

Weightier Matters

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Date: 27 September 2015

[0 : 00] The Lord urges us not to miss the weightier matters.

It's important that we put first things first. And our Lord addresses the Pharisees here in Matthew 23. The Pharisees of Matthew 23.

Our Lord addressed them, he rebuked them with a scathing rebuke. Right through the chapter you can see the detail of it. We won't cover the whole, but you can read it later in detail.

And these men that our Lord spoke to, they were the proud religious leaders of the day. These were the ones who were very meticulous, very particular, very careful about how they practiced their religion, how they put their beliefs into their life.

Yet our Lord says, woe to them, woe to them. He rebukes them. And we see that firstly in Matthew 23, verse 23. He says, woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites.

[1 : 14] For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cumin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law. The weightier matters of the law.

Judgment, mercy and faith. These ought you to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Now the Lord was talking here to these religious leaders, these Pharisees.

These were the men who were very careful and very cautious and particular about weighing these items of mint, anise and cumin.

These were different herbs and spices and seeds. They were very particular. They would weigh them carefully and almost measure to the detail of each seed, as it were, seed by seed.

They wanted to make sure that they gave just the right portion in their offering. And our Lord rebukes these religious men for this focus on formalities, this majoring on minors, this just going through the motions of their religion.

[2 : 21] They were intent on these trivialities of the weighing and measuring of microscopic quantities of seed, of spice. Yet they were missing and neglecting the weightier matters, the weightier matters.

They did not weigh up the weightier matters, the more important matters. They missed out on the much more important things that God had called them to. And we can make that mistake as well. We can make that mistake. Playing church is a dangerous game. And many are missing the mark. They're missing what God is calling us to.

And to do that is to make a very grave mistake. A big mistake. We must not play church, but be real. Be real Christians. And these are weightier matters we'll talk to just now.

There are some that are weightier matters. Some of the things that can occupy us and distract us from the main game, take us away from the weightier matters. The more important matters that we're called to take action on.

[3 : 26] And so these Pharisees, busy with doing their religious acts, fitting for them in that day, under that time, under the law, and yet while following the letter of the law, they were missing what mattered.

They were missing what mattered. So these men, these Pharisees, they were very particular while going through these strict religious duties. They certainly were not slant.

I think that's probably the counter of strict, isn't it? Of being slant. That's probably at times more the case in our day that we're not so strict, but we're more slant.

But nevertheless, the strictness that they had was a strictness that missed the point. It missed the mark. It missed on those more weightier issues, those weightier matters, those matters that God wanted us to have front and centre.

And so their strictness, too, was often a strictness that was directed at others. The strictness was at others. What are others not doing? What are others not being?

[4 : 32] Instead of aiming that strictness at their own selves. And so they neglected what God had put a priority on. What God has said for us to major on.

What God says for us to focus on. They were missing that. They had the head knowledge, but they did not have the heart knowledge right. You know, it's like you can miss heaven by how many inches it is between your head and your heart.

You know, you get all the head knowledge and know everything and yet miss it in the heart. Where God really wants us to get it right. So they had the theology. They had their theory.

But their faith was not real. It wasn't practical. It wasn't practice. It missed their heart. It missed their heart. And so, too, for us. For we today. The Lord wants us to measure things.

To weigh things up. But to not miss the weightier matters. The weightier matters. The weightier matters of the law. Judgment, mercy and faith.

[5 : 31] The religious leaders of the day were missing the whole point. Keeping the letter of the law to the minute detail of it. To the weighing of seeds and minute quantities.

And yet missing the spirit. Missing the weightier matters. The heavy truths that God wanted them to apply to their lives. Here were these men. Well-meaning, perhaps.

These Pharisees that had paid great attention. Great attention to the formalities and the externals of worship. Yet they had missed the point. They were caught up in the works.

In the traditions. In the religious acts and ceremonies. Yet missing what the word was all about. The fundamentals. And brothers and sisters. People of God today. We must not miss the mark.

Miss the fundamentals. Miss those weightier matters. But rather let us concentrate on those weightier matters. As the Lord says, Judgment, mercy and faith.

[6 : 36] Judgment, mercy and faith. These ought you to have done and not to leave the other undone. Judgment, mercy and faith. Judgment, mercy and faith.

So these men, they were very particular. They would strain at a gnat but swallow a camel. What a picture. Here was this picture of magnifying on minor things while missing the major things that God wanted of them.

And so our Lord spoke of these weightier matters. So we're going to look at these three. These three. Judgment, mercy and faith. Number one. Judgment. Judgment.

Firstly, judgment. We are called to judgment. Our brother said earlier. Discernment. What does judgment mean? When I think of judgment, I think of a judge.

And of one who is judged with their gavel. Guilty. Or hopefully innocent. Judgment. Judgment. We think of a judge and one who is to be judged. We know who the ultimate judge is.

[7 : 39] Who is it? God. Genesis 18.25 it says, Shall not the judge of all the earth do right? We know he'll be a just judge. This ultimate judge.

The one who is to judge us is God. And the one who is to be judged is ourselves. And our Lord calls on us to do justly.

In other words, to live rightly. In Micah 6 verse 8. Bores it all down to this key statement. He has showed thee, O man, what is good. And what doth the Lord require of thee?

But to do justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God. To do justly. There's judgment. There's justice. Judgment.

Judgment. To love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God. So doing justly. Acting justly. Is something we call to judgment. God wants us to exercise judgment.

[8 : 36] You know, rightful judgment. Of course there's wrongful judgment. Judge not. In the sense of judging others to condemn. Or without judging ourselves. But to exercise judgment.

To exercise discernment. As he does. God must punish sin. He must. He's a just and rightful just. Judge. And just as God must punish sin.

And he is absolutely just. There's a needful truth of judgment. Of judgment. Now we look at how the Pharisees took this truth of judgment.

And they twisted it. And they got it wrong. They exercised judgment. But there was no exercising of grace. No balance of grace there. So we see this, for example, in John chapter 8.

John chapter 8. As a graphic demonstration of judgment. Of justice. We see it. As you read the whole context of John chapter 8. For yourselves.

[9 : 35] But we'll just look at verse 7. To narrow it down. John chapter 8 verse 7. So when they continued asking him. He lifted up himself.

This is the Lord Jesus. And he said unto them. He that is without sin among you. Let him first cast a stone at her. Here was this woman brought to the Lord Jesus.

Caught in the very act of adultery. It was a blatant, obvious sin. She had sinned. She was sinful. She was caught in the act. And they brought him to her to judge her. And he said. He that is without sin among you. Let him first cast a stone at her. They judged this woman harshly. Though she was caught in the very act of adultery.

They seemed to have let the man go. Interesting isn't it? Was that justice? Was that rightful judgment? They seemed to have let the man go.

[10:33] Even though they were caught in the very act. So the two were together. Perhaps they let the man go. Perhaps he was one of their mates. Perhaps he was a friend.

Perhaps he was one of them. Their judgment was strict. Yet it was one-eyed. One-eyed judgment. Well, don't want to do that so the Illuminati...

They were one-eyed, right? They were one-eyed in their judgment. But the Bible says that we are to judge ourselves. They did not judge themselves.

They were quick to point the finger. Here's this woman, Jesus, caught in the very act. She's a sinner. She should be killed. They were quick to point out the sin of the woman.

But the Bible says we are to judge ourselves. Ourselves. Examine yourselves, it says. Judge yourselves. So it's interesting that our Lord did not say, He that is without sin, let him first cast a stone at her.

[11:36] He did not say that. He said, He that is without sin among you, among you, let him first cast a stone at her. The only one without sin who was present was the Lord Jesus.

Let him that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. The only one without sin was the Lord Jesus, of whom it is said, He was without sin, without sin.

In Hebrews 4, 15, it reads, For we have not in high priesthood, cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin, yet without sin.

So truly the Lord Jesus was unique among men. It was what made the Lord Jesus different from everyone else. He had to be perfect as the perfect sacrifice, and only God could be without sin, because all men and women have sinned.

Only God could be without sin. God become flesh. So this one without sin, it says of him, He became sin for us.

[12:53] 2 Corinthians 5, 21. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

It's an amazing transaction that happens, isn't it? It's interesting, when we fully consider God's judgment against us. God's judgment is just.

He can't let the guilty go free. His judgment against us is all the more wonderful, because he extends forgiveness and pardon. Forgiveness and pardon. As the judge, he acquits us.

He declares us pardoned, forgiven. And so we see at the cross, God's wrath, God's anger against our sin, God's judgment against us, was fully vented in the person of Christ, as Christ died for our sins.

And so God has taken our rags of our own righteousness, which fails us, and he clothes us with his own righteousness. We come to him, we come to him with our sin.

[14:10] Our sin is all we can bring to him, unworthy as we are. The wages of sin is death, it says, and we are subject to God's judgment. The death penalty is the judgment.

His punishment is just. Someone must pay for our sin. Someone must pay for your sin. For your sin. For your sin. For my sin.

Someone must pay. The penalty for our sin is death. Judgment must be declared. This is where grace comes in.

Grace opens the door and grace comes in. God steps in with his unmerited favour, his kindness to us, and he exchanges our guilt with his grace.

There's a transfer, there's an exchange. Our guilt, his grace. Our sins, his saving. Our sin, his body on the cross.

[15:11] The sinless one dying in our place. For us, for us, the sinful one, the sinless one died. And he takes our sin, and he replaces it with his holiness.

He takes our guilt, and he gives us his righteousness. And as a gift, we receive him. What a transfer. Our sin, his righteousness. Payment made.

Judgment. Foul on Christ. And he paid the sin debt. Sin's penalty of debt. Paid in full. God's judgment. God's justice. Fully satisfied.

He sheathed his sword against us. He no longer holds his sword against us. He's put it away. He has set us free. He's taken his wrath away, because it was poured out on Christ at the cross. Christ did not suffer for himself, but for us. Not for his sin, but our sin. As our substitute, replacing us, taking our place, in our stand, in our place.

[16:12] And God's rightful judgment was vented there, at the cross, against our sin, in Christ. And so there's a needful call for righteousness today.

As God wants us, with his judgment, to be righteous. And it's not found today in ritual, in sacrifice of animals, or religious acts.

And so judgment, judgment, is found, with grace. Grace is found there, at the judgment seat. So we must put first things first.

It says in Matthew 6.33, but seek ye first, the kingdom of God, and his righteousness. And all these things shall be added unto you.

It's noteworthy that it says, to seek first the kingdom of God, and not our own righteousness, but his. His righteousness.

[17:08] Seek them. His righteousness. The one who judges us is God, and he's gracious, and he gives us righteousness, and pardon. So let us consider, as this truth, this weighty matter of judgment, we're rightfully condemned, but graciously redeemed.

Graciously pardoned, and given forgiveness. Because the judge, the one who is to be judged, is us, and the judge has given, gracious pardon. So let us judge, not others, as the Pharisees did, as they picked, and poked, and pointed the finger, at the woman caught in the act, and criticized, and condemned her, and judged her.

But let us judge ourselves. Let us judge ourselves. Judgment. Secondly, of weighty matters, we're called to, number two, mercy. To show mercy.

To show mercy. We think of judgment, God's judgment is down, and mercy is horizontal. For us to extend, in our relationships with others. We think of mercy, as we think, horizontally as it were, of the people in our lives.

The people who put, who God puts in our lives. And some, are more testing than others, aren't they? Let's face it. But the people that, God puts in our lives, are the ones, that we can, being his hand extended to.

[18:31] The ones that we can be, considerate of, and forgiving, and giving, and kind to. A good example of this, is the familiar story, of the certain Samaritan, the good Samaritan, of Luke 10.

Again, you can read the whole, context, we'll just narrow it down. Luke 10, verse 13, it says, a certain man, went down from Jerusalem, to Jericho, and fell among thieves.

Suddenly, these bandits, came out of nowhere, and attacked, as he was traveling, this road, and it says, they stripped him, of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him, half dead.

Here was this man, beaten and battered, lying bruised, and hurting, on the side of the road. And you can, read for yourself, the whole context, where it tells, of certain ones, who passed by, some, went on the other side, of the road, they didn't want to get near him, others just glanced, and walked past.

Some were too busy, some, were on their way, to a religious service. They could not be bothered, to stop, and pay, some regard, to stop, and help this man, despite his obvious need.

[19:47] They were too selfish, too uncaring, perhaps too religious. The Pharisees, made that mistake too, of discounting people, of neglecting, to show mercy, and kindness.

The Pharisees, made that mistake, but thankfully, God, to you, to me, shows his loving kindness, and compassion, and he extends it widely, humanity wide, he extends his offer, and grace, is extended.

In Luke 10, 33, we see, how, a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion, on him. Here was this Samaritan, though someone, from another culture, another country, a country, that was hated, by the Jews.

This Samaritan, was the one, who, took the trouble, to help the man. He took the time, he took the trouble, to lend a hand, and to show mercy.

And our Lord, praised him for this, for what he had done. It says in verse 34, and this certain Samaritan, went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

[21 : 03] Here he was, he went out of his way, that he might have had, to make a detour, and change his schedule, to show mercy, and kindness. He put himself out, to show mercy, to the man.

Verse 35, and on the morrow, when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, take care of him, and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.

So he reached in his own pocket, and gave to this man in need, he gave, and he gave, and instead he'd give more, as there was need to give. He put himself out, and he practically, gave of his substance, of his effort, of his time, of his money.

And it was the Samaritan, who showed mercy. The Samaritan, was the one, who went beyond expectations. The Pharisees, the religious ones, the ones who should have known, what to do, lacked mercy, totally.

And the Pharisees, these were ones, who had low people up, with expectations, with burdensome rules, and traditions. They had no grace, or mercy, in applying their, manufactured interpretations, to others.

[22 : 15] These ones, these Pharisees, they didn't show grace, and mercy, but they showed condemnation, and selfishness. And as another example, the Jews of the time, would not work on the Sabbath.

They found fault, with Jesus, because he healed people, on the Sabbath. And they questioned him, and criticised him. But the Lord Jesus, pointed out the hypocrisy, of these ones. He pointed out, the hypocrisy, that these ones, they would help the animals, on the Sabbath, and rightly so, but they would not help, the people in need.

And God wants us, to extend mercy, to show mercy. These Pharisees, though they claimed, authority and knowledge, they were truly ignorant, of what really mattered, of the weightier matters. They did not show, humility, or integrity. And though they were, the spiritual leaders, they were, as blind men, leading the blind. It's where we get, that saying from, the blind leading the blind.

It comes from Matthew 23, from the Bible. They were as spiritual leaders, as blind men, leading the blind. And they're going to, both fall in the ditch. That's the picture of it, of these Pharisees, the religious leaders, of the time.

[23 : 24] And with them, it was all talk, no action. We see in Matthew 23, verse 3. All therefore, whatsoever they bid you, observe that, observe and do, but do not ye, after their works.

For they say, and do not. The Lord is saying, they say, but they do not. It was all talk, no action. It says, verse 4, For they bind heavy burdens, and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders, but they themselves, will not move, with one of their fingers.

So, the picture here, is of these Pharisees, that they put, all these religious rules, and rituals, and expectations, on others, like a burden, too heavy to bear.

But they would not, lift a finger, to help, and to support. So, the Pharisees, of Matthew 23, the Pharisees, burdened these people, with man-made traditions, unbearable things, burdensome, ritual, and rules, and religion.

Now, it's interesting, that the word religion, the word religion, comes from a word, that means, to bind. To bind. The word religion, means to bind.

[24 : 34] It speaks of bondage. The Lord Jesus, didn't come to bring religion, bondage, but to bring freedom. The Lord Jesus, says, that, you shall know the truth, and the truth, shall make you free.

In Christ, there is a freedom. He doesn't bind us up, in unbearable rules, and rituals, and religion, but he sets us free, with his grace, and his forgiveness.

And the Lord Jesus, said of these Pharisees, they bind people up. They bind people up. It's like a picture, of someone in a prison cell, held, captive, captured, like a prisoner.

But the Lord Jesus, comes, and he opens, the prison gates, and he gives us, liberty, freedom. He sets us free. These religious men, these Pharisees, they had form, but no power.

All talk, but no action. It's like 2 Timothy 3. We read, of having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof, from such turn away. There's a form of godliness, but it doesn't have God's power, and we should turn away, from such.

[25 : 48] These Pharisees, they were busy, going through the motions, going through the motions, of their religious works, yet they were standing still, and spiritually, they were lost.

With them, it was all show, but no substance. You can read through, as I say, Matthew chapter 23, you read, these people, the Lord Jesus, said woe to them. He says, but all their works, they are to,

be seen of men.

They may broaden their phylacteries, and then lower the borders, of their garments. Now just to explain, here's a picture, of an Orthodox Jew, wearing a phylactery. A phylactery.

It's like this box, a leather box, that they strapped, to their head, and there was one, that they strapped, to their left arm, facing their heart. And these phylacteries, contained the scriptures.

They contained, some Bible scriptures. And one of these scriptures, was Deuteronomy 6. Hear, O Israel, the Lord, our God, is one Lord. And thou shalt love, the Lord thy God, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

[26 : 56] And Deuteronomy 11, 13. In part it says, love the Lord your God, and serve him, with all your heart, and with all your soul. Great scriptures.

And they would tie them, to their forehead, and to their arm. They made great show, of these things though. Showing off these phylacteries, these boxes, containing scripture verses.

It's like, look, I'm holy, because I've got a bigger, phylactery on my head. I wear it more than you do. Because I can show off, that I'm more spiritual, than you are.

Because, I'm showing it off, for all the world to see. And so, they were using these things, whilst, the intent was good, and the meaning, was very good, of these scriptures, yet they were using them, to show off.

And they were missing the point. They were missing the point, by what they were doing, and they weren't applying, the scriptures, to their own lives. And we read on, from verse 6, of Matthew 23, of these ones, the Lord is speaking to.

[28 : 02] He says, that they love, the uppermost rooms, of the feasts, and the chief seats, in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets, to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi. Excuse me.

And Rabbi, means teacher. And so, these men, they took the glory, for themselves, as they paraded around, in their vanity, and pride, in their self-centered ways.

And as much, as they were worshipping, their religion, their worship, was vain, and empty, and pointless. As was their fasting, and their praying, and their giving of alms.

If you read Matthew 23, all of these things, it was all show. It was all show. They were about paying lip service, but lacking the heart. Here's another saying, that's common, for us in English today.

Lip service. Paying lip service. We get that, from Matthew 15, from verse 7 through 9. It says, you hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, this people draweth nigh to me, with their mouth, and honoureth me, with their lips, but their heart, is far from me.

[29 : 16] Their heart, is far from me. But in vain, do they worship me, teaching for doctrines, the commandments, of men. So here were these Pharisees, well-meaning religious people, the Pharisees, the religious leaders of the day, the ones that had everything down pat, they knew the scriptures, they knew the truth, but it wasn't personally known to them.

They were missing the whole point. And they went out of their way to impress the crowd, with a lot of show, but they did not have the substance, they did not have the reality. And verse 9 says it all, their heart, is far from me.

That's where it all boils down for us. For you and for me, today, how is our heart? There's Pharisees, they had the doctrines, the commandments of men, but yet they didn't really follow, what the authority, of the scriptures, told them to do.

They didn't put the scriptures, into action in their lives. And we too, we can make that mistake. As Christians, we can make that mistake. Many do.

But it's all lip service. It's a token kind of effort. It's a token kind of Christianity. That's just mere lip service. And not the heart. Don't make that mistake.

[30 : 37] That it's all words, and it's not honouring and serving God from your heart. God wants our heart. He doesn't want us to play church, to be a pretend kind of Christian, but to be a real Christian.

It's been truly said, that sitting in a garage, does not make you a car. You know? You know? And likewise too, coming to church doesn't make you a Christian.

You could come to church, church services, morning, night, midweek. You could come, more than me, and still, miss heaven.

Because it's not coming to a church, that makes you a Christian. And so it's important that we avoid that kind of religion that puts an emphasis on going through the motions, but missing the point.

So back to Matthew 23, 23 again it says, the Lord Jesus says, Woe unto you, scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites, for you pay tithe of mint and anise coming, these little items of seeds and herbs and spices, but you've omitted, you've neglected the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and fame.

[31 : 49] These ought you to have done and not to leave the other undone. You blind guides, which strain at a gnat and swallow a camel. Swallow a camel. Verse 24, look at this.

Verse 24, it describes in this very graphic way. You blind guides, you strain out a gnat and swallow a camel. Imagine this. In other words, what he was talking about was for the Jews that were certain unclean animals and they would filter out the smallest unclean animal, which was a gnat.

A gnat, it's a tiny little insect, tiny little insect. And Leviticus 11, 42 declares that very small insect, a gnat, unclean. And the largest unclean creature was a camel.

And the Jews were forbidden to eat a camel. And so here they were, these religious leaders, straining out this little gnat. Now maybe, while they weren't watching, a little gnat flew along, and landed in their soup or in their drink or their food.

And so they were very careful. They wanted to go through that food and make sure there's no gnats in there because it's unclean. And if they were to eat that unclean insect, they would be defiled.

[33 : 09] And yet, they were swallowing a camel is the picture of it. And so, while they're straining out this speck, almost when they drink, they kind of keep their teeth together so they don't swallow the gnat, the little insect.

But they're swallowing this great big camel. So in other words, what the Lord is saying here, they were missing the obvious. They were missing the obvious. Verse 25, Woe to you, scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites!

You might clean the outside of the cup and the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Again, a picture of, you know, imagine doing the dishes, men.

And, you know, on those rare occasions, and you clean the outside of the bowl, but inside it's still got all the food and the leftovers. That's the picture, isn't it?

It's like, religion tries to clean people up on the outside so they look good. You know, put a suit on them and whatever it be, make them look nice, but inside they're full of extortion and excess, full of sin.

[34 : 13] Putting that outside, changing the outside doesn't change the inside. And he says, thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter the plate, that the outside of them shall be clean also.

Clean the inside. In other words, get your heart right, is what he's saying. So these Jews, these Pharisees, they felt pious and religious, they were proud, everything looked good on the outside. Oh, look at me, I'm the supreme example of someone who's got it all together. And here were these ones, they counted out the seeds and they weighed the mint leaves so they were going to allocate the required portion to God.

And while they're weighing these seeds, they're missing the weightier matters. Judgment, mercy, and faith. Their faith was vain, it was a trust in themselves and in their own works.

Let's not make that mistake. It goes on, verse 27, people today, our Lord wants our heart.

[35 : 31] He knows our heart. It says that we can't hide anything from him. That one day all things will be revealed at judgment time. And so it's not some outward show that he wants, but the inward reality.

He wants our heart. He wants to create new life within. We haven't got time to play church, to be a pretend Christian.

We need to be the real thing. Now the world sees what's going on in churches and it's a reproach. We see some who are called Christians or such that are called churches and they bring shame on the name of Jesus because of the vile things that they are doing.

They're not Christians. They are just church goers. And we don't have time to play church. We've got to be real. We've got to be a genuine Christian. A fair dinkum, honest, real Christian.

And so we're looking at weightier matters just to recap. Judgment, mercy, and faith. God's judgment and His grace, thankfully. God's mercy extended through us to others around us.

[36 : 39] And lastly, faith. Faith. We need God's miracle of salvation. Faith. Faith. It means to believe, to know God personally.

These ones that our Lord rebuked, they had all the outward trappings. They were like a beautiful tomb, a monument for someone who's passed away.

Beautiful to look at on the outside, but on the inside it was full of dead men's bones. And the Pharisees were like that. They had it all together. It looked like they had everything down to every fine detail.

No one was more religious than them, but they were very far from God. Their heart is far from me. Their heart is far from me.

They had self-righteousness, but not God's righteousness. They knew the Lord. They wore the Scriptures on their head. The Scriptures that says, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind.

[37 : 43] But did they? No, they didn't. They had the letter of the Lord, but not the Spirit. It's always easier to be religious than to be righteous.

But God's righteousness comes by faith. It tells us in Romans 3, the righteousness of God, which is by faith, of Jesus Christ.

And as we rely on His righteousness, He changes us. He makes us His own. His righteousness He gives to us as a gift, not one that we work for, but we receive as we ask Him.

The Pharisees trusted in their own works. And many in churches do that too. Many try and try instead of trust.

Trust. They try and try by their good works, but simply trust. Trust Him. Believe. Believe. Faith. Faith in Christ.

[38 : 49] And so we see that many today miss the mark. They miss the point. They might have Bible knowledge, but it's not in their heart. And we must not neglect the Bible and God's Word.

It's the answer for us. There's healing found. In Psalm 107, verse 20, it says, He sent His Word and He healed them and delivered them from their destructions.

He sent His Word and He healed them. There's healing here for that dread disease of sin that is your destruction.

Sin will destroy you, but God's truth can heal you and set you free. He sent His Word and He healed them and He delivered them from their destructions.

There is a cure, an antidote for this world's ills. It's the gospel. The gospel. The gospel is what we need. In the gospel, it means good news.

[39 : 51] This news is good news. You know, put aside your newspaper, which is full of bad news, and read the good news.

Read God's good news. The good news for us all. And it says in Romans 10, 17, So then faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. As we hear this Word, faith happens.

As we hear it, faith happens. Faith comes by hearing. There's wonderful truth that happens deep within.

In Philippians 2, verse 16, it tells us that this book is called The Word of Life. Philippians 2, verse 16. The Word of Life.

And when the prophet came, Elijah... Sorry, in Ecclesiastes, it says there's a time to weep, a time to laugh, a time to mourn, a time to dance, a time to break down, and a time to build up.

[40 : 59] There's a time to break down some things. When the prophets came, like the prophet Elijah, they would remove some things. When the people in disobedience had built up, altars and idols, the prophet had to destroy the idols and destroy the altars to tear them down and then to build an altar to the Lord, to God.

And so too, in our lives, this time, we've got to tear some things down, a time to break down and a time to build up. We need to tear down those things of religion that bind and to build up that truth of saving faith, to know Him.

And as our Lord commissioned Jeremiah, He said, Behold, I've put my words in thy mouth. I've set the over the nations to root out, to pull down, to destroy, to throw down, to build and to plant.

The prophets of God had to pull down the altars of Baal, the false worship. They had to destroy the images of the false gods. The Pharisees were just as guilty of worshipping false gods.

Even though they claimed to worship God, their heart was far from God. And so, faith really helps us to tear down those idols, those things that take God's place.

[42 : 28] Our self-righteousness needs to be torn down. Our vain religion, our hypocrisy, our following of other gods, our heart being far from God needs to be torn down and replaced with faith.

Faith is the third weightier matter. As we covered, our Lord says, don't neglect the weightier matters of judgment, mercy and faith. And as we come to a close thing of Samuel said, only fear the Lord and serve Him in truth with all your heart.

It's your heart that God is calling to today. With the Pharisees, their religion was skin deep. The religion of the Pharisees was shallow.

It was skin deep. It was all show and outward, but their heart was far from God. They had much ritual and form and robes and words. They had much form but no reality.

We see how they prayed. Just one last reference here to illustrate faith. How they prayed. In Luke chapter 18, the Lord Jesus talked about two men.

[43 : 40] Two men went to the temple to pray. The one a Pharisee and the other a publican, a tax collector, an obvious sinner, a sinful man. And it says, verse 11, the Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, like that man over there, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.

I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, he would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God, be merciful to me, a sinner.

Amen. The Lord says, I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other, for everyone that exalteth himself shall be abased, he'll be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

The great mistake the Pharisees made was to miss the truth. The truth himself was staring them in their eyes, yet they missed it.

They missed him. And he said, we know the ones who sought to destroy Jesus, the ones who sought to destroy the Lord Jesus were the Pharisees.

[45 : 04] They sought to destroy him, to crucify him. What of you today? Have you considered the weightier matters? What is the priority? What is that which matters?

The Pharisees, they were self-sufficient, self-righteous, and Jesus says, woe to you. You've omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith.

God will be glorified in your life as you think through those weightier matters. He wants your heart today. He wants your heart today. It says that Christ died for our sins and he rose again and he calls to you, to me, come unto me, come unto me, all you that are heavy laden, take my yoke upon you and learn of me for I am meek and lowly in heart and you shall find rest to your souls.

Let us pray. Lord, we thank you for your word today, for each one here today. Work in us, Lord, help our heart to not be far from you. Draw us closer to you each day that we might know you.

Know you not in some religious form as the Pharisees but in reality that we might know you personally, that we might know your saving grace. We might know that it's your grace that stands in place of judgment and your mercy is extended to us such as we and faith can happen in a heart that seems far from you.

[46 : 42] You can bring faith to life. You can help us to change our direction, to turn our lives around, to be converted and to know you as our saviour and master forever.

We pray, Lord, bless each one as we just dismiss shortly and help us, Lord, to be mindful of these waiting matters in our lives to make sure we don't miss the main things that you call us to.

In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.