



# As a Legislator, How Much Rest are You Getting? Mark 2:23-28

TO: LEGISLATORS

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*We trust our weekly Bible study notes are a ministry in your life. I take pains in preparing them each week and am always asking the Holy Spirit to give me applications from the text we are studying that are pertinent to your life as a legislator. Some weeks that is more easily accomplished than others. But regardless of my abilities to make the Scriptures applicable, I encourage you to pray before you read the study and ask God to make the passage come alive, and minister to you in a way that is perhaps unique, overlooked by me. Of course I am always available to you on my mobile phone (661-803-7970) and count it a privilege to talk, counsel and minister to you whenever you feel the need 24-7-365. I am here to serve you my friend.*

## INTRODUCTION

If you have been closely following our ongoing study of the Gospel of Mark, you will note that this is the fourth of five encounters in this section between Jesus and the Pharisees. What I said in last week's introduction are apt words for this week: "The main intent that we should carry away from this passage is that Jesus' ministry and message is a clear departure from the past. The joy of new life in Christ was not to be confused with keeping appended OT rituals such as the pharisaical outward requirement of fasting. Christianity is not intended to be amalgamated with OT traditional Judaism. New life in Christ isn't so much about rules and regulations." Whereas last week Jesus turned the table in regards to the Pharisee's extrabiblical standards regarding fasting, this week He does the same as it relates to extrabiblical standards concerning the Sabbath.

## THE PASSAGE: MARK 2:23-28

*And it came about that He was passing through the grainfields on the Sabbath, and His disciples began to make their way along while picking the heads of grain. 24 And the Pharisees were saying to Him, "See here, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?" 25 And He said to them, "Have you never read what David did when he was in need and became hungry, he and his companions: 26 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 priests, and he gave it also to those who were with him?" 27 And He was saying to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. 28" Consequently the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath. "*

## I. THE CIRCUMSTANCES vs. 23

The time and place setting is the spring and Jesus and His disciples were walking through either wheat or barley fields. What follows is another pharisaical encounter illustrating legalistic abuse of the OT Mosaic Law, and Jesus subsequently putting them in their place. It follows that Jesus' response became a source of aggravation, not only in terms of pharisaical misuse of the Law and His indictment of their legalism, but Jesus' preeminence in principle and personage pertaining to the Sabbath (vss. 27b, 28). What they tried to use on Him—He turns the table—and uses on them.

**IF YOU GET NOTHING ELSE OUT OF THIS WEEK'S BIBLE STUDY, NOTE THAT JESUS IS MASTERFUL AT DEBATE. LEARN THIS SKILL FROM HIM.**

Jesus' disciples, by picking grain were not violating the OT law. Deuteronomy 23:25 permitted the plucking of grain from another's fields for the purpose of eating while traveling. It states: "When you enter your neighbor's standing grain, then you may pluck the heads with your hand, but you shall not wield a sickle in your neighbor's standing grain." Predisposed to discount Jesus' credibility in the eyes of the populous, the Pharisees conveniently (since it was the Sabbath) attempted to enumerate the disciples' actions as acts of work. According to them, the hand-picking of grain was threshing and the blowing of chaff was winnowing. Supposedly then, they were guilty of working on the Sabbath and of a lesser "spirituality."

## II. THE CONFRONTATION vs. 24

This passage reveals that the pedantic<sup>1</sup> Pharisees had stretched the Mosaic Law regarding what it meant to work on the Sabbath. They were claiming that the rubbing of grain between the hands was evidence of a violation of Exodus 20:10 (the fourth of the Ten Commandments) "But the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle



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or your sojourner who stays with you.” This stretch was the basis for the Pharisee’s case. Notice how Jesus responds to this. He first packs His principle in a personality.

### III. THE CORRECTION vss. 25-26

By using David as an illustration, He was pulling a page from their playbook. He used their own star to make His point, versus getting into a debate about the proper interpretation of Exodus and Deuteronomy. By referring to a vivid, concrete narrative in the Old Testament, one they would be quite familiar with, He most effectively countered them, allowing Scripture to interpret Scripture (a fundamental principle of hermeneutics). The passage Jesus refers to (1 Samuel 21:1-6) illustrates the common element of David’s hunger with the hunger of His disciples. To the point, David ate the consecrated-to-God bread that was in the Tabernacle, an act violating the Mosaic Law. Only the priests could eat such bread. But nowhere in Scripture is the act of Abiathar the High Priest and David condemned. Why? “David’s uncondemned act was a reminder to the Pharisees that their rigid demands concerning their traditional observance of the Sabbath were inconsistent with the case of David.”<sup>2</sup> In God’s mind, the immediate human need overruled strict obedience to ceremonial regulations. The powerful illustration sets up the two haymakers that Jesus will punch home to the Pharisees...

### IV. THE CONCLUSIONS vss. 27-28

The first one is this: “The Sabbath is made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.” The Greek word for **man** *anthropos* is best translated as “mankind, or human race.” God in His common grace institutes the Sabbath for every man’s benefit, an inestimable blessing to all. Not only does it afford a day of rest physically, but a day to refresh one’s perspective, elevating one’s thoughts above the rigors of daily labor in a fallen world. It is a day to worship God, to re-gather oneself, for the long-run of life. The Pharisees however, had convoluted God’s intentions and meaning; they used it to enslave, expunging God’s intentions of grace. Post Christ, Galatians 2:4 elaborates on this type of religious leader, “*But it was because of the false brethren who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage.*”

Make note: Legalists and legalism always nullifies God’s grace. Grace is His unmerited, undeserved favor, and it is a wonderful characteristic bespeaking those mature in Christ.

The second haymaker is verse 28: “Consequently the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.” This is a simple deduction from the principle just stated. By way of underscoring His credentials the one who created the Sabbath properly defines its use. He alone is best suited to state the beneficent purpose of the Sabbath. Herein is divine elucidation of Sabbath intention (cf. John 1:3; cf. 1:14)! Who then are we to define as otherwise its use? It follows that the Lord has the authority to say how we should view this special day.

### APPLICATION

Don’t be a stickler when it comes to enforcing your personal convictions regarding the use of Sundays (cf. Col. 2:16). Be gracious here—given how Jesus has interpreted the purpose of the Sabbath. The explicated principle seems to be more about gaining necessary rest than the day of the week one rests. One needs a regular day of rest. God did (Gen. 2:2-3). This is a day to worship our Maker. In addition, the NT book of Hebrews, chapter 4, indicates that when one accepts Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, that they enter a *spiritual* rest<sup>3</sup> in terms of not having to work to gain salvation; it is a gift from God via Christ’s work on the cross. In a *spiritual* sense then, every day is a day of rest for those who are saved. But this truth does not negate or preempt the weekly need for a day of *physical* rest from one’s work. Hebrews 4:9 states, “There remains therefore a Sabbath rest for the people of God.” Do not over-spiritualize your need for physical rest.

### AS DIFFICULT AS LIFE IS ON THE HILL, IT IS IMPORTANT THAT ONE DISCIPLINE THEMSELVES TO GAIN APPROPRIATE REST.

That is how the designer’s manual states your body was intended to function. There is nothing spiritual about wearing yourself out due to a lack of observing the Sabbath principle.

<sup>1</sup> “Excessively meticulous” is the working definition of M&W. It is a good word evidencing a religious spirit of sacramental moralism in contrast to the free spirit of Christianity.

<sup>2</sup> Hiebert, Dr. Edmond *The Gospel of Mark, An Expository Commentary* (Greenville: BJ Press, 1994) p. 82

<sup>3</sup> Some commentators believe that Jesus negates the Sabbath upon His advent. I.e. the Sabbath is a physical picture of rest which Jesus fulfills spiritually in one’s heart at salvation. I agree, but not to the point of negating its physical observance. It should still be observed by the believer in light of Matthew 5:18-19 and this passage, Mark 2:27&28. Jesus does not abolish the Sabbath here, rather He distinguishes it. This would have been a perfect place for Him to abolish it if He so desired. Furthermore observing the Sabbath is one of the Ten Commandments (cf. Ex. 20:11). I find it difficult to argue that one of the 10 is not applicable for today, when the others most certainly are. Lastly, observance of the Sabbath is modeled in creation by God Himself (Gen. 2:2-3) making it a timeless principle.