

A Declaration of Those Things Which Are Most Surely Believed Among Us An Expository Study of **The Gospel According to Luke** **Chapter 6- Luke 6:6-11** 76- Divine Truth Versus Human Tradition- Part 2

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Luke 6:6-11

When Jesus stood before Pilate- the wicked ruler asked Jesus what is probably the greatest question that a human being could ever ask of God. The Apostle John records Pilate asking Jesus in **John 18:38**,

"What is truth?"

And John also records that Pilate asked Jesus that question in response to a statement that Jesus made to Pilate in the previous verse when the Lord said:

You say *correctly* that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.

So here the Apostle John quotes Jesus as saying that the main Cause or the main Purpose for which God sent Jesus into the world was so that He would bear witness to the Truth. And then Jesus made a very startling statement when He said:

Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.

So every single human being- no matter how sinful they have been, or how long they have been sinful, who is chosen by God for Salvation from before the foundation of the world has been granted with the ability to hear the Voice of Jesus.

And it was in response to this statement by Jesus that Pilate asked:

"What is truth?"

And ever since then- people all over the world- both rich and poor, both young and old, both educated and uneducated, both male and female have asked that very same question- *"What is truth?"* so much so that today- 2,000 years after Pilate asked Jesus that question- there is more controversy, more confusion, more debate, and more bewilderment about Truth than any other subject.

And all of our technological advancements and all of our financial progress and all of our medical breakthroughs and all of the glory of an ever growing centralized Federal Government has not brought about any more enlightenment to that question of what is truth than Pilate had 2,000 years ago.

Last week I told you about a strange animal called "post-modernism" that has captivated America and sought to bring utter confusion to the issue of Absolute Truth. And I told you last week that the result of post-modernism taking over our culture is that you have *your* "truth" and I have *my* "truth" and the people over there have *their* "truth", and all the various "truths" out there are all different- and they all contradict each other and they don't agree with each other- but somehow they are all still true.

Today there is no Absolute Authority, no single Standard, and no eternal Foundation for anything- not even in the Church. And the result of this confusion is that today- "Truth" is not a set of objective unmovable and eternal facts, but today "truth" is whatever anybody *wants* it to be. In other words- our own personal opinions have been elevated into being "truth", and the Divine Truth of Scripture has been devalued to being nothing more than personal opinion.

That is why you can read the Bible out loud and somebody will hear what the Words of the Scriptures are actually saying and the first thing out of their mouths is, *"Well that's just your opinion."*, or *"That's your interpretation"*. No it isn't- it is what God Almighty revealed in inspired Scripture.

And make no mistake about this, dear friends, the end of post-modernism is that it will shape the human heart to the point where the most vicious, evil, and wicked behavior will be sanctioned and excused and carried out without hesitation while at the same time- the holy and

infallible Words of an eternal God will be viewed as being hate speech and divisive.

You see, when you remove "right" and "wrong" from a people all you have left in that vacuum is a fallen and depraved nature. When you take away the ability of people to carefully discern between that which is holy and that which is profane- you will always and in all cases have only the profane.

So when you remove Biblical morality from a culture- you automatically replace that time tested and proven morality that works with somebody else's morality that is far less workable and far less moral like the morality of Confucius, or Mao, or Hitler.

Now we see the signs all around us that the lie of post-modernism has radically altered our culture- and we grieve over that. But sadly- this same lie has also entered into the Church, and what saddens me is that the very tenets of post-modernism that allows everybody to do what is right in their own eyes and still believe that they are in right standing with God and that allows every Tom, Dick, and Harry to put their own spin and their own private interpretation on the Words of God have been not only welcomed with open arms by the leaders of the modern Church- but in far too many circles this lie of Satan has actually been called "the Spirit of God", and has actually promoted as being a good and holy thing.

I tell you that there is a ghastly thing that is going on in the modern Church where there is a very odd kind of *pseudo* humility that takes great pride in "not knowing" and that takes great comfort in "not caring" about the deep and the powerful and the important things of God. This hideous curse of false humility has encouraged many who stand in the pulpit to cop-out on our obligation as leaders and shepherds and pastors and elders to struggle to study and learn and put the pieces together of all of God's revealed Word so that we may feed God's sheep and tend to God's lambs.

And this laid back mentality has lulled many of the leaders of the modern Church to sleep as these hirelings seek to alleviate themselves of the God ordained responsibility and duty to read and study and to learn and know and understand and proclaim without hesitation or apology the Whole Counsel of God, and to chase after the accumulation of material goods, financial prosperity, the prophetic anointing,

something called divine health, which I assume means that you never get sick again, and other things that God's Word says are passing away.

But I pray that we are blessed to comprehend that the best friend that we have on this earth is Divine Truth. Because everything else that we believe and hope in and stand on and trust about Heaven and God and Salvation and our very relationship with Jesus Christ itself is based on whether or not the Words of Scripture are true and accurate and trustworthy and relevant for us in the 21st Century.

Now I don't know if this will ever happen- but if I am ever asked to be on a national television program and I am asked, *"What about the Jews who don't believe that Jesus Christ is Lord and is the only way to Heaven? What about the Mormons and the nice moral Jehovah's Witnesses and the Muslims who don't believe that Jesus Christ is God in human flesh or who don't believe in Salvation by Grace alone through Faith alone in the finished Work of Christ alone- are they going to go to Heaven? And what about me if I don't believe in all that Bible stuff- but if I am a good person- am I going to go to Heaven?"*

And, of course, the answer to all those questions is "No." Nobody goes to Heaven by being moral or by doing "good works" or by praying five times a day or by being religious or any of that. All of humanity goes to Heaven the very same way or nobody goes at all. Every single human being who goes to heaven from any culture and any nation and any belief system goes to Heaven through Jesus alone, and by placing all of his trust and hope in Jesus' finished Work, or they don't go to Heaven at all.

Now, that is the Truth- and I realize that this answer isn't popular, and I also realize that fewer and fewer people are saying that these days- but that is the Truth. And I pray that I would have the courage to say that on national television even as I do on the radio and in this Church and when I am talking to somebody privately because I want to only speak the Truth.

But if I do say that- I know exactly what will happen. If that does take place and I am asked that question- I know exactly what will happen. The people who love the Truth and who believe the Truth and those who also proclaim the Truth will rejoice because the Truth was spoken and everybody else will go on the attack. And that's just the way it is. And that is the way it has always been and that is the way it will

always be. And as we can see here in **Luke**- that is the way it was even for Jesus.

And what you have today in evangelicalism is a mindset that says, *"At all costs avoid saying things that are controversial, or that can be construed as being mean spirited or hard or legalistic or autocratic or dictatorial or unloving"*. Which for the most part are just code words that people use when they are ashamed of the Gospel and when they don't love the Truth, or when they are ashamed of the Truth and they don't want to hear it, or say it because of the repercussions that it will have on them personally.

But Jesus spoke the Truth into every situation. And He spoke it not because He was forced to speak it- He didn't speak it passively- He didn't speak it under compulsion- but Jesus always spoke the Truth aggressively. He *planned* to speak it; He staged events on purpose so He could speak Truth into the midst of error. And He staged events so that He could unmask the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees. And Jesus staged events on purpose to strike blows- fatal blows- at the very core of the Pharisees' apostate religion.

Jesus never shied away from speaking the Truth and He took every opportunity to do it publicly- and the more public the opportunity- the more eager He was to take it- because as much as Jesus loved the Truth- He hated error and false teaching.

And this is something that we have to get into our hearts in our day, dear friends. It is impossible to love the Truth without also hating error at the same time. It is impossible to love the Truth of what God said and not also at the same time and in the same way and with the same passion hate the twisting and the perverting of what God said by wayward and evil men. **Psalms 97:10** says:

Hate evil, you who love the LORD,

And **Proverbs 8:13** says:

The fear of the LORD is to hate evil...

So the Bible says here that we cannot love God and we cannot have that reverential respect and awe of God in our hearts and minds unless and until we hate that which is evil. And there is not a greater

evil on this earth than to take something that God said and add to it, or take away from it or twist it or change it or to put your own private interpretation on it until it doesn't even resemble what God actually said.

Because to do that deceives people, it causes people to believe something that God did not say, it encourages people to trust and hope in something that isn't true or that is man-made or that is false and that not only does not glorify God- it destroys people.

So as we found out last week- to speak the Truth is to expose and to remove false teaching and error, and so Jesus not only wanted to expose error to the people who were in error themselves - who were actually the *purveyors* or the teachers of that error- but He also wanted to expose error to everybody else who might even be considering that error, and even to those people who had come to Truth and might be attracted somehow to the error. So Jesus spoke against the error of His day with the Truth in the most public forum.

And we need to know that the goal of a Christian today is not one bit different from that of Jesus back then. I suppose when people think about Jesus- they think to sort of characterize Him as a Man of Love- and I totally understand that because He was- Jesus was God's Love Personified in a body. But we all need to be reminded that while it is absolutely true that Jesus was pure Love- He is also the most hated man Who ever walked the earth, and He was also the most controversial Man Who ever lived.

Jesus was and is so controversial that 2,000 years after He rose from the dead- there are terrible disagreements to this day about whether Jesus was God in human flesh, and even though this single point has been a mainstay of the Christian Church from the very beginning- the overwhelming majority of people both inside and outside of the modern Church reject that point outright.

Jesus was also the Man Who made the whip at the beginning of His ministry and cleansed the temple, and then He did it again at the end of His ministry. Jesus was the One Who called the religious leaders of His day in **Matthew 23** such gentle and loving terms like "hypocrites" and "whited sepulchres who were painted white on the outside, but inside they were stinking and full of dead men's bones", and culminated in the question in verse 33: **"How will you escape the sentence of hell?"**

So we can see that Jesus never minced Words when it came to dealing with false religion. And He never minced words when it came to dealing with the leaders of those false religious systems. And even though there were prostitutes and tax collectors and evil men all around Him- Jesus reserved the most severe diatribe that He ever made on anyone for the false religious leaders- the purveyors of damning error.

Now in verses 13-16, 23, 25, 27, & 29 of **Matthew 23**- Jesus used the Greek word ouia, which was translated here into English as "woe". Now that Greek word does not mean "shame" and this is not some benign or gentle correction. No, this word is akin to the Greek word anathema- which means: *accused or damned*. So here the Love of God Personified- Jesus Christ- in His capacity as God- was pronouncing eternal damnation- on those men who were teaching false doctrine to the people. That is how serious Jesus was about Truth and that is how serious we need to be.

Now that's what we find escalating as we move through the ministry of Jesus. So let's go back to Chapter 6 where we pick up the narrative of Jesus. I want to just kind of talk a little bit more in some general terms before we look specifically at our text in the sixth chapter.

So as we have discovered- Jesus was a Preacher of Truth. And He preached the true Gospel of Grace and Faith and Forgiveness and Eternal Life through Himself alone. And this brought Him into immediate conflict with Judaism, and particularly with the leaders of Judaism who had a lot at stake. Their power, their prestige, their popularity was at stake and they did everything they could to protect it.

And I think it is wise for me to remind you that Jesus made it very clear over and over again that there was absolutely no compatibility at all between His Message of Salvation and existing Judaism.

Now as I have told you- there is no compatibility with error and Truth- none. Never has been and never will be, and any attempt- no matter how noble or how sincere that efforts may be to bridge the gap between Truth and error, is in itself an error and is doomed to fail. The only way for truth to coexist with error is to change the Truth so that it is more compatible with error, and when you do that- you no longer have the Truth.

And make no mistake about this- Jesus was not murdered by the Jewish leaders because He healed the sick or because He gave hope to the lost or because He opened blind eyes or because He fed the thousands. No, Jesus was falsely accused and handed over to the Romans Government to be brutally executed by the Jewish leaders precisely because He refused to compromise on Divine Truth.

And the closest thing that we have to this very same thing today is the confusion that is going on in the modern Church about the great social issues that we face today versus Divine Truth.

Many honest and sincere people think that because we are facing unprecedented social changes in our American culture today that we all need to drop our theological differences and join together and hold hands against the tide of moral collapse in our country. And I agree to a point.

As an individual American- I can hold hands with a Mormon and a Jehovah's Witness and a Roman Catholic and even a Muslim to stand against abortion and homosexual marriage and higher taxes and unprecedented Governmental intrusion into our lives- and I can do that because we all agree on them.

But as a Bible believing, born again, Spirit filled, sin hating, child of Jesus- I must speak the Truth, and my words must never originate Truth- but they must echo the Divine Truth of Scripture. And while I may agree with many of the diverse groups about political or social issues- I do not agree with them about the only thing that really matters- and that is how a wicked sinner can pass through God's Judgment on his life and go to Heaven.

And so as a single American individual- I may hold hands with many of these people to stand with them to combat the political and social issue of our day- as a Christian and as a Pastor and as a Bible believing, utterly unimportant, and unworthy sinner who has been wondrously saved by Grace through Faith in the finished Work of the Lord Jesus Christ- I cannot and I will not hold hands with any of these same people concerning the issue of Divine Truth- because make no mistake about this either- we don't agree at all.

And if I call these people "brother" or say that they too are saved- then I am sanctioning their false teachings and I am dooming them to hell, and Jesus would never do that. So, if you love these people at all- it is imperative that you never compromise with what they teach, and

that you always use every opportunity to preach the Gospel to them and call them to repentance- regardless of what that might do to you and regardless of what other people will call you or do to you.

Now we began to see this incompatibility between Jesus and at the end of Luke 5 when Jesus gave two parables. In the one parable- Jesus said you cannot take a new piece of garment and sew it into old cloth- because it will never work.

The old cloth will rip and tear when it's washed because the new garment will shrink and it will pull those threads right through that old fabric. And Jesus also said that you cannot take brand new wine which is going to ferment and expand and put it into an old parched, brittle wineskin because when that expansion takes place- it will crack the hard old wineskin and the new wine will all leak out.

Now what Jesus was saying was you can't take Divine Truth, you can't take the true Gospel and put it alongside of error and try to make them compatible. Because they are not compatible and never will be.

The Truth about Salvation cannot be connected in any way to Judaism or any other false system of religion.

And so Jesus has already made very clear the incompatibility between His true Message and the existing religion of the Pharisees or any other religious system that teaches a Salvation by human works.

And then we saw that by showing the great distinction between the Truth and the error of Judaism- Jesus eventually had to get to the very heart of the man-made system of Judaism. And the heart of Judaism- not peripheral issue- but the very heart of Judaism was Sabbath observance.

Even today- if you know anything about orthodox Jewish people- everything seems to focus on the Sabbath. The Sabbath becomes the key- the point of all points in the discussion of Judaism and in the observance of its rituals and laws. Everything comes down to the Sabbath. And so what we found here in the beginning of Chapter 6 is this great conflict reaching its zenith when Jesus assaults their perversion of Sabbath worship.

You see, Jesus' relentless commitment to the Truth- of necessity- led Him into this huge assault against their man-made Sabbath observance that has absolutely nothing to do with loving and serving the one true living God.

Now I want to say something to you that I pray you will apply into your own thinking at whatever level it concerns you. And it's a very simple statement- but I really want you to remember it- because even if you think I am over blowing this- I'm not- this is really important- especially in our day.

Jesus Christ was not a Sabbatarian. Now for some of you that may not mean anything at all, and to others- it might mean a lot- because you may be discussing or reading something about the great Sabbatarian Debate that is going on in the modern Church. But at whatever level you're in this- we need to know that there is one fact that is absolutely irrefutable- Jesus Christ was not a Sabbatarian.

Jesus did not observe the Sabbath in the traditional fashion of the Jews- not at all- not one time- ever. In fact, Jesus saw the Sabbath observance by the Jews of His day as demonic and evil and ungodly and unbiblical, and the very focal point of false worship and false religion.

Now if you will remember last time, I told you that when God gave the Sabbath law, and God did give Sabbath Law back in the Ten Commandments in **Exodus 20**, all He said was, "On the seventh day, rest." That's it. Just rest, don't work. Don't let your family work. Don't let your animals work. And that "rest" will give you an opportunity to be restored in your body and to be restored a little bit in your family and you can spend some time with family and use that time to learn more about God and worship Him and minister the Gospel to others.

So all that God ever said was, "Don't work". That was it. Work was prohibited on the Sabbath.

Now God never gave anybody a list about what you were supposed to do on the Sabbath- He simply told you what *not* to do- Don't Work.

But as we discovered last time- all down through the centuries- the rabbis had added a little here and added a little there, and they had embellished that very simple command with all kinds of rituals and laws.

In fact, they had taken it to the place where they actually made the Sabbath day which was supposed to be a day of rest, the worst day of the week. By the time Jesus began His Ministry- the Pharisees had made the Sabbath the most difficult and the most wearying day of the week because they had added so many prescriptions that had to be observed- it got to the point of being absolutely ridiculous- even before Jesus was born.

For example, one of the remarkable indicators of how ridiculous their Sabbath observance had become is found under the uprising under Judas Maccabaeus- some 150 years before Jesus was born.

In the time of Judas Maccabaeus- there was a great revolt against Antiochus who was the Greek who was dominating Israel. And under Judas Maccabaeus certain Jews sought refuge in the wilderness in caves. And historians who tell us that Antiochus sent a detachment of men to attack them, to attack these rebellious Jews, and the attack of the Greeks under Antiochus came on Sabbath day. And Greek historians wrote,

"These insurgent Jews died without even a gesture of defiance or defense because to fight would have been to break the Sabbath."

So in the Apocrypha- 1Maccabees tells us how the forces of Antiochus gave them battle with all speed, it says,

"Howbeit they answered them not nor cast they a stone at them, nor stopped the places where they lay hid." In other words, they didn't block off the places they were hidden, "But said, 'Let us die in our innocence, heaven and earth shall testify for us that you put us to death wrongfully.' So they rose up against them in battle on the Sabbath and they slew them with their wives and children and cattle to the number of a thousand people."

So they all just rolled over and died because they didn't want to violate the Sabbath, and let them massacre their children and everything they had.

Now that is the folly to which this perversion of Sabbath observance had gone. And as I said, these Jewish leaders had manufactured incredible foolishness about the Sabbath- so much so that Jesus referred to the horrible burden and the weight of all the man-made rules and laws concerning Sabbath worship that they had placed on the people in **Matthew 11:28** when He said:

28 "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.

29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS.

30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

Jesus was saying here, "You don't need that kind of false man-made system. Just come to Me- because I *am* Rest. And that was a play on the word "Sabbath", which means: *Rest*- and was designed to be a public slam to all the foolishness that the Pharisees had placed on the people concerning what God had commanded about the Sabbath to begin with.

And so Jesus struck a huge blow to their whole false man-made demonic twisted evil Sabbath system- but He wasn't done yet. Now read **Luke 6:6-11** with me again:

6 On another Sabbath He entered the synagogue and was teaching; and there was a man there whose right hand was withered.

7 The scribes and the Pharisees were watching Him closely *to see* if He healed on the Sabbath, so that they might find *reason* to accuse Him.

8 But He knew what they were thinking, and He said to the man with the withered hand, **"Get up and come forward!"** And he got up and came forward.

9 And Jesus said to them, **"I ask you, is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save a life or to destroy it?"**

10 After looking around at them all, He said to him, **"Stretch out your hand!"** And he did *so*; and his hand was restored.

11 But they themselves were filled with rage, and discussed together what they might do to Jesus.

Now this is an utterly fascinating account. And as I told you earlier- Jesus was not a Sabbatarian- but then that statement raises the question, "*Okay, Brother Blair- Jesus was not a Sabbatarian- but then just how did Jesus treat the Sabbath?*"

And the correct answer is- *Any way He wanted to*. Why? Look again at the end of verse 5,

... The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath

In other words, Jesus was telling these hypocritical religious leaders, "*You're not about to tell Me what to do on the Sabbath- I will do what I want to on the Sabbath- because I own the Sabbath- I am God and I created the Sabbath and I am Lord over the Sabbath- not you.*" .

So Jesus paid absolutely no attention at all to all their regulations and their rituals and their laws and their ceremonies and their washings- absolutely none. In fact, we would be correct to use the word "defiance" here.

Jesus took a defiant posture against their Sabbath law. And by doing that- Jesus was also taking a defiant posture against the Judaism of that day, in general, because like I said- Sabbath observance was at the heart of Judaism back then and still is to this day.

So Jesus Christ did exactly whatever He wanted to do on the Sabbath and mostly what He wanted to do was to publicly and repeatedly defy their ridiculous works system of ceremonies, rituals, and traditions.

And He specifically staged Sabbath defiance events right in front of the leaders on purpose because it was critical that the whole system of Salvation through human works and ceremony and ritual be exposed as being false and struck down.

So this was one of two reasons why the Jewish leaders hated Jesus- His absolute refusal to go along with their perversion of the Sabbath, and the other one was the fact that Jesus had made Himself equal with God.

And the Apostle John wrote about these two issues in his Account of this in **John 5:18**- when he wrote:

For this reason therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.

So the Bible says that it was the combination of these two issues- Jesus' repeated Sabbath violations, and the fact that by calling God His Father and calling Himself God's Son over and over again made Jesus to be absolutely equal with God- which the Jews both then and now along with all genuine Muslims- see this as the worst form of blasphemy.

These are the two issues that so infuriated these hypocritical religious leaders and that finally led to the execution of the perfect Lamb of God.

So I repeat- no matter how many people want to make this to be so in our day- Jesus was not then and He is not now and Jesus will

never ever will be a Sabbatarian. In fact, the Lord Himself revealed the Truth about Sabbath observance for all time to all people to the Apostle Paul in **Colossians 2**- so let's turn to that quickly. And remember- this passage is the Lord of the Sabbath speaking directly through the Apostle Paul- so let's turn to that important passage that begins in verse 15 of **Colossians 2** that says:

15 When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.

16 Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day—

17 things which are a *mere* shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.

So God the Holy Ghost- speaking through the pen of the Apostle Paul- says to us today and says to all believers in every church for all time-

"Do not allow *anybody* to sit in judgment on you for how you observe a Sabbath day because all Sabbath observance is simply a shadow of things that are to come- the Body or the Church is not to be about Sabbath observance- the Church is to be about Jesus Christ!"

Now please listen to this Truth, dear friends. And this is always true. A superior thing supersedes that which is lesser. We no longer sacrifice animals today- even though God commanded that kind of sacrifice through Moses. So if it is true that God Almighty *commanded* animal sacrifices- then why do we not sacrifice animals today?

Because we have a vastly *superior* Sacrifice in the Lord Jesus Christ on Calvary's Tree. And that one Sacrifice made by Jesus of Himself that one single time was so infinitely superior to the sacrifice of animals that in God's Eyes- that one single Sacrifice of God's Holy Son that one single time was a far greater value to God than all the animals that were offered to God put together.

And this is so true that at the very moment that Jesus rose from the dead by the Glory of the Father- God no longer even regarded the sacrifice of animals, and it is, in fact, a sin to offer animal sacrifices today- even though at one time- God absolutely *required* it.

So did God change? No- God *never* changes. But the *way* in which God relates to Man and the Revelation of God *to* Man, and the *way* in which God requires that we worship Him *does* change, and the *inferior* Revelation of the Old Covenant with all of its shadows and types and symbols and signs- has given way- not because anything was wrong with it- but simply because it has been replaced forever by the reality of an infinitely *superior* Covenant.

So the same thing is true about the Sabbath. The shadow of Old Covenant Sabbath observance is now past. And the partial and the inferior Revelation of God to Man that was brought forth under the Old Covenant pertaining to Sabbath observance has been forever replaced by the infinitely *superior* Revelation of God in the New Covenant through the Life, Death, Burial, and Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. So our "rest" today is not found in a particular day of the week- whether that day be Friday, Saturday or Sunday- but our rest is completed and it is forever finalized in the Lord Jesus Himself through His eternal Salvation.

Now listen. Jesus replaced the legitimate Sabbath observance of Exodus by the superior rest of Himself- but He totally rejected the false and man-made system of Sabbath traditions that had grown up around apostate works-oriented Judaism even *before* He died and rose from the dead. And verses 6-11 of **Luke 6** show us just how Jesus did this- so let's read verse 6 again together:

On another Sabbath He entered the synagogue and was teaching; and there was a man there whose right hand was withered.

So on another Sabbath day- Jesus was teaching in a synagogue- **"And there was a man whose right hand was withered."** Now this is the perfect man for Jesus to use to assault their false Sabbath observance and a jumping off point so Jesus could discredit their entire system of Judaism.

Now the word "withered" has to do with something that's shriveled- something that's atrophied, no doubt from a paralysis. So a paralysis had caused some kind of atrophy to take place- and this is a word that is used for dry plants or dry dead wood or dried fruits. So this man had a hand that was not able to be used, and probably hadn't been

used for a long time- long enough to have shriveled. So now read verse 7 again with me:

The scribes and the Pharisees were watching Him closely *to see* if He healed on the Sabbath, so that they might find *reason* to accuse Him.

So now we have the second group of people that are going to play into this great drama. The first character in the drama is the man with the withered hand. And now we meet these relentless scribes and Pharisees- who are dogging the steps of Jesus.

And it says that these yahoos were watching Jesus very closely. And this is an interesting verb, *paratereo*. And the suffix- *Tereo*- means: *to watch carefully*. And *Para*- means: *alongside of*, and this is a preposition- alongside of, or beside.

So these people were as close to Jesus as they could get. I mean, they were looking very intently with intensive scrutiny at Jesus, and this verb carries with it a sort of sinister tone.

So they were watching Jesus carefully- so this is not just casual observance- they're not watching Him with any objectivity- no, they were watching Him very, very intensely. They were scrutinizing Jesus with judgmental hearts to see if He was going to heal this man on the Sabbath day- so they could accuse Him.

So that was their motivation for watching Jesus intently like this- to accuse Him. And this is absolutely amazing to me. I mean when I read this and I began to look at this passage and my first thought was, "Well maybe they wanted to know if He was the Messiah or maybe they wanted to know if Jesus had the Power to heal this man or maybe they wanted to know if Jesus was really God so they might have confidence to trust in Him for Salvation for themselves."

But that wasn't it at all- verse 7 is clear:

The scribes and the Pharisees were watching Him closely *to see* if He healed on the Sabbath, so that they might find *reason* to accuse Him.

Now these guys are so phony- they are so hypocritical! They weren't the moral guardians of the Sabbath at all. They weren't trying to see if Jesus might heal on the Sabbath- so they could stop Him from violating the Sabbath and sinning. No, they couldn't care less about either Jesus or this poor man. They couldn't care less whether this man

received any relief from his suffering at all. No, these religious hypocrites *wanted* Jesus to violate the Sabbath for no other reason other than so they could indict Him for it and have Him killed.

So this shows us the condition of their heart, right? I mean the only reason these guys wanted Jesus to demonstrate that He was God and could create living matter was so they could indict Him for being a Sabbath breaker. Boy, how convoluted is that thinking? The fact that Jesus proved His full Divinity and could absolutely create living matter in this man's arm right there before their eyes never changed them at all. It never broke their hard hearts and it never brought them to repentance. All they could think about was, *"Let's watch Jesus perform a supernatural miracle here so we can indict Him as a Sabbath breaker."*

Now many would say, *"But what's the deal here, Brother Blair? So what if Jesus heals on the Sabbath day- what is so bad about that- even to these guys?"* Well, you have to understand the background. You see, the rabbis had determined that it was a violation of Sabbath to make anybody better. These men had determined in their own hearts and minds that to help anybody, to bind up anybody's wounds, to alleviate suffering was sinful. Now God never said that. And you can't find this anywhere in the OT- but these guys had determined this all on their own.

So the result was that in Jesus' day- no physician could help a patient; no relatives or friends could help a person who was ill on the Sabbath because that constituted "work" and you couldn't do that. And you can actually find this in the ancient Sabbath regulations that are part of Jewish writings in the past.

So the sick person would have to wait till the next day- because nobody could help them on the Sabbath. So if they were bleeding to death- you had to just let them die. So the result of all these man-made rules was that the Sabbath day became the day of the greatest amount of human wickedness and man's inhumanity to man. These evil religious leaders had twisted God's simple Command to rest into a day of absolutely no compassion and no mercy on people in the greatest need of help.

Now I have discovered this in two different sources- both ancient rabbinical writings. The first is found in Shab 8:3 and the second is Yoma 8:6.

Now the rabbis modified the restrictions and reluctantly said you can help desperate people if they were going to die- because they might be dead before the next day comes, and you could also deliver a baby that was being born. Now those are both real nice concessions and it took centuries before the rabbis even gave the people those two.

But the point here is that these evil men so twisted God's simple Plan that if you actually tried to improve someone's physical condition on the Sabbath- then you were a wicked blaspheming lawbreaker. That is amazing isn't it?

So these guys were not objective, devout protectors of the Sabbath law- they simply wanted Jesus to violate the Sabbath- so they could destroy Him. And to do that- they had to completely ignore the fact that Jesus actually healed this man by way of a Sovereign Miracle. Now look at verse 8 quickly:

But He knew what they were thinking, and He said to the man with the withered hand, “Get up and come forward!” And he got up and came forward.

Now when Jesus did what? When He knew what they were thinking. Jesus always knew what was in the mind of people because Jesus is God and God has complete Omniscience. He knew exactly what they were thinking.

Now at this point- some people might want to say, *"Oh, yes, Jesus knew what they were thinking and He certainly didn't want to offend them and He wanted to make sure there was wonderful harmony here, so He refused to heal because it would have been an offense to these Jewish leaders and Jesus was Love and so Jesus never offended anyone."*

But the Bible says just the opposite. Jesus knew exactly what they were thinking and so He stops teaching precisely *because* He reads their minds and He healed this man on purpose- right in front of them- so He could confront these men about their evil and false religion.

Jesus didn't want to do this in secret; He didn't want to do this in a corner so few people would see it- No, Jesus called the man to come up front so everybody could see what was happening and so these evil religious Jews could see it and so Jesus could violate the stew out of their wicked Sabbath observance right in front of them.

Now you can try to spin this any way you want to - but two things are crystal clear to me about this:

1. Jesus did this on purpose
2. He meant to offend them

Now read verse 9:

And Jesus said to them, “I ask you, is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save a life or to destroy it?”

Now remember- everybody in this synagogue is listening right now and this is a guy standing there in front of everybody with this atrophied hand, and so this is a pretty dramatic moment here. And at this moment- Jesus looks right at these self-righteous Pharisees and says:

I ask you, is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save a life or to destroy it?

Now Jesus is a Master at this. He asks questions that evil people can't answer- and these guys can't answer it. There is absolutely no way they could answer this question. If they say, *"Well, it's lawful to do good on the Sabbath and it's certainly lawful to help someone,"* then they would affirm that Jesus could heal the man and that He had not violated the Sabbath after all, and therefore- they have no beef with Him. So they can't answer it that way because that doesn't serve their purpose.

But on the other hand- if they say, *"Well no, it's only lawful to let this guy continue to suffer and not try to help him,"* then they have just revealed their merciless wicked hearts and they can't do that either because the people would turn on them.

So either they had to affirm Jesus or they had to condemn themselves. And they don't want to do either one- so they just sit there and they can't say anything. And Jesus pretty much made a career out of asking them questions like this that they could never answer.

Now there's a right answer to this question- and all of these guys knew it- but because of the hardness of their hearts- these Pharisees

can't give it. But you say, "*Okay, Brother Blair- what is the right answer?*" Turn quickly to **Isaiah 1**. These men had all read **Isaiah**- and even if they had not yet gone through the whole book- if they had just read the first chapter- they would have known the answer to the question Jesus asked them. Look down at **Isaiah 1:11**:

11 "What are your multiplied sacrifices to Me?" Says the LORD. "I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams And the fat of fed cattle; And I take no pleasure in the blood of bulls, lambs or goats.

12 "When you come to appear before Me, Who requires of you this trampling of My courts?

13 "Bring your worthless offerings no longer, Incense is an abomination to Me. New moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies— I cannot endure iniquity and the solemn assembly.

14 "I hate your new moon *festivals* and your appointed feasts, They have become a burden to Me; I am weary of bearing *them*.

15 "So when you spread out your hands *in prayer*, I will hide My eyes from you; Yes, even though you multiply prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are covered with blood.

16 "Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Remove the evil of your deeds from My sight. Cease to do evil,

17 Learn to do good; Seek justice, Reprove the ruthless, Defend the orphan, Plead for the widow.

18 "Come now, and let us reason together," Says the LORD, "Though your sins are as scarlet, They will be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They will be like wool.

19 "If you consent and obey, You will eat the best of the land;

20 "But if you refuse and rebel, You will be devoured by the sword." Truly, the mouth of the LORD has spoken.

What is He saying here? Help people, show compassion, show mercy, do good. That's the answer to the question Jesus asked. Is it right on the Sabbath to do good? Yes, it's right on the Sabbath to do good- in fact, it is wrong not to. So the great prophet Isaiah says, "Don't come to Me with your sacrifices, and your ceremonies, and your external rituals while your heart is wicked and evil. Clean your heart out and do good and help people and show mercy. "

So these men knew that the Sabbath of all days was a day to do good. It was a day to show mercy and kindness. But they had so strangled the Sabbath that there was very little space for that and they certainly couldn't admit that this was right. They couldn't say to Jesus, *"Dear Lord, forgive us- we have sinned. Of course the Sabbath is a day to do good. This is a day to show mercy to someone. This is a day to deliver someone. It is that kind of a day."*

But they couldn't say what they really thought or they would have unmasked themselves as being wicked, merciless phonies. So they stand there quiet before Jesus.

Now all the people standing around- they don't know that these Pharisees have all these murderous intentions toward Jesus- the crowd doesn't understand all this. All they hear is Jesus asking a very simple straightforward question- *"Do you religious leaders think that it is permissible with God to do good on the Sabbath?"*

But these men are stuck and they can't answer Him without exposing themselves for who they really were. So there is a very powerful thing going on in the mind of these Pharisees that's much deeper than what those people in the crowd understood that day, and this is it- Jesus was referring not so much to their attitude toward that man- would they want him to receive good or evil- but what Jesus is saying is related to their attitude toward Him.

And so the real question is this- *"Okay guys- which of us is honoring God? Is it I Who want to do good for this man and deliver him from this life of infirmity? Or is it you who want to destroy Me?"*

So now you're down to the real issue. *"Which one of us pleases God? Is it Me? Or is it you? I want to help a pitiful man and you want to destroy Me."* So Jesus just He nailed these guys to the wall.

They have nowhere to go. Believe me, Jesus made it clear all through His ministry that the Sabbath observance is no litmus test of faithfulness to God, never...never has been and it certainly isn't now. They observed Sabbath law while plotting to murder the Lord of the Sabbath. And that is amazing, isn't it? The Puritan, John Owen said,

"The religious mind is a curious thing. It's not necessarily interested in common morality, still less in relieving human misery and affliction. It is interested in keeping rules, particularly the rules which spring from its own

cherished interpretations of Scripture and tradition and to these interpretations it will attribute the inflexible authority of God."

And then he went on to say,

"Let God incarnate contrary to its interpretations interpose with a miracle of divine goodness to relieve human misery, and then instead of revising its interpretation, the religious mind would plan to stop such miracles from ever happening again."

Summing it up, you see Jesus here as the sole Representative of the Truth of God, and you see the Pharisees and the scribes as representative of a false religion. And the contrast is startling because it's the contrast between Divine Truth and human tradition. It's the contrast between profound knowledge and madness. It's the contrast between goodness and wickedness, between compassion and indifference, between open honesty and hidden deception, between divine power and impotence, between the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan.

So at this point early in the gospel of **Luke**- the storm clouds begin to gather on the horizon that eventually are going to rain down on Jesus on the Cross of Calvary. They will not submit to the Lord of the Sabbath. They would rather execute Him than repent- they would rather hold tightly to their damning man-made error and reject saving truth.

Really sad for those Pharisees and scribes, isn't it? But I have just a bit of good news for you. I don't know what your attitude has been toward Jesus Christ in the past- but I tell you that God will forgive you if you will come to Him in faith- reject your error; repent of your sins and receive Him as Lord and Savior today.

Let's come and pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.