

Message #68

Luke 13:10-17

Jackie Robinson was the first black player to play major league baseball in the national league. He joined the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1947. He ended up playing 1,382 games and he batted .311. What that man went through in his career is shameful:

- 1) He was threatened in every city he visited.
- 2) Pitchers he faced would throw at his head trying to bean him. He was hit 72 times.
- 3) He was degraded and called horrible names in every city he played.
- 4) At times he was not allowed to eat with his own teammates who loved him.

All of the hatred and bigotry was aimed at Jackie Robison because he was black. He was a different color. His close friend, Pee Wee Reese, said there are many reasons to hate a man, but color is not one of them. Jackie Robinson went against the grain of the “white baseball world.” In the end, he won. He ended up becoming the first black athlete to be inducted into the Hall of Fame.

Any person in any field who brings something new into something old is destined for criticism and hatred. Orville and Moody Wright found that to be true when they began working on an idea called the airplane. There were people who thought they were crazy.

Thomas Edison found that to be true when he was working on electricity. There were those who called him insane.

But nowhere in history was this more evident and more dangerous than when it came to Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ came into a dead religious world. It was a world of religious rituals and works. Christ came and offered grace. He offered spiritual emancipation and transformation from the traditions, the burdens and the yokes that were weighing down the people from Jewish religious leaders. He offered life, forgiveness, vitality and freedom.

You would think that the people would have rallied around Him and rejoiced. You would think the people would rejoice that no longer were they under the religious oppression of man-made rules and traditions. After all, Jesus was making it possible for sinful man to be right with a Holy God. He had performed many amazing miracles to prove He was telling the truth. But instead of the people accepting Him, they degraded, criticized, ostracized and hated Him.

Frankly, what happened to Jesus Christ will in some ways happen to one who takes His word seriously. That is why Luke wrote this section down for Theophilus and us to read. What Luke communicates here is this:

A CHRISTLIKE PRESENTATION OF GRACE WILL CAUSE MANY PEOPLE TO REJOICE BUT IT WILL ANGER THE SELF-RIGHTEOUS, PHARISAICAL HYPOCRITE.

A self-righteous, religious hypocrite squirms in a context like this. He doesn't relate to grace.

Pharisees love their traditions and codes and rules and they are angered by one who opposes them.

There are five historical realities to observe from this text in Luke:

HISTORICAL REALITY #1 – Jesus Christ gives His grace healing to a crippled woman.
13:10-13

At this point Jesus Christ is drawing huge crowds of people (i.e. Luke 12:1). The demands on Him were great and public. **Yet we discover that Jesus still took time to care for the individual.**

It was normal for Christ to go to the Synagogue to teach on the Sabbath Day (Luke 4:15, 44) and since His reputation was so well-known, people at the synagogue wanted to hear what He had to say. **This will be the last time in Luke’s gospel when Jesus is in the synagogue. No leader is around forever, even Jesus Christ. Wise were the people who took advantage of the opportunity to listen and learn from Him.** This synagogue should have been the place that was the bastion of truth; but it is a place where people play religion.

In attendance at one of the Synagogue meetings was a crippled woman. There is nothing in the text that suggests this woman went to the service to ask for healing; she apparently was there to hear the word of God.

There are four facts brought out about the woman:

Fact #1 - Her crippled condition was caused by Satan. **13:11a, 16a**

This literally was a woman who had an infirmity literally caused by Satan. The words “sickness caused by a spirit” means that some demonic spirit had been causing this physical issue. There are some sicknesses that are Satanic and there are some that are not Satanic (Luke 4:40-41). This one was. You and I have no way of seeing or knowing which is which. Only Jesus knew this.

Fact #2 - She had been in this crippled condition for 18 years. **13:11, 16**

You would have to have a heart as cold as ice to not feel for this woman.

Fact #3 - Her crippled condition was extremely severe. **13:11c**

This woman could not stand up straight. Many who have studied this think it was some form of spondylitis, which is a type of muscular paralysis.

Fact #4 - Her crippled condition did not stop her from attending worship services. **13:10-11**

We live in a time when a runny nose can cause an entire family to stay home from church. It is hard to relate to a woman who has a crippling spinal disease, who still wanted to go worship. By the way, she did not have easy transportation to get to the synagogue like we do.

There can be no doubt that she came to that service to hear the word of God. She wanted to hear the teachings of Jesus Christ. There is nothing that would indicate she went, thinking she would be healed. In fact, since it was on the Sabbath day, she probably thought that was impossible.

The Jewish leaders were hypocritical fanatics about the Sabbath Day. In fact, there is a story of Rabbi Akiba that shows how fanatical they were. Rabbi Akiba was thrown into prison and another Rabbi, whose name was Joshua, brought him water every day for washing and drinking. On one occasion, the keeper of the jail got the water and went to deliver it to Rabbi Akiba and he spilled half of it on the floor. When Rabbi Akiba asked that more water be brought for his ceremonial washing, Rabbi Joshua said you need more water for drinking. Rabbi Akiba said you are right, but it is better for me to die thirsty than to transgress the traditions. This shows you the fanaticism they had for their rituals. This Rabbi would rather kill himself, which is a violation of the sixth commandment, than to transgress traditions made up by men that are not even in the word of God.

Jesus Christ was continually at odds with mainline Judaism because He would not conform to their man-made system and rules. He continually violated their traditions and codes.

Several passages from all gospel writers emphasize the fact that Jesus Christ broke their Sabbath Day rules: 1) Matt. 12:1-14; 2) Mark 2:23-28; 3) Luke 6:1-11; 4) Luke 13:10-16; 5) Luke 14:1-6; 6) John 5:1-18; 7) John 9:13-17.

If we analyze these passages, we may observe that Jesus did two things on the Sabbath Day that really angered the hypocrites: 1) He ate; 2) He healed. In their minds, His violations were He got something to eat and He healed people on the Sabbath Day.

When Jesus actually addressed the Sabbath Day issue in **Mark 2:27-28**, He established two critical theological points:

Point #1 - The Sabbath was made for man. **Mark 2:27**

The Sabbath was never made to burden people, but to build them up. It was a day designed for rest and worship. These are two things finite men still need today. They need to be refreshed and they need to be revitalized. **Rest revitalizes a man physically and worship revitalizes a man spiritually.** The Sabbath was made for man.

Point #2 - Jesus Christ is Lord of the Sabbath. **Mark 2:28**

The Sabbath Day is about Jesus Christ. He is the Lord of the Sabbath. It is His day and He can do whatever He wants on the Sabbath Day because He is the Lord.

Since Christ has gone to the cross, any Sabbath Day regulation has been nailed there (Colossians 2:14-17).

Now what happened here is that this hurting, crippled woman was at the synagogue and in **verse 12**, Jesus decided to heal her and He began by simply saying, “Woman, you are freed from your sickness.” Then according to **verse 13**, He laid His hands on her. This woman was probably shunned by these religious leaders, but Jesus put His hands on her and immediately (*παραχρημα*) she straightened up and began glorifying God. Luke was a medical doctor and he often emphasizes that the healing was immediate, instantaneous and complete (4:39; 5:24-25; 8:44, 47, 55; 18:43)

HISTORICAL REALITY #2 – Religious hypocrites are angered by anything that does not conform to their religious regulations. **13:14**

The leader of the synagogue was indignant, which means he was intensely angry. Jesus Christ really made him mad.

What has angered this guy is that He had violated one of their Sabbath Day rules and codes. Forget the fact that a poor woman had been healed. Forget the fact that the woman was now praising God. He did not conform to their rules or codes. They had invented 39 forms of forbidden labor on the Sabbath day and Jesus did not conform to their religious system. By the way, this was all man-made stuff. They compiled a list of things you could do on the Sabbath and things you could not do.

HISTORICAL REALITY #3 – Jesus Christ rebukes self-righteous religious leaders. **13:15-16**

Christ starts off by calling it straight “You hypocrites.” Christ uses the plural hypocrites, which means He is going after more than just the leader. What He says is that you are religious frauds and phonies. You are religious play actors. Jesus is calling them out publicly. He is telling them they are religious play-acting pretenders. They are not right or real in their relationship with God.

Christ says you guys take care of your donkeys on the Sabbath and you say you cannot help this poor Jewish woman who has been hurting for 18 years. You are a bunch of hypocrites. You treat your farm animals better than you do people.

According to the Jewish code, you could take your cattle to water as long as they didn’t carry burdens. They even invented the distance which was about ½ mile. Now a donkey taken from his stall to water had only been without water for a few hours. This Jewish woman had been without health for 18 years. These hypocritical religious frauds cared more about donkeys than they did people. Here was a Jewish woman, a descendant of Abraham, who they deemed less important than an animal.

A former pastor of mine told me the story of another pastor he knew who had gone to visit a family who had just come to faith in Jesus Christ. The family had come to church and had trusted Christ and invited the minister to come over. So the pastor took a leader with him to go visit.

The pastor was rejoicing over the fact that the family was saved and worshipping God. As soon as there was a lull in the conversation, the leader the pastor had taken asked which version of the Bible they read. Well this pharisaical leader discovered that the version they liked wasn't the one he liked. So he promptly told the people they needed to burn their Bible and get a real Bible. Well the pastor called the leader out on it. He said these people are reading a good Bible and he defended them. Well this man began to hate the Pastor. But the worst tragedy of all is that after this visit, the people never went back to church.

This foolish, self-righteous, ignorant, pharisaical hypocrite cared more about a translation than the soul of the people and he chased them out of the church and then went on a rampage against the pastor. What a phony. He was just like the religious frauds Jesus faced here.

William Kelly, an old Bible commentator, said, "There is no sense striving to keep fair terms with men who are really enemies of God."

HISTORICAL REALITY #4 – The religious leaders were humiliated. **13:17a**

Notice the emphasis on "all His opponents." There were lots of these guys. The religious leaders became quiet and did not know what to do. The religious leaders were humiliated, which means they were put to shame. The shame and humiliation did not lead these men to repent, but to hate Jesus Christ.

HISTORICAL REALITY #5 – The crowd was rejoicing. **13:17b**

The hypocrites were all humiliated and in contrast to that the crowds were rejoicing over "all the glorious things" Jesus was doing. The crowds of people were rejoicing and praising God. They saw all the glorious things Jesus had done and they were rejoicing. They loved it that Jesus Christ was greater than the religious system. They had never seen anyone like Him or heard anything like what He was teaching.

The religious hypocrites hated Christ and hated grace.

I love something Trent Butler said about churches. He said, "Too often the church has claimed to be rescuing the perishing when what we have really been doing is protecting the dying" (*Luke*, p. 227).

Too often church is about denominational rules and traditions and laws and codes and works and not about grace.