

¹ Another time he went into the synagogue, and a man with a shriveled hand was there. ² Some of them were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath. ³ Jesus said to the man with the shriveled hand, "Stand up in front of everyone." ⁴ Then Jesus asked them, "Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" But they remained silent. ⁵ He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored. ⁶ Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus.

"Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" That would seem to be a rather simple question. Of course you would want to maintain life and do good. God is life and God is good, so as God's people who have been blessed to be a blessing why wouldn't we be dedicated to living our lives as a reflection of God's nature? *But they remained silent.*

What an example of being slaves to the Sabbath. They would rather kill the One who challenged their observance of the Sabbath than fulfill the purpose of the Sabbath by saving life and doing good. It was clear that Jesus was challenging and not condemning them because he was *deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts* even as he was angry at their dishonesty in not replying to his simple question.

While observance of the Sabbath may no longer be the detonator for our reaction against God's Word, we must be ever ready to recognize our peril when we too easily dismiss the conviction that comes through the Holy Spirit. That twinge of conscience should be taken seriously as a cause for examination of our motives and actions in the context of God's Word. When a question arises, always be sure to answer it honestly and with an openness to correction.

Lord God, continually purify me as a vessel of your truth. Through your Holy Spirit cleanse me of the tarnish and debris I have accumulated by living in this world. Where I have taken on the attitudes and ways of the world, redirect my life according to your way. Keep me ever open to your thundering velvet hand of correction. Amen.