

Matthew 23:1-12. Christ Warns the People Against the Pride of the Pharisees.

by Favell Lee Mortimer

Jesus warns against imitating the Pharisees' pride and desire to be seen of men, emphasizing the importance of humility in following God's word.

Scripture: Proverbs 16:18, Matthew 23:12, Ephesians 4:2, Philippians 2:3, James 4:6

Topics: "Pride And Humility", "Godly Character"

Description

Favell Lee Mortimer preaches on the dangers of pride as highlighted by Jesus in His discourse with the Pharisees, warning against imitating their hypocritical actions driven by pride and desire for admiration. Jesus emphasizes the importance of humility, contrasting the Pharisees' love for recognition with the need for genuine meekness and lowliness in the sight of God. The root of pride is revealed as a desire to exalt oneself above God, leading to discontentment and a never-ending pursuit of human approval, ultimately opposing God's rightful place as the sovereign ruler.

Transcript

This is the last discourse recorded which our Savior uttered in the presence of his enemies. How alarming it is! Surely those sins must be very dangerous which called forth such warnings from the meek and gentle Savior! The first part of the discourse was not addressed to the Pharisees themselves, but to the disciples and to the multitude. The Lord warned them against imitating the example of their teachers. With regard to their instructions, this was the rule laid down. When the Pharisees sat in Moses' seat, that is, when they read the books of Moses in the synagogue to the people, then they were to be regarded. We know that their FALSE interpretations were not to be received; for our Savior on one occasion censured them for teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. (Matthew 15:9.) Therefore we perceive how we ought to understand the words in verse 3--"All, therefore, whatever they bid you observe, that observe and do." All the instructions they gave, which agreed with the word of God, the people were bound to observe, however wicked their teachers might be.

The Lord next commanded the people not to imitate the example of the Pharisees. "Do not you after their works." We are apt to imitate those we admire. The people admired the Pharisees exceedingly, for they could not detect their motive. It was PRIDE. All they did was to be seen of men; therefore all they did was abominable to God. The phylacteries (those strips of parchment on which texts of Scripture were written)

were harmless in themselves, but the Pharisees wore them with the wicked desire of gaining admiration from men by an appearance of piety. The borders, or fringes on the garments, were even commanded by God in the law. In Numbers 15:38, the Israelites were desired to put fringes (or borders) on their garments, and upon the fringes a ribbon of blue, in order that when they looked upon it they might remember all the commandments of the Lord. Christ did not reprove them for wearing these borders, but for wearing them in order to be seen of men; neither did he censure them for sitting in the most honorable places at feasts or in the synagogue, but for LOVING to sit there.

It is natural for men to wish to be noticed and admired. Even Christians feel this desire, but they do not cherish it; no, they abhor it, and pray against it, and strive to overcome it. Whenever we feel mortified because we have been overlooked, or elated because we have been noticed, we should bewail before the Lord the pride of our hearts. Why is pride so offensive in God's eyes? Because it leads men to desire to be in the place of God. Pride is never satisfied. Were a man to gain the admiration of a hundred persons, he would wish to gain that of a hundred more, and his desires would never stop until he was the object of universal homage, until he occupied the throne of the Almighty. It is not wonderful that God abhors a sin that aims to dethrone himself, and to render his whole creation miserable. The happiness of the universe depends upon God being seated upon his own throne, and upon all his creatures submitting to his government. God must humble every one that he would save. If we are to be saved, we must be humbled. People little know what they are doing when they cherish pride in children. Many of the common modes of education are calculated to feed this dangerous passion. The desire to be first is encouraged by numerous expedients, when every means ought to be used to check the love of distinction in the young heart. Nothing can so effectually subdue it as the Gospel of Christ. There man learns that he is a polluted being, and that nothing but the blood of the crucified Savior can wash out his stains. Do we believe this humbling doctrine? Then let us remember the words of the apostle Paul, "I beseech you that you walk worthy of your vocation with which you are called, with all lowliness and meekness." (Eph. 4:2.)

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