

# Truth for Today

*The Bible Explained*

---

For reply: Email: [truthfortoday@aol.com](mailto:truthfortoday@aol.com)

**Broadcast Date:** 5 June 2016

**No.** T0940

**Speaker:** Mr. Paul Thomson

---

## Luke's Gospel: Jesus and the Pharisees

Good morning and welcome to *Truth for Today*. We continue our studies in Luke's Gospel as we look at "Jesus and the Pharisees". The text we are considering today is from Luke 5:33 through to Luke 6:11.

In the verses leading into our text we read of the scribes and the Pharisees complaining to the disciples that they and Jesus had eaten with tax collectors and sinners (see Luke 5:30). This was wrong in the Pharisees' eyes. They would never stoop so low in associating themselves with the lowest of society. Jesus reminds them in Luke 5:32, "*I have come not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.*" The Pharisees, meaning "set apart ones", was a name given by others to a religious school among the Jews. The Pharisees would have called themselves "pious ones" or "godly ones". The Pharisees were really a religious sect who studied the law, but also watched and made sure that others kept the law. The Pharisees were very proud and thought that they were superior to everyone else. In Luke 18:9-11 we see the true character of the Pharisees. There it tells us that the Pharisees "*trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others.*" One Pharisee goes up to the temple to pray, but he has the wrong attitude. He prayed to himself and he tells God how good he was, he fasted twice a week and gave a tenth of his earnings to the Temple. The Pharisee judges the publican who was also praying. The publican was humbly aware of his sin and asks God for mercy. Getting back to the Pharisees, most of them were hypocrites, very pretentious and always judgmental.

The Pharisees had been following Jesus around the country, watching everything Jesus did and listening to everything He said. The Pharisees wanted to trip Jesus up; they thought that they would catch Him disobeying the Law of Moses. The Pharisees hated Jesus and wanted an excuse to kill Him. The Pharisees often quoted their interpretation of the law to Jesus, not understanding or accepting that Jesus, being God, gave Moses the Law in the first place. Jesus knew what the Law said and Jesus always worked within the Law because He was the perfect Son of man. Jesus knew the hearts of the Pharisees when dealing with their accusations. Jesus usually turned an accusation into getting over to the people a very powerful message.

The Pharisees and their disciples were happy trying to keep the Law. It was something that with discipline they could do. The Pharisees would pray and fast regularly, they would keep the Sabbath and continue with all sorts of rules and regulations. But now that Jesus had come, the Messiah - the Chosen One, things were about to change. There was soon no need to be burdened by the things of the Law. Jesus had come to offer salvation through grace. Jesus had come into the world to declare the love of God to man and to take the punishment for man's sins. Jesus lived a perfect life here on earth, showing grace and mercy as He healed the sick, made the lame to walk and did all sorts of other miracles. But it was only in His death that Lord Jesus became the willing sacrifice to God for our sins, once and for all. The Law as such was finished; nothing could be done to remedy sin, and the only way of salvation was through faith in Jesus Christ.

In Luke 5:33-35 we have the first clash with the Pharisees and Jesus. The Pharisees pointed out to Jesus that the disciples of John and the disciples of the Pharisees prayed and fasted regularly. The disciples of John lived self-denying lives, living in the wilderness and eating very little. The Pharisees, on the other hand, fasted so they could boast of their self-righteousness. Jesus answers their question of "why?" by giving the example of a wedding feast. Jesus said that there was no need to deny yourself when the bridegroom was at the feast. The bridegroom wants you to enjoy everything he has laid on for you. Jesus, was of course, referring to Himself as the great Bridegroom. Fasting had given way to feasting because the Bridegroom was here among them; there was a reason to feast. The followers of Jesus were filled with joy as they kept company with him. Jesus continues to proclaim that the Bridegroom was to be taken away from them, referring to His soon coming death. Then He tells them that when the Lord Jesus leaves this world His disciples, Christians, will fast and pray (Luke 5:35). There is a lesson for us here. Every true Christian is part of the company called the "Bride of Christ". Each one of us is waiting for the Bridegroom to come. Living in this world brings many trying times but the Christian should feel the absence of the Lord, and with hope, be looking forward to that great day described to us in Revelation 19:7-10, the marriage supper of the Lamb, where we will be with the Bridegroom and we will feast and have joy for ever more.

In Luke 5:36-39, Jesus tells the Pharisees a parable. Parables were often told by Jesus when He wanted to illustrate something He was teaching. A parable could be described as an earthly story with a heavenly meaning, or simply a

story used to illustrate a moral or spiritual lesson. The lesson that Jesus was trying to teach here was that things were about to change. The grace of God was beginning to shine out in the Lord Jesus and, like a new piece of cloth, it could not be treated as a patch to put on the old garment of the Law. The new cloth will impose such a strain upon the old fabric it will tear. The Lord then goes on to give them a lesson in wine preservation.

*“Bottles”* in this verse is better rendered literally wineskins: *“And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine will burst the wineskins and be spilled, and the wineskins will be ruined. But new wine must be put into new wineskins, and both are preserved”* (Luke 5:37) The sense is this that new wine, in the process of fermentation, will burst old bottles made of wine-skins not strong enough to resist the strength of the fermenting fluid, so that there is a twofold loss - both that of the bottles and that of the wine. And therefore new wine must be poured into bottles made of fresh wineskins, which, by reason of their strength and toughness, will be able to resist the fermenting energy of the new wine.

By these very apt illustrations, our Lord teaches us that it is a vain thing to attempt to mingle together the spiritual freedom of the Gospel with the old ceremonies of the Law. The grace of God had arrived in the Lord Himself and the “fleshly ordinances” of the Law were finished with. The Pharisees preferred Law to grace - the old wine better than the new. The Pharisees wanted the Law because they thought that they were capable of keeping it; by contrast, grace is offered on the basis that man is a hopelessly lost creature.

Man is crying out today for the old:

- “Give me rules I can keep”;
- “Give me days I can keep”;
- “I must have something to appease my conscience as I do not accept that I am a sinner reliant on God’s grace”.

Acceptance of the Gospel brings change to the sinner. He or she is born again and we are like new vessels so the Holy Spirit can live in us. 2 Corinthians 5:17 sums up this section very clearly: *“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”*

In Luke 6:1-11, we have two further instances of the Pharisees accusing Jesus and His disciples. On both of these occasions it is on the Sabbath Day that is Saturday. The Pharisees really wanted to accuse Jesus of some doing wrong, some technicality according to the Law. The Pharisees thought that they could catch the Lord Jesus out because of the fourth commandment. Exodus 20:8 says, *“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.”* The Sabbath day was to be a day of rest, no one was to do any work, but the Pharisees took this to the extreme.

Jesus and His disciples were hungry and, as they walked through a field of corn, the disciples began to pick some ears of the corn and rubbed it in their hands and ate the grain. Some of the Pharisees saw what they did and accused them of doing wrong. The Pharisees knew that there was nothing wrong in what they did in picking the corn; as you can read in Deuteronomy 23:25, this was allowed. It was that it was done on the Sabbath day that angered them. The accusation came in the form of a question, and Jesus was ready to answer them. Jesus answered by asking the Pharisees a question, *“Have you not even read this, what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him?”* (Luke 6:3) Jesus went on to tell them what they should have known already or most probably knew because they were students of the Old Testament. David went into the house of God and took the consecrated bread and he and his followers ate it (See 1 Samuel 21:1-19). This was bread that was special and set apart for a particular purpose, but it was just bread. David was God’s anointed king and at this time he was rejected by the people. It was not in the mind of God that His anointed with his followers should starve in order to uphold small technicalities of the Law. 1 Samuel 21:1-9 gives us the full story. Israel in David’s day rejected the king; the Pharisees were concerned about trivialities whilst they rejected the Christ.

We’ll pause for just a few thoughts on the Sabbath day. God made the Sabbath day as a day of rest, a recognition of the fact that He rested on the 7th day, after the six days of creation (see Genesis 1:1-2:3). It was to be a day for the good of man. God knows what is best for man, you cannot work seven days a week without consequences. So physically we need to rest. We need a day where we can spend time with our families outside the hustle and bustle of the working week. The Jewish Sabbath day, as we have seen is Saturday. The Christian’s “special” day is a Sunday, the first day of the week; some Christians call it the Lord’s day. The Lord’s day is a special day for Christians, a day where they take time out to remember the Lord Jesus in His death and resurrection. Christians also meet together in fellowship to worship God, to study and be taught from the Bible. The Lord’s Day is a day that is set aside for God, but that does not mean that you don’t do other things like spending time with your family. But the Christian’s main desire on the Lord’s Day should be going to their local church or meeting place and spending time worshipping God. There are no rules in the Bible as to what we should or should not do on the “Lord’s Day”. Each one of us must decide what we do before the Lord, and without judging others. But one thing we must do is to remember that it’s the Lord’s Day.

In Luke 6:5 Jesus, referring to Himself, says to the Pharisees, *"The Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath."* The Lord Jesus is the only one who calls Himself this title. It seems to be the Lord Jesus' preferred title for Himself. The term points to the humanity and servanthood of Christ, but also reflects Daniel's vision of the Son of man as a coming figure of judgment and authority. There are many verses in the Bible that speak of the Lord's humility, His purpose and His coming again in judgement as the Son of man:

- Luke 9:58: *"Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head";*
- Luke 19:10: *"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost";*
- Matthew 25:31: *"When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory";*
- Luke 6:5: *"The Son of man, the Lord over all things is also the Lord of the Sabbath".*

The Pharisees had some nerve to accuse the Lord of the Sabbath of breaking the law of the Sabbath. Luke 6:5 emphasises the Lord's person. Man, as originally created, was made lord over the earthly creation. The Son of Man is Lord over all a far wider sphere. He was not bound by the Sabbath; the Sabbath was at His disposal.

In Luke 6:6-11, we read of a man who had a deformed hand. Once more this incident took place on the Sabbath day. Jesus was doing what He always did on the Sabbath day; He went to the synagogue to teach. There are many instances in Luke's Gospel of the Lord Jesus going to the synagogue to teach. Luke 6:7 tells us that the Pharisees were again watching Jesus to see if He would heal on the Sabbath day, so they could find some accusation against Him. But Jesus knew their thoughts and He tells the man with the deformed hand to stand up in front of everyone; the man stands up. Jesus turns to the Pharisees and asks them a question about the Sabbath. Jesus asks them what was lawful to do on the Sabbath day, *"to do good, or to do evil? To save life or to destroy life?"* (Luke 6:9) Jesus looked round at all the Pharisees, who could not answer Him, and then turned to the man with the deformed hand. Jesus asks the man to stretch out his hand and, as he did, his hand was completely healed.

The Pharisees would have pushed their technical objections to the length of forbidding any act of mercy on the Sabbath day. But the Lord Jesus was never ashamed or afraid to show grace and mercy upon anyone who had a need. In this miracle, we see the power of the Lord. Jesus had power to heal in grace, and He used that power whether the Pharisees liked it or not. The Lord healed the man in the most public way possible, making him stand in the middle of the crowd. The Pharisees, however, were missing the point; they wanted to hang on to the old things, the ordinances of the Law. But here before them was the Law giver, the Lord of the Sabbath, the Messiah, and the Christ of God. Jesus was revealing the grace of God to man.

Are you like the Pharisees? Are you a self-righteous person? Are you pinning your salvation on useless rituals and ordinances? Dear friends, the Lord Jesus came into the world to save sinners, because He loves sinners. The Lord Jesus came to set sinners free, free from the bondage of their sins. Knowing the Lord Jesus as your Saviour, you are not then a slave to sin but a slave to righteousness. I am reminded of the words of a well-known hymn:

*"I stand amazed in the presence  
Of Jesus the Nazarene  
And wonder how He could love me,  
A sinner condemned unclean.*

*He took my sins and my sorrows  
And made them His very own,  
He bore my burdens to Calv'ry  
And suffered and died alone.*

*How marvellous! How wonderful  
Is my Saviour's love for me!"*

Charles H Gabriel (1856-1932)

The words of another hymn also come to mind:

*"Works of righteousness all in vain,  
Jesus alone can save;  
His blood cleanses from every stain,  
Jesus alone can save".*

Inglis Fleming (1859-1955)

Dear friend, don't miss the point like the Pharisees did.

The final verse of our study today, Luke 6:11, tells us that the Pharisees were filled with madness, anger and hostility toward Jesus. They were furious at what Jesus had done and they began to plot His death. We read in the Gospels of many occasions when the Pharisees plotted the death of Jesus. On one occasion, they even went to the Herodians, their detested enemies, to ask advice on how they might destroy Jesus. But no matter what the Pharisees thought they could do, they could do nothing until the hour had come when the Lord was to be crucified.

While the Pharisees discussed their wicked thoughts of what they would do with Jesus and as the dark clouds of opposition surround the Lord Jesus, He goes out to a mountainside alone to pray (Luke 6:12). The Lord spends the whole night in prayer to God His Father (Luke 6:12). The Son of Man shows His dependence on His God and Father. We need to show that same dependence.

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

---

**Please Note:**

We encourage you to use this transcript for your personal or group Bible studies. This material should not, however, be used in any publications without the express permission from Truth for Today, whose contact details can be found on page 1. Large Print copies of this document are also available upon request.