

Pharisaical Fallacies

Introduction

Would you join me today in the Gospel according to Luke chapter six?

Following Luke's record of the Pharisees transitioning from investigating to antagonizing Jesus, Luke provides us with further examples of the antagonism - specifically related to the Sabbath Day.

The Sabbath Day was established by God before He gave His Law to Israel (see Gen. 2:3 and Ex. 16), as well as in His Law (see Ex. 20:8-11; 31:12-17). Sabbath falls on the seventh day of the week, sunset Friday until sunset Saturday, as a day set aside for rest based on God's seventh day rest after He created the world and all that is in it. A fine article about Shabbat written from the Jewish perspective can be found at <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/what-is-shabbat-jewish-sabbath>.

The Sabbath, or Shabbat, represents a central aspect of God's covenant with Israel. However, by the time Jesus arrived on the scene, Jewish traditions burdened God's people beyond God's intent. Jesus confronted this problem regularly in His ministry.

The two examples provided in our text demonstrate the pharasaical fallacies of the day. Through the confrontation of Jesus, let's identify the pharasaical fallacies. We need to do this because

these fallacies are still possible, and we need to avoid them.

Bible

(1) And it came to pass on the second sabbath after the first, that he went through the corn fields; and his disciples plucked the ears of corn, and did eat, rubbing them in their hands. (2) And certain of the Pharisees said unto them, Why do ye that which is not lawful to do on the sabbath days? (3) And Jesus answering them said, Have ye not read so much as this, what David did, when himself was an hungred, and they which were with him; (4) How he went into the house of God, and did take and eat the shewbread, and gave also to them that were with him; which it is not lawful to eat but for the priests alone? (5) And he said unto them, That the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath. (6) And it came to pass also on another sabbath, that he entered into the synagogue and taught: and there was a man whose right hand was withered. (7) And the scribes and Pharisees watched him, whether he would heal on the sabbath day; that they might find an accusation against him. (8) But he knew their thoughts, and said to the man which had the withered hand, Rise up, and stand forth in the midst. And he arose and stood forth. (9) 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? (10) And looking round about upon them all, he said unto the man, Stretch forth thy hand. And he did so: and his hand was restored whole as the other. (11) And they were filled with madness; and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus. (12) And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to

pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.

Luke 6:1-12 - KJV

Illustration

Robert Coleman wrote about where the Pharisees went wrong. He writes that "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. For instance, 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. These traditions and additions accumulated into hundreds over the years. Soon it became apparent that they far from optional. These laws became every inch as important as the scriptural laws and in some instances more crucial. The Pharisees also saw their mission as creating new laws as the times changed. If they felt the Scriptures contained no moral laws to control something modern, then they would manufacture a law and announce that it was binding on man and God. New situations could not be ignored, and if there were gaps in the Scriptures, someone had to fill them. Jesus found it very difficult to appreciate anyone changing God's laws. For him, it was fine if the Pharisees wanted to fast twice a week. They could go to it with great pleasure. The flak came when they said, "We instituted this new law, and God expects you to keep it." At this point Jesus balked and told them to back off."

Introduction

Look at the ways they demonstrated their wrong focus as demonstrated in our text.

1...They elevated Standards above the Scripture (vv. 1-4).

Explanation

Jesus's disciples picked grain off the heads, rubbed it in their hands to separate it from the chaff, and ate it. Legally, they had the right to take the grain (see Deut. 23:25). That was not the issue that the Pharisees had with the activity. It's possible to identify at least four separate problems the Pharisees had with the activity.

"...in the eyes of the religious leaders they were guilty of reaping, threshing, winnowing, and preparing food" (Guzik).

Illustration

The practice of unreasonably adding to God's written commands can still be seen today.

"In early 1992, tenants let three apartments in an Orthodox neighborhood in Israel burn to the ground while they asked a rabbi whether a telephone call to the fire department on the Sabbath would violate Jewish law. Observant Jews are forbidden to use the phone on the Sabbath, because doing so would break an electrical current, which is considered a form of work. In the half-hour it took the rabbi to decide "yes," the fire spread to two neighboring apartments" (Guzik).

Explanation

Jesus regularly identified this failure of the Pharisees by accusing them of hypocrisy inwardly and legalism outwardly. Inwardly, they were distant from God though they propped themselves up as righteous. Outwardly, they so added to God's Word that they placed grievous burdens on others. The result of all this? Rather than drawing people closer to God, they actually pushed people away from God.

Application

Is this behavior possible today?

The New Testament epistles, especially those penned by Paul, regularly address these "Pharisaical fallacies." They regularly showed up in the churches then and, I submit, they regularly show up in churches now.

How?

- Through any presentation of Christ plus _____ equals salvation.
- Through preachers, teachers, evangelists, or lay people who preach, teach, or declare standards like they are Bible and expect everyone else to hold them.
- Through believers separating from other believers over "non-essentials."

Illustration

How many of you have a phone case protecting your phone?

Where does the value rest?

In the phone or the case protecting the phone?

The value rests in the phone.

How silly would it be to care more about the case than the phone?!

That illustrates what it is to elevate standards above the Scripture.

Application

Standards can be personally used and beneficial as a protection, but they should not be valued above or treated as equal to the Scripture. Do not do so in your life or with others.

2...They elevated personal authority above God's authority (v. 5).

Explanation

Jesus made two astounding claims:

First, He claimed the title "Son of man." This identified Him with the King Daniel prophesied of in Daniel 7:13-14.

Bible

(13) I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the

clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. (14) And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

Daniel 7:13-14 - KJV

Explanation

"Son of man" represents Jesus's favorite title for Himself. It's used some 80 times in the Gospels and identifies Him as this One Who receives from God an everlasting kingdom. The Jews understood this to be a Messianic prophecy. Jesus claimed to be no less.

Beyond that, Jesus claimed the title "Lord of the sabbath." This unequivocally placed Him on the same level as God Who made covenant with Israel at Mount Sinai, the One Who established the sabbath. He claimed to be God.

What was the point?

If the Lord of the sabbath, God Himself, expressed no displeasure with the disciples' actions, neither should the Pharisees.

However, the Pharisees didn't assign that kind of value to Jesus, but they should have.

Bible

(39) Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they

which testify of me.

John 5:39 - KJV

Explanation

These supposed experts of the Old Testament missed the whole point. It's not that they weren't looking for the Messiah, but they were looking for a messiah to their own purposes.

Jesus even asked them, "Have ye not read...?" Certainly, they had, but they failed to understand and apply it properly.

The same was true of their view of Jesus. They read the Old Testament prophecies, but failed to properly understand and apply them to Jesus. If they had done so, they would understand Him to be the Lord of the sabbath.

Application

Be cautious about people who claim equal authority with God. Be careful not to place your authority on the same level as God's authority. Be sure to ascribe Jesus the level of authority He should hold.

3...They elevated their heart for God above God's heart for people (vv. 6-11).

Explanation

Luke transitions to another occasion of a sabbath conflict to demonstrate a pharisaical fallacy.

Jesus entered a synagogue on the sabbath where He taught. There, in the synagogue, stood a man with an unusable hand. The Pharisees, seeking to further antagonize Jesus, carefully watched Him to see what He would do. They considered healing a breach of Sabbath law.

Would Jesus heal the man?

They did not question if Jesus could, but if He would. They should have known that healing the man identified Him as having God's power. Nicodemus, a member of the highest Sanhedrin at Jerusalem, admitted as much.

Bible

(2) The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.

John 3:2 - KJV

Explanation

Jesus knew they were watching. Why didn't He wait until the sabbath was over or wait until they were in private?

I believe it was specifically because they were watching. He wanted to make a point. He said as much as He questioned and confronted them.

What should this have demonstrated to them?

In their zeal for God, wrongly applied, they completely missed God's heart. They thought their activities demonstrated how strong their heart for God was, but Jesus said that they actually completely missed God's heart for people. Had they known God's heart for people, they would never have concerned themselves with Jesus healing a man on the sabbath.

Application

In your zeal for God, do you actually miss God's heart for people?

Think about these Bible principles that Jesus demonstrated and taught Himself:

- God wants mercy more than sacrifice (see Hos. 6:6).
- Loving others is more important than religious rituals (see Is. 58:1-9).
- The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, He will not despise a broken and contrite heart (see Ps. 51:17).
- The greatest commandments are to love God with all I am and to love others as myself.

Jesus revealed to these Pharisees that to withhold doing good that was in their power to do, including on the sabbath, was to do evil. If we truly have hearts for God, then we will have His heart for people. That heart will show love for people, doing the good that is within our power to do, and drawing others by love to Christ.

If you're without Christ, God's heart for you is clear. He gave His Son up for you! He wants to be your Father and make you His child. Believe in Jesus as your Savior today.

Conclusion

The Pharisees of Jesus's day made fallacies by elevating