

INTRODUCTION

The work is basically a write up of Bro. Allan Turner that I have adapted and **modified** a bit. Seems he now has an abridged version, I could no longer find its **original full version** on his website but please check <http://www.allanturner.com/>

Based on Allan Turner's Lesson on 'The Principle of Qualification of Scripture'

Comparing Scripture with Scripture helps us to understand that one passage can actually amplify, clarify, modify, or qualify another passage. In this article, I will concentrate only on the qualification of Scripture. By qualify, I mean one passage can limit or restrict another. Although a qualification passage may appear at first to be a contradiction or denial of another passage, it is not. A qualification merely sets the particular passage in perspective by applying additional information about the topic under discussion.

In his temptation of Jesus, Satan “twisted” the INTENT OF scriptures. His citation of Psalm 91:11-12 was accurate but misapplied in that the providential care promised in this passage did not include the deliberate testing of God’s faithfulness. Jesus makes this clear in His citation of Deuteronomy 6:16, which says, “You shall not tempt the LORD your God.” In other words, being a child of God is not a license to act recklessly. Thus, if you can’t swim, don’t jump into water over your head and challenge God to save you.

"At that time Jesus went through the grain fields on the Sabbath. And His disciples were hungry, and began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to Him, "Look, Your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath!" But He said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God and ate the showbread which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? Or have you not read in the law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless? Yet I say to you that in this place there is One greater than the temple. But if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath." -Matthew 12:1-8

Jesus made it clear that He and His disciples were not guilty of profaning the Sabbath, and that ***it was actually the Pharisees’ understanding of the Law that was in error***, causing them to “**condemn the guiltless**” (cf. Matt. 12:7).

Deuteronomy 23:25 says, “When you come into your neighbor’s standing grain, you may pluck the heads with your hand, but you shall not use a sickle on your neighbor’s standing grain.” Although this passage does not specifically address the Sabbath law, it is interesting to observe the distinction the Scriptures make between plucking and

sickling. Plucking your neighbor's grain would not be considered stealing, while using a sickle would. Why? Because it seems clear when one "works" on (i.e., uses a sickle) or "harvests" his neighbor's grain, he's making or exerting an effort to take what does not belong to him (i.e., he's stealing his neighbor's grain, and having to work in order to do so). But when he simply plucks the grain with his hand, he is only doing so to satisfy hunger, which puts him in the category of eating, not working. When one extends this principle to the work prohibitions of the Sabbath law, which were never designed to interfere with a man eating or taking nourishment, then a reasonable person would conclude that Jesus' disciples were not violating the Law of Moses when walking through grain fields on the Sabbath, plucking and eating the grain.

David rightly concluded that, under the circumstances in which he found himself, in 1 Samuel 21, it was permissible for him and his men to eat the showbread —bread which all but the priests were prohibited from eating. Too many, I'm afraid, and I'm speaking mainly of preachers here, believe David and his men, along with Ahimelech, the priest, sinned by what happened that day. After all, Leviticus 24:5-8 and 1 Samuel 21:6 clearly state that the old showbread was reserved for the priests. Therefore, how could what David and his men did that day not be a violation of God's law? Well, it couldn't, unless.... Unless what?

Unless such a law was **qualified** (i.e., limited) by another command/direct statement. And what command/direct statement or principle would that be? Hosea 6:6 was written too late for it to be of any help to David. So, unless there is some principle found in the Scriptures before or during David's time that qualifies the showbread ordinance, then David, his men, and Ahimelech did, in fact, sin that day.

Did David lie to Ahimelech about his mission, saying he was under orders from the king? (1 Sam. 21:2). ***David did not really lie.*** He left the matter a bit open and ambiguous when he claimed "the king hath appointed me a business." He might be referring to Jehovah. Even if he as the Lord's anointed was indeed referring to Saul, that king hath appointed him a business or assignment or matter -the issue that he must flee for his life to escape assassination! That was something Saul did not want the whole nation to know, it was therefore natural for David to claim he was doing something the king secretly imposed on him! The scenario was akin to when Abraham said of Sarah, "*she is my sister.*" Not a lie but a partial truth in order to save his neck! However, it was not David's half-truth that Jesus appealed to, but his eating of the showbread, and it is not difficult to believe that if the Pharisees would have thought David had sinned in the eating of it, then they would have had all they needed to make their unsubstantiated charge against Jesus' disciple (and thus, Him) appear to stick.

Thus, for anyone to think Jesus was appealing to sinful actions to justify His disciples righteous behavior, just doesn't seem to have a grip on things. Fact is, and folks ought to know this, particularly those who think of themselves as exegetes and hermeneuses, David no more did what was "unlawful" by eating the showbread than the priests

“profaned” the Sabbath by doing those things they had been instructed by the Lord to do on that very special day.

In other words, and let’s start now with the priests and work our way back to David, if the priests didn’t “profane” the Sabbath when they performed the work God instructed them to do on that day (cf. Num. 28:9-10), and the Lord said they didn’t, then we understand that the work prohibited by Exodus 20:8-11 was never intended to include the work the priests were commanded to do on the Sabbath. This means, Exodus 20:1-8 is qualified (i.e., limited) by Numbers 28:9-10.

Consequently, when David convinced Ahimelech he was under obligation to share his food with him and his men, as the dictates of mercy would require, David no more violated the showbread ordinance than did the priests violate the Sabbath. Yes, the old showbread was lawful only for the priests, that is, it was not for anyone else (cf. Lev. 24:5-9); but when it was “common,” namely, when it had been distributed to the priests for their use, it became the priests’ food, did it not? Well, of course it did. So with this in mind, consider a scenario in which the priests, who have food to eat, are confronted with others who have a genuine need for food. Could they, as faithful servants of God, refuse to share their food with those in need? Of course not! And why not? Because if they did refuse, they would be in violation of one of the fundamental themes of the law, ***a principle at the very heart of the OT—namely, *the preeminence of love for one’s neighbor**** (Lev 19:18, Mt 22:36-40).

The direct statement of Hosea 6:6, when properly interpreted, merely reflects this in its emphasis on mercy rather than sacrifice, (as attested to by a scribe in Mk 12:32-34) Thus, when we understand that David did not unlawfully take Ahimelech’s food, but reminded him of his obligation to love his neighbor by extending mercy to him and his men, then it can be understood that Ahimelech did not sin when he shared his food with those he believed to be in genuine need, nor did David and his men sin when they ate, and this anymore than did the priests when they worked in the temple on the Sabbath. Simply put, God did not design the Sabbath law or the showbread ordinance to keep back food from legitimate cases of hunger, nor the priests working on the Sabbath, and this means that these laws were, in fact, qualified.

The Pharisees were plain hypocrites. After all, they didn’t have any problem with circumcising on the eighth day when such an event fell on the Sabbath ([Leviticus 12:3](#), [John 7:22-23](#)). And if their ox or other livestock fell into a ditch on the Sabbath, they didn’t wait until the first day of the week to pull it out (cf. Luke 14:5). Nor did they refrain from loosing their animals and leading them away to water on the Sabbath (cf. Luke 13:15). Thus, there is simply no excuse for them not knowing that Jesus’ disciples were not sinning when they went through the grain fields that Sabbath. In other words, if they had truly been the righteous people they were pretending to be, so zealous to defend God’s law, as they were claiming, they would not have been falsely charging His disciples with profaning the Sabbath.