

Luke 7:29-35. Jesus Reproves the Jews for Their Perverseness.

by Favell Lee Mortimer

The Pharisees' rejection of John the Baptist and Jesus' message is a result of their hatred for the truth, which is the necessity of repentance and faith.

Scripture: Luke 7:29-50

Topics: "Repentance And Faith", "Rejection Of God"

Description

Favell Lee Mortimer preaches on the contrasting responses to John the Baptist's and Jesus' messages by the people, publicans, and Pharisees, highlighting how some openly sinful individuals repent while some religiously devout reject the call to repentance due to hidden sins in their hearts. The Pharisees, who despised both John and Jesus, were offended by the unwelcome truths of repentance and faith preached by both. Jesus uses a parable to illustrate the Pharisees' rejection of God's wisdom, showing that those who oppose the Gospel make excuses based on the faults of the messengers rather than the message itself, leading to enmity towards God and their own souls.

Transcript

We now refer to Luke's account of our Savior's discourse about John the Baptist, because it contains some particulars omitted by Matthew.

The Lord Jesus declared that the people, and even the publicans, believed John the Baptist's preaching, while the Pharisees despised it. The publicans were great sinners, most of them being notoriously dishonest in the collection of taxes. When John declared to them that their sins were great, and deserved punishment, they justified God, that is, they acknowledged that God's sentence was just, and they gladly received baptism as a sign of their need of being cleansed from their iniquities. But when John delivered the same truths to the Pharisees, telling them they were the children of the devil, and a generation of vipers, they were offended; they rejected the counsel of God against themselves, and did not desire to be baptized, because they thought they were already clean in heart and in life. Thus it often is now. Some who have committed open gross sins are brought to repentance; while others, who have led regular, and apparently religious lives, will not believe that on account of the secret sins of their hearts, they ought to humble themselves before God.

The Pharisees treated the Lord Jesus in the same way that they had treated John--with contempt. They had found fault with John, because he led so solitary and so strict a life, being clad in skins, feeding on locusts and honey, and refusing to taste wine or strong drink, therefore they had said that he was possessed with the devil. But they could not find the same fault with Jesus; for he led quite an opposite life, eating and drinking like men in general, and mingling with the vilest sinners, that he might win their souls to God. Yet the Pharisees were not better pleased with him than with John, and profanely called him a glutton, and a wine bibber, and a friend of sinners. But what was the reason that both John and the Lord Jesus were assaulted by the Pharisees' reproaches, when they were so different from each other in their manner of life? The reason was, that they both had declared the same unwelcome truths; they both had preached the necessity of repentance and faith.

Jesus related a short parable to describe the Pharisees' conduct. It was common for children in the market-place to play at rejoicing and at mourning. One party of children imitated the glad songs of the Jews at their marriages, and on other joyful occasions, (such as the return of a long-lost son,) while another party were expected to dance to the sound of their music. But sometimes sullen and wayward children would not join in the amusement. Then the other party would good-naturedly change the play and imitate the mournful music of funerals, (such as that made by the minstrels when Jairus' daughter lay dead,) expecting their companions to use sorrowful gestures and to appear to weep; but the same spoiled children would object to this play also. Thus the Pharisees liked neither the strict manners of John the Baptist, nor the condescending behavior of the Lord. This was a proof that they hated their words of wisdom, for Jesus declared, "Wisdom is justified by all her children." The children of wisdom, (or of God,) acknowledge his heavenly wisdom by whomsoever declared. If the Pharisees had been the children of God, they would have justified God both when John preached, and when the Lord himself preached.

People who hate the Gospel continue to excuse themselves for not attending to it, by accusing those who preach it of faults in their manner, or of errors in their life. These accusations proceed from enmity to the Gospel, and will not be received by God as excuses for neglecting it. If men could find fault with the Savior's conduct, how impossible it is for a true Christian to escape censure, especially as he is liable to commit real errors! But O how great is the guilt of those who thus oppose the servants of God! They are enemies to their own souls.

God tries every means to turn sinners to himself; in his holy word, sometimes using tender entreaties, and sometimes denouncing dreadful warnings--in his providence sometimes heaping mercies on our heads, and sometimes executing judgment. Should every means fail to melt, or to subdue our hearts, well may his wrath wax hot against us! Let us pray for an obedient and docile spirit, ready to listen to the word of the Lord, whether He speaks in thunder, or in a small still voice.

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