

# Luke 13:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The Lord then answered him, and said, Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering?

## Analysis

**The Lord then answered him, and said, Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering?** Jesus' response begins with a devastating label: "hypocrite" (ὑποκριτά, hypokrita, singular, directly addressing the ruler). The Greek originally meant stage actor—one wearing a mask, playing a part. Jesus exposes the ruler's pretense: claiming to honor God while violating His heart.

The rhetorical question employs *kal v'chomer* (light to heavy) reasoning common in Jewish argumentation: if you do X for an animal, how much more should you do X for a human? The ruler would "loose" (λύει, lyei, from λύō, ἀλύω, the same root as "loosed" in v. 12) his ox or donkey for water on the Sabbath without hesitation. Jesus uses identical vocabulary: the woman needed to be "loosed" from bondage just as animals are "loosed" for care.

The argument is irrefutable: Sabbath law permits caring for animals' needs, yet the ruler objects to liberating a woman from eighteen years of Satanic bondage. The logic demonstrates that Pharisaic Sabbath regulations were arbitrary and inconsistent—allowing what benefited them while prohibiting mercy toward others. Jesus exposes their self-serving interpretation of God's law.

## Historical Context

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Jewish Sabbath law recognized that animal welfare sometimes required Sabbath activity. The ox and donkey mentioned here recall the fourth commandment itself (Exodus 20:10, Deuteronomy 5:14), which includes animals in Sabbath rest. Rabbinic tradition allowed untying animals for watering on the Sabbath, recognizing that animal needs couldn't wait. Jesus uses their own accepted practices to demonstrate the absurdity of opposing human healing on the Sabbath. If animal discomfort warrants Sabbath relief, how much more does human suffering?

## Related Passages

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**Genesis 1:1** — Creation of heavens and earth

**Psalm 19:1** — Heavens declare God's glory

## Study Questions

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1. What does Jesus' use of animal care to defend human healing reveal about the value God places on people?
2. How does the charge of hypocrisy challenge those who are more concerned with religious appearance than genuine mercy?
3. In what areas might contemporary believers apply religious standards inconsistently, strict with others but lenient with themselves?

## Interlinear Text

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ἀπεκρίθη οὖν αὐτοῦ ὁ κύριος καὶ εἶπεν ὑποκριτά  
answered then him G3588 The Lord and said  
G611 G3767 G846 G2962 G2532 G2036  
Thou hypocrite G5273

ἔκαστος ὑμῶν τῷ σαββάτῳ οὐ λύει τὸν βοῦν αὐτοῦ  
each one of you G3588 on the sabbath not doth  
G1538 G5216 G4521 G3756 G3089  
ox him G1016 G846

ἢ τὸν ὄνον ἀπὸ τῆς φάτνης καὶ ἀπαγαγὼν ποτίζει  
or G3588 his ass from G3588 the stall and lead him away to watering  
G2228 G3688 G575 G5336 G2532 G520 G4222

## Additional Cross-References

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**Luke 14:5** (Parallel theme): And answered them, saying, Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath day?

**Matthew 23:28** (Parallel theme): Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.