

# Parables on Legalism - 3

by Robert B. Thompson

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*The New Covenant is a voluntary service where you serve God out of love and joy, without expecting anything in return, unlike the Old Covenant which is a contract where you serve God in exchange for blessings.*

**Duration:** 1:04:13

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, Matthew 20:1-16, Luke 18:5-6, Luke 18:9

**Topics:** "New Covenant", "Spiritual Service"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker continues their study on the parables, specifically focusing on the difference between the old covenant and the new covenant. They use the parable in Matthew chapter 20 to illustrate this difference. The parable talks about a landowner who hires laborers for his vineyard and makes a contract with each group, regardless of the length of time they work. The speaker emphasizes that this parable is about God looking for servants and that our entire lives should be a service to Him. They also highlight the importance of not being legalistic and instead being led by the Spirit.

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## Transcript

Let's bow heads in prayer. Our Heavenly Father, we thank you for your love for us. As we bow before you, we pray that your name will be glorified through us this evening.

Lord Jesus, we are weak, we are helpless, we are needy, we lean upon you. We know that those who trust in you will never be disappointed. We live by faith, we don't live by feeling this evening.

We don't depend on our feelings, we depend on you who never change. God who never changes is our Father. God Almighty who rules the universe is our Father.

And our friend, we praise you Lord Jesus that you have become our elder brother and that you are always at the right hand of the Father, interceding for us. And we want to come in honesty before you. We don't claim to be anything.

Anything good in us is what you have done. We acknowledge that and we worship you, we praise you. Be glorified in our midst, O God, be glorified.

Confirm your word with signs following, we pray. O we trust you, Heavenly Father. In Jesus name, Amen.

We continue our study in the parables on legalism. We looked at six of them so far and we want to look at four more this evening. And the first one is in Matthew chapter 20.

Jesus spoke these parables to show us the difference between the old covenant and the new covenant. To show us the difference between being under law and being led by the Spirit. The difference it will make in our life.

And in Matthew chapter 20, he spoke about the Kingdom of Heaven is like a landowner, verse 1, who went out to hire laborers for his vineyard. He is talking here about God looking for servants. The Lord Jesus looking for people who will serve him on earth.

And that does not mean full time work, it doesn't mean just ministry. All of our life is a service for God. It applies to every area of our life.

And he says here, there are these different groups of laborers. He started at six o'clock in the morning and agreed, verse 2, with certain laborers for a denarius for a day. That was one day's wages.

He said, this is how much I will pay you, let's say, if a laborer's wages is a hundred rupees a day. He said, okay, I will give you a hundred rupees today. Please go and work for me.

And then he saw some others at nine o'clock in the morning and he made an agreement with them. Whatever is right, verse 4, I will give you. And they went.

And at twelve o'clock in the afternoon, verse 5, three o'clock in the afternoon, he did the same thing. He did the same thing means he made a contract with them. Now the important thing I want you to notice is, though these people work for different lengths of time, he made a contract with all of them.

You work for me, I will give you this much. And that's what he told all these four groups. You work for me, I will give you this much.

And when he came finally at five o'clock in the evening, verse 6, he went out and found some people still standing around. He said, why have you been standing here the whole day long? He said, what is the difference? He did not make a contract with them. That is the essential difference between the New Covenant and the Old Covenant.

The Old Covenant is a contract. In the New Covenant it's not like that. He says, go and work in my vineyard.

And they never asked, how much will you pay us? What will we get? They went. They said, fine. Even if we get nothing, that's okay.

In the Old Testament, God, people serve God in a contract. And if you want to read that contract, you can see in Deuteronomy 28, the whole chapter, it says, if you serve me, you obey me, I will make you prosperous. That's a contract.

That's how he said to these people, I will give you a denarius a day. Or, I will bless your children. I will bless your nation.

I will bless your business. I will do this, you serve me. You obey my commandments and I will do this for you.

And other part of the contract was also, if you don't obey me, I will punish you. I will give you sickness. I will give you madness and blindness and all types of problems and you will have financial difficulty, etc., everything.

And as long as they obeyed God, God kept his part of the contract and blessed them. When they disobeyed God, again God kept his part of the contract and punished them. It was a contract.

In the new covenant, Jesus is our forerunner. He is the perfect servant of the Lord, servant of Jehovah. He is called the servant of Jehovah in the book of Isaiah.

And we can ask ourselves, since he is our forerunner, the one in whose footsteps we are to run, what contract did he make with his father? Did the father tell him, well my son, obey me and I will make you prosperous. I will bless your business. Did he become the richest carpenter in Nazareth? There was no one who obeyed the father like him and yet he had no place to lay his head.

When he wanted to show them that Caesar's head was on a coin, he didn't even have a coin in his pocket. He said, can somebody please give me a coin. This is the one who obeyed the father perfectly.

He never served the father for a contract. The Old Testament Levites, God told them, you must not do any other job. You are full time workers.

And all the eleven tribes will come and give you ten percent of their income. So eleven tribes give ten percent to one tribe of their income. That's a hundred and ten percent on an average of what each person gets.

That means the Levites got actually more than a hundred percent on an average income in terms of the average of all the eleven tribes. And they were okay. They didn't need land or property.

It was a contract. You serve me, I will make everybody pay their tithes to you. And you receive the tithes and you serve me.

And when the people didn't pay their tithes, we read in different times, when they came back from Babylon, the Levites complained. These people are not paying their tithes to us. We are not able to survive with our wives and children.

So, I think it was Nehemiah's time. He said, you got to pay the tithes. And Malachi said, if you don't pay the tithes, I will punish you.

It was a contract. And Jesus came. He never received tithes from anybody.

He was a full-time worker. Nobody paid him tithes. He received gifts, we read in Luke chapter 8. Some rich women gave him gifts and he used that to take care of his needs and the needs of his twelve disciples.

But there was no contract. This is one of the fundamental differences between the Old Testament and the New Testament. And we can say that among Christians, not only Christian workers, among Christians, there are these two attitudes towards living for God and serving God.

One is on the basis of a contract. If I serve God, this is what I will get. If I live for God, I will get some benefit.

You know, it's like we used to find in CFC, certain nominal Christians used to send their children to Sunday school. Why? Do you think those Christians, nominal Christians, wanted their children to be wholehearted disciples of Jesus? No! They wanted their children to obey their parents at home. It was for some personal benefit that they wanted their children to be godly.

And it's possible that you want your children to go to Sunday school and come to church, not because you want them to be radical disciples of Jesus, but so that they'll behave better and respect you at home. You are under the Old Covenant. You are a father, 100% under the Old Covenant.

You are not interested in your child being a radical disciple of Jesus. In fact, some of those nominal Christians, when they discovered that their children are becoming serious Christians, they pulled them out of Sunday school. Hey, we didn't want all this.

We just wanted them to be well behaved at home. So, if you examine your own life, you know, we've got to be really honest. I believe many, many Christians never get out of the Old Covenant because they will not honestly admit that the spirit of the Old Covenant is in them.

You know, God really loves honest people. A person who confesses his sin is immediately forgiven. Even if he's a thief on the cross, last minute he'll go to paradise.

But if you're not honest, you can go to church every day like the Pharisees went to the synagogue and go to hell. God loves honest people. And when God shows you something about yourself and you honestly acknowledge, that's true of me Lord, you can be delivered.

But if you don't acknowledge it, you live in that state forever and ever. And that's the condition of a lot of people. It's not because they're bad or evil.

It's because they're not honest. So if you examine your life and you find that there's something of this contract principle in your relationship with God, a contract principle on which you come to the meetings. Do you come to the church for some benefit for yourself? I don't know.

Are you getting some benefit for yourself by coming to a particular church? I'm not talking about spiritual benefit that will help you closer to God. We all want that. I'm not talking about that.

But some material benefit, some earthly benefit. Some earthly benefit for your children. You will never ever enter the new covenant till you finish doing business with God.

See, there are a lot of people today who preach the gospel like this. So and so gave their tithes to my ministry. And see how God blessed them.

They pull up some fellow, give your testimony. And he says, I gave my tithes to this ministry. And God gave me a better job.

Or he gave me a car or he gave me a promotion. And multitudes of dumb Christians, dumb, stupid, foolish Christians listen to that on television or in a meeting and say, boy, they're all covetous, selfish, greedy people who are interested in earthly profit and say, boy, let me give to this ministry. I'll also get a promotion.

I'll also get a car. What is that? Is that Christianity? That is as far removed from true Christianity as hell is from heaven. God is not a businessman.

He's not entering into a business contract with you. The old covenant has been abolished. Today the Lord says, if you love me, keep my commandments.

And what do you get? In the world you shall have tribulation. Want it? That's not what the contract in the Old Testament. The Old Testament was in the world you'll have prosperity.

Jesus said in John 16, 33, in me you'll have peace, but in the world you'll have tribulation. What sort of contract is this? Have you ever heard a preacher tell people that? Come to Jesus and you'll get tribulation. You want to come? That's why people live under the old covenant.

They are being deceived into doing business with God. And they're told if you give more, you'll get more. It's something like dealing with a bank.

You know, the different banks competing with each other to offer higher interest. And these preachers saying, hey, don't give it to them. Give it to God.

He'll give you a much higher interest. The whole thing is business. It's Babylon.

You read in Revelation 18, Babylon is a business empire. And the fundamental motivation in Babylon is money. So, if you, this is the difference between these two groups of people.

There's one group of twelve o'clock morning, six o'clock, three o'clock, six o'clock, nine o'clock, twelve o'clock, three o'clock, four groups of people, all who made a contract. And the last group of people made no contract. And when the time came to reward them, the owner said in verse eight, call the laborers and pay them their wages.

And the first, last group came and they got a hundred rupees of full day's wages. And the people who came at six o'clock in the morning, that said, that's great. If those guys got a hundred rupees for one hour, we're going to get one thousand two hundred rupees for twelve hours.

Because we work for twelve hours. And so the first people came and they thought they'd receive more, verse ten. And what did they get? They also got a hundred rupees.

And they began to grumble. Verse eleven. Did you read that? They began to grumble.

Any person who grumbles, you can be absolutely sure he's under the old covenant. Without any doubt. Do you grumble about something that God has not given you, which you think you deserve? Some prayer you prayed and God didn't answer it? And you have a grumbling against God? God, why didn't you answer my prayer? You are under the old covenant.

Because you think you deserve. I warn people, don't ever tell God, give me what I deserve. It's a very dangerous prayer.

You know what he'll do for you? He'll send you to hell. Don't ever pray that prayer. Lord, give me what I deserve.

I pray, Lord, give me what I don't deserve. These people, these contract people felt, I deserve twelve hundred rupees. If you have blessed that person so much, I deserve to be blessed more.

And if you got that attitude, you look at another brother whom you look down upon. Yeah, yeah, he's not as spiritual as me. And he got something.

I should get more. You are under the old covenant. Face up to it.

You can't rejoice that that fellow got twelve times what you got. Even though he came so late. And you grumble.

If you grumble, you're under the old covenant. If you feel you deserve more than other believers, you're under the old covenant. If you feel you deserve anything at all from God except hell, you're under the old covenant.

I've been a Christian forty-five years. And I can say, today, I deserve hell. But Jesus died for me.

And I'll never go to hell. Never. I deserve hell.

Till the end of my life, I'll deserve it. I'll go to heaven and say, Lord, I deserve hell. But you died for me.

Jesus died for me. And I'll never go there. It's because many people don't recognize this, that they look down on other believers.

They grumble against God. They grumble against people. All grumbling and murmuring has disappeared from my life completely.

Hundred percent. Because I've come to the new covenant. I have no contract with God.

Everything is mercy and grace. Everything is mercy and grace. Nothing that I deserve.

That's why my life is so happy. My prayer is answered, I say praise the Lord. If the prayer is not answered, I say praise the Lord.

Because I deserve nothing in any case. This is why you're not happy. Many people are grumpy.

And they don't get something, which they think they deserve. And then the other thing, these people who came in the first hour said in verse 12, they compared themselves. These lost men have worked only one hour.

We have worked twelve hours. That's another characteristic of a man under the old covenant. They compare themselves with other believers.

He's not as wholehearted as I am. He has not served God as much as I have. He's not as spiritual as I am.

Definitely you're under the old covenant. They compared themselves and they said, see how much we have sacrificed. We, verse 12, we have borne the burden and the heat of the day.

Oh, all those who are so aware of how much they have sacrificed for the Lord. Old covenant people. New covenant people never feel they have sacrificed anything for the Lord.

Do you feel you have sacrificed much for the Lord? Do you feel you have sacrificed much for the church? Do you feel you have opened your home to the church? You've suffered inconvenience for the church. You've given money to the church. Brother, sister, please enter the new covenant.

How long will you sit there under the old covenant? How long will you sit meditating on your sacrifices? We have borne the burden and heat of the day. Do you complain that other people in the church are not taking their responsibilities and everything falls on you? I don't complain. I'm tempted to think like that sometimes.

Lord, why does it all fall on me? But I say, I will not think like that. I will not. If you think like that, you're under the old covenant.

When you come to the new covenant, you don't think like that. You don't say, why in the world is he not taking some responsibility? It doesn't matter. If he doesn't do it, I do it.

That's all. If I have to do the work of two people, I do the work of two people. If I have to do the work of ten people, I do the work of ten people and God will give me grace for it.

That's how I believe. I believe that. I found that in numerous situations.

I refuse to complain because I'm not an old covenant servant. I refuse to ask why somebody else didn't do something. Why I have to bear the burden and heat of it.

It doesn't even occur to me. I say, Lord, it's a privilege to serve you. You know, a person who lives under the law, he compares the sacrifices he has made with other people.

Why aren't they sacrificing? You know, like Peter said, Lord, I'm going to suffer and die. What about John? In John 21, Jesus said, that's none of your business. You follow me.

You know, people make, sometimes, we were speaking earlier about some sisters who remove their jewels. And they're always looking at other sisters who seem to be very happy and wearing their jewels. And it really bugs them.

They shouldn't be happy. They should be miserable. But unfortunately, you're the one who's miserable.

It's sad, isn't it? And so I, you know, to me, I'll tell you, obeying God is like eating ice cream. I just enjoy obeying God. I enjoy obeying God and taking off, not wearing jewelry or anything like that.

That to me is like ice cream. Then you know it's real obedience to God. But if you're taking off your jewelry or obeying God in any other area is like taking a bitter medicine.

And it is like that for some people. Here are four boys. And one of them is sick.

So you give them a bitter medicine. And he's upset. Why don't the others also have this bitter medicine? Why only I have to take it? Why only I have to remove my ornaments? What about her? Brother, you better put back your ornaments.

Be happy. This is the mark of people who are under the law. What they're taking is like a bitter medicine.

And they're always wondering why other people are not taking this bitter medicine. If you were doing it out of joy for the Lord, it's four cups of ice cream there. And the other three boys don't want ice cream.

Praise the Lord. I can have it all. Great.

How do you obey God? Is it like bitter medicine? Or is it like eating ice cream? You know, if you're always looking down, why aren't the other people doing that? Why aren't the other people doing that? Is he taking the bitter medicine? Is she taking the bitter medicine? You're under the law. How much are they getting? Are they getting also a hundred rupees like me? They shouldn't get it. But when obeying God for the new covenant person is like eating ice cream.

If they don't want it, don't want to eat ice cream, fine. That's okay. I enjoy it.

Ask yourself. And now is the time to be honest. Okay.

Let's go to the next parable. And that is, we don't want to look too much at that because we already saw it earlier in our study on Pharisees. In Luke chapter 18 and verse 9, Jesus spoke about the Pharisee and the publican.

The Pharisee and the tax collector, you know, they went into the temple to pray. Here is another parable. We looked at it quite a bit in our study of Pharisees, Phariseism.

So we don't want to go into it in too much detail, but I just want to mention it that the essential, if in the first parable, the difference was, are you serving the Lord in a contract or voluntarily out of love? Here the test is, are you a self-satisfied person or a person who's always got a sense of spiritual need in your life? The person who's under the old covenant is satisfied with himself. I'm okay. But the person who's under the new covenant, he's never satisfied with himself.

There's always a sense of need in his life. I mean, he's satisfied with his material condition. He's perfectly content in all situations, whether God gives him 500 rupees a month or 50,000 rupees a month, he's perfectly happy because he knows that God determines his financial circle.

He's not comparing himself with others. I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about spiritually.

Spiritually, a new covenant Christian is never satisfied with his progress towards Christ-likeness. He always feels, Oh Lord, I'm a sinner. But he's not thinking of the same sins that he was defeated by 20 years ago.

He's aware of need in new areas. That's the point in this story. The Pharisee says, Oh, I thank God.

I'm okay. You know, like the elder in Laodicea, I'm rich and I increase goods and I have need of nothing. That's how the Pharisee felt here.

I'm okay. I do all these things and I'm alright. But the other person, he beat his breast, it says in Luke 18 and verse 13.

He said, Oh God, be merciful to me, the sinner. T-H-E, the sinner. That's the literal translation.

Meaning, I feel, Oh God, there's only one sinner in the whole world. That's me. You know, a new covenant person feels like that many times in his life.

When Paul said, I am the chief of sinners in 1 Timothy 1.15, he wasn't just acting humble. The closer we get to God, the more we become aware of sin in our life. And every now and then we get a flash of revelation of the holiness of God.

Like Isaiah saw the glory of God. Isaiah was the holiest man in Israel. But one day when he saw the glory of God, he said, Oh, woe unto me.

I'm such an unclean man. Was he an unclean man? He was the holiest man in Israel. But he felt so unclean in God's presence.

The person under the old covenant never feels like that. He never has moments when he's floored. Have you ever had moments in your life where you feel like putting your mouth in the dust and say, Oh God, I'm such a rotten sinner.

You didn't feel a little proud somewhere about something you accomplished. That's all. That's enough to floor a new covenant man.

Or he acted just slightly selfishly somewhere. Or he spoke one rude word and it floors him. Oh God, I'm such a sinner.

That's, that's the stacks collector. And he went home justified. He went home happy.

That's the meaning of being poor in spirit. The first thing that Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God. And to me that word, if I think of the kingdom of God like a huge building with a thousand rooms in it, like a massive hotel with a thousand rooms and here is a master key that will open every door and make, give me the treasures that are in that room.

Then I can take the master key and open another room and get all the treasures there and open the master key in the other room and open the, get the treasures there. The master key is being poor in spirit because Jesus said the whole kingdom of God is belongs to that person. So it's very important to understand what it is to be poor in spirit.

To be poor in spirit can be compared to the poverty of a beggar who comes to the gate every day and asks for money and you know he'll come back tomorrow and he's not ashamed to come to your gate. Haven't you seen some beggars who come repeatedly to your gate asking for food? Say, what about what I gave you yesterday? Oh, that's finished. I'm in need today.

Five years later, he's back at your gate again. What about all these things I've given you all these five years? Oh, that's all over. I'm in need again.

I learned something from these beggars. If you keep your eyes open, you can learn from everything that happens around you. And the Lord showed me that that is how I must wait at his gate.

It says in Proverbs 8, verse 34 onwards, blessed is the man who waits at my gate. I want to wait at his gate every morning like that beggar. Lord, I'm a needy person.

What about the grace I gave you yesterday? Oh, that was enough only for yesterday, Lord. I need more today. I need power for today.

I need an anointing for today. Yesterday's anointing will not do for me today. I need it afresh.

That's to be poor in spirit. And the more you see your need, you don't waste your, you don't concentrate on other people's needs. I really believe, let me say this very lovingly, my dear brothers and sisters, I want

to say this as lovingly as I can.

Many of you are defeated because you are concentrating so much on the need you see in other people. You've heard me say, forget it, forget it, forget it for years, but you still concentrate on the need you see in other people. Well, what can I do? You will be defeated.

At least today, why not stop that and say, Lord, I don't want to see the need in other people. I want to see the need in myself. I don't want to find fault with that person, the other person, the other person.

It's none of my business. I see such a need in myself. Has any beggar come to your gate asking for money for another beggar? Maybe there are some beggars like that, but I've never found one like that.

They all come for themselves. Why don't we come to God like that? Have you ever heard a beggar come to your gate and say, you know, I find a lot of beggars there very needy. I'll tell you the faults of all those beggars.

No, these beggars have no time to find fault with other people. They are so needy themselves. Can you give me some money? And that's why we are so spiritually rich, rich in our spirit, not poor in spirit, not spiritually rich, but rich in spirit in the wrong way.

And that's why we don't come like helpless beggars before God. And that's why we are so pathetic in our spiritual condition. That's why we don't have victory.

We don't come like beggars asking for grace. And that's the message in this parable. He went home justified.

He went home happy. He went home declared righteous by God. He went home as an overcomer because he said, Lord, I am the sinner.

It's so difficult for people to say that. I've seen very often in conflicts between believers, husband and wife. Where is the person who will say, I'm the sinner? Everybody like Adam points the finger at the other person and say, he's the sinner.

She's the sinner. I'm okay. It never goes well with such a person.

It never goes well spiritually with such a person. Never. There's a curse on that type of life where you put the blame on other people.

That's an old covenant way. In the new covenant, here is the picture Jesus presented. I'm a needy person.

Lord, be merciful to me, the sinner. That's how Abraham felt when he saw God. That's how Job felt when he met with God.

That's how John felt when he met with God. That's how Peter felt. He said, depart from me, Lord.

I'm a sinful man. So they asked him, have you ever felt like Paul said, Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this wretched flesh? Oh, I'm the chief of sinners. Any man who's walking with Jesus will have such experiences, not every day, but quite frequently.

Do you have such experiences where you feel you're the greatest sinner on earth? I believe that's one test of whether you're walking with God. That there are times when you feel you're the greatest sinner on the

face of the earth, like Isaiah felt, like Job felt, like John felt, like Paul felt. These are the greatest men of God in the Bible.

They felt like that. They felt so small, so rotten because they had come into the presence of a holy God. As I said, they were not committing the same sins they committed 20 years ago.

You know, when you take an example of students studying mathematics, if you ask a second standard boy, are you struggling with your maths, son? He says, yes, I'm struggling with maths. You ask a 10th standard boy, are you struggling with maths? Yes, I'm struggling with maths. But he's not struggling with the same addition and subtraction and division that he struggled with in 10th standard.

No, he's struggling with calculus or something else. And you ask a PhD in mathematics, are you struggling with maths? He says, oh, yeah, I'm struggling with maths. He's not struggling with what that fellow is struggling with in 10th standard.

They're all struggling, but they're struggling at different levels. And so the person who's walking closest to God is also struggling with sin, but not the same dirty old sins this new convert is struggling with. He's not struggling with anger and lust and bitterness.

No, he's finished with that long ago. He's finished with addition and subtraction and multiplication long ago. He's struggling with 10th standard stuff, with PhD stuff, but he's a struggle.

And when Paul said, I'm the chief of sinners, he wasn't talking about being bitter and lusting after women, he was talking about much higher things. When Jesus was struggling against temptation in the garden of Gethsemane, what do you think he was struggling against? You think he was struggling with the lust of the eyes? Rubbish. He was struggling to deny his own will.

So what I want to say is Christian growth is manifested in more and more awareness of our sin. And that is the mark of a man who walks in the new covenant, led by the spirit. When we are led by the spirit, we became aware of our need more and more and more and more.

When we are led by the spirit, we don't make contracts with God. We do everything out of love voluntarily. Then we go to parable number three, or number nine in our total list.

Luke's Gospel chapter seven. Luke's Gospel chapter seven and verse 31. Another parable that Jesus spoke on legalism.

Jesus said, to what shall I compare the men of this generation? And what are they like? He was talking about the legalists who surrounded him. The Pharisees and all the people under the old covenant. He said, how shall I compare this generation? They are like children.

They are not mature. First of all, old covenant people act like children. They talk like children.

They get offended like children. They fight like children. They are interested in childish things.

They are like children. They complain about little things. They fight about little things.

They are like children. New covenant people are like mature adults. Paul said, once upon a time I was a child.

I spoke like a child. I talked like a child. But now I have grown up.

I have put away all those childish ways, he said in 1 Corinthians 13. And the mark of a new covenant man, he has put away childish way of speaking and childish way of fighting and childish way of doing things. He is a mature man.

And you and I know the difference between the way children behave and adults behave. So he said, this generation is like children. And they are like children who sit in the marketplace and they are saying to one another, hey, we played the flute and you should have danced, but you don't dance.

And then we sang a dirge, which means like a sorrowful funeral song. And you did not weep. In other words, you must dance to my tune.

Okay? When I play the flute, I am happy, you must dance. Then I now change my note and I sing a sorrowful song, you must start weeping. And you don't do that, I am unhappy with you.

And then he says, explains what he means. John the Baptist came, he didn't eat any bread, he didn't drink any wine, he was eating locust and wild honey. And you say, hey, and he was not even wearing proper clothes, he was wearing camel skin and all that.

He says, he has got a demon. Only demon possessed people will not eat proper food and live so simply. What a simple dress and what simple type of food.

He must be demon possessed. I mean, he doesn't even live a normal life. Okay? Then the son of man came, Jesus came.

He had a proper dress, he didn't wear camel skin or anything like that. And he would eat and drink and everything. This fellow is a glutton.

And he is a drunkard. And he is a friend of sinners. John the Baptist, of course, is a demon.

He doesn't even mix with everybody. Jesus, he is mixing with too many people. The point is, a person under the old covenant will find fault with everybody.

He will find fault with John the Baptist and he will find fault with Jesus. If one person does one thing, he says that's wrong. If another person does it another way, that's also wrong.

Because an old covenant man is gripped by the spirit of the accuser. The accuser of the brethren. John the Baptist is wrong.

Okay. Jesus is different. No, he is also wrong.

This fellow has got a demon. This fellow is a drunkard. You find that.

New covenant people don't have any time to do that. They don't have time. See what did these people do? They looked at John the Baptist's outward appearance and formed an opinion.

He has got a demon. And they looked at Jesus. They didn't know that he fasted 40 days and all that.

They didn't know that. They saw him eating and drinking and all that. This fellow is a glutton.

Look at him. He is asking for a second helping. Holy man, he is not supposed to ask for a second helping.

You know that holy people are not supposed to ask for a second helping? I have seen certain holy people. They are afraid to ask for a second helping lest they lose their testimony. The only time I don't take a second helping of ice cream is if I know there are children in the house and I know they will say hallelujah if I don't take a second helping.

That's the only time I don't take a second helping. But otherwise I want to tell you there is nothing wrong in it. If you are hungry, if you know how to fast, if you know how to fast, there is nothing wrong in a third helping.

But if you don't know how to fast, one helping is enough. Ok. But the point is this.

These people looked at the outward appearance. They don't know anything about the private life of Jesus that he fasted and he prayed and did so many things. They said, ah, this guy is eating, he is drinking, he is a drunkard.

And they didn't know anything about what God's call on John the Baptist's life was. They looked at his outward appearance. That's all funny.

He must be demon possessed. That's why Jesus said in John's Gospel, chapter 7, John chapter 7, a verse which my conviction is 99% of believers do not obey. Shall I show you a verse? 99% of believers do not obey.

John 7 verse 24. It says, Do not judge according to the appearance. Do not judge by the outward appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.

I want to ask you, do you judge people by what you see? As soon as you see, you pass a judgment. Very sad. That's the mark of old covenant people who are gripped by the spirit of the accuser of the brethren.

As soon as you see some person, you disobey John 7, 24 and say, I couldn't care less for John 7, 24. I know how to judge the outward appearance. Jesus said, don't judge by the outward appearance.

You can see a sister come to a meeting with really short hair, really short. Uh huh. So this is the new style, is it? By the way, she had chemotherapy and lost all her hair.

Shame on you for judging that poor sister because she lost her hair when she got medical treatment. That's just an example. There can be many examples like that where we judge according to the outward appearance.

We don't have a clue concerning the circumstances of the other person. Sometimes we don't even know the other person. It's so easy to judge and I believe because of this spirit.

We are playing the flute now, you're not dancing. We are playing the dirge now, you're not weeping. You got to do according to how we do it and we don't give them freedom.

We're like children playing games in the marketplace. And no wonder the anointing of God is not found in our churches as it should be. Really tragic.

Really tragic. There was a young man with a young sister, born again sister, the only one converted in her family. She came to see me and my wife at home one day.

She said, I was passing by the road and I saw your church. I felt God wanted me to come here and I came for a meeting. And she came for a meeting and asked whether she can come and meet us.

I said, sure. We fixed an appointment. She came and saw us.

She was a young girl, I don't know, maybe 18, 19 or a student perhaps. I forget now despite some time ago. And she really loved the Lord.

And I invited her to come to our meetings. And she said, I can't come to your meetings because the only clothes I have are jeans. And girls are not supposed to wear jeans in your church.

I don't have any salwar kameez. I don't have any saree. I don't earn any money.

I'm a student. I won't be able to earn money for 3-4 years before I can buy clothes fit enough for your church. What shall I tell that sister? Wait sister, you can't come to our church for 3-4 years.

You can only come in a certain dress. Jeans and all, forget it. If you go to hell in those 3-4 years, go to hell.

Tragic. Absolutely tragic. I said, come anyway you like.

We love you. You elder brothers, what would you do if a sister walked into your church wearing a shirt and jeans? That's probably the only dress she has. All her clothes may be jeans.

What do you do? Tell her to get out. I'll never forget a story I heard about David Wilkerson. He said it himself.

David Wilkerson is a great man of God in the United States. He said many years ago in the 60s when there were a lot of hippies, you know these people who don't, who dress in an odd way with long hair and open shirt and all that and no chappals and walk barefoot and some of them got converted. And when they got converted they still had their long hair and they still had their open chested shirt and many of them didn't wear shoes but they accepted Christ.

They loved Jesus. They didn't know everything in the Bible. But they had a meeting together and their elders called David Wilkerson who came in a suit and tie and all to the meeting and he saw all these fellas sitting.

He was a young man those days. He saw all these people sitting in this type of dress and he said, you fellas supposed to accept the Lord? Okay before the evening meeting please change your dress and come here. Don't come like this.

The meeting was over. Those elder brothers of this hippie group went to David Wilkerson and wept. They were not weeping for themselves.

They were weeping for David Wilkerson. Look at these godly men without chappals and long hair and weeping for this pastor who comes with suit and tie and said David we didn't see Jesus in you today. We didn't hear Jesus speaking through you today.

Your clothes hid Jesus. He said he never forgot it and I never forget it. This is what legalism does.

It drives away people whom almighty God has welcomed with wide open arms, but whom some of our elder brothers will not welcome because they are holier than God. Legalists always imagine that they are holier than God. John the Baptist dressed like this, wrong.

Jesus dressed like this, wrong. John the Baptist eating this, wrong. Jesus eating the opposite, wrong.

Criticism, criticism, criticism. Everybody is wrong. Who is right? Only me.

That's the mark of a legalist. If anybody lives at a higher standard of living than me, oh that's luxury. If he has got a poorer standard than me, that's okay.

Who is the ideal? Me of course. What arrogance. What fantastic arrogance.

This is how Christians are judging one another. Oh that is luxury. If he eats food better than what I eat regularly in my house, luxury.

Look at the fellow eating chicken morning, noon and night. Then what is the standard what you can afford? What arrogance. This is all the result of living under the old covenant.

And that's why we are defeated by sin. This is wrong, that is wrong. Who is right then? Only me.

Your way of dressing is the right way. The food you eat is the right type of food. The standard of house you have in your house, that is the right standard.

What fantastic arrogance to imagine that such people are disciples of Jesus. They are not. They are disciples of, I don't know what, of the Pharisees, that's all.

Dear brothers and sisters, let's get rid of this criticism. Otherwise we will be criticizing the most godly man who walked on the earth, that's Jesus. And I have seen people, people who are under the law, they have no hesitation in criticizing the most godly people.

No. God may have borne witness to that man ten thousand times more than you, but they will criticize him. Because they have no fear of God.

Imagine criticizing John the Baptist. Jesus said he is the greatest man ever born of women. And I want to tell you, those who criticize others, Jesus' testimony about those other people will be very different from your testimony.

Unless you repent, you can completely miss out on God's kingdom. Instead, learn to appreciate whatever good you can see in someone. Let me tell you a beautiful story I heard.

There was a man called Juniper who lived in the 12th century or something. He was a co-worker of Francis of Assisi. Francis of Assisi was one of those people who had taken a vow of poverty, to live in simplicity and poverty.

He was a Roman Catholic, and there were a lot of godly Roman Catholics in those days, some even today. And Juniper was a co-worker of his, and they all had taken a vow, we will dress very simply. And he was a man who followed that literally.

He lived in very simple clothes. And one day, he saw one of his brothers, one of his co-workers, Juniper Saul, dressed in a little fancy coat. And he was tempted to judge, hey, this fellow is supposed to have taken the vow of poverty like me.

He was tempted. But you know what he said? He said, perhaps under that beautiful coat, he has a humbler heart than I have under this simple coat. That is a godly man, who can look at somebody with much fancier clothes and say, perhaps under those fancy clothes, he may have a humbler heart than I have in these simple clothes I am wearing.

Oh, if our churches were filled with such godly men and women, what a revival we would have! How much God would bear witness in our meetings by manifesting His mighty power! But with all our criticism and judging people by their appearance, we are like these children sitting in the marketplace, this is wrong, that is wrong, the other person comes, it is wrong, this person, and what is the result? We drive a whole lot of people out of our churches. They cannot come to our churches because they are not clothed properly. I believe their blood will be on your hands.

I will never drive a person like that out of our church, because I do not want anybody's blood on my hands. I am more interested in bringing that person to Christ and to God's kingdom than in changing his dress style. Ok, we go to the last parable, which is also a familiar one.

It is the parable of the elder son in Luke chapter 15, more commonly known as the parable of the prodigal son. Everybody thinks of the prodigal son who was wayward, but we read in verse 25 onwards about the elder son. And in Luke 15 verse 25 onwards you read about the elder son who lived at home, he never went and lived his wayward life, and when he came home from the field, he was working in the field, he was a hard working person, you know, perhaps a full time worker.

And he came home and he heard all this music and dancing, and we read, he asked one of the servants, hey, what's happened? He said, your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf. He has received him back safe and sound. Now this elder brother should have jumped for joy.

Hey, my brother has come, who has gone away for so many years. He should have run and embraced his brother and said, I am so happy my brother, I was longing to see you again. He is offended.

He is offended because a younger brother has been given more honor than him. Are you offended? When a younger brother is given more honor than you? When a younger sister is given more honor than you? And you feel you deserve to be the center of attraction? You know, there is a tremendous lust in us to be the center of attraction. You see that in children.

They always like to be the center. Jesus was always trying to hide himself. That's the spirit of the new covenant.

I don't want to come up in front. I want to be in the background, let other people get the honor. But an old covenant person is always wanting to be in the center of attraction.

And till now, he was the only son, he was the center of attraction, all the servants bowed down to him, and he was the master of everything, he was happy. But now somebody else is coming up. You know, I have seen this sometimes, elder brothers trying to suppress younger brothers who are coming up, gifted, more gifted than them.

Push them down. I'm the senior one here. Exactly like this elder brother.

No love for a younger brother who's lost. And then he's so angry and offended that he won't even go in. He's thinking only of himself.

And he tells his father, look how you're treating me. I have served you, verse 29, all these years. You know, this is a mark of old covenant people.

They are very conscious of how much they have served God. Oh, I have sacrificed so much for the Lord. I have suffered so much for the Lord.

I have served God for so many years. But this fellow, how much has he done for you? The spirit of comparison, the spirit of boasting, it's all there. And what have you given me? What have you given me? You have never given me.

You know, the younger son came first and said, give me. We thought the elder son didn't have that spirit of give me. But he's also saying here, you never gave me.

You know, this is the characteristic of people in the old covenant. They come to God and they only think of give me, give me, give me, give me. I want, I want, give me.

You know that in the Lord's prayer, the word me is never found. How many of you knew that? The word me is never found in the Lord's prayer. Not even once.

It is give us, forgive us, deliver us. Jesus said, learn to pray like that. Have you learned it? Ask yourself how you pray.

We haven't learned it. Most of our prayers are bless me, give me. It's the same old thing.

Jesus said, learn to pray. It will change your life. Don't just think of yourself.

Rejoice that somebody else has got a blessing which you didn't get. Old covenant people can't do that. A father can.

See, the difference we see here between the father and the elder brother is the difference between new covenant and old covenant. New covenant people are like fathers. So happy, even if this wretched sinner has finally come back, his backslider has come back, so happy, glad to welcome them and make the fatted calf and rejoice and put them in their right hand and encourage them and encourage them into a ministry and all that.

But the other old covenant person is more like a teacher. You know the difference between a father and a teacher? If a student keeps on getting some mathematics problem wrong, wrong, wrong, and teacher will say, how long I have to teach you, get out of this class. Twenty times I tried to teach you, you are not fit here, go and get a transfer certificate and get out of the school.

But a father at home, his child has got that problem wrong a hundred times, he'll say, never mind my son, you are going to make it, you are going to make it, I tell you, let's work at it together. We have far too many teachers, ten thousand teachers, very few fathers. A teacher is an old covenant person, under the law.

When you are led by the spirit, you become a father. You care for people, you love people, you can be patient with them. Okay, they made mistakes, fine, you still help them to somehow overcome.

If they have willingness to learn, if they have no willingness to learn, they say, Dad, I am not interested, what can you do? Sometimes people are like that, even though you are like a father, some people just not interested in learning, we can't do anything for them. But some, they may make mistakes many times, but they are willing to learn. I believe the great need in our churches is for fathers.

We got to treat the young girls in our churches like our daughters. We got to treat the young boys in our church like our sons. Do you promote your own sons and not other people's sons? You are a teacher.

Teacher will promote his own sons in the class, not a father. A father says, they are all my sons, these are all my daughters, I am not going to show any favoritism. So, what are you? Do you promote your children to responsibilities in your church, maybe in music or other things like that, and you don't encourage other people's children in music? You are a teacher, you are not a father.

Your own children can make mistakes and you forgive and forgive, but if somebody else's child does something wrong, bang, you come down on them. We have far too many teachers, we need more fathers. It all depends on whether we are led by the Holy Spirit or we are under the law.

Dear brothers and sisters, you know what we need, I will tell you. We can't be any of these things, we can't learn to appreciate, we can't serve the Lord voluntarily, we can't be fathers unless we are filled with the Holy Spirit. That's the answer.

Blessed are those who see their need, who are honest and say, Lord, I am the sinner. I am the sinner, I am the sinner. Oh, wretched man that I am, I am the chief of sinners.

There is hope for every such person to enter into the New Covenant, to be free from a life of legalism, living under the law, to come to a glorious life in the Holy Spirit. Every brother, every sister here, even if you can't remember everything that you heard today, can you start with one thing? Do not judge according to the outward appearance. Will you say, Lord, I can't take everything in, but I can start with that today.

Never again will I judge anybody by the outward appearance for the rest of my life. I tell you, that itself will bring a revolution in your life. By the end of 2005, you will be a completely different person.

Heavenly Father, help us. Have mercy on us. We are such criminals.

We judge people whom we have no right to judge. Forgive us. Fill us with the Holy Spirit.

Lead us by the Holy Spirit into the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

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