

Our Lord Teaching Regarding the Sabbath

Mark 2:23 to 3:6

by R.A. Torrey

The Sabbath is made for man's welfare, and the Lord of the Sabbath has the final authority to determine its true use.

Scripture: Exodus 23:12, Deuteronomy 5:14, Matthew 12:1-14, Matthew 23:23, Mark 2:27-28, Luke 6:1-11, Romans 14:5, Galatians 5:18, Colossians 2:16

Topics: "Mercy", "Sabbath"

Description

R.A. Torrey emphasizes that the Sabbath was created for the benefit of humanity, not as a burden, and that the needs of people take precedence over rigid ceremonial laws. He illustrates this through Jesus' defense of His disciples when they were criticized for picking grain on the Sabbath, highlighting that acts of mercy and necessity are lawful on this day. Torrey also discusses the healing of a man with a withered hand, showcasing Jesus' compassion and authority, and the Pharisees' hardened hearts that prioritized law over love. The sermon calls for a deeper understanding of the Sabbath's purpose and the importance of compassion in our actions. Ultimately, it challenges listeners to reflect on their own attitudes towards the law and mercy.

Transcript

(See also Matthew 12:1-14; Luke 6:1-11)

DISCOVERY OF THE FACTS

1. The Sabbath Made for Man--Therefore Sabbath Prescriptions are Subordinate to Man's Need and Welfare, 2:23-28 Where do we see our Lord as the lesson opens? What day of the week was it? On what two points had the Pharisees and their sympathizers already attacked Him and His disciples? (vv. 16, 18.) On what third point do they now undertake to attack Him? In what condition were His disciples? (Matt. 12:1.) In what condition presumably was our Lord Himself? What hint have we here as to His method of life?

What means did the disciples take to satisfy their hunger? Had they a right to take the grain of others in this way? (Deut. 23:25.) Who observed them as they did it? How did they happen to see them? Which were really most justifiable in their action, the disciples or the Pharisees? Where was their authority for

their assertion that the action was "not lawful"? (Deut. 5:14; Ex. 31:15.) To what incident in Jewish history could they refer as confirming their interpretations of the law? (Ex. 16:22, 26.)

Were the cases in reality parallel? Was the criticism of the Pharisees founded upon a complete or partial knowledge of the teachings of God's Word? What lesson for us? Does being very near the Master lift one above the possibility of being the object of such unjust criticism? How should we act under such criticisms? How did our Lord point out to these critical Pharisees that their assumed knowledge of God's word and will was in reality only ignorance of God's word and will? What is the best correction for unwarranted and one-sided inferences from God's Word?

Ought we to take single passages? What are the five arguments by which Christ defends His disciples against the unjust criticisms of the Pharisees? (v. 25; Matt. 12:5; 12:7; vv. 27, 28). What is the first argument? What is the point of it? What is the principle regarding the relation of ceremonial observances to the demands of man's welfare that underlies this argument? What provision of the ceremonial law did David violate? (Lev. 24:5-9; 22:10.) Why was David justified in eating?

How was Abimelech justified in giving David this bread? (Matt. 12:7.) Which are most sacred in God's sight, the ceremonies He has commanded for man's welfare, or man's welfare itself? Is it right according to this to endanger life or health for a ceremony even though it is of divine appointment? Is it right to imperil life or health for a principle? Which were most sacred to the Pharisees, ceremonies or men? Have we any Pharisees today? Upon what day in the week did this incident in David's life occur? (1 Sam. 21:6; compare Lev. 24:8.)

What was our Lord's argument in defense of His disciples in verse 27? What is meant by the Sabbath being made for man? If made for man what is the right use of it? What was God's purpose in giving man the Sabbath? (Ex. 23:12; Deut. 5:14; Neh. 9:13, 14.) If it was made for man is it for the Jew alone? How many men need one today? Is the obligation then binding on men today? If it was made for man who is the Lord of the Sabbath? To whom shall we go to find out its true use? Did Christ's action and that of His disciples run counter to the Mosaic law, or only to the Pharisees' interpretation of it?

Is the Christian under the Mosaic Sabbath law? (Ro. 14:5; Col. 2:16; 3:7, 11.) For whom alone is the law done away? (Gal. 5:18; Ro. 7:4.) If the Christian is not under the Mosaic Sabbath law, what obligation is there upon him to keep a Sabbath (v. 27)? What day of the week will the one who is not of the old creation, but the new creation, naturally keep? 2. "Lawful to Do Good (Works of Mercy) on the Sabbath Days," 3:1-6 What place was the scene of the next recorded contest between our Lord and the Pharisees?

Was it the same Sabbath? (Luke 6:6.) What was the occasion of the controversy? Had the Pharisees any compassion for this poor man's misfortune? What was all they saw in his affliction? With what were their hearts filled? Are there any like them today? Did these Pharisees wish our Lord to heal the poor fellow? Was it out of compassion for the man's suffering that they wished Him to heal him? Has the man who wants another to break a law in order that he may have somewhat to accuse him of, any real love for the law?

What question did they put to our Lord? (Matt. 12:10.) What was the answer that the rabbis gave to that question? What answer did our Lord give to the question? (Matt. 12:11, 12.) What did He show them by that answer? What was the great trouble with the Pharisees? (Matt. 23:23.) What is the general principle that He announces as to what it is lawful to do on the Sabbath day? (Matt. 12:12, R. V.) What kind of a doing would a refusal to heal the man have been? If we are not doing good on the Sabbath, what are we

doing?

When our Lord told the man to stand forth what feelings did it awaken in the hearts of the Pharisees? Did they believe He could heal him? Before performing the expected miracle what did He do? What kind of a look was it? What did they do under the power of that look? Was there any personal resentment in His anger? What aroused it? How in the manner of performing the miracle did He baffle the malicious plots of the Pharisees? By what was the healing work wrought? Who manifestly was Jesus? (Ps. 33:8, 9.)

What did He bid the man do? Had the man faith? How did he show it? Had he the power to do as he was told? Where did he get it? What was the result? Can our Lord do such things today? Why does He not more frequently? Can He heal anything besides withered hands? What was the effect of the miracle upon the Pharisees? Were the Pharisees and Herodians naturally friendly to one another? What bound them together at this time--loyalty to the law or hatred of our Lord? Did He perform any other miracles on the Sabbath? (Mark 1:21, 29; Luke 13:14; 14:1; John 5:9; 9:14.) CLASSIFICATION OF TEACHINGS

1. Our Lord

Divine, 3:5; 2:28; human, 2:23, 28; 3:5; poor, hungry, 2:23; an object of the hostile criticism of professedly pious men, suspected, watched, hunted, 3:2; hated, His life plotted against, 3:6; His thorough and unflinching knowledge of the Word, His compassion on the hungry, 2:23, 25; His readiness to defend the unjustly accused, 2:25-28; His compassion on the afflicted--no fear of offense to hypocrites or of peril to His own life prevented Him from relieving human distress, His anger at the hardness of heart that overlooks the appeal of suffering in its zeal for ceremonies and that clothes pitilessness with the cloak of piety, 3:2-6; His penetrating gaze, His authority--the Lord of the Sabbath, His power to baffle His enemies, to heal by a word, to impart to the man who believes power to do the impossible, 3:5.

2. The Pharisees

Familiar with some of the teachings of the Word, 2:24; ignorant of the teachings of the Word as a whole, 2:25; ready to criticize others' supposed violations of the teachings of the Word, 2:24; blind to their own real and grievous violations of the teachings of the Word, 3:4 (Matt. 12:7); without pity, full of murderous and implacable hatred, on the watch for violations of the law, without real love for the law for which they professed such intense loyalty, presumptuous in recognizing the divine power of our Lord but yet unhesitatingly questioning the moral character of His acts, sought to entrap Christ, dogged His footsteps, 3:2; baffled by His wisdom and power, 3:5; joined hands with their sworn enemies to compass the death of their common foe--Jesus, 3:6.

3. The Sabbath

Made for man--God's gracious provision for man's need, of universal necessity and so of universal validity, its true use that which best promotes man's welfare, 2:27; the Son of Man the supreme legislator as to its right use, 2:28; its true use will regard (a) man's distress, 2:23, (b) man's suffering, 3:4; works of necessity permissible, 2:23-25; work of mercy obligatory, 3:4, 5; ceremonial prescriptions which God has made to promote man's welfare must give way before the demands of that welfare which they were made to promote, 2:23-27; the demands of divinely begotten compassion superior to the demands of divinely ordained ceremonies, 2:23-26; 3:4.

4. The Man with the Withered Hand

Helpless, 3:1 (Luke 6:6); no pity from man, the tool of man's malice, 3:2; our Lord had compassion upon him, spoke to him, commanded him to do the impossible, 3:3, 5; believed that what our Lord commanded him to do He would give him the power to perform, obeyed, was healed, 3:5.

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