

The False Religion of the Scribes and Pharisees

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Date: 03 January 2021

[0 : 00] Please open your Bibles to the Gospel of Matthew, and today we're looking at chapter 23, the first 12 verses, Matthew 23, verses 1 through 12.

Matthew 23, verses 1 through 12.

Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, the scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat. So do and observe whatever they tell you, but not the works they do, for they preach, but do not practice. They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger. They do all their deeds to be seen by others, for they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long, and they love the place of honor at feasts, and the best seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the marketplaces, and being called rabbi by others. But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all brothers. And call no man your father on earth, for you have one father who is in heaven. Neither be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Christ. The greatest among you shall be your servant. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

Let's pray together. Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word, and we pray that you would open your word by your spirit now and help us to understand the truth of your word, even the restrictions that are placed here, and the condemnation, the judgment upon the Pharisees and scribes, Lord, that we would understand these things, that we would not fall prey to them, and Lord, that you would show us a better way through your word. We ask this in Christ's name. Amen.

I want to remind you all where we are in the Gospel of Matthew. We're still just a couple of days away from the crucifixion. Jesus entered Jerusalem a few days ago. He's been in Jerusalem, and now we're approaching the crucifixion. You may remember that Jesus has just questioned the Pharisees about the Christ, and we're showing how that was the first time that this had happened. The Pharisees and others had come and asked Jesus, but if you were to look back, back in chapter 22, verses 34 and following, Jesus, you see them asking about the greatest commandment, and then Jesus' response to that was he asked them, whose son is the Christ? And he spoke of David saying, the Lord said to my Lord, and we looked at that last time when we were in Matthew. And so Jesus just questioned them, and he's shown them that the Christ is not only the son of David, but it is also the Lord, David's Lord, the son of God. And so now he addressed today's passage. What we're looking at today is addressed to the same crowd of disciples and others who were gathered around to whom he just spoke in the previous one. So we have to understand that if Jesus asked the question to the Pharisees, verse 41 of 22, now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question.

[3 : 34] And so it's the same crowd that's still gathered around, those who are observing, the disciples who were present, but also some of the Pharisees who had been asked. And so he's speaking now to the same crowd, and here he rebukes the false religion of the Pharisees, again, who were no doubt present, even as he rebukes their false religion.

And there's two things in particular he deals with that I'm going to look at as two points in our message. He condemns their inconsistent lives, and he condemns their pride. And so I want us to look at those two things, inconsistent lives and pride in the sermon. But finally, I want us to consider, in closing, how we should live in contrast to the Pharisees. And the condemnation that they receive would not fall on us, that we would avoid such condemnation. So first, let's look at their inconsistent lives. And really, we can summarize this in what Jesus says, is they don't practice what they preach. That's become a very popular phrase in our culture today. People not practicing what they preach. And here we have really probably the source of that saying, but we have the Pharisees here in Jesus saying they don't practice what they preach. They live inconsistent lives. Starting really in verse two, he says that they sit on Moses's seat. Now, what this means is that they really were the interpreters of the law. You think if the law came through Moses, the Ten Commandments were given through Moses. And so these Pharisees were those who would interpret the law. And

they were the teachers of the law of Moses. And so they sit on Moses's seat in somewhat of a continuation, not a prophetic sense. The Pharisees weren't prophets. But in terms of God's law coming through Moses to man, you can imagine that day God's law was coming, as it were, through the Pharisees and to men.

They interpreted the law. They taught the law. And so they told the people how the law was to be applied to certain situations. And I think what we see in verse three is that some of what they said was good, at least. Jesus says, do what they say. Listen to what they teach. Maybe we could condition that. I think this is implied as well, that in as much as they're teaching what Moses's law is, what the word of God is, what Moses taught, as long as they're teaching the word of God, obey it. Don't oppose them just because they're bad teachers.

We could probably make further application today to say, we understand today that there are many false teachers that proclaim themselves to be Christians and pastors and bishops and apostles and who knows what else. And there are ways in which we would encourage you to avoid such false teachers. And we ought to. And we see that in the New Testament. At the same time, we could say, though they're false teachers, some of what they say is true. And our prayer is that people sitting under such false teaching would heed what's true that they say. And Jesus here is encouraging them to listen to what they say in regards to the word. In as much as it agrees with the word, or it is the word itself, heed the word as it's taught. I think this helps to distinguish between the word of God and the false teachers of it. When Jesus condemns the scribes and Pharisees, he's not condemning the law of Moses or the word of God more broadly. And I think that's why Jesus conditions this. He wants us to understand what he's about to say about the Pharisees doesn't mean that the law of Moses is no good, that God's word is no good. He's not condemning the teaching. He's condemning the false teacher.

And obviously there is some aspects that they're teaching that are false that must be condemned. But as much as they teach the law of God, the law of Moses, his word, that's not condemned. But these men must be. So his condemnation falls solely on these leaders, these Pharisees. I think another way that we ought to think about this is that today, even the failure of ministers does not condemn the truth of the word which they taught. It's been unfortunate that we've seen a number of pastors who have fallen into sin, who have really made a mockery of their faith. And what do you do with that if you've sat under such teaching and you see people who were really false converts who were preaching the word?

[7 : 49] We have to realize that some of what they taught was true, that God has given the ability even for unbelievers to understand the word of God and to even teach it at times. So the condemnation of such men doesn't necessarily negate all that was taught. Although we ought to be careful, not just of their teaching, but the teaching of any man. We ought to be Bereans who are going to the word of God and saying, does this match up with the word of God? As much as it does, we can follow it. But if it doesn't, we have to throw it aside. But Jesus goes on in verse three, he says to do as they say and not as they do. So do and observe whatever they tell you, but not the works they do for they preach, but they do not practice. And so they're to follow true teaching, but not the example of the Pharisees.

So the Pharisees, if we just begin, I said our big consistency is, excuse me, our big category for this point is inconsistent lives. And so what we're seeing already is that they're teaching things that are true, but they're not doing the very things they're teaching. They're falling short of these things. They were hypocrites whose words and actions did not match up. They said to do one thing, but then they didn't do it themselves.

You have to realize as well that when we see Jesus's condemnation, the Pharisees, there is some degree maybe of ignorance that's going on, but there's also a great degree of knowledge, of understanding that's happening, right? For them to be able to teach the word of God rightly, they have to be able to understand the word of God. And so they're teaching things that are true, but they're not doing the very things that they're teaching that are true. So understand that when we speak of this hypocrisy, we are saying as well, not just that they got some things wrong. And I think even when we talk about false teachers, there are people who are just really getting things wrong and trying their best. Pray for such people. There's also people who know what's true and they choose to teach what's false. And here in this instance, the Pharisees, they know what's true. They're teaching things that are true. And Jesus is saying, you do those things, but understand this, the Pharisees aren't doing those things. They're not doing the very things that they are teaching,

that they know are right, that they know are true. God's word tells us as well that there's a greater judgment for teachers. We're warned, don't be quick to be a teacher because a greater judgment is going to fall upon teachers. And I think in particular, that greater judgment is exactly in relation to this.

You're teaching things that are true, but are you living those things out? And here the Pharisees are teaching things that are true, but they won't live them out. I think we have to understand as well, though, that there's a degree to which this is true of all men, and we want to be careful.

There's not one of us who doesn't say things that we fail to do ourselves, say true things. I think for those of you in the room who are parents, how many times do we tell our kids to do things that we know are right and true from God's word, and then we fell short of doing them ourselves? We can get on to our kids for lying, and then there are times they call us out because we told a lie, and our hypocrisy is put before us. So does that mean that we don't ever say those things? No. And unfortunately, that is somewhat of where our culture is headed, isn't it? We can't say anything's wrong or right. Who are we to judge? No. We are to teach and preach what's true of God's word, but there's a realization that there are ways we're going to fail. All of us sin, all of us fall short of the glory of God. None of us are going to measure up to that standard. That doesn't make it wrong for us then to teach that standard. We're to teach what's true even when we fail, and I want to be careful and say that's true of your pastor as well. You understand that, right?

[11 : 41] I'm not perfect. I'm not always getting it right, and so when I read this passage, I feel convinced because there are times in which I stand up here in the pulpit. I have to preach things I know I need to hear. Lord willing, every week I need to hear what's preached in the word, but there are ways in which I know I'm not living up to the very thing I'm calling you to do.

I pray and hope that doesn't make me a hypocrite because my desire is that I submit to that word too. I need to be taught by the word just as you need to be taught the word, and so if that's true of all men, if that's true of your pastor, why is Jesus calling these men out? Well, first I would say the realization of our hypocrisy ought to point all of us to our need for Christ, for a need of a Savior, for the realization that we all need forgiveness that's found only in Christ. We all need his perfect righteousness given to us because none of us can be perfectly righteous, and so as we look at this, I think all of us ought to feel convicted. There are ways in which all of us say things that are true that we don't do ourselves, and so we're reminded of our need for the gospel, of our need for Christ. Are we ultimately depending upon our work or upon Christ's finished work? Whose works are we depending upon? And so I think that even, that question helps us to get some into what's going on with the Pharisees. The Pharisees aren't those who are acknowledging, look, we don't live up to that standard, and we need the help of God's grace, and we need Christ.

They're pretending as though they obey it, and we see that as we go on that they like to be seen as righteous. They like to be seen as the teachers. They like to receive places of honor.

We're going to look more at that in our next point, but for now, I think Jesus' condemnation falls heavily upon them because they pretend as though they do obey it. They imagine that they are the keepers of the law when they themselves don't keep the law. And in fact, they go on, we see in verse 4, Jesus says, they tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people's shoulders, which in itself would be a crime. But they themselves are not willing to move with it, move them with their finger. And so they won't lift a finger to do the things that they're laying upon other people.

They lay heavy burdens upon people.

[14 : 17] They expected not only perfect obedience to the law, which we understand from God's words impossible, but they added to the law. I think when Jesus is speaking to them laying heavy burdens, he means not just the expectation that you perfectly obey the law, which itself would be a burden too heavy to bear, right? We understand, I think of today that there are, I think, denominations or religions that are teaching this kind of thing, that if we're going to be right with God, we have to perfectly obey the law. We have to never sin. Even some who teach that after you become a Christian, that you don't sin. Do you know what heavy burden that is?

Just imagine trying to lie to yourself all the time and say, what I did, that wasn't really sin. That wasn't sin. You know, to imagine that we could live a life without sin, that's too heavy a burden for any of us. But remember what we just said, all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God and are in need of the forgiveness that's in Christ Jesus.

Jesus. And so heavy burden number one is they say you have to be perfect. You must obey the law of God like we do perfectly. But the second heavy burden I think they lay upon people is that they

were adding to the word of God. And so we have examples of writing from that time of things where you have, for example, the Lord's day or the Sabbath, you were to obey the Sabbath. Well, they'd make prescriptions on how many feet that allows you to walk in a day.

What kind of work can be done? What can't be done? And so you get further and further away from it. Maybe we can imagine even as hedging the law. If you want to make sure you don't break the law, let's say you want to make sure you don't speed. And so you say, well, I'm going to make it a rule for me that I never go five miles an hour under the speed limit or 10 miles an hour under the speed limit just to make sure that I don't accidentally slip up and break the speed limit. Well, that sounds good, but now you made a law that isn't the law. You made a law that's more strict, a heavier burden that was already placed upon you by the law of the speed limit. We can imagine this being applied to so many other religious areas. And this is what the Pharisees were doing. They were adding and adding and adding more laws that weren't included in the law of Moses. Arbitrary laws, things that they added themselves. And so we've seen some of those already as we looked at the Gospel of Matthew about washing your hands. And when you wash your hands, I won't make any application to today, okay? But we saw that they added all kinds of rules about what that looked like and how that was to be done. And then when Jesus and his disciples don't do it, they judge them. Jesus is quick to point out that's not a part of God's word. Some of this as well, we're going to see, I kind of stopped our passage here at verse 12, but Jesus immediately follows his teaching by proclaiming seven woes or seven prophetic judgments upon the Pharisees.

And Lord willing, as we continue to look through this, we're going to look at those. And as we look at those, we're going to see some of the ways in which they added to the burden. But they created these heavy burdens upon others and expected them to obey it. But we read in verse four that they wouldn't lift a finger to do it themselves. And I think what's implied here is that they made no effort. The fingers, the least of things we can move to try to make an effort. They made no effort to try to obey that themselves. They expected others to obey it perfectly. They themselves made no effort to obey it. So they don't even attempt to live by the standard by which they impose on others. They pretended that they were obeying it, but they made no attempt even to obey what they expected others to obey. So they publicly enforce a religious standard that privately they did not keep.

[18:12] I think even as we think of what it means to be a Christian, a true Christian seeks not to burden other Christians. We've been talking about the idea of equipping the saints for the work of ministry in our church. And that part of what equipping is, is we're investing in others, that we want to help others to be sanctified, to move to the right, to be more like Christ. And so if that's what we see is the proper picture of what Christianity is, our goal is to help other Christians to become more like Christ, to be sanctified, or to become Christians, then we understand that the Pharisees are doing the very opposite of that. They're laying a burden that's heavy. They're making no attempt to lift it. They're making no attempt to help others, but they're burdening other Christians, or they're burdening others in ways that they're in no way helping with.

So Christians are seeking to help other Christians. I think, for example, the Jerusalem Council. You think of the Old Testament and all that's applied there. The Jerusalem Council met with this question. What expectation should we have upon Gentiles to conform to Jewish standards if they're going to be Christians? And in Acts 15, 28, we read, for it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay on you no greater burden than these requirements. And there's a few that are listed there. But what I want you to see is that it seemed good to us and the Holy Spirit to lay on you no greater burden than these requirements. They made it as simple as it could. We don't want to lay burdens upon you. The Holy Spirit is burdening us not to lay burdens upon you, which is very contrary to what we see of the Pharisees. And Paul says in 1 Corinthians 9, 12, nevertheless, we have not made use of this right, but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ. And so Paul had a right to expect certain things from them, but he didn't use that right because he felt like if he did, it would burden some people. It would be a hindrance for them coming to the gospel. And so very contrary to what we see of the Pharisees, we see Christians like Paul, the Jerusalem Council, seeking to do all they can to keep from being a hindrance to others, to not be a burden to them. And we've seen already in the gospel of Matthew, a teaching on things like in chapter 18 on forgiveness, where you're to go and try to seek forgiveness for others and help others come to repentance. And then we're mindful as well of the warnings against false teaching that I mentioned earlier that are so prevalent in the

New Testament. But for example, Acts 20, 29 through 31, I know that after my departure, fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.

And from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore, be alert. And so we're called to be alert. And we're even warned that there's going to be wolves that will come in amongst the flock, the sheep, the church. And so we have to be on guard. And I think what we see demonstrated here in the Pharisees is exactly the kind of thing that we have to be on guard against. And again, 2 Corinthians 11, 14 through 15, even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it's no surprise if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds. I thought there's a passage that lays out exactly what Jesus is dealing with. They look like angels of light. They look like righteous men who are obeying the word.

But even Satan disguises himself. And the reality is that they disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. I thought, what a great title for Pharisees.

[21 : 59] Servants of righteousness. We're servants who are seeking to make others righteous, to be righteous ourselves. But it ends with their end will correspond to their deeds.

They won't lift a finger to obey the very rules that they set. And so their end, their judgment will be in accordance with what they've done. Secondly, and related to that, is the issue of pride. They seek to be seen and receive glory.

That's kind of how it's summarized. What do we see the pride in this? The pride's demonstrated in the ways that they seek to be seen and to receive glory. And so we see in verse 5, they sought to be seen by others in everything they did.

They do all their deeds, completely inclusive, all their deeds to be seen by others. Every bit of it. Everything they did was all a show for other people.

It was all done not for the glory of God, but for self-glory. That they might be praised by others. I think this is one of the biggest challenges for us because we're so quick to judge others around us and try to say, well, there's a Christian and that person's not...

[23 : 12] And the reality is, we're not going to know. I believe it's 2 Samuel where we read of God choosing David and in that passage, it says, man looks at the outward appearance, but God examines the heart.

And that's a good reminder for us that none of us can examine the heart. All we ever do is look at the outward appearance. And so these men are doing all the right things that they might receive the praise of other men.

But their hearts are completely corrupt and inconsistent with the very things they're doing. And so as we look at this, I hope you're beginning to think about this and examine yourselves.

Why is Jesus condemning the Pharisees? And where do I fall in relation to this? And so as we look at these things, we can start to examine where do I fit with this?

And so we've already seen ways in which they said and preached things that they didn't practice. And there's going to be some of that in our lives, but is that how we're really living our lives?

[24 : 19] And one demonstration of this as we move into the second point is this. It's to be seen by others and not for the glory of God. What motivates my action? We look at the outward appearances of other people, but my hope is that you're diligent to examine your own heart.

Why am I doing this? What is my motivation for doing it? Is it so that other people will see me and praise me? Or is it so that God would be praised? That God would be glorified?

And so Jesus gives demonstrations. He says, they make their phylacteries and their fringes large. Now, some of you who have been in church may be familiar with phylacteries and heard what it means.

It's not something we have today. But phylacteries were these little scrolls containing four parts of scripture that we would all consider in terms of the parts of the Bible. They were all from the law portion of the Old Testament.

And these four passages of scripture were contained in leather and they were attached to the forehead, sometimes to the arm. So this little scroll had four passages of the Bible and they were rolled up and put in a piece of leather and then attached to the forehead.

[25 : 28] And included in these four quotations was Deuteronomy 6, 4-9. So listen, here's Deuteronomy 6, 4-9. Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your might. I could stop there and just say, just remember, we just looked at verse 34 of chapter 22.

Jesus was asked what the greatest commandment was and Jesus is pointing them back to what we see here in Deuteronomy 6. And it says, and these words that I have commanded you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise.

You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorpost of your house and on your gates. And so there's the commandment for Deuteronomy to remember these things.

And this is one of the four passages that are contained in that. Now, it'd be great if we were in Sunday school I could ask you, do we see a problem with the phylacteries and the misunderstanding of the word of God?

[26 : 41] How have these men misunderstood the passage? Where did it begin? And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.

Well, as far as I know, there was no one doing open heart surgery who was binding up scrolls on their heart. And then on top of that, what does God mean when he says they shall be on your hand and be on your forehead?

Was it literal? Well, if it's literal, why not have open heart surgery, right? Does God not mean something more than just the literal? What does it mean that we bind them to our heart?

That this is what motivates our actions, this is what guides us, this is what we live by. It affects how we move our hands and in between our eyes what we see. But rather than living by it in the heart and it affecting what they touch and what they do with their hands and what they look and what they cast their eyes upon, rather than actually obeying the word as God intended it, they obeyed it only in the outward appearance.

And so they read it in the most literal way they possibly could and misinterpreted scripture. Now, just as we think about that, it's important that we strive to understand God's word.

[28 : 08] Sometimes it sounds like I'm really understanding the word of God if I read it really literally. And that may be a misunderstanding, especially with apocalyptic writing. I think even of what Andy mentioned during the announcements.

There's ways we can literally try to interpret things and get it really wrong because we haven't understood the spirit of what God's intended from his word. And so outwardly, they look like they're obeying the word of God.

Look, we've bound it to our forehead. We've bound it to our hands. But they've done completely the opposite of what they should have done. They never applied the word to the heart. It hasn't affected how they lived.

They only did it so that it could be seen by others. And we could say that the fact that it's supposed to be on the heart meant that it was primarily to be seen by whom? Ourselves. Or by God, we might say. That it wasn't to be a show.

And they've turned it into exactly that. And when we think about why write them on the doorposts of your house or on your gates, it wasn't just to be like a cross you wear around your neck to identify you as a Christian.

[29 : 07] It was to be a reminder. And so it's saying, put it places to remind you of it. To remind you of it. This is what God's word says. This is what I want to live by.

But instead, they put it in places to show it off to others. And so they made it large, it says, even. So why make it large? God's word doesn't specify how big to make it.

It'd be a lot more convenient if it was small. I think of today how convenient it is to carry the whole Bible on your phone in your pocket. You can read it anytime you want to. But you can imagine as well the guy who brings his study Bible.

Study Bibles are great. I love a study Bible. But imagine you carried your study Bible around tied to your chest all day. Got my study Bible with me. I'm going to pop it out whenever. Right? There are ways you can do it discreetly that you're not trying to show off your holiness.

And so they made it large specifically so people would know look how big their phylacteries are. And so they might be seen as being more holy than others.

[30 : 08] And then the fringes come from Numbers 15, 37 through 40. The Lord said to Moses, speak to the people of Israel and tell them to make tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations and to put a quarter blue on the tassel of each corner.

And it shall be a tassel for you to look at and remember all the commandments of the Lord to do them, not to follow after your own heart and your own eyes, which you are inclined to whore after. So you shall remember and do all my commandments and be holy to your God. So the tassels were there as a reminder. What was it to remind them of? To do the commandments of God. God to actually be holy. But instead of using it as a reminder, they made them big so other people would see them and think they were holy. It was all to be seen by others instead of what God intended.

And so this was given so that they might keep the commandments and quote, not to follow after your own heart and your own eyes, which you are inclined to whore after. There's a reality of what we all are like.

[31 : 12] we're inclined to go after our own desires. And so we need reminders from the word of God that we would not pursue those desires. But instead of using it as a reminder that they wouldn't pursue it, they used it to brag or to show themselves off as being holy to others.

And so they made them large to appear to care about the law. But what did they, I mean, what is Jesus saying the Pharisees did? They followed their own desires after their own heart and their own eyes.

Which is that opposite of what the passage said. So isn't it amazing? They're carrying these things around on their head that contradict the very things they're doing and they don't see the problem with it.

And so really these are concrete examples that Jesus is giving of ways they sought their own praise from others without obeying God. And as I've said already, we're going to see more as we look at the seven woes to come later in this chapter.

And then verse 6 we see that they took the places of honor in the best seats. Now you have to realize at some point if you sit somewhere there will be people who have places of honor.

[32 : 21] And it's not wrong in and of itself to have a place of honor at times. I think of even in your households it may be that the father sits at the head of the table.

There's something that's being communicated that's good and right there. But the problem here, and I think this is the significant part, is they salt these things for themselves. They salt the places of honor. They wanted to be honored and praised by other people.

The problem is loving it and seeking it for yourselves. They salt after such praise and they put religion on as a pretense to receive praise.

They wanted people to think highly of them because of how religious they were, how holy they were. And so really they made themselves into idols. Think literally what is an idol?

Something you worship. And so they've set themselves up in the places of honor that other people might praise them, other people might worship them, other people might honor them. And so they're competing with God for his honor and for his worship.

[33 : 26] That never ends well for anybody. Right? We don't set ourselves up as competitors for the glory of God. 1 Timothy 6.5 condemns false teachers who are imagining that godliness is a means of gains.

And so here are false teachers who are imagining godliness as a means of gains. They're only pretending to be godly that they might profit from it in some way. There may have been financial profit but the main way they're profiting from it is by the honor and praise that's given to them. That they're thought of well by others. And then we can contrast that with a man like David and what we read about his attitude in Psalm 84.10. David says therefore a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere.

I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness. You heard how I prayed earlier for our sister church in Argentina our missionaries there.

But I think especially in light of the day in which we're living where even in some states people are being forbidden from coming. Do we view a day in God's presence corporately gathered together for worship is better than a thousand anywhere else?

[34 : 37] Do we honor it that much? I think if we did we might have a greater problem with people telling us we can't worship. We can't gather together for worship. Now don't get flustered.

There are ways we need to be safe. We want to be careful. But do we really value worship as highly as that? A day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. But he goes on to say I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.

I would rather take the lowliest position in God's house than as it were to dwell in the mansions of those who are rich who have gained it in maybe wrong ways.

But I'd rather live there in the temple just to be a doorkeeper. To me I see in David the opposite of what I see in the Pharisees. They want to be thought well of that they might be praised.

And David says I don't care what my position is just that I can praise God. And so we see the contrast between them. In verse 7 we see some mention of titles and greetings. They appreciate or they were after greetings in the marketplace.

[35 : 43] It means called rabbi by others. I think this is just a further expression of all that we've already seen and delineated. They enjoyed greetings in the marketplace.

Why might people greet you in the marketplace? Well because they know you right? And because they want to speak to you. And so I think enjoying greetings in the marketplace just means you're all known.

You're well known in society. People know who you are. In light of everything else we've said they know how holy and religious you are. And they want to be known as someone who knows you.

Right? They want to be connected to that guy. And so these Pharisees like being the guy that people wanted to be connected to. The one that people honored and wanted to know.

The popular person. I think this was so hard probably in school.

[36 : 41] And I know that we have kids that are here in school and maybe you're facing this today. And the challenge to be popular. That you want to fit in and have people like you. And maybe we imagine how hard it was when we were kids and think it's not so bad now.

But adults we're not past it either are we? That we like to be thought well of and people to praise us. But we see there's great danger in this. They're doing it for the wrong reasons.

They want to be thought well of by other people. Instead of wanting God to be honored and known and praised. And so they love to be praised by other people.

Not God. I can say they didn't love to be praised by God. But neither did they love to promote the praise of God. We read in John 12, 42-43. Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in him.

That's Jesus. But for fear of the Pharisees, they did not confess it. So that they would not be put out of the synagogue. For they love the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God.

[37 : 47] And so again, as we apply this passage. Is that true of you today? Where are you seeking glory? Now notice, it's not condemning necessarily glory seeking.

They love the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God. It's okay to want glory from God. That God might honor us in some way.

But not before man. That we might receive glory from God specifically. And where does that glory come from? We are saying it comes from a heart that's changed. A heart that loves him and knows his truth.

That's living for him. And so the outward appearances could look identical. You could check off perfect attendance at church all year. You could have the Bible reading plan we have.

You could knock it out in two years never missing a day. You could be at corporate prayer meeting every time. You could pray every day. You could give to the church. You could do all these things to check them off your list.

[38 : 47] And there could be two people who do identical actions. And one of them is doing because he loves the Lord and is seeking to honor and glorify God. And another one is doing it because he wants others to see him and he wants to be honored and glorified.

The outward actions could look identical but the difference is what's going on in the heart. And so the question for us is do we love the glory that comes from man more than we love the glory that comes from God? What's motivating us and driving our behavior and actions?

And so what I want to close with is an application to say Christians are called to humility. If we look at the contrast of this humility we could also say perhaps faithful or consistent living.

But Christians are called to humility. So verses 8 through 12 we see. But you are not to be called rabbi for you have one teacher and you are all brothers. And call no man your father on earth for you have one father who is in heaven.

Neither be called instructors for you have one instructor the Christ. The greatest among you shall be your servant. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled. Whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

So we see in particular verse 12 they're drawing the conclusion of everything he just said in verses 8 through 11.

[39 : 58] Whoever exalts himself will be humbled and whoever humbles himself will be exalted. So if our desire is to be exalted by God if we desire the glory that comes from God we need to be humbled. We need humility and that's what he's calling us to put on.

First let me just say a word about these titles in Christians. I think some titles are necessary and unavoidable. If you're in a school even if that's a seminary or whatever there probably needs to be some distinction between who's teaching and who isn't.

Even if we think of Sunday school there may be the person who's a teacher and those of us who are there as students in the class. Some of that's going to be unavoidable. I think what Jesus is particularly speaking of is that we're not to set ourselves up in these kind of positions.

Some of those I think are obviously avoidable. We don't have you call the elders your father. We're not your father. We're not your dad. And to that extent we're not living your life for you.

You have some responsibility to do that. And yet we see in God's word that God does call elders to be overseers. To guard the flock.

[41 : 04] To shepherd them so they're to be shepherds. And so we see some titles are given in God's word. But I think what Jesus is primarily addressing here is that we're not to be self-promoting. We're not to put these titles before people or to want to be thought of as highly by others.

But humble ourselves. I mean think of the teaching of the priesthood of all believers. I think it'd be different if your pastors or elders set themselves above you as we're the teachers and you guys aren't.

We know what's right. Even as I've said already in the sermon. Every one of your pastors and elders still need to be taught by the word of God. We have to humble ourselves before the word of God.

And so I think that's part of what Jesus is addressing. He's not forbidding having titles per se. He's forbidding seeking those titles for our own praise. Or using them to be praised by others.

And in light of these we have to understand that Christ is the reality and the fulfillment of all these titles. Look at what it says here. You are not to be called rabbi for you have one teacher.

[42 : 11] And you're all brothers. And call no man your father on earth for you have one father who is in heaven. Neither be called instructors for you have one instructor of the Christ. You see every one of these. Jesus immediately falls with you're not to do this because you're to defer to Christ and at least in one instance to God the father.

You don't call people father because you've got a father. You don't call people teacher because you have a teacher. And so there's a deference to Christ who's the fulfillment of all these titles. And so even as we think about in ways in which we do use those we understand that think of what I just said about elders being shepherds.

But we understand as well that we're still under shepherds for the great shepherd. Right. The Lord is our shepherd not ultimately any man. Now I've said all along that I want you guys to be asking yourself in what ways are you like the Pharisees that we see in this example.

In what ways are there is there still hypocrisy in us. There are ways that we're not practicing what we preach. We're not living it out that we're inconsistent or we're proud. Romans 2 17 through 24 says but if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast in God and know his will and approve what is excellent because you're instructed from the law and if you are sure that you yourself are a guide to the blind a light to those who are in darkness and instructor the foolish a teacher of children having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth you then who teach others do you not teach yourself while you preach against stealing do you steal you say that you that excuse me you who say that one must not commit adultery do you commit adultery you who abhor idols do you rob temples you who boast in the law dishonor God by breaking the law for as it is written the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.

Now Paul there writing to the Jews and I think obviously Pharisees would be included in this and some of what we've already seen falls right into that but Christian is there ways in which this is true of you.

[44 : 29] I'm a Christian. I'm a light to the blind a teacher of those who are in need of teaching but do we practice the things that we preach are we living out the very things that we're telling others that they have to live out.

How about this are there ways in which God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you. You tell people you're a Christian and then you live in ways inconsistent with that profession and blaspheme the name of Christ.

By contrast to that what God's calling us to what Jesus is calling us to here is we're called to live humbly with the knowledge that God will raise up and he will bring down. So we all ought to live in light of what we see in verse 12.

Whoever exalts himself will be humbled and whoever humbles himself will be exalted. Likewise we read in Luke 18 9 through 14 Jesus also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and treated others with contempt.

Two men went up to the temple to pray one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee standing by himself prayed thus God I thank you that I'm not like other men extortioners unjust adulterers or even like this tax collector.

[45 : 47] I fast twice a week. I give tithes of all that I get. But the tax collector standing far off would not even lift up his eyes to heaven but he beat his breast saying God be merciful to me a sinner.

I tell you this man went down to his house justified rather than the other. The same words are said here for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.

So here Jesus is giving us a parable commentary on this very same teaching. What does it look like to exalt yourself versus humbling yourself? We have here this Pharisee praying and he sits before God look at all the great stuff I did.

And his thankfulness is what? I thank you that I'm not like other people. I thank you that I'm so great. And I think there's ways in which we as Christians can fall in that same problem. I think we ought to be thankful that apart from the grace of God we would be in some of the same sin that we see around us.

But there are ways in which we're thankful. Or maybe we hide our pride in the garment of thankfulness.

[47 : 05] And the truth is we just think we're pretty great. That we're pretty holy. That we're better than others. But the one who's justified is his tax collector.

His life doesn't look like it. Hey the other guy he's praying. He's tithing. He's fasting twice a week. Boy that's really religious. But he goes to his house unjustified.

While the man who is justified hears his prayer. God be merciful to me a sinner. Since we evaluate our own lives. How do we respond to what we've seen in this passage?

This is it. We beat our breasts and say God be merciful to me a sinner. We see ourselves as sinners. Not as righteous and holy. And we see in that that we are those in need of mercy.

We're in need of a Savior. That we're in need of Christ. And so I think again. That the greatest condemnation upon the Pharisees.

[48 : 02] Is not just their inconsistent life. It's not just their pride. But it's self-reliance. Is their not seeing their need for a Savior.

It's their refusal to go to Christ for salvation. So how ought we to respond to this sermon? And what we see in this passage? We go to Christ. For mercy. And salvation.

And we realize as well that if we're going to have humility that only comes through Jesus Christ. So I imagine a way that we can misunderstand this. We could say well God calls us to be humble.

So I'm going to try it so hard to be humble. I'm going to be the most humble person on the face of the earth. Look how humble I am. Right? And we'd get it all wrong. Wouldn't we? In our own effort if we try to be humble.

We just added that on to fasting twice a week and tithing. Haven't we? No. We go to Christ. We pray Lord humble me. We see our own sin for what it is.

[49 : 00] We know how we fall short of the law of God. And then we see the righteousness of Christ and how far short of it we fall. And we go to him for grace. And so humility is demonstrated in this parable by saying God be merciful to me.

Because humility says I need mercy and I need a savior. And then I want to encourage you as well that it's not an all out condemnation upon good works.

In fact what we see is that God saved us for good works. But the good works that we do must be to the praise and glory of God and not ourselves. We're not doing things that we might be praised.

And so Christian we've always got to be examining our hearts. Why am I doing this? What's my motivation for this? Is it for God or not? For whom are you living your life? Is it for God or is it for yourself?

Maybe a really searching question is this. Whose praise are you more concerned about? Yours or God's? If someone doesn't give you the honor that you deserve how quick are you to be upset about that versus God not getting the praise he deserves.

[50 : 10] My prayer in light of this passage is that we would live in humility and faith in Christ going to him for mercy and that we would seek to live all our lives no matter what we do for the praise and glory of God and not ourselves.

Let's pray together. Dear Heavenly Father we do thank you for your word and we pray that you would use that word today to convince us.

Lord that you would show us ways in which we're inconsistent ways in which we're hypocritical. Show us our own sin. We pray that you would humble us that in due time we might be exalted. And Lord we pray that you'd forgive us for the ways in which we have exalted ourselves and that you would draw us into yourselves. We pray for any of this room who's still living that way. Lord maybe who are even fooling us who look outwardly to be very good but who have never trusted in Christ for their salvation.

Lord we pray that you would save them today. That they would join with that tax collector crying out to oh Lord be merciful to me a sinner. Lord we pray that you would humble us.

[51 : 18] And we pray that in our lives that you might be exalted that you might be glorified as we depend on every moment in every instance on you. We pray this all in Christ's name.

Amen. Amen. Paul exhorts the church in Philippi to have this mind amongst yourselves which is yours in Christ Jesus who though he was in the form of God did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped but emptied himself taken in the form of a man a servant being born in likeness of men being found in human form he humbled himself but becoming obedient to the point of death even death on a cross.

Let's sing of that in number 239 Who is this so weak and helpless? 239. Please stand. Who is this so weak and helpless?

How lowly he grew made? Who is this so weak and helpless? Who is this so weak and helpless? Holy in a manger laid? Tis the Lord of all creation who this wondrous path has gone He is God from everlasting and to everlasting and to everlasting?

[52 : 56] God Who is this so weak and helpless? Who is this so weak and helpless? He lives our way Homeless weary, dying, keeping O mercy and Satan sway Tis our God, our glorious Savior, who above the starry sky.

Help for us a place preparing where no fear can give the eye. Who is this beholden shagging from some light upon the ground?

Who is this despised rejected, locked in, stanchied, beaten bound? Tis our God who gives and places on His earth is pouring down.

Who shall spite in holy vengeance all His walls beneath His throne?

Who is this man who reigns their dying, found of good world's thoughts and storms?

[54 : 35] Hungered with a maled fractures, torn with nails and crowned with horns. Tis our God who lives forever, in the shining clouds on high.

In the glorious golden city, reigning everlastingly. Therefore, God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, so that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

To the glory of God the Father. Amen.