

## Text— Mark 2:18-28

Fellow redeemed sinners, redeemed by the blood of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ,

All religions outside of true Christianity are religions of works which teach that human beings can save themselves by doing good deeds. Nevertheless, ALL works-righteous religions are false religions that cannot possibly save anyone, because God demands absolute perfection when He says, “Ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God am holy.” (Leviticus 19:2) And yet, Isaiah 64:6 plainly states, “we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.” Yes, even man’s best works are in themselves sinful filth in the eyes of God since we are all sinners who do the works.

Accordingly, Romans 3:19-28 reports, “Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.”

So, my friends, the Christian religion is the only

true religion, for Jesus Christ is the only Savior from sin; and, God-given faith in Jesus Christ is the only way to personally receive the forgiveness of sins and salvation, for Holy Writ declares in no uncertain terms, “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” (John 3:16-18)

Thus, since even our best works are sin-stained and cannot save us, it is vital that we trust and confide in Jesus Christ alone for our salvation. Therefore, our Scripture selection can certainly be of benefit to us as Jesus answers some folks who criticized His disciples, for we behold:

### “CHRIST’S RESPONSE TO TWO CRITICISMS”

With that as our theme, may we, in view of our text and with the help of the Holy Ghost, see—

- 1) What the first criticism laid on Christ was
- 2) What Christ’s response to the first criticism was
- 3) What the second criticism laid on Christ was
- 4) What Christ’s response to the second criticism was

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Verse 18, ----- (Mark 2:18)

To “fast” is to abstain from food for a time. Fasting may be used to help one concentrate more in prayers to the Lord. However, fasting can also be misused when the person fasting does the act simply to put on a show, for in Matthew 6:16-18 Jesus says, “Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and

wash thy face; That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly." Hence, if one chooses to fast, one's fasting must be done for the right reasons and not for a hypocritical show.

Now, we just read in the opening verse of our text that Jesus was asked by some followers of John the Baptist and some followers of the Pharisees why Jesus' disciples did not fast.

Matthew 3:1-4 reports, "In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey."

So, John the Baptist preached repentance and was not a man who feasted on fine foods, but rather chose a simple diet which included fasting. The Pharisees also fasted, but they did so to be seen of men, for Luke 18:10-12 relates, "Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess." Oh, the Pharisee bragged about the fact he fasted twice a week— God should have surely been impressed, so he thought.

Consequently, some of John the Baptist's followers together with some of the Pharisees criticized Jesus' disciples, and thereby Jesus Himself, when they asked: *Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not?* Yeah, with that question some followers of John and of the Pharisees accused Jesus and His disciples of doing wrong – sinning – because they did not fast: such was the first criticism laid on Christ.

As we ponder the next few verses of our text, we will see what Christ's response to the first criticism was.

Verses 19 & 20, ----- (Mark 2:19-20)

It's interesting how Jesus answered His critics. Notice that Jesus refers to Himself as the bridegroom, "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body." (Ephesians 5:23) Furthermore, John the Baptist declared, as we read in John 3:27-31, "A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease. He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all." Thus, John the Baptist's disciples should have immediately recognized the terminology Jesus was using when referring to Himself as the bridegroom and the Church as His bride.

Realize that when our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ was visibly walking on earth with His disciples, it was certainly NOT a time for fasting and sorrow but was rather a time to be joyful as perfect preaching of God's Word could be heard from God's lips since Jesus is, "the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:14) Nevertheless, the time would come when Jesus' disciples would fast, for Jesus the Bridegroom would be taken away from His disciples, tortured, crucified, and buried. Oh, the disciples of Christ fasted while Jesus' body lay in the tomb for three days. The disciples were only happy again when they saw Jesus after He bodily rose from the dead, for John 20:19-20 reports that on the first Easter, "the same day at evening, being the first day of the

week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.”

My friends, we too have reason to be glad since we know that Jesus Christ is our LIVING LORD and SAVIOR! Yes, it’s as 1 Corinthians 15:17-20 tells us, where we read, “if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.” Indeed, when Jesus visibly returns in glory at the end of days, we who believe on Him will be raised incorruptible, “For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.” (1 Corinthians 15:53-54) Thus, everlasting life and never-ending happiness awaits us Christians, thanks be to Jesus our Savior and Lord— not by our sin-stained works but by Jesus’ perfect atoning work!

Verses 21 & 22, ----- (Mark 2:21-22)

Jesus let those who laid a criticism on Him know that they were wrong in that they did not realize the New Testament era was upon them and the Old Testament era was at an end with its laws and practices which pointed forward to the coming of the Messiah, the Christ.

Think about what Jesus was getting at with His parabolic comments. New cloth used as a patch on a piece of old clothing does not work since the patch is stronger than the clothing on which it is sewn; consequently, upon shrinkage the patch tears the clothing and there is a bigger hole than what it began with. Likewise, if new wine is put

into old wine bottles – which were often made of skin in those days – and that new wine ferments it will burst those old containers since they are too weak to contain the pressure generated by the fermentation process. Similarly, New Testament truths cannot be patched over Old Testament truths which have been fulfilled, nor can New Testament doctrines be stuffed into Old Testament practices which foreshadowed that which was to come, which is why Colossians 2:16-17 clearly states, “Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.”

Oh beloved, it’s as Romans 8:1-4 reports, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

My friends, God’s Law was never given as a means to save sinners, for no sinful human being can keep God’s Law perfectly as He commands and demands. Rather, God’s Law shows us our sin and our dire need for a Savior, while the Gospel shows us our Savior, Jesus Christ, who kept God’s Law perfectly for us and paid for our lack of keeping it. So, let’s remember Christ’s response to the first criticism He received in our sermon text.

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As we ponder the next two verses of our text, let us see what the second criticism laid on Christ was.

Verses 23 & 24, ----- (Mark 2:23-24)

In our text the word “corn” is synonymous with “grain” as it is used for instance in John 12:24,

where Jesus remarks, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.”

Jesus’ disciples were obviously hungry as they were traveling through some cornfields on the Sabbath day. It was common for farmers at that time and location to provide walking paths through their fields which people were free to use to get from one place to another, and to glean a little grain for their personal consumption. Deuteronomy 23:25 says, “When thou comest into the standing corn of thy neighbour, then thou mayest pluck the ears with thine hand; but thou shalt not move a sickle unto thy neighbour’s standing corn.” Hence, Jesus’ disciples were eating some of the corn as they made their way along the path.

Nevertheless, the Pharisees observed Jesus’ disciples plucking some ears of corn and eating as they were traversing the path; so, the Pharisees accused them of breaking the Sabbath law which forbade working on that day. The Pharisees were quite extreme in their thinking, to say the least; and, they also had a double standard since they were walking around, watching Jesus and His disciples, and flapping their mouths which could also be considered working on the Sabbath if one wishes to be extreme. Furthermore, the Pharisees with their complaint against Jesus’ disciples were also accusing Jesus Himself of sinning because He did not chide His disciples concerning their plucking corn and eating it on the Sabbath— such was the second criticism laid on Christ.

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As we ponder the remaining verses of our text, let us see what Christ’s response to the second criticism was.

Verses 25 & 26, ----- (Mark 2:25-26)

The Pharisees prided themselves on being experts in knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, and consequently Jesus’ response to their criticism

involved a historical account from the Bible regarding the well-known character named David.

Yeah, 1 Samuel 21:3-6 informs us that when David came to Nob, a city about one mile north of Jerusalem, David said to Ahimelech the priest, son of Abiathar the high priest (2 Samuel 8:17), “Now therefore what is under thine hand? give me five loaves of bread in mine hand, or what there is present. And the priest answered David, and said, There is no common bread under mine hand, but there is hallowed bread; if the young men have kept themselves at least from women. And David answered the priest, and said unto him, Of a truth women have been kept from us about these three days, since I came out, and the vessels of the young men are holy, and the bread is in a manner common, yea, though it were sanctified this day in the vessel. So the priest gave him hallowed bread: for there was no bread there but the shewbread, that was taken from before the LORD, to put hot bread in the day when it was taken away.” Thus, David and his companions ate the priest’s portion of shewbread on the Sabbath, and yet they were not punished by God as law-breakers. The men were hungry, and the Lord never intended any of His commandments to be harmful to human life, for it is written in Romans 13:10, “Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.” Accordingly, the Pharisees’ criticism of Christ and His disciples was unjust and unwarranted.

Verses 27 & 28, ----- (Mark 2:27-28)

In the concluding verses of our text we observe Jesus really laying a correction on the Pharisees who held such a high opinion of themselves. Jesus’ remarks emphasized the fact that the Sabbath day was made to help men, not hurt men. Men were not made to serve the Sabbath day or any other day; men were made to serve God! Consider the Sabbath law as given in Exodus 20:8-11, where we read, “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy

son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.”

So, man’s normal daily laboring was to cease in order that man could rest his body and worship the Lord, remembering Him and honoring Him as Creator of all and Lord of all. The Sabbath was not given to harm man; the command to rest on the Sabbath never meant to starve or to remain completely still for an entire 24 hour period.

But, even more important is what Jesus declares in closing our text: *the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath*. Yes, Jesus the Son of man is also the Son of God, LORD of the Sabbath— the LORD who certainly knows why He made the Sabbath.

My friends, throughout our Scripture selection, we see in Christ’s response to two criticisms that He has emphasized the truth that our own works cannot and do not save us. Rather, we need the salvation Jesus Christ Himself – true God and true man – supplies, for He is our Savior and Lord, “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12)

Let us daily and sincerely repent of our sins; let us keep our full trust and confidence in Christ Jesus as our personal Savior and Lord; and, let us go forward striving to show we love Him, because He first loved us. Amen.

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