

# Luke 6:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then said Jesus unto them, I will ask you one thing; Is it lawful on the sabbath days to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy it?

## Analysis

**Is it lawful on the sabbath days to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy it?** (ψυχὴν σῶσαι ἢ ἀπολέσαι, psychēn sōsai ē apolesai)—Jesus reframes the debate with penetrating logic. The choice isn't between healing and doing nothing; it's between doing good (agathopoiēsai, ἀγαθοποιῆσαι) and doing evil (kakopoiēsai, κακοποιῆσαι). By this standard, refusing to heal when able is equivalent to destruction. To withhold good is to commit evil; neutrality is impossible.

The phrase **to save life or to destroy it** (σῶσαι ψυχήν, sōsai psychēn) carries both physical and spiritual meaning—psychē means life/soul. While they plotted his destruction (v. 11), Jesus offered salvation. The question exposed their hearts: they would rather destroy Jesus than see a man healed.

## Historical Context

Rabbinic debate centered on what constituted permissible Sabbath activity. The principle pikuach nefesh (saving life) permitted Sabbath violation for life-threatening emergencies, but the Pharisees didn't consider this man's condition life-threatening. Jesus elevated the standard from emergency intervention to positive good—the Sabbath should be a day for doing good actively, not merely avoiding harm. This radical ethic transcended their casuistry.

## Related Passages

---

**Matthew 25:31** — Final judgment

**Revelation 20:12** — Judgment according to deeds

## Study Questions

---

1. How does Jesus' question challenge the false neutrality of refusing to do good when we have opportunity and power?
2. What situations tempt you to hide behind rules rather than extending mercy and doing active good?

## Interlinear Text

---

εἶπεν οὖν ὁ Ἰησοῦς πρὸς αὐτούς Ἐπερωτήσω ὑμᾶς  
said Then G3588 Jesus unto them I will ask you  
G2036 G3767 G2424 G4314 G846 G1905 G5209

τί ἔξεστιν τοῖς σάββασιν, ἀγαθοποιῆσαι ή  
one thing Is it lawful on the sabbath days to do good or  
G5101 G1832 G3588 G4521 G15 G2228

κακοποιῆσαι ψυχὴν σῶσαι ή ἀπολέσαι  
to do evil life to save or to destroy  
G2554 G5590 G4982 G2228 G622

## Additional Cross-References

---

**Mark 3:4** (Salvation): And he saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace.

**Luke 14:3** (Word): And Jesus answering spake unto the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day?