

# When Pressure Rises

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[0:00] Here in the Gospel of Luke and walking our way through the life of Christ and His mission. His mission is to save sinners. And we've seen these last couple weeks that because of that mission, sometimes people are always going to be receptive of it.

Sometimes we'd rather check boxes instead of just surrender to Him. And He's kind of dealt with the Pharisees and the lawyers, and this is kind of going to shoot off of that a little bit, because He's going to turn to His disciples now and those that are following Him and say, listen, this is what it looks like to follow, because the pressure by this point is rising.

And the question that Jesus wants us to answer and He wanted His disciples, what are you going to do when the pressure comes? What's it going to show in your life? So we're going to pick up the last couple verses of chapter number 11 and then walk into the first part of chapter number 12.

The Bible says this in verse 53, as He said these things, this dinner that He had with the Pharisees and lawyers, and He's kind of let them know how it is, the scribes and the Pharisees began to urge Him vehemently and to provoke Him to speak of many things.

Why? Because they were lying in wait for Him and seeking to catch something out of His mouth that they might accuse Him. So they're tired of Him kind of putting them down.

[1:13] You know, they were this respectable religious group. And Jesus said, listen, you look real good on the outside, but inside you're just full of dead men's bones. You're so worried about what you look like on the outside, you're just full of hypocrisy.

And so Jesus kind of takes this thought that He's kind of been dealing with, and He goes and launches into verse number 1 of chapter 12. In the meantime, when they were gathered together, an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trod upon one another, He began to say unto His disciples, first of all.

Now, I want to mention this real quick. Disciples, sometimes we just think the 12 disciples. There's going to be many people following Him. Some would have believed that He was the Messiah. There was others that were still trying to figure out exactly who He was.

They were interested in His teachings. They were thankful for His miracles. But they were kind of thinking, well, I'll just kind of ride the fence here. So Jesus is teaching them, all of those that are gathered, He says, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

For there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, neither hid that shall not be known.

Therefore, whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light, and that which ye have spoken in your closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops.

[2:28] And I say unto you, my friends, be not afraid of them that kill the body. After that, they have no more they can do. But I will forewarn you whom you shall fear.

Fear him which, after he hath killed, hath the power to cast into hell. Yea, I say unto you, fear him. Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God?

But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows. Also I say unto you, whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of Man also confess before the angels of God.

But he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God. And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him. But unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven.

And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and to the magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how, or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say. For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.

[3:35] So the tension's rising. The pressure's rising. What's going to happen now? Jesus is saying, listen, the ball's in your court. You're either all in on serving Christ, or you're going to kind of just kind of try to blend in.

And Jesus is kind of calling us through this text to examine our own life. And when pressure rises, it exposes some things about us. And we're going to look at that this morning. I think it'll be a help to us. But let's ask the Lord to bless it.

Father, thank you for this time that we've gathered. Thank you for the songs that have been sung. Thank you for the reminder that our life is to bring you glory, Lord. I pray that we would take these truths and take them home with us.

And especially as we open up your word here, Lord, that you would just meet us where we are, Lord. There's probably many things we've brought into your house today. But Lord, help us to focus on you and what you have for us today.

Lord, I pray there's somebody here that doesn't know you as their Savior, Lord. Would that be the day of salvation? Lord, I pray you'd be with me now. You would just clear my thoughts and my mind. That it'd be a help to your people. And we ask it in Christ's name.

[4:32] Amen. Thank you so much for standing. May be seated. I'm not going to ask for a raise of hands because I don't want to embarrass anybody. But did you brush your teeth this morning? I'm so proud, man.

Parenting win right there. We brushed our teeth. You know, it's an important thing to brush our teeth. And this is going to be a very deep question. What comes out when you squeeze the toothpaste container?

Toothpaste. Man, we are nailing it today. We're on fire to start out. Listen, it doesn't matter who squeezes it. It doesn't matter how hard you squeeze it. It doesn't matter what kind of day you're having or if you slept good that night.

When you squeeze it, toothpaste comes out. Why? It's a toothpaste container. Now, some of you probably this morning, this is your reminder to go to Walmart after church and buy toothpaste. Because you've been trying to squeeze toothpaste out of a container that has been empty for weeks. You're like, you know, you're like, nobody ever does that? Okay. Okay. I mean, like, man, you never remember until the very next morning.

[5:33] So here's your friendly reminder. Go to Walmart and get some toothpaste. See, the pressure does not create the toothpaste. It just reveals what was already inside of the container.

That's a simple logic that we can follow. But here's the idea as we kind of come into chapter number 12 here in our study in Luke's gospel, that the same is true spiritually. Because maybe this week, life squeezed you just a little bit.

Maybe you're looking at your schedule this upcoming week and you're thinking, man, I can just kind of feel the pressure. I can feel all the things. Maybe there's something at school. Maybe there's something at work. Maybe there's just something going on in your life and in relationships.

And the question we need to ask ourselves is, when life squeezes us, when the pressure is applied, what comes out? I mean, is it fear?

Is it silence? Is it anger? Is it compromise? Is it boldness? Is it faith? Because there are certain things that Jesus says, listen, when life presses you, I want these things to come out.

[6:37] But he's addressing a group of people, much like us today, that there was a little bit of everything in the crowd. And these disciples that he's looking at, these are ones that are at least interested and are at least following and saying, hey, we're for you, Jesus.

We're not like these Pharisees. We're not like these lawyers. We want to follow you. And he said, listen, I know you want to follow me. But I just want to remind you, following me is not easy.

That pressure is going to come. And pressure doesn't create character. It reveals it. Pressure doesn't create allegiance. It just exposes where your loyalties lie.

That's kind of what Jesus is showing. Because as we have seen over the past couple weeks, the Pharisees and the lawyers, they thought they were on God's side, but they're not really on God's side. In fact, they were living for themselves.

And what we're about to see here is this pressure kind of has a way of revealing what's really on the inside. Now, Jesus sees it. Jesus saw right through their religious facade, these religious leaders. [7:43] And he said, listen, you're so worried about cleaning the outside of the cup, and you forgot to clean the inside. And he begins to give them all these woes and all of these things to kind of not to be mean to them.

No, to show them the truth. But opposition, it really does this, and we saw this in these past few weeks. It exposes our priorities. Conflict, many times, is going to uncover why we're doing what we're doing.

It shows us the motives, the danger that sometimes life brings because they're in a dangerous situation. The persecution and the things that are going to be coming down the line for some of these disciples wasn't theoretical.

No, it was going to be the real deal, and it's going to really reveal where their allegiance lies. And just to kind of recap quickly, so we kind of are on the same page. There in verse 37 down through the end of the chapter in chapter number 11, that Jesus was invited to a dinner.

Now, there was underlying motives there because these men, these Pharisees, were trying to catch Jesus doing something that they didn't agree with. And lo and behold, they found something.

[8:53] Jesus didn't wash his hands for dinner. And we look at that and say, well, maybe he's just forgetful. No, Jesus was exposing some things they were really dealing with. Because they were so worried about the law and checking all the boxes and making sure they're doing everything right that they missed the whole point of the law.

The law was to point people to God. And in fact, they were taking the very law that was doing that and they were turning people away from God. And Jesus wasn't having any of it, so he sits there at this dinner.

And from what we can probably tell, not much food was eaten. You ever been in a situation that was real tense? And you just kind of like, you don't want to do anything? That's kind of what's going on here. I bet the only thing they probably wanted was some Tums.

Because their stomachs are just churning. I mean, because they're getting called on the carpet. Jesus isn't playing around. Because what they were doing is they were hindering the Word of God from actually changing people's lives.

And when we come down to the end of the chapter, we read those two verses already. Verse 53 and verse 54. To say they were upset was an understatement. The religious establishment was enraged.

[10:03] They were looking for ways to provoke Jesus. They were trying to trap Him in His own words. They were lying wait, listening carefully, hoping for something they could use against Him.

Anything they could use against Him. And don't misunderstand. This wasn't some theological disagreement. No, this is organized hostility. And when you study each of the Gospels, you're going to find that there's this moment, right about this time in Jesus' ministry, that they determined they are going to hunt Jesus like a wild animal.

And they make no bones about it. The world may not know it. Israel may not know it. But within their confines, they want this. Kill this man. He is interfering with all of our business.

They had had enough of this rogue rabbi. Who, in their estimation, cared nothing about the things of God. And as we kind of come into chapter 12, there's one crowd that is totally against Him.

But now there's another crowd that is so enthralled and at least interested in Him, they're trampling one another. I mean, Jesus' notoriety is growing at this time.

[11:07] And that's one thing, too, that just kind of incensed the Pharisees. You know what they loved? The praise of man. And they loved when they walked down the streets and everybody said, Oh, look, it's so-and-so.

He's a great Pharisee. Well, yes, I am. That's kind of how they did. They loved long greetings in the marketplace is what Jesus told us. So they lived for this.

And yet Jesus has not only taken away all of their laws that they love so dearly, He's also taking away the people that they were controlling because of those laws. So I want us to picture there in verse number one that on one side the religious leaders are hunting Him, and on the other side the crowds are kind of just crushing Him.

And the combination of this, of this terrifying pursuit and these growing crowds, it really kind of made Jesus just dangerous to associate with. I mean, whose side are you going to fall on? What's going to take place? And as we jump into the text, we're going to see that this mounting pressure had the effect on some of these so-called disciples and some of these interested followers to be a little bit less open about their relationship with Jesus.

[12:18] Because maybe before they say, Oh, I love Jesus. Man, Jesus is an atheist. He's a great guy. But now they've got these Pharisees. Every move that Jesus makes, they're over there. They're waiting for it.

They can feel the tension. And what we see here in chapter 12, what we're going to kind of see over the next few weeks, is some hid their allegiance. They loved Jesus.

They just didn't want everybody to know how much they really loved Him. Some of them grew cautious. Some went quiet. Some came to the place and said, Well, we're not really, we don't even know Him really.

I mean, we were just kind of following from a distance. And when following Jesus becomes costly, sometimes staying silent seems like the safe and smart thing to do.

But that is not what Jesus calls us to do. That is not how Jesus is. No, He wants us to follow Him, not cave to the pressure. And let me just remind you, it's not a first century problem.

[13:15] You know where you're going to face pressure? School. You know where you're going to face pressure following Jesus? Work. I mean, you name it, you're going to face pressure because we live in a world that's not excited that we're following Jesus.

That's not excited about trying to live by the Word of God. So amidst all of this, kind of this background we've tried to paint a picture of, Jesus turns to His disciples.

And He begins to teach them. He's not really addressing the masses. He's not really rebuking the Pharisees in so much. He says, listen, I want you to be settled where you stand.

I need you to be firm in your allegiance because He is calling us to that. So here in our text today, Jesus shows us four things that pressure does in our life.

The first thing that we see in the first few verses is that pressure, it exposes the heart. It exposes the heart. Jesus says this, beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

[14:19] See, the main problem with the Pharisees is they were hypocrites. That's all that they really were. And if we're being honest, it's still the main problem with a lot of professing Christians today.

I thought that would go over as well as it did. It went real well. As human beings, we struggle with this in lots of areas of our life.

Because here's what a hypocrite is. What is hypocrisy? It's saying one thing and doing another thing. It's living a double life. It is a moral inconsistency.

Here's what it is. Praising God with your lips while your heart is far from Him. These are the things that Jesus brought up to them. And hypocrisy, we could kind of boil it down to this.

It's managing the outside while hiding the inside. We like to keep up appearances, we would say. We know how to look the part.

[15:16] We know the things to say in church. We know when to stand up and when to sit down. We know most of the songs. We know all the things.

That's not what God has called us to do. He's called us to follow Him. And as we've seen, the Pharisees are professional hypocrites.

I mean, that's what they are doing. They are wearing religion like a costume. Because that's where the word originated from. From the stage. From the theater. A hypocrite was somebody that played another part.

When they came onto the stage, that's not who they were. That's just the part they were playing. And Jesus said, listen, that's what the Pharisees are doing. They love, they act like they love the

word of God, but they're just playing a part.

But the issue here that Jesus is bringing to light is sometimes those that were following Christ, and they were interested in His teaching, they were tempted to downplay their level of commitment to Him.

Here's the deal. It's a different form of hypocrisy, but it's the same heart problem. They were worried about what is going on around us. And Jesus says, listen, you can't have that in your life.

[16:22] Because that kind of hypocrisy, it spreads. It's like leaven. It's going to leaven the entire lump. I'm thankful for yeast in bread.

When I eat bread, I want it to be big and fluffy and just full of butter. I don't want this flat bread. This is real life stuff, man. Y'all like bread that actually looks like bread, right?

It looks like a roll. Yeah, I mean, that's how they're supposed to look. How does it get that way? The yeast causes the bread to rise. When you put the ingredients in there, it looks like there's nothing in there. But when you turn the light on in the oven, you're standing there like, man, them rolls are looking good right now.

They start rising up, rising up. Man, that's what I'm talking about. Jesus, He's painting a picture that we understand. It works the same way in our life. That's why He says, beware. He's saying, be on guard.

Why? Because hypocrisy, we can see it sometimes in other people's lives, but in our life, we don't see it as well. We think, well, it's not that big a deal. It's just one little thing. But He's reminding us it doesn't stay contained.

[17:24] No, no. But hypocrisy in our own life, it grows. It spreads to our attitudes and to our speech and into our habits. And it just changes everything about us. And we might do a really good job for a long, long time hiding it.

And people might not have any idea. But Jesus reminds us in verse number two, listen, everything that's hidden will be revealed one day. We don't like verses like this. These last three Sundays, I'll just be honest, these are tough passages to preach.

Like, preacher, you're going to preach something exciting? Yeah, Sunday night we're preaching about hope. Come on, Sunday nights. But right now we're in a tough part of Luke. But He's just reminding us that we can hide it from everybody.

And you might be able to hide it your whole life. But there is coming a day where everything that's hidden will be revealed. And Jesus reminds us of that. Hypocrisy doesn't just spread. It will be exposed.

And He reminds those that are following. Listen, you say you're all in. You need to make sure you're all in. You need to make sure that you're not just trying to put a facade on. And I want to remind us, both then and now, Jesus isn't trying to terrify us.

[18:33] No, here's what He's trying to do. He's trying to rescue us. Because I'm sure you've found this out in your life. Not that we've all been hypocrites, but we have. It's hard. It's a miserable way to live your life.

Trying to always play the part. Trying to remember what you can do and what you can't do. And trying to keep it up. And we can picture it. We think, what does it look like in our life? See, on one side, the life that we, maybe we're going to, we will stand before the Lord one day.

The Bible's very clear. It's pointed unto man once to die, and after this, the judgment. That we will stand before the Lord. There's a different judgment for those that are lost and those that know the Lord. But we will stand before the Lord.

If we know Him as our Savior, we're going to give an account for what we did. And we're going to stand before Him. And on one side, there's going to be the life that we showed everybody. And maybe on the other side, there's going to be the life that we tried to hide.

If those two match up, if both things are the same, you know what that is? That's integrity. That's being true to God. That's being true to others. That's just being who you are.

[19:35] God never called us to be perfect. We don't have to come to church and act like we all got it together. Because I know you and you know me. We don't. Sometimes we try to act like we do.

Oh, how are you? Blessed and highly favored. No, you're not. You're struggling. Life's hard. Raising kids. Going to work. Listen, it's hard sometimes. We all messed up this week.

We don't have to roll up here on Sunday and act like we got it all together. No, no. The church is a place. It's a hospital for those that need help. And God reminds us that we're not in it alone. But we don't have to hide it because we start playing the part.

Guess what? That's not real life. You know what this world needs? You know what your friends need? You know what your coworkers need? A real, authentic Christian. That has ups.

That has downs. That's not trying to be perfect. They're just trying to follow the Lord and allow Him to change their life. Jesus tells them there in verse 3, whatever's whispered in secret, it's going to be shattered from the housetops.

[20:34] Jesus isn't trying to paralyze us. Here's what He's trying to do. Purify us. He's trying to get that stuff that gets in our hearts, that leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy, that we think, man, they struggle with it.

But here Jesus is saying, check the mirror. Because pressure is going to expose that maybe you're not being forthright with really who you are and why you're following and how you're following. So the question we have to answer when the pressure comes in our life, especially when it comes to our walk with the Lord, is not, am I religious? The question we should ask ourselves often is, am I real?

Am I the real person? Am I living how God wants me to be? Am I living how God wants me to be? Am I living how God wants me to be? So what does it look like? You know, I think sometimes you can post all these things. You can post a bunch of Bible verses on your social media feed, but refuse to forgive somebody that you're having a problem with in your life.

[22:07] We can put a whole facade out in our bio about this is who we are and we love Jesus Christ, but does our life show it? Listen, I hope you all listen to yourself when you're singing here.

I love when Brother Jared goes, acapella. Listen, y'all sound good. I hope that this is your story and this is your song, praising my Savior all the day long.

Like I love when we drop out on the music so we can just hear, hey listen, the church is a beautiful thing when we sing together, but God didn't call us to sing passionately on Sunday and then just go live however we want on Sunday.

No, take that story, take that song and take it with you to work. Take it with you to school. You say, well, I don't want to do that. Jesus said, beware. It's hypocrisy. It's going to get in there.

It's going to grow just a little bit. It's real easy to watch the news and critique the culture and critique the sins while excusing our own personal issues. Like I can't believe they would do that.

[23:05] What's wrong with our world? Listen, our world's got a lot of problems, but God is interested in you. He's interested in you because when he has you, then he has your family and he has this church and we're only as strong as our weakest link.

God wants to grow us all together. That we can't just berate everything going wrong in society. Listen, take a look at our own life. It's what Jesus is reminding us here. Listen, pressure doesn't create hypocrisy.

It just reveals it. And Jesus reminds us that before we start examining somebody else's speck in their eye, check out the beam in our eye. That's what he tells us in the Sermon on the Mount.

Really, what he's calling these disciples, these followers, these ones that are trying to live that life. He said, I want to make sure that you're checking your own heart.

See, well, why does hypocrisy grow? Because it has a root. See, sometimes we try to cut off the branch instead of actually going to the root of the problem. See, hypocrisy is not the disease, it's the symptom.

[24:07] Here's the root where hypocrisy grows. Fear. When we fear people more than God, we start adjusting our loyalty to protect ourselves.

That's what Jesus is teaching right here. That's what he's reminding us. And so he moves from exposing the hypocrisy and saying, listen, this shouldn't be in your life, but I want to remind you where it comes from. So when pressure comes, it clarifies who you fear.

So not only is it exposed to the heart, but it clarifies who we fear. Verse number four. And I say unto you, my friends, be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more they can do. But I will forewarn you of whom you fear. Fear him which after he hath killed hath the power to cast into hell. Yea, I say unto you, fear him.

Jesus comes here in these verses, and I love how he says in verse four, my friends. We can't run over that because he's not being mean here. He's not being hateful here.

[25:08] No, the idea is he's saying, listen, things are real. Because we don't really grasp the sway and the power that these Pharisees and this religious elite, the Sanhedrin of Israel, had.

Because if you were kicked out, if you were exposed, if they said, hey, you're not allowed to come to the synagogue, you're not allowed to do any of this, your life was done. Like, this wasn't just their church.

It was the center of everything they did. And so they lived in fear of these Pharisees. I mean, you remember in the story in, I believe, the Gospel of John, chapter 9, I think it is, where the blind man got healed.

And they asked his parents, they said, hey, has he been blind since his birthday? No comment. We're not going to answer. Why don't you ask him? He's old enough. You know why they wouldn't answer? They were afraid of the Jews.

They were afraid of the synagogue and losing all of their rights and all of their privileges. And Jesus is saying, listen, there comes a time in your life, if you're going to follow me, you've got to draw a line in the sand.

[26:09] You've got to be able to move over. You've got to be able to decide who you're going to follow. Because Jesus knew there were some in this crowd that were going to face real-life persecution.

I mean, we know the disciples. Almost all of them were martyred for the cause of Christ. They tried to martyr the Apostle John. They just boiled him in oil and threw him on an Isle of Patmos. He said, listen, there's going to come a time where you're going to need to know, are you all in for me?

Or are you just kind of living for yourself? And what he does is he reminds them and he reminds us that the fear of man is limited. I know it seems drastic, but the most they can do is just kill you.

You think, oh, man. I mean, but really that's what Jesus says. He says they can mock you. They can exclude you. They can slander you. They can even kill you. But that's where their authority ends. Hey, once that happens, they have no say afterwards.

They cannot touch your soul. They cannot undo your salvation. They cannot revoke your standing with God. And that's why Jesus says in verse number five, something that wasn't popular then and still isn't popular today, but he reminds them that he's the one that has that authority.

[27:21] That you need to be living for Christ. You need to be placing your faith in him. That's who you need to fear. Not fear and the idea of scared, but have this awe.

To have this reverence. This is not, Jesus is not trying to incite panic. No, what he wants followers of him to know is that he has absolute authority.

That's who Jesus is. That's why at the end of his ministry he said this, All power is given unto me. The word power has this idea, authority. And because he has all authority, he told his disciples, go. Go ye therefore and preach the gospel. And they did that. God alone holds eternal authority. Man has temporary influence, but God himself has the ultimate jurisdiction.

Read the book of Proverbs. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Listen, when we live in fear of man, it's going to change how we live our life. It's going to change how bold we are in our faith.

[28:22] It's going to change what we take a stand for and what we don't take a stand for. And we see it all the time in our world and we see it all the time in politics. I mean, they're flopping all over the place. Why? Because they're fearing what man's going to do. Well, if I say this, I'll lose this vote.

And I do this, then I'll lose this job. Listen, that's not how we're to live our life. You go through scripture, you see all kinds of people that fear God and it changed their life. I heard about this guy that was on the backside of the desert for 40 years and a bush caught on fire.

And he started talking to the bush. Guess what? He was afraid. I'd be afraid talking to a bush that was on fire. The Bible says that Moses trembled before the bush. But that experience changed his life.

We see Isaiah that he's scared and he sees a vision of God on his throne high and lifted up in the book of Isaiah chapter number 6. And he said, woe is me, for I am undone, and I live in the midst of people that are unclean.

And he was scared, but the fear didn't crush him. It reoriented his life. And that's why we have to make sure we're fearing the right things. Because if we're fearing the man, it's going to reorient our life not around what God wants it to be.

[29:30] But when we fear God and we understand that he is in control, he reminds us it's going to change your life. We see verse 6 and 7, to me at first, it seems kind of out of place.

He's talking about, you know, fear them that can do this, but you really need to fear God because he has the authority over your soul. Then he starts talking about birds and hair on your head. Like, Jesus, are you ADD?

What is going on here? Now, I think he wants us to see this. That the same God who judges eternally cares intimately about you.

These sparrows, they were worth nothing. When you really said of the law and how much, you really paying for one, they were so useless, they just threw the other one in for free. But Jesus says, your father cares for both of them.

Things that people just kind of throw in as a freebie. That God knows. He knows how much hair is on your head. The same God who has the power of hell knows all of these things about you.

[30:32] And he cares for you. That's what he's showing them. That's what he's reminding them. That holy fear of God does not mean living in terror. It means living under the rightful, wonderful authority of God alone.

That you know he has your best interests at heart. How many of you know how many hair are on your head? And some of y'all have a better start than some of us. And I'm only going to say that until mine starts going too.

And then we're going to change the joke, okay? I feel like, you know, maybe Elisha, when the bear's going to come out and eat me, I don't want to do that. Listen, when you fear God rightly, you're not unstable.

That's what the world's going to label it. You know what you are? You're anchored. You're anchored in something that's actually sturdy. It's going to last, that can withstand the fear of man. When you fear God rightly, you're not trying to impress people.

You're just resting in the one who knows you fully. Because here's the reality. If people knew everything about you, they'd run the other way. God knows everything about you and he came to you.

[31:39] He wants to change your life. That's what the cross of Calvary is about. What does it look like in my life? Listen, maybe starting tomorrow, maybe the lunch table at school. Hey guys, can I pray for our lunch? That's a big deal at school.

Hey, can I pray at work? Well, I don't want to mix work. No, it's who you are. What if somebody sees me praying? Maybe it's easier to laugh at a joke that you know you shouldn't laugh at because it just blends in.

Maybe it's saying silent when a biblical truth comes up and you could say something about it and you kind of just let it slide. Maybe you avoid spiritual conversations because it's uncomfortable. Listen, the fear of man asks, what will they think? The fear of God asks, what does he think? And Jesus is saying, listen, you're going to have opportunities. If you're going to be in, if you're going to follow me, when the pressure comes, who do you fear?

Pressure is going to expose what really is going on. Number three, pressure reveals who you confess. We won't take time to read it for the sake of time, but in verses 8 through 10 we see words like confess and deny and before men and before God.

[32:46] Kind of has the idea, it's like almost courtroom language. These are things, they're concrete things. And what Jesus is doing is he is not describing private admiration.

No, here's what he's calling for, public allegiance. God never calls us to be chameleon Christians, to blend in. No, we're in the book of 1 Peter.

He says this, you're a peculiar people. You're a royal priesthood. You are set apart. There should be something noticeably different and it should be salt. It should be savory. It should be light that draws other people, not to you, but to him.

But sometimes we, when the pressure comes, we're just not going to say anything. But to confess, it means to acknowledge openly, to agree with, to identify with, to declare your loyalty to.

Listen, I'm thankful it doesn't say you have to be perfect at this. Because there was a man in this group, his name was Peter. I don't know if you remember this, but he said, I don't even know the guy. Three times. Listen, this is not a situation, and I know verse 10, we're going to get there in just a second.

[33:54] Confession doesn't mean you never struggle. It doesn't mean that you, every opportunity to confess Christ, to lift him up, to witness, it doesn't mean that you just nail it 100% of the time.

But it does mean you don't hide where your loyalties lie, where your allegiance lies. Because verse number 10 is one of the most sobering warnings in all of Scripture. And this voice, this verse has troubled many hearts.

But in the context, Jesus is not saying, well, if you do one wrong thing, you're going to never be forgiven for it. If you deny me, you're never, no, here's what he's saying.

He's speaking about hardened, willful rejection of the truth of the Word of God. That when the Holy Spirit convicts our heart, and we continually reject it, and reject it, and reject it, and say, hey, you need a Savior, I'm good, I'm okay.

And we do that constantly, constantly, and we die in that state, that cannot be forgiven. That's what it's talking about. That's what it means. To blaspheme the Holy Spirit is not a moment of weakness like we see in Peter.

[34:58] It's a persistent, settled rejection of the testimony of who Jesus Christ is. That is what he's talking about. And that's where the Pharisees were. Many of the Pharisees, they had seen the miracles, they had heard the teaching, they had witnessed the power, and instead of yielding to the Spirit, they said, nope, we're good how we are.

And they consistently rejected it. They resisted the truth. And when somebody continually does that, the heart becomes calloused to the truth. So Jesus, what he's doing here is he is drawing a line.

And he's saying this, there is forgiveness for weakness, there is forgiveness for sin, there is restoration for failure, but there is an extreme danger in hardened resistance to the truth of the Word of God.

That if you hear it over and over and over, and you think, well, I'm a good person. Listen, good people don't go to heaven. Saved people go to heaven. It's the blood of Christ that makes a difference. It's the cross of Calvary that changes your life.

Listen, under pressure, silence can reveal fear, but persistent, settled denial can reveal something much, much deeper. That maybe you're not all in on Christ like he told you to be.

[36:10] Listen, confessing Christ doesn't mean you have to take your Bible to work and have a, you know, preach to him during the lunch hour. But maybe when somebody's pouring your heart out, you say something like this, can I pray for you right now?

You know what I've learned? If you ask somebody you can pray for them, almost they say, sure.

They'll say things like this, I need all the prayer I can get. How many of you said that? Maybe mention what God's teaching you.

Maybe saying graciously, as a Christian, I believe this. There's a lot of things in the news. They got a lot of opinions. But you can say, as a Christian, this is what I believe, based on the Word of God. Refusing to do certain things, identifying yourself with Jesus, even when it costs you socially, pointing to Christ when someone notices a difference.

Listen, confession isn't just about being loud. It's about being allegiant to Christ. About being all in on him. Listen, we speak about what we love. We defend what we treasure.

We identify with what defines us. And if Jesus defines us, he will not remain hidden in your life. That we should be excited that Jesus, listen, I know it's Sunday morning, I know I'm going over.

[37:16] We're okay, we're going to be fine. But you should be excited that Jesus Christ changed your life. You should be. You should be glad that you were on your way to hell, and now you're on your way to heaven.

And it's nothing you did, it's all that he did. And that should slip out a little bit at work. That should come into your conversations. That should come into your snap. That should come onto your Instagram.

Why? Because it's everything about you is Jesus Christ. Now at this point, you think, man, this is weighty. It is. What if I fail?

What if when the moment comes, I freeze this? What if I don't have the right words? Jesus knows that's probably our thought line. And because he never commands confession without promising help, that's exactly what he does.

Because you know what pressure should reveal in your life if you know him as your savior? You need his divine help. Pressure requires divine help. That's what the last two verses do.

[38:14] These are not verses. These used to be my life verses in school because I thought, well, I just won't study. And the Lord will give me all the answers when I need the answers. When I stand before the teachers. This is not excusing the preacher, not studying.

This is not accusing you of not getting in your own word. No. What it's reminding us is not to be anxious. Not to be paralyzed by fear over what you're going to say.

Why? Because when you're in the word of God, when you're intimately growing in a relationship with him, you may not think you know things. But I hope all of you have been in a conversation and the Holy Spirit says, hey, say this. Hey, remember that verse that you learned in Sunday school when you were in children's church 25 years ago?

Say that one right there. I hope you've experienced that. Because the Holy Spirit is not some distant being. No, he's alive and he's well. And he promised us in John 15 and John 16 that he's there to guide us and to help us and to lead us.

Listen, that's what we need. You cannot, I cannot live the Christian life in my own strength. It requires divine help. Because it's not natural.

[39:18] These things that God asks us to do, it's not natural. You know what we're naturally bent to? Hypocrisy. We're not naturally bent to saying, listen, this is what the Lord Jesus Christ says. He changed my life.

See, the same spirit who convicts the world of sin empowers believers to be the witness. The same spirit who inspired the scripture promises to strengthen us under pressure. We don't have time to look at it, but look in the book of Acts.

You're going to see it over and over and over again. Peter and John get pulled in before these same men. And they said, I don't know what you think, but we ought to obey God rather than man. Where did all these things come from?

The spirit. See, Jesus, here's what he's teaching us in these last verses and we're done.

Confession is your responsibility. Living for Christ is your responsibility. Being bold for him is your responsibility.

The rest is up to him. He promises the spirit will empower you. That's why he gave the spirit. They remember in John 14, they were all sad Jesus was leaving. He said, listen, it's a good thing.

[40:17] It's a better thing. I have to go away and I will send the comforter. I will send help for you. And we have help, but here's the problem. Sometimes we don't tap into it. It's there.

We aren't called to drum up courage. We're called to depend on the spirit of God. The Holy Spirit, he doesn't get a lot of notoriety like he should.

I think we've been scared off just to be honest by certain denominations. The Holy Spirit is not a backup plan. He is a divine helper promised to us. And I'm so thankful under pressure that we're not left to our own resources.

We're empowered. We're promised to be empowered by God himself. Maybe this week it looks like this. Lord, you're going to have a hard conversation. You know you have something difficult. Just before you walk into it, Lord, would you help me?

You're not going to have a 45-minute prayer. He's there. Trusting God when words don't come easily. Obeying even when your voice shakes. Speaking truth kindly. Letting the spirit do the convincing. God didn't call you to convince.

[41:19] He just called you to obey. That's what he's called you to do. See, following Jesus is costly. And here in our text, he doesn't give a survival strategy.

Here's what he says. Check your heart. That's where it starts. You know what God's after? Your heart. The Pharisees thought, well, we look really good. He doesn't, it's not what he's looking for. Because you know what, the heart, it's going to change how you look anyways. If he has your heart, he has everything. It's a heart diagnosis. Because the pressure doesn't create faith. It just reveals where it is.

If we fear people, we're going to focus on managing expectations. But if we fear God, we're going to boldly confess Christ. Pressure's coming this week for you.

The only question is this. What will it reveal? If we want to live for Christ, we need to turn it over to him. Would you stand with your heads bowed and with your eyes closed?

[42:15] See this?