

# Pharisees Judge Godly People for Not Doing Something That They Do

by Zac Poonen

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*We must be careful not to judge others by their external practices and instead focus on their heart and relationship with God.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 7:1, John 9:16, Galatians 2:9, Galatians 2:11

**Topics:** "Godliness", "Judgment"

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## Description

Zac Poonen addresses the hypocrisy of the Pharisees who judged Jesus for not adhering to their strict Sabbath observance, emphasizing that true godliness should not be measured by religious rituals but by the heart's intent. He highlights the example of William Booth and the Salvation Army, who prioritized reaching the lost over traditional practices like communion and baptism, demonstrating that God can work through those who may not fit conventional molds. Poonen warns against the danger of prejudice that can lead to unjust criticism of godly individuals, often from those who have not contributed to God's work themselves. He encourages believers to recognize the grace of God in others and to avoid the Pharisaical mindset that dismisses those who serve differently.

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## Transcript

The Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath" (John 9:16).

Pharisees assess people not by their godliness but by whether they observe some religious ritual or not. They were certain that Jesus could not be from God, because He did not keep the Sabbath the way they kept it. We too can have our own ideas as to how something should be done in the church; and if someone does not do it that way, we can write him off as ungodly. Prejudice is a powerful evil that can destroy fellowship.

The Salvation Army (founded by William Booth in the 19th century in England) does not have "breaking of bread" in their services. One reason they gave for that was that many of their converts were drunkards and were tempted to go back to their alcoholism, when they smelt the wine at the communion. They did not practise water-baptism either, because they said that many who were baptized had not really been converted. But William Booth was one of the godliest men of his time; and he and his wife brought thousands to Christ from the dregs of society, all over the world. What would you think of such a man? Pharisees would reject him outright. But if I were living in England 150 years ago, I would have joined him

in the work he was doing of bringing drunkards and prostitutes and thieves to Christ - a work that no-one else was doing. I don't agree with their doctrines in these two matters. But I would not assess a man's godliness by whether he agreed with me on baptism and the Lord's Table.

We have to be careful that we don't speak empty words of criticism against godly men like William Booth. It is true that Paul criticised Peter for a compromising stand that Peter took (Galatians 2:11). But Peter had recognised the grace that God had given Paul (Galatians 2:9). So when such a man as Paul criticises Peter, that is acceptable.

But who are the ones who are criticising godly men today? Invariably, those who have done nothing for the Lord themselves, and those whom God has not borne witness to in any way. Such foolish believers dare to criticise godly men whom God has used a thousand times more than them. That is Phariseeism.

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