LIFE BIBLE MINISTRY

Matthew 9 (Part 3) :14-17

Jesus Questioned About Fasting

Pastor Paul LeBoutillier · April 18, 2026

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

We're gonna read verses 14 through 17 then we'll ask the Lord to open our hearts. Then John's disciples came and asked him, how is it that we and the Pharisees fast but your disciples do not fast? Jesus answered, how can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bride groom will be taken from them and they will fast. No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment for the patch will pull away from the garment making the tear worse.

Neither do men pour new wine into old wine skins. If they do the skins will burst and the wine will run out and the wine skins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wine skins and both are preserved. Let's stop there, let's pray. Heavenly Father open our hearts to the ministry of your word.

We need from you as always ears to hear, eyes to see, a heart that is receptive to the word that is planted here today. May our hearts be welcoming to your word. Speak to us we pray, guide us we pray. In Jesus name we ask, amen. The first couple of verses that we're covering here in this passage in Matthew chapter 9 are ones that I like very much because they involve a conversation regarding why we do what we do and really when we get done with this passage today I'm hoping that that's going to be something that you're going to be willing to ask yourself.

Why do I do what I do when it comes to the things that I do for the Lord? What's going on here is that John's disciples, meaning the disciples of John the Baptist, come to Jesus at one particular point and they ask him the question, you know, we noticed that you guys don't fast. You're not fasting. We fast and the Pharisees even fast. They actually did it like twice a week, like regular kind of clockwork, but you guys aren't fasting.

Why is that? And Jesus responds with kind of an interesting sort of a statement and you'll notice here if you look with me again in verse 15, Jesus basically says to them, how can the guests of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them? And what he's kind of saying there is that there is an appropriate time for fasting, but this isn't it. You know, there's an important thing that we need to see here and that is

that there are people in life who will approach us about some kind of religious observance or some kind of religious activity or ritual or something like that and they might say to you, well why don't you do that? Or why aren't you doing that now?

Or something like that. Jesus is making us aware here that there are a lot of good reasons to do things, but there are also some bad ones and there are times when certain things are simply not appropriate. He uses the example by saying, you know, the bridegroom is basically with the bride, so why should they be mourning? Why should they be sorrowful? First of all, what is fasting?

Fasting is a voluntary going without food so that we might devote or dedicate ourselves to prayer, seeking God. It often accompanies times of, well, sometimes sorrow, sometimes mourning, as Jesus mentions here. There are also references in the Bible where fasting accompanies just a time of just really seeking God. You know, in the times in my life when I've fasted, and I have a hard time fasting, to be completely honest with you, just because just going without food can be really hard. I mean, from the standpoint of you kind of lose your energy and sometimes, you know, you got to be careful about blood sugar issues.

Whatever. But anyway, when I have fasted or done some kind of fasting, it's usually because I just really need to hear from God, you know? It's like, God, I really need a response. I really need to hear from you. I need to know your will, and so I'll enter into a time of fasting or so forth.

Now think about that in terms of the disciples being with Jesus, and he's basically saying to them, why would these guys sit and go without food in order to seek the face of God? I'm right here, you know? I'm right here. All they have to do is turn and ask. This was a unique and wonderful time in history when the God of the universe took on human flesh and dwelt among us in physical form, and these men, these disciples, these people got to walk around with him.

Can you imagine? I mean, you're just kind of walking around talking to God on a day-to-day basis. You got an issue? You got a question? And believe me, they asked him lots of questions.

What a cool opportunity, you know? But the point is, why would you enter into a time of fasting which is like, okay, I'm gonna set aside every earthly sort of a distraction so that I can just really focus on God. Oh God, I need to hear from you, and he's like, um, hello, I'm right here. That's kind of what Jesus is saying in essence, and if the bridegroom is with them, this is a time of rejoicing. I'm here, I'm, you know, sort of a thing.

So now, again, obviously, John's disciples fasted. We're really not surprised by that. John's ministry was one of repentance, calling the nation of Israel to repentance, and so things like fasting would kind of go along with that. The Pharisees fasted, as I said before, twice a week. Jesus wasn't terribly impressed with the way they fasted.

There's a reference earlier from Matthew that you might recall. I'll put it up on the screen for you, but it's from the sixth chapter of Matthew where Jesus said to his disciples, listen, when you fast, he said, don't walk around looking all somber and so forth as the hypocrites do, because, you know, they even try to disfigure their faces just so that people are going to realize that they're fasting, but he says, I tell you the truth, they've received their reward in full because they've been doing it for show, and so the religious leaders, the Pharisees, and so forth, during Jesus's day were doing it for all the wrong reasons, and you know, it's really easy to do things that are kind of of a religious ilk, kind of the way we worship and serve God, those rituals, those things we do, it's easy to do those things for the wrong reason, but let's not miss the point of what Jesus is saying here. There are good reasons for doing these things, like fasting, but there are also bad reasons, such as when someone pressures you, you know, we're doing this, how come you're not? Or they say something like, well, others are doing it, so I guess I should too. Or that really lame reason for doing things, it's what we've always done, and then somebody comes along and asks them, so how come you guys do that?

Well, because, well, it's just what we do. Well, that's not what I asked. I asked you why. Because we've always done it. What's that say to you?

That tells me they don't know why. Here's why this is important. We're living in a world today, we have been for some time now, that is very seriously questioning if there's any validity or value of any kind in this thing that you and I call Christianity, this thing of believing in the Bible, believing in God, and they're watching our lives, they're looking at how you live, they're looking at how I live, and they're asking themselves the question, is there anything here? Is there anything valid? Is there anything real?

Is there anything genuine that I can lay hold of here? Or is this just another display of empty religious nonsense? And when you and I can't give people a good reason about why we do the things that we do for the Lord, we play into that belief in their hearts that what we are involved in is empty religious nonsense. Believe me, we've fueled that fire. We've given plenty of fodder for, you know, those who want to poke fun at what we believe and what we do to do so.

And yet the world is looking and they're watching to see if there's something that's real going on here. You know, there was a...just this last spring, I was in having a bunch of dental work done. That's always a trip, isn't it? It's fun. Talk about being in the judgment seat, you know?

It's really very similar to that. Oh, I see you haven't been flossing. Oh, well, anyway. But, you know, it's interesting when you're in the dentist chair because there's usually a conversation going on between the dentist and one of his assistants. And, of course, it's not really aimed at you, not that you could say anything in response anyway, except, uh-huh or uh-uh.

That's about it. That's about all you can get out, which they'd probably like to keep it that way. But there was this conversation going on between the In his assistant about and I could tell she came from a very very staunch Roman Catholic Background and they were about to do some kind of a ceremony some kind of a ritual that was very very common for Children when they take their first communion and and so she was and by the way My my dentist is a born-again Christian wonderful guy, you know, love him to death and and so she's asking him about This stuff and kind of telling him what's going on And if I hadn't had like 16 devices in my mouth at the time, I I would have probably spoken up She didn't know that I was a pastor. Of course he does but but and I would have just said Why are you doing that? Not because I was trying to challenge her necessarily but because I genuinely wanted to know why do you do that?

And I think that that's a question. We all should probably ask ourselves. Why do you do that? Why are you doing that is it because it's just what people have always done is it because well It's what my parents did when I was a kid or Is it just tradition? Why do you do?

What you do as it relates to the things of the Lord? I think that that it's so important because so many things and particularly and I'm not poking just at Roman Catholicism here, but most some of you, you know were raised up through the Roman Catholic Church and so forth and you know, how how tradition plays such a huge part of What goes on there and it's not just Roman Catholicism there's many other mainline Christian denominations and other groups that are just so Steeped in tradition that that it's it's kind of hard to see the the forest for the trees Now some of you might even be kind of taking Taken aback by some of this and you're you might even be thinking in your heart. Well, you know pastor Paul What's what's the big deal about tradition? I mean, is it really is it really so bad? I mean what's wrong with a little tradition?

Well Nothing if it involves things like you know where you spend your summer vacations and you know How you based your Thanksgiving turkey? But when they begin to revolve around The way you serve God and the way you worship God Traditions can very quickly take on a very authoritative feel so

that eventually people really don't know the difference between tradition and the Word of God and they begin to blend Over time to the point where we will keep our traditions At the same level At the expense of following the word now this happened when Jesus came upon the scene in physical form in the nation of Israel This is what was going on and a little bit later on in Matthew. We're gonna come up to this I'll put it on the screen for you on the 15th chapter of Matthew We're gonna read this then some Pharisees and teachers of the law came to Jesus from Jerusalem and they asked him Why do your disciples listen look at the wording here break the traditions of the elders? They don't wash their hands before they eat and Jesus replied And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition thus? He said you nullify the Word of God for the sake of your tradition You see what's going on here?

It's so easy over a period of time for for religious traditions To become so entrenched in our lives and what we do that We will not only keep them along with the Word of God We will keep them to the exclusion of the Word of God at some particular point and they become these Comfortable sorts of things that we just want to hang on to even if it means, you know Kicking God's Word to the curb and not doing what we're supposed to be doing and that is what Jesus is confronting here You know in in in the Jews at that time and you might say well does that stuff really going on today? Oh, man, are you kidding? I? mean just huge You know even here at Calvary Chapel. We have to constantly ask people why they're doing things One of them is water baptism Have any have you guys ever wondered why I require a one-time class for those who want to be baptized in water?

Well, it's because over the years I've learned that people can even get baptized in water for the wrong reasons You know, I had some I had a lady come up to me about 20 years ago here when we were back over in the other building she came up and Along with her husband and she said, you know Cuz we were gonna do a water baptism service and she said well, we want to be baptized in water. I said, how come? Well, we just really want to be closer as a family. Well, that's a really nice Intention but that's not what water baptism is for it's not to bring you closer as a family it's to make a public declaration of your faith in Jesus Christ and to identify with his death burial and resurrection and And you know, that's not an isolated sort of a thing So when when we're doing things like water baptism, we have to say why do you want to do this? Well, I just really I want to go to heaven.

Well, that isn't the way to go to heaven water Baptism isn't doesn't save you Jesus saves you By his death on the cross. Oh Oh So it's not just a religious ritual. I have to go through you see You know even things like Baby dedications you would think how innocuous can that is that it's I mean how simple but you know there's a long tradition in the Christian Church of Baptizing infants and a lot of people think that what we're doing with baby dedications is the same thing as baptizing an infant I was baptized as an infant

don't remember it I was only a few months old but in the church in which I was being raised at the time they saw baptism for babies as Something that literally held them over for salvation Well, you can believe that if you want to but there's nothing in the Bible about it If you're gonna practice infant baptism, you're gonna have to do it without any biblical warrant or authority at all And And you know, that's your choice. You can choose to do that In fact, your whole religious experience can be made up of nothing more than tradition and here's what I want to do But I'm telling you you're gonna lose the world You're gonna lose the ability for people to look at your life and for you to bring them to Jesus All you're gonna be able to do is bring them to your tradition, but tradition doesn't save people Ritual doesn't save people Jesus saves people and that's what we need to be bringing people to is not a thing but a person a real honest-to-goodness Relationship with a person not where we're just fulfilling religious rituals that we really don't even know why we do You know, it's just really you know today. We're actually gonna celebrate communion I have to constantly remind people about communion that doesn't save you Because again, there's been years of teaching bad teaching unbiblical teaching and religious tradition that says Oh on your first communion or when you do this or when you do that and people get all confused and they'd never ask Themselves the question.

Why am I doing what I'm doing? They don't even ask They don't even look into it. Why do we do that? Why do we take communion? We do it because Jesus told us to do it in Remembrance of what he accomplished for us on the cross it's for something something that people do who have already been saved and They're and they're they're they're they're affirming and Reaffirming the covenant that they have that they've made with with God through Jesus Christ We'll actually talk about that in just a little bit, but you can see that it's it's just it's so prevalent in our Religious society and you know, you've heard me say how many hundreds of times just stay away from religion Don't even go near it Religion will kill you Jesus will save you But religion will mess you up, you know So, you know somebody ever comes up to you because you go to church and they say oh I heard you're kind of religious Do you correct them?

So you know what the thing I got going on with Jesus has nothing to do with religion It has everything to do about a love relationship with him because he died for me on the cross and I've accepted that death That burial and that resurrection on my behalf and that's not religion religion kills Jesus saves and brings to life again, you know Now in verses 16 and 17 Jesus kind of Elaborates a little bit about the role that tradition can play when he says no one sews a patch of Unshrunk cloth every time I read that word unshrunk. I think he made that up That's not a word. Doesn't that just sound like a non word unshrunk? It's unshrunk. I Don't know.

It just really seems strange, but it's right there in the Bible No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment for the patch will pull away from the garment making the terror worse I mean, this is just basic stuff. Everybody who washes clothes and sees that they shrink Realizes that if you've got an old favorite shirt that gets a tear in it and you put a patch over it with a piece Of cloth that's never been washed before It'll look great as long as you sew it on there and while you're wearing it the first time But when you go to put it in the wash, the old shirt isn't gonna shrink anymore But that patch will because that's never been shrunk before so it's gonna tear away From where it's been sewn and cause additional issues and Jesus is using this example to say I Haven't come here to follow traditions and patch up an old system I've come to bring a completely new Understanding to this thing he goes on to say and neither do men pour new wine into old wine Skins if they do the skins will burst the wine will run out and the wine skins will be ruined No, he says they pour new wine into new wine skins and both are preserved You know back in those days the way they would ferment the wine was take grape juice After it had been squeezed from the grapes and they'd pour it into animal skins And then they would tie it up and they would hang it in a nice dark cool place and let it ferment over time Well, I know if you've ever been involved in the fermentation process of frankly anything But it gives off gas and that's why they would use animal skins because initially at least those animal skins could Expand with the gas and it would still be okay Well, guess what after an animal skin has expanded so many times it's not going to expand anymore You put brand new grape juice in there tie it up hang it up in the shed and wait for it to ferment you're gonna come back to a mess on the floor because that gas is gonna cause the skin to expand and it's gonna break and It's gonna dump out over the floor and Jesus says that would be ridiculous That would be foolish to do that. And you know, probably one of the most challenging things that Jesus had to address During his public ministry was this kind of this attitude that is causing him motivating him to even give these words this idea of resistance to change and thinking that Jesus was coming to to kind of patch up an old system and or To use an old method for a new work of God. Jesus said I didn't come to do that I Have come to bring a new covenant we'll talk about that in just a second But can I just be honest with you and say that among the people in my own generation I and older I Far too often see this resistance to change You know, it seems like the older we get, you know The more resistant we just and you know That might not be that big of a deal if you decide that you're not gonna just get on board with computers and sitting Smartphones, you can probably live the rest of your life and be just fine But when it comes to walking the Lord with the Lord that mindset that resists change can be deadly Because you see we are people who are following the leading of the Holy Spirit. We're not following tradition We're not willing to say well we've always done it that way so that's the way we're gonna do it You know, it was good enough for the Apostle Paul.

It's good enough for me, you know sort of a thing We're not going there Because you know what when that attitude of resistance becomes the prevalent idea the Holy Spirit just moves on Do you know how many? Denominations in the United States of America right now are still doing the same thing They've been doing for hundreds of years and the Spirit just moved on He's not there anymore Because he's really not welcome there anymore because they they got Entrenched in their tradition and and their way of doing things and they became resistant To anything that was different or new or fresh and literally the move of God was no longer welcome among them This is the way we do things we sing these songs We dress this way and then that's all the only way it's gonna go and here it is It's stamped in concrete forever in a day, you know, it's like what's up with that If there's a if there's an example of following God that we saw in the Old Testament It was when the Jews were following the Lord in the wilderness. You remember when it says that the Lord appeared to them as a pillar of fire by day or excuse me by night and and a pillar of smoke by day and the Bible says whenever that pillar Up and moved they moved and if the Lord's presence stayed in one area for a week They stayed there for a week if he stayed there for a month They stayed there for a month if he if he got up and moved after 24 hours They got up and moved after 24 hours. You suppose that was very convenient You know, it's like you just got your everything kind of unpacked, you know I got the TV set up and the Holy Spirit says yep. We're heading on down to the next place Okay, pack it up guys.

God's moving, you know, well, that's never a convenient thing to do But here's the deal. We want to follow God You know, and we're not gonna be satisfied saying we're willing to live here. I want to be where God wants to be, you know And that means I have to be open to change not resistant and You know this whole issue this mindset of resistance has played into How we see the covenant that we are currently under do you guys you guys know that we're under the new covenant? We're not under the old covenant. I hope everybody knows that And I don't say that to be funny.

I say that because in the last 2,000 years Well-meaning Christians have been trying to shoehorn elements of the old covenant into the new covenant It never works very well, it doesn't work well at all But they keep trying And you know even happened during the days of Paul remember when Paul and Barnabas were out ministering for the Lord It says they were they were they were setting up churches and bringing people to the Lord suddenly these Jews from Jerusalem showed up You can read about this in the book of Acts and they started saying hey These people need to be circumcised these Gentiles because you know We're the Jews and that's the sign that God gave us under the old covenant And if they want to be saved they got to be circumcised Oh this believing in Jesus dying on the cross thing is all good and fine, but they got to be circumcised, too well, the Bible says that Paul and Barnabas it brought them into sharp

dispute with these men and they which means they argued and Eventually, they couldn't solve it. So they said well you guys want to hop a Ship back to Jerusalem because let's just go take this to the Apostles let's go see what they have to say on this thing and so they did and They go all the way back to Jerusalem to settle this issue and you guys I'm assuming you've read it Eventually Peter gets up and in front of everybody and he says listen We're not gonna put on these Gentiles something that we are our own people. It was too heavy to bear meaning the law And we don't believe that people are saved by keeping the law We believe people are saved by putting their faith in Jesus Christ. So that's it And it would have been great if it would have been settled from that point on but but you know What happened early in the early years of the church still goes on today? Even though the Old Testament says to us a new covenant is coming and it's different Let me show you a passage from Jeremiah chapter 31.

This is a powerful prophecy The time is coming declares the Lord. Look what God says through Jeremiah When I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah and look what he says here guys It will not be like the covenant I made with them Or rather made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt that tells us what covenant that Was that's the Mosaic Covenant That's the covenant they got in the wilderness through Moses the Ten Commandments and all the covenantal sort of rules and rituals and regulations That went along with it. Why? He even answers the question because they broke my covenant Though I was a husband to them declares the Lord now this is a very very important passage you guys because it tells us something very important about the two covenants and There's way more than two covenants in the Bible But the two that we really need to be concerned about the Mosaic Covenant and the new covenant that Jesus Inaugurated at the Last Supper. Do you guys remember that remember?

He took bread and took a cup and when he raised the cup He said this cup is the new covenant in my blood and he inaugurated a new covenant Well hundreds of years before that happened Jeremiah through the Lord said that it would happen. God's gonna make a new covenant. What's it gonna be like? Well, it's not gonna be like the Old Covenant Really yeah, it's not gonna be like the Old Covenant. Oh, by the way, that's good news You don't want to live under the Old Covenant The Old Covenant couldn't make anybody perfect the Old Covenant couldn't change your life It was just a bunch of rules.

But do you know what those rules led to this is the crazy thing? People want to keep laws to get to heaven. Do you know God never promised them? They'd get to heaven if they kept his law He never said that the Jews assumed it God here were the terms of the covenant you're ready Mosaic Covenant Here's my law all the valve shouts and thou shalt knots they're all there now, here's the deal keep my law and I'll bless you in the land Your enemies won't be able to stand against you You'll live at peace Your children

will grow up happy and healthy Your crops will be good. You'll have a bumper crop all the time and All the diseases that overcame the Egyptians aren't gonna touch you but keep my law and that's my promise God never said to them keep my law keep the Sabbath keep the food laws Keep this keep that never said to them and you will go to heaven not one time and Yet as Christians, what do we do?

We ignore what God said through Jeremiah that the new covenant coming is going to be different completely This is not gonna be like the Old Covenant. We ignore that and we think oh, no, we got to get these things in here How can I shoehorn this thing in? How can I cram this thing in here a little bit? And we've come up with all kinds of things that we figured, well, we've got to do that, you know. And so, whether it's Sabbath-keeping, or whether it's food laws, or you've got to wear just these clothes, or whatever it might be, we've found some way to bring the old covenant and just kind of cram it in there, you know, even though it goes against the Word of God.

And the two don't get along with each other. It's just, it's craziness. You know what it's like? It's like putting new wine in old wineskins. They bust, and all you have is a mess.

And you know what? A lot of Christian churches are a mess. Because they've been so resistant to change, they've ignored the Word of God as it relates to the difference between these covenants, and they've tried to marry them. It's just, it's ridiculous. And destructive, I'll add, to that as well.

You know, one of the things I love about taking communion, frankly, is that when we do, we're doing something that is similar to kind of the Old Testament. When they were under, when the Jews were under the old covenant, every so often God would gather his people together, and they would reaffirm the covenant. And that was probably a good thing for them to do. They would, somebody would get up and read the terms of the covenant, and they'd say, here's the terms. God says, do this, do this, do this, do that, do this, do that.

You guys agree to do this and that, and this and that, and this and that. And the promise is, I'll bless you in the land. There's the terms of the covenant. So, you know, they did that every so often. Well, that's what Jesus gave us in communion, you guys.

He says, I want you to come together, and as often as you, as often as you come together with the bread and the wine, I want you to do this in remembrance of me. And here's the terms of the covenant. You ready? This bread is my body, given for you. This cup is my blood, shed for you.

Those are the terms. Accept or receive my body and my blood, what I did for you on the cross, and your sins will be forgiven. Now, can you handle those terms? Well, now, wait a minute. Don't I gotta keep some rules, too?

What about that Sabbath thingy? What about this? What about that? I gotta, you gotta give me a rule. You gotta give me something that I can, you know, feel good about.

No, it's not about feeling good. It's about having faith in what Jesus did on the cross. And that's why I love communion, because it's all about what Jesus did on the cross. There's nothing about you and me in that whole process of communion. It's all about him.

And that's why Jesus said, do this in remembrance of me. Not you, me. It's all about Jesus and what he accomplished for you and I. Those are the terms of the covenant. Can you handle it?

Can you handle those terms? I think that's probably about the best offer you've ever had going. And if you haven't accepted the terms of the new covenant, I want to encourage you to do it. I want to encourage you to do it today. Those are good terms.

And you're not going to get a better offer. Here's how the offer goes. To all who received him, to those who believed on his name, he gave the right to become children of God. John 1, verse 12. To all who received him.

That's what we do with communion. We symbolize that we've received. We take the bread. We receive it. We take the cup.

We receive it. Symbolizing accepting what Jesus did for us. ♪♪♪