

Let's pray:

Heavenly Father,  
As I've prepared for today,  
and studied the Bible reading,  
and read commentaries,  
,,,, I think I understand it...  
But how can I explain it???

Lord,  
Let me **not** be like the Scribes,  
or like the Pharisees.  
They were responsible for teaching God's word,  
and they were supposed to be helping people  
to understand it, and how to apply it,,,,  
  
and yet they got it so wrong –  
they were so, so wrong...

They took away the key of knowledge...  
The Scriptures (and Your commandments)  
were meant to help Your people to **know** You,,,  
But they took away that key – they  
hid the means to knowing You.

And so Lord,  
we ask that You would give us that key today –  
That You would unlock the Scriptures for us,  
And help us to know You, through Your Word.

And

May the words of my mouth; and  
the meditations of our hearts,  
be acceptable to You,  
Our Lord, and Our Redeemer,

Amen.

Today's the 2<sup>nd</sup> week we're spending on this Bible reading.

Last week, we talked about "religion" – it gets a bad rap, doesn't it – almost one of the worst insults a Christian might hurl at another Christian is "You're religious"... But religion as it's supposed to be (Pure and undefiled), is a beautiful thing – It's the work of the Holy Spirit, causing us to worship God, from within.

**Corrupted** religion – defiled religion, is an ugly thing – It **does not** flow from the Spirit within. And **one** form of corrupt religion, is to try to keep God's written Law (in a way that is essentially "rule-keeping, out of fear of punishment"). And if we endeavour do that, we'll end up like the pharisees – working really hard to make sure we tick every box, but never achieve, what God really desires...

What **does** God desire? I'll tell you what: Godliness within,, that flows outwards....

You see, when our hearts are made right, through the Lord Jesus Christ, we can be filled with His Holy Spirit, and the ways of God become our ways (fruit of the Spirit)...

And so, **true** religion, is the worship of God (from the Spirit within), **and** loving others with justice and mercy, because this also, is a **work** of the Holy Spirit, flowing out from us...

**That's** why Jesus absolutely caned the Pharisees – they had the appearance of holiness on the outside, but on the inside, they were filthy (filled with sin)...

And that's what we studied last week...

This week, Jesus turns to the Scribes.

Now, if you can remember back to last week, the Scribes, were the professionals (if you like). They studied the Scriptures (the Old Testament), and especially they studied what's known as "The Book of the Law" (Torah), or the Pentateuch – it's the first five books of the Bible: Genesis; Exodus; Leviticus; Numbers; Deuteronomy.

And the Scribes knew the Scriptures inside-out and back-to-front ... And they saw it as their job, to interpret the Law... But, Jesus is absolutely scathing of **how** they interpreted God's Law.

Maybe their intentions might've been OK (for some of them),

but overall, they were an abject failure. You see: the Scriptures would occasionally give some detail, but more often, God would lay out a broad principal in His Law...

And just like the lawyers of today, (those who draft the laws of our land), they wanted to spell everything out in minute detail, to make sure that they didn't cross any lines that they shouldn't cross...

And so, if they could define, **exactly** where the line was, they could push the limits (you see), and they could step right up to the line, as long as their toes didn't it... And then they could be confident they were all good with God – they'd met the minimum requirement.

And so, they did what is called, "Building a fence around the Torah"... , to clearly define, every law.

But the thing is, to strictly define everything, Well, that takes something that was once a simple principle, and makes it into a complex "*This is in – This is out*" sort of a document... Because that's what Lawyers do (My apologies to lawyers – I don't mean to offend, but that's what a legislative framework requires).

*So, for example, in QLD, the aim is, to drive safely on our roads, to reduce mayhem and danger for ourselves and everybody else...*

*The QLD drivers guide (now called) "Your keys to driving in QLD" – The book that every learner driver has to study before they can get their licence, is 179 pages. (I reckon*

*that's probably double the size of the book that I had to study)...*

*But the written Law behind that – the “Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act of 1995 has 497 pages. But wait – there's more... To go along with the act, there is the regulations: the Transport Operations (Road Use Management – Road Rules) Regulation of 2009, and that's an additional 429 pages. (Total: 926 Act & Regulations)*

*Alright, so the principle is to drive safe; The guide for that principle is 179 pages; And the “**fence**” – the legislation, that defines the Law, is a total of 926 pages...*

*Imagine, if every driver, had to know all of the ins & outs of those 926 pages (before they got in their car), so that they could be safe.... Not to be a safe driver – to be safe from prosecution....*

If you can picture that, then you've got a bit of an idea of what the Scribes had done to the Torah.

So for example:

God had said (in relation to keeping the Sabbath holy), to “Do no work on the Sabbath”. So the principle: Keep the Sabbath Holy; Do no work on the Sabbath.

And to help us understand this, He said, “Do not carry a burden (a load) on the Sabbath”...

Enter the Lawyers.... What constitutes “carrying a burden”?  
– How much stuff can I carry, before it’s considered “a burden” or “a load”?

- Is a mum allowed to carry a baby?
- Can I carry a dinner plate to the table?
- Can I go and collect firewood for the week???

Well, what do **you** think God meant??? You see, the whole point is, God appointed a day of rest, so: “Do not work on the Sabbath”. So,

- Maybe collecting firewood for the whole week, probably is doing work: Bad – do that on another day.
- but grabbing firewood from the wood-heap to heat your home: good.
- Lumping a 3bushel bag of wheat on your shoulder to market: Bad. Transport the bags of grain on another day.
- but getting a scoop of grain out of a container, to make porridge: probably not work...

At least, that’s the way a sensible person may see it (don’t you think)...

Enter the Lawyers, and oh my goodness.....

This is how the Lawyers explained it:

*On the sabbath, .... a man may not carry a burden ‘in his right hand or in his left hand, in his bosom or on his shoulder’. But he may carry it*

- *‘on the back of his hand, or*
- *with his foot or*
- *with his mouth or*

- *with his elbow, or*
- *in his ear or*
- *in his hair or*
- *in his wallet (carried) mouth downwards, or*
- *between his wallet and his shirt, or*
- *in the hem of his shirt, or*
- *in his shoe or*
- *in his sandal<sup>i</sup>*

So, it was pretty simple – just don't work on the Sabbath – don't carry a burden/load... And they added that crazy interpretation... Now, what was it again???? I want to put some wheat into the porridge... I can scrape it onto the back of my hand... That's it...

How could a person, remember what they were allowed to do, and what they weren't allowed to do??? And it was just ridiculous – it **increased** the burden... It made the Sabbath, not at all, a restful occasion...

And that was just one of their set of rules... To define God's law, they drafted hundreds of these things...

It's no wonder Jesus said to the Scribes (Lawyers), **you load people with burdens hard to bear**. And He said: <sup>52</sup> **Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter yourselves, and you hindered those who were entering."**

What a terrible indictment...

The whole point of God's Law – The Torah and the Prophets, was “Knowledge”... And it's not just knowledge about knowing stuff – it's about knowing God...

If when we read the Old Testament, we do it to “know stuff”, we've missed the point – it's so that we can know God – it's so that we can live in Godliness...

Now, this got me wondering, “If the Scribes had taken **away** the key to knowledge, what is it they took away? What **is** the key to knowing God???”

1. Knowing God, isn't complex.

You don't need to seek legal advice; you don't need to be an expert; you don't need to complete a doctorate in theology, to know God.

In fact, when Paul wrote to the church in Corinth, he said: <sup>1</sup>  
Corinthians 1:26 (ESV)

<sup>26</sup> For consider your calling, brothers:

- not many of you were wise according to worldly standards,
- not many were powerful,
- not many were of noble birth.  
(sounds like He's describing BD)
- <sup>27</sup> But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise;

- God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong;
- <sup>28</sup> God chose what is low
- and despised in the world,
- even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, <sup>29</sup> so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.
- <sup>30</sup> And because of Him you are in Christ Jesus,
- Who became to us wisdom from God,
- righteousness and sanctification and redemption, <sup>31</sup> so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."

You see, it's not "the clever" who come to know God (because they're so clever)... And it doesn't take education – it takes Jesus. In the first chapter of John, we're told that Jesus has made God known.

2. The Second key to knowing God is "God Reveals Himself"...

And God reveals Himself in various ways, but in this case, Jesus is talking about how God reveals Himself in the Scriptures. And more specifically, it's in the Old Testament (the Book of the Law), that God was revealing Himself.

In the commandments, God provided the keys to knowing Him, and the Scribes, and their drawing fences around the law, they mucked it up.

The Law and the Prophets reveal God/Godliness. How? They reveal:

- The Love of God;
  - Justice;
  - Mercy;
  - Sacrifice;
  - Righteousness
- 
- The purity of God, and
  - Our need for the forgiveness of sins, to fellowship with God.

And this is what all of the Law is about.

At one time, a Lawyer got up to test Jesus, and he said:

**Matthew 22:36-40 (ESV)**

<sup>36</sup> "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" <sup>37</sup> And He said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. <sup>38</sup> This is the great and first commandment. <sup>39</sup> And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself.

<sup>40</sup> On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."

Loving God, and loving others, is what all of the Law is about. It's a picture of Godliness. If we know what it means to love God and love others, we know what God is like: God is Love...

**3.** The third key: God reveals Himself through **uncorrupted** teaching.

In V <sup>46</sup> And he said, "Woe to you lawyers also! For you load people with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers.

Do you know what I learn from that?

The role of a Teacher of the Law, is to **lift** the burden – It was to help Israel to know God, and to have a Godliness within.

One thing God hates, is hypocrisy – to have an appearance of Godliness by some strict rule-keeping... The genuine item, is godliness within..

**Uncorrupted** teaching would have taught the love of God, and things like:

- Grace;
- Justice;
- Mercy;
- Sacrifice;
- Righteousness

Things of the heart....

You know, there are many people who firmly believe the God of the Old Testament, is different to the God of the New Testament. What a load of rubbish... They obviously either have not read the Old Testament, or they haven't understood

it, and so they need **uncorrupted** teaching to explain it to them, and to lift the burden....

#### 4. The fourth Key: Knowing God, is a thing of the Spirit.

Israel had rejected the work of the Holy Spirit.

Over the centuries, God had sent His prophets, and Israel had rejected most of them, and killed some of them... And Jesus is telling the Scribes that they will do the same thing...

**'I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and persecute,'**

And they did... Jesus was the first to be crucified... But then, just about every one of the apostles, and many other Christians, were executed... In the Holy Spirit, the apostles and the prophets were sent...

And that's the key to knowing God today. What the Apostles taught, has been written in the Scriptures, and we can know God.

#### 5. The fifth key to knowing God, is a repentant heart

Jesus said something that I found a bit hard to wrap my mind around here... Their forefathers had killed the prophets, but now they built tombs/monuments (if you like) to commemorate the prophets.... And Jesus says: <sup>48</sup> **So you**

are witnesses and you consent to the deeds of your fathers, for they killed them, and you build their tombs.

How did He make that connection??? It's because Jesus can see the heart... Just as the Pharisees were clean on the outside, but filled with sin on the inside,,, The Lawyers built these flashy tombs to commemorate the prophets,,,, but they didn't honour the Prophets in their hearts (by doing what they said)... And in time, that would be proved, because the Holy Spirit would send the Apostles and prophets, and they'd be the killers of them. And they did.

Their **hearts** weren't right. Their hearts were filled with murder. So the blood of all the prophets, shed from the beginning to the end, is on you...

They couldn't know God, because their hearts were not repentant... They didn't repent of the sins of their forefathers, and they followed in the same sin.

Who's sons (or daughters) are we???

You know, sometimes we inherit the sins of the father... That doesn't mean, that what he did, is our fault. What it means, is we all learn from our fathers, and more than what we realise, we take on the perspective of our fathers – (what is done, and what is not done)... And we take on the ways of our fathers...

And sometimes, those ways that have been so ingrained into us, are not the ways of our heavenly Father... AYWM???

Sometimes we have to repent of the way we were brought up / of what we hold dear, and repent of what defines us, because that was the way of our earthly father – not the way of our Heavenly Father...

Who's son or daughter are you???

I hope I can lift the burden for you:

The key to knowing God:

1. It's not complex – you don't need to be an expert;
2. God reveals Himself in His Son, and in the Scriptures;
3. God makes Himself known, through **uncorrupted** teaching;
4. Coming to know God, is a thing of the Spirit;
5. The fifth key to knowing God, is a repentant heart – rejecting the ways of our fathers/the world, and embracing the ways of our Heavenly Father.

And when the Lawyers heard what Jesus had to say, it's like:  
“Them's fightin' words, they are...”

And the Scribes and the Pharisees started to poke the bear...  
They tried to get Jesus to speak about a lot of stuff, looking for an opportunity to catch Him out, to do away with Jesus...

And of course, we know that eventually led to the cross...

Isn't it amazing... It's both amazing, and disturbing,,, That Jesus and the religious leaders, were so opposed,, and they eventually did have Him executed,,, but the amazing thing is, the crucifixion of Jesus, is what made salvation possible.... And it's at the cross, where God makes Himself fully known...

- Come to Jesus at the cross.
- It's not complex.
- God reveals Himself there.
- And come to the cross with a repentant heart.
- And You too, will know God.

Let's pray:

Heavenly Father,  
We give You praise,  
that You have made Yourself known.

You are indeed,  
the One who calls the nobodies,  
the unlearned;  
the unimportant;  
the poor & the lowly...

And we are one in Christ Jesus...

What grace;  
What mercy;  
What a great love...

And Lord,  
we ask that each day,  
You would increase our knowledge of You.  
Help us to know You; and  
to experience Your presence within.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
Amen.

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<sup>i</sup> Morris, L. (1988) *Luke: an introduction and commentary*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press (Tyndale New Testament Commentaries).