

Proper Use of the Sabbath; The Call of The Apostles

Luke 6:1-16

Luke 6:1-16: Now it happened on the second Sabbath after the first that He went through the grainfields. And His disciples plucked the heads of grain and ate them, rubbing them in their hands. 2 And some of the Pharisees said to them, "Why are you doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath?" 3 But Jesus answering them said, "Have you not even read this, what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: 4 how he went into the house of God, took and ate the showbread, and also gave some to those with him, which is not lawful for any but the priests to eat?" 5 And He said to them, "The Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath." 6 Now it happened on another Sabbath, also, that He entered the synagogue and taught. And a man was there whose right hand was withered. 7 So the scribes and Pharisees watched Him closely, whether He would heal on the Sabbath, that they might find an accusation against Him. 8 But He knew their thoughts, and said to the man who had the withered hand, "Arise and stand here." And he arose and stood. 9 Then Jesus said to them, "I will ask you one thing: Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy?" 10 And when He had looked around at them all, He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And he did so, and his hand was restored as whole as the other. 11 But they were filled with rage, and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus. 12 Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. 13 And when it was day, He called His disciples to Himself; and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles: 14 Simon, whom He also named Peter, and Andrew his brother; James and John; Philip and Bartholomew; 15 Matthew and Thomas; James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called the Zealot; 16 Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot who also became a traitor.

Background Notes

The scribes and Pharisees were the "legalists" of Jesus' day. They believed they were "gaining points" with God by scrupulously following all kinds of extra man-made rules for the Sabbath. They had incorrect ideas and a wrong interpretation of the Law concerning the Sabbath, and thus they misunderstood what the Sabbath was all about. They found fault with the Lord and His disciples for doing anything on the Sabbath - including good and necessary things. In order to correct their improper thinking, and to expose their self-righteous legalism, it seems that the Lord purposely chose to do a number of His miracles on the Sabbath.

This certainly seems to be the case when the Lord healed the man with the withered hand in the synagogue on the Sabbath day. The scribes and Pharisees said that He was "practicing medicine" on the Sabbath, and that was work - so if Jesus healed this man, He would be breaking the Law of the Sabbath! In fact, the scribes and Pharisees were hoping that Jesus would heal the man - not for the man's well being, but so they could accuse Jesus of breaking their man-made rules

about the Sabbath. Notice in verse 8 that the Lord knew exactly what they were thinking. This knowledge was another proof of His deity. It was also an indication that the Lord deliberately chose the Sabbath occasion to confront the self-righteous legalism of Jewish leaders.

In verse 9, the Lord said to the scribes and Pharisees, *“I will ask you one thing: Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy?”* In other words, to **not** to help this man when he could be helped would be wrong and causing harm on any day of the week, including the Sabbath. The evil hearts of the Pharisees were exposed when the Lord compassionately restored the man’s hand to full strength!

Recently I was involved in a golf outing called a “scramble.” In my group was a young man with a disabled hand, and he brought this miracle of our Lord to my mind. He played golf essentially with one hand and did amazingly well, but it was sad to think how much better he could have been if he had the full use of both hands. I was able to share a gospel tract with him: “Life is More Than Golf,” written by Tom Lehman, a professional golfer who is a strong believer.

Our first doctrinal point comes from the other Sabbath occasion here in Luke 6, when the Pharisees found fault with the Lord’s disciples for picking and eating grain on the Sabbath. Notice that Luke recorded both Sabbath confrontations immediately following the Lord’s parable of the new cloth and old cloth, and the new wine and old wine skins at the end of chapter 5. Certainly both of these Sabbath events illustrate that contrast between the old teachings of Judaism and the new teachings of our Lord.

Doctrinal Points

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

When the Pharisees observed the disciples picking and eating some grain as they were walking through a grain field on the Sabbath, they questioned the Lord: *“Why are you doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath?”* (v2). Notice how the Pharisees were observing every move that the Lord and His disciples made, obviously looking for something they could criticize.

The Pharisees weren’t finding fault with the disciples for taking some grain to eat from someone else’s field, because the Law allowed this. Deuteronomy 23:25 says, *“When you come into your neighbor’s standing grain, you may pluck the heads with your hand, but you shall not use a sickle on your neighbor’s standing grain.”* In other words, you could take and eat from your neighbor’s field if you were hungry, but you couldn’t cut down or harvest your neighbor’s grain with a sickle – that would be stealing. So the Pharisees were not criticizing the actions of the disciples here – they were criticizing that fact that they were doing it on a Sabbath. In their way of thinking, the disciples were guilty of several breaches of their manmade Sabbath law. They thought that simply plucking the grain was equivalent to “reaping” the

grain - and therefore work! Rubbing the grain in their hands was “threshing” the grain - and therefore work! Throwing the husks away was “winnowing” the grain - and therefore work!

The Lord began His answer to these legalists with a stinging rebuke: *“Have you not even read this, what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him?”* That is, haven’t you read God’s Word? (I wonder how often the Lord would say that to *us*, pointing out our religious hang-ups!)

When the Lord referred to David eating the consecrated bread, He was referring to the account in 1 Samuel 21 when David and his men were escaping from King Saul. In a time of great need they were given the consecrated bread from the Tabernacle, which normally would be eaten only the priests (according to the Law). However, the Lord condoned David’s action because the Law about the Tabernacle bread was not a *moral* law – it was a *ceremonial* law. In the same way, keeping the Sabbath was not a moral law. “Thou shall not kill” or “Thou shall not commit adultery” are *moral* Laws. Normally, they would have kept the ceremonial laws or civil laws, but when David’s men were in serious need of food, the extreme situation superseded ceremonial or civil law.

A contemporary illustration of this would be the action we would take if we saw someone having a heart attack in the local library. We would break the ceremonial law of “Be quiet” and call out for help - and we would break the civil speed limit in order to get the person to the hospital as quickly as possible. In other words, the “letter of the law” should not take precedence over the “spirit of the law” The *spirit* of the law would be to look out for the good of mankind, not to allow an untimely death or illness because of the *letter* of the law!

When the Lord said that the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath (v5), He didn’t mean that He could break the Sabbath Law whenever He wanted to. No - He meant that He was the Creator of the Sabbath, and thus He had the correct view and the correct interpretation of the Law of the Sabbath. The Creator is over what He has created, and this biblical truth has many applications. The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.

2. Important decisions demand much prayer.

“And when it was day, He called His disciples to Himself; and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles...”

The Lord had many disciples - people who followed Him and believed on Him. Luke 10 says that the Lord sent seventy disciples out to every city with the message of the Kingdom. Out of these many disciples, the Lord chose twelve men to be His special apostles. He gave them power to do miracles that would authenticate the message of the Kingdom. When we compare this list of the twelve disciples given here and with the list in Matthew and Mark, we find that several of them went by more than one name.

The important point here, however, is that the Lord spent all night in prayer before making the important decision as to the call of His disciples. This was an important decision and the Lord spent all night in prayer. If the Son of God needed to spend many hours in prayer regarding an important decision, how much more do we need to talk to our heavenly Father about important decisions? There are many important decisions for all of us to make in life: to go to college or not; what university; whom to marry; what job or career; where to locate; what about family; what church to attend; what Christian service to get involved in, and so much more. We need to spend time in prayer, and God will answer! The important thing is prayer. Important decisions demand much prayer.

Practical Application

1. Have I ever spent a whole night in prayer?

This practical application logically follows our last doctrinal point, that important decisions demand much prayer. If important decisions demand much prayer, then praying all night has a proper place in the Christian life. The Lord spent all night in prayer before He chose the twelve apostles: *“Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.”*

So once again the question for us is, have we ever spent a whole night in prayer? I’ve tried it, but never made it the whole way without falling asleep. I hope that doesn’t mean I don’t realize the importance of prayer! I *do* realize the importance of prayer, so this is a good question for all of us: Have I ever spent a whole night in prayer?

2. Let God’s strength be seen in your weakness.

In 2 Corinthians 12:9, the Lord said to the apostle Paul, *“My strength is made perfect in weakness.”* We see this biblical truth illustrated in the miracle of the healing of the man with the withered hand. The Lord asked the disabled man to come forward in front of everyone and stretch out his hand. Public display of his disability was probably not easy for the man - but the Lord was glorified, because God’s power was clearly seen when this man, by faith, obeyed the Lord, stretched out his hand – and was healed!

Do you have a weakness? Do you feel handicapped in some area of your life? Reach out in faith - and allow God’s strength and power to be seen in your weakness!