So what gets you all bent out of shape? I Googled that the other day and here are some everyday things that get people all bent out of shape.


Do you get bent out of shape? What gets you bent all out of shape? As we continue our series in Luke 13, we’re going to focus on two people who were bent out of shape; one was a woman who was physically bent out of shape and the other was a very religious man who was spiritually bent out of shape. One was crippled by a spirit of weakness; the other was crippled by a spirit of legalism. Jesus was able to help one of them, but the other one stayed bent out of shape, Please turn to Luke 13:10-17 (p. 872). If you’re taking notes…

1. Some people are bent out of shape with sin and its ramifications. Each December, WORLD Magazine announces their annual Daniel of the Year award. It’s bestowed on someone who’s put their faith in God and gained the strength to stand up against ungodly trends. Joni Eareckson-Tada (picture), is this year’s recipient and the 20th recipient of this award.

In the midnight darkness of a Baltimore hospital in 1967, Joni begged God to heal her. Weeks earlier, this 17-year-old girl broke her neck after diving into unexpectedly shallow waters in Chesapeake Bay. The result: paralysis from the shoulders down. Joni endured grueling surgeries and lay strapped onto a frame designed to allow nurses to turn patients with spinal cord injuries. Her weight dropped to 80 pounds. One friend sobbed at the sight.

But Joni had grown up in church and hoped that God was teaching her a dramatic lesson before healing her quadriplegia. At night, in her hospital bed, Joni would imagine herself at the Pool of Bethesda. In the account from John 5, a man disabled for 38 years waits at a pool for someone to dip him into healing waters. Jesus passes by and heals him. The man gets up and walks. Joni imagined herself at the pool and sang a hymn she learned as a child: “Savior, Savior, hear my humble cry. While on others Thou art calling, do not pass me by” but Joni has never walked again.

For fifty years her permanent paralysis—including losing the use of her hands—led to a battle with depression and doubts about God’s goodness. Why would He leave her this way? What kind of Savior doesn’t heal a paralyzed girl who cries out to Him? Fifty years later, Joni’s answer is jubilant: “It sounds incredible. But I really would rather be in this wheelchair knowing Jesus as I do than be on my feet without Him.”

She celebrates “that glorious but awful, beautiful but sad, terrible but wonderful day I broke my neck—because look what God has done.” Joni came to embrace God’s sovereignty in her suffering and founded a ministry that’s helped hundreds of thousands of individuals around the world.

It wasn’t fifty years but it had been 18. The woman in our story had been bent over in constant pain for 18 long years. That’s longer than some of you have been married…18 years. 18 years of chronic, constant pain. Can you imagine it?

It’s amazing that she’s even in the synagogue. Apparently, she’s a regular. No doubt she’d prayed for a miracle, for God’s healing – but nothing – yet still she came. Not bitter or angry at God, after suffering 18 long years, but still trusting. She sought the solace of worship and the Word. Most of us know folk who’ve gone through much less that jettisoned their faith, becoming very angry at God.

But after 18 years, for the congregation, she’s invisible. They no longer notice her. She’s ostracized. Disease brought a social stigma. The Jews believed suffering was an indication of God’s judgement. They didn’t want to see her. But Jesus sees her. Jesus always sees us in our pain.

He calls her up. Some were probably embarrassed for her, that the Teacher points her out. She shuffles slowly to the front and Jesus lays His tender hands on her, and she’s healed.

The consensus of modern opinion is that she suffered from an affliction called spondylitis deformans. The discs in the spine degenerate, causing the bones to fuse together in a rigid mass. There’s no suggestion that she’s demon possessed, though this and all disease is from sin. That a “disabling spirit” is alluded to suggests it was a Satanic attack. As a man of medicine, Luke knew that her disease had a supernatural cause. The diagnosis is confirmed in verse 16 when Jesus says she was bound by Satan. Obviously, not every medical difficulty is a direct attack from Satan but hers was.
She lived her life in a posture of forced humility, hobbling around, her face always toward the dust of the earth. My grandmother broke her back and would shuffle from room to room. I’m sure it looked something like this poor woman. “She walked about as if she were searching for a grave.” At times she probably wished she could find one.

Notice that she didn’t ask Jesus for healing. There was no faith on her part. Modern healers often say, “You’re suffering or you’re not healed because you don’t have enough faith.” She had no faith. Jesus simply ruled over her disease and she was healed.

Notice, too, that her healing is complete and immediate. Jesus didn’t start the seeds of her healing. He spoke, He touched her and it’s done. Not like some of our contemporary charlatans who say that healing is a process.

By touching her, He identifies with her suffering. Jews didn’t acknowledge those diseased and certainly would never touch someone diseased. But it’s just so Jesus! In his commentary on Luke, G. Campbell Morgan (picture) points out that Jesus saw her and then adds, “If there is a man or a woman in any assembly of human beings, more in need than any other, that is the man or the woman that Jesus is after.”

Is that you? Perhaps, like this woman, you’ve been coming to church for years in some spiritually bent-over condition. Perhaps people have ignored your need or been helpless to do anything about it. But Jesus sees you and He wants the power of His Word to touch and heal your soul today. That power transforms you when you make real contact with the living Lord.

In spite of all her years of going to the synagogue, this woman was in bondage to this debilitating illness that Jesus ascribes to Satan. She’s a picture of the millions who attend religious services every week for years, but live in spiritual bondage to sin and to the prince of darkness. They’re often very sincere, but are bent over under the load of sin and guilt.

What are you bent out of shape over? What are you living in spiritual bondage to? Like this woman, Jesus wants to heal you. Maybe your need is salvation. You’ve never come to Jesus, you’ve never repented of your sin and come to His cross. He wants to heal your soul today.

Maybe for you it’s some sinful habit. We’ve heard so much during the last few weeks of those addicted to sexual sin. Is that you? Is it anger or bitterness? Is it doubt? Maybe you’re a closet alcoholic or addicted to some other substance? Like this woman, Jesus wants to heal you.

When Jesus touches you, you’ll straighten up and praise God! Jesus wants to do the same for you that He did for this woman. He sees you and He knows your pain. You can hide your pain from others behind a smile, but Jesus sees you. Next, He calls you to Himself. “Come to me all you who labor and are bent over with care, and I’ll give you rest.” Then, He speaks to you to let you know that you can be set free from your weakness. But, best of all He touches you. Every time you encounter Jesus in worship, He touches you. It would be fantastic if the story ended right here but it doesn’t…

2. Some people are bent out of shape with rules and ritual. “But the ruler of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, said to the people, ‘There are six days in which work ought to be done. Come on those days and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day’.” Why does it seem like the worst party poopers are always religious? Every church has a party pooper or two. We have them at Grace. God is working and they’re critical. Or, like this “ruler of the synagogue,” they’re bent out of shape. What ticks us off says more about our spiritual temperature than anything else.

So the last time that you were ticked off at church, what made you angry? Was it a biblical issue or were you spiritually out of touch like this legalist? He didn’t have a biblical leg to stand on. Most legalists don’t.

And what this spiritual idiot suggests is laughable. This woman has been coming for 18 years with the same disease, so if she comes back the next day this spiritual snot is going to heal her? Seriously?!? If she’d come the day before or if she’d come the next day, he still couldn’t have healed her. He was indignant about what Jesus did, but he himself was spiritually impotent.

He’s also a coward. Who healed this woman? Jesus. Who does he scold? The crowd. Legalists are nearly always cowards. They whisper, censure and criticize. You’ll catch them off in a corner, whispering their carnal criticism. And he’s much worse off than this woman. Her disease only had her body in bondage. This guy had heart and soul in bondage, and is opposed to the very Son of God. I love Kent Hughes’ (picture) description, “He was a chickenhearted religious snob...His heart was pumping great amounts of formaldehyde. He breathed arsenic...his lack of love for the woman showed that he did not love his neighbor as himself, indicating that he did not love God.” The horrible irony here is that the very one who should have been most excited for this poor woman, what would have been here senior pastor, was instead bent out of shape. So what’s going on here?
a. Legalism prioritizes rules before relationships. “Then the Lord answered him, ‘You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger and lead it away to water it? And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?”

Now it’s Sunday, so I’m going to be very honest – I don’t like Jesus’ response here. Do you want to know why? It makes me feel guilty. The truth is that it’s a lot easier for me to love my dogs (picture of Ernie and Harley) than it is for me to love some people. Every time I walk in the door, Ernie and Harley rush to meet me. (It has nothing to do with the fact that I give them a treat every time I come home). They’re a lot easier to love than the cashier at McDonald’s who mumbles something as she takes my order. Ernie and Harley listen to everything I say and are always happy to see me. They’re pretty much hassle free, so I get a bit where this guy is coming from.

The problem wasn’t the Sabbath law. It was given by God as part of the Ten Commandments. “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God”. It was that the Law had come before a human being. That’s what legalists always do – they put rules before relationships.

The Jews had made loopholes for themselves so they could take of their livestock, even if it was the Sabbath. They could give them water and feed them. They were kind to animals, but Jesus was supposed to let this woman continue to suffer…just because it was the Sabbath.

Where does legalism come from? Let me share an analogy. A family with children move into a home on a busy street with no fence. What do they do first? They put a fence up. They tell the kids, “Enjoy the whole yard. Dig holes with the dog, build a fort, run and play. But don’t climb over the fence because it’s dangerous. I don’t want you to get hurt.” While this fence looks like a barrier and a restriction, actually, it’s life-giving and life-preserving.”

But a legalist reasons, “Well, if once fence is good, then two or three…or ten are better.” Before you know it, you don’t have a yard, you’ve got a prison.

It’s why you’ll find that the most rebellious kids were often raised in the most legalistic homes. The Pharisees thought that they were more spiritual because they had so many rules and there are Christians with long lists of rules and think that’s spirituality. They put rules before relationships.

b. Legalism easily succumbs to hypocrisy. “The Lord answered him, ‘You hypocrites!’” A pastor had been preaching on the importance of daily Bible reading. He and his wife were invited for a meal at a church member’s home. While there, the pastor’s wife saw a note that the hostess had written on her kitchen calendar: “Pastor/Mrs. for dinner—dust all Bibles.”

What is hypocrisy? The word originated in the ancient world as a theatrical term. In their theaters an actor played multiple roles in the same play by disguising himself with a series of masks. For example, he might come in from one side of the stage wearing a smiling mask, as he delivered one liners to make the people laugh. Later he’d enter from the other side wearing a frowning mask as he delivered solemn, sad lines.

This actor was called a “hypocrite,” someone with two or more “faces.” Over the years this term has evolved to mean “two-faced,” describing someone who said one thing but did another, someone who pretended to be something his/her actions did not back up. Hypocrisy is presenting ourselves as something that we know we’re not. It’s a very subtle and dangerous sin.

Like this ruler of the synagogue, hypocrites want to impress others. They’re driven by pride. They want to be respected, so they put up a good front. This man tries to impress others, forgetting that God examines the heart and he ends up deceiving himself in the worst way. A hypocrite’s piety is a sham.

One of the most effective tools that Satan has used to keep people away from a relationship with the living God is hypocrisy. When Jesus was on this earth, His main battles weren’t with raw pagans. His main conflicts were with the religious crowd. Down through the centuries, Satan, the master counterfeiter, has infected churches with hypocrisy and externalism to keep people from a genuine, heart-transforming experience with God.

c. Legalism exposed results in freedom and celebration. “As He said these things, all His adversaries were put to shame, and all the people rejoiced at all the glorious things that were done by Him.” Jesus uses the language of freedom and bondage. The synagogue leader used the word for healing but Jesus keeps coming back to the words for freedom, the words for releasing and loosing the bonds. Jesus is pointing out that something greater than healing is taking place. The synagogue leader talks about the finer points of the Law, while Jesus talks about freedom.

When this woman experienced Jesus’ healing touch, she glorified God. The purpose of Jesus’ ministry was to deliver people from Satan’s power so God would be glorified. Hypocrites glory in themselves. Those with a relationship with Jesus know it’s by God’s grace and give Him all the glory. As Matthew Henry (picture) observes, “When crooked souls are made straight, they will show it by their glorifying God.” Or, as the psalmist exults, “Blessed is the one you choose and bring near, to dwell in your courts! We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, the holiness of your temple!” (Ps. 65:4). The goal of the one who’s truly met Jesus is to glorify God.
Before we move to the next section, let’s ask an important question: Who are you in the story? Are you the hurting woman that Jesus healed and was free? Or, are you the religious critic? Do you split hairs over minutiae, or do you get excited about what God is doing in your life and the lives of others?

3. The power of the Gospel is way beyond the bent of our imagination. These two parables in verses 18-21 are here to encourage all who serve the Lord Jesus with the simple truth that His side is going to win. The mustard seed will grow into a tree with the birds nesting in its branches. The leaven will spread throughout the whole lump “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever” (Revelation 11:15). Luke links these parables to the preceding account of the woman healed with that word “therefore.”

These two parables show that in spite of small and seemingly insignificant beginnings, the gospel will prevail. Even though there is conflict, though the task seems overwhelming, God’s purpose through Christ will ultimately triumph. Though there are some different lessons, both parables make the same point, ultimately God’s kingdom will triumph.

a. The Gospel has external power. “He said therefore, What is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it? It is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his garden, and it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air made nests in its branches.”

Have you seen the movie, The Founder (picture)? It’s the story of Ray Kroc and beginning of McDonald’s. Ray Kroc was a traveling salesman and sold a variety of products. Ultimately, he was selling milk shake mixers when he visited a small, but lively little hamburger restaurant run by the McDonald brothers, because they’d bought several of his mixers. Seeing something unusual in their restaurant, Kroc developed a vision for a nationwide chain bearing the brothers’ name. The corporation started in 1955 in California. One hundred million burgers had sold by 1958. Today there are over 13,000 McDonald’s in the U.S. with another 30,000 in 120 other countries. McDonald’s is an example of enormous growth from a small start.

The mustard seed is the smallest seed that was sown by Palestinian farmers and yet it grew in a very short time to the biggest of all kinds of plants that were grown from seeds. Consider the amazing power in a seed. Throw a small seed near the foundation of your house and it may eventually crack that foundation. We’ve all seen sidewalks buckled because a tree seed had been sown nearby. The power in a seed is the power of life. Sequoia trees that stand 300 feet tall and are almost 30 feet in diameter are contained in a small seed that you can easily hold in the palm of your hand. Put that seed into the ground and the life in it will produce that mighty tree.

The seed of the gospel is powerful because God uses it to impart His very life to sinners, transforming them from the inside out. It’s so powerful that it can transform not only individuals, but whole cultures.

Notice that there’s no glory to the man who sowed the seed. We don’t even know his name. He didn’t do anything spectacular or heroic. The power was not in him or in the slick way he put the seed into the ground. He hadn’t taken a course in how to get guaranteed results through proper planting techniques. He just threw out the seed and let it do its thing. Sure, he may have watered it and protected it from the elements and fertilized it. But he had nothing to do with making that seed grow.

The seed grew because of the life within it. Others marveled at how that big tree came out of that little seed. It’s the same way with the gospel. While we may benefit from learning how to present the gospel in a clear manner, we have nothing to do with the power of it. The power comes from God imparting His life to dead sinners. When God acts through the gospel, all we can do is marvel at His great power to transform lives. Those who sow the seed can’t take any glory. God gets all the glory.

Think of the powerful results that can come from a single seed. Thousands of new seeds are produced, each capable of producing thousands more life-giving seeds. Birds found shelter in the tree that resulted from this single seed. This is probably a reference to the Gentiles who find shelter in the gospel (Ezek. 17:23). All who nest there find safety and peace with God, freely provided. The Bible shows that the preaching of the gospel will result in myriads from every nation gathering around God’s throne, singing praises because of His saving grace. God’s means of accomplishing His glorious purpose is through His people sowing the seed of the gospel.

We forget the power of the gospel! In his book, Witness Essentials (picture) Dan Meyer lists out some statistics about the growth of the church around the world. We only have time for a few. Did you know that more people in the Islamic world have come to Christ in the last 25 years than in the entire history of Christian missions? In Islamic Indonesia, the percentage of Christians is now so high (around 15%) that the Muslim government will no longer print statistics. In China, it’s estimated that there are now more believers than members of the Communist party. Even the most conservative estimates suggest that China will
soon have more Christians than any other nation. Across the planet, followers of Jesus are increasing by more than 80,000 per day with 510 new churches forming every day.

**b. The Gospel has internal influence.** “And again He said, ‘To what shall I compare the kingdom of God? It is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, until it was all leavened.’” J.C. Ryle (picture) reminds us, “Let us learn from this parable never to despise the day of small things...” No one thinks about yeast, but it has such power and influence.

Three measures is 60 lbs. of flour. It’s bread enough to feed a huge crowd, a whole village. But the yeast is invisible. Many times the kingdom of God is like that. It looks like nothing is going on but God’s power is working. There are times when its growth is almost imperceptible. It was true of Christ’s first coming when the glory of His deity was concealed by His humanity As Charles Wesley (picture) wrote in our Christmas hymn, *Hark the Herald Angels Sing,* “Veiled in flesh the Godhead see; hail the incarnate Deity.”

The yeast must come in contact with warm water for the power to be unleashed. Once the contact is made, the power works from the inside out. That is how the gospel works as God transforms the hearts of sinners.

Like a mustard seed, yeast is “alive.” There are thousands of living, plant-like micro-organisms. When activated by warm liquid and fed by sugar or starch, the yeast releases tiny bubbles of carbon dioxide gas. This gas is what makes the dough rise and achieve its light texture after baking. Yeast acts as a catalyst to change the nature of bread dough. Just a tiny bit of yeast can affect an entire lump of dough.

That’s the point Jesus is making. The kingdom of God is a living catalyst that changes every part of your life. You can’t have an encounter with God and stay the same. Yeast works invisibly on the inside of the dough. Religion tries to change people from the outside. It’s interested in appearances. The Kingdom of God works invisibly on the inside of your life. Like yeast, God changes you from the inside out. The Kingdom of God is not outward appearance or behavior, it’s the inner righteousness of the Holy Spirit.

And you can’t reverse the process. Once you introduce yeast into the dough, it does its thing. Once the gospel penetrates a heart and regeneration takes place, it can’t be stopped. Salvation is followed by progressive sanctification.

Our task is to bring the leaven of the gospel into contact with the mass of humanity. God’s job is to bring about new life. Salvation doesn’t depend on man, but on the grace and power of God. It permanently changes a life. Has the Kingdom of God come into your life and revolutionized it?

**Conclusion:** As I read my Bible and see what God did in the book of Acts and the early church, I too often think – that was then, but this is now. And I get discouraged…and I know that you do. I pray for lost family and friends. I share the Gospel when I can…and nothing seems to happen. But God is still working. The Gospel still has power. It may be a bent over life, someone who has suffered for years that God will use us to touch. God loves to take the bent and broken, and straighten them out.

It was a synagogue service that crowd would never forget. I want God to do that here with us…don’t you? As I was preparing this, an old poem came to my mind. It beautifully pictures what Jesus does when He touches sinners who are bent out of shape with the weight of sin. It’s about an old violin (picture)

'Twas battered and scarred,
And the auctioneer thought it
hardly worth his while
To waste his time on the old violin,
but he held it up with a smile.

"What am I bid, good people", he cried,
"Who starts the bidding for me?"
"One dollar, one dollar, Do I hear two?"
"Two dollars, who makes it three?"
"Three dollars once, three dollars twice, going for three,"

But, No,
From the room far back a gray bearded man
Came forward and picked up the bow,
Then wiping the dust from the old violin
And tightening up the strings,
He played a melody, pure and sweet
As sweet as the angel sings.

The music ceased and the auctioneer
With a voice that was quiet and low,
Said "What now am I bid for this old violin?"
As he held it aloft with its' bow.

"One thousand, one thousand, Do I hear two?"
"Two thousand, Who makes it three?"
"Three thousand once, three thousand twice,
Going and gone", said he.

The audience cheered,
But some of them cried,
"We just don't understand."
"What changed its' worth?"

Swift came the reply.
"The Touch of the Masters Hand."

"And many a man with life out of tune
All battered and bruised with sin
Is auctioned cheap to a thoughtless crowd
Much like that old violin
A mess of pottage, a glass of wine,
A game and he travels on.
He is going once, he is going twice,
He is going and almost gone.

But the Master comes,
And the foolish crowd never can quite understand,
The worth of a soul and the change that is wrought
By the Touch of the Masters' Hand.

My friend, has Jesus touched you? If not, let Him touch your life today!