

# Mark 2:23- 3:6

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[ 0 : 00 ] I am excited to come back here. Take your Bibles and go with me to the Gospel according to Mark. Mark chapter 2. Mark chapter 2. We will pick up in verse 23 of the second chapter there and we will go into the third chapter and we will get down to verse 6. So Mark chapter 2 verses 23 through Mark chapter 3 verse 6. Now I know that kind of cuts against the grain every now and then people say well we don't need to go into the next chapter. There are good divisions and breaks and that is so.

But understandably these divisions and breaks chapters and verses in your scripture are created in there for our sake. Man put them in there later on. This is one grand letter that was written by Mark to the church and it was written to the believers of the early ages and so it doesn't really hurt our feelings. They need to go into it because sometimes context helps us to keep it in proper setting and you will see why when we get into it.

So if you have the Word of God and you are physically able to desire to do so I am asking you to join with me as we stand together and we read the Word with one another. Starting in Mark chapter 2 verse 23. We will go into chapter 3 verse 6.

And it happened that he was passing through the grain fields on the Sabbath and his disciples began to make their way along while picking the heads of grain. 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 he and his companions became hungry how he entered the house of God in the time of Abiathar the high priest and ate the consecrated bread which is not lawful for anyone to eat except the priest.

[ 1 : 35 ] And he also gave it to those who were with him. Jesus said to them the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath. The Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.

He entered again into a synagogue and a man was there whose hand was withered. They were watching him to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath so that they might accuse him. And he said to the man with the withered hand get up and come forward.

And he said to them is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath to save a life or to kill. But they kept silent. And after looking around at them with anger grieved at their hardness of heart he said to the man stretch out your hand.

And he stretched it out and his hand was restored. And the Pharisees went out and immediately began to conspiring with the Herodians against him as to how they might destroy him.

Let's pray. Father we thank you for this day. Thankful for the opportunity we have of gathering together. We thank you for your word and what a grand privilege it is to hear it, to read it, and to see it.

[ 2 : 41 ] And now Lord we pray that you would speak to our hearts and minds. We pray that the truthfulness of scripture would penetrate to the very depths of our being. That it would mold and conform us to be more like you for your glory and honor.

We ask it all in Christ's name. Amen. You may be seated. I want you to see this morning confronting the dangers of legalism.

Confronting the dangers of legalism. These last two encounters recorded for us at the end of the second chapter and in the first six verses of the third chapter really are the culmination of what began in the first verse of the second chapter.

Beginning in chapter 2 verse 1 Jesus begins to confront the legalistic standards of his day. He begins to proclaim forgiveness of sins over a man when someone says who can forgive sins but God and to declare that he has the ability he tells the man to get up and walk.

And he gets up and picks up and picks up his pallet and goes home. When he walks out of there he goes and he meets a tax collector sitting at his booth named Levi later on known as Matthew. And he calls Matthew from the tax booth and then he goes and eats with sinners and tax collectors. [ 3 : 55 ] And then they fail to fast the way the Pharisees and the disciples of John the Baptist fast. And Jesus says they that have the bridegroom need not fast because they're in a mode of celebration.

And now we see the two other events the passing through the grain fields and the occupation or the habit that takes place during the synagogue. It is this past week I was reading through this in one of our breaks.

We were in the convention center and if you've ever been to one you know convention halls are long. And we always try to find a hole somewhere to go hide in and to sit down for one because we've always had young kids with us.

And it's a good place to let them just run around. And unless you've ever been to a Southern Baptist convention you don't know this. They have all these vendors and they think it's fun to give kids balls. And so these kids run around with these balls that just bounce off things.

And when you put a kid with a ball in a room full of 15,000 people somebody's going to get hit. Right? So you eventually take them into a hallway and you let them just throw that thing. And as much as they want to throw it you say I can't believe you do that.

[ 4 : 59 ] Well you would if it was you. You would do it too. So it was there during all that time that I was reading through this passage. And there's just one phrase that I couldn't get over. And I want you to see it this morning when we get to it.

And he said to the man with the withered hand. That's a good phrase. You'll get it in just a moment. Because he said to the man with the withered hand get up and come forward. Jesus is confronting the legalism of his day and even the legalism of our day.

Because make no mistake about it. The law leaves the hungry man hungry. And he leaves the broken man broken. Only Jesus brings restoration and renewal to them both.

In the law there is no provision for your hunger. And in the law there is no provision for your brokenness. It can only declare that you are so.

But only in Christ can we find both of those needs met. During the days of Christ the Pharisees were the chief legalists.

[ 6 : 03 ] They knew the laws and the rules and the do's and the do not's. And they expounded upon the ten commandments and turned it into 634 oral commandments. They multiplied ten time after time after time again.

And came up to 634 recorded in the Mishnah of what we should do. During the construction of the temple they decided they wanted to observe the Sabbath. So it was during the construction of the temple that they began to dictate what could and could not happen on the Sabbath.

That you could not bring in material on the Sabbath. And you could not reap grain on the Sabbath. And you could not do all these things. And they began to make legalistic matters. Out of things that were given to be symbolic.

The Sabbath was one of the signs and seals of the covenant with the people of Israel that God gave them at Mount Sinai. God sanctified that day.

Set that day apart at creation. But then he used it to set apart his people at Mount Sinai. It was given as a ten commandment to set the nation of Israel apart from the nations around them.

[ 7 : 06 ] If you want to see how much it does so then you need to go to the book of Nehemiah. Nehemiah chapter 13. And you will find in Nehemiah chapter 13 that the traders of that land and that region would come wanting to trade with the inhabitants of the people of Jerusalem.

And Nehemiah shut the gates and said don't come here because we're different than you. We're not going to do it on the Sabbath. Because it set them apart as the people of God. It was a sign given to signify the covenant.

But what was to signify the covenant became a legalistic manner of do's and don'ts along with a number of other things. And we see here the confrontation of legalism.

The first thing I want you to know is that this begins with an accusation. It says, And it happened that he was passing through the grain fields on the Sabbath. And his disciples began making their way along while picking the heads of grain.

Now I'm thankful that Mark is a part of the Synoptic Gospels. So you have Matthew, Mark, and Luke. All three of them sharing many things in common.

[ 8 : 17 ] And all three of them expounding and telling the same story. But I'm thankful that we have three accounts of this account. Because when we read these three accounts, we see something a little bit different in each one of them.

It is Matthew that tells us the reason why the disciples are picking the heads of grain. Matthew tells us that while they were following Jesus, they became hungry. And as they were hungry, and they were walking along the edge of the field, they began picking the heads of grain. And something that was an acceptable practice in that day, and even until recently, even in our day. That it was acceptable. As a matter of fact, you were supposed to leave the edge of your field unharvested.

In case someone that was going along the road became hungry, and they needed to get a little food to sustain them for their journey. Matthew tells us that they weren't doing this just because they were bored.

They were doing it because they were hungry. And as they were walking along and making their way, they were meeting their physical need of hunger by picking heads of grain and rubbing it together in their hands and eating it.

[ 9 : 23 ] But then the Pharisees show up, because look at what it says. And the Pharisees were saying to him, Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath? Oh, they paid no attention to the hungry man.

All they saw was the head of grain being picked and rubbed between the two hands. And they said, Look, why are they doing what is not lawful? And then when we get to the very next Sabbath, found in the third chapter, it tells us that Jesus was in the synagogue and the Pharisees were there too. Look at what it says. They were watching him, it says in verse 2. That word watching, by the way, is a very unique word. It means to be looking out of the side of one's eye, to be spying, kind of not wanting to be noticed.

They weren't just staring a hole through him. They were kind of blending in to the crowd. We've got a picture. At least my wife has got a picture of it. She took a picture recently. We've got this little bitty kitten. Someone in the congregation blessed us with a little kitten.

And it happens to be a family member of mine, so I can't say anything about them. I'm not a cat guy. Some of you are. I'm not. I'm sorry. Anyway, I came home with this little kitten. And this little kitten has to live with our big German shepherd.

[ 10 : 35 ] And so this little kitten is sitting on the steps, and my wife's got a picture of our German shepherd sitting behind the bushes, just looking through the bushes at the kitten. That's the picture, right? Now, I need to tell you the reason she was watching the kitten is because our second granddaughter had the kitten in a headlock, and she was really wanting to make sure the kitten was going to live, which all of us were.

Some of us were staring, but the dog was spying. But the picture here is being behind the bushes and looking. See, they weren't just staring at Christ. They were spying on him.

Because you need to know this. Legalism, legalism can acknowledge a problem, but it has no answer for a solution. The legalist can tell you what the problem is, but they cannot tell you how to resolve it.

They can bring an accusation, but they have no means of restoration. And what we find is here with these disciples, hungry, harvesting a little grain, or in the synagogue with the man who has a problem.

We'll get to him in just a moment. The man who's over here with a problem, and the Pharisees are spying, and they're looking, and they're watching, and they had to be following Christ, or else they would have never noticed this.

[ 11 : 54 ] And what we notice is that the legalist can make an accusation. Friend, you have no problem telling people what's wrong with them. But the question is, is can you tell them how to get right?

Not by the legalistic standard of the law. Because when you read the Old Testament, and I love the Old Testament, or there was a day when I started preaching, I wasn't in love with the Old Testament.

I loved the letters and epistles and writings of Paul. I loved the grace and the mercy and the redemption and the forgiveness. I came to Christ through reading personally the book of Romans. Many of you know that. The writings of Paul were my passion. But then I began to understand that I could not really grasp Paul until I understood the Old Testament. And I had fallen in love with the Old Testament. And the reason I fell in love with the Old Testament is because the Old Testament tells me repeatedly what's wrong, what's wrong, what's wrong, what's wrong.

And until I know how wrong I am, I do not know how good he is. I need to get to the gospel so that I can understand what Christ has done. I need to get to Paul so I can understand the glories of redemption and sanctification.

[13:03] I need to get to the good news of the gospel. But until I know what the good news is, I need to know what the bad news is. See, the law, Genesis to Malachi, can repeatedly tell me what is wrong with me, but it cannot tell me how to get right.

It cannot tell me how to address my problems. It tells me over and over again, it is not the sacrificial system. You say, oh, well, sure, the Bible tells us in the Old Testament that we bring sacrifices. In sacrifices, I do not have any pleasure, the Lord says, but come to me with a humble and contrite heart. What is the fast that the Lord desires? Humility and a brokenness of heart and a contrite spirit.

It is not the bringing of bulls and lambs and the spilling of blood. These things do nothing but remind us that we have a problem. See, the legalist can bring an accusation, but they cannot bring restoration.

Friend, be careful with the message we proclaim, because if all we do is bring the accusation, but we do not tell them how to be restored, we're not doing any good. So we see here an accusation.

[14:14] Number two, we see a confrontation. It is one thing for the Pharisees to make an accusation, but I love the fact that Christ confronts this accusation. It tells us in verse 24, the Pharisees were saying to him, look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?

And in verse 25, it says, and he said to them, oh, praise be to God that Christ has something to say about that, right? And he said to them, he says, have you never read what David did when he was in need and he and his companions became hungry?

And how he entered the house of God in the time of Abiath the high priest. Now, I entrust that you are Bible scholars or desire to be a Bible scholar. And by that, I mean I entrust that you're gonna look at your cross references and you're gonna look up your Old Testament passages and that when you look up the cross reference to this passage, that you will come to the realization that at the time when David entered into the priest's house and the priest of Nob, that Ahimelech, Abiathar's father, was actually the high priest at that time and Abiathar was not the high priest. And I trust that when you do that, you're gonna scratch your head and say, well, wait a minute, does the New Testament contradict what the Old Testament says? Well, I trust it. In no ways and no means will you think that it does because it does not say that when Abiathar was the high priest, it says that during the time of Abiathar, who became the high priest because Abiathar was alive when the Ahimelech, his father, was high priest at Nob and he was the only one who lived when Doeg went to Nob and slew all of the priests.

You remember that, right? That was during that time. And so he was the only one who was alive and began to serve with David and he was acknowledged with David and became the first high priest during the reign of David.

[15:49] So it's good to know your scripture. That way when someone comes to you and says the Bible contradicts itself, you can say, oh, no, it doesn't. Let's dig a little further. If you ever find a contradiction in the Bible, it is not a contradiction in scripture. It's a contradiction in your mind and you just need to dig a little further, okay?

The word of God is true. Let all men be found false. So what we see here is he brings up this picture and that was a really side note. Did not mean to give it to you, but let's see what he says. He confronts them here with the account of David. Now again, praise be to God that we have three accounts of this same event because Matthew tells us in this confrontation that Jesus actually brought up three illustrations.

Now, why didn't Mark bring up all three of those illustrations? Who is Mark writing to? Do you remember? Mark is writing to the Romans, the citizens of Rome who are Gentiles. Matthew is writing to the Jewish people.

The other two examples from Matthew's writing, which I'll give to you in just a moment, have application to the Jewish people in particular. They would not have had application to the Roman citizens of Rome.

[16:51] They would have cared less if that makes any sense, but they didn't know about David because everybody knew about David, so he's a good example to set forward. But it is becoming of us to look and see what those other two are.

If you were to turn to this account in Matthew chapter 12, you don't have to, but you can write this note down. In Matthew chapter 12, and in the parallel is also found in Luke chapter 6, Matthew 12 tells us that Jesus used not only the account of David asking for the showbread that was put on the table, but he also said, do not the priest break the Sabbath in the temple every Sunday. When they go to do work in the temple and they're offering sacrifices in the temple, but just because it's in the temple, it's okay, right? Because they're the priest and they're in the temple. Now pay attention.

And then Jesus brings up the prophetic word of the gospel of the gospel of the gospel of the gospel, in which Jesus says, I desire compassion and mercy and not legalism.

But now it's telling because, stay with me here, immediately after saying this in the gospel of Matthew, Jesus says, but there is one here who is greater than the temple.

[18:01] But there's one here who's greater than the temple. Just hold on to that in the back of your head for just a moment. We'll come to that. So he confronts them with something that would speak to them. They could not argue about the fact that David took bread he was not supposed to eat, and he did eat and gave it to the people with him.

They could not argue with the fact that the priests in the temple, every Sabbath, are laboring and working and performing work with their hands. And they could not argue with the fact that the old word of God says that it is not the legalistic observance of the law, but rather the compassion and mercy that God desires.

He confronts them. And then on the following Sabbath, when he's in the synagogue, oh, here's my saying, he said to the man with the withered hand, I mean, just let that sink in for just a minute. He's in the synagogue where people go to hear the word of God. And there's a man there who has a problem. And the man who has a problem's in the back of the room because the man's got a problem.

He said to the man with the withered hand, you know him, he's the man with the withered hand who's sitting along the back wall who's got a major issue that everybody knows. And we know that people noticed his problem because the Pharisees knew he was there and they were looking to see if Jesus would heal him on the Sabbath, right?

[19:14] So he was a man whose problem was obvious to everybody. But he said to the man with the problem, man with the withered hand, Luke tells us in Luke chapter 6, Luke, the beloved physician, tells us it was his right hand.

Now that's important. Luke paid attention to that. Mark could care less what hand it was, but the physician, you want him to know which hand it was, right? Luke tells us it was the right hand because the wording here again is in particular.

The wording implies that his hand was injured or maimed in some way or fashion. He was not born with a deformity, but rather somewhere in the course of his life, he was hurt on his right hand. And he was hurt in such a measure that everybody noticed it. And he was hurt by such a means that it was recognizable. And here's a man whose right hand is injured, living in a society in which your living is made with your hands.

But he's still going to the synagogue. And Christ shows up, and he said to the man with the withered hand, you know him, the man with the problem, get up and come forward. Now what were the Pharisees doing?

[20:26] The Pharisees were looking at him, spying upon him. And it tells us in Luke chapter 6, in case you missed the confrontation, it tells us in Luke chapter 6, and Jesus knew what they were thinking.

That is, he knew what the Pharisees were thinking. And then he said to the man with the withered hand, come forward and stand in the middle. He went public with his confrontation.

See, Jesus could have healed the man on another day. Jesus could have said a word in silence and solitude and healed the man. Jesus didn't do anything but tell him to lift his hand up.

The one who created it all and spoke it all into existence, the one who created all things, all things were created by him and through him and for him, could have at a moment looked upon him and his hand would have been healed.

He didn't have to call him to the front, but he did. He brought him to the front. And he asked the penetrating question, is it lawful to do good or to do harm?

[ 21 : 31 ] To save a life or to kill a life? See, what Jesus was saying, in the legalistic attitude in which I cannot do anything, then you're killing this man.

You're doing him harm. James would say it this way, to those who know what to do and do not do it to him, it is sin.

And if you have the means to help a brother out, then you help a brother out. Jesus puts him in the middle because he wants the confrontation to be public.

Praise be to God that Jesus confronts legalism. And he brings us to the third and final thing, and that is a restoration.

Because in Christ, all things are restored. We know from the Gospel of Matthew the disciples were hungry, and since they were hungry, they were picking the heads of grain, rubbing it together, and eating it.

[ 22 : 36 ] We know that the Pharisees wanted to stop it, but Jesus confronted it, and as far as we can tell, the hunger of the disciples was met because they were not hindered by following him. Because Jesus made this statement, for the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.

Remember that phrase I asked you to remember? That someone greater than the temple is here? When we get to this observation of the Sabbath, the question is, do we still keep the Sabbath? Now, the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath, which is a good way of saying God gave us a day to rest. And rest is good for our souls. It's good for our body, and it's a good day to set aside and focus upon him.

But it is not set forward as a legalistic manner in which to be addressed because Christ says that when we're serving Christ, we're serving something greater than the temple.

And when we're following Christ, we're following the one who is Lord of every day, even of the Sabbath. So even if it was still a law, Jesus is over that law.

[ 23 : 54 ] And he wants to meet that need. He wants to observe. Now, does that say we shouldn't take time to rest and be still? No. Does that say it's sinful to observe a Sabbath unto the Lord?

No. But that's saying if we're trusting in the observation of that day to make us something that only Christ can, then then it becomes a sin. We see here that Christ tells us he has nothing wrong with a hungry man finding something to eat.

I love how S.M. Locker used to say it, I know where a hungry man can find bread and a thirsty man can find water. And I know where a hurting man can be made well. And that's found in Jesus Christ. See, the Pharisees would say, I'd rather you be hungry than eat on the Sabbath. If you have to work for it, Jesus says, you're free to eat. Why? Because you're walking with me. The man with the withered hand, he tells him to stretch out his hand, he stretches out and it's made whole.

It's made perfect. And it tells us that Jesus, after asking the question, he looked at the Pharisees and they were silent and he was angered.

[ 25 : 06 ] But what was he angry at? The hardness of their heart. The heart that said, we're going to look to the law and forget about the person. We're going to forget about the man with the withered hand.

The one who's walking through life maimed because of an accident. We're more concerned about the letter of the law, not the person. So, Jesus says, we focus on the person.

The irony of it is, is that after he heals the man, it tells us in the gospel, according to Luke, that then the Pharisees became angry. And they became angry and went out and met with their bitter enemies, the Herodians.

The Herodians are only mentioned a couple of times in the New Testament because they were supporters of the Herod dynasty and family, really, which was kind of really against the Pharisees' beliefs, but at this time, they partnered with because of their animosity towards Christ.

Both of them had this animosity towards Christ and their mutual animosity led to a partnership of how they conspired together to get rid of Christ. Even the enemies were brought together in their accusations.

[ 26 : 15 ] But what we find here is that Christ gives restoration. The hungry man finds his hunger met. The maimed man, the man with the withered hand, has his hand healed.

And only in Christ, in the gospel he proclaims, do we find full restoration. Friend, listen to me. The letter of the law does nothing but diagnose the problem.

That's all it does. But the person of Jesus Christ can cure the problem. Now, does that mean we discount the law and we cast it aside?

No. I believe we are saved and redeemed through grace and faith alone. It's not by works lest any man should boast. It's by the work of Jesus Christ.

He has made us whole. I was a hungry man and he gave me something to eat. I was a man with a withered hand and he called me forward and restored me and made me whole. Not because of me. Quite often, it's been in times in spite of me.

[ 27 : 18 ] But the moment he did it, my life is changed and transformed and renewed and while my hunger has been met, I'm still a disciple following him which means my life is going to look differently. My withered hand has been made whole and now I can labor and work and I'll do it with a new heart and a new mind.

Serve him to the best of my ability. That doesn't mean we cast the Old Testament away. It just means that we cannot judge ourselves according to the legalistic nature of it and we dare not judge those around us that way either.

Because the great need of man is not for us to highlight their problem. The great need of man is for us to introduce us to introduce them to the one who can cure them of their problem.

We don't just get to bring an accusation. Each and every one of us need restoration. The reality is we all know what's wrong with us.

The conscience inside of us testifies to us. We know what's wrong. We don't need anyone else to tell us. Do you think that the man in the back of the room needed Jesus to tell him he had a withered hand?

[ 28 : 27 ] No. But he needed to tell him what he could do about it. The great need of restoration. Cast off this legalistic nature and we walk in the means of restorative power.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you so much for this day. We praise you for the opportunity we've had to be together and we thank you for your word.

We pray that now you would speak to our hearts and our minds. Lord, we understand our own issues and our own problems. We know that they're meant in you and in you alone.

So Lord, may we live in the restorative work of Christ. May we extend that to those around us. We ask it all in Jesus' name.

Amen.