

Luke 5b: HG Bishop Youssef

His Grace Bishop Youssef ~ فسوي ابن الالة فاين تاطع • LUKE 5: 27 - 39 ~ Bible Study (English & Arabic - يبرع)

Jesus calls a Tax Collector

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²⁷ After these things He went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, "Follow Me." ²⁸ So he left all, rose up, and followed Him.

- Levi traditionally is identified as St Matthew
 - Matthew means "Gift of God"
 - Matthew was a gift to God to the Christian faith
 - He wrote his gospel to the Jews and what helped him write it was:
 - his scholarly knowledge of the Old Testament
 - his intimate understanding of the Pharisees and Sadducees
 - his ability to penetrate the falsehood of the religious hierarchy of that era
 - He was a tax-collector, who were known for their greed, violence and wickedness
- Jesus called him to be one of His followers and even one of the Twelve (inner circle). This reveals the purpose of the ministry of the Lord Jesus who came to redeem all men "I did not come to call righteous, but sinners to repentance"
 - The Lord did not choose based on outward appearance - or He would have chosen the Pharisees, Scribes and Religious Leaders
 - God is looking at the heart
 - Many people are sinners from the outside, but they are waiting for a touch of grace that will convert their life completely.
 - Matthew was a sinner but once the grace of God touched him, he converted completely.
- When God called Peter, James, Andrew, John they immediately left everything and followed Him. In the same way, Levi (Matthew) left all and followed Him.
 - This was not an easy decision - it needs determination, self-denial, full trust and confidence and God

²⁹ Then Levi gave Him a great feast in his own house. And there were a great number of tax collectors and others who sat down with them. ³⁰ And their scribes and the Pharisees complained against His disciples, saying, "Why do You eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?"

³¹ Jesus answered and said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. ³² I have not come to call *the* righteous, but sinners, to repentance."

- St Matthew's Sincerity
 - The integrity and sincerity of St Matthew is evidenced by the great feast in honor of the Lord Jesus Christ
 - Maybe his friends, the tax collectors and sinners, were moved by the kindness and friendship of this New Teacher - they heard about Him and how He called a tax collector (who was looked down upon and shunned by the religious leaders of Israel) to be one of His followers. They assembled in the house of St Matthew to see this kind, friendly, compassionate New Teacher
 - Maybe Matthew, being touched by the Lord's compassion and kindness, made a great effort to gather as many as he could to his house to introduce them to the new Master so that maybe their life would be changed too
 - This is one of the best ways in Christian service... if you are really touched by the Love of God, talk to others about God. Invite them to be in His presence. Invite them to taste and see how sweet it is to be with the Lord.
 - He demonstrated publicly his new way of life... I am not a greedy tax collector anymore, but I am a disciple of Christ
- There is always someone negative to attack the works done for the glory of God
 - The Pharisees and Scribes were offended that Jesus, who pretended to be a good Teacher, a Prophet, lowered Himself to go and have company with such men: sinners, publicans, tax-collectors
 - For them, the tax-collectors were considered dishonest men who abused their authority
 - The same happened when the Lord said to Zacchaeus "I will go and stay in your house"
- They disrespectfully said to the disciples: "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?"
 - Although they directed their words to the disciples, not the Lord, their intention is clearly directed at the Lord Himself
 - The Lord takes up the case and vindicates His disciples and Himself
- Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick
 - This is one of the sayings of the Lord which sank very deep in the hearts of the hearers
 - Those who *believe* they are in good health, stand as if they don't need assistance of any physician
 - Scribes and Pharisees, in their own opinion, believe they are free from the disease of sin... you are righteous and blameless according to the Law of Moses... so you don't feel that you need Me. I am the Physician who came to cure the maladies of the souls and bodies of men
 - Nowadays many people believe they do not need God and deny the existence of God or say "I don't know whether He exists or doesn't exist" (agnostic) as if this knowledge is unimportant to them... or they don't need the Church. They believe they are righteous. They are like the scribes and Pharisees - judging everybody and making themselves to be righteous.

- Those who are sick with sin and desire healing, He is there for them. He came to cure and save them.
- That's why He conversed with the sinners...
- That's why on the Cross, when He heard the thief praying and talking to Him, He assured him of his salvation
- His ministry as Physician was among the sinners not among the righteous
- The Lord did not dispute here that their form of righteousness is false... because even if He told them that, they would not heed Him.
 - People who are prideful don't listen to any advice or correction... they are wise in their own eyes.
 - This righteousness is dangerous righteousness because it produces a man who is very proud and fails to see their need for God
 - Those who considered themselves sinners were healed... but those who didn't, did not go for healing because of their pride and arrogance.
- In the definition of a difficult personality, it's not the people who have problems but those who don't realize or acknowledge that they have a problem
 - Addicts who recognize they have a problem are not difficult to deal with, but an addict who is in denial is
 - So who are the more difficult people to deal with? Not the tax collectors... but the Pharisees.
 - The Lord came to seek those who are lost
 - He came for both the elder son and the prodigal son, but unfortunately the elder son did not benefit from Him
 - Those who believe they are in the sheepfold did not benefit from His ministry, but those who realized they were the lost sheep
- In this story, St Matthew includes one more detail
 - **But go and learn what *this* means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.'** (Matthew 9:13)
 - Reference to Hosea 6:6
 - You can offer as many sacrifices as you want but if you don't have a merciful heart, none of your sacrifices will be accepted.
- When the Lord answered them wisely as to why He is sitting among the tax-collectors and publicans, and they could not answer Him, they try to look at something else from a spiritual perspective to condemn the Lord

The Lord is Questioned About Fasting

23:30

³³ Then they said to Him, "Why do the disciples of John fast often and make prayers, and likewise those of the Pharisees, but Yours eat and drink?"

³⁴ And He said to them, "Can you make the friends of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them? ³⁵ But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them; then they will fast in those days."

³⁶ Then He spoke a parable to them: "No one puts a piece from a new garment on an old one; otherwise the new makes a tear, and also the piece that was *taken* out of the new does not match the old. ³⁷ And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine will burst the wineskins and be spilled, and the wineskins will be ruined. ³⁸ But new wine must be put into new wineskins, and both are preserved. ³⁹ And no one, having drunk old *wine*, immediately desires new; for he says, 'The old is better.' "

- Other Gospel Accounts

- "The disciples of John and of the Pharisees were fasting. Then they came and said to Him..." (Mark 2:18)
- "Then the disciples of John came to Him, saying, 'Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but Your disciples do not fast?'" (Matthew 9:14)
- Why would the disciples of John ask this?
 - Perhaps how the Lord conducted His life surprised and disturbed the followers of St John the Baptist (because St John was ascetic)
 - Presence at feasting
 - Association with publicans
 - Choice of a tax-collector to be disciple
- Their intention is to discredit him
 - Everyone respects John and recognizes him as a great prophet... and his disciples fast. So why don't Yours?
 - Fasting is an expression of humility before God in mourning, repentance and spiritual glorification
 - As if they are telling Him: "You are calling people to repentance, but why aren't you teaching them to fast?"
 - They want to start a conflict between Jesus and John the Baptist... John the Baptist is admired, so if they succeed in this, they would discredit the Lord Jesus Christ
- The Lord gives them four illustrations:
 - Feasting and Fasting
 - New Patch on Old Garment
 - New Wine in Old Wineskins
 - Drink New Wine After Drinking Old Wine
- Feasting and Fasting
 - He starts with an analogy that they are familiar with... Jewish marriage ceremony
 - John the Baptist testified that Christ is "the Bridegroom" (John 3:29) and that the coming of the Bridegroom is the fulfillment of joy ("Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled")
 - The Lord does not reject or deny the concept of fasting, but is telling them that this present time is not the time of fasting. But when the time comes that He is taken away, it will be the appropriate time to fast.
 - After the Ascension of the Lord, the disciples were fasting... and many times in the Book of Acts
 - St John Chrysostom said: "He is again establishing His argument by illustration from common life and what He says is like this: 'The disciples have not yet become strong. They have not yet been renewed by the Spirit. And on persons in that state, one ought not to lay any burden of injunction.'"

- The Lord intends to teach His disciples step by step
 - "But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them" - earliest hint at His death and Resurrection and Ascension
 - New and Old (2 and 3)
 - The point is that we cannot fit His New Covenant into old forms
 - New Patch on Old Garment:
 - Disfigures the New Garment by having to cut from it, and damages the old garment because the new piece will shrink and pull the old worn out garment into pieces. And they won't match!
 - New Wine in Old Skins:
 - Skins of animals were sewn together to make bags for wine. The strength of newly fermented wine causes wineskins to expand. New wineskins have the ability to expand... but if new wine is put into old wineskins that have already expanded, the new wine will cause them to burst and spill all the wine
 - The incompatibility of the Old Covenant given to Moses, and the New Covenant given by Christ
 - The Lord did not destroy the Old, but fulfilled it on our behalf and gave us His righteousness as a gift.
 - The Old is Better
 - Someone who is used to the Old will not give it up quickly
 - The Lord is identifying a problem with those who believe they are satisfied with the old wine like the Scribes and Pharisees. They are satisfied with the righteousness of the Law
 - Many of John's disciples and the Pharisee's disciples would prefer old ways of righteousness to the new methods of approaching the Kingdom of Heaven
 - Jesus would not have put His disciples on strict and austere discipleship lest they are tempted and leave Him...
 - When God took Israel out of Egypt, He did not bring them by the way of the Philistines lest they see war and return to Egypt
 - Christ wanted to train up His followers gradually to the discipline of the New Covenant because no man having drunk old wine will immediately desire new wine. He will say the old is better because he's used to it.
 - Those who refused to embrace the message of the Lord Jesus and His establishment of the Kingdom of Heaven, and closed their minds and hearts to His mission, will miss the best that God can offer them
 - The New Covenant promised in Jeremiah 31
 - These illustrations stress the unwillingness of the Lord to make the ceremonial fasts of the Old Testament a large feature of His New Kingdom. That's why He did not fast the old fasts of the Old Covenant...
 - He wanted to establish new wineskins: the disciples who would be able to receive the new teaching
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