

# The Church That Covers Sin Will Not Prosper

by Richard Owen Roberts

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*This sermon emphasizes the importance of knowing and serving the God of the Bible wholeheartedly, highlighting the dangers of hypocrisy, pride, greed, and obstructionism seen in the Pharisees. It calls for a revival where individuals are broken, remade, and filled with the fresh graces of Christ, urging a deep repentance and a genuine transformation of hearts to align with God's will.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 23:13, Matthew 23:25, Matthew 23:29, Luke 3:8, 1 Thessalonians 2:16, Proverbs 28:13, Psalm 51:10, Isaiah 1:16, Ezekiel 36:26, James 4:8

**Topics:** "Wholehearted Service to God", "Genuine Transformation and Repentance"

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## Description

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## Transcript

A young man approached me and said he had a very urgent question he wished to ask. And he said, Mr. Roberts, I really need some help. Would you tell me what I ought to preach next? I was utterly flabbergasted by the question.

I said, you obviously know I'm not the Holy Spirit. Why would you be asking me a question like that? Well, he said, I've got to have help. I just don't know what to preach next.

So I said to him, what did you preach last? Oh, he said, I just finished a series of sermons on the Ten Commandments. Well, now I knew the answer to the question I was going to put to him. I said, what was the response of the people? Well, he said, they looked at me and said, who do you think you are to tell us what's right and what's wrong? And I said, in the light of their response, what should you preach next? And he looked at me somewhat disgusted, and he said, others have said this about you.

Don't ask Mr. Roberts a question. He'll turn it around and ask it back to you. Well, I said, in the light of the response, what should you preach next? I don't know, he said.

If I were in your shoes, I would preach on the God of the Bible so earnestly, so thoroughly, so consistently, until I could see the people actually quaking in their seats. It doesn't do any good to speak against sin when you're speaking to people who don't think there's anybody anywhere who has the right to tell them

what is acceptable and what is unacceptable conduct. Most preachers are failing because they're acting as if people know that there is a God who has the right to insist upon conduct pleasing in his sight, and they don't know that at all.

And some preachers of my acquaintance are still living in a world that doesn't really exist, living in a world, they think, where everybody knows God. But I find the vast majority of people don't know God at all. And those who think they do really are thinking about something that doesn't really exist at all.

A number of years ago, God, in his incredible mercy, began directing my own thoughts more and more into searching the scriptures to discover more completely than I ever had the God of the Bible. After some considerable time in that direction, I was given an opportunity to speak in a sizable congregation, 12 messages, and I felt led to speak upon the God of the Bible, a self-portrait. And what I did was to pray earnestly for direction from the Holy Spirit to a critical passage each week where the word I appeared, God himself speaking.

Passages like, I change not, or I will it, I bring it to pass, or I will relieve myself of all of my adversaries. So for six days each week, I gave two hours just with my Bible open before me, looking at those few words that the Lord had directed me to. And I thought of everything I could think about concerning those words.

For instance, I change not. Having thought a great deal about the God who could say, I change not, I then directed some thought to myself, and to what extent could I say, I change not? I once had a strong voice. I could once easily preach 12 hours a day without difficulty, but I've changed.

My grandchildren have only known me as a white-haired old man, but one of them said to me a few days ago, Grandpa, did you ever have hair that was different than it is now? Yes, I said, an abundance of it so dark brown that it looked black. Who here can say, I change not? Who can say, I will it, I bring it to pass? Only God can speak words like that. And as I was preparing each week that series of messages, I began to experience at a deeper level, in a more profound fashion, the God of the Bible.

And I came to the absolute conviction, until people know God, they will not know themselves. And they cannot know how heinous sin is. And they cannot know experientially true salvation.

Let's turn to a book in the New Testament, the Gospel of Matthew. And let me read a chapter that doesn't get all that much attention in the church today. Maybe the reason it's so largely neglected is because it strikes too close to home.

The Gospel of Matthew, chapter 23. I wonder if any of you recognize immediately what I'm speaking about. Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to his disciples, saying, the scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses.

Therefore, all that they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds. For they say things and do not do them. And they tie up heavy loads and lay them on men's shoulders.

But they themselves are unwilling to move them with as much as a finger. But they do all their deeds to be noticed by men. For they broaden their phylacteries and lengthen the tassels of their garments.

And they love the place of honor at banquets and the chief seats of the synagogues and respectful greetings in the marketplaces and being called by men, rabbi. But do not be called rabbi. For one is your teacher and you are all brother.

And do not call anyone on earth your father. For one is your father, he who is in heaven. And do not be called leader.

For one is your leader. That is Christ. But the greatest among you shall be your servant.

And whoever exalts himself shall be humbled. And whoever humbles himself shall be exalted. But woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from men.

For you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in. Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you devour widows' houses, even while for a pretense you make long prayers. Therefore you shall receive greater condemnation.

Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel about on sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he becomes one you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourself. Woe to you blind guides who say, whoever swears by the temple, that is nothing, but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is blind. You fool.

And blind men, which is more important, the gold or the temple that sanctified the gold? And whoever swears by the altar, that is nothing, but whoever swears by the offering upon it, he is obliged. You blind men. Which is more important, the offering or the altar that sanctifies the offering? Therefore he who swears, swears both by the altar and by everything on it.

And he who swears by the temple, swears both by the temple and by him who dwells within it. And he who swears by heaven, swears both by the throne of God and by him who sits upon it. Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you tithe mint and dill and cumin and have neglected the weightier provisions of law, justice, and mercy, faithfulness.

But these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others. You blind guides who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel. Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they're full of robbery and self-indulgence.

You blind Pharisees, first clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, so that the outside of it may become clean also. Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you're like whitewashed tombs, which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all unclean, even so you too outwardly appear righteous to men. But inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous and say if we had been living in the days of our fathers we would have not been partakers with them in shedding the blood of the prophets. Consequently you bear witness against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up the measure of the guilt of your fathers.

You serpents, you brood of vipers, how shall you escape the sentence of hell? Therefore behold, I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes. Some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city, that upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Bershia whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. Truly I say to you all these things shall come upon this generation.

Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem who kills the prophet and stones those who are sent to her. How often I wanted to gather your children together the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings and you were unwilling. Behold your house is being left to you desperate.

For I say to you from now on you shall not see me until you say blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Now, how much time did Christ spend trying to win the Pharisee? For those of us who think that God loves all sinners and only hates the sinner's sin, where do you find anything about Christ loving the Pharisee? Does this sound like a demonstration of love, this chapter? It is quite clear in the passage, isn't it, that there does come a time when it is too late. The apostle Paul picked up on this matter of which Christ has spoken in 1 Thessalonians, and in describing the warm-hearted response of the Thessalonian believers to his message, he commends them in Christ.

But then he goes on to speak of these men to whom Christ was speaking on this occasion. And he said they went on filling up the measure of their sin until they were under the wrath of God to the utmost. And many of us have considered the words that appear late in the chapter.

Behold, your house is left unto you, desolate. And we understand that although Christ had gone twice into the temple and cleansed it, driving out the money changers, tipping over the tables of the merchants, even saying, my father's house is a house of prayer for all the nations that you have made it a den of iniquity, we know perfectly well that although he drove them out one to another, they came back in another. Truly, they had filled up the measure of their sin.

They were already under the wrath of God to the utmost. Every entity must consider the fact that God does a lot to each entity, a measure of sin. And when that measure of sin is full, that entity is under the wrath of God to the utmost.

Christ did not seek to win these men to himself. It was too late for them. Now, there are lots of people in the church that don't like that kind of statement.

But the Bible is still the Word of God. And there's no place for the projection of our opinion into the Word of God. We face in these matters a very critical issue.

The scriptures are ever so plain, blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord. And we understand quite clearly, he who covers his sin shall not prosper. Have you ever considered what led to the time when the Pharisees were beyond hope? There is clearly a pattern that we can see in history.

In our society, there was a time when men kept very tight reins, when individual Christians understood that when they sinned, they must immediately repent. And they also understood that if they did not repent, then it was the task of the church to bring them under discipline, not simply to rid itself of a problem, but to bring the unrepentant to repentance through the grace of Christ shown in the lives of the believers in the fellowship. And there certainly were times in our history as a nation when there was this consistent practice of obedience.

And when there was disobedience, there was quick action taken to rectify that problem. And we know how these things move. You go from swift obedience to slow obedience.

I've lived through this myself. That's one advantage of being old. You can remember how it was when it was very different from it is now.

It's not always comfortable, but I watch the church across America become slower and slower in dealing with the issue of sin in its ranks. I've been in those meetings when someone introduces the necessity of church discipline, and then some little old lady so full of herself and of nonsense, she ought to be thoroughly embarrassed and hide under a pew, stands up and says, my Bible says, judge not that ye be not judged. And the little snicker passes through the congregation.

But a lot of strong men are afraid of that stupid woman. They know what a vicious tongue she has. And so they drag their feet when it comes to the practice of discipline.

So what was once enacted swiftly becomes slower and slower, but still discipline was happening. But then the time came that it was so slow that the misdeeds were often forgotten. Before the discipline was enacted, so more and more people were getting away with things that God himself had forbidden.

And eventually the time came when church leaders would say, oh, you can't practice church discipline, you might be sued. And it's true. A church that practices discipline might be sued, but it seems far wiser to me to be sued by men than condemned by God.

But we've moved, you see, away from strict obedience to the Word of God to an incredible level of carelessness. Now, at the time Christ is addressing these leaders in Matthew 23, did you ever ask the question, who was there in Jerusalem to deal with these men who were so grievously wrong? You see, the time had come when they no longer even had the possibility in Jerusalem of practicing Scripture. For the very men who were there, placed by God in a position to see that the Scriptures were fulfilled, were in regular violation of Scripture themselves.

But this isn't merely some distant problem that once existed elsewhere. This is what is happening among us. The church no longer has standards.

And when an old man rises up and mentions the standards of Scripture, he's pretty well laughed into a corner. But the fact remains, the person who covers their sin shall not prosper, and the church that covers its sin shall not prosper. And indeed, we'll soon reach that point where they are under the wrath of God to the Atman.

And you say, what does that have to do with beholding your God? If you've ever weighed, if you've ever made any serious study of the Pharisees, of the scribes, of the Sadducees, you know that these men did not know the God of the Bible. They knew the God of their imagination. And it seems to me that what we have in this passage is of incredible consequence and truly vitally involved in where we are at this very moment.

Let's take the time now to gently, carefully work through the accusations that Christ makes against these men. I find 10 specific accusations. Maybe you'll count 12.

Maybe you'll only see seven. The number is not consequential. But the heart of the issue is because they did not know God, they did not know sin.

They could not view sin as God viewed it. Therefore, they could not be saved because they were too full of themselves to give any place at all to Christ. So, beginning then in the very fore part of the chapter, verse 2, Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to his disciples, said, the scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses.

May I say to you, everyone who has an inadequate view of the God of the Bible is in danger of doing exactly what these Pharisees did. They seated themselves in the chair of Moses. They didn't know that they were so unlike Moses that they looked ridiculous in that chair.

Because they did not know God, as I said this afternoon, they could not know themselves. Therefore, they had an opinion of themselves vastly above reality. They thought they were genuine men of God who had the right to seat themselves in Moses' seat.

I'm regularly meeting men in ministry who have no difficulty seating themselves in Moses' seat. I meet men who are spiritual midgets, who've hardly ever had even a serious thought in their head, let alone a gripping conviction in their heart, who think themselves well qualified to sit in the seat of Moses. I'd like to ask you, where do you seat yourself? Do you have an opinion of yourself that is vastly greater than God's opinion of you? Someone commented to me this afternoon that they had seen something on YouTube.

I've never looked at YouTube. I wouldn't even know how to get to it if I had to, so I don't really know what's there. This brother told me there was a piece drawn out of Ezekiel chapters 8 and 9. Some of you may remember the passage, this extraordinary vision that Ezekiel had where God took him by the locks of his hair, and he forced him to see things through four separate portals.

He saw things he could not have seen if God had not made it necessary for him to do so. Then in the next chapter, God summons a group of persons with implements of death in their hands and another man with some kind of a writing pot at the waist. He says to the man with the pot of ink or whatever it was, go throughout Jerusalem and dab on the forehead every man who sighs and cries over the abominations in the land.

Then he says to the men with the implements of death, now pass through and destroy everyone who has not been God on the forehead. Don't have any mercy. Show no compassion.

It matters not whether it's men or women, even little children. Put to death everyone who does not see what I see. And then the prophet looks up and he sees the great heaps of the dead all around, and he understands that only he saw what God was saying.

And most of us understand, don't we? You never feel what God is feeling until you see what God is seeing. The Pharisees couldn't see what God saw. They couldn't feel what God felt.

They thought themselves to be infinitely better than they were. And I'm asking, how about you? Would you dare to seat yourself in the seat of Moses? Look at what he says next. This would be number two on my list of ten, verses three and four.

Therefore, all that they tell you do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds. For they say one thing and do not do them. And they tie up heavy loads and lay them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them even with their finger.

Hypocrisy. Over and over in the passage, he refers to them as scribes, Pharisees, hypocrite. Hypocrisy is rampant among us.

Most of us have no earned degrees, but if we ever really earned a degree, it would be the degree of first-class hypocrite. Some of us, including myself, know far more about hypocrisy than it's legitimate to know. We wish we didn't know any of this, but often we have seen ourselves laying on others' burdens

that we wouldn't even trouble ourselves to push with a finger.

When you don't know God, how can you help yourself but be a hypocrite? Or if, like these Pharisees, you worship and serve the God of your imagination rather than the God of the Bible, you're caught in the same trap that they were caught in. Rank hypocrisy. As I have stated already, the great thrust of this passage is, oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her.

How often I would have gathered you under my wings as the hen would gather the chicks in Luke. He goes on to say, you did not know the day of your visitation, the blindness that comes as a result of the worship and the service of a God who does not exist. Look at the third accusation that Christ makes, verses 5, 6, and 7. They do all their deeds to be noticed by men.

They broaden their phylacteries, they lengthen the tassels of their garments. They love the place of honor at banquets and the seats in the synagogue. They delight in the respectful greetings in the marketplace and especially in being called rabbi.

But how about you? Any of those problems troubling you? How about your church? Is it possible that your church has been covering iniquity, that it cannot prosper? Well, we must understand we'll all cover our iniquity until we see the God of the Bible. Once we begin to know who he is, we are unwilling to go on covering sin. But isn't it heartbreaking? Eli, the genuine earnestness of these Pharisees who truly believed they were doing God's service in putting to death not only the prophets but the Savior himself.

How many of the things that you do are done so that they will be noticed by men? Most of us have an awful history of pride. With ease, we can recollect shameful incidents in our lives. Quite a number of years ago, my dear wife Maggie and I thought we were going to get to move out of the Chicago area and come to a warmer climate.

And in expectation of this, we began packing things up so that we would be ready at the moment's notice to move. The proposed move fell through, and we're still in the midst of a Chicago area that has plenty of problems. But in that process, I had received in the mail a packet in one of those large manila envelopes.

And I couldn't tell by the return address where it came from. And I opened it up, and I realized that it was a packet of material that had been sent to me by a major denomination. And I discovered myself looking through this material to discover if indeed they had mentioned in the printed material where they learned about what the material was about.

Now the truth was, I had spoken at a conference where some of their leadership got a hold of what God had put upon the house today, and they then planned a whole ministry around a particular subject. But immediately when I discovered what I was doing was looking through that material to see if I had name recognition. I was so disgusted with myself, I crammed the stuff back into the envelope and never ever did look at it.

But as I said, we were getting ready to move, and then the move fell through. So I had these piles of boxes all packed, and I had to unpack them. And I came to this large manila envelope, and I thought, now I wonder what that is.

So I pulled out the, there it is again! Oh no, I can't handle that! So I still haven't read this stuff. The problem of pride is an incredibly great problem for all of us. The Pharisees fell under the influence of pride and never recovered.

The question is, have you? Have you learned how to put pride down? I have certainly discovered there's only one effective way to deal with pride. This afternoon I made rapid mention of John the Baptist and cited the verse out of Luke 3. I'd like to call this to your attention. John the Baptist was able to deal with pride not by pretense, not by pretending that he was unimportant.

John knew he was important to the kingdom of God. There's nothing wrong with knowing your call from God and your place in the kingdom. John kept pride down by refusing to compare himself with anybody other than Christ.

The Pharisees are accused of incredible pride, of vanity, and of course the scriptures speak greatly and frequently on this subject. Number four, look at these words again in verse 13. 13.

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from men. For you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in. Obstructionism.

I see that regularly in the church. I watch as the church makes it clear to a certain class of people, you're not welcome here. Now, God in my youth put a great burden for revival upon me, and I've lived with that throughout the decades.

In the early 1970s, I was pastoring a church in Fresno, California. Our home was very near the University of California at Fresno, and keeping my ear to the ground and my eyes on the Lord, I began to sense that there was a stirring taking place among the young people, and that in time I said to my wife Maggie, dear, we must be ready. Something is going to happen at the university, and we want to be ready.

What do you think is going to happen? I said, these young people are tired of the rebellion they've been involved in. They've migrated to the beaches where they're fornicating and doing drugs, but I believe God is going to meet them there. Well, in almost no time, there began to be this incredible movement of the Holy Spirit.

Some of you older folks remember that it was described at the time as the Jesus people movement, and tens of thousands of young people were moved upon by the Holy Spirit. So, I kept saying to Maggie, we're going to welcome these young people. We're going to have a grand time ministering to them.

But the first group of this hippie group of young people that came to the church, our people made it clear, you don't fit here. And in almost every church in the coastal regions where this movement was so rich, the young people were turned away. Well, now the Pharisees were splendid in driving others off, but some of us have developed that skill as well.

And it's something we're going to have to face and face very clearly. Look at the next statement that is found in verse 14. This has to do with greed.

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you devour widows' houses, even while for a pretense you make long prayers, therefore you shall receive greater condemnation. That's not the problem that vanished from the earth with the Pharisees. There's still a great deal of ministry that is focused upon money and the accumulation of that.

And some of the wretched things we learn about that are taking place in the churches make us truly sick at heart. I was so disturbed a while back when I learned that a man who had followed a great pastor had drawn up a contract with the church in which it was agreed that if the pastor who had retired in any way

interfered with his ministry, he could step down and the church would have to pay him \$250,000. And a few days before the two-year contract was up, he falsely claimed that the old pastor had interfered and he collected the \$250,000.

Then it was discovered he was living with a mistress as well. But most of us are not in the position to make \$250,000 contracts. But is there any way in which greed is affecting your life? Understand in this passage, we have no way to deal with greed effectively apart from the power of the gospel.

Look at the next accusation Christ hurls at these men. Verse 15, Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel about on sea and land to make one prophet like. And when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourself.

Many times I have watched a young convert dragged down by the leadership of the church. I've heard people in the church say, when a new convert arrives on the scene and everybody is troubled because he's so full of zeal and devotion to Christ, don't worry, in a few days we'll have him down to our level. There is a conspiracy of evil that exists in many churches to keep anybody from rising above the status quo.

There is a universal problem, the making of false converts or the turning of true converts into hypocrites like the leader. I'd like to ask, are you part of a church where there's a conspiracy of good, where everybody is working together to elevate and nobody's working to drag down? And look at the next accusation our Savior makes. Verses 16 to 22, Woe to you blind guides who say, whoever swears by the temple, that is nothing.

But whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obligated and all that nonsense in which they were involved. These blind guides. And I want to gently but very firmly ask, is there any danger that you are a blind guide? Go back to what I began with, this young fellow coming to me and saying he had preached on the Ten Commandments and the people assailed him and said, who do you think you are to tell us what's right and what's wrong? Some of you pastors have been moaning because it doesn't really seem as if anybody's paying any attention to what you're saying.

Nothing seems to change, things just get worse and worse. One of my old friends announced some years ago, and he did so with a great deal of pleasure, he said, I've been preaching 50 years and I'm grateful to say that I'm preaching now exactly what I was preaching 50 years ago. When I heard him say that, I quaked.

I thought, what a dreadful thing to say. 50 years ago, almost everywhere I went, I was preaching to biblically literate people. Now, most everywhere I go, I'm speaking to biblically illiterate people, people who don't know any more about the God of the Bible than the Pharisees did.

What a dreadful thing to be a blind guide leading the blind. All of us must be able to discern the times in which we live and to aim the message of truth at the root of the problem. No wonder nothing changes.

Some years ago, a group contacted me and they had gotten involved in a struggle to fight masonry in the churches, and they wanted me to join them in this movement against masonry. And I said to them, masonry is a fruit, not a root. No man who loves Christ supremely has time to waste on a Masonic order.

You won't gain any ground at all fighting masonry. All you'll do is make a bunch of enemies, help nations to see that they don't know Christ, and when they know Christ, they'll be glad to be done with that

nonsense. You see, the problem for many of us is the problem that these Pharisees had, blind guide, not knowing what the real problem was.

I want to say this as firmly as I know how. Just as it would have been impossible for the prophet Ezekiel to sigh and cry over the abominations in the land if God had not forced him to look through the four portals described in Ezekiel 8, so it is impossible for us to speak relevantly to the urgent needs unless we have seen what God sees. So I know that it is the burden of my heart to encourage you to begin to see God and to see what God sees and to feel what God feels.

And I'm telling you, these Pharisees give us a powerful lesson on how to waste your life, and you weren't called to waste your life. Isn't it delightful that we can take an absolutely negative passage like Matthew 23 and turn it around and make something powerfully positive out of it? Stop covering your sin. Discover the God of the Bible.

Ask him to transform everything about you. Give you a life that is relevant and purposeful and that accomplishes the will and the purpose of God. That is impossible if you don't walk with him.

Look at the next accusation our dear Savior makes against these wretched men. Verse 23 and verse 24. Can you imagine a picture like that? Can you see yourself swallowing a camel? But that's what legalism does to you.

When you focus upon little minor issues and you make them the great cause for which you pour out your life, you forget the things that really matter to God. Look at the next accusation, number nine on my list. Verses 25 and 26.

Oh, to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they're full of robbery and self-indulgence. You blind Pharisees, first clean the inside of the cup and of the dish so that the outside can be clean also. But I want to call to your attention now something of incredible importance.

How many of you have ever really carefully considered what revival is? The first time I felt I ought to write a book on the subject, I gave a definition and I said a revival is extraordinary work of God producing extraordinary results. That's true, but I found a better way to state the very heart of revival. Revival is God in the midst of his people.

I want you to think about that. I want to ask you to use your imagination. Can you do that? I want you to imagine your life as a cup.

Can you do that? I've got in my mind a particular cup. I've been married 50 years. I was old when I got married.

I had some dishes and when I agreed to marry me, she wanted to throw out my old dishes. But I said, no, I like them. You don't have to use them, but I want to keep them.

So she knows I like them and so quite frequently she'll serve me my tea in one of those ancient cups, a genuine antique like I am. Now if you came to a home, you wouldn't be served in one of those cups. They're simply not good enough for company.

They're all right for me. I'm asking you to imagine yourself as a cup and I'd like to address some questions to the cup of your life. Number one, how big is your cup? Number two, how clean is your cup? Number three, what is the condition of your cup? And number four, how full is your cup? Now the nature of a true revival, you'll always find in every genuine revival that there is a breaking, a remaking, and a pouring full.

So I've asked you those four questions about the cup of your life. I'm starting over now on question number one, how big is your cup? Some of us are trying to serve the Lord God omnipotent in a terribly small cup. But the nature of revival is God comes with the hammer of his word and he smashes the cup of our life and he always replaces those miserable little cups with much bigger cups.

Now the Pharisees had terribly small cups and they were dirty cups and they were chipped and cracked cups and they were trying to serve God out of the dregs of those lousy cups. They didn't like Christ because Christ served as the hammer of the word of God, smashing the lives of those that heard him and believed and they didn't want any smashing. So they were cursed to live out their days in their miserable cups.

But I ask as well, how clean is your cup? I hope that you practice daily repentance. But even when we do, there's something about sin that stains the life. I drink mostly tea, but I've noticed that after the cup is used for a spell, it gets to looking awful.

So every once in a while, my favorite cups disappear. And I don't know what Maggie does, but she gives them some kind of a scouring and they come back better, but still not all that good. Are you trying to serve God with a small cup that is badly stained, even though you've been to the cross, even though by the mercies of God, you have gained fresh forgiveness? Maybe there's still some of the effects of sin lingering.

And would it be awful if the God of the Bible sent the Lord Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit with the hammer of the word to smash the cup of your life? Wouldn't it be wonderful to be done with that miserable little cup, with that stained cup? And what's its condition? Chipped? Cracked? Quite acceptable for your own use, but not suitable at all for honoring a guest? Many of us are trying to serve the Lord God out of cups that are badly damaged. And how full is your cup? Are you like the Pharisees trying to serve a lost in the dying world by taking a filthy little sponge and getting down into the bottom of the cup of your life and swirling around down there trying to get a drop or two? I've heard some sermons, let me tell you just what they sounded like. They sounded like a man that had a nearly dry sponge who was standing in the pulpit, wringing on that sponge, twisting, turning, trying to get something out.

Finally, a single bitter drop falls and he pronounces the amen. The beautiful part of revival is always the breaking, always the remaking, and always the pouring forth. Imagine yourself a wonderful new cup, gloriously, shinningly new, absolutely without flaw, and then God instructs the angels to roll back the portals of heaven and he begins pouring and pouring and pouring and pouring some more.

And even when your cup is full to overflowing, the fresh graces of Christ are still being poured upon you. Oh, what our world desperately needs is not more Pharisees, but Christians who have been revived by the Lord Jesus Christ and who are under those portals of heaven as the fresh graces of Christ are poured out. The only cure for the problem of Phariseeism is the Lord Jesus Christ.

But there's one more. I told you ten. I've spoken of nine.

Let me return to the text and read the tenth of these observations that are so crystal clear in the word of the Lord. Look, if you will, at verses 29 and 30. Woe to you, scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites, for you build the tombs of the prophets and you adorn the monuments of the righteous and say, if we had been living in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partners with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.

Consequently, you bear witness against yourselves that your sons of those murderers fill up then the measure of your guilt. You serpents, you brood of vipers, how shall you escape the sentence of hell? When your view of God is wrong, you cannot discern that which is good and that which is evil. Has not your heart been deeply pained in recent days when you have seen decisions made at top levels of government that are absolutely asinine? Often we think we are led by madmen, men who don't have the brain power of a three-year-old that isn't corrupted fully by sin.

And I want simply to say that the cure of hypocrisy, of Phariseeism, of scribalism is the Lord Jesus Christ in all his glory. And none of us will know and fully appreciate the Lord Jesus and his glorious redemption who have not had such a good look at the God of the Bible that we see and feel and weep over our utter hopelessness and our lostness. And I believe it's appropriate for me and my brothers who share this week's messages to declare to you, let's get back to the God of the Bible.

Let's preach on him as Timothy Dwight did at Yale College until the seats in the university chapel are shaking as the young students understand the magnitude of the God against whom they are sinning. It is not too late. God is still the unchanging God.

He is simply waiting on some men and women who will tell the truth and do so in the power of the Holy Spirit.

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