

THE RISING OPPOSITION

Mark 2:13-28

Intro: Back in Mark 1, verse 22, we have the first mention of the Jewish scribes. It was that the people notice a great difference between the teaching of the Lord Jesus when it was compared with the teaching of the scribes. He taught with authority; the scribes were those who cited other authorities, but their teaching lacked that conviction and power which the truth carries. The Word carries its own authority. The people came away from hearing the Lord teach convinced that what He was telling them was the truth. The teaching of the Jews at that time was a mixture of truth and traditions which had been added over the years to the teaching of the Jews. And unfortunately it is always the case that when the Word of God is mixed with the words of men, it is the words of men which prevail. But that message has to be enforced by rules and regulations because the teaching of the words of men does not carry the authority, the conviction, and power, the way the Word of God does. And those who hear both kinds of teaching usually are quick to notice the difference.

This explains why the scribes and Pharisees had to keep after the people, ruling with threats and other warnings to keep the people in line. The Lord was different, and people noticed the difference. And this was going to become the battlefield between the Jewish religious leaders and the Lord. His teaching was powerful; theirs was not!

We see that the same thing has happened in the church today. From many pulpits people hear more psychology and humanistic philosophies, but the preacher has turned away from the truth and, as Paul warned Timothy in the years following our Lord's ministry, they turn to fables and the actual denial of the truth. The church generally needs to be awakened to the power of God's Word, such as is declared in Hebrews 4:12. So it is clear from the beginning of our Lord's ministry that He was going to be opposed by the scribes because of His teaching.

Then notice Mark 2:6, 16, 18, and 24.

In Mark 2:6 we see that the scribes, "in their hearts," were objecting to the ministry of the Lord Jesus. Or we could say that they were objecting to the Deity of our Lord and the authority He had to forgive sins. And even though our Lord said the more difficult thing, "Arise, take up thy bed, and walk," that still did not convince the scribes that the Lord was the Son of

man had the authority to forgive sins, which, of course, He did!

In Mark 2:16 the scribes and the Pharisees objected to the Lord eating with publicans and sinners, something that they would never have done. They felt that they were superior to such people, and could only be contaminated themselves by associating with them.

But that was hardly over when “the disciples of John,” that is, the disciples of John the Baptist joined with the Pharisees in criticizing the Lord because He was not fasting instead of eating. But why would they fast when the Bridegroom was with them. The time was coming when He would be taken away from them, and then they would fast. Fasting, however, was strictly regulated by the Jews, far beyond what is taught in Scripture. This was one of their ways of controlling the people, and they considered what the Lord was doing as a threat to their own self-made demands which they had laid upon the people.

The last time in the chapter (2) that we have the Pharisees mentioned is in verse 24, and it had to do with one of the major points of contention that the Jewish leaders had with our Lord: the Sabbath.

So you can see in all of these references that very early in our Lord’s ministry it was clear that He was not going to have an easy time with the scribes and Pharisees (plus other members of the Jews’ religion. In fact, our Lord’s opposition was not coming from the people, but from their religious rulers.

Charles Erdman, a professor of Princeton Seminary in the days when Princeton stood for the truth, said concerning these conflicts between our Lord and the scribes and Pharisees, that “in the hostility of the Pharisees he saw the signs of the approaching storm, the certainty of His rejection and death” (p. 52). But this did not take the Lord by surprise. He knew the condition of the religious leaders of the Jews, and that they, while claiming to be the spiritual leaders of the Jewish people, were actually the foremost enemies of the truth of the Word of God.

It is the same today, isn’t it? There are those in position of religious authority who are strong opponents of the truth. In places which were established for the teaching of the Word of God, every effort is now made to destroy the faith of anyone who stands for the truth. And even many who call themselves evangelicals turn away from the truth of God’s Word

as the greatest means of ministering to people, and they resort to music and entertainment to draw people in instead of doing what the Lord did, attracting people with the teaching of the Word of God. And so the battle still rages, and undoubtedly it will until the end of time.

But going to our text for tonight the first thing that we are told after the healing of the palsied man, was

I. THE CALL OF LEVI (Mark 2:13-14).

If there was one group that the scribes and Pharisees hated it was the publicans. They were the tax collectors for the Roman government. They were generally dishonest men who collected what Rome required from the people, but then added to their collection whatever they could get from the people to keep for themselves. Cf. the Lord's parable in Luke 18:9-14 as an example of how the Pharisees looked upon the publicans.

Mark has told us about the call of Peter and Andrew, and then James and John. But now we learn about Levi, who was Matthew, the writer of the first Gospel. Now we don't know about the previous contacts that the Lord had with any of these men, but the call of all five of these men would fit in perfectly with what Paul said about the people the Lord calls in 1 Corinthians 1:26-31. But this call is recorded here to show that the Lord was not intimidated in the least by the rising opposition that was coming in His direction from the scribes and Pharisees. He never chose a Pharisee to win the Pharisees as many so-called leaders today would have advised the Lord to do. The Lord acted according to His own will, and we can do no better than to make the Lord's will our will in doing the Lord's work.

II. THE DINNER IN LEVI'S HOME (Mark 2:15-17).

The Lord did not do this to offend the scribes and Pharisees, but there is no question but that this would only make the scribes and Pharisees more unhappy with Him. The Lord met with other publicans and "sinners" in Levi's home where he had called them together to hear the Lord. The Jewish leaders objected to our Lord's disciples, but what they were saying got to the Lord. And we see His response in verse 17. This was obviously directed toward the scribes and Pharisees. There was no evidence in their hearts that they recognized that they were spiritually needy. And as the Lord said later in denouncing the scribes and Pharisees, they refused

to enter into the Kingdom, but that was not all that they did. They stood in the way to keep others from entering in. That is the diabolic purpose of all who oppose the truth, especially religious leaders. They are not happy unless they make others fall (although they don't call what they are doing as falling).

But this led to another incident.

III. THE QUESTION ABOUT FASTING (Mark 2:18-22).

When I first read verse 18, at least the first part, I thought that somehow some of the disciples of John the Baptist had joined with the scribes and Pharisees in opposing the Lord. But that was not the case at all. The scribes and Pharisees were citing what the disciples of John the Baptist had done (although they were not friendly with John), and then what they did, and wanted to know why the Lord and His disciples did not fast instead of feasting as they were doing.

It does not mean that the disciples of our Lord never fasted, but the problem that the scribes and Pharisees were raising, was, Why are they not fasting now?

The scribes and Pharisees had everything regulated for the Jewish people. There has to be a reason for true fasting, some great need, or a burden of some kind. But when it is regulated to take place at a certain time, people will do it because it is required of them, but not because it comes from their hearts. And what does not come from the heart, means nothing to the Lord.

People fast in order to spend more time in prayer with the Lord. But the Lord asked the Pharisees the question that we find in verse 19. We fast to take time with the Lord, but why do that, the Lord said, when you have the bridegroom with you – referring to Himself?

But what was the Lord talking about in verses 21 and 22?

Judaism was like an old garment that needed to be patched up. And it was like an old wineskin that no one would put wine in because in the fermentation of the wine, the wine would break the bottle open, and the wine would be lost. The Lord did not come to reform Judaism. You would have found little or no connection between what the scribes and

Pharisees were doing with the Jewish people, when comparing it with the instructions which were given to Moses by the Lord in OT times. I repeat, the Lord did not come to reform the Judaism of the day. He came to do a new thing. Much of what the scribes and Pharisees were doing with the Jewish people in that day had no connection with the OT. It was all a form, a sham, and, as we see especially in the Gospel of Matthew, the Lord did not come to patch up the old, but to do something new. And I think that we can say that He was making a reference here to the building of the church, the body of Christ, in which believing Jews and believing Gentiles would be united together as one people of God. The scribes and Pharisees were not interested in salvation, salvation from sin, the forgiveness of sins, being born again. Nicodemus is proof that he, a ruler of the Jews, did not know what the Lord was talking about when the Lord spoke to him about being born again, or being born from above. They felt that Jews were the people of God, and they just needed to be made to do what their leaders felt that they should do, not necessarily what God wanted them to do.

There is much more that could be said on this point, but let us move on to the final issue in this chapter:

IV. THE SABBATH (Mark 2:23-28).

When the Lord was asked what was the great commandment in the Law, the scribes and Pharisees would have been very happy if He had said, "The fourth commandment." What was it? "Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy." Genesis 2:1-3 makes it very clear that the Sabbath Day was the seventh day, following the six days of creation. It was a day of rest, a day when God rested from the work of creation. He rested, not because He was tired, but He rested because His work of creation was finished. And personally I know of no evidence in Scripture that the Sabbath was ever changed to Sunday. Read what Paul had to say about the keeping of days in Romans 14 if you want the truth.

Well, the Jews had their own rules as to what compromised work, such as, how much weight you could lift on the Sabbath, or how far you could carry an object before it became work. On a certain Sabbath Day the disciples went through the corn fields, and they began to pick the corn with the idea of eating it. Right away the scribes and Pharisees who always seemed to be around began to criticize what they were doing as a violation of the Sabbath Day. Then our Lord cited an incident in David's

life which is found in 1 Samuel 21, how David and his men were given the showbread to eat.

The scribes and Pharisees felt that man was made for the Sabbath, but the Lord Jesus said that the Sabbath was made for man, with his good in mind. And that the scribes and Pharisees were not lords of the Sabbath, to tell people what they could do, or not do. The Lord said that He was the Lord of the Sabbath.

Concl: You see, the main problem of the scribes and Pharisees was that they had lost sight of the central place that the Lord is to have in the lives of His people. This doesn't mean that the Bible is not very specific about what is right and wrong, good and evil, but the standards are not set by men. They are set by the Lord. He is the One Who must have the pre-eminence. He is the One we must seek to please. He is the One to Whom we must seek always to glorify.