

The Characteristics of False Spiritual Leaders, Part 2

Scripture: Matthew 23:5-12

Code: 2361

We worship the Lord now by hearing Him speak in His word. Matthew Chapter 23 is our Chapter, the first 12 verses the particular setting for the message of the morning. Turn with me would you in your Bible to Matthew Chapter 23. And we want to continue what we started last Lord's day in looking at these 12 verses that open this great chapter. One of the duties of pastors is to warn their people. The apostle Paul told the Ephesian elders that he had spent night and day for years warning them. And he was warning them about those who would try to destroy their faith. Those who would come as false spiritual leaders to take them away from the truth.

But he was not the first to warn his people for true spiritual leaders throughout all of the history of God's redemptive plan have always been called to a ministry of warning. There must be warning as a part of the ministry, because the world is filled with false prophets, false teachers, false shepherds, false spiritual leaders. They are every place. You can see their advertisements in the church page of the Saturday paper. They occupy the places of authority in leadership in the false religions of the world, the cults, the occult; they have found their way into the forms of Christianity. They masquerade as those who represent God and do not. And the sad fact is that they damn the souls of men and women to hell while promising them heaven.

In the 15th verse of this 23rd Chapter our Lord says to the scribes and Pharisees who are the false spiritual leaders of His day, "You compass sea and land to make one proselyte," or one convert, "and when he is made, you make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves." False spiritual leadership has to be dealt with with great seriousness for it damns the souls of men in the illusion that they have found God and are pleasing Him. And that is why false spiritual leaders are the most cursed of all sinners in the Scripture.

This particular chapter is the greatest single tirade against them on the pages of holy writ. And in it the Lord Jesus Christ fully denounces them. Now the chapter really falls into several parts. It begins with a call to the people to avoid these damning teachers. And then there is a condemnation of the teachers themselves and it closes with a compassionate word of pity about the people who have been under their influence being judged. So it's a very significant chapter. It's a hard chapter. It's a stern one.

And Jesus said, and I will do my best to relay to you what He said, things that are hard to hear and biting and sometimes painful, but necessary. Now the scene opens in verse 1. "Then spoke Jesus to

the multitude and to His disciples." It is Wednesday as you know, the passion week, the Lord will be crucified on Friday and rise on Sunday. During this week He has been in conflict with the Jewish religious leaders. He is now in the temple. It is filled with people who are there as pilgrims and residents of Jerusalem celebrating the Passover. All day long He has been in encounter with these religious leaders.

They have stopped asking Him questions as Chapter 22, verse 46 says, because they had such profound answers given to them that they were silenced. And now in His final speech on Wednesday, and in fact, His final sermon ever given to the multitude before His death, Jesus calls the people away from these false spiritual leaders. And then He condemns the leaders themselves. And then He offers a word of pity for people who have been so deceived.

So it is the last public message of the Lord. And it is a warning to stay away from those who steal men's souls from God, from truth with the lies of false religion. Now in the verse 12 verses He talks to the multitude and the disciples, the leaders are there and they can hear everything He says, but His message is directed to the people and it is a warning to stay away from these false religious leaders. And He says they are disqualified because they lack five things and we're working our way through those five.

Remember, first they lacked authority. Notice verse 2. "When Jesus spoke He said the scribes and the Pharisees sat in Moses seat." And we pointed out the fact that they are seen here as those who took a seat they really didn't deserve. Moses seat was a title for the place of the primary teacher in a synagogue. He taught the Mosaic Law. The chair of Moses. He was the one who was to articulate the will of God as expressed in the Old Covenant.

Well, they sat down in that place of authority in the synagogue as if, in fact, they were representatives of God and God's word and God's law and the truth was they were not. They were usurpers, they didn't belong there. And they substituted the traditions that they had invented for the commandments of God, so says Matthew 15. So they were usurpers without a God given authority and without an authoritative message. Oh there were times when they articulated the law of God, but they embellished it and enhanced it and overwrote it and obscured it by their multitudeness traditions, rules, and regulations.

In fact, in John 10, Jesus said the true shepherd comes through the door of the sheepfold and those are thieves and robbers who try to climb in over the edges. And so they are thieves and robbers bent on stealing the souls of men for their own purposes. And they are denounced. They lack authority. They're not sent by God like the prophets of Jeremiah's time of whom God said the prophets speak and they are not sent. They have no word from God. They tell you what they themselves wish to tell you.

And so spiritual leaders who articulate a message other than the biblical message who usurp a seed of authority other than that which is given by God for the speaking of His truth are usurpers without authority. Secondly, we remember last week, we said they also lacked integrity. Integrity is consistency. Integrity means you live what you say. They didn't do that. Verse 3, it says at the end of the verse, "Do not after their works for they say and do not."

Now earlier in the verse, He says, "whatever they bid you observe." In other words, when they do speak for Moses, when they do reiterate mosaic law, do it, because the law of God is the law of God no matter who teaches it. So when they do relate Moses truth, insofar as they are true to the text of the Old Testament, you must respond to it. But don't do the way they do because they say the thing that ought to be done and they don't do it. In other words, there was no integrity. And it will always be that way with spiritual leaders who are false. They may advocate morality, they may advocate a system of ethics, but they'll never be able to live it because they don't have within them the power of God to restrain the flesh and promote righteousness. They can't stop evil and generate goodness. Because that only can occur in a regenerated heart.

So no matter how ethically and morally acceptable it looks on the outside, on the inside like a tomb it is full of dead men's bones. And so our Lord is saying, don't pattern your life after theirs. They say things that they do not do. And so when you want a note whether a person is a false spiritual leader, look first of all as to whether they speak the word of God and only the word of God. And if they embellish it with some self-appointed authority and some tradition and truth beyond Scripture, they have usurped a place of authority that God did not give them.

And secondly, look at their life and if their life doesn't mark them out as one who is consistent with his message in his living then write them off as false. Because no matter how good the morality they preach, if they themselves are unrestrained in their own hearts and unable to produce the very good that they call other men to abide by, they're false spiritual leaders.

Thirdly, we said last week that they lacked sympathy, verse 4. "They bind heavy burdens and grievous to be born and lay them on men's shoulders and they themselves will not remove them with one of their fingers." Now, of course, the Pharisees and the scribes were legalistic to the core. They had developed this very sophisticated and elaborate system of rules and regulations and ceremonies and rituals and laws and they imposed those on the people, heavy, heavy burdens. And the people were told that if you do enough good things, they'll outweigh your bad things and you'll make it to heaven. If the bad things outweigh the good things, you're going to go to hell.

And they never elevated the burden. They just piled it higher and higher and higher and the burden of rules was compounded by the burden of guilt, which was imposed upon them by their inability to keep the burden of rules. And so there was a double burden and never a message of mercy and

never a message of pity and never a message of grace and never a word of forgiveness and never was there any gospel that sin is removed. It was always there and it was always piling up and always accumulating and it might damn you some day unless your good deeds had a higher pile than your bad ones.

And this was an intolerable burden. They lacked sympathy. There was no sense of kindness. There was no sense of graciousness. Quite in contrast to the Lord who came and said, "my yoke is easy and my burden is light." Quite in contrast say to the apostle Paul who in writing to the Thessalonians says, "when we came to you we were gentle among you as a nursing mother nurses her baby, cherishes her child." Cherishes means to warm with body heat and Paul says in the intimacy of that marvelous imagery of a nursing baby, that's how we were with you. That's how tender we were. That's how caring we were with you. That marvelous tenderness that marks the true shepherd, that mark the Savior and those who followed Him. Very different from the unsympathetic legalism and bondage of the false spiritual leader who abuses people, who uses people, who piles and crushes them under rules and regulations which they pretend to fulfill, but don't. They were without sympathy.

Now there are two more that I want to talk about today that are most fascinating. The fourth, they lacked spirituality. They lacked spirituality. Now by this I mean a very simple point. Everything was for the outside, not the heart. All of their religion was for show. All of it was for fleshly gratification. They got ego satisfaction out of their religious parading and piosity and pompousness and ostentation. They wanted to show on the outside how pious they were so they could get the homage and reverence of the people.

They sought a physical gratification. It wasn't an issue of character with them, it was an issue of show. As it says at the end of Galatians, the Jews were into making a fair show in the flesh. Verse 5, "But all their works they do," for what reason, what does it say? "To be seen by men." To be seen by men. That was the whole thing. The whole thing was right there and that is why in Matthew Chapter 6, the Lord so directs that part of the Sermon on the Mount to false religion. He says in verse 1, "Take heed that you do not your alms," that is your giving, "before men to be seen by them." That's what they were after. And then He goes on to say, when you do your alms, don't sound a trumpet before you.

Can you imagine when the Pharisees would come into the courtyard of the women which had receptacles all on the walls where you put your offering for various things and as they came to give, they would have a guy blow a fanfare on a trumpet to announce that they had arrived. So everyone could watch them give and see how pious and how holy and how devout they were. That was the whole thing was all on the outside. It was all for show.

And then He says when you pray don't be like the hypocrites. They love to pray standing in the middle of the synagogue and in the crossroads of the streets. Here they would pray their daily prayers right in the middle of everybody, where everyone could see them and remark how holy and how virtuous and how pious they are. They would find the most public place that they could do that. And later on in verses 16 to 18 it says when you fast, don't do it like the hypocrites with a sad face. They disfigure their faces. They would put ashes on their face and make it pale and white and they would go around, I'm fasting. I'm fasting. I'm so devout. See?

It was all externalism. Jude in verse 19 of that marvelous epistle that deals so much with false spiritual leaders says this, these are they who separate themselves. What a remarkable statement. They separate themselves. They want to be considered a spiritual elite. They want to dress differently. They want to appear very pious. Sometimes they may wear a backwards collar or a fancy robe or a funny hat or all kinds of stuff all over them. And they want to appear different than other people. They want to make a display of their piety. They want to separate themselves. They want to be creating some kind of separated identification as if they are greater than just normal folks.

By the way, the word Pharisee may come from a word that means separated. Generally, they thought of themselves as better than everybody else. Someone to be revered and looked up to and honored. They were in it for the whole objective of being seen by men. And Jesus says in Matthew 6, "They have their reward." What is it? They're seen by men, period. God will not reward them at all. In fact, He'll punish them. Then Jude 19 says, they not only separate themselves, but then this dramatic word, they are sensual.

They are psuchikos, the soul. It has to do with the soul. It has to do with the physical part of life. It has to do with our human life as opposed to the spiritual dimension in the sense of being sensitive to God. They're not spiritual in the sense of being tuned to God. They're not spiritual in the sense of considering things that are the deepest part of a man's being. They're soulish. And the word is used of the life that's in a tree or the life that's in an animal. It's just that everything is for the human dimension. Everything is for the physical world. Nothing belongs to the pneuma, the spirit which knows God.

They are soulish. They are psuchikos, but void of pneuma, void of any spiritual sense. In fact, it says in the same verse 19, "they separate themselves, they are sensual, they have not the spirit." They don't possess the spirit. Devoid of the spirit. Oh they have breadth, but not the spirit of God. These elite fleshly frauds without the Holy Spirit who parade and masquerade as if they were representatives of God are followed by millions of people. They head religious organizations. They have seminaries and colleges. They even pastor churches and teach all in the flesh, all for the gratification of their earthly appetites. And so they are characterized as those who are desirous of being seen by men. That's the whole business.

The gratification that comes when you think people think you're something very pious and very devout. It's an ego trip. Now, notice verse 5, and the Lord identifies a couple of ways in which they desired to be seen of men. He says, "They make broad their phylacteries and enlarged the borders of their garment." Everything is on the outside. The whole religious game with them is what is visible to people. Contrary to the heart. If you read 1 Corinthians Chapter 4, you will find that everyone of us who serves Christ will ultimately be judged as to the heart, as to the motives of the heart, as to the intense of the heart, as to the purposes and drives and thoughts and desires of the heart.

That's the true standard. Not so with these people. They're called in Scripture whited tombs, whited walls, graves concealed by grass, broken pots covered with silver dross. They're called wolves in sheep's clothing. They're called wells without water. Cloaks covering sin. They're even identified as hired weepers who cry for a price if the price is high enough. Everything they did is motivated by the desire for honor from men. And Jesus exposes that right here.

And they're all standing there and they've all got large phylacteries and they've got enlarged garments and they're standing there while He's rebuking them here. It's a dramatic scene in the temple court. Now what does it mean they make large their phylacteries? I'm going to tell you a little background so you'll understand. Fascinating.

In Deuteronomy, two places; in Exodus, two places; it's in Exodus 13:9, Exodus 13:16, Deuteronomy 6:8, Deuteronomy 11:18. Four places in total, two in Exodus and two Deuteronomy. The Old Testament says that the commandments of God, now listen carefully, "the commandments of God are to be upon the hand and between the eyes of God's people." All four of those verses say that. "The commandments of God are to be upon the hand and between the eyes of God's people." Now what is the significance of that?

Well, the ancient Jews had absolutely no problem with that all. They understood the significance of it. It was symbolic of saying, that the commandments of God are to be the controlling factor in what we think and what we do. Very simple, in what we think and what we do. Between the eyes, speaks of the thought processes. On the hand, of the action, the activity of life. So when you think, think thinking through the commandments of God. When you act, act acting through the commandments of God. In other words, that's the grid for all of thinking and all living.

Nobody had a problem with that. The Jews accepted that as symbolic statement, a spiritual command that they were to give attention to God's word in their thoughts and in their actions. But as the centuries passed and the Jews began to develop an external, legalistic, outward approach to religion, that which was originally understood for the heart somehow crawled outside, left the heart and became a way that you sort of parade your supposed piety. And so they became concerned to literally put the law of God on their hand and to put the law of God on their head between their eyes

on the outside.

They were following the letter of religion when their hearts were far from God, but they thought God would be pleased by their mechanical, external legalism. By the way, there is no record of phylacteries until 400 B.C. which puts it in the intertestamental period. We found some relics of them in the Qumran community down by the Dead Sea. So this is not something that the Jews always did. This didn't come until later when a system of external religion was developed. You say well, what are phylacteries?

The word basically means "a means of protection." It has to do with a means of protection. Another way to simply understand is a charm or if you like an amulet. The idea was that the Egyptians and the pagans around Israel wore charms to ward off evil spirits. The Egyptians were really into this. And as the Jews drifted away from God and more toward pagan expressions of religion, they wanted charms also. They wanted things that would ward off evil spirits and ward off demons and be means of protection. And so they developed these phylacteries as charms, as little magical boxes to ward off demons, which shows how far their religion had deteriorated.

They made them square and covered them with black leather from a clean animal, ceremonially clean animal. And then they connected to them with 12 stitches each, one stitch for each of the 12 tribes of Israel, leather straps by which they could tie one on their forehead and another on their hand. They did they left hand because they said it was closer to the heart. Now in the box they put four sections of the mosaic law. Exodus 13:1-10, Exodus 13:11-16, Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and Deuteronomy 11:13-21. In one of the boxes they put all of those on one piece of parchment. In other box, they put each one separately on a different piece of parchment.

They rolled up all these little pieces of paper and stuck them in these little boxes and strapped them on their head and strapped them on their arm. This shows you the extent to which this whole magical approach had gone. And they said that the phylacteries were more sacred than the gold plate on the forehead of the high priest which had the name of God on it, because inside the little box was God's name 23 times. So they were 23 times as sacred. By the way, they taught that God Himself wore them all the time. And if you follow Phariseeism you will find that they thought God was nothing more than a glorified rabbi who studied the law three hours a day to keep up on it.

Now another interesting thing, on the little box there is a shin. Sheen is the s-h sound letter in the Hebrew language and they put that on the little box. When they tied the straps of the box on the head in the back, they made a knot in the form of a dalet, which is the D sound letter in Hebrew. And then when they strapped the one on their hand, they had seven times around the arm and three times around the hand. And I watched one do this in a synagogue in Cairo one time. I watched the whole process through the fingers and all around and the whole objective is that when you're done, you create there a yod, which is another Hebrew letter.

So you've got shin, dalet, yod, which are the letters that form the term Shaddai, which is the name Almighty. And so they were creating a magical charm with God's name to thwart off any demons. Very pagan. Magic is what they believed in. A boy of 13 today still who's raised in an orthodox family gets his set of phylacteries when he's 13 years old. And every time he goes to prayer and the times of prayer designated in the day particularly in the morning, he puts that on when he prays. In those days men only, and still wear them, they wore them at the time of prayer, but mark this, the Pharisees wore them all the time.

So as you in your minds eye see them marching through the history of the New Testament, all the time, they have little boxes on their heads and little boxes on their left arms. One story is told in rabbinic literature of a rabbi who went to see a king. And of course, in the Jewish tradition, rabbis were superior to kings. And so the rabbi went to see the king and after seeing the king he turned to walk away and he turned his back to the king and walked out. Well, you don't do that with a king. In ancient history when you go out, you go out backwards like this bowing and bowing and bowing until you're out of his sight. You don't turn your back on him. The king was so irate he called his soldiers to attack the man and kill him for his effrontery and as they moved toward the rabbi the straps of his phylacteries began to blaze with fire. And they dared not touch him.

Strange fairytale that gives you some idea of how they thought this provided protection. Now it wasn't that they just wore them, which would have been bad enough, but verse 5 says, they made them large. The bigger the box, the more pious you were. You see? It's really remarkable. Bigger boxes and wider straps demonstrate greater devotion to God. You see, it's all outside, just to be seen of men. And even today you see them do that especially when you go to Israel. In very public places, it's a parade of supposed devotion utterly devoid of heart.

And then it says in verse 5, "they enlarged the borders of their garments." The garments is probably implied. It just says they enlarged the borders, but it means their garments. You see back in Numbers 15, verses 37-41, God did give them a very interesting principle. He said, look when you make your clothing, put on your clothing, little tassel, talesh, the phylacteries are called tethalyn. The fringe is talesh so they were to...they were into the talesh and the tethalyn. Now the talesh was just a little hem or a little fringe on a Jew's garment to mark him out as set apart unto God. And it was an actual outward mark. Jesus wore them on His garment according to Matthew 9:20. It was a common thing.

But the Pharisees made theirs bigger and bigger and bigger to parade some kind of devotion to God. By the way, they were on the outer garment in the time of Christ. A little later in Jewish history they went to the inner garment and today since the orthodox Jews were black suits, they're on that prayer shawl. Have you ever seen a prayer shawl that an orthodox Jew pulls down over his head and has a blue line in it and some blue fringe on it? Well, that's what's...that's the remnant of the talesh to mark

them out as Jews.

So here they came parading with the little boxes on their heads and the big fringes hanging off their garments as if they were utterly devoted to God. All that for show. All that to parade supposed spirituality. Truth is they lacked it. They lacked spirituality altogether. A final lack comes in verse 6, they lacked humility. Not only authority, integrity, sympathy, and spirituality, but they lacked humility. It says, "they loved the uppermost places at feasts." What does that mean? They want to sit at the speaker's table.

They want to sit up by the host. You see the seat on the right and the left hand of the host was the seat you wanted. That was the seat of honor. That was the seat of dignity. But they wanted to be in the chief place where they could be thought of as the great people. They loved it. James and John fell into that didn't they? Said to their mother can we sit on the right and the left hand of the Messiah in His kingdom? You see they were used to that in their culture. Those were the seats of prominence. They loved that. They loved to be welcomed as if they were some great person.

And when there was a feast, they wanted to be recognized as the supreme guests of honor. And then it says in verse 6, "they loved the chief sits in the synagogues." They wanted to sit on the platform. There was a raised platform in the front like there is in this place and they wanted to sit up here where everyone was facing them and looking and seeing them. And they wanted to come in with their little boxes on and their enlarged garments and they wanted...in fact, it wasn't a bad idea to come in late when everyone could see and you would come up and take your place with the dignitaries who prayed and the dignitaries who read the Scripture. Parade ostentatiously, proudly and boastfully your supposed piety before everybody.

I guess that's why I have such an aversion to sitting on the platform. That's why I always sit down there. People ask me why do you sit down here? Why do you sit down here? I just don't want to...I don't want to be related to that kind of stuff. I mean, I'm just one of you and I just happen to have a gift to teach and God's called me to teach. So when it's time to teach I'll come up and do that. When it's time to pray, I'll come up and do that. But I'm not going to elevate myself above you as if I'm some one more devout or pious than you are because that's not true and I seek not to be lifted up in any way.

But they were in to religion for show, see. I mean, that was the whole ballgame, prestige and fleshly gratification. Honor from men. That's a sad thing and you know, the church has really kind of muffed this up. I go into some churches and the chairs you see on the platform look like thrones. They really do. Makes me very nervous to sit in those things. But we get into that just like they did.

And I'm not saying that everyone who does that has wrong motives. The issue here is the heart, isn't it? I mean, they sought that. They lived for that. I mean sometimes you do that because that's

tradition or that's the way people have always done it or you're their guests and you've got to do it, you know. I mean, I sit at my share of speaker's tables and my share of church thrones and I hope my heart doesn't get corrupted by it, but I don't like it. I don't like that personally.

And another thing they liked in verse 7, "they liked formal salutations in the marketplace." In other words, when they were walking through the marketplace, they wanted to be recognized for they were and properly saluted with the dignity that their office deserved. In fact, one heathen governor or Caesarea is portrayed in the rabbi's writings as saying that he considered their faces as if they were the faces of angels. They really had a very lofty opinion of themselves. They give in their writings very elaborate directions about how you're supposed to treat them in their office and their rank and their...if you don't treat them that way you're in a lot of trouble. There's even lists of things that you...to do to people who don't treat rabbis the way they ought to be treated.

They like formal titles. They wanted to be called by titles. They wanted to be acknowledged as great ones. In fact, one rabbi wrote that he was supposed to be buried in white because he wanted the whole world to know how worthy he was to appear in the presence of God. And Jewish writings, I read this week, one thing that said that was a debate in heaven and an argument ensued between the group of rabbis and God. And they had to go get another rabbi to solve the dispute. Mishnah says, Jewish codification of law says, "It is more punishable to act against the words of the scribes than against the words of the Scripture."

So when they went through the market, and Jesus is saying this, and they're there listening to this, they love to be called by men rabbi, rabbi. Now that doesn't mean a lot in our culture, because rabbi is not a word that we're accustomed to. What it means is teacher, teacher. But more than that, because teacher isn't even the right word in our culture because a teacher is so broad, there are so many things in a culture like ours that's not religious, but to say teacher in a Jewish culture is to say supreme one, superior one, your excellency, most knowledgeable one, great one. The Latin equivalent, this is painful, is doctor, docura.

This is doctor. Yes, doctor so and so. They love those titles that push them up, see. That elevated them above everybody else. You just...if you just say hey I want you to meet Joe. Hey Joe, nice to meet you. As soon as they say this is Dr. Joseph So and So, oh Dr. So and So. I mean, that's very intimidating. People say to me, well, people call you John. Why don't they call you Doctor? I say, look I'm not even a nurse let alone a doctor.

But some people like...some people like the elevation that comes. It feeds the ego, you know. Dr. So and So, as if that means you're some great, great one. They wanted to be called that. They demanded to be called that. And another thing they demanded to be called is down in verse 10, master, master. Interesting word. It's hard to just be very dogmatic in nailing down the meaning of ekakothetas. The best thing you could do to identify it is leader. They love to be called leader, see.

They wanted to be called doctor, knowledge, leader, authority. And another word they love to be called is in verse 9, father. They wanted to be called rabbi or teacher or doctor because that spoke of the fact that they were the source of knowledge. They wanted to be called master because that indicated that they were the source of direction in guiding. By the way some equvalate...give equivalent meaning to the word professor and the word master or leader ekakothetas. But the third one was father, and they loved that because that spoke of the fact that they were the source of spiritual life. They were the father of spiritual life. They gave spiritual life.

So they wanted to be called teacher, source of knowledge. They wanted to be called master as it were or leader, source of all direction. They wanted to be called father, source of spiritual life. You know something? All of that was what they sought. I have a real problem with that. I don't want to be called any of that. I just don't want to corrupt my own soul unnecessarily with those kinds of things and have my ego react and respond to those.

And I'm not saying that everybody who is called doctor somebody or who has a Master's Degree in something or is a professor of somewhere is necessarily corrupt. I just think we not to seek those things. That's what our Lord says here. But they love that. Oh that's exactly what they wanted. Now, the word father is interesting. That's found its way into religion hasn't it? Primarily in the Roman Catholic church and the Anglican Episcopal church. If you were in the church of England today and you're a bishop, your proper title is Right Reverend Father in God.

Can you imagine introducing me to someone and saying this is our pastor Right Reverend Father in God John MacArthur? Mercy. I mean if...listen, if...it'd be one thing if I was the teacher, but I'm not. It'd be one thing if I was the leader, but I'm not. It'd be one thing if I was spiritual father, but I'm not. I'm not any of those things; not any of those things. By the way, the word abbot in the Roman Catholic church comes from Abba Father. The word Pope even comes from a form of the word Father and the word Father obviously comes from Father. And...it's just a little linguistic insight.

But that's characteristic of a false spiritual leadership viewpoint. Now look at verse 8 and watch what happens in the midst of this. The Lord turns to His disciples I believe at this point and He says, "be not ye called teacher." Don't you be called rabbi. Why? "For one is your teacher." Who? Christ. That's why I said, I'm not your teacher. I'm not your teacher. Listen, I have no corner on truth. I have no special in with God that I get the truth from Him independent of the word of God. Christ is the teacher. I just tell you what He said, right? So don't pat me on the back and call me doctor. I didn't event this information. If I invented it, don't believe it. It's not true.

I'm not the teacher. So don't stick on person up above another person as if that person is the source of truth. And the leveler comes in verse 8 at the end of the verse, "you are all," what, "brothers." Nobody's a great one. Nobody's a superior. He just puts all the same level. We're all brothers. You

have one teacher and that's Christ. He is the didaskalos. He taught us the truth which we pass on. Well, we really lose sight of this in the church.

And there is a place for honoring those that God has given us to pass on the truth. There is a place for respect. There's a place for admiring, for giving respect, rendering the due honor to those who are over us as Paul says to the Thessalonians, as the writer of Hebrews says in Chapter 13. There's a place for that, but there's no place to seek that, to desire that, to clamor for that. It's better to have no titles and no degrees and no anything than to play an ego-centered game which endeavors to push you up and keep other people in their place. So the reverend, doctor, bishop, professor, abbot, pope, father, so forth and so on is artificial. We're all brothers. And if we ever teach truth, it's because the master teacher taught us.

And in verse 9, don't call anybody father, "don't call anybody father upon this earth." There's not a soul on this earth that gave you spiritual life, right? Nobody. Nobody here gave you spiritual life. The Sanhedrin members like to be called father as if they were the source of spiritual life. And men in the ministry of some churches today want to be called father as if they are the source of spiritual life. They are not. Verse 9 says "one is your Father," and He is where? "He is in heaven." The source of spiritual life is the heavenly father, not some human person.

To call a man father or a higher ranked priest holy father is unacceptable, a violation of Scripture. It just isn't right, because none of us is the teacher and none of us is the leader and none of us is the Father. That brings us to the last word leader, verse 10. "Neither be ye called master or leader for one is your leader again Christ." Christ is the teacher. Christ is the guide. And Christ is the source of life. So don't be called master. We have so many problems. We just love that. We want to get a bachelor's degree and a master's degree and a doctor's degree and then we want to keep going up just putting these barriers between ourselves and the common folks.

I can understand it happening in the world, but it shouldn't happen among those who are all brothers in Christ. None of us is any great one. None of us is the depository of all truth. None of us the leader among leaders who has all insights. None of us is the spiritual life source of anybody. So he says to the people. You stay away from these false leaders. Now you disciples, you be true leaders and you avoid the things that they got into and don't be like them. How should we be?

Verse 11, "He that is greatest among you shall be your," what, "your servant." Your servant, servant leadership. You're not going to have a title if you're a servant. You're not holy reverend doctor bishop slave. You're not right reverend father master guide professor foot washer. You see, greatness consists in self-giving. Greatness consists in humble outpouring of life for others. It's the servant leader. If you want to be great the serve, that's all. Jesus was just Jesus in terms of His earthly name. And He served and He washed feet and He gave His life. And He said "The son of man has not come to be ministered unto, but to," what, "to minister." Or serve, give his life. That's

the point.

So he that is greatest isn't the one with the most degrees and the most titles and the highest rank, but whoever is the lowest servant. Whoever's the best server, whoever's the most selfless. Whoever gives and gives and gives. And then verse 12 is that paradoxical divine statement that we have become familiar with in our study of Scripture. "Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be brought low and he that shall humble himself shall be lifted up."

Just a reverse of the world. You want to be up, push yourself up. Push yourself. The Lord says, push yourself down, He'll lift you up. Push yourself up, He'll put you down. No, you can take your choice. You want to be useful to the Lord, put yourself down. Down in the role of a servant, down in the role of a sinner who has no right except a God-given right, who has no knowledge except God-given knowledge, who has no wisdom except God-given wisdom, who is not one who gives spiritual life except God-given spiritual life. When you see yourself as simply a servant, that's what helps you to understand where God wants you.

And then in God's own time and God's own purpose He'll lift you up. That's what Peter had in mind, didn't he, when he was writing Chapter 5 of 1 Peter. He said, "You are to feed the flock of God. Take the oversight," verse 2, "not by constraint, but willingly. Not for money, but of a ready mind, eager mind. Neither as being lords over the charge allotted to you." Not like you're dominating it or being lord over it, but as examples. And then he says, "Be subject one to another, clothed with humility for God resists the proud and," what, "gives grace to the humble." Self exaltation is no place in those who represent Christ.

Andrew Bernarr was a dear man of God years back. He once said he could always tell when a Christian was growing and the way he could tell when a Christian was growing is the Christian would always talk more and more of Christ and less and less of himself. And he said it was like the Christian seeing himself get smaller and smaller and smaller and smaller until like the morning star he gave way to the rising sun. False spiritual leaders, no authority, no integrity, no sympathy, no spirituality, no humility.

So what is a true spiritual leader? What is a true spiritual leader? Divine authority where does that come from? Word of God. Integrity, his life matches his message. Sympathy, he's filled with grace and mercy and pity and care. Spirituality, it's the heart he's concerned about not the outside, not the show. Humility, instead of lacking humility he manifests the heart of a servant who seeks to be humble and let God lift him up. Let's bow in prayer.

Lord God, we acknowledge You as our teacher. We acknowledge You as our Father. We acknowledge You as our leader. And if any of us teach, if any of us bring the message of spiritual life, if any of us act to lead to Your people, it is only in Your behalf. It is only with delegated authority,

delegated power, delegated responsibility. So we seek no names, no titles, no honors, but the honor of service. We seek not to be lifted up but humbled. Give us that perspective oh Lord. And protect this people from the false. Help us to look carefully at those who come as leaders and mark them out. Do they speak with the authority of God in the word? Do they live with the integrity of a life that matches the message? Do they demonstrate the sympathy of one who's yoke is easy and who's burden is light? Do they show true spirituality? That is a greater concern for the heart than the exterior and is there a meekness and humility in them as opposed to a proud self-serving, egoistic, ostentatiousness?

Help us Lord to examine those things that we might be alert and that we might help others not to be drawn in and be made twice the child of destruction. We do Lord know that the kingdom goes forward, but not without its enemies. Help us to be alert to that.

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