

Hypocrisy Condemned

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- [0 : 00] Let's turn again to the chapter we read in Luke's Gospel, Luke chapter 11. And I want us to do it now. It's a long section. We're trying to work through this Gospel.
- And this is a very long section from verse 14 to the end of the chapter. So just highlighting some of the things as we go along. And no doubt as we have been following the life of Jesus, there are some parts and aspects of it that are so encouraging.
- There are parts that thrill us. But there are also, we come to places and points of Jesus' teaching where they're much more challenging and much more sobering.
- And I think one of the things that we begin to see as we go along in following the life of Jesus is as there was growing opposition to him. Just how prejudiced people can be.
- And when a person has prejudice in their heart against something or against someone, it becomes impossible for that person to see worth and value and good within that person or within that thing.
- [1 : 12] A person becomes pretty blinkered so that they have this vision and they're not able to see a bigger picture. And that's what was happening with so many of the religious leaders. As they looked at Jesus, they became really offended by him.
- Because Jesus didn't mix his words and Jesus didn't spare them. Because there was one thing Jesus, well there's many things he couldn't tolerate. But the honesty and the purity of Jesus, he could not tolerate the hypocrisy that he was seeing so often in the religious leaders.
- And as we come to this chapter, it's one of the things, particularly in the latter part of the chapter, where Jesus is exposing the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and the lawyers.
- And the lawyers, of course, were Old Testament students. Not the kind of lawyers that we would think about today. And when we come to God's word, God's word must always act like a mirror.
- So that we examine ourselves in light of that word and say, right, where do I measure up? Because it's one thing to look at the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and say, oh, that was awful.
- [2 : 18] That was them. We've got to say, right, do we fall into that category? Are we, do we have some of these traits? Do we display some of these characteristics as well?
- We'll see that just in a few moments. But first of all, we find here that Jesus has cast out a devil out of somebody that was dumb. And again, the religious leaders, some of the people there, they were so prejudiced against Jesus that they were saying that he cast out this devil by the power of Satan.
- That it was a satanic power that he used in order to cast out the demon. And Jesus is highlighting just how ridiculous that claim is.
- Because he said Satan would never throw out a demon. Because that would be weakening his own grip, his own authority, and his own kingdom.
- And he said no kingdom fights against itself. If they do, they become divided and they become weak. And Jesus then is highlighting the hypocrisy of these people.

[3 : 30] Because elsewhere they had been saying that it was when others were casting out demons that it was by God's authority they were doing it.

But how come Jesus is the exception? And really, if you look at what they're saying, as they recognize that Christ is casting out a demon, they are actually acknowledging his authority and his supremacy over all.

And Jesus goes on to picture Satan as a strong man in armor guarding his palace. Now, again, often we, people tend to underestimate the reality and the power of the demonic.

But in this world, there are two great kingdoms. Two great spiritual forces. The Bible makes it very clear. And this is a great thing about the Bible.

Because it opens up to us the spiritual nature of things. You see, we're so grounded in the physical, in the here and the now, in everything that affects us, that so often we lose sight of the spiritual.

[4 : 40] But the Bible opens up to us the spiritual nature of things. And reveals to us how there are two hidden kingdoms that are working in this world.

The kingdom of light, kingdom of God, and the kingdom of darkness. And these two forces are in conflict and are at war in this world.

And they are largely at war in and through us. That is what is taking place. This is what the Bible shows us. Because it's very clear the kingdom, when Jesus says about a person who comes to accept himself as Lord, he says, the kingdom of God is within you.

That's where the kingship of Christ has come to live and to reign within a person. And similarly, Satan works through people as well.

And the sinister thing is that he can work through even those who have accepted the Lord. For instance, you find it with the apostle Peter. There was a time when Peter, who was a person who was devoted to Jesus, he started to rebuke Jesus.

[5 : 50] And remember, Jesus turned around to Peter and he said, get thee behind me, Satan. He could hear the very voice. He knew that the words that Peter was speaking were actually words that had come from the devil.

So we are at the center of this great conflict, this great struggle. And Jesus is showing here about how he's likening Satan to this strong man, fully armed, who guards his own palace and his goods are safe.

And of course, that is what the devils try to do. They try to influence our mind. And the Bible, again, this is all from what the Bible teaches.

We don't make this up. We read all this within the scripture. There are many names given to the demonic. For instance, the devil is called the disturber of our peace.

The devil is against peace. And whenever we see the disruption, we know that there are sinister forces behind things. He is a disturber of the peace.

[7 : 01] He accuser of the brethren. He's called the God of this world. And one of the things that the God of this world does is he blinds the minds of those who do not believe.

Now, this doesn't mean for any moment that a person becomes, we hear of demon possession. That's not what we're talking about. But Satan has an influence upon people's minds to close their mind against the truth, against the gospel.

And that happens all the time. It can happen when the gospel is preached, where there is, it's like kind of water off a duck's back, and so are saying, don't get it.

It's kind of irrelevant. People can sit down to the truth, and they say, well, that's okay, but I don't actually believe this. I don't accept that. Well, the Bible is saying that there is an influence, there is a human influence, and there is a demonic influence that is trying to close our mind against the truth.

Jesus likens it, and say, for instance, the parable of the sower. The sower went out sowing seed, and he said, some of the seed as it was sown on the ground, the birds of the air came and took it away.

[8 : 16] And Jesus interprets that for us. He says, that is the devil, where he comes and he takes the word away. So people don't hear it, they don't accept it, they don't believe it.

And he's great at doing that, because he comes into our mind, our imagination. How many times we can sit down to the word, and all of a sudden, something comes before your mind? Something maybe you're prone to worry about, something you're really looking forward to, and all of a sudden, that's your mind gone, and you don't hear anything else, and all of a sudden, the service is over, and you say, oh my, I didn't really hear.

People may say, what was being said today? Well, I'm afraid I didn't really hear much. It could be the fault of the preacher, but often, it is our mind is captured, it's gone, it's taken away.

And the Lord is showing us this, that there's this, that our mind is, our mind is not, as it were, just something that it doesn't really matter about.

It's at the center of a conflict. But the Lord goes on to show us, that there is one who is stronger than the satanic, and that is himself.

[9 : 34] And when a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, its goods are saved, but when one's stronger, then he attacks him and overcomes him. And that is what the Lord Jesus Christ has done.

That is the victory that he has won. We're told in Scripture that through death, he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil.

And that's what Jesus has done. That he is the one who is able to open people's minds. And if today, for instance, you're here and you're saying, you know, I've never really, I've never really grasped the truth.

I've never really come to accept the Lord. And remember that accepting the Lord is, it's a personal thing.

People have very strange ideas of Christianity, that it's all rules and regulations and things like that. Well, Jesus actually blows apart all these rules and regulations. I'm not saying, but that there aren't.

[10 : 36] The Word of God makes it very clear that the Lord sets out a pattern for our living, which is a life to be of obedience to him. However, we can become obsessed with the rules and regulations.

And Jesus shows how wrong that is. What is important is coming into this living, personal relationship with him. So that the Lord becomes real.

He's a real person we speak to in prayer. We hear the Word. It becomes a reality to us. And that's what we're to do when we come under the Word and say, Lord, open my mind.

Open my eyes. So that I might see spiritually. That I might hear spiritually as well. And then Jesus goes on to show that there is no neutrality with regard to the Gospel.

We cannot sit on the fence. We can't be neutrals. We can be neutrals in loads of situations in life. You could be neutral politically. You could say to yourself, Right, I'm not into any particular party.

[11 : 40] It doesn't... I'm just... I know that there are people who are so caught up with politics, but it doesn't really bother me. I'm not too bothered who's in power. So you can have people like that who are neutral.

They can go to a game and watch. And they don't mind which team wins. Because they've gone in a term of neutrality. It doesn't really matter. And loads of situations in life people can be neutral.

But this is one area the Lord says, You cannot be a neutral. You cannot be. You're either for me or against me. That's what he says. Whoever is not with me is against me.

Isn't that a challenging thought? And you see what happens. Those who are with me are gatherers. Those who are not with me are scatterers. Whoever is not with me is against me.

And whoever does not gather with me scatters. So remember that there's no sitting on the fence. There is no place of neutrality here.

[12 : 46] And so it's again one of these solemn and challenging things. And then Jesus condemns the blindness of the Jews of the day. They kept clamoring for a sign.

And they're saying we want to see something. We're hearing your words. But we need a sign. And Jesus is saying no. Now one of the reasons Jesus wasn't going to give them a sign was because his life was a complete fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.

And they had the light. Jesus hadn't come to people who were, as it were, ignorant of the truth and living in darkness. They were the people of privilege.

They were the people who had the word. They were the people who were studying the word. And his life was a fulfillment of that word. And yet they kept saying, oh, we want a sign.

And he was saying, look, the signs are all there. And then he highlighted the likes of Jonah and the likes of the Queen of Sheba. And these were Gentiles.

[13 : 47] Remember, these weren't Jews. They were Gentiles. The Queen of Sheba came from, as it says, the ends of the earth or of the known world. Came from such an incredible distance to hear Solomon.

Because she believed the words of Solomon. She believed what she heard. And he was saying, look, if she came to hear Solomon, let me tell you, there's somebody far greater than Solomon here.

It's me. And you're not believing. And he's talking about the Ninevites. When they heard the message of Jonah, they repented.

And he was saying, you know, there's going to come a day of reckoning. There's going to be a judgment. And he says, the Queen of Sheba and the people of Nineveh, they are going to rise up in the judgment and condemn you.

These people who had little light and yet they believed, there it's going to be far better for them than you who have the light and keep rejecting the light.

[14 : 47] See, Jesus is highlighting just what a serious thing it is to reject the light. And then from verse 37 to the end, Jesus pronounces woes upon the Pharisees.

Now, as we know, these were the most religious of people. And they were the ones that had made hundreds of laws on top of God's law.

And many of these laws had become far more important to them. And this Pharisee asked Jesus to a meal. And it's obvious that there were many other people there. And Jesus went.

But this Pharisee and those who were there were horrified because Jesus didn't wash. Now, of course, there was so much attached to the actual washing. And they were saying in their mind, what on earth kind of man is this?

They straight away, they would say, if he was a religious man, the first thing he would have done was he would have gone through the ritual of washing. Jesus didn't bother. Because these were man-made rituals and man-made laws.

[15 : 51] And he wasn't about keeping man-made rituals and laws. The law he was honoring was God's law. And so they were appalled at Jesus' action there.

So Jesus, knowing what they were like, he then turns around and he begins to pronounce these woes against the Pharisees.

And that's why we've got to look at these things. It's all very well saying, that's 2,000 years ago. We've got to say, right? What about me? Am I guilty of these very things or not?

And just to sum them up very quickly, Jesus warns against being concerned with the outward rather than the inward.

That's the first thing. The Pharisees were so concerned with doing the right thing. They had to dot every religious eye. They had to stroke every religious T.

[16 : 50] They had to be seen to be doing the right things and being in the right places and all the rest. And Jesus is saying, you know, it's all very well, all this outward life.

What is important is your heart. And for many of you, your hearts are full of greed and wickedness. And you've been condemned by God. And that's a sobering thought.

Because whoever we fool, we can fool ourselves and we can certainly fool other people. We can't fool God. And as we look at our own lives, are we more concerned with the outward?

Or with getting our hearts right with God? That's what Jesus is saying. That's the important thing. And then he shows that the Pharisees were more concerned with prestige and pomp rather than again getting themselves right spiritually before God.

They like to be seen. They like the upper seats. They like to parade themselves. They like to be well thought of. The Lord is saying, no.

[17 : 59] In God's sight, that is wrong. You know, spiritually, there should be no place within the religious life for somebody trying to elevate themselves.

Somebody trying to be great and big in human terms. There's no place for that. The Lord is saying, whatever greatness, it must be spiritually before God.

That is what it's to be. Then he pronounces a woe because he said they're like unmarked graves. Now, as you know, in Jewish culture, again, any contact with the dead brought a person to become ceremonially unclean.

And an unmarked, even if you walked on top of a grave, you became, even although you weren't physically in contact with, like with touching a dead body, you still brought yourself into, you became ceremonially unclean through walking across a grave.

So graves had to be clearly marked, clearly identified. So Jesus is saying to the Pharisees, you're like unmarked graves. Rather than helping people, you're actually hindering them.

[19 : 16] Rather than being a warning to people and being an encouragement to people and being a help to people, you're actually a hindrance. And what a condemnation upon those who are religious.

Because those who are religious, and if we put it into our own society and into our own terminology and into our own day and into our own situation, if we are believers following the Lord Jesus Christ, our lives ought to be displaying Christ.

And they ought to be helping people and encouraging people. And if our lives are putting people off track, if our lives are such that they are causing a hindrance to the growth of people and the growth of the gospel, then there's something far wrong.

And that's what it's going back like to what Jesus was saying in verse 23. Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters. And Jesus is really saying to the Pharisees, you're in the scattering mold.

You're not gathering. You're not building up. You're not encouraging my church. You're scattering it. And then one of the lawyers who was there, he took exception to what Jesus was saying.

[20 : 39] And he complained. He felt that Jesus was being insulting. But Jesus then turned upon the lawyers. And he said to the lawyers, look, he said, you're busy preaching on how people should live.

But you yourselves don't practice what you preach. And it shows in verse 46 there that they were trying to find ways to avoid having to keep the religious laws.

They were saying to the people, look, there's the law. This and this and this and this. And yet they themselves were trying to find ways of avoiding doing the very things that they were telling other people to do.

And again, you can't fool people. You can't fool people. Because, again, if we are guilty of preaching one thing and not practicing it, people soon notice.

And Jesus is saying it becomes your testimony becomes a joke. Because people see there's no reality in it.

[21 : 47] And that's what was happening with the Pharisees of that day. And then the last thing there. Well, again, how Jesus is highlighting how the history of these people was down through the years.

Rather than listening to the prophets that the Lord sent, they were killing them. And they were party to that. And they saw, you know, what Jesus was saying while he was talking historically, he was also talking prophetically.

Because they were soon, these very people were soon going to kill the prophet, the Lord Jesus Christ. But the last thing that Jesus says, he condemned them for taking away the key of knowledge.

In other words, what they were doing with the word of God was they were twisting it and turning it to suit their own ideas. And that's one of the most dangerous things that any person can do.

Is to take God's word out of context and build a philosophy or a way of life on just one wee thing. You've got to take it in its unity, in its entirety.

[22 : 58] Because God's word sheds light upon God's word. As somebody said, God's word is the best commentary you'll get on God's word. And we can get into all kinds of problems by isolating and taking a wee thing out of context.

And twisting it to suit our own ideas and what we want. And that's what the Pharisees were doing. They were building up their own ways. And because they were doing that, they were closing the book of light against the people.

And I pray that I will never be guilty of doing that. The one thing is that you will try always to make the message as straightforward and as simple and as relevant as possible.

Preaching is not to come with your own fancies, your own ideas, your own hobby horses, your own pet themes. It is to bring what God's word is saying to try and make it as clear as possible.

And hope that God, through his spirit, will apply this truth to where we are for today. So as we come to this part, a very challenging part of God's word, we've got to look into ourselves and say, If Jesus was here today and we were all sitting around having a meal, how would he be speaking to us?

[24 : 24] Would he be saying, Hey, see you people? You're more concerned with the outward than with the inward. Your lives are actually a hindrance to the development and the growth and the spread of the gospel.

That's the kind of things he was saying to these Pharisees. It's a challenge and we've got to read these things and take them to heart. And pray that these things won't be true of us.

And the key, of course, is getting it right inwardly. Getting it right privately, personally, before God. And may we seek then for the grace so to do.

Let us pray. Lord, our God, we give thanks again for coming under the word. And we pray that the word will indeed touch our hearts and minds. We pray for those who are sad and mourning, those who have lost loved ones.

We commit them to thee. We pray to heal and to help those who are brokenhearted this day. We pray for the spread of the gospel throughout our land and throughout the nations of this world.

[25 : 32] And we pray particularly for the persecuted church. For those who suffer because they love the Lord Jesus. Do us good and part us with thy blessing.

Taking away our sin in Jesus' name we ask all. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.