

Mark 2 - The Old and New Covenants

Teacher: Pastor Paul LeBoutillier
Life Bible Ministry

Mark chapter 2. Let's open with prayer. Heavenly Father, open our hearts to the ministry of Your Word today and speak Words of grace and insight. We ask it in Jesus name, amen.

Mark chapter 2, beginning at verse 1, it says, *"And when he returned to Capernaum after some days,..." (ESV)*

And you'll remember when we ended chapter 1, they were in Capernaum but the crowds were getting so huge that they couldn't stick around anymore. Jesus said, let's move on. Let's go on to some of the other towns and villages.

It says now, that they're back to Capernaum. And) *"it was reported that he was at home.* (which probably means in Peter's home, once again) *2 And many were gathered together, so that there was no more room, not even at the door. And he was preaching the word to them.*

3 And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. 4 And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him, and when they had made an opening, they let the bed down on which the paralytic lay."

We're told that a group of men can't even get close to Jesus because of the huge crowds. I suppose that's probably pretty difficult carrying someone on a makeshift stretcher, getting through the crowds, maneuvering their way. It'd be one thing for one person to squeeze your way through or whatever, but this was a pretty difficult thing. And they got there and they realized, there is no way we are going to be able to get to Jesus.

What's interesting about going up on the roof... And this may sound really weird in our culture today to think about going up on the roof and digging a hole through the thing. That'd be a pretty big deal today.

First of all, it'd be pretty difficult. You probably have to have a sawzall and a bunch of other tools to go along with it. But roofs in that day were not made

with any such permanent sort of materials, and it wouldn't have been difficult to get through. And getting onto the roof was even easier. Because people use their roofs back in those days for all kinds of things. Bathing, meditation, sometimes just as a place to get away from it all, like from a cranky wife. That's what the proverb says, right? I'm not making that up. It says, *"better the corner of a roof."* (Proverbs 21:9) Right? Okay, don't throw anything at me. That's just what it says. Just that to say that a man's roof was considered to be part of the home.

And there was usually some kind of a makeshift stairway up the side of the home to get to the roof. Or, a ladder if they couldn't afford the stairway. And getting up there wouldn't have been a big deal. These men all make their way up onto the roof so that they can dig their way through it. And then lower the paralyzed man down right in front of Jesus, presumably.

And then verse 5 says, *"And when Jesus saw their faith..."* And that's an interesting phrase, is it not? *"...when Jesus saw their faith..."* Presumably, we're talking about the men who brought the man. And perhaps even the man himself. Jesus *"...said to the paralytic, 'Son, your sins are forgiven. 6 Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, '7 Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?'"*

Now stop there for just a moment. You have to understand something. These men are not wrong, from the standpoint of what they're thinking in their minds, okay. In the Jewish mind it was blasphemy to put yourself in the place of God. And only God can forgive sins, in the sense of saying, *"...your sins are forgiven."*

Now, don't get me wrong. You and I can tell somebody, I forgive you if they've sinned against us. But when I tell somebody their sins are forgiven, I'm speaking for God. And in the Jewish mind, that was blasphemous to be able to say that. Well, they realized they didn't think they could say it. In fact, they didn't even expect the Messiah to say it - those kinds of things. That was just unheard of.

So, they're thinking these things and Jesus knows they're thinking these things. What are we going to do? It says verse 8, *"And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, 'Why do you question these things in your hearts?'"* And then Jesus goes on to pose a question of His own, *"9 Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are*

forgiven,' or to say, (rise up or) 'Rise take up your bed and walk.'?" Great question. Right?

Now, let me stop you there, again, just for a moment. To say that, for you and I, thinking about this question from an American, Christian standpoint, we would say, oh, well, it's easier to say your sins are forgiven, rather than, rise up and walk. Because quite honestly, there's no way to prove one way or the other whether or not, I have the authority to say, your sins are forgiven. Because the result of that would be unseen. It's not seen with the human eye.

You see one person here for a moment who is laden with sin, and then in the next 60 seconds they invite Jesus into their life to be their Savior. After that time, their sins are forgiven. But you can't see a difference in that person's life. You can't see that their sins are gone or that they've been forgiven. That's not a visible thing. It's a spiritual dynamic that is hidden to the human eye. Right?

From an American standpoint, I would say, oh, well, if I had the choice, I would just say, it's easier to say, your sins are forgiven. Because nobody could prove it. Right? But if I were to say, well, I think I'll choose door number two, I'll say to that person, rise up and walk. Well now see that's pretty tough. Because you're going to be able to tell right away whether I have the authority to do that. Because either that person is going to get up and walk and you're going to go, whoa. Or, that person is just going to lie there on their mat. And they're going to go, you're a fake. Right? Because you can see the result.

That's the way you and I would think. But we don't think like Jews. To a Jewish mind, this was almost kind of like a trick question. Because in their mind, both of these options are equally impossible to do. You can't say to somebody, your sins are forgiven. Because that puts you in the place of God. And now the people are going to start throwing stones at you potentially because you'd be blaspheming. Nor do you have the authority to say, rise up, take up your mat and go home. Because that would be to do a miraculous work of healing. Now what Jesus is going to do is, He's going to prove that He has the authority to do that which is unseen, which is forgive sins, by doing that which is seen. And that is healing the man.

Look what it says in verse 10. *"But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" —he said to the paralytic—* ¹¹ *"I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home."* ¹² *And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all, so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!"*

You can imagine that's pretty amazing. I mean, there's a crowd of people, huge crowd of people. So much so that they can't even get this man close to Jesus. Everybody sees this. Everybody hears this thing. Right? And they see this man rise up and walk who had been paralyzed for as long as he had.

The logic that is given here again, in this passage, is that since Jesus can do what you can see, which is to heal the paralyzed man. Then obviously He also has the authority to do what you cannot see. And that is, say that an individual's sins are forgiven from a pronouncement from God. Now here's another passage that very clearly shows the deity of Jesus Christ. Because He does what only God can do.

But let me also now address... Let me bring this to October 2016, can I? Because you see, we have to look at this also from a New Testament perspective. We're not Jews. I assume you might be a Jew, part Jew. Pardon me if you are. But we probably still don't think like Old Testament Jews at all. We are people who've been raised up with the New Testament understanding of what it means to express forgiveness. And one of the things that we need to understand what the Jews didn't have, is that you and I have the authority to pronounce the forgiveness of sins without being blasphemous. We can do that.

Here's why: we know what it takes for somebody to have their sins forgiven. Therefore, we know that when someone comes to Christ, when they pray to receive Him as Savior, we can then say to them, your sins are forgiven. And it's a privilege. And it's a wonderful thing to be able to do. But we can do it because we've been told to do it. We in the Gospel, proclaim the forgiveness of sins. Let me put a just a quick Scripture up on the screen from Acts chapter 13. This is the apostle Paul speaking here. He says,

Acts 13:36 (ESV)

Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you.

Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through this man (and he's talking about Jesus) forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you.

You see, this is something you and I can do. Isn't that cool? And we're not blaspheming because we've been given permission to speak on the authority of God's Word, as it relates to this.

And you know what? It's a wonderful thing to be able to look somebody in the eye and say, your sins are forgiven. They are wiped out. They've been blotted

out. And it's even more glorious thing to see it in the eyes of the person with whom you're praying. That is an amazing thing to see someone for whom the burden of sin has been lifted and they know it. And Oh, the joy! The joy in their heart just knowing, I'm forgiven! Powerful thing.

We move on. Verse 13. *"He went out again beside the sea, and all the crowd was coming to him, and he was teaching them."* And we know that Jesus liked to be near the sea at times. Because He could put Himself out in a boat just past the shore. And then speak to the people without them crowding too close to Him. And people could be better in a position to hear the Word.

"¹⁴ And as he passed by, he saw Levi, the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he rose and followed him."

Now, Levi is, of course, one in the same as Matthew, the writer of the first gospel account. He was a Jew. But he was also a tax collector by trade. And what that meant is, that he was a despised individual. All of the tax collectors that were Jews were despised by their fellow Jews, because they were considered to be traitors. They were not collecting taxes for Israel. They were collecting taxes for Rome. And Rome was their tyrannical, government structure that bullied them all the time.

And these individuals who raise taxes or collected taxes for the Romans were considered traitors. And it was bad enough that they did that. But here's the problem. They went above and beyond collecting taxes for Rome. They would overcharge people and then they would pocket the difference. Rome would tell them to collect so much tax. They would collect twice as much, put the rest in their pocket. And they were hated. They were hated, they were hated by the Jews.

And here's Levi, this hated person, whom the rest of the disciples wouldn't have even probably taken notice of. And if they did, they probably would have taken notice only to spit on him. And Jesus says to him, *"Follow me."* And the amazing thing too, is that Levi instantly got up from his tax collecting booth and followed the Lord.

And it says in verse 15 that, *"As he reclined at (the) table in his house, (meaning it's Matthew's house) many (other) tax collectors and sinners were reclining with Jesus and his disciples, for there were many who followed him."*

Some of you in your Bibles, the word *"sinners"* is in quotations. That's not in the Greek. It's meant to call out that term. Because what the Gospel writers, you

need to understand, are not trying to convey to you... They're not trying to convey that some people are sinners and some people aren't.

When they say sinners, what they're talking about is people who have no place in their life for God or His Word. They have rejected the Mosaic law. They don't care about coming to synagogue. They're basically, unbelievers. They're atheists potentially. They're just immoral people. And they're people...

I mean, here's the thing: we're all sinners. But some of us do a pretty good job of hiding it. Some of us are just really good at hiding our sin. You can't smell it on my breath, sort of thing. You can't see it when I walk a straight line. It doesn't make my speech slurred or anything like that. Just know this: I sin just like you do. And that's the fact of the matter. We all sin. We're all sinners.

But these people were called sinners because they didn't care. They're like, you know what? I'm going to live my immoral lifestyle. And I'm going to live it the way I want. And I don't care who sees it, or knows it, or whatever. And they were just notorious in their sinful activity. There you go. And it was scandalous, by the way, for any Jew to have an association with those blatantly, immoral, people.

It says in verse 16 that, *"And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, said to his disciples, 'Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?'"* ¹⁷ *And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.'"*

And you have to love this response by our Lord. Because you'll notice that it doesn't excuse the behavior of the people with whom He's eating. See, if you and I... Okay, I'll take you out of the equation. If I was being criticized for eating with someone and you felt that it was wrong for me to do that, I would probably defend myself by defending them. And I'd say, they're not so bad.

Jesus didn't do that. He didn't come back and go, come on, you guys, these guys aren't so bad. He said... In fact He made it clear, these people were sick, by saying, hey, these are the people that need a doctor. It's the sick who need a doctor. It's not people who are well that needed a doctor.

And really all that points out and makes very clear is that, such people as those tax collectors and sinners, were the very ones that Jesus's mission directed Him to reach. Because the Bible tells us that, He came to seek and save the lost. (Luke 19:10)

And again, I want to make note of the fact that when Jesus says here, *"I came not to call the righteous..."* He's not suggesting that some people are righteous in and of themselves, and they have no need of the cross. In other words, Jesus isn't saying, I came to die on the cross for some people, but not for everybody. That goes against the Word of God.

These people saw themselves as righteous before God because they were keeping the Law of Moses. And because of that they had rejected the call to repent. And they didn't think they needed Jesus. They didn't need forgiveness. We got it dialed-in. We're keeping the law.

And Jesus is basically saying, I'm speaking...These are the people I'm talking to. The people who understand and recognize that they're sinners. And I've said many times, I would much rather talk to a flat out heathen about Jesus. You know what I mean? Rather than talk to a religious person who didn't know the Lord. Because there are heathens that don't know the Lord. And there are religious people that don't know the Lord. And by far the religious person is the tougher person to reach.

And the reason is because they figured out a way to make themselves feel better about their life. And with the Jews, they felt better because they were keeping the law. Or so they thought. And that was their get out of hell free card sort of a thing. And we're good. What do I don't need talking about forgiveness and stuff like that. I don't need any of that stuff. Right?

Oh, I'd much rather talk to a heathen who recognizes that they're a heathen. I mean it really is a delightful thing to sit down talk to somebody. And you're just going... You start talking about sin and they go, oh yeah, I know. I sin. I'm a sinner. Man I've been sinning since the first day. And I've been sinning and I'm a sinner. And it's like, oh, what a refreshing thing. Right? It's just refreshing.

Love talking to those people. Because they're just primed to hear about God's love and mercy. Even in the midst of their sin. And it's so cool to say that. You know what? God loves you. And He loved you so much, He sent His Son to die on the cross for you. That you would no longer be a slave to sin. But rather be a child of God and a slave to righteousness. Which is a way of saying to be free.

Verse 18 goes on, *"Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. And (the) people came and said to him, 'Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast.'"* “

Now, I need to pause for a moment just to let you know that, the Pharisees observed a regular weekly fast as apparently, did also John the Baptist and his disciples. John was a good Jewish boy.

But you need to know this. This regular, weekly fast was not part of the law. It was not part of the Mosaic law. It had become part of the Jewish understanding of the law because it was tradition. And it was something that they did as a very important part of their practice of Judaism. But the Pharisees, who believed now, that this practice of weekly fasting was part of keeping the law, wanted to know why Jesus and His disciples didn't join in. And they're asking Him. Let's see how Jesus responds.

Verse 19, *"And Jesus said to them, 'Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as (you) have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast.'"*

What is He saying here? Now, remember, Jesus is the bridegroom and we are the bride. The body of Christ is the bride. What is Jesus saying here about fasting, as it relates to Him being with them at that time?

Let me paraphrase His response, if I could. All right? It might go something like this. Who thinks of fasting during a time of joyous celebration? That's what Jesus is saying. I'm here. I'm here with My intended. The one whom I love. And who thinks of going into a time of fasting, which is sorrow, and mourning, and a focused waiting upon the Lord, when there's a sense of joy, and anticipation, and festivity.

I got to tell you something. I've done dozens of weddings over the years. And I have always loved being with an engaged couple before they get married. It's fun. I like doing pre-marriage counseling with them. Because they're just so excited to be together. They love being together. And they love getting into the Word. And talking about what it means to be a husband. What it means to be a wife. And they... And we talk in pre-marriage counseling about their roles. And they're just soaking it in. And they got smiles on their face.

And I'll look at them after I'm finished. I'll say, you guys have any thoughts? And they look at each other and they grin. I don't know, it's just all so cool. And that's what it's like to be an engaged couple. You just sit around smiling all the time because there's such this sense of anticipation. We're getting married!

And I try to even play into that. Or, I don't play into it, I encourage it even. I'll talk about it. So what, are you about a month away here now from your

wedding? And they go, yes! And they're just so excited. And that's what it's like.

And Jesus is saying... Keep in mind again, fasting was done by the Jews, to express various things, such as: sorrow, grief, mourning. Jesus is saying, "How can there be mourning when I'm with My intended, My bride to be. How can we take on an attitude of sorrow when there's such anticipation and joy that is here?

And yet Jesus does go on to say, look at verse 20. He says, *"The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day."*

And I imagine He's referring, no doubt, to those three days between His death, and burial, and the resurrection. And I'm willing to bet the disciples fasted on those days. It was completely appropriate during that time.

But Jesus is saying it's inappropriate when there's a time of joy, great joy. And then Jesus makes a larger statement here about the old and the new, as He goes on in verse 21. Check out these 2 verses. Very important verses because they are, basically, statements given in parabolic form. These parables that make the same point.

He says, *"No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. If he does, the patch tears away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear is made. 22 And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins - and the wine is destroyed, and so are the skins. But new wine is for fresh wineskins."*

You guys understand, right, the idea behind these parables and what they're teaching? Basically, you don't put a piece of unshrunk cloth to patch an old shirt that's done shrinking. And when it's washed... Because when you put that new patch on, that new patch is going to shrink. Right? You sew it into place, but then you wash it and it shrinks. But the rest of the garment's done shrinking. The new patch pulls away from where it was sewn in. And it makes a worse tear now and basically ruins the garment.

Same thing with the wineskins. They were made out of animal skins. And when wine or grape juice was put into those originally, they would leave it sit while it fermented. Well, you would put new grape juice in a new wine skin. Because when it gave off the gas of fermentation and enlarged that skin, the skin could stretch with it.

Now there comes a time when that leather is going to stretch as far as it can go. It's done stretching. You put brand new grape juice in there, tie it up, and hang it in your shed or whatever, and wait for the fermentation process to take place. It's going to take place. The gas is going to be given off. It's going to try to stretch that leather, but it's going to break it. Because it's beyond its ability to stretch. And all of the wine is ruined.

What is the point of what Jesus is saying? The point here is that God never intended Christianity to be patched up by Judaism. And God never intended Christianity to fill the old container of the Mosaic Law. You do that and you're going to have a tear, and a rip, and both are going to be ruined. Because there was never an intention to do that.

If we attempt to sew our faith in Christ, on the garment of Judaism, and the practices of the Old Testament, the result is going to be that the whole garment is going to be ruined. And if you're going to carry your faith around in the old wineskin of Judaism, it's not going to work. It's going to burst and ruin the object of our faith. And these are lessons that the early church had a hard time learning. They struggled to lay hold of these basic lessons. And they learned them often the hard way.

We read about these lessons in the Book of Acts. Paul and Barnabas are hanging out up in Antioch, in Antioch, Syria, which became a center of church growth after Jerusalem, after Stephen's death by stoning, and the persecution that followed. The believers scattered. And they made their way up north, up to Syria, to Antioch. And it was a huge growing time for the church.

But it didn't take long before men came up to Antioch. And they started telling the Christians, hey, listen, you got to be circumcised if you want to go to heaven. Remember something, Jesus was a Jew. You have to conform to what it means to be a Jew, so that you can then become a Christian. Because Jesus was a Jew, you got to be a Jew. you got to convert to Judaism. Then you have to believe in Jesus Christ.

And it created a real row in the church there in Antioch. What were they doing? They were trying to sew the new patch of Christianity on the old garment of Judaism. It didn't work. And Paul and Barnabas took very, very, sharp difference with them about that teaching. And you guys know how that whole thing goes.

Fact is, we're still working through this stuff today. The body of Christ is still struggling with these things today. We're still having a hard time figuring out

what we should and shouldn't adopt, as it relates to Judaism. And there's a lot of what appeared to be very, compelling arguments that come from the legalistic camp of you got to do it this way. Everything from: head coverings, to Sabbath keeping, to don't eat certain kinds of meat, to this, and that, and the other thing. And it's constantly trying to work its way into the body of Christ, constantly. It was happening then. It's happening now. Isn't that crazy? You think after 2,000 years, we would have gotten that one dialed in. But not in the body of Christ.

And that's why we come to this final account here in Mark's chapter 2 because he deals with the Sabbath. And we're going to talk about the Sabbath here in this last thing. And you need to understand what's going on here. Because the next chapter, and chapters after that, are going to deal with accusations that were leveled against Jesus, related to the Sabbath. And Him doing things on the Sabbath. And if you don't get what it says here in chapter two about the Sabbath, you're going to get messed up in chapter three, and chapters following. Because this was a huge bugaboo with the Jews. Meaning that, Jesus worked on the Sabbath. This was just enormous.

They believed with all their hearts, Jesus was a lawbreaker. And it created this incredible contradiction in their minds. How in the world can He be the anointed of God, when He is, at the very same time, a lawbreaker? And it created this conundrum that caused people to stumble. And they didn't get it. And we need to get it, or we're going to struggle.

Verse 24. *"And the Pharisees were saying to him, 'Look...'"* You know what? I skipped a verse. Verse 23. I'm sorry. *"One Sabbath he was going through the grainfields, and as they made their way, his disciples began to pluck heads of grain."*

Now, to the Jews this meant they were harvesting. To pluck a head of grain was to go through the process of harvesting, picking, threshing, and so forth. And they believed it was strictly forbidden. It was considered to be work on the Sabbath.

In fact, you guys know probably that the scribes had so meticulously defined the Sabbath and its regulations that they came up with no fewer than 39 specific definitions for work on the Sabbath that were forbidden. And it was... It got to be even a little ridiculous.

Now verse 24, *"And the Pharisees were saying to him, 'Look, 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 was hungry, he and those*

who were with him: 26 how he entered the house of God, in the time of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the bread of the Presence, which is not lawful for any but the priest to eat, and also gave it to those who were with him?" 27 And he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." 28 So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath. "'

And I want you to take note of some key words here in our Lord's response to them to help us understand a bit about the Sabbath. And that is in verse 25. First of all, He says, *"Have you never read what David did when he was in need,"* those are key words. *"Have you never read what David did when he was in need,..."*

And Jesus is referring to an incident that we actually referenced in our study of Leviticus just last Wednesday, when David, before he was king, he was serving under Saul's kingship. And he met Abiathar, the high priest, and came with him and his men and said, we need provisions. Is there anything here to eat? And Abiathar said, no, there's nothing here to eat, except the bread of the Presence. Which is the bread that was placed on the table of Show Bread, which stood before the Lord. And it was a picture of fellowship with God. And David said, well, that'll do. And Abiathar gave it to him. And he took it, and he ate it, and he gave some to his men as well.

And the point that our Lord is making here in this response to them is, first of all, that He says, human need should take precedence over the ceremonial law. Jesus made the same point in a different conversation with the religious leaders when they were harassing Him about working on the Sabbath.

He goes, what about your priests? If a baby boy was born in Israel, he was to be circumcised on the eighth day. Well, what happened if the baby boy was born eight days before the Sabbath? When would they circumcise him? On the Sabbath. Even though that was considered work for the high priest, or for the priest, they did it anyway. Because there was a need to get it taken care of. This was God's covenant requirement.

The point is, the Sabbath was intended to serve people, not people intended to serve the Sabbath. That's the way the Jews had gotten it. Which is why Jesus said, listen guys, the Sabbath was made for you. You weren't made for the Sabbath. It was meant to serve you, to be a blessing to you, to be a day of rest. Now, you've turned it into this legalistic minefield where any small wrong step in any direction, could blow you up. And often it did. But what ended up happening is the Jews ended up serving the Sabbath, rather than the other way

around. Rather than it being a blessing to them, it became a burden to them. It became a heavy thing to lift. All right.

Where is the Sabbath as it relates to our faith and our understanding of this thing from a New Testament perspective? Well, it has to start back in the Old Testament, where God declares what the Sabbath is and who it is between. Let me show you this passage on the screen from Exodus chapter 31. We're looking at verses 12 and 16. And it says,

Exodus 31:12, 16 (ESV)

And the LORD said to Moses, "You are to speak to the people of Israel and say, 'Above all you shall keep my Sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the LORD, sanctify you. Therefore the people of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, observing the Sabbath throughout their generations, as a covenant forever.'"

And the LORD said to Moses, "You are to speak to the people of (Who, what's it say there? Says,) Israel (doesn't it? You're to speak to the people of Israel) and say, "Above all you shall keep my Sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and (Who?) you (for all your and) throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the LORD, sanctify you. (or set you apart) Therefore (Look at this) the people of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, observing the Sabbath throughout their generations, as a covenant forever."

Now, this is an important passage for us to look at. Because it's very clear that God spoke through Moses, and told the people of Israel, that the Sabbath was a covenant sign between the two of them. It was an element, or an aspect of the Mosaic covenant that was between God and Israel.

Now, see, this is the big bugaboo. There are so many people who are taught today, that the church—the body of Christ—took over for Israel. And that we are now the spiritual Israel. Okay? And this is a very common and very popular teaching in the body of Christ. But it is an assumption that is made. And it is, fundamentally, not true. We do not take over for Israel. We are an amalgamation of Jew and Gentile. That's what Paul tells us very clearly in the New Testament. It's... And in fact, we are now neither Jew, nor Gentile, nor slave, nor free. Not even man or woman. Even those distinctions fall away in the body of Christ. We are simply the children of God. Right? And we are not under the Mosaic Covenant.

God said through Jeremiah, I'm going to make a New Covenant. It's not going to be like the Old Covenant that I made with their forefathers. It's not going to

be like that. It's going to be a New Covenant. And yet we're trying to constantly turn the Old Covenant into the New Covenant, and the New Covenant into the Old Covenant. We're constantly trying to bring those two together. And get them to somehow fit together, and work together, and live together. And they don't. They don't.

You say, well, then why did God tell these people to keep the Sabbath? Well, number one, they needed a day of rest. And that's the way God told them to live their lives. Take a day and rest. By the way, the Spirit of that command is a good idea. If you are one of those people who work seven days a week and you don't take a day of rest, you need to start taking seriously God's Word.

But not for legalistic reasons. Not so that you'll get into heaven. Because there's some wisdom to it. It's like, God's the creator. Right? He created you. He's the manufacturer. Take a day. He told us, people take a day and just chill. Just rest, put your feet up, read a book, maybe even the Bible. Ooh, wouldn't that be fun. And just hang out in God's presence and just take a break.

Now, is it a legalistic requirement? No. Are you going to be condemned and cut off from your people if you don't? No. But it's a good idea. How else are we to think about the Sabbath? Well, we're to also understand that the Sabbath pointed to something. It was part of what we call the ceremonial law. We have the moral law and we have the ceremonial law. The moral aspects of the law are like: don't murder. The ceremonial aspects of the law, related to: the ceremonies of keeping days, and sabbaths, and the feasts. And things of that nature.

We understand as we get into studying the New Testament that these things are pointers to Jesus Christ. And I think, of all the writers in the Bible, the writer to the Hebrews in the New Testament, did the absolute best job of explaining what the Sabbath means. Because remember, the Sabbath is all about resting. The Jews made it into way more than that. But fundamentally, it's all about resting.

How does that apply to you and I? Just take a day off? No, it goes beyond that. Because you see, we're resting in the finished work of Jesus on the cross. We're not working for our salvation. We're resting in what He did. Look at how the writer of Hebrews described it.

Hebrews 4:9-11; 4:3 (ESV)

So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience. For we who have believed enter that rest...

So then, (he says,) there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, (Now, this is the New Testament. Okay? He says,) for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience. (How do we get to that rest?) For we who have believed enter that rest...

Let me highlight those very important sections of that passage.

Hebrews 4:9-11; 4:3 (ESV)

*So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for **whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works** as God did from his. Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience. **For we who have believed enter that rest...***

First of all, "whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works..." People, if you're trying to be good... If you're trying to be a good person and get to heaven, then you haven't rested. If you're constantly getting discouraged because you sin, you think wrong things, you say wrong things, you do wrong things, and you're constantly feeling condemned, and you're constantly feeling like, I don't know if I'm ever going to make it to heaven, I just can't seem to live a good life. You are not resting. You're working. Okay. That's works. That's a works-based salvation.

We don't get to heaven based on our works. Your works have nothing to do with it. He says, "whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from (his own labors) *his own works*..." And we want to enter into His rest. I want to be in the Sabbath rest of God. How do I do that? Last part, "*we who have believed enter that rest*." It is by faith, Christians, that we enter into the rest of God. By faith in what? Faith in Jesus and what He accomplished on the cross.

I just think that's such a powerful, powerful passage. Because it links the understanding of the Sabbath regulations that were part of Judaism. And helps us to understand what God was trying to convey to His people. Learn to rest in Me, you guys. Learn to rest.

Learn to just relax in My arms and know that I have this thing. And I will work all things together for good..." And on and on and on. Learning to rest in Him. Resting in your salvation. Resting in your life. Ah, how we need to learn to rest. The world around us is looking for joy and peace. Happiness and peace and they're not finding it. Because those things are found only in Christ. That's how you're going to find real joy. And that's ultimately how you're going to find peace. And I just want to encourage you.

Some of you guys, who maybe have come out of a legalistic background, or, you have a legalistic bent to your nature. And you just recognize it. That doesn't mean you're a bad person. There are people that are like that. They have a bent toward seeing things in a very legalistic way. And there are other people who don't. They're just all grace. And this thing comes a little easier to the second group of people.

People who have a tendency toward legalism struggle in the areas of really trying to hang on to that from day-to-day. Because their own actions challenge them in the belief that they are really saved. And we have to keep coming back to them and saying, your actions are not a picture of your salvation. Your deeds are not a guarantee of your salvation.

It is Jesus Christ—putting faith in Him that causes us to be saved. And then resting in that faith. I believe. Ah, it does your heart good to say that. Have you done that lately? Have you done that lately in prayer? Just say, Lord, I believe. I believe what You did for me. I believe it. I believe that what You did on the cross was enough. It was enough.