

A Message to Legalists

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[0:00] If you're visiting with us and you need a Bible, you should find one in the chair, pocket, or excuse me, underneath the chair in front of you. You should, should, be a black Bible there and go to the back of that Bible and find page 19.

Page 19, we're going to do all of Matthew chapter 23. I thought about breaking it up, but it's too depressing.

I didn't want to do that. It's just a hard passage. And you only find this, I mean, there's remnants of this in Luke, but really the, just the amount of weight that's here, it's only in Matthew's gospel. But yet we can learn from this, and so we will, because God is good bringing us principles that shoot through culture. Matthew chapter 23, I'll read, and then we'll jump in.

Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to the disciples, saying, The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses.

[1:12] Therefore, all that they tell you do and keep, but do not do according to their deeds. For they say and do not, and they tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men's shoulders.

But they themselves are unwilling to move them with a finger. But they do all their deeds to be noticed by men, for they broaden their phylacteries and lengthen the tassels. And they love the places of honor at the banquets.

And the chief seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces have been called by men, Rabbi. Do not be called Rabbi, for one is your teacher and your all brothers.

And do not call on earth your father, for one is your father, the one who is in heaven. And do not be called master, for one is your master, Christ. But the greatest among you shall be your servant.

And whoever exalts himself shall be humbled, and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted. But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you've shut off the kingdom of heaven from men, for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to enter.

[2:29] Drop down to verse 15. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.

Woe to you blind guides, who say, whoever swears by the temple, there is nothing. Whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obligated. Foolish and blind.

Which is greater, the gold or the temple that made the gold holy? Verse 18. And whoever swears by the altar is nothing. Whoever swears by the gift upon the altar, he is obligated.

Blind men. Which is greater, the gift or the altar that sanctifies the gift? Therefore, he who swears by the altar, swears by the altar and everything on it.

And he who swears by the temple, swears by the temple and by him who dwells within it. And he who swears by heaven, swears by the throne of God and by the one who sits upon it.

[3:32] Verse 23. Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you tithe, mint, and dill, and cumin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law. Justice and mercy and faithfulness.

But these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others. Blind guides who swallow the gnats and who, excuse me, strain out the gnat and swallow the camel. Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they're full of greed.

And self-indulgence, blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, so that the outside of it may become clean also. Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you're like whitewashed tombs, which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they're full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness.

In the same way you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous and say, Have we been in the days of our fathers?

We will not have been partners with them in the blood of the prophets. Consequently, you bear witness to yourselves that you're sons of those who murdered the prophets. Therefore, fill up the measure of your fathers, snakes, children of vipers.

[4 : 58] How will you escape the judgment of hell? Therefore, look, I myself am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes. Some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city that upon you may fall all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.

Truly I say to you, all these things shall come upon this generation, Jerusalem. Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her.

How often I wanted to gather your children together the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. Look, your house is being left to you desolate.

For I say to you, from now on, you will never see me until you say, Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.

There's a story about a pastor who found the roads blocked on a Sunday morning and forced him to have to skate on the river to get to the church building.

[6 : 19] And when he arrived, the elders of the church were horrified that their preacher had skated on the Lord's Day. So after the service, they held a meeting where the pastor explained that it was either skate to church or not go at all.

Finally, one elder asked, Did you enjoy it? When the preacher answered no, the board decided that it was alright. Ah, legalism, which says you can't enjoy life on Sundays.

None of you are going to enjoy life today, right? Good. That's the way it's supposed to be, right?

Legalism, which has a bunch of rules and regulations that you must follow.

It's a trap. It's a trap that we as Christians have a tendency into which to fall. Ourselves. We have that tendency.

We forget the gospel. And so when we come to this part of Matthew's gospel, bow down, worship Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of God, the King of Israel, here is a message to legalists.

[7 : 35] Here's a message to legalists. And, to those of us who deal with legalistic tendencies.

Are you prone to legalism today? Do you think you need to keep a bunch of laws to maintain God's love? Do you think it adds to your salvation?

Do you expect others to keep your laws? And then you have contempt and hatred for them when they don't. Friends, that's legalism.

That was the fallacy of the Pharisees and the scribes. Here's the culmination of Jesus' confrontation with these religious leaders. The rejection of Jesus, and anyone connected to Him, was finalized, and they would face judgment.

This chapter can be split up into three parts. Three sections. The first part, Jesus warned the crowds and the disciples of the heirs of the Pharisees.

[8 : 46] And you'll see, the disciples, they pretty much listen. The crowds, not so much. In the second section, Jesus denounced the leaders with seven woes.

He revealed their hypocrisy and their rebellion, just like their forefathers. And in the third section, he laments for the religious leaders, knowing that they would face God's judgment because they had rejected Jesus.

And it's not directed at every Pharisee that's ever lived of all time. It's those of Jesus' own day.

Really, those who are wholly rejected Him to be the Messiah, who did not repent. So what's legalism?

Legalism emphasizes rules and regulations to gain God's salvific approval, and they become ends in themselves. Rites, rituals become ends instead of the means to the end.

These are just ways for us to respond to God in relational, loving obedience. Ways to respond to God in relational, loving, caring obedience to God.

[10 : 00] He cares for us, we're going to obey Him. And legalism's not like that. And then you treat others with contempt and hatred when they don't follow your own rules and regulations and

commands.

So I want to start out here in verses 1 through 3. I'm just going to jump to verse 8 and then verses 12. But notice how Jesus begins.

Do and keep, but don't follow. Interesting, isn't it? Verses 1 through 3. He spoke to the multitudes and to the disciples, saying, scribes and Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses. What does this mean? In other words, they had Mosaic authority and would teach the people from that chair. The Pharisees and scribes had a huge voice in Jewish life.

They were in like a teaching office. And they gave, in some way, orthodox teaching, directing the people to the law of Moses, to the Old Testament, God's law.

[11:08] And look at what Jesus says. Verse 3. Therefore, all that they tell you, do and keep. Keep and do what they teach you, but do not do according to their deeds, for they say, and do not.

Don't follow their example. They say one thing and do another, which is called what? Hypocrisy. In spite of the hypocritical example, obey them.

Now, some commentators think that this is like sarcasm by Jesus. I don't think he's being sarcastic here. Follow them in principle, because they have the place of authoritative teaching, being in that chair.

So do what they say, but don't follow their example. Or don't adopt their superficial, hypocritical way of living.

They don't practice what they preach. They only burden people, because they didn't really love people, because they didn't really love God. They did actions to be seen by others, not for God.

[12:28] Oh, how easy it is to display a reputation of godliness all the while we ignore what truly is happening deep down inside of us.

It's so easy, isn't it? So easy. So the first part, Jesus says, do and keep, but don't follow.

And now I'm gonna jump to verse eight, and he wants to tell them something different. You be different. You guys stand out from these Pharisees.

You guys be different from these scribes. Look at verse eight. Don't be called rabbi, if one is your teacher, you're all brothers. Don't call anyone father, if one is your father.

Don't be called master or leader, if one is your leader, Christ. In other words, no one is inferior. God is your father. Jesus is your master. Three prohibitions, and it gives three reasons.

[13:30] Rabbi. Don't be called that. Don't be called father. Don't be called leader or master. You have one teacher, one father, one master. And you might say, well, wait a minute.

Okay, so now my kids are all thinking, great, we don't have to call dad, dad anymore. Awesome.

We've been waiting for that verse, buddy. No, it's not what he's talking about.

Within the context of what Jesus is saying is this. The problem wasn't about giving respect, but these Pharisees and scribes craving honored titles.

You see that in verses four through seven. They wanted these titles. They wanted people to respect them. They demanded that.

They thought of people that were inferior to them. And they made sure you were inferior to them.

You'll see this in just a moment. So the problem was these hypocritical leaders wanted praise and dignity given to them by humans.

[14:37] But you be different. These titles are reserved for our heavenly father, for Messiah. No, he says instead, we are all brothers and sisters in Christ.

It's not about status in Jesus' faith community. It's having a humble serving attitude. Instead of all are inferior and I'm superior, we're all part of one family.

We're all in the body of Christ. One's your master. It's Christ. One's your father. It's your father in heaven. One is your teacher. The teacher is God. And no one's inferior.

So you be different. Second, and you be humble. You be different and you be humble. Notice verse 11, but the greatest among you shall be your servant.

Because true greatness lies in being a servant. It's not the first time Jesus said that. Remember? Chapter 20. It says, greatness lies in being a servant.

[15:44] You want to be great? Serve. Want to be number one? Be last. For the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

True greatness lies in being a servant, not in having a title. We should seek to serve others. And notice Jesus says, whoever exalts himself shall be humbled. Pharisees.

And whoever humbles himself shall be exalted. How do true servants of Jesus act? They live lives of service, lowliness, and humility.

Why? Because it's just the right thing to do? No. Because of the gospel. Because Jesus was humble.

Jesus was lowly. Jesus served you. God serves you. By taking on flesh. By dying for you, Christian. [16:51] By loving you, Christian. Humbling of self to God for you, Christian. That's why Jesus says, you be different.

And you be humble. Don't be like these clowns. Thirdly exalts himself. Notice the pompous practices versus the norms for Jesus' disciples all because of Christ in the gospel.

So, go through these first parts. And now what I want to do for the remainder of our time, learn from these hypocritical religious leaders by seeing seven characteristics of legalism.

So you can fight this tendency in your own life. And what I'll do is, I'll display the characteristic and then I'll do an opposite to that.

So for example, here's the first one. Legalism is enslaving versus helping. So I'll give you like the negative that Jesus brings out, but then I'll also give you the positive one, okay?

[17:58] So I'll kind of do both for you. So I'll be it's not all like dreary. So one of the first characteristics of legalism is enslaving.

You enslave people versus, excuse me, verse four. Jesus says, and they tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men's shoulders. Interesting.

Remember what Jesus said? What was that? You know the verse. What is it? Chapter 11. For my yoke is what? Easy. And my burden is what?

Light. Interesting. Jesus is opposite to that. He's helping, right? Jesus serves. Jesus loaded his light.

They loaded their legalistic traditions on people. Burdens stood in contrast to the light load of Jesus. And not only did they lay their legalism on people, notice what he says, but they themselves are unwilling to move them with a finger.

[19:07] So they're gonna tell you all these rules and regulations, but then they refuse to help you. Heartless. Trivial matters.

Legalism is enslaving. It enslaves people to keep the laws, the rules, and regulations. Second characteristic, vainglorious versus humble.

We ever looked at that, right? Humility. Vainglorious versus humble. Their goal was human applause, known as verse 5. But they do all the deeds to be noticed by men.

So what do they do? They broaden their phylacteries. What are those phylacteries? Not a, Jesus is not saying factories, but phylacteries. Phylacteries were like leather boxes containing portions of the Torah, the law.

They put them in little boxes and they wear them on their foreheads or on the right hand, the right arm. So, the wider the box, the more portions of the Torah, the holier the man.

[20:16] If the guy has a big old thing that's like out there, you're like, wow, that guy must be really holy. Right? And that's through the first thing. Oh, the tassels too. What were those? Lengthen the tassels, he says there, the end of verse 5.

They were fringes on their prayer shawls as a reminder to pray. So, you have the big long phylacteries and then they lengthen the tassels to create a reputation for piety and godliness so other people notice that.

They want to bring glory to themselves. It was all for show. Notice he says here in verse 6, they love the place of honor at the banquets and the chief seats and the synagogues.

So, they saw these places of honor, these chief seats in the public events so they'd be noticed and then notice the third illustration he gives here and the greetings in the marketplace is being called by men rabbi, you know, a master, a great teacher.

They crave these respectful greetings and for people to call them that. They crave these titles. It was all for a show. The legalists will be all about how they look.

[21:37] The opposite of that is humility. It's not about vain glory, bring glory to yourself. You want to be humbling, you want to serve, you want to help people, it doesn't matter.

It doesn't matter what it is, it's going to serve you and help you, it's what I'm going to do. See, that's the opposite. Legalism is going to be enslaving. It's going to be all about me.

The opposite of that is going to be humility and helping. And then what Jesus does, starting in verse 13, he begins on these woes, seven woes.

And we'll continue on with our characteristics, we've done two, we'll look at the third one in just a moment. But first I want to say a word about woes. What does woe mean? Woe has the idea of anger, grief, and even warning or alarm.

Why is there anger? Because they're speaking for God against sin. Why is there grief? Because it's directed to their own people. Why is there alarm? Because doom is sure of their own people if there is no repentance.

[22:47] So when Jesus says woe, there's an element of anger and yet of grief and yet a warning. So it's all three of those mixed in, okay? So think of that when you see, when you read these woes, Jesus is like, there's passion yet, there's also grief, there's sadness, and yet there's a warning, doom is coming.

And here in verse 13 and verse 15, we see the third characteristic of legalism, which is controlling. Verses freeing.

Legalism will bring you to the point where you're not only just enslaving and about you, but you want to be controlling. Legalism's not controlling people versus freeing them in the gospel.

Look at verse 13 first. Oh, to you scribes, Pharisees, notice the word hypocrites. You shut off the kingdom of heaven from men. You do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to enter.

Let me say a word about hypocrites. He brings this out earlier in the few verses. Don't do how they do.

[24:05] Don't live how they live. Hypocrisy, hypocrites, they honor God outwardly, but their hearts were far from Him. They said one thing but did another.

It was nothing but a religious sham. They simply acted apart. That's hypocrisy. One writer says they live for fleeting human applause.

When Jesus uses this term, hypocrites, He says it six times. And then He does it a seventh time, I'm using it as an adjective. So seven times in chapter 23, He's the word hypocrite.

I think He's trying to communicate something. What do you think? They did what they did because of the effect on others, not for God. And notice how they're controlling as these hypocrites are.

They didn't enter the kingdom. Oh no. They would not believe in Jesus. But not only did they not believe in Jesus, but they make sure that you would not believe in Jesus.

[25:16] They prevented others from entering as well. So, some of the people, maybe they were considering Jesus to be the Messiah.

Messiah. And so they looked to their leaders and they saw their leaders whom they respected reject Jesus and they believed them, their leaders.

This is explained again in chapter, and later on in the chapter, verse 37. This is what they did. It's all about control. I'm going to bypass verse 14.

It seems like this is omitted by key manuscripts. It seems like they pulled that in from Mark's gospel and Luke's gospel. But notice verse 15, again, an aspect of control.

Well, to scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, you travel sea and land to make one proselyte. In other words, make a Pharisee. To indoctrinate this guy towards their religious practices and because he's zealous for his, quote unquote, new faith, he'd be completely closed off to anything different from their teaching, which is why Jesus says, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.

[26:39] They're controlling to the point where this guy who becomes a proselyte, who becomes one of their disciples, would not even consider remotely about believing in Jesus.

Legalism is about controlling people versus, controlling people to follow your rules and regulations versus the freedom of the teaching of God's word and allowing his word to change the hearts and lives of God's people.

There's probably one of the biggest differences between legalism and truth. Legalism is about controlling people to follow your rules, your laws, your regulations, but freedom is giving people the freedom of the teaching of God's word and allowing God's word to change the hearts of God's people, not your rules and regulations.

Controlling. A fourth characteristic. Disingenuous. Opposite to that, integrity.

This is verses 16 through 22. O.T. blind guides who say, and notice what they do here. Worry about the temple is nothing.

[28:00] Now if you swear by the gold of the temple, now that's a big deal. And then verse 18. You swear by the altar, that's whatever. But if you swear by the gift that's on the altar, well then you're obligated.

You know this is it. You know this is, right? This is self-convenience. I'll put it a different way.

Disingenuous versus integrity.

This is convenient oath-taking. Jesus rejected this ease and taught all oaths for valid.

One cannot lessen the obligation by some shallow distinction. The opposite to that is integrity.

Integrity is you do what you say you will do unless you forget.

You might forget, although you can use that as a cop-out too, I guess. Most of the times you forget.

I said this, well I did? I said that? My wife tells me that all the time. You said that. I did? Okay. She knows what I said.

[29:02] I will forget. My wife knows. Listen to your wives, right? It's interesting because Jesus is asking the question in verse 17, foolish and blind, which is greater?

The gold? And then later on he says in verse 19, the offering or the gift or the temple, altar, that makes the gold or that makes the gift holy, set apart, sanctified.

Duh. Well, well, I only swore by the altar and I didn't put my offering on it so it doesn't count. The oath doesn't really count because I was only swearing by the temple, I wasn't really swearing to God.

What's that? You're just doing your oath as convenience for you. And notice what Jesus says starting in verse 20. Remember, he swears by the altar, he swears by the altar and everything on it. He swears by the temple, the one who dwells in it. He swears by God's throne, by God, and the one who sits on it. Everything. Everything. You still profane the name of God by lessening the obligation if you're saying that, oh, there's no obligation because I didn't really mean it.

[30:20] Jesus is like, no, no. You are not having integrity. Simple integrity is what's called for. Actually, remember, Christ denounced all kinds of oaths.

He just says, let your yes be yes, your no be no. Why do you have to make an oath anyways? Legalism is disingenuous.

Legalism is about being disingenuous for convenience sake. Instead, we should have integrity. integrity, integrity, being honest and true at all times.

See the difference? A fifth characteristic. A knit picker. Not nose picker.

Knit picker. All my kids are like, nose picker? Great. That's in the Bible. Shoot. Knit picker versus the opposite of that is gospel focused.

[31:25] 23 to 24. Who do you scribes and Pharisees? Hypocrites. They did their tithing. Oh, they were good Southern Baptists. Southern Baptists, they do their tithe.

Mints, dill, come in. But they were less concerned about more important matters. Justice, mercy, faithfulness.

They're more concerned about unimportant issues than the main thing. Not that they shouldn't do those things. Not that they shouldn't tithe.

Because Jesus says, but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others.

That's what Jesus says. And notice, he brings out this kind of, almost funny, he does here, you blind guides who strain out the gnat and swallow a camel.

You say this, but you do that. One writer says this, quote, in their eagerness to avoid a tiny defilement, the Pharisees are polluted by a huge one.

[32:47] So true. See, friends, legalism is concerned about the meticulous details of things that just don't matter.

Mercy matters. The gospel matters. That's what should be important. That God is a just God, we're sinners and we deserve him to judge us and yet he sent Jesus who died on behalf of our sins repent and trust Christ.

That should be of vital importance. Mercy. You see, the justice of God and the mercy of God and God staying faithful to his promises, is that not much more important than just following some blasted rule.

Knitpicker versus gospel focus. Sixth characteristic. Fake. Notice the opposite.

Genuine. Verse 25. Woe to scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites. You clean the outside of the cup and of the dish but inside they're full of greed.

[34:09] Self-indulgence, blind Pharisee. First clean the inside of the cup and of the dish so that the outside of it may become clean also. They were fake.

They're all about cleaning the outside. They were concerned about how they looked with people instead of internal issues of their hearts. They looked nice and shiny but they're full of greed and self-indulgence.

They neglected the internal matters. They just had outward religiosity, no self-discipline. Oh, they would not allow their religiosity to interfere with their comfort.

Oh, no, no, no, no, no. Look at verse 27. Woe to scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites. For you're like white, you're like white to wash tombs.

Jews would whitewash the tombs as a way to delineate to people that those were tombs because after a while they would have the rain and then deteriorating and no Jew wanted to touch or be around anything that was unclean so they would whitewash the tombs so it would delineate, especially people coming into town, that's a tomb so you didn't want to touch that because it would be unclean, right?

[35:17] So when they would see these tombs, they'd look nice. They're white. They were pretty. Clean. Clean. But inside, they're full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness.

That's what you guys are like. In the same way also, verse 28, in the same way also, you outwardly appear righteous to men but inwardly, you're full of, there's the seventh one, adjective, you're full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

Heart piety versus outward piety. It was just a show. See, when clean on the inside, the heart, it will show itself on the outside by one's actions.

Mere outward change is nothing. One writer says this, David Turner in his commentary, which has just been excellent, an excellent help to me. He says, our, quote, obedience to the law must emanate from the heart.

Outwardly, lawful behavior may conceal a lawless heart. They do not truly follow God's law, which is to love God and love others.

[36:42] They were fake. Friends, is our exterior life just a mere show? When internally we're full of greed, self-indulgence, lawlessness, evil thoughts, oh God, help us to love you and to love each other.

When you come to church, church is the place where you should be real, not fake. where you come to share, not be secretive.

He says, should be, right? He has all these characteristics and the last one, which is the worst.

Blind versus attentive or know thyself. they're blind.

A legalist is blind to themselves. Speaking of tombs, verse 29, woe to scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites. You build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous.

[38:04] You would adorn these tombs who were murdered by their fathers. They would beautify it and then notice he says, and then you say, well, if we had been in the days of our fathers, we would never partner with them by doing any of this stuff.

No, no, no, no. We never do that. When in all reality, they continued in the sins of their fathers.

How? How do they do that? They rejected John and they rejected Jesus. No, no, no. They would kill him.

So they gave outward evidence of devotion to the prophets, but they took strong action against the one who actually sent the prophets.

Jesus. That's why he says here in verse 31, consequently, you bear witness to yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. You bear witness to yourself.

[39:07] You say you're sons of the murderers. Exactly. Why? Because you've rejected the greatest prophet and the wisest person, the Son of God.

So their denial and the murder of the prophets actually implicates them in their forefathers' guilt. In other words, the apple doesn't fall far from the tree or their chips off the old block.

One writer said this, prophet killers and prophet barriers belong together. That's why Jesus says this in verse 32.

32. Therefore, fill up the measure of your prophets like a command. Finish it all off. How are they going to finish it all off? By killing Jesus. It will be at the crucifixion that they fill up the measure.

And look at what he says here. Look at verse 33. Snakes, you children of vipers, you will not be able to escape the judgment of hell.

[40:20] Wow. Wow. Because of what they've done and because of what they would end up doing sooner and later. What they would do, look at verse 34.

Therefore, look at what Jesus says, behold, I myself, that's how it is in the Greek, I myself am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes. They would reject them. They would kill them. They would crucify them. They would scourge them. They would persecute them. See, murdering Jesus would indicate the rejection of his followers.

Jesus would send them and yet the rejection of Jesus would show itself by them rejecting these guys that Jesus would send to them again. And look at what he says here.

And there in verse, he says at the end of verse 34, you will kill, crucify some of them, you will scourge in your synagogues, persecute from city to city. Verse 35, that upon you may fall all the righteous blood shed on earth from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Barakida, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.

[41:34] Wow! In other words, they would fall in league with those who murdered all the prophets of the Old Testament from Abel to Zechariah with Jesus as the ultimate climactic prophet they would kill.

Abel to Zechariah. Do you realize Jesus is proclaiming the Old Testament and the validity and the inerrancy of the Old Testament? Abel to Zechariah. Wait a minute, the Old Testament doesn't end with Zechariah.

It ends in Malachi or the Italian prophet Malachi. In the Hebrew Bible, it ends in 2 Chronicles. And guess who's murdered in 2 Chronicles? Zechariah.

So from Abel, from Genesis, all the way to the end of the Old Testament, you guys will be responsible for their blood. They'll be on their heads.

Legalists. They are blind to who they really are. Which is why we need the body of Christ. Which is why we need discipleship.

[42:39] Which is why we need people speaking into our lives. That's why we need that. See here, these leaders have rejected God and His prophets, especially the ultimate prophet, interpreter of the prophets, Jesus.

Notice what Jesus says here in verse 36. Truly I say to you, all these things shall come upon this generation. What? What? What? these legalists, blind, disingenuous, nitpickers, fake, controlling, vainglorious, enslaving.

They led the people down this path and yet the result would be judgment. Jerusalem. Jerusalem. who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her.

How often I wanted to gather your children together the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings and you were unwilling. Friends, notice something.

When Jesus says, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, he's not talking about the people. This is not directed to the people. That first sight, you know, he's directed to the people.

[43:54] No, it's not. This is not directed to the people of the city. Jesus was talking about or to the scribes and the Pharisees. They were the ones who killed the prophets, right?

They were the ones who stoned those sent to her, right? He's talking about the religious leaders. They led the people and would kill those sent to her by God.

This is directed to the religious leaders. And then Jesus says, he wanted to gather your children. What's the children? The people of Israel. He wanted to gather your children, meaning those led by these false leaders and teachers, to gather them together as a hen.

But remember, what did they do? They rejected going into the kingdom themselves and they would do what? They would keep others from going into the kingdom as well. That's why Jesus says through the end of verse 37, and you were unwilling.

Who was unwilling? The leaders. They would not have it. They kept others from doing it.

[45:06] So what's the judgment? Verse 38. Look, your house is be left to you desolate. Your house, the temple, or even Jerusalem, even the nation itself.

The temple and the city represented life and the destiny of the whole nation, really. Israel's leaders had sinned by rejecting their Messiah and leading others to reject them.

For that, they be severely punished. What was it? 70 AD. The temple was destroyed.

Jerusalem was ransacked. And then later on, the 100s, Jerusalem was totally and completely destroyed. They would not nationally, with their leaders leading them, ever see Jesus again.

Notice, he says, for I say to you, you will never see me again. That's the nuance of the Greek. Ume, you'll never see me again until they say, they shout out the blessing of Psalm 118, verse 26, and mean it.

[46:19] They did it last time. They did it in chapter 21, but they didn't mean it. This was the end of his ministry to them and until he established his final kingdom, until he establishes that they would never see him again.

And just quite interesting, isn't it? The next chapter, Jesus does what? The second coming, chapter 24. These religious leaders who sat in Moses' chair would face sheer doom.

And Jesus graciously invited them again and again, but unless God does a work in the heart of people, there's no way a person will ever trust, ever love, ever fear, ever come to Jesus.

Never. Here's a warning to us. Here's a warning to us to be mindful of our tendency towards legalism, which is rejecting the gospel and all for which it stands.

We must model ourselves after Jesus. Humility, integrity, love, grace, helping, being genuine, attentive, freeing, gospel focus.

[47:37] Those are all opposites to legalism. Lord, we pray that you would give us your grace.

It's so easy for us to be caught in this trap of legalism in our own lives to gain your approval somehow, to maintain this salvation, follow these rules and regulations that we make up.

We pray that we would be a people who are humble, have integrity, love, grace, or helping, genuine, attentive, freeing.

and that we be focused on the gospel. May we be more attentive to the important matters, justice, mercy, faithfulness.

Give us your grace, we pray. I encourage you at this time to fill your minds with God's word, ponder the truths that we've seen here, that your mind be filled up with truth, gospel truth, and as we do, we take a few moments of silence for you to think and ponder and we'll worship in our giving and sing a couple more songs and closing prayer.

[49:13] Yes. May this time of just silence be a time for you to reflect, ponder, and let the word that we've seen, really the warning that we've seen here in Matthew 23, may it sink deep into your heart and soul.

Do that now, please. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Hello.