

Jesus And The Law

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[0 : 00] Good morning, everybody. Y'all doing good? A lot of smiling faces. And if you are new, man, thank you so much for joining us. Anybody listening online, thank you for that.

If you have a Bible, go ahead and flip to Mark chapter 2 and verse 18. If you got it on your phone, go ahead and open it up and get there. And I will be praying the Spirit gives you, just gives you help not to be tempted to look at your brackets, all right, while your phones are open.

All right. If you are new with us, we are going through the Gospel of Mark, mainly for two reasons. The Gospel teaches us about who Jesus is.

And the other thing it does, the benefit we receive from it, it shows us very explicitly what it means to follow Jesus as a disciple. And if you are a Christian, or if you're not a Christian, and you're just here examining the faith and looking into it, those are two significant, important questions.

And what we believe about Jesus, and what we understand about discipleship and following him is arguably the most important things that shape how we see and relate to God, and how we see and relate to others, and all the other intricate matters of life in this world.

[1 : 14] So we have quite a bit of Scripture to get to, so let's go ahead and jump into it. It's Mark chapter 2, verse 18. It says this. 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?

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. The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day.

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. 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. One Sabbath, he was going through the grain fields, and as they made their way, his disciples began to pluck heads of grain.

And the Pharisees were saying to him, look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath? And he said to them, have you never read what David did when he was in need and was hungry?

[2 : 26] He and those who were with him. 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.

And he said to them, the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath. Again, he entered the synagogue, and a man was there with a withered hand.

And they watched Jesus to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse him. And he said to the man with the withered hand, come here. 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. And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at the hardness of heart, and said to the man, stretch out your hand. He stretched it out, and his hand was restored.

The Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him. This is God's word. So the common thread through these three stories is Jesus breaking the rules, or at least he seems to be.

[3 : 39] And this is becoming a point of contention for the religious leaders of that day. Throughout the gospel accounts, you see this ongoing battle between Jesus and the Pharisees around this kind of like rule breaking and keeping the law.

And it's the big contention more than anything else. And the great tragedy is, is that these religious leaders, as much as they were devoted to the law, man, their devotion caused them to actually miss seeing Jesus for who he really is.

And their tragedy can be ours. It's easy to mistake our rules and methods for God's mission and miss God entirely. See, the Pharisees put so much faith in their rules and regulations.

In these stories, they're saying, hey, we fast, we're doing the right thing, why aren't you guys fasting? Jesus, how come your disciples aren't fasting? How come you're not doing that?

And then the other part is, man, we are the most hardcore, the hardcore with regards to the Sabbath and keeping the Sabbath and all its rules and regulations. And we can fall in love with how we do church and start to put our faith and hope and our methods and rules and style rather than in God.

[4 : 48] And there's a comfort to that. There's a comfort of wanting to lean into our methods, especially when they seem to be working, right? You can start a church and get into a way of doing church and then God kind of shows up and starts bringing fruitfulness.

And then we can mistake the fact that we're seeing fruit, kingdom fruit, for the way we are doing church rather than God who brings the growth and God who brings the increase. That's always the danger.

And me and you can fall into this place of thinking like it's how we do it that matters the most versus who is doing it. But you and I, we have to step back and realize we can't force fruitfulness in God's kingdom.

In our most honest moments, we all would admit or should admit to having Pharisaical tendencies. And it actually stems from a good desire that gets twisted.

See, there is a reason the Pharisees were strict law observers. Before Jesus arrived on the scene to do his earthly ministry, there had been hundreds and hundreds of years of painful history that lay behind the nation of Israel.

[5 : 56] Babylon came and they destroyed Israel, right? Or Jerusalem. And Jerusalem was like Israel's Washington, D.C. It was the seat of power. It was the place where the temple was.

It's the epicenter of their religion and where God was dwelt. And if God's, his temple was there and his presence was there, it was this constant reminder that they were God's people and he was with them.

But all that was done away with. And then after Babylon, the Medo-Persian Empire came in and sacked them and defeated them and took them captive. And then again, it was Greece and then finally Rome in the present day.

And God had brought all this about. It was part of his punishment for Israel abandoning his laws and moving into idolatry. They moved away from adherence to God and following him, they began to worship other gods and foreign gods.

And leading up to this, leading up to these defeats and captivities and exiles and even during exile, God spoke to his people through the prophets to turn and repent.

[6 : 59] But he also gave them this beautiful promise that a time was coming where God, he himself, would return them to their land and restore them. And a resurgence of law adherence and devotion to worshiping God alone began to take place during this time.

And the hope was that their obedience would quicken the fulfillment of God's promises. And along the way, the Pharisees became a sect within Judaism, committed to the strictest adherence of the law and the prophets.

That was their original mission, to see the deliverance and restoration of God's people. And that is, let's be honest, that's a noble, good aim. But somewhere along the way, the method became the mission.

And that led to their misuse of the law. And the second and third story that we read demonstrate this misuse in different ways. And so we will look at each in turn. And so let's look at this second story in verse 23 of chapter two.

It says this, one Sabbath, he was going through the grain fields, he, Jesus. And as they made their way, his disciples began to pluck heads of grain. And the Pharisees were saying to them, look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?

[8 : 11] 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, 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?

And then Jesus said to them, the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath. What had happened is the Pharisees placed greater importance on Sabbath rules than people's needs.

For them, the Sabbath was rigid prohibitions from doing a ton of stuff that actually scripture was just not clear about at all. They were so concerned about making sure they were getting Sabbath observant perfectly right that they lost sight of what the Sabbath was actually given for.

But every law of God that he gave to us is like that. They are not prohibitions to limit our joy. The law's no points us to the greater joy of God's yes.

And Jesus says in this story, the Sabbath is made for man, not man for the Sabbath interpretation. The Sabbath is a gift that brings joy when properly observed.

[9 : 31] God made it for our sake. He instituted it to serve our needs, not the other way around. The Sabbath was more than just a day of rest. It was resting in God with God's people.

It was a holy day set aside for that. It was a day dedicated to worship and communion. It was a day of feasting and fellowship. God's no for the Sabbath to working was a yes to communion with him and with family and with neighbor.

His no to daily toil was a yes to a full day of celebration and rest and restoration. Now, the Sabbath police of Jesus's day, what they had done is they had went and slapped so many rules and regulations on it that the Sabbath became all about God's no.

It was overwhelmingly about that for them so that they totally missed the beauty of his yes. Now, we aren't much like the Pharisees in that sense of what they did to the Sabbath, but I would argue that we can make our own rules to ruin the Sabbath.

Let me say this another way. With regard to the Sabbath, as a great example, we say no to God's yes when we constantly work and don't take a day of rest.

[10 : 51] Or we rest in isolation apart from God's people. Or our rest isn't focused on God and his past, present, and future renewal and redemption.

So we can easily say no to the goodness of the Sabbath, just like the Pharisees, just in our own way. And we give good reasons for it. We might say, hey, you know what?

God's love isn't dependent on my church attendance. That's true. We can say, man, church is God's people. It's not about going to a building. And that is true.

And in that way, we can actually become legalistic with our anti-legalism. We can be the sincerest of people in our position on the Sabbath. But the Pharisees were the sincerest of people.

They were just sincerely wrong. They had taken the Sabbath command, don't work, and tried to dive into figuring out what exactly that meant.

[11 : 54] And even in Jesus's day, there were schools of Pharisees that debated exactly what constituted work and what didn't. And so when Jesus and his disciples are going through grain fields and plucking heads of grain with their hands, it seemed to be breaking a prohibition from Exodus 34, 21 that said, six days you shall work, but on the seventh day you shall rest.

In plowing time and in harvest, you shall rest. It seems pretty straightforward, this verse, that, hey, you're not allowed to harvest on the Sabbath.

But the question then is, well, what is harvesting? That is where the Pharisaical law would dive into what constitutes an act of harvesting. Is it putting sickle to the grain and gathering it in bundles? Does that also include taking the grain with the hand? Is it determined by how much you take or the quantity you take? What if you take a walk on a Sabbath day and go buy a field of grain and accidentally knock one of the stalks of grain and break it and it falls over or the head of the grain falls off?

Did you suddenly harvest? See how much minutia we can wade into with this stuff. It's like never ending. And when we do that, man, we step back and it seems so pious.

[13 : 13] We seem so pious and righteous because after all, we're just trying to be as obedient as possible. Or in the case of reverse legalism, we are trying to be as free from the law as possible.

And along the way, the Pharisees and us get so focused on the what and the how that the why gets lost. See, on the surface, it seems that they are appealing to Scripture as their authority, but in reality, their rules and their regulations had went far beyond Scripture.

And we know this because Jesus steps in and he actually uses Scripture to prove his position. He gives his counter argument from Scripture, which is a good rule of thumb.

Let Scripture interpret Scripture. Jesus brings up this story of David breaking a Levitical rule. He came to a priest, David did in the time of David, right?

He came to a priest to get bread for himself and the young warriors that were with him. Now, the context of that is David had just fled from King Saul. He was trying to kill him, which means David and his crew had zero time to prepare and unpack the necessary provisions.

[14 : 25] And so they arrived in this town called Nob and David goes to the priest in the town and asks for bread to eat. He comes and says, we are hungry, we need something, we are desperate, what do you got?

And the priest, all he has is the old bread that just came out of the holy place in the temple. And the priest gives him the bread, although technically, it was only supposed to be eaten by the priests according to the law.

And the point Jesus is making here is that the law is good and it should be obeyed, but they fit, these laws fit within the higher law that governs those laws, which Jesus spells out explicitly in the next story.

Mark 3 verse 1, again, he, Jesus, entered the synagogue and a man was there with a withered hand. And they watched Jesus to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath so that they might accuse him.

And he said to the man with the withered hand, come here. And he said to them, is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?

[15 : 26] But they were silent. And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at the hardness of their heart, and said to the man, stretch out your hand. He stretched it out and his hand was restored.

The Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him how to destroy him. And in this story, Jesus asks them a question and it's a question that gets right to the heart of the matter.

Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill? And his question answers itself, doesn't it? And Jesus, what he is doing, he is bringing in the higher matter of the law, which is the spirit of the law.

And the spirit of the law promotes what is good and gives life. Abiathar, the priest, understood that. He saw David and his young men hungry and in need.

Now the letter of the law said only the priests get to eat this bread. But the spirit of the law says help your brother in need. The letter of the law says, do no work on the Sabbath.

[16 : 38] But the spirit of the law says that doing good and saving life is not Sabbath-breaking work. The Sabbath is for restoration of our body and soul.

And healing this man's withered hand fits within the restorative, life-giving purpose of the Sabbath. But here is our problem. Without Jesus, we will never rightly discern the spirit of the law.

However, the good news for us is that Jesus came to show us the spirit of the law. See, the Pharisees, man, they were trying their best to adhere to the law and keep it, but they kept getting it wrong.

And Jesus came and showed what the correction was. He kept bringing the correction. Jesus wasn't breaking the law like the Pharisees claimed he was, and he wasn't fixing the law either. The law didn't need to be fixed. He was fixing the misunderstanding and misuse of the law. And he has every right to do that, and he is capable of doing that because he alone is Lord of the law.

[17 : 43] He can say what is lawful to do on the Sabbath because he is Lord of the Sabbath. He alone has right relationship to it and correctly understands it and discerns it because it's his law.

It came from him. It came out of his heart. And until Jesus saves us, you and I will never have a right relationship to his law. There are only two ways we can relate to God's law outside of Christ. We will either be lawbreaker or we will be legalist. And to break God's law, to be a lawbreaker, means we reject God and we go our own way because rejecting the law, going our own way is rejecting the nature of God because the law reflects who he is.

It reflects his righteousness. It reflects his holiness. And so what we end up doing is we go our own way to exalt ourselves and to become God's unto ourself. And then in the process, we mistreat others because his law is about how we treat others well.

And the legalists, they use the law to punish others and promote themselves to earn a righteousness apart from God. And here is the irony. The lawbreaker and the legalist, they end up

in the same place of rejecting God and mistreating others.

[18 : 58] But when we are saved, it changes our relationship to the law. Paul gets into this in Romans and we could say a lot. I mean, we could, you know, he talks a lot about that in the book of Romans, but I'm gonna pull out some verses from Romans 7.

In verse 6, he says this, but now, having been saved by Christ and justified by him by faith, but now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the spirit and not in the old way of the written code.

Now, there is a lot there. It seems like Paul is saying that life in Christ means no more law, no more rules to follow. It's like a holy hall pass that we get, right?

And if that was the case, man, evangelism would be so much easier, wouldn't it? But right after this, Paul goes on to elevate the law as good and righteous.

In fact, in Romans 7.14, he says, for we know that the law is spiritual. It is a good thing. But I am of the flesh, sold under sin, which is saying he is born a slave to sin.

[20 : 13] And then he says later on, as part of this same thought in Romans 7.22, for I delight in the law of God in my inner being. What does all this mean?

Before Christ, you and I are spiritually dead. We are not spiritual, but the law is spiritual. And in that place, the law, the written code, is there to show us how sinful our sin is against God's righteous standard.

And the written code of the law was also given to show us how God wants us to live. And Jesus said, the whole law is summed up in two statements. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself.

And so the hundreds and hundreds of laws in the Old Testament, they get distilled down into those two statements. And that's the standard, those two things, that's the standard you and I, apart from Christ, can never live up to.

We will break it. We can't do it. The law, the written code, stands apart from us and against us because we are of the flesh, born into sin, a slave of sin, but in Christ, we have died to the law just like in Christ, we have died to sin.

[21 : 40] Now, this is an interesting thing and it's worth pointing out those two things because we still know, and in relation to having died to sin, we still know, as Christians, that sin is still very present in us.

And when it says we have died to sin, what Paul means is that it no longer has power over us. We have a very different relationship to sin now.

Before, we couldn't say no to sin, but now we can. And in the same way, we have died to the law, which means we have a new relationship to it.

And that's what Jesus came to do for us. Here is how he explains it. In Mark 2, verse 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. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins and the wine is destroyed.

[22 : 41] And so are the skins. But new wine is for fresh wineskins. So what is this all about? Old wineskins and new wineskins.

Remember, the context of those verses is relating to matters of the law. So in the Old Testament, the Old Covenant, it's at the old wineskin, the law was written on stone tablets.

That is where the law resided. It resided apart from us. But the new wineskin is not like the old one. When God prophesies about a coming change in a new covenant, a new relationship of something he is gonna do in Jeremiah 31, 33, look what it says.

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord. I will put my law within them.

I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God and they shall be my people. See, Jesus didn't come to change the law.

[23 : 49] He came to change where the law lives. Jesus is Lord of the law who writes it on our hearts. Jesus is not the lawbreaker.

He is the lawkeeper and he is the lawkeeper who kept the law for us. He fulfilled it for us. Jesus is not the legalist who separates the law from God to be a law unto himself.

Jesus is Lord of the law who writes it on our hearts just as it resides in his own. In the old covenant, in the old wineskin, God wrote himself into stone tablets.

He dwelt in stone temples. In the new covenant, the new wineskin, he writes himself into our hearts. and into that new wineskin, he pours his new wine.

In these new hearts upon which his law is written, we are filled with the Holy Spirit, God the Spirit, the very presence of God. And that is the Spirit who discerns the law and knows the law and leads us to walk in that same discernment.

[24 : 59] This is the good news of the gospel. The Holy Spirit dwelling in our hearts, which means we are loved and accepted by God. But the law written on our hearts means something too.

It means that disciples and as disciples, we obey the Lord's law because we love the Lord of the law. Salvation is not just a mental ascent.

It is a substantive shift that happens at the very core of our nature. It is why salvation is symbolized and talked about in terms of death and resurrection.

We die to our old self and our old heart and are raised a new creation with a new heart upon which is written the same law that is written in the heart of our Savior.

And the law is not outside of us condemning us. It is inside propelling us. Disciples aren't legalists. We aren't lawbreakers.

[25 : 59] We are those who follow the way of our King who is Lord of the law. As the band comes up and we consider how to respond, I would like to speak to those in the room who are not yet a Christian and I want to say thank you for coming.

I hope this was helpful for you in understanding more of who Jesus is and what he demands of us. And I want to say this to you, living under the law apart from Christ means you will always be looking for a way to be counted righteous.

I would say in our day and age we look for a new just cause to get behind. Why? Because intrinsically in our nature there is a desire for righteousness and the only way that we can get that apart from God is trying to get behind the latest thing where we can say if I'm a part of this then I might be considered righteous.

Legalism dominates our cultural moment and our politics which has become the new religion of the day if we're honest. But there is an emptiness in it all because it is far from Jesus.

It is separated from Jesus. It doesn't include him. And it is why there is so much out there of trying to get behind just causes to find righteousness and yet there is an epidemic alongside of that of anger and bitterness and despair and depression and loneliness and anxiety.

[27 : 29] And I want to say to you Jesus is holding out to you today a better righteousness a perfect righteousness his righteousness that you don't have to earn he earned it for you.

He lived a life you could not live. He fulfilled the law that you could never fulfill and then he died in your place for all the ways that you didn't live up to the law of God so that all those sins all those flaws all those failures could be taken away and he's holding it out to you and he's saying come to me come to me and believe that I am the Lord of the law come to me and believe that I am Savior and King and confess that is true and surrender and let go of your life and let go of trying to live towards your righteousness and live to me and if that's you there's going to be a prayer up on the screen in a few moments and I would encourage you to pray that prayer there's not any more hoops you have to jump through you pray that prayer in faith that Jesus is who he says he is and the promise is you will be saved I want to speak to us in the room that already are a Christian how is God calling you and need to respond right now how have you and I drifted into legalism how have you and I drifted into law breaking and God is offering us his grace today to come to him and he is pointing out those things because he wants you to come and confess them to him and bring them to him and he takes them and you know what he does he wipes them away he washes them under the blood of his son and it is no more it doesn't exist somewhere out there for him to bring it back up it is done gone away with and bring that to him bring it to him and