

A Declaration of Those Things Which Are Most Surely Believed Among Us

An Expositional Study of **The Gospel According to Luke**

Chapter 11- Luke 11:37-54

226- Five Characteristics of False Religion

November 17, 2013

Luke 11:37-54

37 Now when He had spoken, a Pharisee asked Him to have lunch with him; and He went in, and reclined *at the table*.

38 When the Pharisee saw it, he was surprised that He had not first ceremonially washed before the meal.

39 But the Lord said to him, "**Now you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and of the platter; but inside of you, you are full of robbery and wickedness.**

40 "**You foolish ones, did not He who made the outside make the inside also?**

41 "**But give that which is within as charity, and then all things are clean for you.**

42 "**But woe to you Pharisees! For you pay tithe of mint and rue and every kind of garden herb, and yet disregard justice and the love of God; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others.**

43 "**Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the chief seats in the synagogues and the respectful greetings in the market places.**

44 "**Woe to you! For you are like concealed tombs, and the people who walk over them are unaware of it."**

45 One of the lawyers said to Him in reply, "Teacher, when You say this, You insult us too."

46 But He said, "**Woe to you lawyers as well! For you weigh men down with burdens hard to bear, while you yourselves will not even touch the burdens with one of your fingers.**

47 "**Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets, and *it was* your fathers *who* killed them.**

48 "**So you are witnesses and approve the deeds of your fathers; because it was they who killed them, and you build *their tombs*.**

49 "For this reason also the wisdom of God said, 'I will send to them prophets and apostles, and *some* of them they will kill and *some* they will persecute,
50 so that the blood of all the prophets, shed since the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation,
51 from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the house *of God*; yes, I tell you, it shall be charged against this generation.'
52 "Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge; you yourselves did not enter, and you hindered those who were entering."
53 When He left there, the scribes and the Pharisees began to be very hostile and to question Him closely on many subjects,
54 plotting against Him to catch *Him* in something He might say.

To the Glory of God

Now as I told you last week- there are at least five points here in this Passage that Brother Andy just read to us that are *a/ways* true about false man- made religion that are *never* true with genuine Biblical Christianity:

1. False Religion is Always External and Superficial
2. False Religion Possesses no Forgiveness of Sin
3. False Religion is Always Surface and Shallow
4. False Religion Always Replaces the Important With the Unimportant
5. False Religion Always Seeks Human Acceptance

So let's examine each one.

1. False Religion is Always External and Superficial

Luke 11:37&38

37 Now when He had spoken, a Pharisee asked Him to have lunch with him; and He went in, and reclined *at the table*.

38 When the Pharisee saw it, he was surprised that He had not first ceremonially washed before the meal.

The religion of the Pharisees was purely external. And what happens is this: in order to live out your man-made religion and put on

a convincing show- you have to elaborate the external. So you expand and emphasize the emblems, you expand the functions, you expand the ceremonies, you expand the rituals, the trinkets the colors, the show- you proliferate the prescriptions.

And that's exactly what the Jews had done- way beyond the Old Testament. That's what the Roman Catholics and the Greek Orthodox have done- way beyond what the New Testament teaches- adding almost endless rituals and routines and ceremonies and regulations and that is because there's nothing on the inside- no truth; no power; no reality- so they make up for that lack by simply creating a bigger illusion on the outside and on the surface.

And the Pharisees lived for these rites and rituals and ceremonies. And the Lord knew He could get this guy's attention by violating one of these silly rituals. And so that's what Jesus did.

Jesus had just given them the denunciations. And following all of this that He has spoken, exposing the fact that it's not a light problem, it's a sight problem--there's plenty of light; the light is everywhere in blazing clarity; Jesus is in their midst—so it's a sight issue, they're just blind in their sin. And then Jesus gives us an illustration of this blindness, this inability to see the light.

And Dr. Luke says a Pharisee asked Jesus to have lunch with him. And so Jesus went in and just reclined at the table. And that sounds pretty matter of fact. Now we should know that there were basically two main meals in the day, one was the word here which is the word for lunch; it was a brunch kind of thing, a little before noon. And then there was dinner later in the day. This is the word for lunch. So it was the meal after a few hours of work, and a significant meal, a meal that took some time. And so in the typical fashion it wasn't a snack, it wasn't on the run, and this required an invitation, and He went in and did what you do at a prolonged meal, to have a prolonged conversation-- you recline at the table, extending yourself toward the table, your feet away from the table in a sort of comfortable posture on a kind of couch-- you get ready for an extended meal and conversation.

And here is this Pharisee (from the Hebrew *parosh*, which means to separate). This is one who was a separated one. That's how they designated themselves. They were fundamentalists; they were non-priests; they were laymen. They were devoted extremely to the laws and the traditions. And there were about 6,000 of them at the time. They

had a long history, all the way back to the Babylonian exile. Their influence had been growing for 400 years since Ezra.

They had come to be seen as the spiritual authorities to whom the people looked. They were self-righteous. They were evil. They were degenerate. They were hypocritical. They were filled with pride. They abused people for personal gain, etc.

But when this invitation came, Luke says the man asked Jesus to have lunch, and the Lord went in and reclined at the table. Now at this moment- Jesus has already breached the code of the Pharisees, and He did it on purpose. And what surfaces, starting in verse 38, is the first Characteristic of false religion- it was all external and superficial.

So these Pharisees loved the symbolic. Now this isn't about hygiene, folks. This isn't about dirty hands. This is about man-made ceremony, that Jesus had not first ceremonial washed. It's actually the verb in the Greek, *baptize*, from where we get our English word, "*baptize*". You see They had developed a ceremonial washing that they did to demonstrate their cleanliness, to demonstrate their holiness. And in fact, this was an old thing, been around a long time--in case they might have touched a Gentile that day, God forbid, or touched something a Gentile touched, or touched something an unclean person touched, or touched something else unclean.

And this was done to symbolize their holiness and their desire to be clean from all the defilements of the world. And the Jewish Mishnah actually describes how this was to be done. It even gets down to the amount of water they had to use. You were to use enough water to fill one and a half egg shells, and it was to be poured across the tips of the fingers, running down to the wrist, and then the hands were to be washed, symbolizing this bathing/cleansing.

Now there's absolutely nothing about any of this in the Old Testament. Nothing. They just made this ceremony up to symbolize externally how holy they were. So this was just a silly little ritual that they had developed to publicly parade their own purity.

Now over in **Matthew 15:2**- Levi says that these guys came to Jesus to rebuke Him and said

Why do Your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread.

... and in the next verse- Jesus condemned them by saying,

Why do you yourselves transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?

So Jesus just ignored their tradition. You know what He was saying? He was purposely saying this, "I have no interest in being in being a part of your religious club." Our Lord was willing to insult this man at the very outset of this lunch. And this is how it is, my friends, with false religion. They love the external, they love the superficial, they love the symbolic.

In Greek Orthodoxy- it just knocks your socks off- all the extravagant external symbolism. You stand in one spot and this parade goes on with people in all these elaborate dressings and head dresses and waving censors, and icons all over everywhere. It literally blasts your senses; it's bizarre, and people walking in endless circles and mumbling incomprehensible drivel and waving things in the air--and these poor, sad souls trying somehow to connect God and Salvation and Truth with all this external superficial madness.

But false religion that has nothing true on the inside loves the elaborate superficial symbolism. Look at the Roman Church which is full of it. And the more important things are supposed to be- the more elaborate the ceremony and the ritual and the music and the colors- everything except the Truth. They will dazzle you with things that don't matter at the expense of Truth.

So this is a very important characteristic of false religion- they have no Truth, no spiritual power, no genuine salvation, and so they make up for it by having elaborate and colorful and musical ceremonies and rituals and traditions.

So anytime the tradition of man outweighs the Truth of God- run from that- it is a sign of a false religion because all false religions love meaningless and superficial symbols and rituals and ceremonies and human traditions.

The longer the song service- the less Truth will be preached and taught and the result is that the people will know God and His Ways less and less. The more programs that are designed to tickle the ears of lukewarm and unsaved and carnal minded people, the more sporting events take the place of Bible Studies and Prayer meetings, the plays

and the puppet shows and comedians and music concerts that are flooding into the House of God- are all signs that people do not love Jesus; people do not love the Truth; and people love pleasure more than they love God and the things of God.

Over the last 25 or 30 years- we have been inundated with a syndrome in our culture that has been collectively called, "ADD"- attention deficient disorder. And so we put children on Lythium and Rydalyne instead of taking away the violent and pagan video games and giving them an orange and pushing them outside to climb trees and run and play like children are supposed to.

But there is another malady that has struck our nation and it is called, "ABB"- Anything But the Bible. And it has infected the American Church. And so the leaders of the Church will give the people anything- everything- except the only thing that matters and that is Holy Spirit inspired Scripture. And so they will play and have concerts and grow large in number and have a blast- all while Jesus and the Truth sits over in a corner unknown and unloved disrespected in His Own House and not obeyed and the people perish for a lack of knowledge.

And this is done in spite of the fact that The Church possesses the only Truth that can change the human heart and save the soul and that Truth is preached and taught and known and understood and obeyed and loved and defended less now than at any time in the 2,000 year history of the Church. And that is because we have traded the Real and the True and the Important for the Superficial and the External and the Symbolic. Please turn with me to read what the Apostle Paul said about this in **2 Timothy 4:1-5**:

1 I solemnly charge *you* in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom:

2 preach the word; be ready in season *and* out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.

3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but *wanting* to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires,

4 and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.

5 But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

2 False Religion Provides No Forgiveness for Sin

Luke 11:39

But the Lord said to him, "Now you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and of the platter; but inside of you, you are full of robbery and wickedness."

Now this was an appropriate illustration for Jesus to use at a meal. He just sat down, and there's going to be a dish there. And anybody who is a decent host is going to make sure that the part you see and eat out of is clean.

True genuine Salvation however, goes way beyond the surface and what is seen and goes all the way down to the heart- to the very core of the individual. True Christianity doesn't simply say for us to do the "right thing"- but for us to do the "right thing" for the "right reason". So while it is true that Biblical Christianity deals with our actions – it goes far deeper and deals with the motive and with the reason behind the actions.

It is only where there is false religion- where Biblical Christianity is either hidden or obscured or not known and not known in fullness where evil hearts and hypocrisy are not brought to light. The very nature of true Biblical Christianity is that it deals with our heart, with our motives, and with the reason behind *why* we do what we do so that even if we do outwardly "good" and "noble" things but we don't do them for the right reason- for the Glory of God alone- our actions count as absolutely nothing with God and are condemned as being sin.

False religion *always* places emphasis on *outward* actions because it has no power or ability to cleanse inward sin and hypocrisy, which is why they place great emphasis on rituals and ceremonies and trinkets and colors and music symbols- because the more a religion promotes these things- the less Truth is there and the more sin can flourish and remain hidden and grow.

So the Lord tells this Pharisee- *"Your problem is that you pay attention to the part of the plate that nobody eats from. You clean the part of the plate that doesn't matter. You clean and emphasize the outside of the cup and the outside of the platter- which is pointless. So all your symbolic trappings do not and cannot touch the part that matters- the inside- that's filthy and sinful."*

And so in verse 39- Jesus directly confronts this religious hypocrite and tells him:

Luke 11:39

... inside of you, you are full of robbery and wickedness.

Now how could Jesus say that? First of all, Jesus is God and so He is Omniscient and so He knows everything about everybody. But even more than that- Jesus understands false religion is always a cover-up- always. **Matthew 23:25-28** says,

25 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence.

26 You blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, so that the outside of it may become clean also.

27 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness.

28 So you, too, outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

In **John 3:19**, Jesus said,

This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil.

... so their soul was not feeding on God's Truth and God's Spirit- but it was feeding on pride and self-righteousness and human greed and lust and therefore it was open to great and terrible deception so much so- that when God Almighty in human flesh stood before them- they called Him "Beelzebul".

Now it is easy to see why Jesus would say these men were full of wickedness- but why did He say they were also filled with "robbery"? What is the connection between inward wickedness and robbery? This word, "robbery" came from the Greek word, *harpagē* which means: *to plunder, pillage, and rape*. So one of the side effects of people in false religions who are being inwardly sinful and hypocritical while having

an outward measure of beauty and holiness is that they are by nature a thief- whose mission is not only to plunder and fleece the sheep but to also steal their souls with false teaching.

People like this are plundering people- and not just their material possessions- their not only raping their bank accounts in order to build their own spiritual enterprises- but their also raping their souls. This is a term that has to do with violent force. So they're knowingly and premeditatingly making people twice the sons of hell that they are. So it is correct to say that all false religions are a spiritual rape- they plunder the souls of men.

But not just robbery. Jesus also said they were wicked. And the Greek word here is *poneria*- *which means: badness; malignity; or villainy*. So the wickedness that false teachers are is like a malignancy- a cancer that eats at the soul.

Now I want you to notice a curious thing here. Jesus's approach to this man is both brutal and damning. And it is contrary to every evangelistic strategy that is taught today in the modern church. And yet we must understand that this is God Incarnate.

But before you think that you now have the license to talk to people like this- remember that you are not God incarnate and you are not sinless and you are not Omniscient. So while I agree that we can go straight to the core of the problem- those of us who are saved by Grace through faith are commanded by a whole host of other Scriptures to be kind and gentle and merciful and patient as we preach the Gospel to every creature.

The Gospel- all by itself is straight and narrow and to the point. So because that is true- the man who preaches that Gospel should be a man of mercy and a man of love. Preaching and Teaching the Gospel is never about making points or winning the argument- it is about helping people see the Glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ. So Point number 2 is that they love symbols on the outside while they love sin on the inside and sin is never dealt with in these false religions.

3. False Religion is Always Surface and Shallow

Luke 11:40

You foolish ones, did not He who made the outside make the inside also?

People deceived by false religion love the things that are surface and shallow because they live in a compartmentalized world and they can't possibly afford to think honestly or deeply about anything. So they emphasize colors and trappings but never Truth. And notice how Jesus deals with that. He calls them,

"foolish ones"

... and the Greek word here is *aphrones*- which means: *fools or simpletons*. And this is a correct assessment of these people and not simply calling them names. It's a word used to describe those who are destitute of reason, or destitute of thought, or destitute of truth- people who think shallowly and superficially about deep and important and eternal issues.

This very same word was used by the Apostle Paul in **Ephesians 5:17** when he said,

So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

Do not be simple mind about God's Will or God's Way; do not be shallow; or silly and frivolous. This word has to do with an absence of thinking and pondering and meditating. It is looking before you leap; it is building before you count the cost; it is shooting before you aim.

Don't approach Divine Truth with a shallow or silly mindset. Ponder the things of God, think about eternal issues, and meditate on Truth.

Now I would be remiss if I did not bring out something here and talk about the almost total absence of deep and serious thinking by far too many people of the modern Church. And this is a direct result of them not reading at all or not reading edifying things that will provoke them to think. We don't want to be foolish and in order to be wise and not be simpleminded- we need to think and ponder about serious and deep things and the best way to do that is to read and be exposed to serious and deep things.

The Apostle Peter also used this same word in **1Peter 2:15**,

For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men.

Paul echoed Jesus by saying this about the Jews in **Romans 2:17-29**:

- 17** But if you bear the name "Jew" and rely upon the Law and boast in God,
18 and know *His* will and approve the things that are essential, being instructed out of the Law,
19 and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness,
20 a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of the immature, having in the Law the embodiment of knowledge and of the truth,
21 you, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that one shall not steal, do you steal?
22 You who say that one should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?
23 You who boast in the Law, through your breaking the Law, do you dishonor God?
24 For "THE NAME OF GOD IS BLASPHEMED AMONG THE GENTILES BECAUSE OF YOU," just as it is written.
25 For indeed circumcision is of value if you practice the Law; but if you are a transgressor of the Law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision.
26 So if the uncircumcised man keeps the requirements of the Law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision?
27 And he who is physically uncircumcised, if he keeps the Law, will he not judge you who though having the letter *of the Law* and circumcision are a transgressor of the Law?
28 For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh.
29 But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.

So Jesus said, *"Do you think that God is only concerned about your outside and not your inside? You who supposedly exalt God as being holy- do you think that God's concern about holiness is limited to your physicality? Do you think God is holy? Because you say you do and if He is holy, then He is as concerned about holiness on the inside as He*

would be on the outside." You see, there can't be any limit to God's Concerns or He's not really holy at all.

You Pharisees are supposed to be teachers of the Law and teachers of the depth of Divine Truth. And you say God is holy and God is interested in holiness, and so your life is supposed to be an illustration of that. But the only holiness you're concerned about is superficial, and you know the rottenness and corruption of your own heart, and you satisfy yourself with that kind of compartmentalized thinking? God wants your heart. The Old Testament is filled with that.

So in **Luke 11:41** Jesus makes another strange statement and says,

But give that which is within as charity, and then all things are clean for you.

In other words- give your heart. Be real. You Pharisees go about in your alms. You parade your stuff in the temple and you go in and you blow a trumpet and make an announcement and then you dump your money in while everybody is watching to call attention to your giving. You do all your fasting and your public prayers to be seen of men and you go through all the externals and even tithe your seeds. But you haven't given your heart to God or to the poor so all your external symbolic alms giving and all your external symbolic prayers and all your symbolic fasts are hypocritical as long as you keep plundering people and pillaging people and spiritually raping people.

So give that which is within- not that which is without. Give your heart. Give your life and then all things are clean for you. So this is really very much like Jesus' conversation with the rich young ruler. Serving Jesus may cost you everything- so it has to be real, it has to be genuine, it has to come from a transformed and regenerate heart.

You can pour an ocean of water on your hands and you can count your seeds and tithe 10% and you can wear the right colors at the right time of the year and memorize the prayers and go through all kinds of symbols and rituals and ceremonies--all the external facade of devotion- but all you've done is manifest how shallow and simplistic you think.

How does a Roman priest go do all of his little symbolic rituals and then go molest children and somehow compartmentalize his life without going mad? How does a man like Paul Cain say, "Thus says the Lord" while secretly being drunk and homosexual? How do the leaders on the Hay, Wood, and Stubble Television Network look people in the

eye and blame them for why they are not healed and then tell them that God wants them to give more money so the preacher can live in a penthouse in Manhattan and then go to sleep?

It's because the whole thing is just a game to them. The whole thing is a sham. And then they become very adept at it. It is the nature of every false religion for the leaders to play that game. They love symbols, they love sin, and they love "simplistic thinking and simplistic people. They don't want to think deeply about the implications of their black hearts.

4. False Religion Always Replaces the Important with the Unimportant

Luke 11:42

But woe to you Pharisees! For you pay tithe of mint and rue and every *kind of* garden herb, and *yet* disregard justice and the love of God; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others.

Now here in verse 42- Jesus launches into three woes. And now this direct confrontation has turned into a pronouncement of Divine Judgment.

Now the word, "Woe" is interesting. Some people have thought that this is some kind of statement of sorrow or some kind of sentimental musing on Jesus' part where He is saying, "O my, you poor Pharisees." But that isn't true because He just called them "fools" in verse 40. No, this is a pronouncement of Divine Judgment. This is not a sentiment of sorrow- even though there's sorrow in it. This is a declaration of Judgment- especially in light of the language of Matthew 23 where He repeats these woes seven times.

And they are all directed at those who are sons of hell, called hypocrites repeatedly, filled with lawlessness, objects of greater condemnation, and who will not escape the sentence of hell. This is judgment. So Jesus goes to lunch with a Pharisee and ends up pronouncing Divine Judgment on him if he doesn't repent.

Now what brought about these "woes"? It's their love for the unimportant. They pay tithes of mint and rue and every kind of garden herb but they disregard justice and the love of God. I mean, how can you be that trivial? But that's what false religion does to people- it causes them to strain at a gnat and swallow a camel.

False religion will never be involved with genuine Justice and the love of God- because the inside is corrupt. So what they are left to do is to emphasize things that don't even matter- like tithe their seeds.

Now these Pharisees were correct to pay their tithe. Jesus says, *"You ought to have done that- the reasonable tithe- the required tithe- you ought to have done that."* The tithe was a tax and even Jesus and the Apostles paid their taxes. So Jesus said, *"You ought to have done what is commanded to be done- but while you're doing what you're supposed to do- you ought not to have disregarded justice and disregarded love toward God."*

But that's what hypocrites always do. All the external rules, all the emphasis on external rituals and ceremonies with no transformation of the heart, no humility, no repentance, and no trust in God's Grace and Power to forgive and so there is no genuine love for God.

But boy, they could talk all day long about colors and ceremonies and things as unimportant as tithing seeds. So they totally ignored the important and eternal things while emphasizing the unimportant trivial things.

5. False Religion Always Seeks Human Acceptance

Luke 11:43

Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the chief seats in the synagogues and the respectful greetings in the market places.

Pay attention to all the false teachers and look at all the colorful clothes they wear, all the thrones they sit in, all the wacky hats they wear, all the crazy garb, all the junk and the trinkets hanging all over everywhere. And they always want grand titles- *"the very most reverend so and so"*.

That's why I don't sit up on this platform. That's why I sit with you in the congregation. I am not to be elevated- the Word of God is what is elevated. These guys all wanted to be seen and made much over. And that's why it took many years before I even asked anybody to give money for the radio broadcast. The leaders of the modern Church come up with new and innovative ways to fleece the sheep nearly every day and I do not want to be like these people at all- in any way. Now I

think we have developed a very godly and tasteful way to ask if somebody wants to give and support the Ministry that is God honoring and not sheep fleecing- but my reluctance came from this Passage. This is what I fear because I don't want to be like these guys.

They want to be loved and admired and accorded reverence and have elevated positions and be venerated and be admired and have all kinds of titles and to be distinguished from everybody else by all the stuff they wear- and they tell you about all their dreams and all their visions and all their angelic visitations and they do all this so that somehow you think they're holy and close to God.

Now it is possible that some people will say that me wearing a coat and tie or a shirt and tie is being pompous like these Pharisees. And that *could* be true. It isn't true- but it *could* be. But I notice that many of those same people who say that also wear a coat and tie on what they deem to be important and special occasions. So that is inconsistent logic to me. So let me tell you what I think. I do not believe that dressing up makes you holy or important. But I also do not believe that dressing down is a sign of humility either. Sometimes dressing up is pompous but sometimes dressing down is just being lazy.

But that is something you have to decide between you and God. My reason for dressing up is not to "put on airs" or be like these religious hypocrites but to simply do my best for Jesus. And I will never and I have never made any distinction with the poor about this issue. So for example- if the best a person has to wear is a t-shirt and bib overalls- then he would be accepted with open arms. But I would tell that man to wear his *best* t-shirt and his *best* overalls for the Glory of God.

But if your best is a tie and you would wear a tie on important and special occasions- I can't think of a more important or special occasion than to be in God's House on the Lord's Day leading the people of God.

My heart in this is simply for me to do my best, to be prepared, to have the right heart, to be prayed up, to make sure I have the right attitude toward God and the people, to be on time, and to look my best out of respect for God and His House as we lead the people- not to be pompous.

If you are smart and you have the potential to make straight "A's" then I think you should. I agree that being smart doesn't make you holy but being dumb on purpose doesn't make you humble either. If the

best you can do is a "C" and you make a "C", then I think God is pleased. But if the best you can do is an "A" and you make a "B" and you made a "B" because you were lazy and didn't study- then I think your "B" is a sin. So the issue is doing your best for God's Glory- not putting on airs.

Now I am a Pastor and many people call me, "Pastor Blair" and that is very kind and wonderful. I am honored to be in the Ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. I love being in Ministry. Many times- it is a thankless job- but I honestly believe that I was divinely called to the Ministry and I think the fruit bears that out. But as far as I am concerned there is no more endearing term to me than "Brother". I am your brother in Christ because we have all been graciously forgiven and mercifully washed in sinless Blood and to me- that is the greatest title I could ever have.

People ask me why I preach the things I preach about. Sometimes they are hard to study, hard to learn, hard to teach, and hard to accept. So why do it? So many today are *not* doing it- so why am I? I am preaching what I preach for one reason- I cannot escape it. It is in the Bible. I am preaching every verse through an entire Book and I cannot and I will not avoid the hard and deep and profound and difficult subjects simply because they are not popular.

I also understand that many will not come here because of that. But I'm not trying to be conservative; I'm not trying to be liberal. I'm trying to be Biblical. My primary goal is to glorify God and make Him known to you and through the faithful exposition of Scripture to have your eyes unveiled so that you can see the glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ so you can behold the Lord in all His magnificence and then be changed into that same Image from Glory to glory even as by the Lord who is that Spirit.

My goal is not to cater to the whims of lukewarm or unsaved people. Your capacity to come and sit and listen to the Word of God unfolded before you is predicated on just how hungry you are for Truth. So I am not doing this because I think I'm some hot shot- but because I fear God and knowing the terror of the Lord- I persuade you to repent and turn to Jesus.

But these guys did their deeds to be noticed by men. They loved the place of honor at the banquet- the chief seats in the synagogues.

They loved the respectful greetings in the marketplace. They loved to be called rabbi."

But Jesus says, *"Don't be called rabbi. Don't be called Father. Because there is only One Who is your true teacher and Father and that is God and all of you are brothers and sisters in Christ."* But that's how it is with those in phony religions. They always elevate themselves.

So that's the picture of a false religious leader and a false religion. They claimed to love God. They claim to love people. They are a sham. They are a deception. They are blaspheming God. They are abusive. They are the recipients of the most pronounced and divined severity of judgment that ever fell from the lips of Jesus. They really only love their symbols, their sin, their simplistic notions of spiritual reality. They love what is secondary and they love status. And this applies not only to Pharisees but all across the board, even into the modern time to all religious hypocrites. And that means all religious people apart from the true gospel of Jesus Christ.

Let's pray