

## **Sabbath Controversy**

### **Mark 2:23-3:6**

We return to Mark in his gospel of displaying Jesus as the son of God, the Messiah, as he is writing to his audience. In chapter 2, we find ourselves in a controversial chapter. The temperature has been turned up. The heat is rising as these interactions between Jesus and the religious leaders take place. So, we're fairly fresh into our understanding and study of His Galilean ministry, and as we've seen, there's been these interactions that have happened, and they haven't necessarily been the most positive in terms of seeing eye to eye and on the same page between Jesus and these religious leaders.

If you recall the beginning of chapter 2, this interaction that Jesus has with the paralytic; Jesus makes the bold statement that He has the authority to forgive sins. Clearly, and it's, really, unmistakable that He is claiming He's God in that statement. Obviously, the religious leaders aren't too excited to hear something like this. Then, Jesus goes on, and He's associating with people like Levi the tax collector and all these sinners and eating with them and be willing to take His disciples and go over to their house and feast with them. This also does not bode well with the Pharisees, these scribes, as religious leaders. And the last time we were in Mark, we saw this issue that came up regarding fasting, just the actions and the attitudes; why Jesus and His disciples aren't mourning and fasting like the typical, spiritually minded Jew or Pharisee - Jesus following that up with saying He is bringing something totally new, something completely different than the expectation and the status quo of Judaism at the time.

To show the difference and how new... really, this complete ushering in of Jesus' program that would lead into the church, to show how new it was and controversial, we come to a topic like today, the topic like the Sabbath. That would be the opportunity, the concept that would put this all on the table and show how clear of a divide there was between Jesus and these religious leaders. So, we're going to see the Sabbath come out in two different passages as we're going to put them together today as they both reflect and come back to that concept. We'll look, starting in verse 23 of chapter 2, and we'll just read down to verse 27, the end of the chapter; "One Sabbath he was going through the grainfields, 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, 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.

Our passage, today, starts off and we see the purpose of the Sabbath being addressed in these verses at the end of chapter 2 - the purpose of the Sabbath being addressed. The last time we saw an event taking place on the Sabbath was in chapter 1 when Jesus had gone into the synagogue on the Sabbath as was customary for the Jewish people, and Jesus was invited in that synagogue in Capernaum as the guest speaker or teacher if you will. So, this has happened before. We’ve seen this Sabbath gathering and how they slow life down for the sake of giving attention to this. And that happened in chapter 1 where Jesus taught with authority and cast the demon out of the man in the synagogue in the presence of everyone there.

Now we come to another Sabbath incident, but this time it’s not in the synagogue, it’s out in the grain fields, just out walking around the grain fields. Notice that the Pharisees are saying (and they’re really bringing this up as an accusation), “Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?” That’s a bold accusation in verse 24. Their contention with Jesus has increased throughout this, and the first passage of chapter 2, we saw that they were pretty much questioning in their hearts. They kept this to themselves. They weren’t verbalizing it. Then, in the next interaction where Jesus is dining and eating with these tax collectors and sinners, they’re willing to speak to Jesus’ disciples. Then, when Jesus and His disciples aren’t fasting, but, instead, they’re feasting, we see they, actually, come and ask Jesus why do your disciples act this way? But now we have the accusation of “...doing what is not lawful...,” breaking the law. This is rising to a whole new level as far as the controversy is concerned because it revolves around the Sabbath.

Well, what do we know about the Sabbath? From the Bible itself, not much; it’s pretty minimum. This is the accusation on the Sabbath that takes place - the accusation on the Sabbath. Because of the fact that it was the Sabbath is why this becomes such a big deal for the Pharisees and the religious leaders of the time. The Old Testament tells us a little bit about the Sabbath. You

might already jumped to in your mind passages like the Ten Commandments where we have the mention of the Sabbath and honoring that. We see the Sabbath, really, started though before that - when we have God creating. As He's creating, and we all know He creates for six days, and then the seventh, He rests. This is the foundation for it all. Notice the word rest that keeps coming up. He's rested from all He's done. He's resting on the seventh day, and He makes this day holy as He rests from His work. So, Sabbath, the seventh day, clearly connected to this concept of resting. And then, it's later in the Ten Commandments that we see this very characteristic of God in resting. He gives this to the nation of Israel, not necessarily to the whole earth, not necessarily to all the nations, but specifically to Israel and says to them, this is something that you will honor and observe yourself, and it's, really, a gift. God's giving it to them as a gift, not just to reflect Himself, but also for them to enjoy that rest, to enjoy the very rest of stopping and ceasing from work, not just the people, but their servants, their animals, and everyone in the household. This was a gift from God to His people; "... the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy."

Now, outside of that, as we go through the Old Testament, we don't see a lot more clarification of what it means to rest and what it means to work on the Sabbath. We know that you weren't to work, and that was bad, and it could be punishable by death, but what were the details? What did working look like? What exactly qualified as work, and what qualified as rest and when were you crossing over? This was the very task that the Pharisees were experts in or at least sought to be experts in. They spent so much of their time trying to detail the minutia of this, and they spent, you know, several article after article and documentation of what it looks like to actually rest - and when you're actually doing work, and you're now violating the Sabbath.

For instance, there's obvious things like working in the fields. So, if you're reaping or you're threshing or winnowing, any type of harvesting that you're doing in your fields, that's considered work; you're not to do that. But then they would get even more detailed to any part that might lead up to that or might come after it. If you're tying a knot or untying a knot, that's work; you can't do that. All right. You're not allowed to start a fire on the Sabbath, but, if a fire's already going, then you can't put it out. You just have to let it go. You can't be cutting garments. You can't sew or clean. You can travel a certain distance, but even then there was debate on how far that distance was, and they had to keep track of it, and this was before Fit-Bits, so that's

even harder, and they're having a tough time, and this is just a constant detail after detail. You can carry a certain amount of things, but only so much, not too heavy, and it depends on who you are, your size, and what you can do. And you can tell where this goes. It's a headache is what it is, but they prided themselves in this.

They were God's people, and they had been given the Sabbath, and they upheld it. And they had these details; they went beyond what Scripture actually taught, and they formed these other details of, really, externals and extra-Biblical understanding of what it meant to rest versus work and violating the Sabbath. Thus we have them in our passage, and they're accusing Jesus' disciples of "...doing what is not lawful..." They accuse Jesus' disciples of violating the Sabbath for doing what? In verse 23; "...going through the grainfields, and as they made their way, his disciples began to pluck heads of grain." Is this allowed? You might think, yeah, actually, that does sound a little odd. It almost sounds like stealing. You're going through people's fields, and you're just taking their food. I don't think you're allowed to do that. Actually, this is something that was provided for in the Law in Deuteronomy 23:25; "If you go into your neighbor's standing grain, you may pluck the ears with your hand, but you shall not put a sickle to your neighbor's standing grain." So, what was not allowed was taking actual tools and bringing bags and going to your neighbor's field and taking all their stuff and filling it up in your bags and taking it home with you; but if you were passing through, you could have a snack, and that was fine. That was okay, and there's provision for this in the Law.

So, it wasn't that. It wasn't this issue of stealing. So, what was it? It came down to this minutia, this detail of what it meant to actually break the Sabbath, to violate it. And in their mind, it was this - when you were picking the grain and rubbing it and then taking the chaff and separating it from the grain, all that was a part of the process of reaping and now threshing and then winnowing, and you couldn't do any of that even if it was just a handful. That was violating the Sabbath. That was wrong. That is not lawful, and thus they're Sabbath breakers. This was the classic understanding and picture of what the Pharisees did so well. They took the Law of God, and then they put fences around it to protect, and they went further and further out and made further commands in their oral tradition that became extra commands that were never actually found in the Bible to begin with. This is what they've done, so, in the technicality, they approach Jesus about His

disciples. And they're, really, approaching Him, not about what is actually written in the Law and what is actually Biblical, but they're approaching Him about what they have deemed as work in their definition which was not clearly laid out in Scripture.

How does Jesus respond to this? Does Jesus go on to their level and say, technically, guys, you have a misunderstanding here? Let me talk about all your details. You're allowed to tie a knot, but maybe not this kind of knot. And does Jesus involve Himself there? No, that's not where He goes. Jesus appeals to Scripture. Jesus' response is an appeal to the Scriptures in verses 25-26; "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?' " Jesus refers to the story of David that's found in 1 Samuel 21, and notice how Jesus begins; "Have you never read..." ... "Have you never read..." To them, to the Pharisees who knew the law so well, who obsessed over it, who obsessed over memorizing and understanding this, this was a slap in the face. Of course they've read this. Of course they've read it multiple times and potentially have committed parts of this to memory. Of course they know this, but Jesus brings it up as such an obvious matter-of-fact; haven't you read the story with David and what happened.

He appeals to this account with David, and what we find in the account, if you were to go to 1 Samuel 21 which we've actually visited not too long ago from this pulpit going through the book of 1 Samuel, David is on the run. He's fleeing from Saul. Saul is a murderous man at the time, and David is anointed as king, but it's not quite his time yet, so he's running, and in his running with his people, he goes to the tabernacle. They didn't have the temple yet, so they had the tabernacle, the tent of meeting, and when he goes there and he approaches the priest, he asks do you have anything? Do you have anything to eat? We're on the run. All right? We need this. And the priest allows an exception. He takes this bread, it's called the showbread, the bread of Presence, the bread that was in the tent of meeting for God; they take that, and they give it to David and his men. And Jesus refers to this incident - He says this bread that is not lawful for any but the priest to eat, this bread that was, actually, specifically for the priests as we see.

To learn a little bit more about this, we see that this was commanded by God in Exodus 25:30; "...you shall set the bread of the Presence on the table before me regularly." This table that was in the tent of meeting would have twelve loaves of bread on it, one loaf for each tribe of Israel to represent that. And every week they would cycle out the bread. They'd take the bread out, and they'd feed the priests, and then they'd bring new bread in, fresh bread for the week. So, every week they'd keep putting the new twelve loaves on that table that was in the tent of meeting. And notice the clear indication in Leviticus that this bread was for Aaron and his sons, for the priests there. It was for them. It wasn't to just be passed out. It wasn't to let anybody just waltz in there and take a loaf for themselves. This was, actually, intentionally set up for a representation, a symbolic gesture, and for feeding the priests in that matter. To see this maybe, there's the tabernacle, the tent of meeting before the temple as I mentioned and not in the holy of holies, the back kind of section behind the curtain, but in the holy place, the front section, you have that table up against the wall, and it was on that table that you had the bread of Presence or the showbread.

This is the story that Jesus is referring to, and in this, He makes the simple suggestion here; all right, this story appears to violate the Law because the bread is for the priests, but what happens when there are moments of danger or hunger, or a rare scenario comes up, or God's anointed one David is on the run from Saul who's trying to kill him? What happens then? Sorry, nothing we can do for you. This is for us, we have lots of it stored up, but, hey, it's just for us. We can't help you out David. Sorry. No, the high priest kind of makes a decision at that point because there's not a specific detail of what the priests could or couldn't do with the bread. Maybe the priests could hand it out if they felt it was necessary, and that's what the high priest decided to do, gave David the bread; temporarily set this aside, this understanding of what it was intended for, in order to serve a greater purpose, seemed to be a greater purpose on hand with David the anointed one (the Messiah expected at that time), this one that's there in their presence, and he decides to feed him with this bread.

This concept isn't that far of a stretch for us. We understand this in our day as well. There are laws. When you go on the road, there are speed limits. (Now, don't think I'm going to go somewhere I'm not going to go.) All right. Speed limits are a good thing and understandably set up by our government. However, we all understand, and we appreciate the fact that



first-responders – when you have ambulance and cops, and you have firemen - they have that priority where they can obviously drive on the wrong side of the road if they want to. They can drive faster than the speed limit because there's a greater need in mind; there's a severe danger at hand. There's a health issue that's taking place. There's a need that needs to be met. So, we understand that the speed limit does not apply or can be set aside in a moment such as that. We understand these things. We encounter these things. And in the same way, Jesus brings up this example from David, not just any old person in the Old Testament, but David, a big deal to the Jewish people. And Jesus says, don't you know what happened here for David? And that was fine. That was understandable because everyone knew the intent of the bread, and how it could be, in a certain situation like this, could be offered up.

Jesus goes on to explain even more the purpose of the Sabbath, to bring it back to His scenario and, in that, displaying once again His authority, as we've seen. The authority of the Son of Man in verses 27-28; "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.' " Jesus shares this most simple and basic proverb. What was the point of the Sabbath? It was a gift. It was a gift for man. The Sabbath is for man. Think about the order of creation. Man was created on the sixth day. The day of rest didn't happen until the seventh day. There was a service. There's an order here that the Sabbath is not to be somehow trumping everything that man does, and now man lives with this burden, this yoke to make sure, before anything else, that we're abiding by and holding to this Sabbath day of rest. I mean, that's how God initiated it when He even gave it to His people. He made it very clear. Not only in Genesis do we see God resting as a description of the Sabbath, but when He gives it to them, He tells them the purpose; on the seventh day you shall rest that you may be refreshed. This is a service to His people. There's a purpose behind the Sabbath - to serve man. The Pharisees and Judaism had written copious amounts on this issue and, once again, had made the main concern holding to their details of not violating their fences they've set up around the Law, and Jesus exposes that with this little statement.

Well, it seems obvious for the Pharisees to do this and us to look at it and say, yeah, that's wrong; they went beyond what Scripture says. Is this not us once again, too? We do this all the time. Just think about the word Biblical. How many times have you heard people use that word? Is that Biblical?

What does Biblical parenting look like? How about a Biblical marriage, what does that look like? We use that word sometimes, and you read it in books, and you hear from different preachers and people explaining the word, and they start to explain what is Biblical finances, Biblical... whatever you want to fill in the blank with, and unfortunately, even when people say Biblical parenting, they go on to declare things that aren't in the Bible. And it's a shame because it's simply transferring the same practice of the Pharisees to our day; because now, people feel guilt about these certain practices, and they feel like they need to uphold them and follow them when all along it was never stated in Scripture to begin with.

I've read it all. I've seen different things in parenting books that say you need to, if you're Biblical parenting, you need to purchase a Bible for your child at a young age, even when they can't read, and make sure there's a cover on it that has a handle that the child can carry around. And that's good for the child, and that's Biblical parenting. And this is just so... oh, yeah, where'd you find that? Show me the verse? That's not in the Bible. Where is that? It's not there. Biblical marriage – well, clearly a Biblical marriage is one where the wife is not working at all, and they're at home being a homemaker. They're not allowed to go out and get a job. No. No. No. No. Or, the husband has to make every decision, every decision about whatever shirt he buys or where the family's going to dinner. All right. This husband has to... he's the headship of... he's the authority. He has to do this. This is the way God created it. People go too far. They go too far in their explanation of these things, and yet they call it Biblical. How confusing is that? Now, there's a slew of Christians that are just getting kind of ran over by this teaching in these books, and they're thinking, well, Biblical parenting has to look like that because I read it somewhere. But it's not in the Bible. Or, one of my favorites, Biblical dating. That's a great one. Right? Dating Biblical... wait, is dating in the Bible? Dating isn't even in the Bible. How're you going to call it Biblical dating. This is ridiculous.

So, there's all these examples, and, really, what they are is just examples of extra-Biblical Christianity, and it's so rampant; you can go to a Family Christian Book Store, you can go anywhere. You can turn on the radio and you hear these things, and they're thoughts and ideas that kind of sound nice, but then you realize that's not even in the Bible, but they're sold off as Biblical, and we miss the point. We miss the point completely. We did the same thing in our own thinking, in our own upbringing. We just do things



because that's the way we've always done them, and we don't question it; and we don't ask, really, is this in the Bible? Am I ordering my life in such a way as to flow out of and, actually, be convicted from what the Scriptures teach? And so, when the Scriptures teach something, I hold to it and when the Scriptures are silent on something, I understand that I can hold that lightly, and someone could apply it differently than I might, because the Scriptures are silent, and that's okay. I don't need to make them speak to it because they haven't spoken.

This is the danger that was taking place right there in Jesus' day, and there was a successful threat that had permeated all of Judaism; thus the Pharisees being the leaders, and Jesus addressing it. Jesus in verse 28 giving His final authority in this, not only appealing to Scripture, not only saying what the intention of the Sabbath was, but also appealing to the fact that He has the authority; "...the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath." He's already said how the Son of Man has the authority to forgive sins, claiming to be God, and now He says the Son of Man, referring to Himself, is Lord, Master, even of the Sabbath. Who's the one that created the Sabbath again? That was God, and now you have Jesus claiming that He is Lord of that Sabbath. This is the clear affirmation, once again, that Jesus is God. They would understand this. These Pharisees would see how bold of a claim this is, yet again, by Jesus, on something that they held so tightly to, Sabbath regulations. Jesus saying by the way, I kind of know what I'm talking about because I made this thing. I made the Sabbath. I know what I'm doing. I have the authority over this.

Our text doesn't just stop there, but we go into chapter 3:1-6, and here we will find the plotting, the plotting on the Sabbath - the plotting on the Sabbath. Verses 1-6; "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 their 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."

First, in verses 1 and 2, we see the setup, an absolute setup. The Pharisees are convinced. They don't like Jesus. They're seeing how Jesus has completely written off and done away with their oral tradition and understanding of the Law in their extra-Biblical fashion. And so, they now try to set Him up by planting this man in a synagogue on the Sabbath, this man with a withered hand as it states. Last time Jesus was in a synagogue, He was welcomed as a guest teacher; this time, He comes as a prey to try and trap, trying to set Him up. How are they going to set Him up? If Jesus heals this man, then according, once again, to their understanding of Sabbath regulations, He would be violating the Sabbath. It was only right to help someone if their life was truly in danger, but if this man just has a withered hand, he could survive the day. He'd be fine until the next, so Jesus had no need to heal him in their minds. Thus, if Jesus did follow through and heal this man, they would find Him guilty of breaking the Sabbath.

There's so much irony here that they're thinking let's plant this man that Jesus is going to heal, then we'll get Him. And they're not even realizing that they're presupposing that Jesus heals people they have already come to that conclusion. They've seen enough that they conclude Jesus is a miracle worker. He's a healer. That should move you somewhere. That should move you closer to this understanding of what the Messiah would be, and He would also do miracles and healings. No. No. No. Let's not think about that. Let's just trap this man because He's stealing all of our attention. This is ironic, just all throughout this. They're neglecting the fact that He's a miracle worker, and they're trying to use the miracle to somehow condemn Him. That's their set up. Once again Jesus responds, and the response leaves them in silence. Jesus addresses the man in the congregation; "And he said to the man with the withered hand, 'Come here.'" ... "Come here," in front of everybody. All right. Jesus doesn't try and shy away and say I'll just make it through this synagogue gathering, then afterwards, I'll approach the man on the side, and then I'll heal him. No, that's not what Jesus does. He says come over here in front of everybody. "Come here."

And Jesus asks this question that's so obvious, but at the same time, it's so piercing in the way it sounds to His opponents; "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?" Gee, I wonder. Well, you'd absolutely be clueless and heartless to say it's okay to do harm on the Sabbath. Yeah, go ahead and kill someone. That's fine. That's obviously not the right answer, but then to swing the other way, and if they were to answer

Jesus it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath, they knew what Jesus was going to do. He would do the good of healing this man. So, now they're left in this position where they have nothing to say. They're silenced. They thought they had this perfect set up and plan, and Jesus asked a simple question. What's better on the Sabbath "...to do good or to do harm...?" And they don't know what to say. They're silenced; "... they were silent..." as verse 4 states at the end. They have no response. Jesus is showing a difference between Himself and them. There's this obvious level to question, but then there's a more subtle level. Here's Jesus come to save mankind. Here's Jesus come to do good in healing these people, and here are the Pharisees trying to set Him up and do harm. Here are the Pharisees that would eventually kill Him, and at the end of our passage will plot to do so. Jesus knows what's in a man and what they will do.

Verse 5 - we see Jesus heal this man. In verse 5; "...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." The problem with these people and the Pharisees is massive. They are spiritually blind. They have hearts that are hardened, and this isn't to say that their feelings, their emotions, behind their heart are hardened; the heart was used in a way of even referring to your thoughts, so even their mind, their very mind. They were spiritually calloused, hardened, and blind to who Jesus was and what He was doing. They were those old wineskins. They were those old garments. Jesus said I have new wine, but you will not be able to hold it in your old wineskin. It's going to burst. I'm the new cloth, but you're not going to be able to be compatible with this. You're an old garment, and it's going to rip away from you. These are the Pharisees and those that would not accept Jesus.

This is their problem, "...their minds were hardened." As 2 Corinthians states, "For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away." There's a veil. They can't see this is their problem. Jesus says in His scene, and as we look at it, it's such an obvious scene. Here's the Messiah come to do good on the Sabbath, and here are the spiritual and religious leaders of the people plotting to do harm just to try and catch someone and show that he's a violator of the Sabbath. The irony is they're violating the Sabbath and God's Law. This is the problem with not just these astray spiritual leaders, but everyone that's not saved. Every unbeliever has this problem; they're

darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God as Ephesians says, and they have this hardness of heart. This is a hardness of heart that Jesus is witnessing first hand, and it grieves Him. It grieves Him to see this, real time to live this, and they don't get it.

Unfortunately, we end with a transition here to what will take place at the end of our gospel account. In verse 6, we see the scheme; "The Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him." There's two levels here. One, the Pharisees are now interacting with this new group we haven't seen before, the Herodians. What do we know about the Herodians? We haven't really seen them yet. We do know Herod the Great. We know different Herod Antipas and different leaders, different Herods, that were reigning all throughout Israel and their different sections of land. And the Herodians were simply a political party in support of the different Herods. That's all. So, what do they have to do with Pharisees, the religious leaders of the Jews? You think there's not much of a connection there, and that's the point. The Pharisees are so threatened now by Jesus' popularity if you will, His ability; they're so threatened by Jesus that they now need to team up with people they'd never would even rub shoulders with. They need to... they're the religious people, and they need to team up with anybody they can get, these political people, the political party, and get them on their side and convince them this Jesus is a threat. He's a threat to us religiously. He's a threat to you guys politically as the leaders.

Just after this encounter, this controversy over the Sabbath, the Pharisees recognize the potential here for them to completely diminish as Jesus increases as the Messiah. So, it's already insane that they would interact with these people. It shows the level to which they would go, but why? They're seeking to destroy Him. They're plotting to kill Jesus. Once again, the irony - they're the ones violating the Sabbath. They're the ones using this day of rest that God gave as a gift to His people. They use that day of rest to plot how to harm, how to kill, Jesus. Is that what God intended the Sabbath for? And yet, in that, they think they're going to get someone else and show Him to be the law breaker, the one violating the Sabbath; when Jesus is simply the Messiah healing this man, doing good on the Sabbath and with a greater mission, the greater mission to give up His life as a ransom for many and to save mankind. The irony is amazing. They are hardened in their hearts. They're spiritually blind. They have become so attached to their

extra-Biblical principles and rules they've made up that now it's causing harm.

And that's the danger for us, too. We can, not only be blinded by these things and start to attach ourselves to certain rules and things that aren't in the Bible, but when we do that, and we stay attached, and we keep a firm grip on them, we now cause harm to those around us. We now cause harm to those that are going to be introduced to Christ because we're not portraying the true gospel anymore. We're adulterating it and mixing it in with our own commands and our own rules. We cause harm. That's exactly what the Pharisees are doing - so attached to their understanding of the Law but they're causing harm even to the people like this man with the withered hand.

Instead, we ought to do what 1 Thessalonians 5:21 tells us, "...test everything [test everything]; hold fast what is good." We must. We can't pretend like everything we're hearing and everything we're reading outside of the Bible is perfect in its explanation of Christianity. There's so much that gets mixed in, and we can get convoluted in our thinking, and then our living does not help the cause of Christ. We need to test everything, make sure it upholds once again the commands of Scripture. Where Scripture speaks, we speak with boldness, with clarity; where Scripture is silent, we need to be willing to be silent rather than fill it in with our own command and writing our own book on it. May we as a congregation be aware of that, helping each other, coming along side each other based on what Scripture has said. We don't need more. We don't need newer and cleverer ways to say it. We just need what God has already given to us. Otherwise, we will become like the very group that is opposed to Jesus here.