

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

An Expository Study of **The Gospel According to Luke**
Chapter 16- Luke 16:14-18

273- That Which is Highly Esteemed Among Men is
Detestable in the Sight of God- Part 2

April 12, 2015

Luke 16:14-18

14 Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, were listening to all these things and were scoffing at Him.

15 And He said to them, "**You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God.**

16 "**The Law and the Prophets *were proclaimed* until John; since that time the gospel of the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it.**

17 "**But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter of the Law to fail.**

18 "**Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries one who is divorced from a husband commits adultery.**

To the Glory of God

God thinks Truth is pretty important. But survey after survey of people who call themselves "Evangelicals" show that most of the people who attend Church today do *not* think Truth is very important. In the Book that God the Holy Spirit Authored- things like: knowing God correctly, and understanding what God has said fully, and coming to love God's Son enough to actually obey Him, and believing true things about Him is called "Liberty". Jesus Himself said in **John 8:32b**:

... you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.

So God's Self-Revelation in the Holy Bible is not something we can take or leave. In **Romans 6:17b**- the Apostle Paul called it:

... that form of teaching to which you were committed,

So the Holy Scriptures are a Standard, a Rule, a Yardstick, a Pattern. And believers measure "right" and "wrong" by it. Elsewhere, Paul called the Truth of Scripture:

- ✓ The **"whole counsel of God"** (The Acts 20:27)
- ✓ The **"standard of the sound words"** (2Timothy 1:13)
- ✓ The **"treasure which has been entrusted to you"** (2Timothy 1:14)

And because it is objective propositional absolute Truth- Scripture never changes. And nothing less than our own everlasting Salvation is determined by whether we believe what Scripture teaches. In **2John 9**- the Apostle John wrote:

Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son.

So the Bible clearly teaches that if a person departs from the doctrine of Scripture- they also depart from Christ Himself. Another way of looking at this is when Paul said in **1Timothy 4:16**:

Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.

And that's fairly high praise for Sound Biblical Doctrine. And so you would think that after 2,000 years of reading and studying the Scriptures- Evangelicals would all agree. And yet, inexplicably- after all the sermons and all the Bible Studies- we hear silly slogans like,

"Christ unites and doctrine divides"

So we see that in our day- the *minimization* of Biblical Doctrine is common. The effort by many to push the Truth of Scripture off to the

side so that it doesn't interfere with the way we live our daily lives, the effort by many to pay lip service to the Holy Bible in Church and then living in such a way 6 days a week that screams out that we really don't believe it at all, this concerted effort by far too many within the modern Church at the "minimization of Biblical Truth" is a form of "scoffing". It is saying that other things are *as* true or even *more* true than what came out of the very Mind and Mouth of Almighty God. And they go on to say that it is those "other things" that are *as* true or *more* true that they have determined to use to fashion their thinking and to order their lives.

This is saying that we are free to believe Scripture all day long- as long as Scripture does not contradict the modern "gods" of Science and Technology, or as long as Scripture doesn't contradict our own opinions or our own personal experiences- which is simply another way of saying that Scripture is only true when we feel like awarding it with that label and if we don't- we won't.

So I would suggest to you that this is a very good definition of the "scoffing" that the Pharisees did here in the Passage that Brother Andy just read to you. Look at verse 14 again with me:

Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, were listening to all these things and were scoffing at Him.

Now please notice that these religious men refrained from their scoffing until *after* they had listened to what the Incarnate God had spoken and taught. In other words- it was *after* they had heard what Jesus said that they scoffed. It was *after* they understood what Jesus was teaching that they rejected what the world's only perfect Preacher said with a sneer and a disdain.

And I would also say to you that, in contrast to what you will hear from the famous preachers on the "Hay, Wood, and Stubble Television Network" (more commonly called "Christian Television"), that the *first thing* that Dr. Luke tells us about these men in verse 14 is what caused them to scoff at Jesus. Luke is very quick to tell us that the Pharisees:

... the Pharisees ... were lovers of money...

So I will be faithful to tell you that the reason *why* there are so many warnings from cover to cover in the Holy Bible about the insidious affects that money and wealth and material possessions have on the human soul is because loving money will contribute to you scoffing and sneering and rejecting what Jesus says. And this is a part of Divine Truth that will not be spoken in more than five Churches this morning all along this Gulf Coast region. But you just heard it here.

So we see that the *second thing* in verse 14 is the product of the *first thing*. That the scoffing at what Jesus says is the result of loving money. So if you turn that around you could also say that loving money directly contributes to people scoffing at what Jesus says. And I dare you to preach that in your Church.

But if we are not willing to get a high estimation of Biblical Truth from the Owner and Creator of the Universe- then perhaps we can get it from George Barna.

Barna has been surveying American Evangelicals for many years now - to see if we actually practice what we preach. And he is finding that the average Church that lays claim to believing the Bible as the Word of God doesn't make a habit of preaching and teaching doctrine from the Bible, and the result is that the people of those churches don't live their lives much differently from the pagan unsaved world.

For example, Barna says that only about 7 percent of Evangelicals give sacrificially and regularly to their Church while 45% say that buying themselves luxuries is far more important to them and much more in the Will of God than supporting Missions. Of 12,000 teenagers who took "the pledge" to wait for Marriage and signed the paper and put on the ring- about 80% of them engaged in sex outside of Marriage within the next 7 years. Today about 26% of Evangelicals don't think premarital sex is actually sinful while 72% say that God "understands" them viewing pornography.

Now we should take Barna's survey with some grain of salt since his definition of what an "Evangelical" is- was somebody who answered this question in the affirmative:

"I have made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ that is still important in my life today."

In addition, the “Evangelicals” included in Barna’s surveys agreed with several other things like:

- ✓ Jesus lived a sinless life
- ✓ Eternal Salvation is only through Grace- not works
- ✓ Christians have a personal responsibility to evangelize non-Christians
- ✓ Satan exists

... which is pretty basic stuff and certainly not anything to write home about since *everybody* who names the Name of Jesus should believe those things.

But recently, Barna has developed a new set of criteria that defines a group *within* greater Evangelicalism- those who agree with all the above criteria but who also hold to a “Biblical Worldview”- which to Barna means that these people agree with statements like:

- ✓ “The Bible is the Moral Standard”
- ✓ “Absolute moral Truths exist and are conveyed through the Bible”
- ✓ “God is the all-knowing, all-powerful Creator Who still rules the Universe according to His Will”
- ✓ “Salvation cannot be earned by their deeds”
- ✓ “The Bible is totally accurate in all it teaches”

And as you might guess- this group is substantially smaller than the broader Evangelical group- only about 7%-8% of all those who lay claim to being an Evangelical. So among those who lay claim to believing that the Holy Bible is the inspired Word of the living God (Evangelical)- 92%-93% do *not* hold to a Biblical Worldview.

Now for those who scoff at what Jesus says as a result of loving money and who belittle or minimize Biblical Truth as being troublesome- it may come as a surprise that this tiny 7%- 8% live much differently from the rest of the world. Ronald Sider, in his book, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Conscience*, describes the difference:

“They (the 7%-8%) are 9 times more likely than all the others to avoid ‘adult-only’ material on the Internet. They are 4 times more likely than other Christians to boycott objectionable companies and products, and twice as

likely to choose not to watch a movie specifically because of its bad content. They are 3 times more likely than other adults not to use tobacco products and twice as likely to volunteer time to help needy people. 49% of people *with* a biblical world view have volunteered more than an hour in the previous week to an organization serving the poor, whereas only 22% of church members *without* a biblical world view had done so. 67% of those with a Biblical worldview have shared the Gospel with somebody else in the previous week while only 4% of those without a Biblical Worldview did so.”

Sider’s conclusion is:

“Doctrine matters!”

Sider puts it like this:

“Barna’s findings on the different behavior of people in the Church with a Biblical worldview underlines the importance of Sound Theology. Biblical Orthodoxy matters. One important way to end the scandal of contemporary Christian behavior is to work and pray fervently for the growth of Orthodox Theological belief in our Churches.”

Who would have thought that the very survey system that lures so many to put their finger in the wind of opinion would tell them,

Take your finger down and teach the people what the Bible says

... and this is what is at stake here in these five verses of **Luke 16**- that Divine Truth matters and that false religion is at war with the Truth.

Now with a shallow reading- these verses appear to be a strange collection of disconnected thoughts- especially verse 18- which seems totally out of context. But, in reality- this is an extremely fixed path of Divine Statements by the Lord that are designed on purpose to accomplish two goals:

1. Confront the Pharisees about their lostness
2. Instruct us about the destructive components of false religion

Now the assumption by the pagan world is that “religious people” are close to God- that religious people honor God and are appreciated by

God. So to the lost world- being religious somehow *increases* your Favor with God. It makes God "like" you more, and the lost world says that if there is a heaven- then surely religious people are going to end up there.

But this Passage here in **Luke 16** teaches us that this is simply not true. This Passage teaches us the exact opposite- that the hottest hell is reserved for people who reject the Truth and trust in a lie. So as far as God is concerned- the very *worst* people on earth are those who consciously reject the Gospel of Jesus Christ and accept a false substitute. And while the false substitute qualifies as being a "religion"- false and man-made religion *does not* and *cannot* forgive a single sin or save a single soul.

And so Hell is most severe on the people who invent spiritual lies, those who create myths that deceive other people, those who were the architects of false religions which promote the rejection and antagonism of the Truth.

Listen, in order to be a real good Muslim or Jew- you must deny and categorically reject the Deity of Jesus Christ. You must consciously reject what God said about Jesus in Scripture and trust in a lie about Him. In order to be a real good Mormon or Jehovah's Witness or Oneness Pentecostal- you must deny and reject that God is one in His Essence while being eternally manifested in three distinct Persons of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit- in direct contradiction to what the Bible teaches. In order to be a real good Roman- you must deny and reject Justification by Grace alone through Faith alone in the finished Work of Christ alone- even though that is what God has declared in sacred Scripture. In order to be a real good Humanist- you must deny and reject even the concept of God's Grace, and in order to be a real good Buddhist or Hindu- you must deny and reject that God is "one".

So in order for anyone to be a functioning part of these false and man-made religions *requires* that you deny or reject or scoff at one or more of the basic tenets of the Divine Truth of Scripture and trust in a lie. And in order to be a real good Pharisee- you must scoff at what Jesus teaches. So any religion that scoffs at Jesus, or any religion that scoffs at what Jesus says is real bad and should be rejected and denounced by a true believer- even when these religious people are highly esteemed among lost and unsaved men.

So Dr. Luke wants us to know that the Pharisees are “God-scoffers”. They scoff at the Incarnate God. They scoff at Jesus Christ. They mock Him openly and publicly. They treat Him with derision and scorn and ridicule. They do everything they can to show Him disrespect- to demean Him in the public view. And they assaulted Jesus because of what Jesus says at the end of verse 15:

... that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God.

So in reality- what you have in all false religions is not people loving God and God loving them back. You actually have people scoffing at God and God declaring them to be detestable. You have people mocking God and what God said through the teachings of their false religions, and God viewing them as being detestable in His Sight. And so what we see here is the mystery of the abject hatred that all false religions have toward the Truth of God’s Word which results in them being highly esteemed by Man but which also renders them to be detestable in God’s Sight.

And because that is true- there is no compromise between the Truth and false religions. There is no “middle ground” where we can all stand and hold hands and work out agreements or make alliances between the true Gospel and any false religion- which includes Judaism. The Message of Christianity is that Salvation is found in Christ alone, and, therefore- all who reject Christ forfeit any hope of Heaven.

So in this Passage, our Lord teaches a characterization of false religious leaders. And there are at last six points that need to be made:

1. False religion promotes the love of money
2. False religion promotes antagonism toward God’s Truth
3. False religion promotes self-justification
4. False religion promotes favor with Man
5. False religion promotes an evil heart
6. False religion rejects the Gospel

So let’s go over them briefly.

1. False Religion Promotes a Love for Money

Luke 16:14a

Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money...

About 40 years after this Gospel Record was put down- Jude wrote this about false teachers in Jude 11b:

... for pay they have rushed headlong into the error of Balaam

And this is referring to the OT false prophet Balaam- who sold his supposed gift for money as recorded in **Numbers 22**. And then the Apostle Peter amplified what Jude taught by saying this in **2Peter 2:15&16**:

15 forsaking the right way, they [the false teachers] have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam, the *son* of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness;

16 but he received a rebuke for his own transgression, *for* a mute donkey, speaking with a voice of a man, restrained the madness of the prophet.

So “**following the way of Balaam**” or engaging in the “**error of Balaam**” is when somebody teaches and believes the same thing that Balaam taught and does what Balaam did. Listen, it is no coincidence that false teachers *always* promote the issue of money as being a sign of Favor with God. Ever since the Fall- the lost world has equated having money and wealth and material possessions as a sign that God is pleased. And so because the false teachers know this- they promote this in the way that Peter says in **2Peter 2:3**:

and in *their* greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.

Now the phrase “**exploit you with false words**” is better understood as “making merchandise of you through deception”. So the false teachers *use* people in order to become financially wealthy themselves. So the goal of all these false religions is to teach people that the height of spirituality is through acquiring more of this world’s goods. And this is the “**error of**

Balaam” and this is “following the way of Balaam”. Peter then went on to say:

2Peter 2:18-22

18 For speaking out arrogant *words* of vanity they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality, those who barely escape from the ones who live in error,

19 promising them freedom while they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved.

20 For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first.

21 For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them.

22 It has happened to them according to the true proverb, “A *DOG RETURNS TO ITS OWN VOMIT*,” and, “A sow, after washing, *returns* to wallowing in the mire.”

Now contrast what the false teachers say with that which Jesus Himself taught in **Luke 16:13**:

No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

Now please turn with me to read what the Apostle Paul taught about this in **1Timothy 6:3**:

3 If anyone advocates a different doctrine and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness,

4 he is conceited *and* understands nothing; but he has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions,

5 and constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain.

6 But godliness *actually* is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment.

7 For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either.

8 If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content.

9 But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction.

10 For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

11 But flee from these things, you man of God, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance *and* gentleness.

12 Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

... quite a contrast between the Truth of God and what the false religions teach, isn't it? But there is more. Look what the writer of Hebrews said in **Hebrews 13:5**

Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, "I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU,"

.. and what James taught from **James 2:1-9**

1 My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with *an attitude of* personal favoritism.

2 For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes,

3 and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the fine clothes, and say, "You sit here in a good place," and you say to the poor man, "You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool,"

4 have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives?

5 Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world *to be* rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?

6 But you have dishonored the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag you into court?

7 Do they not blaspheme the fair name by which you have been called?

8 If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF," you are doing well.

9 But if you show partiality, you are committing sin *and* are convicted by the law as transgressors.

2. False Religion Promotes Antagonism against God's Truth

Luke 16:14

Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, were listening to all these things and were scoffing at Him.

Now I stress this because you need to understand this. These men were *not* scoffing at Jesus because they didn't understand Him or because they were confused about what He was saying or what He was doing. No, Dr. Luke says here that these false teachers were scoffing at Jesus and rejecting everything He said and rejecting Jesus Personally precisely because they *did* understand what He was saying and doing.

The miracles that were done by Jesus proved beyond any doubt that Jesus was God. There was no doubt. Only God Himself can heal organically and forgive sin and calm the wind and the waves, and Jesus did all this, and Jesus forgave sins. And the perfect Teachings of Jesus proved that He was the Author of the Old Testament- including the Ten Commandments. Yet these men rejected Jesus to His Face. And so we see that false religion is so evil and so hideous that it *compels* people to reject the Truth after they understand what it is.

You see, part and parcel to what it means to be saved is not simply that you *know* the Truth or that you *hear* the Truth or that you have been *exposed* to the Truth in some way or even that you are trying to some extent in your own power and volition to *obey* the Truth. No, the hallmark of having a new divine nature is that you have been so radically transformed by the sovereign Act of God that you now LOVE the Truth!

And false religion destroys the Love of the Truth. Listen to what the Apostle Paul said about this from **2Thessalonians 2:10-12:**

10 and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.

11 For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false,

12 in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.

And notice in verse 10 that Paul taught that human beings “**receive**” this love of the Truth. You see, this kind of love runs counterintuitive to human nature so that- left to ourselves- we would never normally or naturally possess this kind of love. You can’t work this kind of love up through human willpower or human effort. So we must be graciously and sovereignly *given* this kind of love for God and for God’s Truth, or we will not possess it.

3. False Religion Promotes “Self-Justification”

Luke 16:15a

And He said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men..."

Now there are about 8,000 different false religions and human philosophies on the earth right now- all competing with Christianity for your soul. But even though that is true- there are really only two religions on the earth:

1. False Religion that Promotes “Self- Justification”
2. Biblical Christianity that promotes Justification by Grace alone through Faith alone in the finished Work of Christ alone.

The only distinction between all of the other 7,999 false belief systems is in the particulars of what they say you have to do to earn favor with God. Romans teach that you must be saved “sacerdotally” or through the seven Sacraments of the Church, while Islam teaches that for every 100 things that you do- at least 51 of them must be approved by Allah. The Church of Christ says you have to be baptized, while the Oneness Pentecostals teach that you have to speak in tongues.

But the Truth is that whatever these false religions say that you have to do- you will fail. Whatever requirement that your false "god" places on you- you will always come up short. So it really doesn't matter what color the figs leaves are- trying to "cover your nakedness" by whatever you do for yourself is *never* going to be good enough to pass God's Requirement that anybody who goes to Heaven must be just as Righteous as He is. And human beings simply can't get there from here.

But Biblical Christianity alone teaches that since we cannot walk perfectly and be continuously perfect in thought, word, and deed 24/7- that we need a Merciful Savior Who did live as a Man- but without sin. And this sinless High Priest forgives all our sins and cleanses us to the uttermost and makes us fit for Heaven- all by Himself. And this Jesus does this for no other reason than God set His Love upon us from before the foundation of the world. We don't deserve it, We cannot earn it, and God is not obligated to do it. So Salvation is *entirely* by God's amazing Grace, and it is appropriated entirely through the Gift of Saving Faith, and it was all made possible through the Life and Death and Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. And Salvation is by these three things- ALONE which is why God receives all the Glory for it and why Man receives none. And Biblical Christianity is the only religion in the history of the world that teaches this and genuinely saved people are the only people on earth who believe this.

4. False Religion Promotes Favor with Man

Luke 16:15a

...You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men,

Since false religions possess no Truth- it's all about looking good *externally*. So they have very elaborate prayers and very colorful robes and very intricate rituals and extremely detailed ceremonies. So it's all about the colors and the style and the smoke and the mirrors and the cleverness and the symbolism. It is never about the substance and the reality with the false teachers is they have no substance. Everything they teach is wrong and everything they promote is false.

So they seek approval from Man. And you can hear it in their teachings. False religion is all about "being relevant" or to be

“culturally acceptable”. It is never about “What did God say?” Because they haven’t heard from God and God isn’t leading them.

But the problem with being “culturally acceptable” is that there is no base line. The “culture” is not like cement or a bridge or geology where there are fixed standards. The “culture” is the summation of all the actions and words of the people in a particular nation or area. And so, by default- the culture is in a constant state of flux, it is always changing, always shifting, always adapting to the ever changing mores of society.

So to be “culturally acceptable” means that you must also be constantly changing and never able to stop. Because as soon as you stop- the culture leaves you behind. The modern Church is literally insane about trying to “relate to the culture”. And if it wasn’t so serious- it would be humorous. The desire to “relate to the culture” is why they change their music every two weeks. And one of the latest fads seems to be to install a smoke machine so that when the multi-colored lights shine on the smoke during the song service- they can pretend that it is the Spirit of God that has come down to walk among them.

One local church recently spent a whole lot of money changing their name and putting up a new façade on their building and redoing the platform where they perform and installing multi-colored lights and the obligatory smoke machine. And this was decided by their leadership so that they would become attractive to the people so they will grow. But they didn’t change what they preach and teach. And God’s Word still plays second fiddle to the music and the style. So the people who attend this Church are well entertained- their senses are literally shocked with all the special effects- but they remain ignorant of what God has said. Beloved, that isn’t spiritual growth.

The mad rush to be “culturally acceptable” is why the leadership of the modern Church wrongly thinks that fallen people are saved through humanly engineered methods and means. “Relationship Evangelism” has replaced Gospel Preaching; Entertainment has replaced Edification, while Sensualness- the appeal to the five senses by artificial means- has replaced genuine godly Spirituality- which is all just a another way of saying that they are ashamed of the Gospel- which is why they are constantly trying to make a patently offensive Message to be more palatable to lost people who hate God by nature. So

to these people- if the world loves them and accepts their message- they are fine- regardless of what God thinks.

5. False Religion Promotes an Evil Heart

Luke 16:15b

... **but God knows your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God.**

The motive of those who peddle false religion is corrupt. Their motive is to deceive people into believing a lie. So Jesus said that God knows their hearts; God has their number. They are known by God to be corrupt and perverse and sinful and wretched and detestable. And this word "detestable" comes from a Greek word that means: *something rotten that stinks*. So both they themselves and their false teaching are a stench in the Nostrils of God. They may walk around appearing to be very godly. They may go through religious motions appearing to be very holy. But the truth of the matter is they are a noxious odor in the Nostrils of a Holy God.

6. False Religion Rejects the Gospel

Luke 16:16

The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John; since that time the gospel of the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it.

Now this is interesting. The phrase "The Law and the Prophets" means the Old Testament. That's what the Jews called the OT Scriptures- the Law and the Prophets. But we have to understand that the Old Testament wasn't "old" to the Jew because they had rejected the New Testament of the New Covenant of the Gospel. So to the Jew- the OT wasn't "Old", it was simply "The Testament" or "The Scriptures", precisely because they rejected the inspiration of the New Testament.

So Jesus says here that "The Law and the Prophets" was proclaimed until John- which refers to John Baptist. But since the coming of the Baptist or "the one who baptizes in water"- you have the ending of the "Old" and the beginning of the "New". And the reason

that the Old ended was not because there was anything wrong with it. There wasn't. *Everything* in the Old Covenant was inspired and inerrant and infallible. The Old Covenant was breathed out by God and was true and was as right as rain. But even though all of that is true- it is also true that everything in the Old Covenant was *incomplete*, and the Old Covenant itself told of an infinitely superior New Covenant that was coming with the advent of the Messiah- Who is Jesus the Christ.

And so John the Baptist was the bridge between the two Covenants. And then Jesus went on to say,

... since that time the gospel of the kingdom of God has been preached

... and the Gospel of the Kingdom is that the door to the Kingdom of God- Who is none other than Jesus Christ. So Jesus is the only Way into the Kingdom- the only Way to God. And so the "Good News" or the "Gospel" is that Forgiveness and Salvation to unworthy sinners is available now through Jesus Christ. The Kingdom of God is open and the Way is through Jesus Christ, and there is no other way.

So at the point when the NT came into its zenith- which was the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead- from that very moment- it was no longer enough for somebody to believe in God. Since the Resurrection- those who are saved must now believe in Jesus Christ. It was no longer enough for somebody to be baptized in water. They must now be baptized in water "in the Name of" or "by the Reputation of" Jesus Christ. At the point of the Resurrection- acknowledging God as the one true living God was no longer enough. Now for anyone to be saved- Jesus must be confessed as being Messiah and Lord and Savior and God Almighty in human flesh, and it must now be believed that God raised Jesus from the dead- not simply believing that "a god" exists.

But as we see- false religion- even Judaism- fights against the true Gospel because it denies these basic essential Truths. And it causes those who are deceived by it to reject the only Way to God and to the Kingdom. Now look again at the end of verse 16:

... and everyone is forcing his way into it.

Here Jesus is telling these Pharisees directly, and all the false teachers indirectly, *"You're on the outside. You have no interest in the*

true Gospel or the true Kingdom, and yet there are many- who naturally speaking would normally not have any rights or access into it because they are not the elite religionists of the day- yet they are forcing their way into the Kingdom".

Now I actually prefer how the King James Version puts this. There it renders this as:

Luke 16:16b

... since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.

So Jesus was saying that everyone who comes into the Kingdom realizes that it's a struggle. It is hard. It is difficult. And so the way to understand this is that Jesus is simply pointing out that even though it is hard- the door is wide open. The Gospel of the Kingdom of God is being preached and it takes a magnificent effort for you to come into this Kingdom. So Salvation is not a human work- even though there are components that involve the human will. So we understand that true Salvation never happens apart from the human will. Everybody who is saved- is saved because they *want* to be saved. They *want* to believe, they *want* to love God, they *want* to repent and trust in Jesus, they no longer *want* to sin, they no longer *desire* to be separated from God.

But the difference between how most people in the modern Church teach this is- in understanding why *some* people *want* Salvation while others *do not*. You see, for any lost person to suddenly "want" the Will and the Word of God, for any depraved person who is "dead in trespasses and sins" to suddenly "love" God and the things of God, for any fallen person who hates God by nature to sincerely "hate" his sin and earnestly "desire" to run to Jesus for Forgiveness and Salvation requires that God already have done a sovereign miracle in granting them spiritual life, and in transforming their nature, and in graciously giving them both the will and the power to do of God's good Pleasure.

So, in order for anyone to desire to be saved- God must first do a sovereign Work inside of them- *before* they ask for it, *before* they see the need for it, and *before* they even want it. Other than that- nobody would ever hear, nobody would ever believe, nobody would ever repent, and nobody would ever be saved. And that sovereign "giving of spiritual life" is called being "born again" or "being regenerate". And the Promise

of God is that God will do that for every single person who has been chosen by God from before the foundation of the world- regardless of how sinful they have been.

So Jesus is making a profound comparison here. He is telling these religious hypocrites, *"Look at all these sexually impure people and the tax collectors and the diseased and the riff-raff and the social scum. They have nothing in this life that would commend them to God and yet they're all coming into the Kingdom. They have nothing going for them- and yet they're believing in Me. Your false teaching says that these people are cursed by God but these are the very people who are trusting in me and they're repenting, and they're struggling, and they're pressing into the things of God. These people are as outcast as you can get but God has graced them with a holy hunger and a holy thirst for God, and so the response that they make since God has chosen them is that they're knocking and they're crying and they're coming and they're not allowing anything to stop them. They're making the effort- they're judging Me to be worthwhile. While you stand there are scoff!"*

This is what Jesus meant back in **Luke 9:23** when He said,

Luke 9:23b-26

23 ... If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.

24 "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.

25 "For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself?

26 "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His glory, and *the* glory of the Father and of the holy angels.

So the first thing right out of the box that Jesus *requires* is that every single human being who wishes to come after Him must deny himself. This is what is called "the beauty of the gift of self-denial". And it is patently unbeautiful to the lost world. This is being graced with the supernatural ability to come to the place where you deny that there is any good thing in yourself. It is literally "hating your own life", "hating what sin has done to you", "hating what you have done to you", "hating what you are and what you have become through your sin and

separation from God". It is the lost concept of what the Puritans called "self-loathing".

So while the leaders of the modern Church are scrambling around trying to build up self-esteem into the people- trying to exalt the "self" of Man, trying to have a "Man-centered Gospel", trying to put Man at the center of all that God does and says, trying to elevate Man at the expense of God- Jesus promotes the very opposite. Jesus taught the concept of self-loathing- not self-esteem.

The Apostle John called it "hating your own life". Self-denial is the complete *abandonment* of all your dreams, all your ambitions, your hopes, and desires, and joyfully humbling yourself at the Feet of Jesus as a "bought and paid for bond-slave of the Lord Jesus Christ"- with absolutely no rights of your own. It is *refusing* to associate with the wretched sinful person that you are any longer. This is the self-denial of true and genuine repentance. This is the beating on your chest and crying out, "*Oh, God, be merciful to me a sinner and save me!*" This is what Jesus meant when he said, deny yourself. And it is not a suggestion, it is not a tip on how to have a better life- it is the single and only way into the Kingdom of God for anyone who wills to come.

And nobody in their right mind would ever come into this on their own. So for anyone to truly deny themselves requires a sovereign Act of God. And yet- even though Jesus said this was a *requirement* for Salvation- the modern Church is very busy teaching that you can simply "add Jesus" to your already planned out life as some kind of "extra boost" to help you fulfil all your dreams and your ambitions. Jesus is being portrayed today as a "tool" that helps people run faster and soar higher and accomplish more things, and so they can hit more home runs and make more money and otherwise become more important in this world and have a much better life down here.

So Jesus responds to this by saying that the ones who are actually coming after Him are those who deny themselves, those who carry their cross, and those who follow Him. Jesus is telling all those who teach wrongly that the only ones who are pressing into the Kingdom, the only ones who are striving to enter in at the straight gate, the only ones who are working while there is yet day for the night is coming when no man shall work, the only ones who are fighting and struggling to get into God's Kingdom are the ones who have been granted the sweet and precious gift of seeing Jesus as being better and

more important than anything or anyone else, and those who have been given the power to hate sin, and those who have been gifted with the strength to deny themselves and take up their cross and follow Jesus- while the rest will sit there and they will listen and they will scoff.

And this is why it's called "forcing your way" into the Kingdom, and this is repeated in other passages in the Gospels. There's a certain *seizing* of the Kingdom. There's a tremendous battle that goes on in the human sinful soul to bring the person to the place where his pride is crushed and his self-will is broken and where he is brought to a place of total penitence. And it is all the gracious Work of God. And those are the only people who are being saved.

Now I have to stop here- but next week- Lord willing- we are going to see Jesus drive home His Divine Condemnation about False religion by showing these men just how they had polluted the very Truth of God's Law that they took so much pride in and how they were guilty of committing "spiritual adultery".

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.