

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

227- These You Should Have Done Without Neglecting
the Others- Part 5

December 1, 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 just what did Jesus mean when He said at the end of verse 52:

... you yourselves did not enter, and you hindered those who were entering."

Jesus is saying here that these religious hypocrites not only did not want to love and serve Jesus *themselves*- but they actually hindered those people who were on some path in the direction of Divine Truth and Salvation and the Kingdom of God and Heaven. So the question we need to ask here is:

Could anything be said about a religious leader that could be worse?

Is there anything worse that could be said about a man or a Ministry than that the sum total of all their efforts is that they personally rejected Divine Truth and that they actually hindered or stopped people from getting into Heaven? In other words- in the name of religion, in the name of the Old Testament, in the name of God, in the name of righteousness, in the name of holiness- these people actually *prevented* people from obtaining Salvation. That the totality of all they

said and all they did in their ministry is that people are stopped from being saved.

How horrible! There is nothing that could ever be said that could possibly be worse than this. This is the ultimate discredit to any religious leader because every normal person, every reasonable person understands just how important it is to be told the Truth- because without Truth- nothing else matters.

Now the Truth may be offensive at times, or the Truth may seem to be hard, or the Truth may appear to be destructive- but Truth is our very best friend- because without Truth- there is no knowledge of sin and without the knowledge of sin- there is no place for repentance and without repentance- there is no forgiveness and no change and no Salvation.

So when dealing with human souls- you have to understand that sin is a huge part of this life. We humans sin- and we sin repeatedly and so a part of genuine ministry is to rightly and fully preach and teach Divine Truth so that sin is underscored or highlighted or revealed to the individual. Because there can never be genuine conviction without the knowledge of sin.

And I am in the process of writing a "White Paper" on just what genuine conviction is and how God the Holy Spirit brings redeemed people to a place of conviction and repentance and forgiveness.

The Bible teaches that this is an amazing *process*- and not an event- and that there are several things at work in the saved person's life that eventually leads to a change in behavior that will glorify God and bring the believer into the fullness of joy.

But this process begins with the knowledge of the Truth- that what God has said about a particular subject in the 66 Books of Holy Scripture is clearly and fully taught through a called and gifted Teacher so that the individual understands what the Will of God is- concerning that matter.

And that is where this process begins and nothing else of any eternal importance will ever happen; there will be no conviction, no godly sorrow, no repentance, and no change unless and until the Truth is taught and preached and known and understood.

So for God Himself to say that a Ministry or a collection of religious leaders are not teaching and preaching the Truth, for God Himself to categorically condemn an entire class of priests precisely

because they hide the Truth, and obscure the Truth, and compromise with the Truth, and change the Truth, and add to and take away from the Truth- to the point where the end result is that the people who listen to these people and who follow them are not convicted, and they do not enter into godly sorrow, they do not repent, and they are not forgiven and saved- in other words- for God Himself to say that the summation of everything a group is doing is hindering people from coming to God- you can't get any worse than that.

Because God the Holy Spirit takes the Divine Truth of God and begins to work in the mind of the individual. And the mind then informs the heart and God the Holy Spirit brings the individual to a place of "conviction"- that glorious place where an individual knows that he is wrong and comes to understand that he has sinned and realizes that he is at odds with God and comprehends that what he is doing or thinking or saying is sinful so that he may go into a place of godly sorrow where he can savor and taste of the inherent sinfulness and horror of his of sin and then that godly sorrow leads to repentance- or a change of thinking and that change of thinking then leads to a change of behavior that will glorify God and bring joy to the believer.

But we must understand that conviction is different than condemnation. Conviction has- as its goal- repentance and forgiveness while condemnation has- as its goal- destruction.

And what Jesus is doing here with these Pharisees and lawyers is *not* bringing conviction into their lives- but rather condemnation. Jesus' goal here is not for these men to repent and be saved- but to categorically condemn them and the false doctrine that they teach- to the end that they will be eternally damned- which is why I am spending so much time with this passage.

This passage ought to strike fear in our hearts because this is *not* an evangelistic passage whereby these men are presented the Gospel so that they may repent and be saved. No, this passage is Divine Judgment on spiritual apostates who promote and teach a false, man-made religion and doctrines of demons that is not designed to save a single soul but deceive them into hell. And so Jesus is not trying to *reason* with these men- He is categorically condemning them.

But as we read this passage that brought such terrible condemnation to these men- God uses these very same words to bring good and holy conviction to us. And it all begins with Divine Truth.

Now just from the viewpoint of common life- in the normal routine of every day circumstances- we want people to tell us the truth. We really count on it whether it's about our job, or whether it's about the house we're about to buy, or the loan we're about to get, or the insurance policy we're about to put in place, or the car we're about to purchase, or whether it's what the mechanic tells us when we take the car in to be repaired, we depend on people to tell us the truth. Even when we buy an appliance, or a computer, certainly when we go to the doctor, we want the lab report to be correct. We want truth.

We understand that life disintegrates and unravels, it becomes chaotic if we don't know the truth about these things that make up our lives. We expect lawyers to be honest, accountants to be honest, our business associates to be honest, the people that manage our retirement to be honest. We expect our parents to be honest. And we parents want our kids to be honest. All of life requires that.

But we need to understand something. We could live in a world full of liars where no one told you the truth about those natural and earthy and day to day things- you could live amid deceivers all your life and still be okay in the life to come- as long as just one single person told you Divine Truth. And that one person could be your pastor, or your preacher, or your religious teacher. You could be deceived about everything in this world and still be okay if you get the Truth about God and the world to come.

But on the other hand, you could live in this world in the midst of people who tell you the truth about everything pertaining to this life and the day to day function of this life- a world where everybody told you the truth about things pertaining to this earth- and yet you could be damned forever by not hearing and not knowing Eternal Truth.

So it is infinitely more important to be told the truth about God and sin and forgiveness and salvation and about the way to heaven than about everything else on this earth.

Therefore, the realm in which the Truth matters most is the spiritual realm. And it isn't even close. For example- if the doctor lies to you about the disease or if the IRS lies to you about how much taxes you owe or if the President lies to you about health care- that could affect you physically and economically- and that would be bad. If your spouse lies to you or your children lie to you- it could affect you socially- and that would be terrible. But if you went through every bit of that

deception and still had the Truth about spiritual and eternal matters- you would end up being okay throughout all of eternity.

But if you had the Truth about every single issue of this life and yet whoever you trust to tell you the Truth about the life to come- lies to you- and deceives you- it will damn you forever.

Now the world is full of religious liars- always has been and always will be. False teachers are everywhere. And there is a very entrenched and sophisticated system of false teaching that is under the direction of satan- the arch-enemy of God- and all of his demons who work this system across the face of the earth to deceive souls and send them to hell. And this has been in operation since the Fall- but it was only in individual people until Nimrod began to organize false religion and formalize it in the land of Shinar at the Tower of Babel- which is why that was such a big deal to God.

And their platform is greater today than it's ever been because of media and at a time when false teaching proliferates and true Biblical discernment disappears and false teachers damn people's souls. And the end result is that they literally shut the door to heaven. They hinder people from God and from forgiveness of sin and from Salvation.

And there is not a more frightening judgment than the Judgment of God that falls upon the people who slam the door to the Kingdom in the face of those who were entering.

But that's what false teachers do and that is what they have always done and that is what these Pharisees did in Israel. And they had been doing it for a long time- shutting heaven and keeping people out. So they were obstructionists; they were hinderers- they didn't want to enter into Heaven themselves and they didn't want anyone else to enter in either.

And this is as bad as it gets and yet- in spite of the horrific damage down to countless millions of human souls over the last 2,000 years- the normal response of the average person in the modern Church is that they amazingly seek to tolerate false teaching and false teachers in the name of some kind of "love", and in the name of "acceptance", and in the name of "tolerance" and "kindness", and in the name of "preserving peace".

It is sadly true today that Doctrinal *discussion* and Doctrinal *dispute* in the sincere search for Doctrinal *purity* and Biblical *accuracy* is looked down on and condemned far more than doctrinal error. The

thought that Biblical Truth might divide people or hurt the cause of unity is anathema to most people- even though they would be hard pressed to explain just what we are all in unity about.

But we need to know that the earnest effort to know the Scriptures rightly and fully is always noble- even though it may temporarily cause discomfort and even division. But there is never anything good that can hope to come from Doctrinal error- it always damns the soul. And so false teachers are the most dangerous people on the planet because they damn people's souls forever.

So when Jesus came and began His ministry- He engaged in a necessary proclamation of Truth and alongside that proclamation of the Truth was an equally necessary assault on the obstructionists- those who stood in the door to Heaven and wouldn't let anyone pass through.

And what I have been trying to impart to you is that even though the harshness of Jesus here is not something we would want- it is not an over-reaction. We need to remember when we get into Passages like this that Jesus was God in human flesh and therefore what He did and what He said was Right- it was Good, it was Holy and Pure. Jesus was and is God's Love Personified and so even this damnation of false teaching and false teachers is an expression of Love.

So what you see in the ministry of Jesus is a ministry of immense and escalating conflict. There are some people who would like you to think that the life of Jesus was a life of kind deeds and miracles and gentle teaching and He was surrounded by women and children and everything was just sort of warm and fuzzy and nothing could be further from the truth because from the time that He started His ministry- it was a ministry of immense and ever escalating conflict. It was a ministry in which the hatred of the religious leaders in Judaism against Jesus and against the Truth grew to a fever pitch until against all reason and revelation they manipulated the Romans to crucify their own Messiah.

And so this was not simply the result of some kind of hot-headed reaction at the end of His life. This conflict had been mounting since the very beginning of His ministry- when after Jesus preached His very first sermon- to His Own extended family and the people He grew up with- their reaction is that they tried to throw the only sinless Man Who ever lived off a cliff.

So when you look at the life of Jesus- you see this constant escalating conflict. And we've been looking at it as we've gone through Luke and we see it again in bold relief in this incident that is occurring before us in the text that Brother Andy just read. It's not surprising that the conflict reaches this level and takes center stage because Truth had never been on earth in a more purer form than it was when Jesus preached and taught it.

So Jesus sees this escalation and He understands it completely and so He confronts these priests who are the pervasive liars who have the whole nation basically following them right into hell. And we see that confrontation in our text.

Now what we have learned so far from verses 37-44 is that Jesus condemns these Pharisees and then we come to verse 45 where a lawyer speaks up and says:

Luke 11:45b

... Teacher, when You say this, You insult us too.

Now this guy should have left well enough alone. Anytime God is condemning an entire class of people- it is best to keep your mouth shut and lay low and pray that God will not look your way.

Now just who were these lawyers? The Greek word here is *nomikon*, which means: *an expert in the Law of God*. These people were also called "scribes" down in verse 53- same word. And we need to know that these men were not *practicing* the Law; they were not *students* of the Law- no, they had graduated and were self- appointed *experts* of the Law that God gave to Moses for the Jewish nation.

Now as a total group- the Pharisees were committed to fastidious observance of the religious system that they had invented and perverted that they equated as being the same thing as what God gave to Moses- even though it was entirely a fabrication of their own wicked minds and had nothing to do with that which God gave to Moses. And within the larger group of the Pharisees was a much smaller group who were the lawyers- the experts of the Law. So not all Pharisees were lawyers- but all lawyers were Pharisees.

So the way this worked is that the Pharisees were the practitioners of the man- made religious system that had been developed by these Law experts. Another way to understand this is that

these Law experts were the theologians and the exegetes and the expositors of the Law. They were the interpreters of the Scripture and they are the ones who came up with this false system which the Pharisees then practiced and applied.

Now the Sadducees were different from the Pharisees and they had their *own* man-made false religious system and they had their own so-called experts interpreting the Law their own way which was different from the Pharisees. And as we have studied before- there were two other groups of Jews in that day- the Essenes- who were the mystics and the nomads and those who shunned cities and lived in caves and waited for the Messiah to come get them and then there was the Sacarii- who were the terrorists of that day who would kidnap and murder Gentiles- in the Name of God- especially the Romans with their small daggers that they hid in their clothes.

And none of these groups were right. All of them were very sincere but they were also very wrong and all of them had taken the pure Law of God and had twisted it beyond any recognition and they were not sincere but wayward followers of God- they were deceived lost people- who followed and taught doctrines of demons.

So all these men crafted a perverted and corrupt and apostate religion that did not save a single soul but which actually shut the door to the Kingdom of God and sent people to hell. And so the Pharisees and the Lawyers were inseparable. The practicing Pharisees were dependent upon these lawyers to interpret the Law for them and to find them the loopholes which they were very adept at doing. You could never meet with Pharisees without having to meet with lawyers because some of the Pharisees would be lawyers and they were inseparable- they were always together.

So to criticize the Pharisees was to also criticize the lawyers because it was the lawyers who developed the system that the Pharisees were putting into practice. And so with that in mind listen to this man's shock and how he is insulted at what Jesus is saying here to the Pharisees and he blurts out:

"Do you realize what You've just done? You've insulted us, too."

... and the implied statement that wasn't actually put into words is,

"Just who do you think you are, Jesus? Don't you realize who we are? We are the experts, the exegetes, the expositors, the interpreters of Scripture, and you are simply an intenerate preacher wandering all over the place."

These men were skilled in the Law and in the Jewish tradition. They were the theorists- who put it all together, who crafted the traditions, and the routines, and the rituals and the system that had nothing to do with the heart because their hearts had never been converted. There was not a single thing that these Pharisees and lawyers taught that had anything to do with true holiness; nothing to do with true righteousness- but they had concocted a very complex system of external behavior that had nothing to do with actually loving and serving God with gladness. It was an endless list of thousands and thousands and thousands of outward methods and external means imposed upon the people in the name of being the true Will of God. And it was so complex that you had to have a lawyer around to interpret it.

It's like those legal documents that we get written by lawyers today that nobody but a lawyer can understand. Lawyers write them and you need a lawyer to read them. Lawyers wrote this religious system and the people needed a lawyer to explain the system to them because it was so complex.

So nobody actually ever knew if they were right with God and everybody became totally dependent on these lawyers and Pharisees to tell them that what they were doing was "pleasing to God" or "sinful". In **Matthew 23:2**- Jesus said this:

The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses;

... in other words- these men have literally pushed Moses out of his chair and they sit in the place of Moses. And this is just another way of saying that these men got rid of the Law of Moses and took over. So always beware of any human being having authority over your soul simply because of his position. Religious leaders who sit in elaborate chairs and hold your soul captive by virtue of where they sit or who they are is always false religion, dear friends.

The only Authority that should ever have the power to impose an obligation on you and bind your conscience is the Word of God. That is

the hallmark of Biblical Christianity and was the foundational cause of the Protestant Reformation 500 years ago. But that doesn't mean that we are then free to disregard position or authority- we aren't. But what that *does* mean is that sin is not defined by men- it is defined by God in the Scriptures and therefore- Truth is not defined by men- it is defined by the Holy Scriptures. Therefore the concept of "Sola Scriptura"- where the only doctrine that is taught in the Church is that Truth that is derived from Scripture and from Scripture alone- is what makes a Church to be Biblical.

These people had moved all that aside and replaced Divine Truth with their bizarre, twisted, perverted, allegorical, mystical, spiritual interpretations. They had completely fabricated a religion that was in competition with and that had replaced Biblical Truth. And that is the hallmark of all false religions

So they had literally put themselves in Moses' seat. And so these men are a picture of all false religious leaders- all those who misinterpret the Bible, who misrepresent what it teaches, all the wicked exegetes, interpreters, expositors, theologians, scholars, academicians who pervert the Bible to create damning religious systems, whether they're Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox, cultic, or whatever they are.

And every false and man-made religious system has them. They all have some theologians, some interpreters, both historically and in the present tense. And all their hearts are unchanged and corrupt and void of God and full of robbery and wickedness and they plunder and pillage people's souls and they are themselves wicked.

So Jesus says to these men in **Luke 11:52:**

"You're hindering those entering."

"But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut off the Kingdom of heaven from men."

... that's what you do.

"For you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in."

... so you are obstructionists. You stand in the way and you keep people out of the Kingdom. And that's what all false teachers do- they cannot do anything other than that.

Now I know that I have to say something here. It is correct to say that everything that is not true- is, by definition, a lie. I agree with that. But there is a world of difference between someone who is saying something that might be wrong or inaccurate as he is *trying* to be right and someone who is purposefully trying to deceive someone. All false statements are bad- but all false statements are not the same. All false statements need to be corrected- but not all false statements are evil. Anyone who ever teaches anything that isn't true is wrong- and he needs to repent- but that doesn't make him a heretic.

And as God is good to allow us to learn more Truth and as we grow in Grace and are subjected to more and more Truth- the instances that we have to teach or to believe something that isn't true is *reduced*- but it is never eliminated. So never think for a moment that because you know *some* truth that you know *all* truth.

Every human being has "clay feet" and what that means is that every single preacher and teacher who has ever walked the earth besides Jesus has some area of belief that might be off base and that might not be exactly correct. We are sinners saved by Grace and God could have set this thing up so that all saved people are sinlessly perfect-but He didn't.

And our individual failures and sins serve to make us humble to be brought back to the reality that the only reason why we know and understand God's Word in the first place and the only reason why we are able to apply Divine Truth to our lives is because God has graciously *allowed* us to know that Truth and God is the One Who gives us both the will and the power to do of His good pleasure.

And so even though we are supposed to study and prepare and agonize and struggle and seek and dig deep into God's Word- we must always understand that any Truth that we possess is a gracious gift of God and not the result of our labor alone.

Now this may come as a surprise to some of you- but there is an area of your belief system that you possess right now that is false, it is man-made, it is not taught in the Bible, and, it is, by definition, a lie. And yet in spite of that- you are saved and following Jesus.

Every saved person has areas of their lives that are guided by a false understanding or a misunderstanding of what God said and what God meant by what He said. And, so, false belief has impacted your life to some extent. And that is because you either don't know the Truth about that subject at all or else you don't know the *entire* Truth about that subject.

And that is why God made the Church. And that is why we have a 2,000 year history of both terrible failures and marvelous victories to study and learn from. And that is why God established Elders who devote themselves to both prayer and the study of God's Word so that collectively they can help keep the Church and the people of the Church Biblical- which means that God is pleased.

But we have to understand that there are three levels of Biblical Truth that we need to keep in mind:

1. Essential Truth
2. Cooperative Truth
3. Leadership Truth

1. Essential Truth

Essential Truth is that body of Biblical Teaching about which there is no negotiation, no debate, and no discussion. You either believe these essential things or else you are not born again and you are still lost. Such things as: The Deity of Jesus Christ, and Justification by Grace alone through Faith alone in the finished Work of Christ alone. If you don't believe these essential Doctrines- then you are not saved. These are those Biblical Teachings that make up the very core of the Gospel. And so if you change these Truths, if you alter them in any way, if you add to or take away from these Doctrines- you no longer have Christianity but you have invented an entirely different religion. Examples of groups who officially and formally reject or deny essential Truth are Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, Christian Scientists, and Roman Catholics.

2. Cooperative Truth

These are those areas of Biblical Teaching about which genuinely saved people can differ but which should be settled by the Elder Board before people join together in a particular local Church. Examples of areas pertaining to "Cooperative Truth" are: infant versus believer's baptism and understanding about the last days. For there to be people who differ about these issues in a single local Church would bring confusion and hinder the productivity of the Church. However- all of these distinctions should be spelled out in the Doctrinal Statement of that local Church and the reasons behind their position.

3. Leadership Truth

These are areas that must be understood and agreed upon by the leaders of a particular local Church such as teaching methods and cooperation among the leaders. So for example- while somebody may well be saved because he believes the first level and while he can be a member of a local church because he agrees with the distinctions of the second tier- he probably shouldn't be in leadership in that local Church because he disagrees with methods of teaching.

The point I am making is that while it is true that *theoretically* there should never be *any* division among genuinely saved people- because we are all human- we *do* differ and while many times- those differences cause disruption- they *shouldn't*- unless those differences pertain to the first group of Essential Truth.

So we must understand that while differences on the first level means that the individual is not even saved- differences in the other two does not. And, so, it is very possible to have differences in the last two levels and still be saved and yet not able to walk together due to bringing confusion to the entire Body.

It is very easy among Reformed people to label somebody as being a heretic when there is simply disagreements or misunderstandings in the second and third tier areas of Doctrine and that is not fair and that is not right. And yet even though these differences are not correct- we must understand that there really is heresy and there really are heretics.

For example- I do not believe that those who either deny or who don't understand Sovereign election are always heretics. Some may be- but not all. Conversely, I do not believe that those who teach a number

of important issues wrongly are always doing so for the purpose of deceiving people. Some may be- but not all.

As I have studied Jude extensively, I realize that while real sure nuff heretics do exist- and that is awful and so we must always be diligent and watch on the wall to protect the Church against false teachers and against false doctrine. But while we do that faithfully- we must also realize that there are very few heretics and simply because somebody disagrees with what we are teaching here in this Church does not necessarily make them a false teacher. They may well be a brother in Christ who is simply wrong about that issue or they may well be a brother in Christ who is right- who God can use to teach us a better way.

But the difference between being right and being wrong is not a matter of personal opinion and neither is it a matter of personal experience. Do not try to argue with me about a Biblical issue if your only argument is, *"Well, I know what I saw with my own eyes."* because that is simply not true. As humans- we are able to be completely confused about what we see with our own eyes. Personal opinions and personal experiences and dreams and visions and angelic visitations and prophecies and history and pronouncements by popes, bishops, and priests and church tradition and books by the latest best- selling author do not rise to the level of being infallible and therefore they are subject to error- perhaps even horrific and damning error- and therefore they are to be rejected when formulating Doctrine.

Dear friends- what we teach and what we believe must come from the Scriptures and from the Scriptures alone- and that is a concept that was coined by the Reformers 500 years ago with the Latin phrase, *"Sola Scriptura"*. And that understanding of Scripture must be objective, it must be propositional, it must be historic, it must be grammatically accurate in the proper context in which the verse or passage was originally given by God the Holy Spirit to the human writer or it is wrong.

And in Alabama English that means that it really doesn't matter what that verse or passage means to you- it matters what it meant to the human writer that God the Holy Spirit was moving on to pen it down in the first place. And so that requires us to engage in a wonderful but solemn process of discovering the one single meaning of every verse or passage in the Bible.

And so if you think it is simple and easy to hold to the concept of Sola Scriptura- then you've never done it. I spend most of my week-agonizing over these issues because as a human being- holding myself to the standard of Sola Scriptura is operating counter- intuitively to human nature. The easiest thing I can do is to write my own opinion into these verses and that would be wrong 100% of the time.

Listen, I do not expect everybody to always be right. We all sin and fall short. But I do expect everybody to always *want* to be right. So for a believer to not care about Truth or to not be concerned about Biblical Doctrines or to approach his walk with God with a laid back and cavalier attitude- especially a leader- is deeply disturbing to me and something I want to always be faithful to warn you against because it is death to your soul. Sin is deceptive and sin will convince you it is pretty and attractive and valuable and unless you are busy in the Work of God and unless you are diligent about making your calling and your election sure- you will be deceived.

I will work with anybody for as long as they desire to be worked with. I don't want to throw anybody away and I will do everything in my power to walk anyone- as long as they are willing. It is only when there is no longer a desire to be willing that there has to be a separation.

And yet Jesus here categorically condemns these people. And so we must conclude that since Jesus was sinless- that the reason why He seems to be so harsh to these men is not because of second and third tier issues- but that these men rejected Essential Truth and therefore were not only fighting against God- they were the enemies of the Gospel.

And that becomes the issue in verses 47 to 51. Jesus says that these religious leaders don't have any spiritual Truth and therefore they don't have any spiritual Life and consequently they have no spiritual power to transform the human soul.

So this was not a simple disagreement about unimportant matters- this Jesus confronting false religion. There's no Truth in the religion of the Pharisees at all and so it provides no real spiritual life which has no ability to produce any spiritual power to save the soul.

And so the people who believe it and who embrace it are eternally doomed. And this was true of Judaism 2,000 years ago and it is still true of any man-made religion except the pure Gospel of our Lord Jesus

Christ. And that is why we must remain vigilant and steadfast in the Lord and plead with God to give us eyes to see and ears to hear so that we may know God and love God and enjoy God forever.

Amen. Let's pray.