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Message: Let Love Be Without Hypocrisy

Text: Luke 11:37-54

Introduction

- A. How many of us would feel complimented by being called a Pharisee? The term “Pharisee” has become a disparaging label among Christians ever since Jesus’s condemnation of them. The label is sometimes tossed among those disagreeing on points of theology and practice, and not always accurately or fairly.
- B. Those calling others a Pharisee or pharisaic are usually charging others with being overly restrictive, adding to the obligations the Word of God places on us. While the Pharisees were certainly guilty of this, they were also guilty of being overly permissive, taking away the obligations the Word of God places on us. So those labeling others of being “Pharisees” for their conservative Scriptural interpretations and practices, would do well to make certain they are not themselves the “Pharisees” by their avoidance of what God’s Word requires. Avoiding the folly of the Pharisees involves avoiding a double-edged sword of adding to and taking away from the Word of God. As we will see in Jesus’s words, avoiding the foolishness of the Pharisees is a matter of eternal life and death.

I. Historical origins of the Pharisees

- A. The Pharisees roots are in the Hasidim (from the Hebrew word “hasid” = pious, devout, godly) , a strictly orthodox sect emerging in the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC. The Hasidim resisted the secular influences of the Greek culture on their faith and supported the 2nd century BC Maccabean revolt against Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who outlawed Sabbath observance and circumcision, place an image of the Greek god Zeus in the temple, sacrificed a pig on the altar, and caused sacrifices to cease.

Psalm 4:3 But know that the LORD has set apart the godly man (hasid) for Himself; The LORD hears when I call to Him.

- B. When the Hasmonean family called the Maccabees (the hammer) by the Jews led a successful revolt and won Jewish independence, this family took over the high priesthood, which eventually, in the view of the Pharisees (possibly from a Hebrew word meaning “separate”), an offshoot of the Hasidim, became corrupted. During the reign of the Jewish priest-king, John Hyrcanus (134-104 BC), the Pharisees would withdraw support for the Hasmonean dynasty.
- C. Believing that the purity of the priesthood and temple worship had been compromised, they adopted from the law many of the practices for ritual cleanliness required of the priests to insure their own purity, such as washing of utensils and their hands and feet before meals.

Exodus 40:30 He placed the laver between the tent of meeting and the altar and put water in it for washing.³¹ From it **Moses and Aaron and his sons washed their hands and their feet.**³² When they entered the tent of meeting, and when they approached the altar, they washed, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

Luke 11:37 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 (baptizo) before the meal.**

Mark 7:1 The Pharisees and some of the scribes gathered around Him when they had come from Jerusalem,² and had seen that some of His disciples were eating their bread with impure hands, that is, unwashed.³ For **the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they carefully wash their hands, thus observing the traditions of the elders;**⁴ and when they come from the market place, they do not eat unless they cleanse themselves; and **there are many other things which they have received in order to observe, such as the washing (baptizo) of cups and pitchers and copper pots.**⁵ The Pharisees and the scribes asked Him, "Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat their bread with impure hands?"

- D. The majority of the scribes were Pharisees, but the majority of the Pharisees were not scribes. They adopted an oral tradition of their rabbis, claiming it, like the written law, was handed down from Moses. With the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD and the scattering of surviving Jews, the scribes and Pharisees, worried about the loss of their oral tradition, began writing down and collecting the sayings of the rabbis until completing what is known as the Mishnah by 200 AD.

Mishnah Aboth 1.1 *Moses received the (oral) Law from Sinai and committed it to Joshua, and Joshua to the elders, and the elders to the Prophets; and the Prophets committed it to the men of the Great Synagogue. They said three things: Be deliberate in judgment, raise up many disciples, and make a hedge around the law.*

- F. Remember, the origin of the Pharisees began from a movement of the faithful - a back to the Bible movement. While the theology and practice of the priestly class, the Sadducees, was affected and liberalized by the Greek culture, the Pharisees were the more religiously conservative (as are we evangelicals today). If anyone should take to heart Jesus's 7 rebukes of the Pharisees, it should be us religious conservatives.

Acts 23:6 But perceiving that **one group were Sadducees and the other Pharisees,** Paul began crying out in the Council, "Brethren, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees; I am on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead!"⁷ As he said this, there occurred a dissension between the Pharisees and Sadducees, and the assembly was divided.⁸ **For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor an angel, nor a spirit, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all.**

II. Jesus's 7 rebukes of the Pharisees in Luke 11:39-54.

A. 11:37-41 Meticulous in cleaning the outside while ignoring the inside.

Luke 11:37 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.

1. Jesus has just given a stinging rebuke of this generation, but the Pharisees would have considered themselves immune to such a rebuke.

Luke 11:29 As the crowds were increasing, He began to say, "**This generation is a wicked generation;** it seeks for a sign, and *yet* no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah. ...³² **"The men of Nineveh will stand up with this generation at the judgment and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.**

2. This was no neutral matter for either Jesus or the Pharisee. For the Pharisee, the issue is purity before God through a water ritual. For Jesus, it a matter of actual purity of heart before God with eternal consequences.

Matthew 5:8 "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

3. Jesus expands His answer to cover the principle involved - true purity versus ritual purity. Hypocrisy versus honesty/sincerity. The Pharisees were meticulous about matters of outward ritual purity/cleanliness, but unconcerned about the inner person before the Lord. Jesus calls them fools. If God cares about the purity of the outward body which He created, does God not also care all the more about the purity of the inner person which He created? 1 Samuel 16:7 God *sees* not as man sees, for **man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.**

Luke 11:41 "But **give that which is within** as charity, and then all things are clean for you.

Matthew 23:26 "You blind Pharisee, **first clean the inside of the cup** and of the dish, so that the outside of it may become clean also.

1 Timothy 1:5 But **the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart** and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

4. In what ways or circumstances do we give more attention to how we appear than to how we are, falling into hypocrisy? If youth or adults hide their sinful behavior and put on an

obedient appearance to parents or others, does Jesus's rebuke of the Pharisees not apply to us?

- B. 11:42 Inverted priorities - neglecting the justice and love of God. Jesus is not dismissing tithing - in fact, He affirms it should be done. He does not rebuke the Pharisees from obeying the laws of tithing, but on neglecting the weightier matters of justice toward others and love toward God.

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.

- C. 11:43 Loving the exalting of self. The Pharisees preferred to be honored above others. To have attention drawn to themselves. Are there ways we Christians might display a desire for ourselves or our children to be honored above others, to draw attention to ourselves?

Luke 11:43 "Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the chief seats in the synagogues and the respectful greetings in the market places.

Matthew 6:1 "Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven.² "So when you give to the poor, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be honored by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. ... ⁵ "When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.

- D. 11:44 Guiding people unawares to their destruction.

Luke 11:44 "Woe to you! For you are like concealed tombs, and the people who walk over them are unaware of it."

1. The law taught that contact with the dead resulted in ritual uncleanness, which symbolized spiritual defilement.

Numbers 19:16 'Also, anyone who in the open field touches one who has been slain with a sword or who has died *naturally*, or a human bone or a grave, shall be unclean for seven days.

2. The Pharisees were like unmarked graves where people would defile themselves unawares, in that they taught people they were righteous when they were not.

Mishnah, Gittin (Bills of Divorce) 9:3 *The essential formula in the bill of divorce is, "Lo, thou art free to marry any man."* R. Judah says: *"Let this be from me thy writ of divorce and letter of dismissal and deed of liberation, that thou mayest marry whatsoever*

man thou wilt." The essential formula in a writ of emancipation is, "Lo, thou art a freedwoman: lo, thou belongest to thyself."

Matthew 5:20 "For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 5:31 "It was said, 'WHOEVER SENDS HIS WIFE AWAY, LET HIM GIVE HER A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE';³² but I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for the reason of unchastity (pornea), makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

3. In this case the Pharisees are not adding restrictions to the Scriptures, but removing biblical restrictions. They are not overly conservative and restrictive but overly liberal and licentious. How might parents, church members/leaders become unmarked graves in leading their children or others to violate God's will?
- E. 11:45-46 Putting burdens on others that you either avoid bearing or avoid helping others bear. They were hypocritical in demanding others keep God's commands while making distinctions in the law that enabled them to avoid keeping it while justifying themselves. So their legalism included not only adding to but also subtracting from what God's law commands. We can become very interested in parsing biblical vocabulary and manipulating biblical statements when we want to avoid/set aside what God is commanding.

Luke 11:45 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.

Luke 10:29 But wishing to justify himself, he said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

Mark 7:6 And He said to them, "Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of **you hypocrites**, as it is written: 'THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME.⁷ BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, **TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.**⁸ "Neglecting the commandment of God, **you hold to the tradition of men.**"⁹ He was also saying to them, "You are experts at setting aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition.¹⁰ "For Moses said, 'HONOR YOUR FATHER AND YOUR MOTHER'; and, 'HE WHO SPEAKS EVIL OF FATHER OR MOTHER, IS TO BE PUT TO DEATH';¹¹ but you say, 'If a man says to *his* father or *his* mother, whatever I have that would help you is Corban (that is to say, given to God)',¹² you no longer permit him to do anything for *his* father or *his* mother;¹³ thus invalidating the word of God by your tradition which you have handed down; and you do many things such as that."

- F. 11:47-51,53 Continuing the hostility of your fathers toward God's prophets. While the Pharisees, by building tombs for the prophets their fathers killed, saw themselves as

honoring the prophets, Jesus said that by rejecting Him they share the same attitude toward God's messengers as their fathers who killed them, and become guilty of the martyrdom of all of God's messengers - from the first to the last martyrs recorded on the Old Testament Scriptures, Abel in Genesis 4:8 to the Zechariah martyred in 2 Chronicles 24:22-24. Far from honoring the prophets by building their tombs, they are just finishing the job their fathers initiated. Instead of repenting at Jesus's words, they, like their fathers, plot to destroy Him.

Luke 11:47 "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,

G. 11:52 Taking away the key of knowledge of knowing God savingly. They pointed people away from Jesus. The key refers to possessing the truth of God's Word that gives us access to God. How might parents or any of us, by words or deeds withhold the key to knowing God from our children, from others?

Luke 11:52 "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."

Conclusion: We should hesitate before calling another believer pharisaic for, in our opinion, being too restrictive in his biblical interpretations. It might be us who are pharisaic for being too permissive, licentious. Legalism is not only the erecting of unbiblical restrictions, but also the removal of biblical requirements in an attempt at self-justification. According to Jesus, avoiding the folly of the Pharisees is a matter of eternal life or death. So as we approach the Lord's table, before we pledge our love, loyalty, faith to Christ by eating and drinking the symbols of His sacrificed life for us, let's repent of all hypocrisy, all half-heartedness, and ask Christ to unite our hearts to love Him above all.

Titus 2:13 ... Christ Jesus,¹⁴ ... **gave Himself for us** to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession

James 4:8 **Draw near to God** and He will draw near to you. **Cleanse your hands**, you sinners; and **purify your hearts**, you double-souled. ... ¹⁰ **Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord**, and He will exalt you.