom **IS FAITHFUL**.

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F. Christ your bridegroom **SATISFIES**.

It is because you have nibbled so long at the table of the world. Your soul is stunted with small things, and there is no room for the great One. God did not create you for this. There is an appetite for God. And it can be awakened. I

invite you to turn from the dulling effects of food and the dangers of idolatry, and to say with some simple fast:

“This much, O God, I want you!” (John Piper)

The coming of Christ is not about law-keeping, fasting, or mourning. It’s about the Bridegroom who came to seek and save His Bride; to sanctify her, to wash her, to take her home to the Wedding!

II. JESUS’ GOSPEL IS EXCLUSIVE! (21-22)

- Jesus will give 2 stories (=parables) — v.21-22 - the twin parables teach the incompatibility of the OLD (rabbinic/traditions of Judaism) with the NEW (faith alone in Christ)
- Showing that you cannot mingle them together. Jesus didn’t come to *remodel*, but to *regenerate & redeem*.

Salvation is ...

1. **Exclusive** - in Christ
2. **Transformative** - made new
3. **Internal** - heart-work
4. **Satisfying** - preeminent & better

Christian Fasting: (from John Piper, *A Hunger for God*)

We have tasted the powers of the age to come, and our fasting is not because we are hungry for something we have not experienced, but because the new wine of Christ’s presence is so real and so satisfying. We must have all that it is possible to have. The newness of our fasting is this: its intensity comes not because we have never tasted the wine of

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Christ’s presence, but because we have tasted it so wonderfully by his Spirit, and cannot now be satisfied until the consummation of joy arrives. The new fasting, the Christian fasting, is a hunger for all the fullness of God (Ephesians 3:19), aroused by the aroma of Jesus’ love and by the taste of God’s goodness in the gospel of Christ (1 Peter 2:2–3).

— John Piper, *A Hunger for God*, p.43 (all of chapter 1 deals with this text in Mark 2:18-22! Superb read.)

When we fast we genuinely say in our hearts: “Father, without you I will die; come to my assistance, make haste to help me.” — Joseph Wimmer, *Fasting in the New Testament*

Another way to look at Mark 2:18-22 is three illustrations using pairs of things that do not mix, all pointing out that the old way of Judaism does not mix with the new way of the Gospel.

1. First Illustration -- Feasting and Fasting (Mk 2:18-20)
 2. Second Illustration -- New patch on Old garment (Mk 2:21)
 3. Third Illustration -- New/old Wine in new/old wineskins (Mk 2:22)
- Warren Wiersbe

STEPS IN JEWISH MARRIAGE CEREMONY - (by Arnold Fruchtenbaum)**Christ calls Himself the “Bridegroom”. What can we learn about this ‘marriage’ imagery?**

First, the father of the groom made the arrangements for the marriage and paid the bride price. The timing of the arrangement varied. Sometimes it occurred when both children were small, and at other times it was a year before the marriage itself. Often the bride and groom did not even meet until their wedding day.

The **second** step, which occurred a year or more after the first step, was the fetching of the bride. The bridegroom would go to the home of the bride in order to bring her to his home. In connection with this step, two other things should be noted. First, it was the father of the groom who determined the timing. Second, prior to the groom’s leaving to fetch the bride, he must already have a place prepared for her as their abode.

This was followed by the **third** step, the wedding ceremony, to which a few would be invited. Prior to the wedding ceremony, the bride underwent a ritual immersion for ritual cleansing.

The **fourth** step, the marriage feast, would follow and could last for as many as seven days. Many many more people would be invited to the feast than were to the marriage ceremony. In the Marriage of the Lamb all four of these steps of the Jewish wedding ceremony are evident. (in Fruchtenbaum, *Footsteps of Messiah*)

THE CHRISTIAN DISCIPLINE OF “FASTING”

Some Scriptures:

Nehemiah 1:4; 9:1; Ezra 8:23; Psalm 35:13; Psalm 69:10; Daniel 9:3; Joel 2:12

Matthew 4:2; 9:15; 17:21; Acts 13:2; Acts 14:23

Definition:

Fasting is a temporary renunciation of something that is in itself good, like food, in order to intensify our expression of need for something greater — namely, God and his work in our lives. (John Piper)

Fasting is an exceptional measure, designed to channel and express our desire for God and our holy discontent in a fallen world. It is for those not satisfied with the status quo. For those who want more of God’s grace. For those who feel truly desperate for God.

Fasting isn’t merely an act of self-deprivation, but a spiritual discipline for seeking more of God’s fullness. Which means we should have a plan for what positive pursuit to undertake in the time it normally takes to eat.

In fasting you are withholding from yourself something you need (food) in order to pursue something you need even more (communion with God). ... You fast in those times you earnestly desire to seek God, the presence of God, the will of God, the power of God, and the forgiveness of God. If it is worth pleading with God about it, it’s worth fasting about it. Ultimately, prayer is a means of seeking God himself, and fasting is God’s mysterious but effective means of assisting that noble desire. It is putting aside the satisfaction of food to come to a deeper satisfaction in God. It is diverting the desire for food into a desire for God. (Tim Challies)

Purpose:

Fasting is for this world, for stretching our hearts to get fresh air beyond the pain and trouble around us. And it is for the battle against the sin and weakness inside us. We express our discontent with our sinful selves and our longing for more of Christ (David Mathis).

Christian fasting is not mainly about what we go without, but who we want more of. (David Mathis)

But if we are awakened to see fasting for the joy it can bring, as a means of grace to strengthen and sharpen Godward affections, then we might find ourselves holding a powerful new tool for enriching our enjoyment of Jesus. (David Mathis)

But one important clarification: don’t look for external fasting to do for you what God has appointed the Scriptures to do. Fasting is not designed to put righteous desires *into* you; it’s meant to be a means to express urgent desires that already exist. Fasting is an *effect* of a spiritual urgency, not the cause of it. (Don Green)

According to Don Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines of the Christian Life*, fasting’s spiritual purposes include:

- strengthening prayer (Ezra 8:23; Joel 2:13; Acts 13:3)
- seeking God’s guidance (Judges 20:26; Acts 14:23)
- expressing grief (1 Samuel 31:13; 2 Samuel 1:11–12)
- seeking deliverance or protection (2 Chronicles 20:3–4; Ezra 8:21–23)

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- expressing repentance and returning to God (1 Samuel 7:6; Jonah 3:5–8)
- humbling oneself before God (1 Kings 21:27–29; Psalm 35:13)
- expressing concern for the work of God (Nehemiah 1:3–4; Daniel 9:3)
- ministering to the needs of others (Isaiah 58:3–7)
- overcoming temptation and dedicating yourself to God (Matthew 4:1–11)
- expressing love and worship to God (Luke 2:37)

Fasting serves to “put an edge upon devout affections.” --Matthew Henry

Horatius Bonar asked for believers to pray & fast for him when he began his ministry:

To this, then, my brethren, I call you, at the very outset of my ministry among you, that through your prayers and the anointing of the Holy Ghost, I may come to you in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ. It is to prayer I urge you—to prayer and fasting—to prayer as the appointed remedy for all those spiritual maladies which we profess to lament—to prayer as the means of a revival in the midst of us—to prayer in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the strength of that Holy Spirit who maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered—to prayer for yourselves, prayer for your nation, prayer for your church, prayer for your parish, prayer for ME!

How to fast:

The Scriptures include many forms of fasting: personal and communal, public and private, congregational and national, regular and occasional, partial and absolute. Typically, we think of fasting as “a Christian’s voluntary abstinence from food for spiritual purposes” (Don Whitney, [Spiritual Disciplines](#), 160).

When you fast, how do you pray?

Focus your mind on God and direct your thoughts to divine realities.

- Meditate on the reality of God’s sovereign control of your situation.
- Remember that Christ has come, died, and risen so that all your sins would be forgiven.
- Remember that Christ has ascended to heaven and continually intercedes for you before the Father.
- Remember that you will one day see Him face-to-face.
- Remember that nothing can separate you from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Almost everywhere at all times fasting has held a place of great importance since it is closely linked with the intimate sense of religion. Perhaps this is the explanation for the demise of fasting in our day. When the sense of God diminishes, fasting disappears. --Edward Farrell

The state of the times extremely requires a fullness of the divine Spirit in ministers, and we ought to give ourselves no rest till we have obtained it. And in order to [do] this, I should think ministers, above all persons, ought to be much in secret prayer and fasting, and also much in praying and fasting one with another. It seems to me it would be becoming the circumstances of the present day, if ministers in a neighborhood would often meet together and spend days in fasting and fervent prayer among themselves, earnestly seeking for those extraordinary supplies of divine grace from heaven, that we need at this day. --Jonathan Edwards

I GREET THEE, WHO MY SURE REDEEMER ART

I greet thee, who my sure Redeemer art,
My only trust and Saviour of my heart,
Who pain didst undergo for my poor sake;
I pray thee from our hearts all cares to take.

Thou art the King of mercy and of grace,
Reigning omnipotent in every place:
So come, O King, and our whole being sway;
Shine on us with the light of thy pure day.

Thou art the life, by which alone we live,
And all our substance and our strength receive;
O comfort us in death's approaching hour,
Strong-hearted then to face it by thy pow'r.

Thou hast the true and perfect gentleness,
No harshness hast thou and no bitterness:
Make us to taste the sweet grace found in thee
And ever stay in thy sweet unity.

Our hope is in no other save in thee;
Our faith is built upon thy promise free;
O grant to us such stronger hope and sure
That we can boldly conquer and endure.

THERE IS A REDEEMER

There is a redeemer
Jesus, God's own Son
Precious Lamb of God, Messiah
Holy One

*Thank you, oh my father
For giving us Your Son
And leaving Your Spirit
'Til the work on Earth is done*

Jesus my redeemer
Name above all names
Precious Lamb of God, Messiah
Oh, for sinners slain

*Thank you, oh my father
For giving us Your Son
And leaving Your Spirit
'Til the work on Earth is done*

When I stand in Glory
I will see His face
And there I'll serve my King forever
In that Holy Place

*Thank you, oh my father
For giving us Your Son
And leaving Your Spirit
'Til the work on Earth is done*