

January 27th, 2019
Lord of the Sabbath
Mark 2:18-3:6

BIBLE IN A YEAR READING PLAN

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| Jan 20 | Exodus 7-9 | Jan 24 | Exodus 19-21 |
| Jan 21 | Exodus 10-12 | Jan 25 | Exodus 22-24 |
| Jan 22 | Exodus 13-15 | Jan 26 | Exodus 25-27 |
| Jan 23 | Exodus 16-18 | Jan 27 | Exodus 28-29 |

Lesson Introduction: Part of what we have seen already in the Gospel of Mark is that Jesus has come onto the scene with authority. He is calling people to Himself, teaching truth, casting out demons, and healing the sick. These actions (along with the fact that He was always hanging around “sinners”) raised some eyebrows among the religious elite, and what we will see starting this week, is that they were constantly trying to trip Him up. The Pharisees prided themselves on their strict, self-righteous adherence to the Law, and in our passage this week we see Jesus making clear that true righteousness is found in Him alone. As we go, we will consider how relationship with Christ is far more important than practicing religious ceremony, how Christ provides Sabbath rest, and how self-righteousness effects the heart.

FOUNDATIONAL TRUTHS OF THE PASSAGE:

- **Relationship with Christ is far more important than practicing religious ceremony (Ch. 2:18-22)**
- **Christ is our Sabbath rest (Ch. 2:23-28)**
- **Attempts at self-righteousness always lead to further division between us and God (Ch. 3:1-6)**

Mark 2:18-3:6

18 Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. And people came and said to him, "Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" 19 And Jesus said to them, "Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. 20 The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day. 21 No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. If he does, the patch tears away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear is made. 22 And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins—and the wine is

destroyed, and so are the skins. But new wine is for fresh wineskins."

23 One Sabbath he was going through the grainfields, and as they made their way, his disciples began to pluck heads of grain. 24 And the Pharisees were saying to him, "Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?" 25 And he said to them, "Have you never read what David did, when he was in need and was hungry, he and those who were with him: 26 how he entered the house of God, in the time of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and also gave it to those who were with him?" 27 And he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. 28 So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath."

3 *Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there with a withered hand. 2 And they watched Jesus, to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse him. 3 And he said to the man with the withered hand, "Come here." 4 And he said to them, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?" But they were silent. 5 And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, and said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was restored. 6 The Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.*

Discussion Section 1: *Missing the Forest for the Trees* (Ch. 2:18-22)

-What was at the heart of the question about fasting?

-What was at the heart of Jesus' message concerning why His disciples were not fasting?

-What is Jesus referring to when He speaks of the old and the new in verses 21-22?

Note: *As the ministry of Jesus progressed, so did hostility toward Him from the religious and political leaders of the day. Throughout His time ministering on Earth, Jesus faced constant scrutiny as He regularly turned social norms and religious traditions on their heads. In this instance, people were concerned about Jesus' disciples because, although other religious people regularly fasted, they did not.*

In that day, fasting two times a week "was a major expression of orthodox Judaism" (MacArthur). However,

Old Testament law only required one fast a year, on the Day of Atonement (**Leviticus 16:29, 31**). We will see throughout this passage that the Pharisees added extrabiblical requirements to the Law, seeking to justify themselves, believing that following a strict set of rules would set them apart, making them fit for fellowship with God. The question that was raised indicated that there was something wrong with Jesus' disciples, and that perhaps they were in danger of missing out on justification because of their lack of religious practice.

Jesus makes plain, however that it would be foolish for His disciples to spend time fasting (generally reserved for a time of mourning) while they were in His presence. Jesus' words and examples were not an indictment on fasting, but rather, He was pointing people to the reality that He was the one who could bring about eternal life. Essentially, He was telling the people that when they think that practicing religious ceremony is what will make them right with God, rather than relationship with Him, they are as foolish as one who would fast during a wedding banquet! He goes on to use the analogy of the unshrunk cloth and the new wineskins. John MacArthur stated, concerning these two parables, **"they illustrate that His new and internal gospel of repentance from and forgiveness of sin could not be connected to or contained in the old and external traditions of self-righteousness and ritual."**

Discussion Section 2: Our Sabbath Rest (Ch. 2:23-28)

-In what ways do we see the Pharisees casting an unnecessary burden on the disciples?

-What are some ways that we put unnecessary burdens on people for the sake of religious tradition?

-What do we learn about the Sabbath in this passage?

-How does Jesus provide Sabbath rest for us?

Note: Again, in this section, we see the religious leaders of the day seeking to poke holes in Jesus' ministry by calling out His disciples' actions on the Sabbath. Once again, although there were Sabbath laws specified in the Old Testament (**Exodus 34:21**), the ultra-religious of the day had put parameters in place concerning the Sabbath that were overly strict, seeking to justify themselves though rigid conformity to the Law (such restrictions included things like how many steps you could take). We see again how Jesus quickly challenges the Pharisees, boldly proclaiming that **"the Sabbath was made for**

man, not man for the Sabbath," and that He **"is the Lord even of the Sabbath!"**

Jesus here is teaching that true rest and fellowship with God does not come from following a set of burdensome rules that the Scriptures don't even mandate, but true rest comes from Him (the Lord of the Sabbath). If our hope is placed in rule following, we will always fall short, always grow weary, and ultimately, our efforts will leave us frazzled and frustrated. This is not to suggest that we should not follow the commandments that God has laid out for us in Scripture, but rather, it is when we truly find rest in Christ that we will gladly seek to please Him by being obedient to what He has commanded. Christ fulfills what the Sabbath points to, namely, rest. If you have been seeking to live simply by the letter of the law, trying to figure out just exactly what it is you need to do to please God, know this: Jesus brings you rest (**Matthew 11:28-30**). He is the One who makes you right before His Father, and by the Spirit you will be moved to happily seek to obey all that He has commanded.

Discussion Section 3: The Counterproductive Nature of Self-Righteousness (Ch. 2:13-17)

-What does Jesus expose in the Pharisees by asking the question found in **V. 4**?

-What does this passage ultimately teach us about the effects of an attitude of self-righteousness on the heart?

Note: In our final section, we see plainly that self-righteous attitudes always lead us further from God, not closer to Him. The goal of the Pharisees in all their rule following ways, was to justify themselves before God. The problem is, the very thought that we could justify ourselves is sinful! Their self-righteous attitudes led them to a place where they would rather observe tradition than see a man healed. When religious practice allows us to come to a place where we are not interested in helping the needy, we have clearly missed the point (**James 1:27**). Ultimately, we see that the anger of God is directed their way, that their hearts are hardened, and that they want to see the Messiah killed. In reality, Self-righteousness never results in taking steps toward God, but rather, we find ourselves resenting Him, and believing that we are more righteous than even He. As we close, may we examine our hearts, and repent of any attitudes of self-righteousness, and turn to Jesus, that He might give us rest.