

The Lord Of The Sabbath

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 31 January 2021

Preacher: Jared Blankenship

[0 : 00] In case we are guilty of, as they say, losing sight of the forest for the trees, it might be helpful for us before we dig too far into Sabbath issues to kind of take a step back and just be reminded of the purpose and what's actually happening here in the Gospel of Mark.

You remember that the Gospel, the singular purpose of it, is to proclaim the good news, as we see in chapter 1, verse 1, to proclaim the good news that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah and the Son of God.

And then by extension of that, understand that Jesus' death paid for the sins of His people and His resurrection secured eternal life for all that belong to Him.

So when we come to these Gospels, and we've talked about this so often, they're not biographies, they're Gospels, they're proclamations. They're not for entertaining us, they are for persuading us. And as Mark is going through, and Matthew and Luke and John as well, and they're presenting the identity of Christ, they're presenting the identity of Christ for a purpose. We can't just stop at who He is, which is where a lot of people get stuck.

[1 : 14] They're happy to admit even that intellectually speaking, Jesus was unique, that He was from God, that He possessed the power of God.

They may not have very many qualms with His identity, but then they stop there. And instead of allowing His identity to persuade them into what He taught, into what He did, they just kind of give intellectual scent to Him, conform to some religious ritual, claim to be a Christian or whatever, and kind of move on from there.

But we can't stop there, right? The purpose in identifying Christ is to actually show us what His purpose was, why He came. And so the issue when we're studying about the life of Christ, and we understand that, and we see all of these claims of divinity, and we see all these demonstrations of deity and His healings, and all of these other things, the issue is as we continue to read through the Gospels, we find out that there's a big problem.

And that's the fact that He died. This Savior died. That wasn't supposed to happen, right? At least in the minds of the Jews, their idea of Messiah was not that the Messiah would die, but that He would live, He would reign, that He would establish His kingdom.

And so the issue is that as Jesus comes along, and He shows all these things, and people begin to follow Him, and then the problem is He died. But that's not supposed to be what happened.

[2 : 40] Well, what was the purpose of that? Well, the purpose of that death was to take our place, to pay for our sin. And fortunately, gratefully, it didn't stop with His death.

He resurrected from the dead. He secured life, giving proof that all of His claims were true, that He is indeed the Messiah. Therefore, the issue was not with what happened to Jesus.

The issue was with how we, as mankind, were interpreting what the Messiah was supposed to be to begin with. And so as Mark is going through this, he's identifying who Jesus is, and all of that is for the purpose of the Gospel.

And the truth is, He is indeed the Messiah. He is the Son of God. And there's been overwhelmingly compelling evidence, even in the first two chapters, that that is indeed the case.

It is hard to argue against it. The only way that you can argue against this fact is just to say that every bit of this is just a lie. It's made up. But there's just too much evidence to say to the contrary of that.

[3 : 42] He is Messiah. He is Son of God. And if that's true, His death had a purpose, and His resurrection is fantastic and even expected. Well, such immensely good news, you would expect, would be universally celebrated and accepted, right?

But it wasn't. It wasn't. Over and over in chapter 2 and chapter 3, in the first part of chapter 3 at least, where we get to today, this is actually Mark's purpose in writing these events. He's bringing out the fact that though Jesus is good news, though He is Messiah, not everyone believed that. Not everyone wanted to accept that. In fact, the very people that should have, the very people that should have recognized who He was, actually denied Him and rejected Him and even went so far as to oppose Him, to seek His own destruction. And that's really what's unfolding here. We see all of these various conflicts that Mark is bringing together. And the issue here, in each one of them, really the link between them all, is this issue of authority.

The Pharisees and the scribes, and even to an extent, as we saw last week, the disciples of John the Baptist, had placed themselves in a position of authority, religious authority.

[5 : 04] And now, here comes Jesus, naturally as the Son of God, teaching with tremendous authority, demonstrating that authority and that power in healing.

In fact, there's a Greek word that's used over and over, even up to this point in Mark, *exousia*. It means authority or power. If you remember in chapter one, Jesus went to the synagogue, and all the people were astonished because he didn't teach them like the scribes taught, but he taught as one with authority.

It's that word, *exousia*, authority, power. There was significance to his person in his teaching. Okay? And then immediately, that *exousia*, that power is demonstrated as the demon-possessed man in the synagogue is freed from that bondage simply by Jesus' word.

When we get to the story of the paralytic, the word is used again. Jesus looks at the Pharisees, and he says, I'm going to do this in order that you may know that the Son of Man has authority, *exousia*, to forgive sins.

And we see this. The issue is the Pharisees believed themselves to be the authoritative power. And then here comes Jesus showing that that's actually not true.

[6 : 24] He is the one with the power. He is the one with the authority. And what happens? They're threatened. They didn't like that very much. There's this struggle now. The gospel of grace versus the gospel of religious observance.

The gospel of works. And now they're fighting against one another. Who's right? Who has the real authority? Who has the real power? And that's what's really unfolding here in these stories.

When we get to the final two that we just read about, the issue is elevated. And it all has to do with Sabbath observance. It was one thing for them to see Jesus not fasting, following their traditions of fasting.

It was completely intolerable for them to see that he didn't conform to their traditions of Sabbath observance. And that's the issue coming to the surface here. So much so that this is the thing that pushes them to the edge.

And when we get to the very end of it, all of this is kind of building. Here he is, Jesus is forgiving sins. And now he's hanging out with sinners. And now he's not fasting. And now he's not doing the Sabbath thing.

[7 : 29] And what's the result? We're going to go find our enemies, political enemies, and we're going to find a way together to destroy this man. Why? Because he didn't conform to their rules.

It's this battle of authority. The first thing we're going to look at is Jesus confronting religious perversion or religious distortion, however you would prefer to say it.

Look with me again at verse 23. And it came to pass that he went through the fields of grain on the Sabbath day, and his disciples began as they went to pluck the ears of grain.

And the Pharisees said unto him, Behold, why do they on the Sabbath day that which is not lawful? Now, if you'll remember from your history classes in school, you will know that the Romans were partly known for their road system.

Well, even as that is true, their roads weren't quite like our roads. We can literally find a road to go anywhere, can't we? There's roads everywhere. It wasn't exactly like that in Jesus's day.

[8 : 36] There were some main routes that people could follow, but if Jesus and his disciples were looking to go to the next town over, per se, they might not look for a road. They might just cross through an open field.

And in the process of traveling from place to place, they would have crossed people's property. They would have crossed pastures. They would have gone places that were relatively unmarked.

But what's happening in this instance is Jesus and his disciples are traveling from place to place and they're doing just that.

They're cutting through someone's field. Now, if you're reading along in the King James with me, it says cornfields or they were plucking corn. Okay, well, corn wasn't discovered at least by civilized society until the 1600s.

That's not what this means here. This is an old English word for grain. It's probably wheat or barley. And as they're walking through this wheat field, it has ripened probably in the spring or the summer and it's ripened.

And they're taking the heads of grain and they are eating them because they're hungry. The issue wasn't that they were taking from someone else's field. In fact, the Bible actually said that that was perfectly fine.

[9 : 44] The issue isn't with the fact that they were taking from somebody else's field. The issue was timing. They were doing this on the Sabbath day, which is what becomes the issue here.

Now, the confrontation arises in verse 24. Look at it with me again. The Pharisee said unto him, look, look at what they're doing. They're angry about this.

Why are they doing on the Sabbath day? And then they use this phrase, that which is not lawful.

Now, when we first look at that, we think, oh my goodness, that's a good question.

How in the world could Jesus allow his disciples to break the law? That doesn't sound right. What the Pharisees meant was not, why are they breaking God's law?

What they meant is, why is he breaking our law? The issue for this timing here, as we study, is really is just an extension of this legalism that we looked at last week with the fasting.

[10 : 47] Yes, God had established the Sabbath. No issue there. He had established circumcision as well. No issue there. God had designated those things for a specific reason. What the Pharisees had done is they had distorted what God had intended to be a blessing.

They took the Sabbath laws that God had made and they added all of their extra traditions, all of their extra burdens onto the people. And they were unbelievable.

Still are today. There is a Jewish manuscript called the Talmud that is followed religiously by Jews. There are two dozen chapters committed specifically to Sabbath observance.

And in those 24 chapters on Sabbath observance, there are 39 categories for work. And under each category for work is a full description on what they believe to be lawful and what they believe to be sinful.

If you were a writer, if that was your occupation, it would be unlawful for you on the Sabbath to carry around a pen. Now, it's not a problem for anybody else to carry around a pen on the Sabbath unless it exceeded a certain way.

[12 : 02] You had to weigh it to make sure. But if you're a writer, just to carry your pen meant that you were in danger of performing work. Therefore, you were breaking the law by doing that. You couldn't sew more than one stitch.

I don't know what one stitch would do, but you couldn't sew more than one stitch. You couldn't write more than one letter. All of this is described. Unbelievable. That wasn't God's law.

That was the Pharisaical law. That was just rabbinical tradition or burdening the people. That's what these men were accusing Jesus and his disciples of. The bottom line is that the legalists had taken something that God meant for a blessing and they had perverted it into a burden and a method of gaining acceptance from God.

Spurgeon wrote this years and years ago. He said, we have some of that sort of folk living now who take the smallest matter, which is altogether insignificant, in which there is neither good nor harm, and magnify and distort it, and then make a person a grave offender all for next to nothing.

Well, that's what's happening here. Jesus confronts it. He confronts it in three ways and we'll move quickly through these things. He confronts it first by giving a precedent A precedent of King David.

[13 : 22] Then he provides some doctrinal clarity and then he proclaims his own divine authority. Let's first look at David's precedent. David's precedent. Look with me again at verse 25.

Verse 25. And he said unto them, Have you never read what David did when he had need and was hungry? He and they that were with him? How they went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest and did eat the showbread, which is not lawful to eat, but for the priest, and gave also unto them which were with him.

So the event that Jesus is referring to here is in 1 Samuel chapter 21. You'll be familiar with what happens just before this.

You remember who was David's best friend? Jonathan. Who was Jonathan's father? Saul. Who wanted to kill David? Saul. And so Jonathan and David were working together.

They had made this deal that if Saul was still intent on killing David, Jonathan was going to signal him by shooting some arrows. And so he comes out and he signals them that yes, dad's trying to kill you.

[14:31] You better run. And so David goes on the run. And he's got just a couple of men with him and that's it. They got nothing. He leaves and he starts running. They go on probably a couple of days journey from Gibeah to a place called Nob.

Nob is where the tabernacle was. And when they show up there, they're starving. Like they're starving. They're going to die if they don't eat something soon. And David goes into the tabernacle and he finds the priest who 1 Samuel 21 tells us is a Himelek at that particular point.

And he walks in and a Himelek says, what do you need? And he says, we need something to eat.

Can we have whatever bread that you have available? Well, the problem is the bread that was there, the bread of presence, the bread of show bread, was not lawful for anybody else to eat in the ceremonial law, the ceremonial law that God had given.

And so the man reminds him of that. Well, this is only lawful for the priest, but since you are in such need, here you go. David and his men ate it.

Now, Jesus' argument here is that if God was pleased for David to violate the ceremonial law in order to survive, then it certainly wasn't a problem for the Son of God to allow his disciples to violate the mere tradition of men.

[15:52] That's the whole point. Now, in Matthew's account of this, Jesus adds another precedent in Matthew chapter 12. In this one, he says, have you not considered the priest how on the Sabbath day they still perform all their duties?

They're doing work and yet nobody thinks anything about it. In other words, God has provided certain exceptions to ceremonial law. And then he tells the men in Matthew chapter 12, he says, go and learn what this means.

And he quotes Hosea. He says, I want mercy, not sacrifice. In other words, God doesn't care about all your externalism if he doesn't have your heart.

And that he meant for this ceremonial law to be subordinate to the needs of man. So there was no true violation of God's law taking place here because God wasn't displeased with what David did and Jesus affirmed it here.

So if God was okay with that, there was no issue with what these disciples were doing on this day. All right? That's David's precedent. Second, doctrinal clarity. Doctrinal clarity. Now look at verse 27.

[17:01] And he said unto them, the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. Now, the rabbinical traditions had confused the relationship between the Sabbath and human life.

And Jesus set this right. In other words, the ceremonial laws were a means to an end. They were not an end in themselves.

God did not create us to fulfill the Sabbath. He created the Sabbath to fulfill us. So Jesus then brings some great doctrinal clarity to what these men were saying.

Now, let's talk about the Sabbath just for a quick second. And I don't want to bore you to death.

We're just going to talk about it for a second because I think this is helpful for us right now. And then we're going to move on, okay? You say, why in the world don't we observe the Sabbath now?

Jesus wasn't abolishing the Sabbath in this passage. He wasn't saying that it wasn't necessary.

Now, there's going to be a time where it is no longer necessary, but that's not what Jesus is doing here.

[18:16] There's a couple of things we need to understand about the Sabbath and the scriptures. First, the Sabbath is a creation ordinance. It was instituted by God at creation as a Sabbath principle.

So you understand? God creates everything there is in six days and then on the seventh day he rested and then he set that day apart. He made it holy, sanctified it for the benefit of mankind.

Now, it wasn't that God needed rest. That's not what that meant. He's all powerful. He doesn't get tired. What he was doing was just stopping from work. That's what the word means, to cease from work.

He was setting a principle, a patterned example for our benefit. In other words, God was saying, six days, do all your labor, do all your work and then on the seventh day, rest.

Stop from your work. Recreate. Reflect. Rest. Rest. It's a principle, an eternal principle, really. Rest. Okay? It wasn't until thousands of years later that this became a part of God's law.

[19 : 23] That was with Moses in the book of Exodus. God established it as a law for his nation, for Israel, not for the world at large, but for Israel.

And it was a part of their ceremonial law. Now, they obeyed that because God said to do it and God was serious about it. Those who broke it were put to death. And we see examples of that in the Old Testament.

God cared about it, but it was a law for Israel and it was a part of the ceremonial law, which meant that it was pointing to something more significant. And so now we come to the New Testament.

Well, if that was so important, Israel is God's people, the church is God's people, wouldn't that mean that God desires for us to observe the Sabbath? Well, no.

That's why Jesus is so significant. These ceremonial laws are all fulfilled in Christ. We don't celebrate or observe the Sabbath in the same way that Israel did for the same reason we don't sacrifice animals for the atonement of our sin.

[20 : 25] Because Christ has fulfilled that. All of those things were pointing toward something greater. They were pointing toward the gospel of Jesus. And then in Colossians chapter 2, Paul tells us very plainly, Colossians chapter 2, 16 to 18.

Paul says, don't let anybody judge you. Don't let anybody judge you on the basis of festivals and feasts and religious observance. And then he says, or Sabbath days.

He said, all of those things are a shadow of what is to come and their fulfillment is in Christ. So what's the point of that ceremonial law?

Every day they were working hard. They were working hard. They needed rest. As spiritually speaking, they were doing the sacrifices over and over and over and over. But it was never enough. This rest was never enough. But there would one day come a real eternal rest and it came through Christ. Now, what has not abolished is the Sabbath principle set forth at creation.

[21 : 28] I think we need to take that serious as Christians. I think God intends for us to rest, to have time where we cease from our work.

And so there's doctrinal clarity Jesus brings here. And then thirdly, he appeals to his own divine authority. Look at verse 28. Therefore, the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.

Son of Man, that's a reference to himself. His favorite thing of calling himself in the Gospels is Son of Man. It's a reference to Daniel chapter 7. And he says, I'm Lord of the Sabbath.

He appeals to his own identity for his argument. Now, we've seen in every single one of these conflicts, Jesus at some point has referenced his own identity.

The Son of Man have power on earth to forgive sin. He is the merciful God who befriends sinners. He is the Lord, the groom that has come for his bride at the wedding feast.

[22 : 37] And now he is Lord of the Sabbath. This matters. What's Jesus saying? Jesus is saying, I have the right to interpret both the reality and the practice of the Sabbath because I am the one who instituted it to begin with.

He was saying, I am God. Listen to me. I put this in place. Watch me. Forget about your own rules. Watch me.

Listen to me. This was their issue, wasn't it? His purpose was he was trying to get these men to see his identity in order that they would recognize his authority.

And if they would just recognize his authority, they would find out that all of this effort, all of this work is worthless and unnecessary.

That he came to lighten that load. Indeed, to get rid of that load. He came to offer grace and mercy if they would just see who he really was.

[23 : 48] And so he confronts this religious distortion or perversion. Secondly, we see Jesus confronting the hardening of their hearts or religious hardening. This one gets a little more practical for us.

Look with me again at verse number one of chapter three. And he entered again into the synagogue and there was a man there with a withered hand. Now the issue between these two examples, not only were the Pharisees' externalism leading them to pervert the word of God in favor of their own rules, but their traditionalism was actually hardening their hearts to the truth of the

gospel of grace.

Their commitment to their own truth above God's truth was hardening them to everything that was good and logical and reasonable and compassionate.

And this then becomes the theme of this second part. Jesus is confronting this hardness. He's trying to open their eyes to the true condition of their heart. Now the scene here takes place in a synagogue on another Sabbath day.

Now this is proof here that Jesus was not trying to abolish the Sabbath because he's still, he's going to synagogue on the Sabbath. It's not that he was being rebellious. That's not the point.

[25 : 04] He was correcting their error. And when he shows up at the Sabbath this day, there's a man there with a withered hand. Now, based on his interaction with Jesus, I assume that his condition was that his hand was somehow curled or withdrawn.

It was possible maybe that he couldn't extend it at all. It was just kind of tucked back into his body in this deformity. Luke, I think it is that tells us that it was his right hand. Therefore, probably was even more difficult for him.

Not only did he only have one hand, but it might not have even been his dominant hand that he could use. It's just a difficult situation for this man. Not life-threatening, but hard, difficult life to live. Now, some have suggested that the Pharisees had actually arranged, as they did at other times, for this man to be there on the day that they knew Jesus to be there. And we think that because in verse 2, they're watching him to see if he'll heal him.

They were wanting to trap him. They wanted to trap Jesus here in this moment. And there's a tremendous amount of irony here, isn't there? The Pharisees, on one hand, fully acknowledged Jesus' power and willingness to heal the man.

[26 : 22] Yet, they simultaneously desired to have him killed for doing it. Now, if this doesn't show us how our hearts can be hardened to the point that we just become absurd in our thinking, on one hand, they're realizing he has this power that only God has.

But we're gonna kill him because we don't like that he's doing it on the Sabbath day. What? What was happening to these men? They had ignored what God wanted.

They had left God's word and they had dedicated themselves supremely to their own tradition, their own form of religion, the own things that they wanted and their hearts just kept getting more and more hard and so that the son of God is standing before them and they even know it.

Intellectually, they know it and yet they still deny him and they still reject him. Why? Because they were committed to religion not to the Lord. This was God's issue in Isaiah with the nation of Israel all together.

Remember he said, I'm so full of sacrifices and I'm tired of your Sabbaths and I'm tired of all the things that you're doing because your heart is far from me. You are wicked people. You're doing everything you're supposed to do on the outside but inside you are just wicked and you don't love me.

[27 : 45] And here we see that exemplified in the Pharisees. They were doing all these things everybody thought they were just like the most spiritual people in the world but the truth was they were wicked, wicked people.

And the same thing happens now. And it happens in churches when people come in and they've got all the things together and they've really built up this externalism in their lives but their hearts are far from God.

Jesus is confronting that. He's confronting these people that have hardened their hearts through this. Let's look how he does it. What were they hardened to? First, they were hardened to true worship.

They were hardened to true worship. Look at verse 2. And they watched him whether he would heal the man on the Sabbath day that they might accuse him.

Accused here is not just pointing out that he did something on the Sabbath day. They were seeking to bring formal charges against Jesus which meant that he would have been a candidate for execution.

[28 : 51] They were trying to kill him. They were trying to charge him formally. So they're watching him. They're keeping their eyes on him. Well, what's the problem with this? Well, there's a problem that they're trying to kill him but there's also a problem that they are the Sabbath keepers and God had said to the nation of Israel part of the reason I want you to keep the Sabbath is because I want you to reflect on the fact that I delivered you from bondage in Egypt and that I have made my

covenant with you.

Same reason we worship today just from the New Testament perspective, right? God has delivered us from our sin. He has delivered us from death. He has covenanted with us to be his people for all of eternity and so we worship him Jesus who is our Sabbath rest, right?

So all of it is still there. Worship was a part of this Sabbath observance. Worship was the last thing on these guys' mind. Now listen, they were where they were supposed to be.

They were in our terms, they were in church on Saturday but we would say on Sunday they're in church. They're doing everything they're supposed to do. They're following all the rules.

As far as everybody else can tell, they've got it together in ways that nobody else does. And yet the last thing that they think about doing on this Sabbath day is worshipping the Lord.

[30 : 11] Why? Because they're watching Jesus to see if they can trap him so that they can charge him so that they can kill him. And it's amazing how this happens with us, doesn't it?

We start to give into our traditions, we start to give into the things that we have created on top of God's law and those things start to become more important to us than what God has actually said and it hardens our heart to true worship.

So we'll come to church on Sunday, we're there. We look the way we're supposed to look however we've determined that's supposed to be. We do the things we're supposed to do but our hearts are far from the Lord.

The last thing we're thinking about is worship because we're making sure that we've got all of our formalism together or we're making sure like the Pharisees, everybody else has all their formalism together. You ever been around people like that?

You ever been a person like that? I have. And what happens is we come into church and we've got all these things in our mind and we're thinking okay, this is how we're supposed to dress and this is what the music is supposed to sound like and this is how the songs are supposed to be structured and this is when we're supposed to do this and this is when we're supposed to do this and all the things, right?

[31 : 17] And then we come in and we make sure that all that stuff is happening. We make sure that everybody else is doing it too and then we come in on Sunday and we leave at 1130 or 1230 or 130 whenever it is we leave the door and we haven't given the Lord one ounce of attention that day.

We haven't worshipped at all. Why? Because we're just consumed with self. We're consumed with what we want. We're consumed with our preferences. We're consumed with these legalistic mindsets and it's ironic then how sometimes we become hardened to the thing that we think we are actually trying to preserve and we think we've got all of these traditions and these formalities and things and in the process of that we are preserving true worship and then in reality we're actually denying true worship.

We're not actually engaging our hearts. The problem's not with tradition. The problem is with our heart and so they had become hardened to that. Weren't thinking anything about the Lord on this day.

Secondly, they were hardened to compassion and this is as clear as anything in the passage. They were hardened to compassion. Look with me at verse 3. And he said unto the man which had the withered hand stand forth or stand in the middle of the room.

He brings him up in front of everybody like we did with Joseph and Missy. Everybody's looking at this man which you know had to have been just like the worst thing for him. He probably hated that. We're going to come back to that in a minute.

[32 : 42] And he said unto them to the Pharisees that is, is it lawful? Is it right? They were meant to do good on the Sabbath or to do evil on the Sabbath to save life or to kill it.

But they held their peace. They kept silent. The hardness of the Pharisees' hearts had brought two emotions into Jesus that we're going to get to in just a moment.

But those emotions were produced by this response. in the grain fields, it was the Pharisees who confronted Jesus. In this case, it's Jesus that confronts the Pharisees.

And there's kind of a recall to the healing of the paralytic. He reads their minds. They're not verbalizing this at this point. He just knows what's in their heart and he addresses it. And so Jesus confronts their head plan head on by bringing this man up to the front of the room.

And then he turns to the Pharisees and he says, listen, is it right to do good or evil today? That's a simple question. There's only one possible answer to that question, actually.

[33 : 54] It wasn't tricked. There was one answer. Well, it's right to do good. It's never right to do evil, but it's right to do good. He was exposing the hypocrisy that was in their hearts.

They wanted to deny Jesus the right to heal this man on the Sabbath while blatantly planning to do evil themselves on the Sabbath.

There's hypocrisy here. He's also confronting their lack of compassion. They didn't care anything about this man. They couldn't have cared less if this man was actually healed except for the fact that Jesus healing him gave them an opportunity to accuse him.

And again, in Matthew's account, Jesus confronts these men with a different story. And he says, which one of you, if you had a sheep on the Sabbath that fell into a pit, wouldn't get it out?

And then he looks at him and he says, is not a man better than an animal? That depends on who you ask that question to. But they would have certainly answered, well, yeah.

[35 : 08] Man's better than him. He's drawing out this lack of compassion, this hypocrisy that existed in their hearts. Well, to what end? Their lack of compassion had placed them as enemies of God rather than the representatives that they thought they were.

one of the things that we see over and over in the scripture is that for those who love God, those who pursue him, those who follow him begin to exhibit his heart.

And what is clear through the scripture is God's compassionate, merciful heart. So on one end, there's the Pharisees who say that they are following God, yet they are nothing like him.

And then there's Jesus on the other end in contrast to that, who is the very nature of God, the very expression of who God is and what's he doing, showing compassion to this man.

It's logical, but their commitment to tradition had hardened them to it. Now, their silence becomes an issue. It wasn't that they didn't know what to say.

[36 : 14] It wasn't that they felt bad. That's not what's happening here. They just refused to say what they knew to be true. To answer in the affirmative to Jesus' question meant that they were acknowledging that it was good for him to do what he was doing for this man.

And they just refused to do it. So they kept silent. They said nothing. They couldn't say that it was right to do evil. There were only two choices in the question, but they refused to say it was right to do good.

They prefer that he just do nothing. They would have rather this man continue in this disability the rest of his life than for Jesus to heal him on the Sabbath day. No compassion. Tradition did that. Harden them. Thirdly, they were hardened to grace. This is the best part. Look at verses 5 and 6. When he had looked round about on them with anger being grieved for the hardness of their hearts he said unto the man stretch forth thine hand and he stretched it out and his hand was restored whole as the other.

Now, like I said a minute ago the Pharisees' hardness had produced two emotions in Jesus here. Anger and grief. He was angry at the hardness of their hearts but he was heartbroken by the condition of their soul.

[37 : 35] Can I say this is the wonder of God's grace. The wonder of God's grace is that he cared just as much about the Pharisees' spiritual condition as he did about the man's physical condition.

Yes, he was angry at the hardness of his heart but that anger was produced from compassion for those men. And we look at people like that and we think man, I just, I don't want anything to do with them.

I'd just rather them not be anywhere in my life. Jesus didn't do that. He looked at with compassion even on these Pharisees who were denying him who he knew would continue to deny him yet he was grieved.

He felt sorrow in his heart for them. Why? Because they were doing this denial to their own destruction. And then this whole episode turns into an expression of God's grace.

Now remember Jesus' healings are never just about healing. They're parables of a greater healing an eternal healing of heart and of soul.

[38 : 41] So this is about the gospel of grace. Now, I think it's interesting that Jesus asked the man to do the one thing that he couldn't do.

He's got a withered hand. It's curled. It's withdrawn. He can't stretch it out. And what is it that Jesus tells him to do? Stretch out your hand. We can't do that.

He can't do that. It was going to take faith on this man's part to receive this miracle. Jesus was willing to provide it. But it was going to take faith on his part.

He's going to have to stick his hand out. He could have run out of the room embarrassed. He could have said, I can't believe you brought me in front of all these people. I'm embarrassed. I don't want to have anything to do with you and I'm going to leave.

Because what was Jesus really doing bringing this man up to the front? We say, this is kind of cruel. No. This is what happens anytime somebody comes to Christ. He strips them down of anything that they're trying to hide.

[39 : 45] He forces us to confront our own condition. In salvation, Jesus forces us to confront our own condition. It's only then that he can change our hearts and that we will exhibit that faith and receive his grace.

That's what he's doing with this man. The man didn't have to stick his hand out. He could have ran out of the room and he would have stayed disabled. But Jesus says, stretch out your hand. What does the man do? He stretches out his hand.

Now, his hand doesn't come out and then all of a sudden Jesus heals it. No. As it comes out, he recognizes it's healed. which tells us another thing about God's grace. Yes, it takes our faith.

We have to exercise that faith but what we realize is that God's already been working in his grace behind the scenes to make all of that happen. It's fantastic. It's fantastic. What joy this man must have experienced in that moment to see this grace and to witness what Jesus was doing for him. It stood in contrast to what the Pharisees believed and taught. They insisted a commitment to law is what was necessary but Jesus demonstrated this was all of God's grace.

[40 : 56] This man didn't deserve healing. The fact of his disability didn't make him deserving of any kind of healing. That was God's grace. Same thing with our soul.

Now, I love how Jesus did exactly what the Pharisees hoped that he would do. Did you notice that? But he did it in a way that they could charge him.

This is awesome. These men are watching Jesus meticulously to see what he will do because they want to charge him. They want to accuse him. They want to murder him. And Jesus heals the man. But how does he do it? He's standing there. If he had pockets in his robe, maybe he's sticking his hands in his pockets. And he just says, hey buddy, stick your hand out here. And he's healed. The miracle happens. But what are they going to say? He talked to him. That went against the rules. He could talk. What they wanted Jesus to do was like touch him or do something physical so that they could say he did work, that this miracle was a work on the Sabbath and they could charge him and have him put to death.

[42 : 00] But Jesus accomplishes this miracle all at the same time of not doing it in a way where they could actually charge him with anything in that moment. It's just fantastic, isn't it? I wish I could think like Jesus thinks.

And it's just awesome to see. And what's the result of it? It infuriated them. Look at verse six. And the Pharisees went forth and they bowed to Jesus in conviction of heart and said, Lord, forgive us for our denial.

What a wonderful demonstration of compassion and grace you have given. Please forgive us.

That's not what they said. That's what they should have said.

They said, we're going to go find the Herodians who are our political enemies and we're together going to see if we can find a way to destroy them. Why?

Because he didn't follow their rules. Their traditionalism, their legalism hardened them to grace in two ways.

[43 : 15] They were infuriated that this disabled man received grace. They probably thought he was disabled because God didn't love him. God didn't want anything to do with him. They was mad at him. They didn't like that he received healing.

But there was a different hardening to grace and it was the grace that they themselves could receive. The evidence was there of who Jesus is. It's clear. They knew it.

They just refused it. How many people will there be that we meet in this life, especially in our, where we live in this cultural Christianity, that know the truth, but they still deny that truth.

They harden themselves religiously to the very thing that can save them.