

Is It Lawful?

Ponder: God's Word and Traditions

Scripture: "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?" (Matthew 12:10, NKJV.)

We humans tend to be extremists. Careful obedience to God is good, but some extremists bind laws God never made. Others manufacture loopholes to evade divine commands.

The Pharisees of New Testament days erred in both ways! They concocted a tradition called "Corban" to wiggle out of obeying God's command to honor (with financial help) their parents (Mark 7:11). But they also demanded strict obedience to their erroneous views on Sabbath observance. They had decided just how far you could walk, and just how much you could carry without violating the Sabbath. When it came to assisting the sick, you could help only if the situation was life-threatening; and even then, you could only keep the person from getting worse. If you helped them get better, you sinned!

Jesus had to confront this kind of thinking on at least seven occasions when He healed on the Sabbath. One of those involved a man with a withered hand. Jesus pointed out the Pharisees' inconsistency and unreasonableness. They would help a distressed animal on the Sabbath, but not a sick man! (See Matthew 12:11, 12.) God intended the Sabbath to be a blessing for man, but they had turned it into a grievous burden.

Then the Lord answered their question with one of His own: "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy?" (Luke 6:9.) Not surprisingly, they refused to answer (Mark 3:4). We're glad Jesus didn't surrender to their perverse tradition; He just healed the unfortunate man.

Let it be emphasized that our Lord did **not** break the Sabbath law! Jesus was "in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). Religious teachers who claim that God's word may be set aside when we think the situation calls for it have erred right along with the Pharisees.

Careful obedience to God is good. Even traditions can be good, but they must never be bound as though they were God's commands. When human traditions conflict with God's word, set the traditions aside just like Jesus did!

Song: "Give Me The Bible"

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we thank You for revealing your perfect will to us in the New Testament. We pray that You will help us to obey You carefully, even as those under the Law did. Help us not to go to extremes, either in manufacturing loopholes or binding our own traditions. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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