



FENCES: On the Farm & In Our Lives

For the last few weeks and months, I have been working feverishly to build fencing on the pasture donated for the Cattle for Christ herd. Thanks to God's faithfulness and the generosity of our donors, the CCI herd is growing rapidly-at times more rapidly than my fence building ability.

The greatest challenge has been to build enough quality fencing fast enough to keep up with herd growth while also making sure that the fence construction is suited for the various types and temperaments of cattle we receive. The actual land boundaries are fixed and non-negotiable, but the individual fences vary from pen to pen, according to the needs of the individual cattle to be contained.

After the November devotional I received a very encouraging letter from our new friends, Davis and Mary Thompson in Vincent, AL. In his letter, Mr. Thompson shared some of "life's lessons" that he had learned on the farm, many of those lessons involving fencing. His thoughts stirred my heart and mind as I was reminded that on the farm and in our personal lives, there are always fences to build, fences to mend, fences to maintain, and fences to tear down. Perhaps in the upcoming months, I will be able to address each of these topics and the many truths to be learned from them.

Fences are an absolute necessity in our personal lives and on any livestock operation. You have heard of the open range days when stock ran freely wherever they wanted to go without any fences. Fortunately, those days are long gone, especially in these parts. Think about the chaos this practice would cause now with our current population densities and heavy traffic on the roadways.

Imagine your closest neighbor hauling in trailer loads of cattle, hogs, horses or goats and just turning them out on his unfenced property. How long would it be before the animals came visiting your place, eating your pasture (and yard), breeding your stock, destroying what you have worked so hard to build? Your neighbor would probably benefit financially from not having to feed or house his livestock, but all his gain would be at your expense and the expense of others! How long would it be before you and everyone else around you had a problem with this practice and with this neighbor?

This scenario may sound far-fetched, but it has happened before when the prices fell out of the hog market. I hear it is happening now in some parts of the country since the horse kill market was discontinued leaving prices plummeting. Some irresponsible owners are turning out their horses to roam free rather than having to buy feed. The scenario may not be as far fetched as it first seemed.

Many people today, under the guise of 'Freedom of Speech' or even 'Freedom of Religion' want us to believe that we too should be able to live our lives without any boundaries, any restrictions, any fences, and without any concern for how our fellowman is affected by our actions. They also do this without any regard or respect for the Holy God who established the boundaries and directed the building of the fences in our lives; fences that are designed to guide our thoughts and actions, and govern how we relate to God and to one another.

Some refer to these God established boundaries and fences as legalistic and oppressive-a list of do's and don'ts that Christians have to live by-when in fact they are rooted and bathed in

love. God's boundaries and fences are for our safety, our good, our protection, and the good of our neighbors and all of humanity. They not only make our world a better place, but they show us our sin. They keep us from trespassing on our neighbors, they keep our neighbors from trespassing on us, and they help us to not trespass against our Holy and Loving God. This is important because trespassing is a serious matter and almost always leads to broken or damaged relationships between the parties, whether it be other people or God.

The word "trespass" in Scripture is almost always associated with sin and is sometimes used interchangeably with sin. Scripture reveals that sin is a "trespass" against God and "trespass" is a sin against God, both of which must be atoned for by the shedding of blood. Most often when we trespass against God, we trespass against someone else as well. Praise God for the blood of Jesus that was shed to atone for our sin and our trespasses!

Fencing also teaches us to trust and depend on the shepherd or the rancher to provide for us what we need within the fenced parameters. The Lord Jesus is the Good Shepherd (John 10:11-15) who lays down his life for his sheep. If we know that he loves us enough to give his life for us, then it is a given that He is trustworthy and caring enough to meet all of our needs and sustain us within the parameters He has ordained. In fact, His Word promises that He will do so in Philippians 4:19: "And my God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus."

If God's Word is true, then we can know without a doubt that God not only loves us and is faithful to sustain us, but He also knows what is best for us. Therefore we can trust His character, His integrity, His knowledge, and the genuineness of His love enough to know that the boundaries He has ordained in His Word are liberating instead of oppressive. They protect us and point us to Jesus. He alone took upon Himself the burdens of our sin and the guilt associated with our trespasses against God and others. This is Grace!

God has indeed set moral boundaries for our lives. As we place our faith in Jesus and yield our lives to Him, we find freedom, sanctuary, and contentment that could never be found living outside His will. As you begin the New Year, I encourage you to surrender your life fresh and anew to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. He is the Good Shepherd and He cares for you.

Blessings in Christ Jesus,

Glenn
2 Cor. 5:15

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