

**Message #21****Luke 5:27-39**

In 1874, F. B. Meyer, the minister from England, accepted a call to become the Pastor of the Victoria Road Baptist Church in Leicester. The church was extremely wealthy and very influential in the community. Many members of the church were part of the higher classes in society and many had a great deal of money. The church liked F. B. Meyer because he would open a book of the Bible and go straight through it and the Bible came to life.

F. B. Meyer had just one small problem in their opinion; he had the habit of inviting broken down lost people to come to church. He didn't care what they looked like and he didn't care what they had or who they were, he just invited them to come to church. Some of the people he invited had a somewhat bad reputation and they certainly weren't wearing nice clothes. He was specifically known to invite people to come to church who had just been released from jail. He had a real heart for those who were down and out.

This philosophy of ministry did not go over too well with many in the congregation. In fact, some of the upstanding members became very angry about this. The tension reached a climax one Sunday night. Right in the middle of the service, a very wealthy leader and board member yelled, "We cannot have this sort of thing here. This is not a gospel shop." Soon after this, F. B. Meyer resigned and moved on to another ministry.

1,800 years before F. B. Meyer, the same kind of thing happened to Jesus Christ when He ran into the Pharisees and Scribes. Religious Pharisees love their religion and they like it their way. As long as you fit in with them, life is good. As long as you dress their way, act their way, obey their rules, things will be fine. But the moment you do something that goes against the way they think, you will come face-to-face with hostile opposition. That is exactly what happened to Jesus Christ:

**PHARISEES ARE INWARDLY AND OUTWARDLY HOSTILE TO JESUS CHRIST AND IN TOTAL OPPOSITION TO THE WORD, WORK AND PROGRAM OF GOD.**

Pharisees will always try to give the impression that they are right with God. They give the appearance that they are genuinely concerned about God's work and program, but inwardly they are hostile toward it and in total opposition to it.

Pharisees do not like the pure truth of God nor do they like the grace of God. Deep in the heart and mind of a religious Pharisee is a rebellion against Jesus Christ.

In this passage the opposition to Jesus Christ takes front and center stage. There are three main areas of Pharisaical opposition we see in this text:

**AREA OF PHARISAICAL OPPOSITION #1** – Pharisees oppose the people Christ calls.  
**5:27-32**

Rigid, legalistic Pharisees believe it is their responsibility to analyze their rules and laws and codes and judge sinners, not reach out to sinners. They do not tolerate or accept anyone who reaches out to someone they oppose.

In this text, Jesus Christ really offended the Pharisees because He not only called a tax collector to salvation, but He selects him to be one of His disciples (5:27-28).

There was a tax collector whose name was Levi, and Dr. Luke wants to truly emphasize he was a tax collector. He mentions that several times in this context (5:27, 29, 30).

Tax collectors were hated by the Pharisees and by most of the Jews. They were considered to be on the same level with harlots, robbers and gamblers. Tax collectors were not allowed in the synagogues and the Pharisees taught that God hated tax collectors and they could not ever be right with God or justified by God. There were three reasons why they took this position:

**Reason #1** - Because the tax collectors took the Jew's money.

Tax collectors took quite a bit of their money. William Barclay said that they required a 1% tax on all income, 10% tax on all grain, 20% tax on wine and oil, plus they had regular toll taxes on such things as roads, bridges, etc.. They would sit in their booths and collect money like they do on toll roads.

Tax collectors were very wealthy and they were known to pad their own pockets by taking a little extra in taxes. What is interesting is that Levi is identified as a tax collector and later in the book Zacchaeus is identified as a chief tax collector (Luke 19:2). So we may assume that Levi was a lower level tax collector, but he obviously was very wealthy. To show how much money Levi had, notice **verse 29**, he gave a “big reception” at his house. He obviously was a very wealthy man with a mansion type house.

**Reason #2** - Because the tax collectors gave the Jew's money to Rome.

The Pharisees did not want to render anything to Caesar, but very piously said we only give our money to God. They hated tax collectors because they forced them to give money to Rome.

**Reason #3** - Because the tax collectors were Jewish.

For the most part the tax collectors were Jewish men working for Gentiles. They took money from Jews and gave it to Gentiles. So in the mind of a religious Pharisee this was the most despicable person on earth.

Now according to **verse 27**, Jesus had gone out of the house and He noticed a tax collector sitting at his booth doing his job. He had his own tax booth and he collected taxes from the Jews. His name was Levi, also known as Matthew. He was actually connected to the priestly family of Levi and he was working as a tax collector. This would really anger the Pharisees.

According to **verse 27**, Jesus specifically saw Levi and He specifically said to him “follow Me.” That word “noticed” is an intense word which means He carefully and consciously singled out Levi to be the recipient of this grace. So He zeroed in on Levi and said, “Follow me.”

According to **verse 28**, he did. He left everything behind and got up and started following Jesus Christ. Only Dr. Luke brings out the fact that he “left everything” (Matt. 9:9; Mark 2:14). In Luke’s mind, to be a disciple of Christ meant a total commitment to and total priority of Jesus Christ. You could believe in Jesus Christ and be saved, but you could not physically join His discipleship team without this commitment.

This speaks volumes about Matthew. He left his own tax booth, a lucrative business and eventually a nice house to follow Jesus Christ.

Not only did he follow Jesus Christ, but according to **verse 29**, he gave a big reception for Christ in his house to honor Jesus Christ. There was a huge crowd of people, including tax collectors and others who were reclining at the table. He obviously had a lot of money to be able to do this. He also had a palatial home to be able to invite a “great crowd.” But Levi wanted everyone he knew to meet Jesus.

Now you would think that religious people would be totally and completely happy about this. There were other tax collectors and other people who were interested in being right with God and meeting Jesus Christ.

But those Pharisees and scribes began grumbling at His disciples asking them why they eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners (**v. 30**). Their big argument with Christ is not that He had contact with sinners; it was that He was eating and drinking with them. To the Pharisee, the sinner should be kept at a distance. By the way, Luke mentions Christ was “eating and drinking.” The fact that Christ drank wine with these people is something that really angers these Pharisees and something Luke mentions more than once—**5:33**; 7:33-34. Pharisees just don’t get it. They just don’t understand.

Jesus Christ was not interested in appeasing or pacifying these Pharisees. In fact, He will consistently oppose them. There are two true and sarcastic responses Christ gives:

**Response #1** - Jesus Christ came to minister to those who need spiritual healing. **5:31**

You don’t need to see a physician if you are healthy. You need your doctor when you are sick. I have seen my doctor more in the last month than all previous years I have known him.

Christ says I came to minister to those who admit they are sinfully sick. Pharisees do not admit this about themselves.

**Response #2** - Jesus Christ did not come to minister to those who think they are righteous. **5:32**

Jesus develops His point, specifically, I came to call sick sinners into a relationship with God. **Here is a great lesson to learn about a true Christ-like ministry—do not waste your time on religious Pharisees who see themselves as spiritual giants; go after sinners.** Pharisees spend their lives condemning sinners and judging sinners and trying to get them to obey the law. Jesus Christ spent His life reaching out to sinners and offering them forgiveness and grace.

It was D. L. Moody who said, “you can be too big for God to use, but never too small.” You can be too good for God to save, but you cannot be too bad. You can be too self-righteous to be used by God, but you cannot be too sinful.

What is so ironic is that the Pharisee believes his righteousness and law-keeping is the key to his greatness, but it is the admission of sinfulness that is the key to greatness.

Jesus Christ came into this world to save sinners and those rigid legal Pharisees didn't like it. They would oppose Him every step of the way.

**AREA OF PHARISAICAL OPPOSITION #2** – Pharisees oppose the non-conformity of Christ's true disciples. **5:33-35**

Christ's disciples did not fit the Pharisaical mold. They were alive to God and not stagnant. They had a freedom and not a religious asceticism. They were learning and growing and developing and ministering, but they were not conforming to the rules and codes and man-made laws of the Pharisees and that made them mad.

The Pharisees were all upset because the disciples were not spending a great amount of time fasting and praying, like they were. So the Pharisees had the arrogant audacity to go to Jesus Christ and criticize them about that.

They pointed out that John's disciples fasted and prayed and so did they but Jesus and His disciples didn't.

According to some historians, Pharisees were known to fast and pray on Mondays and Thursdays. The time was very rigid and demanding. This was all man-made legal stuff.

This would be equivalent today to someone saying—how come you don't do the religious stuff we do? How come you don't follow our legal days we have made up?

In **verses 34-35**, Jesus answered them.

**Answer #1** - When I am here on earth it is no time for fasting. **5:34**

Why in the world would the disciples fast and pray when they have God in Person with them? If they had some request, they could ask Jesus Christ in Person. Clearly these Pharisees don't have a clue as to whom He actually is.

**Answer #2** - When Jesus is not here on earth there will be times for fasting and praying. **5:35**

Jesus said when I am gone, there will be times when My disciples will fast and pray. I will be taken away from them and when that happens, they will fast and pray.

The thing that so bothered these Pharisees is that Jesus Christ and His disciples did not conform to them or to their requests. Pharisees don't like that.

**AREA OF PHARISAICAL OPPOSITION #3** – Pharisees oppose God's new program Christ instituted. **5:36-39**

Jesus Christ wanted these Pharisees to realize that their traditions and legalism were old and His program of grace was brand new. **So Christ gives a couple of illustrations to the Pharisees that clearly prove dispensationalism. Pharisees love to hang on to their religious traditions, man-made rules and legal codes. Christ didn't fit in with them.**

When Jesus Christ came to this world, He implemented a brand new system of grace and Jesus wants these Pharisees to know there is no mixing of His grace system with their legal law system.

To establish this point, He uses two illustrations:

**Illustration #1** - The illustration of the new garment. **5:36**

Christ compares His presence on earth with that of a new garment. No one cuts a piece off a new garment and sews it on an old one for two reasons:

**(Reason #1)** - You ruin the new garment. **5:36a**

You end up with a new garment with material that is cut out of it.

**(Reason #2)** - You don't match the old garment. **5:36b**

You end up patching an old garment with material that does not match.

In other words, Jesus Christ did not come here to try and patch up some old religious way of living. He came to offer new life. Christ did not come to patch up O.T. law and legalism; He did not come to offer a mixed system of Old and New. He came to offer a new grace system.

**Illustration #2** - The illustration of wine. **5:37-39**

Christ says Me and My grace program are like new wine. A wineskin was typically made from sheepskin or goatskin. The point of this is that new wine must have new wineskins. The grace gospel does not fit with O.T. law or Judaism. You do not ever mix new wine with old wineskins for several reasons:

**(Reason #1)** - The new wine will burst the old wineskins. **5:37a**

If you put new wine in the old wineskins, as it ages, it expands and eventually the old wineskin would explode. The old wineskin is brittle and cannot handle expansion.

**(Reason #2)** - The new wine is lost. **5:37b**

If you mixed new wine into an old wineskin, then the wine skin will explode and you will lose the wine.

**(Reason #3)** - The old wineskins are lost. **5:37c**

Wineskins that could have been used for something are good for nothing.

**Verse 38** says new wine must be put into fresh wineskins.

But **verse 39** makes the point that most people don't want the new, they want the old. Most people don't want grace; they want religious ritual, O.T. law and codes. To most people, their religion is good enough and they don't want a new fresh relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ.

What Christ is saying to these Pharisees is that I came to offer a new grace program and you cannot mix that program into your O.T. Judaism or your old religious rules and systems. Any attempt to mix the two will ruin the purpose.

But Christ makes it clear that these Pharisees would rather have the old, rather than the new: Pharisees would rather have law rather than grace.  
Pharisees would rather have Judaism rather than Jesus.  
Pharisees would rather have works rather than faith.

This passage warns against getting stuck in some old system of religion. This text invites people into a new, free relationship with God based on His grace found in Jesus Christ. Will you believe on Him? Will you expand and develop in ways that are new? Or will you stay in the old?