

“Fences”

(Luke 6:1-11)

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I. Introduction

A. Delta flight 253 into Detroit

1. 23 year old terrorist from Nigeria
 - a. Explosives sewn into his underwear
 - b. What was he thinking as he ignited it?
2. His father’s warning that he had become “radicalized”
3. The religious fervor of radical Islam
 - a. Daily carnage in the Middle-East
4. The power of religion
 - a. Nothing new
5. For good...or bad

B. The birth of a special group

1. They were known as the “Separated Ones”
 - a. Fought for God and the fundamentals of their faith
2. The Menorah and the birth of this proud group
 - a. Seleucid (Greek) ruler over Judea
 1. Antiochus Epiphanes (168 B.C.)
 2. Called the “Greek Hitler”

3. Instituted a program to annihilate Judaism
 4. He killed thousands of Jews
 5. He sacrificed a pig to Zeus on the Jewish altar in the Temple, as an act of defiant blasphemy
 6. He attacked the true and living God
 7. And a special group of Jews rose up in outrage
 8. People called them the “Separated Ones”
- b. Revolt led by Judas Maccabaeus in (165 B.C.)
1. Great victory though outnumbered 6 to 1
 2. Hanukah and the Menorah
 3. Free to worship God
- c. Another group was determined to protect God’s Word & Law
1. *“Their rise has been described as a story of raw courage, daring heroics, and a deep dedication to God”*
- d. They were known for the following good attributes
1. They were national heroes
 2. They accepted the scriptures as God-given
 - a. Very careful Old Testament students
 - b. Kept the ceremonial laws
 - c. Emphasized biblical education
 3. They were fervent evangelists
 4. They were sacrificial givers
 5. They longed for the coming Messiah
3. They were originally called the “Hasidim”

- a. Different...but similar
 - b. Hasidic Jews today
 - c. Meant “the Pious”
4. From this group came....The **Pharisees!**
- c. The group that instigated the crucifixion of their own Messiah
 - d. The group Jesus labeled as hypocrites and snakes
4. What went wrong?
- a. And how does it apply to us

II. Text...Luke 6

A. Working on the Sabbath (Luke 6:1-5)

1. The grain fields.....v.1

(1) One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grain fields, and his disciples began to pick some heads of grain, rub them in their hands and eat the kernels.

- a. In the Jordan River Valley
 - a. Headed for Capernaum
 - b. Walking through grain fields.....v.1
 - 1. Harvest time
 - a. Possibly August
 - 2. Late on a warm summer day
 - 3. Traveled on narrow footpaths between fields of grain
2. It was on the Sabbath
- a. Saturday....not Sunday
 - 1. Seventh day of the week

(Ex. 20:8-11) “(8) Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. (9) Six days you shall labor and do all your work. (10) but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. (11) For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

2. Sunday and the resurrection of Jesus

- b. His disciples were hungry (according to Matthew)
- c. Plucked grain from fields and ate it

- 1. Rubbed heads of grain together in hands and then ate

3. The Pharisees react.....v.2

(2) Some of the Pharisees asked, “Why are you doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?”

- a. Accused them of violating the Sabbath
 - 1. (Exodus 34:21) “Six days you shall labor, but on the seventh day you shall rest; even during the plowing season and harvest you must rest”
- b. The Pharisees and Rabbis went to great lengths to define “harvest”
 - 1. Picking – reaping
 - 2. Rubbing – threshing
 - 3. Blowing away chaff – winnowing
- c. Remember—these are their explanations—not God’s
- d. God’s Law was fair and compassionate
 - 1. It let the hungry eat
 - 2. Deuteronomy 23:24-25

(24) If you enter your neighbor’s vineyard, you may eat all the grapes you want, but do not put any in your basket.

(25) If you enter your neighbor's grainfield, you may pick kernels with your hands, but you must not put a sickle to his standing grain.

3. Just don't steal his harvest

e. And God didn't exclude the Sabbath.....they did

The story of the Pharisees

A. The importance of understanding this group

1. Will be popping up throughout Luke
2. The ones that pushed to crucify Jesus
3. Jesus had his harshest names for them
4. Over some of the same issues we face today

B. What went wrong?

1. They added their opinion to God's opinion

- a. The Pharisees had so much respect for the original set of scriptures and wanted to protect them so desperately that they started adding to them. Then, after a while, it not only seemed helpful to make additions but absolutely essential.
- b. When Jesus began his ministry, he saw these new laws as absurd. Yet the Pharisees saw nothing odd in the practice. They had been doing it a long time

2. They erected more and more "Fences"

- a. The Pharisees were desperately determined to not break the laws of God. Consequently they devised a system to keep them from even coming close to angering God. They contrived a "fence" (seyag) of Pharisaic rules that, if man would keep them, would guarantee a safe distance between himself and the laws of God. Therefore, if God said we could not work on the Sabbath, then don't even pick grain to eat, just to play it safe. Don't even heal people because that might be a borderline case.
- b. These laws became known as the "seyag" or "fence" and they took on the same weight as God's commands and in many case seemed far more crucial

3. Their opinions began to outweigh God's

- a. They had lots of opinions regarding everything
- b. Their opinions regarding the Sabbath
 - 1. Couldn't bathe on Sabbath
 - a. Might spill water
 - b. Cleaning it up would be the same as "washing the floor"
 - 2. Couldn't carry a burden
 - a. Burden defined as the weight of a dried fig
 - 3. Couldn't look at yourself in a glass or mirror
 - a. Might see a gray hair and be tempted to pluck it out
- c. Their opinions took on the same weight as God's
- d. Tradition became a driving part of their religion

4. The fences pushed people farther from God...not closer

- a. The Pharisees started out okay

"In fairness, their difficulties were not born out of indifference. They cared a lot and gave it their all. However, their very zeal was eating them up and affecting their judgment. They were in fact injuring the possibility of the very close walk with God that they were trying to promote." (Coleman)

- b. They became proud and self-righteous
 - 1. Thought they were holier than others
 - 2. Deserved to be saved
- c. Their hearts became cold
- d. Religion became a matter of external obedience
 - 1. Rather than a changed heart

5. People failed to understand the importance of "discernment"

- a. Jesus' response to the Pharisees.....Luke 6:3-5

(3) Jesus answered them, “Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? (4) He entered the house of God, and taking the consecrated bread, he ate what is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions.” (5) Then Jesus said to them, “The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.”

a. Sarcasm

1. Haven't you read the Law and prophets?"
2. They probably had them memorized!

b. The Pharisees sang of David's glory

1. Yet David had violated a rule

c. The Showbread (I Sam. 21:1-6)

1. The band on the run
2. Came to the Tabernacle
3. They were hungry
4. The priest had no “common bread”
5. The only possibility was the showbread
6. The old loaves were to be eaten only by the priests

a. “Holy bread”

7. (I Sam. 21:6)—“*So the priest gave him holy bread; for there was no bread there but the showbread which had been taken from before the LORD, in order to put hot bread in its place on the day when it was taken away.*”

d. The ceremonial law was designed to help mankind

- a. Because God is merciful

e. Matthew adds in Matthew 12: 5-8

(5) Or haven't you read in the Law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple desecrate the day and yet are innocent? (6) I tell you that one greater than the temple is here. (7) If you had known what these words

mean, “I desire mercy, not sacrifice,” you would not have condemned the innocent. (8) For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.”

- f. The priests themselves worked on the Sabbath
 - 1. Lit the fires for sacrifices
 - 2. Killed the animals
 - 3. Lifted the animals (weighed more than dried fig)
- g. And they were certainly blameless

C. Fences and our history

- 1. The battle that was raging 100 years ago
 - a. Liberalism threatened to decimate the American church
 - b. Over issues like the Deity of Christ and the virgin birth
 - c. Mainline Protestant churches and Seminaries sucked in
- 2. Some special champions arose
 - a. Stressed the “*fundamentals of our faith*”
 - b. The “Fundamentals of the Faith” published around 1900
 - 1. *The inerrancy and authority of the Bible***
 - 2. *The virgin birth of Jesus***
 - 3. *Substitutionary atonement***
 - 4. *Bodily resurrection of Christ***
 - 5. *The glorious return of Jesus Christ***
- 3. The call to separate from apostasy
 - a. Bob Ketcham in 1919
 - b. Groups of churches began breaking away in 1930’s

1. Courageous congregations losing their buildings
 2. Pastors being blacklisted
 3. Heroes willing to fight the good fight
 4. Fighting over core beliefs
4. But then the fence builders came
- a. Their motives were also good
5. Some fences that had little to do with theology
- a. Lifestyle issues
 1. “Hair...Hemlines...and Harmony”
 2. Sideburns...ears...collars
 3. The hair instead of the heart
 - b. Separation from other believers
 1. Primary, secondary, tertiary...
 2. Attacks on Billy Graham
 - c. A new form of legalism
 1. It severely damaged many of my generation
 - d. For example, God tells us to avoid “adultery and drunkenness”
 1. We try to keep away from the edge by building a fence
 2. No movies
 3. No dancing
6. The result...
- a. Made everything black or white
 1. All movies are evil (black)

(or)

2. All movies are good (white)

b. Eventually we were no longer wrestling with the core problems of drunkenness and adultery. Rather we were fighting mock battles at the new fences we had erected. Soon we began to test a person's orthodoxy by his respect for our fences.

c. Soon it became apparent that they were far from optional. These manmade standards became every inch as important as the scriptural laws and in some instances far more crucial.

7. The fences kept many farther away from God

8. Many kids who never learned "Discernment"

a. Got out of the home and went crazy

b. Life is not always in black or white

9. Things to remember

a. Our brothers and sisters fought a courageous fight

b. Their battle was needed and their motives were pure

c. Can be a stumbling-block to our kids

d. We don't need to improve on God's fences

10. Watching the Shriners at the Shrine Circus

a. Old men with strange hats

1. Riding little motorcycles

b. Strange costumes and rituals

1. Part of the Masonic Order

2. Dan Brown's new book "The Lost Symbol"

3. Strange ceremonies

c. Members are so accustomed to them they never notice

- c. But the newcomers are fighting back a giggle
11. Some churches
 - a. So many strange rituals and clichés
 - b. Newcomers holding back a giggle
 12. We become comfortable with our traditions
 - a. **(Luke 5:39) *And no one after drinking old wine wants the new, for he says, "The old is better."***
 - b. But Grace brings freedom

B. Healing on the Sabbath (Luke 6:6-11)

1. The man with the paralyzed hand.....v.6-7

(6) On another Sabbath he went into the synagogue and was teaching, and a man was there whose right hand was shriveled. (7) The Pharisees and the teachers of the law were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal on the Sabbath.

2. The laws they had made said it was wrong to heal on the Sabbath
 - a. That would be “work”
3. Jesus never flinched

(8) But Jesus knew what they were thinking and said to the man with the shriveled hand, “Get up and stand in front of everyone.” So he got up and stood there. (9) Then Jesus said to them, “I ask you, which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?” (10) He looked around at them all, and then said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” He did so, and his hand was completely restored.

4. Mark says Jesus was angry at the Pharisees

(Mark 3:5-6)

(5) Jesus looked around at them in anger and deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored.

5. The response of the Pharisees.....Luke 6:11

(11) But they were furious and began to discuss with one another what they might do to Jesus.

- a. Mark 3:6 says they left “*and began to plot how they might kill Jesus*”

V. Summary

A. Francis Schaeffer’s crisis

1. Religion in the 1950’s and 60’s
 - a. Judged a person’s spirituality by outward appearances
 - b. Fences...but cold hearts
2. What was “True Spirituality?”
 - a. His book in 1971
 - b. The heart has to change first
 1. Not behavior and dress
3. True spirituality is *from the inside out*
 - a. God wants to change your heart first