

7 Traits of a Pharisee (Pt. 1)

by Shane Idleman

Shane Idleman explores the traits of a Pharisee and emphasizes the necessity of loving God with all aspects of our being to avoid hypocrisy and foster genuine faith.

Duration: 52:33

Scripture: Matthew 23:1

Topics: "Phariseeism", "Renewing The Mind"

Description

Shane Idleman discusses the seven traits of a Pharisee, emphasizing the dangers of hypocrisy and the importance of loving God with our entire being. He highlights that true love for God involves a complete commitment of mind, soul, and strength, which leads to clarity in decision-making and a transformed life. Idleman warns against the deceptive nature of Phariseeism, where individuals may appear religious but lack genuine faith and love, ultimately leading others astray. He encourages believers to renew their minds through God's Word and to seek a deeper relationship with Him, rather than being caught up in the approval of men. The sermon serves as a call to self-examination and a reminder of the importance of humility and love in the Christian walk.

Transcript

You can turn to your Bibles to Matthew. It's a chapter I've been wanting to get to for some time. Matthew 23.

And do you recognize anything up there? The mask, the Pharisee? That means there's deception, there's hypocrisy. And we're going to talk about the seven traits of a Pharisee based on what Jesus said. But before I get to that, I want to just recap a few things we talked about because they were vitally important last week on loving God with all your mind, with all your soul, with all your strength, basically with everything.

And it wasn't separate areas that we're loving God with. It's the completeness. If you're loving God with your mind, you're loving God with your soul.

You're loving God with all your strength. It's completeness. And I forgot to mention last week, and I wanted to throw it out there this week, that that aspect of God's will determines your whole course of your life.

People are so worried about other aspects, but when you love God with all your soul, with all your mind, with all your strength, everything else will fall in place. You'll get clear direction. Decisions will become much more easier than they are now.

We're so worried about these other areas, but we neglect the most important commandment ever given. It's to love God with all your soul, with all your strength, everything that is about you. And there was something interesting we briefly touched on about this area, that your mind, and I think this will be huge for some people, that your mind can overcome matter.

And what I mean by that is our thoughts control our brain. The brain is the gray matter. You've heard that word before, gray matter.

It's this brain up here that controls actually what I'm doing. My brain is processing my next thought, my next movement. But the brain is subject to the thoughts, to the thought life.

The Bible talks about renewing your mind, and focusing your thoughts on things that are pure and honest and noble and upright. And there are some wonderful resources out there by Christian psychologists who would say that the mind can change the brain chemistry. And what we tend to do is look at the brain chemistry and ignore the thought life.

But the Bible says to work on your thought life, and that will control the brain. So as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he. The mind, what you put your mind on, finally brethren, whatever things are pure and noble and honest, and you can really restructure your life.

I believe that a lot of illnesses, mentally, physically, spiritually, are directly related to our thought life. And ask most physicians, what is the number one reason why people are going to the doctor? Stress. Stress.

Anxiety. I'm so stressed out. And we're not taking our thought life captive.

And this is why I talk about the media often. You need to have a very healthy balance of the news. You don't need to know what's going on all over the world.

Who was stabbed here? Who was murdered here? What was going on here? This and oh my goodness, yeah the world is falling apart. That's why you look to the anchor. You look to the rock.

We build our life on this, not that. That's supposed to be falling apart. Has that ever dawned on you? That the world is supposed to be falling apart.

There are murderings, there are stabbings, there are things on the news. I read, is that even possible? How can a mom do that to her kid or a dad? And it just starts to really wear you down. I think we're getting worn down physically because we're first getting worn down mentally.

And I've noticed in my own life when I remove all of those things and I just concentrate on God's Word, I concentrate, finally brethren, when Paul says finally to the church in Philippi, finally brethren, whatever things are pure and noble and honest and upright and of a good report, meditate on those things. So either Paul's in error or many people aren't following his directives. Because whatever things are true, well there goes a lot of things that we need to not be focusing on.

Whatever things are noble, things of integrity, things that are upright. Your thoughts control and they begin to change. Many of these psychologists would say your DNA.

Well I don't want to hear what a psychologist says, I want to hear what the Bible says. Well be renewed by the renewing of your mind. Be transformed.

Don't be transformed, be renewed by the renewing of your mind. Be transformed by what you're putting in. And I see it all the time.

I'm not trying to be a positive motivational speaker right now, but I'm just telling you the truth. If you put positive things in, you're going to get positive things out. If you look at your spouse as someone who's cared for you, who's raised your children, who's done all these things, that's going to go a lot farther than oh that person, I don't even like that person anymore.

They're doing this and they don't take the trash out. And we just start to dwell on those things. Do you think you're going to have a happy, healthy marriage or a destructive marriage? The way we view others, the way we view our children, the way we view coworkers, the mind, it's very interesting.

And as I said last week, the big lie is that you do not control your actions as much as you think you do. That's the big lie. You can go back to Freud, a psychologist in the 1800s.

You can go back to you don't really control your actions. How you're pre-programmed, have you heard that word? It's how you're wired. It's how you grew up in your environment.

No, that doesn't control you as much as you think that it controls you. Here's what controls you. The thought life.

I mean there's been wonderful teachings from teachers that all of us know. They've talked about it's not what happens to you, it's how you react to what happens to you. Or I should say respond to what happens to you.

So I just want to encourage you. They call it stinking thinking. And if we knew how powerful our thoughts were, we would not try to think negative thoughts again.

If you realize that every negative thought about a person, a job, your health, this, and it's just going to start bringing you down. And that's why people get into anxiety and they need medication. Because their thought life has broken them down to such a position to now they need some kind of help.

And I'm not ruling out that at all. Sometimes people need medication to balance out things. You know that.

But every time I talk about this, people email me. And they say, well I needed to take Xanax because of this. Okay, well fine.

I'm not saying that. I'm just saying the majority of the people run to the doctor instead of the great physician. And I've seen my mind put me in a dark spot.

And I've seen my mind take me out of a dark spot. By getting back into God's Word. Just a confession from the pulpit.

If I watch too much of the news, I do get scared. If you're raising four little kids in this culture, you'll get scared too. I don't like it.

What's it coming to? The schools, they're battlegrounds. The colleges are no more. They'll laugh at Christianity and where it's going pretty soon and how they're going to treat Christians.

Do you know there's bills in California trying to be passed for doctor prescribed suicide? It just got defeated, but they're trying. Did you hear what I'm saying? A doctor can write out a prescription that you go and pick this up. You take this medication.

You will be dead within minutes of taking the medication. That's how far we've drifted. It's fear factor, but God says, I haven't even given you a spirit of fear.

There's nothing a part of me that is fearful is of God, because I should focus on God who is sustaining and God who will guide me through and God who is my foundation. I often think of when Paul lived. We're not burning Christians yet at the stake to light the candles of Rome.

So that's a good thing. We're not there yet, but we're going in that direction, I feel, that there's so much to be fearful about. But God says, don't focus on those things that are fearful.

Don't get your mind caught up in the what ifs will kill you. Won't they? What if this? What if that? What if this is going to happen? I think the last time I checked, 95% of the what ifs don't happen. 95% of what we worry about doesn't even happen.

So when we say, God, I love you with all your mind, we really need to check ourselves and say, do we really? Because we serve our Lord with our mind. Paul said, wretched man that I am who will deliver me from this body of sin and death, for with the mind I serve the law of God. Because before obedience starts in my feet, it starts in my mind.

Everything starts here. You are not a product of your environment. You may be influenced by it, but it doesn't need to control you.

And that's a huge encouragement for people who grew up in difficult homes. I mean, some of the stories I've heard, you know, I did not have it easy with my dad, and people say, well, you're a product of your environment. You had an angry dad, your predisposition to be angry.

Throw in there German and Irish, and you're in big trouble. And they tell you, well, that's a product of their environment. If you change the environment, you change the, well, no, you change the mind.

You change the environment of the mind, you'll see changes. But you've seen people in terrible areas that are great students. And they're good at school, and they're just coming out of what they would call the ghetto.

How is that possible? And then you see somebody who's rich and affluent, and they just destroy their whole life. So it's not necessarily in the environment. The environment plays a role, for sure, but you don't have to, like I said, be a product of your environment.

And that's how we sell people on things. You're a product of your environment. That's one of the worst things a counselor can tell somebody.

Well, you know, you're just a product of your environment. It's the way you're going to be from here on out. When we've seen people radically changed by renewing their mind.

And it takes time. People read the Bible. Shane, it really didn't help me.

Right, you don't just read it and literally be transformed right then, because you have to offset the tons of garbage that's coming in. So you get rid of the garbage, and then you spend time in the Word. You spend time in worship.

You spend time seeking God. It's a renewing process. It's like telling somebody, it's like somebody getting frustrated.

Shane, I started working out last week, and I did not lose my 50 pounds. How long did it take to gain it? Well, two and a half years. How long is it going to take to take it off? Much quicker, trust me, much quicker.

If you do it right, it depends where you're at, but you can. That's the whole point, though. The same thing with spiritual principles.

The renewing of your mind is a process. It's like a spiritual shower, and you have to keep taking the shower. And the world comes in.

And how much of the world do you allow in? And I don't mean to offend, but I will offend some people right now. If you think just coming to church one time on a weekend is going to get you through spiritually, you are gravely mistaken. I hope to just be the prime that fuels the pump.

That's why I say, take this atmosphere home. Take this worship home. Get into the Word, because it needs to be a daily thing.

And then we just come to church as a united body to worship. If you're relying on me to resuscitate, come back to life, and then you die all week, and then you come back. Okay, good.

That's not spirituality. And actually, those people don't come every week. It's every other week or once a month.

And that's not enough. I just encourage you, get into the Word of God, get into worship, and begin to be transformed. I don't feel it right away.

Right. I don't either. So let me just encourage you that the Lord's mercies are what every morning? Renewed.

Renewed. How are they renewed? His mercies are renewed, but you have to bring your thoughts back. Lord, thank you for giving me another day.

Thank you. You're renewing my life. You're renewing your mind through the washing of your mind.

Paul talks about washing your spouse with the Word, and that's just a washing over, renewing. And I can't tell you the difference it makes in my own life because I'll get up in the morning, have tons of things on my mind, turn the phone off, go put it in a drawer, tell my wife to hide my phone for two hours, and then just get into the Word of God, it starts to change you. So be encouraged.

The most powerful thing you possess is your mind. That's why the worst enemy out there is within. And that's the best way to love God with all of our soul is with all of our mind.

And then we ask the question, are you hungry for heaven? Why don't many people truly seek God? And the sad truth is that they don't want to. That's why many people don't seek God. They don't want to.

They've bought a lie that seeking God will turn them into a weird person. Then I'm going to have to do this, and then I can't go here, and then I've got to quit drinking this, and I've got to quit smoking this, and I've got to quit hanging around with this person. Well, where are you going with all that right now? You're miserable.

Look at the fruit. And the devil gives us this line that's seeking God. People say, I can never do what you do.

Right. You don't have to. Do what God's called you to do.

You'll be a better husband. You'll be a better wife. You'll be a better spouse.

Because you're following hard after God. And the question I don't think I got to, I know I didn't at the second service, was how much of God do you want? That was the name of the message of the sermon. How much of God do you want? We've had a lot of people online listening and watching.

And I forgot to make this point, I think, but the point is this, the fire of God, what I mean by that is people say, I want more of God. Shane, I would assume that most of you in this room, if I asked you, would say, absolutely. I don't think there's very many here that would say, no, I'm just here because I'm bored.

I mean, we want more of God. And what I mean by the fire of God is throughout the Old Testament and even the New, tongues of fire. John the Baptist said, there comes one after me that will baptize you in spirit and in fire.

There's this fire. It's this passion. It's this out of your belly will flow rivers of living water.

Jeremiah said, His word is in my heart like a burning fire. It's this fire. That's how God would say passion, fire.

But the fire of God does not fall on an empty altar. Paul said in Romans 12, therefore, I urge you, I beseech you, another translation would say, in the view of God, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God. That's how the fire of God falls.

If you want to know God in a powerful way, if you want all of God, and we won't see perfection on this side of heaven, but there's a difference between somebody lukewarm and somebody filled with the spirit of God. Clear difference. Difference is as night as day.

Somebody carnal who looks just like the world and somebody filled with the spirit of God. If you want that, the fire of God does not fall on an empty altar. You've got to present your body as a living sacrifice.

What does that look like? Well, what I've been teaching on the last five years. Living sacrifices. We just sang it.

Brad, that was a great song. That last song. Less of me, more of you.

Empty me. Fill me. But you have to mean it.

Because a lot of people can sing it. More of me, but I know what that takes. And I'm not going to do that.

And let's just keep singing. I'm going to play along. More of me, less of you.

No, I'm not getting rid of that. No, Lord, I'm not going to go there. And we play games with God.

So how much of God do you want depends upon you. Not the church, not the preaching, not anything. It depends on how much of your life do you want to give God.

And it doesn't involve a big checklist. God will answer a prayer. And that's why I love preaching on this topic.

Of those who say, God, I want more of you. I'm done playing games. Show me.

God, show me what it looks like. Show me what I need to remove. Help me prioritize my life so I can put you first.

Your money, my marriage, the way I treat my spouse, the kids. I'm going to be honest at work. God, I need you.

Please give me all of you. And he'll answer that prayer. But I know a lot of people, when they do that, they're thinking.

Especially young adults. You know, you talk to them and they're like, I don't know, I've got my Vegas trip lined up. My girlfriend is kind of fun right now.

We're living together. I can't. You know, there's this stumbling block.

There's something. The enemy will use that, whatever it is, and he'll use that to where you don't surrender all. I mean, sometimes it takes God knocking us down to a lower.

What do mathematicians say? You've got to get something down to its lowest common denominator before you can begin to build it back up. And he had, in my own life, he had to take everything away. Oh, you're very prideful, man.

Okay, we'll get you in this position, corporate America, and then you get a demotion. Uh-oh. And then you're used to all this money, and now you're nothing.

And now you think this, and God will use these ways to chip at us to where we surrender and say, God, you've got everything. Everything is yours. But you have to get to that point where you truly believe that, because I can honestly say that.

I can say, Lord, everything is yours. My finances, this church, in case you didn't know it, this church is God's church. Oh, Shane's church, every week.

Oh, is that your church? No, it's not my church. Don't say it's my church. Just say I'm leading, pastoring and teaching, but this is God's church, whatever he wants to do.

As we're praying about a merger, as we're praying about laying, it's God, whatever you want to do, we have to get off of this high horse. It's my building. I've been here 30 years.

It's God's church. And then when you give it to him, he can lead you. See, that's why God can't lead many people.

They're holding on. But when you go like this, you can be led. It's very easy to be led when you want to be pulled, but it's very hard.

God can do anything, but he's not a puppet master. You know what that is? It's not a Metallica song. It's a puppet master.

He's not going to just make you, let's do this. He says, whoever seeks me will find me. I'll go to and fro to look throughout the whole earth to find those whose hearts are loyal to me.

So there's a responsibility on our part. Now with that said, with regrouping and retracking, let's look at what a Pharisee is. Sound good? Seven traits of a Pharisee.

You know, and this was a challenging title, because if I put out that title, Pharisees aren't going to watch it. And I want Pharisees to listen. You know, I'm like, oh, how's this going to, maybe I should trick them.

It's okay if you're a Pharisee. Watch this. You know, but I'm just, just put it out there.

I look for some feedback on the title, and seven traits of a Pharisee. But I want to clarify something. A Pharisee versus someone who struggles with Phariseeism.

Because I've struggled with Phariseeism, but I'm not a Pharisee. So there's a difference. You can struggle with Phariseeism, or you can be a Pharisee.

You might say, what is a Pharisee? Well, how long do we have? Let's just say they were, this is amazing. They were religious leaders teaching the Bible who were not saved. In many cases.

Most cases. I mean, you can argue Nicodemus. You can argue Gamaliel later on in his life.

I've heard different things. But the bottom line is, Pharisees were not saved. So they would pound you with this, but they didn't know the author.

Now, we can struggle with that. And here's why. Pride is very prevalent in Pharisees and in Phariseeism.

But those struggling with this issue are repentant. In other words, they'll say, you know what? You're right. I shouldn't treat people like that.

I shouldn't do that. The Pharisee would never say that. That's why they're a Pharisee.

So that's a big, the distinction is you're going to struggle, especially if you get into the Word of God, and as you begin to be puffed up in truth, and as you start to read big theological books, and as you realize you can win some arguments, you're going to struggle with Pharisees. Especially, we see this come out a lot when Easter gets here. And I'll get emails, don't call it Easter.

That's from the goddess Esther. Call it Resurrection Day. That's good if you want to do that.

That's fine. But I'm not worried about the goddess Esther because I'm here to worship Jesus Christ. You can call it the 27th of March, and we're going to be here to worship Jesus.

But you have to be careful in this area. Here's a good example. Saul was a Pharisee.

What happened when he met the Lord? He became converted. But did he ever struggle with Phariseism or legalism? Probably. You would assume so.

God's Word, and here's another aspect of it. God's Word, as we all know, is truth. Did you know that? This is truth.

But even cults can have this in their home. So what's missing? This is truth. But what's missing? The Spirit.

Those who worship God must worship Him in Spirit and in truth. So a Pharisee has the truth, but not the Spirit of God in them. So that's why they go sideways in many different areas.

So you have to have both. Truth and Spirit. So in today's term, this is a commentary from the InterVarsity Press.

In today's term, talking about Pharisees, Jesus was thundering against many popular preachers and people who seemed to be living holy lives because they were practicing human religion rather than serving God with purified hearts. So that would be your translation. A Pharisee today is maybe a popular preacher or even pastors or elders or people who seem to be holy.

We're holy, but we're not converted. And it's hard to spot at first, isn't it? Sometimes, some of you that know, they're holy, but they're not converted. And it takes a little while to look at these traits to find out.

In other words, they are very serious about their faith. I haven't got to the seventh trait yet, but just an introduction. Pharisees are very serious about their faith.

I mean, they are the most serious people I know about their faith, but they're very arrogant. They don't love. They don't have the fruit of the Spirit.

They may teach. They may even teach in churches or different places, but they don't know the teacher. They have zeal, passion, but it's without love.

And they may have been attending church for years, but they don't know God. A.W. Tozer said, When people find that after being in church for many years, they are not making much progress, they ought to examine themselves and wonder whether they have truly been converted. If people have been sitting in church for years and there's no change, you have to wonder, have I truly been converted? And what he means here, they're not seeing much progress.

Progress is the fruit of the Spirit. This is very easy to spot. The fruit of the Spirit is love and joy and peace and contentment and longsuffering and gentleness and kindness and goodness and self-control.

So it doesn't mean there's no problems in the church. We can have problems in the church, you know, bickering, but, hey, I love you, that wasn't right, I'm compassionate, I overstepped my bounds, there's goodness, I want to restore the damage I've done. So you see how the fruit of the Spirit comes into play.

But with Pharisees, there's no fruit of the Spirit. They don't have the fruit of the Spirit. Why don't they have the fruit of the Spirit? Because they don't have the Spirit.

They have the truth without the Spirit. And when you have the truth without the Spirit, you beat people up. And that's what Pharisees do.

They hurt people. Let's just get that out of the way. Pharisees hurt people.

I've got to write that down, because I don't remember that one. Okay, so the seven things, the seven traits. The first thing, Matthew 23.

Jesus says, Woe to the scribes and the Pharisees. The scribes wrote down the law. They did a lot of the legality and the writing of it.

The Pharisees taught it. So he's saying, Woe to the scribes and the Pharisees. And if Jesus ever says woe, to me it means wake up.

So when you read woe, think of wake up. What's going on here? Woe to you scribes and Pharisees. Woe be to that nation who rejects God.

Woe be to those people who call good evil and evil good. What does woe mean? Woe means grief, sorrow, misery, heavy calamity. So Jesus is pronouncing woes on these people.

To me, this would be a huge wake up call. Wake up. So here's the first trait, and then I'll read the passage of scripture.

The first trait of a Pharisee without fail is they say, but they do not do. And we're all going, well, I struggle with that. Well, yes, we all struggle with this.

But there's a difference between a struggle and somebody who's caught in this Pharisee lifestyle. So they say something, but they do not do it. This person loves preaching at you, but they don't love to obey the preaching they're preaching.

If that makes sense. They'll just, oh, you shouldn't do this, you shouldn't, and then they'll just go home and just be just messed up into sin. They don't obey the preaching.

They love to preach, but they don't want to obey the truth of God's word. And they add heavy burdens. You shouldn't go there.

You shouldn't do that. Let me check in. Let me do this.

It's like cults. If you know anything about cults, they are very controlling. I won't sit here and name them right now, but they are very controlling.

Where were you last week? Why weren't you at church? What's your giving record? Who are you this? Where do you live? We're going to have people stop by. Did you read my material yet? Do you believe? And you need to come to classes on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. And don't forget our Sunday service and our Sunday night group, because I need to see.

It's just controlling and controlling and controlling. That's what they do. So here's a reference, Matthew 23.

They say but do not do. Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. Therefore, whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do.

But do not do according to their works, for they say and they do not do. For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and they lay them on men's shoulders. But they themselves will not move them one of their fingers.

Now it's interesting. They sit in Moses' seat, which means they sit in positions of authority. And what they're teaching, they would probably be in Genesis or Exodus or Leviticus or Numbers or Deuteronomy as they're reading Deuteronomy, the blessings of God and the cursings of God.

So Jesus is saying they're sitting in Moses' seat. They're sitting in positions of authority. So you better listen to what they're saying.

But don't go follow them and watch their actions because their actions are not lining up with Scripture and you might be led astray because you're watching their actions. So Jesus says listen to what they say and do it. And this is also interesting because many people, because you have the extreme of Phariseeism, but in the church you also have the other extreme over here where they don't want to have anything to do with obedience.

So anytime you talk about obeying God's Word, nope, that's Phariseeism. No, that's obeying God's Word. Nope, that's legalism.

That's obeying God's Word. Nope, you're being too hard. Oh, so you don't want to obey anything, right? You like your comfortable, smoke your marijuana, don't go get a job, you know, tell everybody off, aren't you a quarterback, and you just want to live this comfortable life, watch the hateful eight, and watch desperate housewives, and watch all, you know, just no change in you.

You don't want to obey anything about the Word of God. You don't want to love your spouse. Nothing.

You just want a lukewarm, carnal Christianity. And so they'll use, when you start to say, here's what God's Word says you need to obey, they'll say, no, that's Phariseeism. That's legalism.

And Jesus here is saying, no, it's not. Obey. Obey what they say about the Word of God.

Obey how to treat somebody, how to act. Obey that, but don't do as they do because they'll say something and then they'll go home and do something else. Or they'll say something in the temple and then they'll see them out at the local whatever, shopping place, and they're like, well, that's, he just, that doesn't seem right.

So he's saying, do what they do because, I mean, do what they say because what they say is of God's Word, but don't follow what they do. And they bind heavy burdens onto people. They give them heavy loads to carry.

And that's the key. We can instruct others, but it must come from a humble, loving heart like Jesus. Jesus and the Pharisees often said the same thing.

The Pharisees would say, give of your, Pharisees would say, we have to pray. Jesus would say, you have to pray. Pharisees would say, we have to fast.

Jesus would say, we have to fast. Pharisees would say, you have to give. Jesus would say, give.

So they were saying the same thing, but their actions were not backing up what they were saying. Also about this heavy burden, Jesus says to the sinner, go and sin no more, but He doesn't follow them around and check up on them on every hour. That's controlling there.

So here's the second thing. Matthew 23, you have your Bibles? Matthew 23, verse 5. The second thing Pharisees do is they love to show off. They enjoy the praises of men.

And again, this is a struggle for a lot of people. Praises of men. Do you think I want to hear people say, hey Shane, good sermon, thank you, or terrible sermon.

That was, get out of here. Well, of course. You want to hear, okay, good job, that a boy.

You want to hear that. So you have to be careful of that. We have to, Lord, put that in check.

That's why I often say, don't tell me anything, just go and thank God. Thank God for Him transforming and changing. But these people actually enjoy it.

That's what they, see, I don't enjoy it as far as, I know it's wrong. I know this is wrong. Lord, I can't feel this way.

Help me. I don't want to show off. Lord, help me in this area.

But they love it. They want to show off, and they want the praises of men. They have ulterior motives.

When they do something, they're in show off mode. And if you see, sometimes those guys on TV, they just, to me, it's complete show off mode. Not all of them.

I like some of them. It's just, where in the world did they come up with this? It's showing off, and it's this big, elaborate production. They're showing off, and all these things.

And that's one of the marks of a Pharisee. They love to show off. They enjoy the praises of men.

Matthew 23, 5. But all their works, they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad, and enlarge the borders of their garments. Everybody's going, hold on, what was that word? Phylacteries.

What are you talking about? Phylacteries. You don't know what that is? No. Phylacteries.

Come on, guys. I didn't either, until I looked it up, about 12 years ago. It's a little box, leather box, believe it or not, I'm not lying, that they would put on their head, like, remember those 1980's bandana? You got that, Jim McMahon, bears, remember? You know, they got this little thing, and they got this little leather box.

And rolled up in the box is the law. And it would remind them to follow the law. So if you have a big phylactery, am I more spiritual than the little phylactery over there? Look at that guy.

He can't even fit two scriptures in there. I have the whole Torah, right here, rolled up. And that's how they, look at me, just look at me.

Should I just, I can just keep it here, give you an impression. But that's what they would do. And then the long robes, right? Look at, the long, oh, look at this.

Wow, he must be, yes I am. I'm a person of great, and it was just, oh, sick to God. Sick to, I hate when I see that in the church.

I mean, it's just, ooh, stop it. Please, stop it. And this person, it's sad because, it's put my name in the PowerPoint, or up on the PowerPoint, put my name in the bulletin, I want to be a leader, recognize me, recognize me, can I show off, here's my skills, here's my, and they're just constantly looking for the praises of men.

But this is ugly when it's in leadership. Because what happens is, because they want the praises of men, they'll make decisions, that bring in the praises of men. And not, right decisions.

Because they're not led by the Spirit of God. And I joke about this sometimes, but I don't think I'm joking. I guarantee, well, I shouldn't say that, but if, if I was, if I was focused, solely on the praises of men, we would be at four services now, and packed to capacity at every one.

If I was in motivation mode. just, all, motivation. I want everybody to like what I'm saying.

Seven steps to financial freedom. Next Saturday, be here. I'm going to tell you to get healthy, wealthy, and wise.

And just, just, look at, oh, what a wonderful motivational speaker. And just, you know, it changes how you conduct yourself. You're not going to preach the Word of God, if you're worried about the praises of men.

Because the praises of men, and the Word of God, are not going to jive. Now, Christians will say, thank you, brother, praise you, God. But the world hates it.

They just hate preaching. That's a bottom line truth. So they love to show off.

And I want to read an excerpt from a book called, Contentiously Contending. Contentiously Contending. It's written to those people who contend for the faith, but they're contentious about it.

And it's actually, I just emailed the author, I talked to him today, on email too. He's a friend of mine, he speaks here sometimes. But he, I think it's free download on Kindle.

And when I went on there, it's a zero, zero, zero, zero amount. And it's a quick little book, Contentiously Contending. I'm recommending this book, and promoting it in this sermon.

Yes, I am. In case people email me now, are you promoting your book? Yes, I am. It's called, Contentiously Contending, by Anton Bosch.

I think we have copies here too, if Mike's got some back there. Here's what he wrote. I mean, I wanted to just read this book.

Can I just read this book tonight? Because it just, on this area, it is so spot on. He's from South Africa. He teaches seminary in South Africa.

Travels all over, so he's seen a lot of this. Sometimes I think that many people who get into apologetic type ministries do so simply because they love an argument. Many just love the excitement of the scrap.

They get their kicks out of proving how right they are, and how wrong others are. I know a few who will disagree with anything someone says just to pick an argument. If you are irritated by this writing, you may be well one of them.

Others enjoy the fact that engaging in debate makes them feel intellectual, while others just must have the last word. You know that person, they just have to get the last word. You know, the emails are done, but here it comes.

Here comes that last word. Here comes that last word, and they just have to get that last word in. Then there are those who have to win every argument, and like bulldogs, they cannot release one of their jaws once it's locked into the prey.

There are a lot of these online. I don't know if you've seen them. They'll call everybody from John MacArthur to Billy Graham and False Prophet.

They've never planted a church in their life. They just love the praises of men. Their armchair quarterback, just look at that.

And all they do is rebuke, and all they do is rebuke, and they get the praises of men. But I want to read this other part about the phylacteries. They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, the greetings in the marketplace, and to be called by men, Rabbi, Rabbi, but you do not call anybody Rabbi, for one is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brothers.

Do not call anyone on earth your father, for one is your Father. He who is in heaven. And do not be called Teacher, for one is your Teacher, the Christ.

But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant, and whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted. Now many people read this and go, should I not call my dad Father? No, wrong interpretation. Father, in this sense, is elevating beyond what's acceptable.

It's a title you're elevating, such as the most reverend, or the most right reverend. Did you know there's denominations where pastors are called that? Next time you come, would you call me the most right reverend, please? Shane, what? No, no, no, not Shane. No.

The most right reverend, okay? Here's my card. But that's what it is. So Jesus said, don't have any, because Rabbi, Rabbi, it was like this wonderful teacher speaking for God, don't have anybody call you that, but only God is your true Father.

Yeah, I'll say it. But in the Roman Catholic Church, when they say, when they put that Father, and they give this elevation that shouldn't be there to the Pope or the Father, it's not a good thing. This is exactly what Jesus is talking about.

And I just read something on the Masonic, the Masons, in their lodge, the leader's called the Worshipful Master. Brant, you want to change the title? I mean, Worshipful Master. I mean, we're putting all these titles.

That's what Jesus is saying. So you call your dad, Dad, call your Father. Father, can I come over? I mean, you're not putting this position of exaltation on somebody that shouldn't be there.

And that's what he's talking about. Because they love recognition and want to show off, they look for opportunities to pull others down. This is a genuine mark of a Pharisee.

Never forget this. Because they're looking for approval, they will pull other people down. The reason, a little secret here, the reason most people gossip or say negative things is so as they pull somebody down,

what happens to them? Oh, this church over in Lancaster doing wonderful things.

They're a lot bigger than your church. Yeah, but did you know? Hmm. Well, I don't know if I should tell you, the pastor.

You know, I have to pull them down so I look what? Better. And that's what a Pharisee will do. They'll never build somebody up unless it builds themselves up.

So here's the question. What do you think of? What do you think of when you find out or see somebody caught in sin? Do you help or do you hurt? Do you pull down or do you pull up? See, a Pharisee would never, Aha, I told you so. I told you so.

You single mom, now you're pregnant again. I told you so, you wretched tramp. But the loving person would say, Hey, how can I help you? You're already condemned and convicted.

How can I pull you up? And I'm not gonna judge you. I'm not gonna condemn you. How can I build you up and strengthen you? Pharisees, when they see somebody caught in sin, it's like you said, a bulldog.

They go after the kill like a coyote goes after the kill. Remember I told you guys in November I saw my little puppy get taken by a coyote. Never returned.

My kids are like, Can we at least find its, you know, little... It's gone. He's 30, 40 feet away from me. Coyote comes in.

Gone. Like, how did that happen? I'm running. Can't catch a coyote.

You get back here. You know, wish I had a shotgun at that time. That would have been... But my point is, the way, the enemy is the great deceiver.

He is sent to kill, steal, and to destroy. And when you move away from God's standards and you want the praises of men, you want the recognition, everything I just talked about, you open yourself up for the enemy to come in and take you. That's how vital this is.

Our love for one another proves to the world that we are Jesus' disciples. And it's funny, when you talk about love, people are like, Oh yeah, I've heard of love, love, love, love, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. But it's so powerful that Jesus said, Others will know that you are my disciples by your love for one another.

That's what I hate. I hate it when churches, inside churches, they're like this. They're fighting, they're bickering, they're complaining, there's division.

Where's the love? What kind of message are we sending? Because here's the other side of it. Our lack of love proves that we are not of Christ. If a person has all these traits and they have no love, they're a legalist, they're always right, they don't care, they pull people down, there's no love there.

Christ is not in you. A person who's truly been converted, not perfect, there's a love of Christ there. It might be a little ember, but it's there.

It can grow, it can flourish, but it's lacking. Also, Pharisees will not humble themselves on this area I'm talking about. When you confront them, they will not humble themselves.

You might get a, I'm sorry, I'm sorry, but. How often have I said, don't throw the buts in there. Anytime you say you're sorry, don't say but.

Bad idea. Think it maybe, but don't say it. Like, well, I guess that's not right.

Yeah, I'm sorry, but. And that's what Pharisees will do. You'll confront them on certain areas, and they'll freeze up.

And I'm just gonna close on the next point, and we do part two next week. This is probably one of the most disheartening things about a Pharisee, is they are blind guides. See, it's bad enough that they're on the broad road.

They are going to hell, but they're also leading people to hell. Because a Pharisee has a responsibility, they will be held accountable. I want to remind you as well, that seekers will be held accountable.

Because we have an obligation to seek the truth. God says, if you seek me, you will find me. And I remind, I tell young adults too, where you look is what you find.

If you're looking for truth outside of God's word, if you're going to, like I've talked to Mormon missionaries, and I tell them, and I say, would you pray that God reveals truth to you through the Bible? They say, no, I already know the truth. And they ask me, would you pray that you receive that burning in the bosom? And I say, no, no, no. I'm not opening myself up to that.

Why? Because I know it's not true. So the seeker, what happens here is, Jesus said, But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men, for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in. So this isn't people entering heaven, and they sidetrack them.

These are seekers. People seeking. I'm seeking the truth.

I'm entering. I'm going the way of truth. I'm seeking.

And I get blindsided by a Pharisee. And this Pharisee leads me astray. But there's nothing to worry about if you do three things.

Stay, pray, and obey. Stay in the truth. Stay in the truth.

Don't allow other things to come in and sway and pull you away. Stay in the truth. Just pray for direction and obey God's principles.

You are anchored. You will never be pulled away if you stay in the truth. If a person prays, God, please show me what your truth is.

I want to know you. Would you please show me? You think he's not going to answer that prayer? But then you have to obey his principles. Stay, pray, and obey, and you will stay anchored to the truth.

That's a promise that God has made. And I know there's so many people here in the church at large that has that problem in this area. They're not in the word of God, so they're being led astray by all these different things.

And they're starting to believe things that aren't true. And as a result, they're not praying for direction, they're not obeying God's truth, and they're being led astray by blind... Could you imagine, the imagery is a blind person leading a blind person over a cliff. So they are blind guides leading people, spiritually blind, into deception, into hell.

And Jesus has harsh words for them. You hypocrites. You devour widows' money, their houses.

You devour... You are hypocrites, and you're leading people astray. So I would just encourage you tonight to just make sure you're grounded in the truth. If you're not, guess what? This can be very encouraging because you can get back into the truth.

As I share with the first service, it's amazing. If we believe that this was the word of God, if we truly did, why would we not live in this more than Facebook? Why would we not devote a portion of our day to understanding the heart of God? People actually died for getting this in our hands. Have you heard of names? William Tyndale, John Hus, Whitecliffe.

Whitecliffe Bible translations. The history of two of those three men is they were burned at the stake for bringing the word of God into the common language of the people. The corrupt church said, no, it's in Latin.

Keep it in Latin. Don't tell the common man. So they would put him on a pole, tie his hands, and say, recant.

He'd say, I can't recant. And they would throw this torch into this wood, and they were all on oil all over them. And they would just go up, and they would say, heretic.

And I can picture God saying, no, you're the heretic. You're denying people my truth. You are blind guides leading people to the pit of hell.

That's how serious this is. This is the word of God. People have died over it.

The Gutenberg Press could do one page per day. Change the A. Change the Y. We are so blessed that our blessing has become a curse. It's like when you're so full, you don't realize you're spiritually malnourished, malnourished.

God. You know what I'm saying. But that's what happens, folks, when we're outside the word of God.

That was given for life, to give us spiritual life. It's not my word like a fire, like a hammer that devours. The word of God is living and active like a two-edged sword.

It cuts through the intentions in the heart of man. It's God's word to us. We should be living in Psalms, learning in Proverbs, going to Isaiah and Jeremiah and Ezekiel and Daniel, looking at what happened when people disobeyed God and using that to motivate us to get us back into the word of God.

We should look at Genesis and look at the creation of God, Leviticus to look at the Levitical priesthood to why Jesus was a perfect sacrifice, and then Numbers to number the people and the doctrine of Balaam and Deuteronomy, seeing what God has given us through His law and the cursing and the blessing. And then you get into 1 Kings and 2 Kings and Ruth and Sam and all these books of the Bible that speak life into us if we allow ourselves to be fed on the word of God, turn off the media for the love of God, disconnect it and get into the only true source of life. That's why many people are dying spiritually because

they have not the word of God in them.

Listen, I'm not putting on an act up here. I believe that I've given my life for this. And someday I might give my life for this.

But I see so many people, half the problems could be solved if you just turn. You know there's a verse in there in Proverbs? I read that years ago when I was a kid. Well, you might want to read it again.

Trust not in your own understanding, but lean, or lean not on your own understanding, but trust in God with all your heart. Lean not on your own understanding. What about all these other issues in Proverbs about wisdom? Wisdom is a principal thing, therefore get wisdom in all your understanding.

She will exalt you. She will promote you. Return to Psalms.

Blessed is the man who walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly. That'll end a lot of friendships right there. And he begins to get you on the right course.

And the reason this is so hard to do and why prayer is so hard to do is because the enemy knows it. Why is it so easy to put on Christian music while we're driving? It's a good thing. But that's not going to change you.

You're going to be changed through the Word of God and through prayer and worship. I want to pray for people who are on the broad road to destruction. We know, everybody knows people who are going to be lost eternally unless God opens their eyes.

It struck me that you might be the only person praying for that person. You in this room, we might be the only people praying for that person. God says, I look for an intercessor.

I look for a man from among the people who would stand in the gap and build a wall before me on behalf of the people that I might not destroy the land. But I found no one. He's just looking for an intercessor.

Say, Lord, I'm going to pray for this person. I'm going to get rid of dinner tonight. I'm going to fast tonight just through dinner.

I don't care how hungry I am. I'm more hungry for you to move in their life. We all know somebody.

I can name 15 people right now that I know that are going to hell unless God intervenes. And I believe He can. I believe He will.

I believe He answers the prayers of His people. So I would just encourage you. There will be a prayer team in the back.

But tonight, if you need us, we'll be back there. But just stay where you're at if you need to and just pray for those people. It's okay to cry for them.

Jesus wept over the city of Jerusalem. And I want to ask, when was the last time you wept for anybody? Because if it's been months or years or it's never happened, there's something wrong with your heart. The heart should weep for a broken sinner on their way to hell.

Jesus wept. Paul wept continually. And I would encourage you, just look at your heart and pray for those people tonight.

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