



The Son of Man and the Sabbath (Part 2)

Key idea:

Legalism blinded the Pharisees to God's gracious work through Jesus, so instead of praising God, they decided Jesus must be put to death.

Key text:

Mark 3:1–6

Another time he went into the synagogue, and a man with a shriveled hand was there. ² Some of them were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath. ³ Jesus said to the man with the shriveled hand, "Stand up in front of everyone." ⁴ Then Jesus asked them, "Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" But they remained silent. ⁵ He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored. ⁶ Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus.

Key points:

1. This passage is the final of five conflict stories near the beginning of Mark's Gospel, in which the Pharisees exhibit a growing disagreement and antagonism toward Jesus.
2. Jesus was in the synagogue to worship with God's people, but the Pharisees were looking to accuse Jesus of violating the Sabbath by healing a man with a deformed hand.
3. Jesus tries to help the Pharisees understand their error by asking "Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?", but they stubbornly refuse to answer his question or rethink their ways.
4. Jesus is both angry and grieved at the stubborn hearts of the Pharisees, who are blinded by their legalism and refuse to change.
5. Jesus heals the man, and rather than praising God for the miracle or rejoicing with the man, the Pharisees begin to plot to kill Jesus.

6. In these conflict stories, we see that legalism is a deadly disease that:
 - a. Blinds a person to the grace of God at work around them
 - b. Destroys true worship
 - c. Drains away joy
7. We must understand and detect legalism, which has these characteristics:
 - a. Legalism loves rules more than relationship
 - b. Legalism loves old wineskins more than new wine
 - c. Legalism loves a graveyard more than a nursery
 - d. Legalism defines faith by “No” rather than “Yes”
 - e. Legalism believes sin is more powerful than holiness
 - f. Legalism believes law is more powerful than grace

Questions for discussion/application:

1. What part of Sunday's teaching stood out most to you? Why?
2. Why does Mark present these five stories of conflict together so early in the Gospel? How would it have been different if he had spread them out rather than presenting them together?
3. In what ways can I see the conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees growing as I move through these five stories? Does Jesus appear to try and avoid the conflict, or does He seem to provoke it? Why?
4. What is the relationship of legalism to adding commands to God's Word? How much of legalism is a wrong spirit and approach to God's actual commands, and how much is the problem of adding to God's Word?
5. Why does Jesus confront the legalism of the Pharisees directly? Why does He heal the man in front of everyone when He could have easily done it in private?
6. Why is it important that Mark tells us Jesus was both angry and distressed at the hardness of heart in the Pharisees? What does this tell me about God's response to human sin and refusal to respond to the Gospel?
7. Can I think of an example in my own life where I have been a legalist? When I consider those times/areas, do I see the effects of legalism as listed in point 6 above?

8. When I consider the characteristics of legalism in point 7 above, can I discern any legalism in my life right now? How can I address it before it metastasizes and becomes deadly in my relationship with God and others?
9. For me personally, is the greater danger legalism or compromising on God's Word and standards? How can I grow in this area?
10. Who will I call or see to invite to gather with the church this week?

For Further Study:

You can learn more about [Sabbath](#) and [Legalism](#) on the BRCC teachings resource page.