

Noteworthy

Prayer Requests: Karen Berry (*recovering from accident*), Margaret Blackburn (*pancreas and hip*), Joe Brown (*cancer*), Marian Church (*neck & back*), Mildred Church (*shut in*), Day family (*sickness*), Charles Goodall (*recent passing of his sister Anita Nix*), Linda James (*ongoing medical*), Paul Lloyd (*back, on-going medical*), Ahrea Miller (*recovering from hip surgery*), Neil Miller (*back*), Butch Morgan (*ongoing medical*), Dottie Reynolds (*back, on-going medical*), Martha Smith (*broken hand, recent passing of her granddaughter*), Suzette Stevens (*ongoing medical*), Ken Turner (*blood clots, kidneys, ongoing medical*).

Family and friends: Nell Goodall (*Charles Goodall's aunt—blood clot, ongoing medical*), Chuck Goodall (*Charles and Vernita's son—cancer*), Ned Hicks (*Larry Hick's father - ongoing medical*), Brian James (*cancer*), Wayne Ryland (*ongoing medical*), Ardis Tucker (*Paula Sullivan's sister—ongoing medical*). Remember and encourage others who are struggling with problems.

Out of Town: Yvonne Jordan, Ed & Terrelle Lawson.

Group Meeting: Group 1 is scheduled for tonight after the evening worship service.

1st Wednesday Night Singing: Will be this week!

Kids' Review: Class will be *next week* after the evening service in classroom number 5.

Ladies' Bible Class: Resumes Monday Oct. 9th (*next week*) at 7pm in Paula Sullivan's home. In preparation, please do lesson XII on page 160 titled "Don't Forget to Take Inventory or Examine Self" from the book, "Some Do's and Don't's for the Christian."

Gospel Meeting: Our gospel meeting (*Oct. 15th-20th*) with Joseph Casimier is right around the corner. (*Please make plans to attend every night*)

Assignments for Worship Service

Wednesday Night: 10/4/17

Song Leader: Colby Sadler
 Opening Prayer: Leon Miller
 Invitation: Mike Sadler
 Announcements: Bob Marschall
 Closing Prayer: Jerry Williams
 Recordings: Keith Marschall
 Usher: Leon Miller

Sunday Evening: 10/8/17

Song Leader: Colby Sadler
 Opening Prayer: Bob Marschall
 Lord's Table: Larry Wisdom
 Announcements: Larry Hicks
 Closing Prayer: OPEN
 Recordings: Keith Marschall
 Usher: Gus Johnson

Sunday Morning: 10/8/17

Lord's Table: Larry Wisdom (B)
 Bucky Day (C)
 Serving: Mike Sadler
 Colby Sadler
 Song Leader: Bob Marschall

Opening Prayer: Jordan Lawson
 Announcements: Larry Hicks
 Closing Prayer: Joe Brown
 Recordings: Trent Stevens
 Usher: Gus Johnson



**Lakeland Hills
 Leader**

LAKELAND HILLS CHURCH OF CHRIST

2510 Lakeland Hills Boulevard Lakeland Florida 33805 (863) 688-4336

www.lakelandhillchurchofchrist.com

ELDERS

Larry Hicks (863) 899-7405
 Leon Miller (863) 640-6378
 Larry Wisdom (863) 583-4311

SERVICES

Sunday
 Bible Study 9:00 A.M.
 Morning Services 9:50 A.M.
 Evening Services 6:00 P.M.
 Wednesday
 Bible Study 7:30 P.M.

DEACONS:

Robert Marschall
 Michael Sadler
 Moses Stevens
 David Williams

EVANGELIST:

Ian Rice (863) 213-9795

Does Mercy Trump Meticulous Obedience?

For quite a while now, we have noticed a trend among Christians to teach that the great mercy of God, and it is truly great, trumps strict obedience to God's laws. A favorite "proof text" is Hosea 6:6 as referenced by Jesus in Matthew 12:7. The idea being that faced with a dilemma between strictly obeying Scriptures that would cause a "hardship" on a person and extending mercy instead – in spite of what would be the scriptural thing to do ordinarily.

About 30 years go, I heard a "conservative" brother make an observation in a sermon. He believed that even though there is no scriptural precedent for a local congregation's (from it treasury) helping any other than needy saints, he believed that in an emergency, either at home or abroad, the church could give funds to all alike. What was his "authority" for such? The "mercy not sacrifice rule," citing Matthew 12. It would not take a genius to figure out that this application would open a huge Pandora's box. One could set aside any teaching he, subjectively, considered "too hard" to obey under any given circumstance by invoking the "mercy and not sacrifice rule" as he interprets it.

A close look at the “mercy and not sacrifice” teaching in both Hosea and Matthew will show that no such application is under consideration. Concerning Hosea, an Old Testament prophet, there are passages from other prophets showing a perfect mixing of mercy and sacrifice. “... *Praise the LORD of hosts: for the LORD is good; for his **mercy** endureth for ever: and of them that shall bring the **sacrifice** of praise into the house of the LORD. For I will cause to return the captivity of the land, as at the first, saith the LORD.*” (*Jeremiah 33:11*). Then there was the message to King Saul that obedience is even better than sacrifice “*Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and **sacrifices**, as in **obeying** the voice of the LORD? Behold, to **obey** is better than **sacrifice**, and to hearken than the fat of rams.*” (1 Samuel 15:22). It clearly is not a matter of either or, but a matter of blending mercy, sacrificing, and obedience into the proper mix to please God.

Now let’s turn to an admittedly difficult passage, in some respects, to see that what was at play – and how it is often misused to justify a more loose attitude toward obedience or “law keeping.”

“**1** At that time Jesus went on the sabbath day through the corn; and his disciples were an hungred, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat. **2** But when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day. **3** But

he said unto them, Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungred, and they that were with him; **4** How he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shewbread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests? **5** Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless? **6** But I say unto you, That in this place is one greater than the temple. **7** But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless. **8** For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day. **(Matthew 12:1-8 KJV)**”

The Pharisees accused the Lord’s disciples of breaking the Sabbath – a very serious offense under the law (of Moses). What had they done? As they walked through a grain field on the Sabbath they plucked some gain and ate it. Apparently the Pharisees saw this as generally harvesting the field – which would have been forbidden under the law. This was not the case. They were doing no more than reaching for the food and putting it into their mouths – no more than they would have been doing to have reached for it on a table or plate and put it into their mouths. They were clearly not “working” in a way forbidden by the Sabbath law. So, Jesus, in verse 7, declared them “guiltless” – they had broken no commandment, done no sin.

Jesus uses the opportunity to expose the inconsistency and hypocrisy of their accusers – the Pharisees. He points to two Old Testament examples to make his case. The first was David’s action. On the surface it may seem like Jesus used David’s example to justify breaking the law in order to relieve hunger. Next the priest. In their example, one might surmise, under some circumstances, certain ones are justified in breaking the Sabbath.

However, many look at this as being three parallel situations illustrating the right to set aside law in the name of mercy. It goes something like this: All three cases – Jesus’ disciples, David and his men, and the priests – in Matthew 12, were breaking the law, strictly speaking. But, none of them were held accountable because of the “mercy” rule. Therefore, we are supposedly justified in breaking Bible commands under certain circumstances and charge it to mercy.

Let’s take a closer look. First, Jesus did not defend David, but rather declared what he did was unlawful. (Verse 4). Secondly, He declared the priests blameless for what they did on the Sabbath. (Verse 5) Thirdly, He exposed the Pharisees’ hypocritical inconsistency in condemning His disciples. 1) They had a high esteem for David. They were looking for the Messiah to restore the throne of David in all its glory. Who among them would be willing to condemn David as harshly as they were condemning his disciples? Hence, they were willing to overlook David’s law breaking, while condemning the disciples for theirs. 2)

The priests engaged in activity on the Sabbath that was recognized even by the Pharisees as being lawful while condemning the disciples who went about doing no more than the priests did on the Sabbath.

Besides Jesus was Lord of the Sabbath. He was in a position to know the kind of activity constituting a violation of the Sabbath laws and to instruct his disciples what they could do on the Sabbath and still be observing the law. He never taught one to break even the least of the commandments of the law until it was fulfilled and warned his disciples about the same. (cf. Matt. 5:19).

So, Jesus was not teaching the Pharisees (or anyone else) that one could set aside a law when mercy required it. In fact, in another confrontation with the Pharisees he shows that mercy itself was a “matter of the law” along with all the rest of the law that ought be done – no matter how exacting they may be.

“**23** Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, **mercy**, and faith: **these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.**” (Matthew 23:23 KJV Emp mine).

- Written by: Edward O. Bragwell, Sr.