

Mark 2:18-28

What was the concern of some of the religious Jews (v. 18)? Jesus' disciples weren't doing things the way they're supposed to be done, i.e. "according to our tradition." The Pharisees were well known for fasting twice a week (Luke 18:12). Fasting was a legitimate form of worship, but the Pharisees had distorted it, turning it into a ritual tradition that they legalistically imposed upon the people.

How did Jesus respond (vv. 19-20)? Jesus' message was bold and clear: "I'm not like the Pharisees or John the Baptist. I am the Messiah, the bridegroom to the people of God. Wherever I am, it is appropriate to have the joy we associate with weddings." As long as He was with them, there was no occasion for sorrow. But the days were coming when He would be taken away; then they would have occasion to fast, but not now.¹

How did Jesus change the subject from fasting (vv. 21-22)? He introduced two parables, both of which had broader relevance than just to fasting. Jesus' presence with His people was a time of newness (fulfillment) and signaled the passing of the old.² Both of the parables announce the arrival of a New Era which was incompatible with the Old Era.

What does the patch of unshrunk (new) cloth represent (v. 21)? The New Covenant....new worship format....new way of God relating to his people....the Messianic age.

What does the old garment represent (v. 21)? The Old Covenant....old system of worshipold way of relating to God....10 Commandments....the Law.

What is the point Jesus is making? If you take an old garment and patch it with a new piece of cloth that has never been shrunk.....the patch will shrink and will tear away from the garment. It's like trying to connect the newness of the gospel to the old religion of Judaism, which is futile.

What does the new wine represent (v. 22)? The new-found joy and power of the Christian faith.

What do the old wineskins represent? The old forms and rituals of Judaism.

What's the problem with pouring new wine into old wineskins (v. 22)? The old leather wineskins become brittle over time and lose their power to stretch. If new wine was put into them, the pressure built up by the fermentation would burst the skins. Judaism had also become rigid and inflexible because of the traditions that had encrusted it.

Christianity has always suffered from man's attempt to mix Christianity with legalism. Jesus' point was made clear by these examples. New wine needs new wineskins. You can't fit His new life into the old forms. Jesus came to introduce something new, not to patch up something old. Judaism had become "old" and obsolete and Jesus was going to set up a "new" form of God's kingdom on earth. The Lord Jesus taught that the old Judaism and the new Christianity are incompatible so let go of your traditions.

Jesus' disciples did something that the Mosaic Law actually allowed when they plucked the heads of grain (Deuteronomy 23:25). **Why were the Pharisees concerned (vv. 23-24)?** Because by doing it on a Sabbath day, they were breaking a traditional Pharisaical interpretation of the law. The Pharisees had distorted the law in regard to fasting and now in regard to the Sabbath. The Law said working on the Sabbath was prohibited. The Pharisees taught that to do what the disciples did in plucking the heads of grain constituted reaping, threshing and winnowing, and that was forbidden work on the Sabbath³ – a clear distortion of the law.

There was nothing wrong with what they did. The issue was only the day on which they did it. The Pharisees ignored the spirit of the law in favor of their particular interpretation. This incident illustrates the conflict Jesus had just taught between the traditions of Judaism and the liberty of the Gospel.

How did Jesus respond to the Pharisees question (vv. 25-26)? Jesus' point was this: In the Old Testament, David broke the Law (as the Pharisees wrongly interpreted it) by eating bread that only the priests were supposed to eat. Nevertheless, he could do so because David's men hadn't eaten in days and were hungry (1 Samuel 21:3-6). Again, the offense was a matter of incorrect Pharisaic interpretation, not a true violation of the Law. Jesus used this action which God did not condemn, to show that the Pharisees' narrow interpretation of the Law blurred God's intention. The spirit of the Law in respect to human need took priority over its ceremonial regulations.⁴

The Pharisees made the Sabbath a straitjacket that inhibited the Jews. What did Jesus say about the Sabbath (v. 27)? That God made the Sabbath for man as a good gift, a day to enjoy and relax. He designed it to free His people from ceaseless labor and to give them rest.⁵ It was instituted by God for man's benefit, not for his bondage. In doing so, He redefined the 4th Commandment (Exodus 20:8).

What was the second principle that Jesus declared (v. 28)? That He was the Lord of the Sabbath. If He, the Lord of the Sabbath, was not offended by His disciples' actions, then these sideline critics should not have been either.

Christians are not obligated to keep the Sabbath. That day was given to the nation of Israel. The distinctive day of Christianity is the Lord's Day, the first day of the week, i.e., Sunday. However, it is not a day full of legalistic do's and don'ts. Rather it is a day of privilege when, free from their normal jobs, believers may worship, serve, and nourish their souls. For us it is not a question of, "Is it wrong to do this on the Lord's Day?" but rather "How may I best use this day to the glory of God, to the blessing of my neighbor and to my spiritual good?"⁶

It's easy to pick on the Pharisees. However, it has been said that if we examine ourselves closely and honestly, there is a little bit of Pharisee in all of us. Can you find any evidence of Pharisee-like traits in your life/heart? Pride? Hypocrisy? Legalism?

¹ MacDonald, W. (1995). *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*. (A. Farstad, Ed.) (p. 1325). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

² Grassmick, J. D. (1985). *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, Wheaton: Victor Books, 114.

³ Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on Mark, 2020 Edition, (published by <http://planobiblechapel.org/soniclight/>), p. 74

⁴ Grassmick, J. D. (1985). *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, Wheaton: Victor Books, 114.

⁵ Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on Mark, 2020 Edition, (published by <http://planobiblechapel.org/soniclight/>), p. 75

⁶ MacDonald, W. (1995). *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*. (A. Farstad, Ed.) (p. 1326). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.