

## PARABLES OF POWER #1

### Patching Up Is Not Enough

Read Luke 5:29-39

#### Even men need a doctor sometimes

Jesus had just come from a feast (Luke 5:29-30). Two questions. The first was: 'Why do you eat with sinners?' (Luke 5:30).

The answer was, 'I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance'

- Jesus came to reach those who are aware of their need.
- Note that he did not come just to call sinners – but to call sinners to repentance. (32-32)

#### The 'fast' way to heaven

The second question was, 'Why don't your followers fast?' (33)

Who asked the question?

- 'Disciples of John' (Matthew) – John fasted often: a noble ministry
- 'People' (Mark) – who had been taught to do so
- 'Pharisees' (Luke) – who took pride in it (Luke 18:12)
- Fasting was only required on Day of Atonement (Lev 16:29-31)
- Also on special occasions (eg Joel 2:12)
- Many people felt it was obligatory
- But the issue is of more than fasting – it is of merit with God

#### Popular theology is always based on what we do for God

- Eg Five pillars of Islam – confession that there is no God but Allah and that Mohammed is his prophet; fasting during Ramadan; giving alms; praying five times a day; and if possible, the Haj (pilgrimage to Mecca).
- Many good and sincere people do these things thinking they will make them acceptable to God
- But the good news is based on what God has done for us
- Religious observance is our response to what God has done, not what we have done. The basis of our acceptance is found in God, not us.

#### People are always reluctant to change old ways

- John the Baptist – such a good ministry! Hundreds of baptisms, fasting and prayer, people repenting... Why change?
- The Reformation: 'Priests have been celibate for a thousand years so they could focus on their work and not be distracted by family responsibilities, and now you want to marry!...'
- The missionary movement: In 1791, When William Carey proposed to his Calvinistic Baptist church that they should use 'means' to proclaim the good

## Parables of Power – Patches Don't Work

news to the heathen, he was told, 'Young man, sit down. When God wants to save the heathen he will do it without your help or mine...'

- The Charismatic movement: 'For hundreds of years the church survived without prophesying or speaking in tongues, why do it now?'
- Why do we resist change? Just because we are used to doing it that way? The only question is – what does Scripture say? If something is biblical we should be prepared to do it!
- Of course not all change is good: we need to be discerning. This is where we must always use the Bible as our guide. Neither tradition nor innovation – but the Word of God.

### 1. True religion is not a patch-up job (36)

- Just putting on a patch will not work. You can put as many patches as you like to cover the holes on an old garment but an old garment is still an old garment
- Eg Clayton's Charismatics who think that by raising hands or clapping they are 'charismatic'. This is just putting on a patch. Total change is needed.
- Eg counsellors – solving the presenting issue may not be enough. This may still just be a patch-up job. The fundamental issue still needs to be addressed (31-32)

### 2. Get a life! (37)

- New wine = *neos* ie new in time
- New wineskin = *kainos* ie new in nature,\* (ESV = 'fresh')
- The history of 'denominational wineskins' shows they have rarely been supple enough or able to stretch enough to accommodate the new wine.
- The Medieval Church could not accommodate the Reformation
- The Reformation churches could not accommodate the Anabaptists
- Although Wesley was a member of the Church of England till the day he died and longed to see it renewed, ultimately it could not contain Methodism
- A century later, Methodism could not embrace the ministry of William Booth and so the Salvation Army began
- A hundred years ago, the established churches were not able to make room for Pentecostalism

### 3. Old wine or new? (39)

- Sadly, even when offered new wine people may prefer the old
- It is hard to break old habits and ways: we don't mind a bit of patching but we don't want total change
- Jesus calls us to repentance—maybe even of our pride in a noble background or religious culture
- Do you need new life? Invite God to renew your wineskin (2 Corinthians 5:17)
- Do you need the empowering of the Spirit? Loosen your wineskin so it will not burst when the Spirit comes
- If we don't allow God to work in us and make us new, the wine will be lost.

**SOMETHING TO THINK OR TALK ABOUT**

**Remember:** You don't have to answer all the questions. Choose those that seem most relevant at this time.

**Read** Luke 5:27-39

Biblical

1. What can you find out about Pharisees? (30)
2. Some churches today invite people to participate as members without requiring a change of lifestyle (eg permitting sexually immoral people to minister). How does verse 31 relate to this?
3. Who is the Bridegroom? (34) How would he be taken from them?
4. What kind of contemporary illustration might Jesus use today (instead of repairing an old garment with a new patch)? (36) Would these suggestions be an improvement? Why or why not?

Personal and practical

5. Jesus was accused of fraternising with sinners (30). How much do you think members of your church could be charged with the same thing today? Why? Is this good or bad?
6. What are some 'old wineskin' issues that hold us back from receiving God's best today?
7. Describe times in your life when you have preferred old wine to the new wine of God's blessing. (39) How did you change?
8. Think about your cell group or church – what are some examples of 'new wine' you could 'drink'?
9. Memorise: Luke 5:38

## About Dr Barry Chant

Barry Chant is Senior Pastor of the Wesley International Congregation in Sydney, Australia. He is a regular speaker at church services, seminars, conferences and conventions. Hundreds of thousands of his books have been sold around the world. He has degrees in arts, theology and ministry, a diploma in education and a PhD in history. He was the initiator and former president of Tabor College, Australia.

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