

WEEK 13: THE DANGER OF SELFISH RELIGION (LUKE 11:37-54)

Introduction

The Fear of God and the Fear of Man

One of the greatest dangers of being involved in a community of faith is **trying to impress others** with your own spiritual growth/progress. This is a wrong way of thinking and has no place in the life of someone who is walking with God. Rather than **living in the fear of God** we might fall prey to the temptation to **live in the fear of man**. Praise from others might become a primary goal rather than honoring Christ.

Fighting Nature

By nature, we are s_____ **people**. This battle with selfishness doesn't go away just because we become Christians. We need to *constantly confront and combat* this sinful tendency towards living selfishly in order to truly walk with God and be a real disciple.

Jesus and the Self-Important Pharisees (11:37-44)

What are some signs that you might be self-important (thinking of yourself too highly)?

When we expect Jesus to live by _____.
(11:37-38)

"Now when He had spoken, a Pharisee *asked Him to have lunch with him; and He went in, and reclined at the table. When the Pharisee saw it, **he was surprised that He had not first ceremonially washed before the meal.**"
(Luke 11:37-38 NASB)

Ceremonial washing would occur as a *ritual* before meals. Yet Jesus *broke* their ritual and didn't go along with what everyone else was doing.

The Pharisees were **adding** religious rules to the Law and treating it on the same level as the Law. Jesus did not abide by their way of doing things.

- Question: can you think about something in your past when you got frustrated with God because he didn't do what you thought he should do?

When we focus on the outward to the neglect of the inward. (11:39-41)

"But the Lord said to him, "Now you Pharisees **clean** the outside of the cup and of the platter; but inside of you, you are full of robbery and wickedness. "You foolish ones, did not He who made the outside make the inside also? "But give that which is within as charity, and then all things are clean for you."
(Luke 11:39-41 NASB)

- Question: What does cleaning the outside look like?

- If you only clean the outside, who does this mean you're trying to impress?

When we focus on looking good in front of others.
(11:42-44)

"But woe to you Pharisees! For you pay tithes of mint and rue and every kind of garden herb, and yet disregard justice and the love of God; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others. "Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the chief seats in the synagogues and the respectful greetings in the market places. "Woe to you! For you are like concealed tombs, and the people who walk over them are unaware of it."
(Luke 11:42-44 NASB)

"Woe to you"—why/what is the problem?

- 1) *They do things they know will get them praise by others while ignoring the parts no one will notice.*
- Question: What do you pay attention to (what do you love) and what do you disregard?

Jesus' instruction: it's not that you **shouldn't** do the outward things; rather, you should **not neglect the inner life** while pursuing outward righteousness.

- 2) *They love _____ from other people while being inwardly dead.*

The picture Jesus paints is pretty vivid: they are like graves full of bones you might walk over and never know the graves were even there ("concealed tombs").
You can't see below the surface—but God can.

Application Questions

- 1) Are you *selective* with parts of the Bible—willing to submit to certain commands but not committed to obedience no matter what? Or are you willing to accept what Jesus has said without reservation? How would you change this tendency?
- 2) How much do you value what others think of you? Is this a constant concern? If so, what do you think you should do about this? Can you think of any verses you might be able to memorize and meditate on that can address this problem?
- 3) All these sins could be boiled down to **selfishness**. From the passage above, what is the *solution* to living a selfish life?

"For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you **not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think**; but to **think so as to have sound judgment**, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith." (Rom 12:3 NASB)

Jesus and the Self-Deluded Lawyers (11:45-54)

The "Lawyers" were "teachers of the (Old Testament) Law." Sometimes the term "lawyer" was used interchangeably with "scribe." These individuals were **completely dedicated to the minute details of the law**. For Jesus to say what he did would have been insulting to them!

The Lawyers weigh down the consciences of their people. (11:45-46)

"One of the lawyers said to Him in reply, "Teacher, when You say this, You insult us too." But He said, "Woe to you lawyers as well! For you weigh men down with burdens hard to bear, while you yourselves will not even touch the burdens with one of your fingers." (Luke 11:45-46 NASB)

The lawyers reinterpret their own history. (11:47-51)

"Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets, and it was your fathers who killed them. "So you are witnesses and approve the deeds of your fathers; because it was they who killed them, and you build their tombs. "For this reason also the wisdom of God said, 'I will send to them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and some they will persecute, so that the blood of all the prophets, shed since the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the house of God; yes, I tell you, it shall be charged against this generation.'" (Luke 11:47-51 NASB)

The lawyers teach but don't personally develop their walk with God. (11:52)

Most damning of all, the lawyers would pretend to have a walk with God, demand that others follow the commands of God, and yet themselves **have no real walk with God!**

"Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge; you yourselves did not enter, and you hindered those who were entering.'" (Luke 11:52 NASB)

"Taking away the key of knowledge" means preventing people from knowing God themselves. They acted as though you could only know God through their interpretation.

You yourself did not enter = They had no personal relationship with God.

They prevented others who were trying to enter = This goes together with the statement above. They were keeping other people from walking with God by causing them to sin or preventing them from knowing what God required for them.

How will you respond? (11:53)

"When He left there, the scribes and the Pharisees began to be very hostile and to question Him closely on many subjects," (Luke 11:53 NASB)

As Jesus finished rebuking these men for their wrong thinking, they responded as you might expect them to respond: with **hostility**.

Compare to David's response to being confronted with his sin (Psalm 51:14-17)

The danger of selfishness

Selfish religion is **religion practiced for the express purpose of making yourself feel better or gaining a good reputation with other people**.

If you follow this kind of religious practice, you will face judgment from God. This is **not true religion**. This is not true relationship with God.

"You foolish ones, did not He who made the outside make the inside also?" (Luke 11:40 NASB)

The key to being a disciple is recognizing that you're following a **person** and not just a list of rules. You must honor that person (Jesus) with all your being.