

Hypocrisy and Hindrance

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[0 : 00] 1137 to 54. I'll read it out loud for us. While Jesus was speaking, a Pharisee asked him to dine with him.

So he went in and reclined at table. The Pharisee was astonished to see that he did not first wash before dinner. And the Lord said to him, Now, you Pharisees, cleanse the outside of the cup and of the dish.

But inside you are full of greed and wickedness. You fools! Did not he who made the outside make the inside also? But give as alms those things that are within, and behold, everything is clean for you.

But woe to you, Pharisees! For you tithe, mend, and rue, and every herb, and neglect justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done without neglecting the others.

Woe to you, Pharisees! For you love the best seat in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces. Woe to you! For you are like unmarked graves, and people walk over them without knowing it.

[1 : 14] One of the lawyers answered him, Teacher, in saying these things, you insult us also. And he said, Woe to you, lawyers, also.

For you loathe people with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers. Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets whom your fathers killed.

So you are witnesses, and you consent to the deeds of your fathers. For they kill them, and you build their tombs. Therefore also, the wisdom of God said, I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and persecute.

So that the blood of all the prophets, shed from the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation. From the blood of Abel, to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between the altar and the sanctuary.

Yes, I tell you, it will be required of this generation. Woe to you, lawyers, for you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter yourselves, and you hindered those who were entering.

[2 : 27] As he went away from there, the scribes and the Pharisees began to press him hard and to provoke him to speak about many things, lying in wait for him to catch him in something he might say.

This is God's infallible and authoritative word. I don't know if you have ever sat through a sermon, wondering to yourself, Is this pastor talking about me and my situation?

And most of the time, when I preach, I don't have a single person, like one person in mind. Usually it's several people or categories of people, since no temptation has overtaken you, except that which is common to men.

For that reason, if you're dealing with something, it's no likelihood there are other people in the church dealing with it as well. But I do think specifically about our church when I prepare sermons, because my sermons are not preached for the world, but for you, for this local church.

And that's why pastors do not, or at least should not, copy and paste sermons written by other pastors, even the best preachers in the world, and then preach it to their local churches.

[3 : 46] In the passage immediately preceding our passage for today, Jesus preached on the importance of believing and living in accordance with his message that the kingdom of God has dawned with his arrival as the Messiah and Savior of the world.

And he spoke unflinchingly that this generation is an evil generation. It seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah. And the sign of Jonah was in reference to his preaching, that his preaching to them to repent and to believe in him is the sign that God's giving to them.

And as Jesus was saying these things, I'm sure some people were squirming in their seats thinking, oh man, Jesus is speaking directly to me. But then there were others who felt certain that Jesus was not speaking to them.

They were the Pharisees, the scribes. The Pharisees were one of the four major religious groups, Jewish religious groups in the first century.

They were the Jews who sought to purify and reform the Jewish community. And the scribes, who are called the lawyers in this passage, they were the religious academics who lended legal and scholarly support to the Pharisees' ministry, their interpretation of the Old Testament.

[5 : 10] So you could think of the Pharisees as kind of the ministers or the pastors. And then you could think of the lawyers, the scribes as the theologians, the seminary professors of the Jewish people.

And as the Jewish leaders, the religious leaders and teachers of their day, and the context of this passage and what we've seen among the Pharisees and the scribes, they suggest that they would have been heartily saying their amens to what Jesus was saying about this evil generation.

Because they were, they knew the generation was, they wanted to reform it. That was their entire agenda. Yes, Jesus, preach! Tell them! They don't listen to us! Maybe they'll listen to you!

But Jesus is not about to let them off the hook. He lays into these religious leaders in Luke 11, 37 to 54. He speaks specifically of the hypocrisy of the Pharisees in verses 37 to 44.

And he speaks of the hindrance he describes in verses 45 to 54. And the main point is that following Jesus involves not merely external conformity, but also internal conversion through the blood of Christ.

[6 : 27] So let's first look at the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. While Jesus was speaking, it says in verse 37, that a Pharisee asked him to dine with him, so he went in and reclined at table.

This is the second of three occasions in the Gospel of Luke when Jesus accepts the invitation to a Pharisee's home. And throughout his ministry, Jesus has been drawing the ire of the Pharisees because Pharisees refused to associate with sinners, but Jesus constantly had as his companion sinners because he was calling them to repentance.

And so the Pharisees didn't exactly get along with him that well. And yet, when a Pharisee asked him to dine with him, Jesus accepted the invitation because he knew that despite the Pharisee's self-righteousness, they were still sinners in need of the message of the Gospel that he brings.

So he went in and reclined at table. And the word reclined suggests that this wasn't an ordinary family meal, as we've seen, where people sit down on a chair. But they're reclining, that means it's reversed to a special meal.

It's a formal banquet where the guests are reclining on little mats, on cushions of some kind on the floor. And Jesus was likely the guest of honor at this special banquet since he was considered virtuous among Jews to invite itinerant Jewish teachers to their homes to have a discussion and to hear their lessons.

[7 : 48] And that's what Jesus called the teacher here, verse 45. And this kind of context of having theological and religious and philosophical instruction over a meal was very widely used in the Roman Empire.

It came to be known later as a symposium, which is where we get the English word. So this is a common context. And at this special banquet, it says in verse 38, the Pharisee was astonished to see that Jesus did not first wash before dinner.

So he was watching Jesus to see what he would do. And he was surprised that Jesus didn't wash his hands, he didn't wash himself before he ate.

And the concern here is not with personal hygiene. The Pharisees couldn't care less. This is about ceremonial purity. Washing yourself before meals is described in the Old Testament, but really mostly for hygienic purposes and customary things to do.

But they are never prescribed in the Old Testament as a commandment. You must wash your hands in this manner before you eat. And yet the Jews traditionally practiced ritual cleansing before meals.

[9 : 04] Mark chapter 7, verses 1 to 4 describe this Jewish tradition. Now when the Pharisees gathered to him with some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem, they saw that some of his disciples ate with hands that were defiled, that is unwashed.

For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands properly, holding to the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash.

So this is a reference to the tradition of the elders. This is extra-biblical. And it's not in Scripture itself. It's something the Jews have added to it.

In fact, if you look at the Mishnah, which is a collection of Jewish commentary, they're teaching an authoritative tradition of the Jews, it says specifically that when you wash your hands before meals, you're supposed to wash it twice.

You're supposed to pour water on your hand twice. And as you do that, however, the ritual cleansing only applies up to your wrist. So if you actually pour the water above the wrist, beyond the wrist, twice, and the water that touches the part that's not clean above the wrist, and the water flows back down to your hand, then you haven't washed properly.

[10 : 16] You're still unclean. So that's the length to which these Jews went to ensure that you're ritually clean before you are actually able to eat something. And Jesus is not willing to submit to these human traditions.

And so he doesn't do this, intentionally or unintentionally, and the Pharisees are shocked that Jesus, this Jewish teacher, would flaunt this tradition.

And he's judging him. He's surprised by that. And even though the Pharisee himself doesn't actually say anything to Jesus here, Jesus nonetheless perceives the Pharisee's astonishment and challenges his understanding of ritual purity.

And so he says in verse 39, And the Lord said to him, this is Luke, the author of the gospel, calling Jesus Lord, which is a loaded word, right? Because God is called Lord in Luke chapter 1, verse 43.

And in Luke chapter 2, 11, Jesus is described as a Savior who is Christ the Lord. So by intentionally using the word Lord here, Luke is highlighting the contrast, how out of line it is for this Pharisee to look down on Jesus for foregoing a ritual cleansing taught by the traditions of men.

[11 : 31] He is Jesus, the Lord, the Holy One of God. And this is the verdict of the Lord. He says in verses 39 to 40, Now you Pharisees cleanse the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness.

You fools, did not he who made the outside make the inside also. The issue at hand was of course the washing of the body, the hand, before the meal. But Jesus uses the Pharisees' practice of ritual cleansing, the practice of ritually washing the cups and dishes as well that the Pharisees practiced to make a larger point.

This is his illustration to make a larger point about ritual cleansing in general. Because the Pharisees were meticulous about making sure that every cup and dish that they used were ritually clean.

But their concern with ritual purity was hypocritical because inside they were full of greed and wickedness. Greed is the word that refers to robbing somebody, plundering someone in other contexts.

And the word wickedness is a general term for what is evil. Which is, the word evil is a key word throughout Luke chapter 11. The word evil has been used five times in this chapter alone.

[12 : 46] And in verse 29 Jesus said specifically that this generation is an evil generation. So by saying that the Pharisees are full of evil, the wickedness, which is non-form of the attitude evil in Greek.

Jesus is saying explicitly that the Pharisees are not exempt. You thought that you were exempt from this criticism of this evil generation. You are full of the same evil.

They too are part of this evil generation. They too need to repent of their sins and follow Jesus. When it comes to outward observances that people can see, the Pharisees were strict and detail-oriented.

But when it came to the inward posture of obedience, what people cannot see, they were thoroughly wicked. And the illustration is powerful.

What good is it to wash the outside of dishes, right? If on the inside there's still food stains. What good is it to wash the outside of your cups and water bottles when on the inside has green and white things growing?

[14 : 00] Would you drink from that? Jesus is charging the Pharisees of hypocrisy, which means to act, to pretend.

The Pharisees are pretenders because if they were really concerned with holiness, they would have first dealt with their inward greed and wickedness. But instead, they are concerned with this outward minutiae of the Jewish religious tradition, which are not even in Scripture, but are instead accumulation of human tradition.

And this is offensive to God. This is an affront to God because Jesus says in verse 40, Did not he who made the outside make the inside also? God not only made the outside of a person, but also the inside of a person.

So both our outside and inside belong to God. Not merely what we say out in the open, but also our hidden thoughts. They belong to God.

God is not merely concerned with what we do in public, but with everything we do, even in the privacy of our homes. How do we live when no one is looking?

[15 : 14] Because God is still watching. In what ways, this is a good time to ask ourselves, have we compartmentalized our lives? Perhaps on the outside, we are ever the polite person smiling at everyone, saying all the courteous and nice things, but in our hidden thoughts, we are full of prideful judgment and hatred.

Behind closed doors, we are full of gossip and slander. Perhaps we speak gently and kindly to everybody on Sunday morning, but in the privacy of our homes, in the context of our workplace, we speak harshly and haughtily to our spouses, to our coworkers, to our roommates.

Perhaps on the outside, perhaps on the outside, we are proficient at using the Christian lingo, saying all the amens in the right places, saying praise God at timely moments, and always asking people about their prayer requests, but we barely spend any time praying for the request we so diligently canvassed.

Perhaps there is a jarring incongruity between the way you present yourself in the virtual world of Facebook and Instagram and the way you actually live in the real world.

God made both the inside and the outside, and He's not looking for halfway Christians or surface Christians.

[17 : 02] He's looking for those who will follow Him with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength. Those who will give their whole lives to Him and live from the inside out in obedience to Him.

That's what God is calling us to. So Jesus continues that point in verse 41, but give as alms those things that are within, and behold, everything is clean for you.

In the context of a special banquet like this, it was customary to leave the door open. It's a public meal so that uninvited guests could enter in and be flies on the wall and listen to this religious or philosophical dialogue.

And at the end of the feast, poor were also welcomed in so that they can beg for the leftovers and walk away with some alms given to them by charitable people. And in light of this context, what Jesus says about giving alms is it stinks.

Because the Pharisees could host lavish banquets like this and give alms to the poor, but their hearts were not in it. They despised the lowly, sinful people.

[18 : 06] But instead of a mere outward generosity, they should, as Jesus is saying, cultivate an inward love and compassion toward them. Give as alms those things that are within, and behold, everything is clean for you.

If you are sanctified inwardly, then everything you do will be acceptable to God. Because as Jesus said earlier in Luke chapter 6, verse 45, the good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil.

For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks. because heart is the wellspring of life, because the heart that governs our inward disposition posture, governs what we do outwardly.

If we are sanctified inwardly, if we give of God inwardly, it will come out on the outside. After giving the summary judgment of the Pharisees as those who are, who cleanse the outside but not the inside, in verses 42 to 44, Jesus pronounces three woes on the Pharisees that further explain their hypocrisy.

The woe is the opposite of a blessing. It's announcing pity for someone's misfortune. Woe to you, Pharisees. And the first woe is in verse 42.

[19 : 24] Woe to you, Pharisees, for you tithe mint and rue and every herb and neglect justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done without neglecting the others. Following the Old Testament law, the Pharisees gave a tenth of all their material possessions to God to be used for God's worship and for the ministry of God's people.

That's what we call a tithe. But the Pharisees, as they did to everything else, they took this to the extreme and they cut an exact tenth of even the smallest herbs like mint and rue in order to tithe them.

Can you imagine them on a table? It's a little mint cut over a tenth of it to make sure they can bring it to the temple. They calculated their tithe to the smallest, the decimal point, the very last penny.

But even though they obeyed the commandment to tithe, even to the minutest detail, they neglected justice and the love of God. The word justice refers to doing what is right to our neighbors, giving them what is their just due, and loving God refers to our orientation toward God.

Really together, those two words are shorthand for the greatest commandment that Jesus taught earlier in Luke chapter 10, 27.

[20 : 46] You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself. Love to God and justice to our neighbors.

The Pharisees go to great lengths to obey the least of the commands of God, yet they neglect the greatest of God's commands. Jesus doesn't say, notice that, he doesn't say that the Pharisees are wrong to tithe.

He doesn't condemn them for the practice. He says, these you ought to have done without neglecting the others. Their obedience to God was disproportioned.

It was misprioritized. They obeyed the smallest letter of the law, but not the heart and the spirit of the law. Are we overly concerned with one or two minor areas of obedience to the expense of more important areas of obedience?

Perhaps we're extremely concerned with being on time at the worship service. Being on time for worship service is a good thing, but do we, in the name of punctuality and reverence for God, impatiently cut off other cars and honk at other drivers, and angrily chew out our spouses and our children for making us late.

[22 : 19] perhaps we're extremely concerned with exegetical and theological minutiae, overly eager to point out people's sins, overly eager to point out the smallest of their theological error.

prayer. And in the name of theological precision and holiness, we sinfully judge and tear down our brothers and sisters in Christ.

What aspect of the spiritual life most preoccupies you? Are you obsessed with tithing, mint, rue, and every herb, or are you focused on the justice and on the love of God?

Jesus pronounces the second woe in verse 43, Woe to you Pharisees, for you love the best seat in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces. The Pharisees were always competing with each other for the most respected positions as they gathered in worship at the synagogues.

You can see this from even the Puritan practice. If you visit, have you guys ever been to the old North Church? It's a spot on the Freedom Trail. One of the oldest churches in the country. It's located in the North End, and if you go, you can still see the old box pews.

[23 : 53] And these box pews, they all have keys in them, interestingly. Can you imagine all these seats having keys and you're owing a key to it? You had to pay for it. You had to pay for these box pews, and only the people who had the keys could sit on them.

And of course, only the wealthiest people could afford such pews, especially the ones that were near the front, which were the most prominent positions, and whenever one suddenly became open, there would be a bidding war.

And sometimes they would get in fist fights for these prominent seats, which is an embarrassing thing to share, I know, because these are, they did this in the churches. But that's kind of exactly what Jesus is talking about.

A similar thing was happening among the Jewish leaders in the synagogue. They sought the best seat in the synagogues because it was a status symbol. Yes, I get to sit here in the front.

We have the total opposite problem. Nobody wants to sit in the front for some reason. You guys just sit in the front. But they wanted to be highly regarded.

[24 : 57] They wanted to be seen as important. And they wanted to, they loved greetings in the market places. Jesus is not simply saying that these Pharisees, you know, loved people and wanted people to say hi to them.

This is a reference to these formal elaborate greetings that the Jews were expected to lavish on respected persons, highly regarded persons.

Pharisees wanted people to see them in their flowing robes. And when they were caught them, they would come to be like, oh, most revered Pharisee or rabbi, the peerless scholar of the law, the doctor of theology, the compassionate champion of piety.

You kind philanthropist, what an honor it is for me to be greeted by your presence. The Pharisees were engaged in a popularity contest, but Jesus rebukes them for this.

Do we seek the approval of man rather than the approval of God? God. do we want to be seen by others as important, as successful, as godly, as mature?

[26 : 15] Are we eager to show off how many Bible references we know? Do we subtly let on to so that people can see just how many hours we spend praying each day?

Do we like to pray long, flowery prayers, eloquent prayers to impress those around us rather than focusing on speaking to God? Are we eager to show people just how much we give to the church?

Or how much we sacrifice and serve? Do we despise humble service in the background and seek only the prominent positions on the stage?

and then if we do this, we do not get the recognition and praise that we crave, we throw temper tantrums.

Nobody notices me when I'm serving. Nobody sees how mature I am. Why is that woman serving in that role? I'm just as gifted as she is.

[27 : 26] Why is that man in the place of leadership? Surely I am just as qualified as he is. If we serve to get credit for ourselves, God does not get the credit.

If we serve in our own strength without acknowledging the gifts of God, that all that we have comes from God, and that all that we do is the outworking of the grace of God within us, then we are robbing God of his glory.

And that too is hypocrisy. Acting like we want to glorify God when we're really concerned with glorifying ourselves. And the final woe against the Pharisees is pronounced in verse 44.

Woe to you, for you are like unmarked graves, and people walk over them without knowing it. Numbers 19 11 taught that coming into physical contact with the dead brought ceremonial uncleanness.

And so to avoid, so the Jews avoided graves. And unless they were burying their family members, they didn't go near the graves. And unmarked graves were particularly dangerous for ceremonial defilement because you can't see them.

[28 : 45] You can't spot them. They're not marked. It's like going to a cemetery and it's all grass and there's dead people all under you, but you don't know where they are. The Pharisees, ironically, they were the highly respected religious leaders of their communities.

The people followed their teaching and example, and yet they were like unmarked graves. And people unknowingly were rendered unclean by following them, coming into contact with them, because the Pharisees were spiritually dead inside, even the outwardly they had the appearance of life.

So Christian brothers and sisters, we all might have the outward appearance of life, but are we alive on the inside?

God, this is an especially important question for you to answer if you have taken it upon yourself to teach, lead, or disciple other believers.

If we don't have the life of God within us, if we are hypocrites, who are clean on the outside, but dirty on the inside, if we fixate on minutiae, while ignoring the most important things, if we seek our glory rather than the glory of God, then our example and our teaching will not merely be in vain, they will be spiritually deadly for those around us.

[30 : 18] So I want to exhort you this morning as the 19th century pastor J.C. Ryle once exhorted his own congregation, let us leave the whole passage with a settled determination to watch and pray against hypocrisy and religion.

Whatever we are as Christians, let us be real, thorough, genuine, and sincere. Let us abhor all affectation and part acting in the things of God as that which is utterly loathsome in Christ's eyes.

We may be weak and erring and frail and come far short of our aims and desires, but at any rate, if we profess to believe in Christ, let us be true.

Let us rather be weak, failing, Christians who fall short, yet be true, then be fake. Following Jesus involves not merely external conformity, but also internal conversion through the blood of Christ.

And as Jesus denounces the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, an expert of the Jewish law, a scribe dares to step into Jesus' line of fire. Teacher, in saying these things, you insult us also.

[31 : 50] To translate that, he's saying, Jesus, I think you're a little out of line here. Surely you don't intend to insult upstanding moral citizens like us, but you're getting a little bit carried away because these Pharisees are one of us, so please stop.

These lawyers and theologians, they were allied. These lawyers aided the Pharisees in their ministry, so they were squirming in their seats as the Pharisees were being denounced in this way, but Jesus doesn't stop.

He addresses the lawyers directly as well. He says in verse 46, Woe to you lawyers also, for you loathe people with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers.

Much like the Pharisees insistence on a very particular ritual cleansing prior to meals, the lawyers had developed hundreds of rules that went beyond the warrant, the boundaries of Scripture.

By doing this, they loaded people with burdens hard to bear, with burdens that God did not intend for them to bear. And one of the clearest examples of this was their observance, their legalistic observance of the Sabbath, because Exodus 20 does command us, remember the Sabbath day by keeping holy, right?

[33 : 17] Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day you shall not do any work. That was the simple command. Six days work, seventh day do not work. Remember your Sabbath. But the lawyers, these Jewish lawyers, they took that simple command and attached dozens of prickly rules to it.

So one such example of this is this, it says, a man may carry an object in his right hand or in his left hand, in his bosom or in his shoulder, and if they did that, they would be guilty of breaking the Sabbath, if they use any of those body parts to carry an object on a Sabbath.

However, if he carried an object on the back of his hand, or with his foot, or with his mouth, or with his elbow, or with his ear, or in his hair, or in his wallet, as long as the wallet is carried mouth downwards, or between his wallet and his shirt, or in the hem of his shirt, or in his shoe, or in his sandal, then he would not be guilty of breaking the Sabbath.

Isn't that crazy? It's ridiculous. I was reading that. That's from the Mishnah. Unlike Jesus who said in Matthew 11, come to me all who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am gentle and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your souls for my yoke is easy and my burden is light. These Jewish lawyers loaded people with burdens hard to bear.

[34 : 49] They added to God's perfect law these imperfect human traditions. They complicated God's law with complex legal details that were difficult for people to follow let alone understand.

Sometimes we too can be tempted to take matters that are spiritually indifferent and then elevate them to level of God's law.

1 Timothy 5 verse 2 it does teach us that men are to treat older women in the church as mothers younger women as sisters in all purity.

So if you're a man and you start to get romantically involved with a young woman in the church you should treat her like a sister in all purity until you're married. I do believe that has far reaching implications because there are a lot of men who do all kinds of things that they would never think to do with their sisters.

But despite this principle the Bible does not say that the two can never go on a date by themselves. The Bible does not say that they can never hold hands or hug.

[36 : 08] Sometimes pastors and Christians lay those extra rules down. 1 Timothy chapter 2 verses 9 to 10 teach women to adorn themselves in respectable apparel with modesty and self-control not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire but with what is proper for women who profess godliness with good works.

That is commanded in Scripture. But the Bible does not say that a woman therefore should wear only full length dresses as some churches teach. 1 Corinthians chapter 6 19 to 20 does teach that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you whom you have from God you are not your own for you are bought with a price so glorify God with your body in your body 1 Corinthians 10 31 also says whether you eat or drink or whatever you do all to the glory of God but the Bible does not teach that we should all be pescatarians and vegetarians and cut out all inorganic and processed foods from our lives Psalm 127 verse 3 does teach us that children are heritage from the Lord the fruit of the womb a reward but the Bible does not teach that therefore all contraceptives are evil and that married couples should have as many children as they can possibly have physically

Ephesians chapter 6 18 teaches to pray at all times in the spirit with all prayer and supplication but scripture does not say that we have to close our eyes and pray on our knees every time we pray or that we have to use the rosary or to repeat certain phrases over and over again it doesn't commend those things if we idealize our personal preferences or our human opinions to the level of God's law if we fail to distinguish the biblical principles from our personal practices then we lay undue burdens on people make it more difficult for them to follow God to make things worse not only did these lawyers lay heavy burdens on the people they also did not touch the burdens with one of their fingers they were happy to multiply regulations but when it came to actually helping people follow these regulations patiently teaching them explaining to them walking alongside them and motivating them they did nothing after loading these people up with these heavy burdens they did not lift the finger to help them instead they just pointed their finger at them in condemnation they crushed them so

Jesus pronounces the second woe over these scribes in verses 47 to 48 woe so you are witnesses and you consent to the deeds of your fathers for they kill them and you build their tombs not only do these scribes lay misleading and heavy burdens on God's people when God sends his prophets to redirect them they bury these prophets these two verses 47 and 48 are structured with matching mirroring statements it begins by saying your fathers built the tomb your fathers killed the prophets and you built the tombs of the prophets whom your fathers killed and it ends with the reverse of the same statement and the intention of that structure is to bring focus to the middle which is so you are witnesses and you consent to the deeds of your father that's what Jesus is talking about he's not talking about literal tomb building that it's a problem for them to build tombs for these prophets he's saying that you are figuratively finishing what your fathers started your fathers killed the prophets of the

Lord and you make sure they stay dead and buried they kill them you make their tombs you consent to their deeds by the way you reject me the ultimate prophet of the Lord Jesus continues in verses 49 to 51 therefore also the wisdom of God said I will send them prophets and apostles some of whom they will kill and persecute so that the blood of all the prophets shed from the foundation of the world may be charged against this generation from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah who perished between the altar and the sanctuary yes I tell you it will be required of this generation Jesus is not citing from a book of scripture here but he's alluding generally to God's wisdom borne out by Israel's history so even though God knew that his people would kill and persecute his prophets and apostles God sent them anyway so that people might be held accountable because they heard the message and rejecting them intentionally after hearing the message and shedding the blood of these prophets they will be held accountable by

[41 : 32] God he says from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah Abel as you recall was killed by Cain his brother because Cain resented the fact that Abel was more righteous than he was and that he offered a more acceptable sacrifice to God than he did and so Cain murdered his brother Abel is called here the first the martyr and Zechariah is not a reference to the prophet Zechariah who wrote the book of Zechariah but it's a reference to the prophet Zechariah mentioned in 2nd Chronicles chapter 24 verses 20 to 25 he says that Zechariah denounced the transgressions of the people of Judah but then by the command of the king the people stoned him with stones in the court of the house of the Lord in the temple precinct within the house of God itself these people killed the prophet of the Lord and according to the Jewish canonical order the book order of the Old Testament Zechariah is the last prophet to be martyred in this way so this is basically from the first to the last you will be held accountable for all of them why because they are rejecting

Christ the ultimate prophet and in doing tradition of their fathers who killed the prophets they're continuing their work and therefore they'll be held accountable for them all if our Christianity is merely about external conformity and not internal conversion through the blood of Christ then we too are doing exactly what the scribes were doing the last woe is in verse 52 woe to you lawyers for you have taken away the key to knowledge the key of knowledge you did not enter yourselves and you hindered those who were entering even though these teachers of God's law believed that they held the key to eternal life to the kingdom of God they in fact did not have the key themselves they could not enter themselves in fact they were hindering people who were entering instead of clarifying God's word they complicated God's word by adding human traditions and regulations instead of accepting the prophets of the

Lord and listening to them they rejected them and turned other people away from them and by doing these things these lawyers hindered people from knowing God entering into his kingdom hypocrisy and false teaching heresy these are not just problems for us they're hindrances to other people around us this is a heavy hitting message and if you're like me you've been convicted by this passage I've done this and that's where we receive hope in verses 53 to 54 as Jesus went away from there the scribes and the

Pharisees began to press him hard and to provoke him to speak about many things lying in wait for him to catch him in something he might say what is this pointing to from this point on the hostility of the scribes and the Pharisees against Jesus escalates sharply until chapters 22 to 23 when they plot and execute their plot to arrest Jesus using the civil authorities and to bring him to his death on the cross and that's the most important point from this passage because we have all done this I have done this we pretended to be righteous on the outside even though we're sinful on the inside but that's why Jesus died outwardly as a sinner he died a sinner's death even though inwardly he was the only man in human history that had no sin we have moralistically and legalistically kept the minutia of the law while neglecting the more important commands and that's why

Jesus had to live a perfect life of obedience and he died to satisfy the requirements all the requirements of the law from the minutia to the most important we have sought prominent seats and long greetings from people robbing God of his glory and that's why Jesus had to die on the cross the lowest seat reserved for criminal slaves and he endured the mockery and humiliation from people so that we might be seated with God and be ushered into his glory life eternal we have all at one point rebelled against God by living for ourselves and for our glory rather than for him but by doing this we put ourselves squarely in the line of the Pharisees and the scribes who are accountable to God for the blood of all the prophets and the most important blood that we have shed through this resistance and rebellion is the blood of

[47 : 08] Jesus the ultimate prophet the Messiah the Son of God but this is the amazing thing the blood of Abel cries out for our for vengeance the blood of Zechariah clamors for our condemnation the blood of all of these prophets call for justice for us to be condemned to eternal destruction in hell but Hebrews 12 24 tells us that the sprinkled blood of Jesus speaks a better word than the blood of Abel the blood of Jesus does not cry out for vengeance the blood of Jesus cries out for our vindication the blood of Jesus cries out for our justification the blood of Jesus declares that our sins so grave and our spiritual conditions so lethal have been made right have been paid for have been made new through what

Jesus did by dying on the cross for our sins and being raised to new life that's what we call the gospel of Jesus Christ and that's the hope that this passage points us to take a moment now to reflect on this reality for a few moments in what areas of your life is the Lord calling to repentance and greater conformity to Christ in what ways is God calling to rely less on your self righteousness but on the righteousness of Christ For