

The Condemnation of False Spiritual Leaders, Part 3

Scripture: Matthew 23:13-15

Code: 2362

Let's open our Bibles together to the 23rd Chapter of Matthew's gospel. We are involved in a study of false spiritual leaders; false spiritual leaders. I hear a lot today about the threat of communism. I hear a lot today about threat of humanism and many evangelical Christians are in great concern about these issues. I hear about the threat of secularism. The pressure of an immoral society and how we've got to battle on all of these fronts. But communism and secularism and humanism and immorality and all of that put together does not pose as great a threat to Christianity as to false spiritual leaders.

Without question, this is the most significant issue facing the church, and it always has been in God's redemptive history. And that's why our Lord saves His most blistering words, His most strong condemnation for false spiritual leaders. And we're going to see as we look at Chapter 23, verse 13 and following why this is so. Why it is that the threat of false religion is so much more severe than any other threat that could possibly face Christianity in the world or face the world itself.

Let me begin by reminding you that Isaiah said, "and it shall be as with the people so with the priests. In other words, people follow their spiritual leader. However it is with the priests, that's how it's going to be with the people. Jeremiah put it this way. "The prophets prophesy falsely and the priests rule by doing what they prophesy and my people love to have it so." Give them lying prophets and lying leaders and they'll love it. And God condemns the false leaders of Jeremiah's time when he says, "many shepherds have destroyed my portion underfoot. They have made my pleasant portion a desolate wilderness."

In other words, they have trampled down, as it were, the garden of God. You see people follow their leaders. And false spiritual leaders have followers. And many of their followers are those who are seeking spiritual answers. Those who are seeking religious answers. And they have been turned away from the truth to a lie. A severe threat. Now in this text, the Lord Jesus confronts and reveals the true nature of the false spiritual leaders of Israel, the scribes, and the Pharisees.

They were the religious leaders. Jesus attacks them head on directly beginning in verse 13. He has already warned the people about them in verses 1-12 along with warning the disciples not to be like them. In the first seven verses He said, you are to be warned about them. And then in verse 8 to the disciples, you're not to be like them. You be true spiritual leaders manifesting the true attitude and the true heart of one who really serves God. And then beginning in verse 13 He turns from the crowd

which He was warning and the disciples which He was exhorting, to those false religious leaders. And He is in the temple court, you remember, a couple of days before His death. The crowd is there swelled by the Passover season. The leaders are there and He confronts the leaders in the face of the whole crowd so that everyone hears exactly what He calls them.

This is His last public sermon. And His last public sermon dealt with the most important subject. He calls those false spiritual leaders what they are and warns the people to stay away from them, because He knows that they must avoid the error if they're to follow the truth. This great final sermon of Jesus is not a sermon on salvation. It is not a sermon on the power of God in the life of a believer. It is not a sermon on His resurrection. It is a sermon against false teachers.

It's a very important issue. It isn't the first time He has condemned them. He condemned them quite often. Back in Chapter 7 in the first sermon in Matthew's gospel, He told the people to beware of the false prophets who come as wolves dressed like shepherds and they don't spare the flock. So His first sermon was a warning about them, and His last sermon is a warning about them. And we need to be reminded today that our society needs to be warned not only about communism and humanism and secularism and immorality and all the other things that we hear so much about, but we need to be warned continually about false spiritual leaders. And for some reason even evangelical Christianity seems a little bit hesitant to deal with this. More hesitant by the way than the Lord Jesus Himself.

Who told the people that they were false because they lacked authority, they lacked integrity, they lacked sympathy, they lacked spirituality, and they lacked humility. Told them that in the first seven verses of this chapter. And now He turns to them and tells them exactly what He thinks of them and what is true of them and what is about to come to pass on them. And this is a warning not only to that day and that people, but to us today, because we have false spiritual leaders just as they did. They've always been around. It seems today that they flourish in a way that's beyond anything we've ever known in the past in our society.

And it seems as though the further we move away from our Christian foundations, the greater the flourishing of false religious systems becomes. And not only here, but all around the world and we have to be warned. That's why Paul said, "night and day for the space of three years, I cease not to warn you." And he said that in Acts 20 to the Ephesian elders and what was he warning them about? He was warning them about grievous wolves who would enter in not sparing the flock and perverse men from among you rising up; false spiritual leaders.

The Lord in the last sermon then is calling the people away from the scribes and Pharisees and to those who manifest the truth in life and message. His own apostles being obviously the object He wanted to draw His people to. He knew He was going away and He wanted to be sure these people moved away from the influence of these evil men to hear the message of His apostles. And so we must be warned today that we must follow true spiritual leaders who seek not to be served, but to

serve. Who seek not to fleece the flock, but feed the flock. Who seek not the highest honors, but no honor at all. Who do not scatter the flock, but gather the flock. And who like David know that it is the goodness of God that has made them great and like Jesus "do not break a bruised reed and do not quench smoking flax."

We must follow true spiritual leaders who know that the sheep are God's not their own for their own purposes and their own ends. So having warned the people, he turns to these leaders and from verse 13-33 he gives them seven woes; seven curses. Now if you have in your text eight, it's because they've included verse 14. And the older manuscripts of the New Testament do not include verse 14, which is to say that if in the early manuscripts you don't have this verse and it shows up in the later manuscripts, it's usually evidence that it was added later. That it wasn't in the original. What is said in verse 14 is true about the Pharisees and scribes. In fact, it looks like a scribe took it out of Mark Chapter 12 and also Luke Chapter 20. Both of those Chapters mention the same kind of things. And probably a well meaning scribe thought that it fit in so well he just took it from Mark and Luke and put it here.

But when we get into the older manuscripts it doesn't appear, so we've chosen to set it aside for this particular study and we'll get to it in the day when we get to Mark and Luke, probably in heaven. And so with verse 14 being added later on to the original text that leaves us with seven curses; seven woes. And folks, I can only tell you that it's a volatile scene. It is an unbelievable passage. And if you could only have reconstructed on your mind the drama of the moment, because this in front of the whole crowd at the Passover season is an absolute devastation and condemnation of all the religious leaders to their faces in front of the whole crowd.

Now this kind of confrontation seems to be foreign to us today. We seem to be resistant to that. It seems as though if you speak against any false system or any false religious leader or spiritual leader people pounce on you as if you don't know the meaning of graciousness and love and kindness and all of that. But that is a very warped perspective. And this text ought to show you why it is so.

This is the Lord Jesus. Liberal theologians have decided that He wouldn't say these things, so they would just eliminate them. The Jesus that they liked wouldn't say this. So they just say it isn't so. He didn't say it, but He did. And out of His mouth comes the most fearful, the most terrible profusion of words that He ever uttered on this earth. They fly from His lips, someone said, like claps of thunder and spears of lightening. The rejection of Him by these leaders with their hearts that has led astray the people is cause for divine judgment, and this is it. Pronounced upon them.

It's a serious passage. I mean it is very serious. It's seriousness can be seen, the tone of it can be revealed by the terms that He uses. Verse 13, hypocrites. Verse 15, hypocrites. Verse 15, He calls them children of hell. Verse 17, fools and blind. Hypocrites in verse 23, 25, 27, 29, and then in verse 33, He calls them snakes and vipers set for the damnation of hell. Very strong language. He is

definitely not tickling their ears. He is not saying what they wish to hear. And He says it with a deadly calm and a crushing power.

And yet there is mingled in it a certain sense of sorrow. It is not just a scathing rebuke of judgment apart from any emotion. It is filled with a certain melancholy, a certain pathos that ultimately breaks forth in verse 37 as Jesus says, "oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them who are sinned unto thee how oft I would have gathered thy children together even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings and you would not." There's pathos in that.

And Luke tells us that on the day in which He rode into the city and knew of it's coming judgment, when He came near He beheld the city it says and He wept over it. So there was pain involved with this judgment. It is not just a dispassioned cry, it is a very passionate, sorrowful cry. And so we must see a balance. We see on the one hand the fiery righteousness of God. And we see on the other hand, the sympathetic love as He sees the curse coming. He knows it's inevitable, gives it as it must come and yet His heart is aching because of the doom of the people.

There are two key words that'll help you with this section. The first is the word woe, which appears seven times and identifies each of the distinctive thoughts. The word woe in the Greek is a most interest word. It's this word, *lie*, which doesn't even sound like a word. It sounds more like a painful guttural cry. *Lie*, that's what it is. It's an onomatopoeic word. That is it sounds like its meaning. It is a word that just utters similar to the Hebrew word to howl, which is the word hoi. It's a word used, for example, in the Septuagint to express grief, despair, sorrow, dissatisfaction, pain, and the threat of losing your life. It's used in the New Testament to speak of sorrow, to speak of judgment. It's the mingling of punishment and pity, cursing and compassion.

You could almost translate with the word *alas*; *alas*. And that's the word you find in Revelation talking about Babylon in Chapter 18; *alas*. It's as if to say inevitable judgment is coming, but oh how sad is that inevitable judgment. Judgment then is mingled with pity in the word woe. And there's another word that dominates the text and that's the word *hypocrite*. And that is the word hupokrites. It originally came from a term which mean actor. Someone who played a part on a stage. Someone who pretended to be something he wasn't.

And it was a good word that I guess entomologically in its origination, but it came to be a very bad word and finally it came to mean *deceiver*; *deceiver*. One who pretends in an evil sense, who acts evilly. In fact, William Barclay says it basically could be seen to describe someone who manifests what he calls "theatrical goodness who parades an outward goodness but inwardly is evil. Who wants people to see him give." Such as Jesus condemned in Matthew 6. "Who wants people to see him pray and to see him fast and his motto is to me be the glory." It is the man who is the *deceiver*, the actor who plays outwardly as if he is pious and inwardly is not.

So here you have a rather pitiful pronouncement of doom on spiritual phonies who masquerade as if they are spiritual leaders when, in fact, they are not at all spiritual leaders. Now I want to add another thought. When Jesus says woe, woe, woe all these times, this is not a wish, this is the statement of a fact. His condemnations here are factual, not wishful. It isn't like people today might say well damn you which seems to be a rather popular phrase. It is not just a wish that you be damned, it is a fact. It is a statement of absolute fact. Divine judgment is set in motion when Jesus says you're cursed. That's not a wish, that's a fact.

And so this is indeed a curse that worked its way out in reality and the death and eternal damnation of these false religious leaders. Now as we look at it, I want us to see not only its historic import, but I want us to see its contemporary significance, because it is equally true today that false spiritual leaders are condemned by God in the same way and we need to deal with them in the same way and we need to be warned about them in the same way with the same kind of strong language and the same kind of confrontiveness that Jesus confronted them and warned the people, so do we need to confront them and warn the people today.

Now the woes can be divided up, and I give you a little outline. I'm just going to cover two of them this morning and because I want you to see them because they're so powerful. The first one is false spiritual leaders are cursed for exclusion. They are cursed for exclusion. What do I mean by that word? They keep people out of the kingdom. Now just think about that folks, they keep people out of the kingdom. That is a definition of false religion. That is a definition of false spiritual leadership. It does not help anybody. We can't say oh they're nice folks and they're doing what they think is best and they're helping some folks over their trouble and they're giving them some moral standards to live by, blah, blah, and so forth and so on.

False spiritual leaders keep people out of God's kingdom. Very strong. Look at verse 13. "Woe to you scribes and Pharisees," He goes right at them. Names them hypocrites. "For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men. For you neither go in yourselves, neither allow them who are entering to go in." We'll stop at that point. What a statement. He starts out by telling them they keep people out of God's kingdom. Now, of course, they believe that they were the ones who were...who operated the door, see. They believed they were ones who let people in. They believed they had the keys to the kingdom. They knew the way in.

He says, you keep people out. It's very much like the words of the apostle Paul in Romans Chapter 2 when in condemning the Jews he says, "you call yourself a Jew. You rest in the law. You make your boast of God that you know His will, that you approve what is excellent. That you're instructed out of the law. You're confident that you're a guide of the blind and a light to those that are in darkness. And an instructor of the foolish and a teacher of babes. You have a form of knowledge and the truth in the law." And he goes on to say and you don't have any of that stuff and "you make God's name

blasphemed among Gentiles."

See they lived under the idea that they could keep...they could let people into the kingdom, they knew the truth, they knew the law, they knew the entrance, they were the light in the darkness, they were the guides of the blind. They had it all and the truth was they kept people out. They never let them in. Now the kingdom here, did you notice it says "you shut up the kingdom of heaven?" The kingdom of heaven is this sphere of salvation. The place where God rules and God rules His redeemed. God rules those who belong to Him, who enter by grace through faith. And so they shut up salvation. They keep people from getting saved. That's what it says.

There's a little phrase there, you'll notice in verse 13, "against men." That's an important phrase. It's very vivid because it's literally before men. So that it says you shut the doors of the kingdom of heaven before men. The picture is that men are moving in that direction and right in their faces you slam the door, very vivid. And it also is supported by the fact that the end of the verse says neither permit them that are answering to go in or that are endeavoring or continuing to enter.

The idea is here are people going that way, entering in, even continuing to enter in, and right before them, you shut the door. These aren't people running away. These are people coming in that direction. To put it in its historical context, Jesus came into the world to announce the kingdom, right? To bring the kingdom. to bring salvation. But before Jesus came, He had a forerunner who's name was John the Baptist. And John came to prepare the way of the Lord. And his message was repent. In other words, turn from your sin for the kingdom is at hand. The king is coming. Get ready for the kingdom. And all Israel went out to the Jordan River, it says, and they were there being baptized. They were there confessing their sins. They were there getting their hearts ready for the Messiah.

In other words, this mass of people in Israel were moving toward the kingdom. They were starting to make steps toward the kingdom. Repenting of their sin and trying to get their lives right and listening to the preaching of this prophet who confronted their evil lives and called them to obedience. In fact, it says in Chapter 3 of Matthew verse 5, "Then went out to him Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region round about the Jordan and they were baptized by him in the Jordan confessing their sins."

And right then the Pharisees showed up and the Sadducees and he said "oh generation of snakes," you snakes, "who warned you to flee from the wrath to come. Bring forth the fruit of repentance." That's pretty confrontive stuff. But He knew why they were there. Here were all these people getting ready to move toward the kingdom and here came the very guys who would slam the door in their face. The false religious leaders. So the picture is one of movement of flow toward the kingdom and these people slammed the door in the faces.

This is the pursuit of the person who's looking for religious answers, who's searching for God, who's searching for some spiritual reality. And they shut up the kingdom. How'd they do that? By denying

the word of God, misinterpreting the word of God, denying that Jesus was the Messiah. Denying His deity. Denying salvation by grace. Denying the need for repentance. They shut it in the faces of the people with a works righteousness system that had no place for Jesus Christ.

Now the point that its making here is that false spiritual leaders damn peoples' souls to hell. So you don't deal with this lightly. Very severe. And if I don't get too excited about fighting humanism on the one hand and fighting secularism on the other hand and fighting immorality on this side and fighting certain political battles over here on the other side, you can understand that I think there's a more important battle. And the battle that I see that must be fought is the battle for the clear and popular articulation of the truth as over against the error that's out there.

That's why the human cry of my heart is to get men of God and the people of God to know what they believe and articulate it loudly and clearly and confront error with boldness and courage. That's what we need. That's what the church needs. The church needs to know the word of God and it needs to take its stand on the truth against false religious leaders. They damn men's souls. Paul writes to Timothy and says they propagate damnable heresies and doctrines of demons.

There's a most interesting statement in Luke 11:52. It says...I think it's in verse 52. Yes, it says "Woe unto you scribes," or lawyers or scribes, "for you have taken away the key of knowledge and you entered not in yourselves and them that were entering in you hindered." False religious leaders keep people from being saved, folks. That's what I'm trying to tell you. That's what Jesus said. And we can't treat that lightly. We can't treat with some kind of indifference. We can't say well, we don't want to say anything. We want to express love. We want to be kind. That's what the liberals condemned Jesus for doing. If Jesus did it, we have a mandate from Him to act as He acted.

And the difference comes in Matthew 16 where Jesus says to Peter, "I give you the keys to the kingdom." You see the true teaches, Peter, the apostles, and all who follow in their doctrine, we have the keys. We open the door and let folks in. These people shut the door in their faces by their lies and false religion. I talked not long ago to a religious leader and I said, "Doesn't it bother you that you never give people the saving gospel of Jesus Christ that can save them from eternal hell? Doesn't that bother you?" Well, he was very angry with me. But I was sort of angry with him.

In fact, that kind of thing raises my righteous blood temperature very high. You see men's souls are at stake. And these people work for hell, the scribes and the Pharisees did. This is no small issue. No small issue. Let me just show you how you can characterize them. Go to the 9th Chapter of John's gospel and a very familiar account of a blind man who was born blind for the glory of God's sake. And this blind man was healed by Jesus in a wonderful expression of divine power and compassion. And having been healed by Jesus he then became a very interesting topic of discussion for the religious leaders who needed some way to explain how this guy was healed. He went the...the religious leaders went to the parents and the parents didn't want to get in trouble so they said

asked him. He's a big boy. Verse 21, he's of age, ask him, he'll tell you.

So these words spoke his parents because they feared the Jews. They were afraid. They knew the Jews hated Jesus, the Jewish leaders. That's what the Jews refers to. And by the way, the phrase the Jews most often in the gospel refers to the Jewish leaders. "For they had agreed already," verse 22 of John 9, "they had agreed already if any many did confess that he was Christ he should be thrown out of the synagogue." I mean, it didn't matter who it was. If somebody shows up and say they're the Messiah, throw them out.

Hmmm, unsynagogued. In other words, they had no room in their theology for the Messiah. They had already made up their minds. So in verse 24, they said to the blind man, look you better praise God for what happened to you and not this man. We know this man is a, what, sinner. They called Jesus a sinner. And in verse 34 they really rebuked the blind man when he tries to explain who Jesus must be. They said, "you were born in sin. Do you teach us?" Well, the implication of that is that we weren't. Are you saying you weren't born...you were born in sin. Are you teaching us and they threw him out. See they don't want to be confused of the facts.

They're in the business of sending people to hell. They're in the business of damning the souls of people and they will damn their souls by a denial of the Messiahship of Christ, the deity of Christ, the power of Christ, the work of Christ, the gospel of grace. Whatever it takes to damn men's souls, that's exactly what they want to do, false spiritual leaders.

In Acts 4:17 when the church began to move with power and healing and preaching the gospel, the Sanhedrin got together and they had to stop the message. They said what are we going to do with these men, verse 16. "For indeed a notable miracle has been done by them as manifest to all those who dwell in Jerusalem and we can't deny the miracle." What are we going to do? But that it spread no further among the people. In other words, it had nothing to do with truth. They didn't care if it was true or real or whatever. Just stop it, that's all. "Let us threaten them that they speak henceforth to man in this name." That is the name of Christ. "They called him and commanded them not to speak...called them and commanded them not to speak at all or teach in the name of Jesus."

Wow, see they didn't want anything to do with Jesus. They just slammed the door. Look at 1 Thessalonians 2 for a moment there's several verses here that you might overlook and I think they tie in so very, very well. He's talking here about the Jews who persecuted the church in verse 14. The churches of God in Judea are in Christ Jesus and have suffered from their own countrymen and so forth, even the Jews. And then verse 15, he talks about the Jews and he says "who both killed the Lord Jesus and their own prophets." Listen, when people want to say they didn't kill the Lord, you can't say that. The Scripture says they did. I mean, that was their pattern all along, they killed their prophets. They didn't want to hear the truth.

"They killed the Lord Jesus and their own prophets and they persecute us," Paul says, "and they please not God and they're contrary to all men." In other words, they're not helping people. They're not helping people at all. They forbid us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved. They're trying to keep people from getting saved is what they're doing. Now when you look at the cults, that's what they're trying to do.

I'll never forget being in my office and I got a call from a guy who said, "I'm leaving your church. I'm going to be a Mormon." He was a young fellow and I knew him. And I said, "what are you saying?" He said, "well, I've been learning from Mormonism and I'm going to be going to that movement. In fact, there are some coming over now to teach me." So I ended the conversation and got in my car and beat them to his house. Right over here. And I knocked on the door and when I came in, he was just as white as he could be. And I said, "I just want to confront them. I just have some things to say to them." And I told him they were going to damn his soul if he didn't know Jesus Christ. They would tie him up. I said, "I don't know whether you're a Christian or not, but if you're not, they're going to damn your soul." And I gave him the strongest speech as I could. And I was irate.

And then those two arrived and it was a very interesting conversation. Because I was in the Spirit of Matthew 23 at the time. And I was in absolutely no mood to discuss any doctrine or any theology or to do anything but pronounce curses upon them based on the word of God, which I proceeded to do as fast and furiously as I possibly could and unloaded everything I could think to say about evil soul damning people who deny Christ and His saving gospel and so forth and so forth and so forth.

Well, I haven't had too many occasions like that in my life, but I wish to God that all of us as Christians had more courage. I don't know how those two reacted ultimately to that. I doubt that they'll ever forget it. It was one of those kind of things. And maybe sometime the Lord can use what was said, but I do know this that we become so...oh we become so victimized by the sympathetic people who don't want us to cause any struggles or trouble and don't want to offend anybody and so we allow them so often to go their merry way sending people eternally to hell. And that's just inconceivable.

Works righteousness systems, false religious systems spawned by false religious leaders always will be the strongest opponents of the gospel of grace. And we have them today absolutely every place. They're everywhere. I mean, you can't even...you can't even deal with them all. It's an absolutely traumatic experience for me to read the Saturday religious page of the L.A. Times. I can't stand to look at it. Because all you see are proliferation of the spiritual phonies every place. And you take a person who's trying to find comfort or is trying to find answers or trying to find some spiritual help and they wind up going in a direction like that and the door is slammed in their face to salvation.

Absolutely tragic, tragic. Damning teachers and they come in Protestantism. They come in liberal Protestantism as much as they come in Roman Catholicism or Mormonism or Christian science or Jehovah's Witnessess or World Wide Church of God or Unification Church or Unity or Unitarianism or whatever religion, false religion in the world. And we can't be tolerant of those things that damn men's souls.

Now just briefly, let me give you the second one in verse 15. Verse 14 we noted it's not in the early manuscripts so we looked to verse 15. False spiritual leaders are cursed not only for exclusion, but perversion; perversion. They corrupt people who come into their religion. They not only keep them out of the true religion, but they corrupt them in the false religion. It's just two sides of the same thing really. They pursue converts and make them perverts. Verse 15, "Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites for you compass sea and land to make one proselyte and when he is made, you make him twice more the son of hell than yourselves." Boy what a statement. You not only shut him out of the true kingdom, but you turn him into a child of hell.

Now apparently during the life of our Lord according to Jewish history there was a great effort being made to proselytize Gentiles, that is to bring them in. The word proselyte comes originally from the term it means a stranger. To take these strangers and bring them in. It's used only here and three times in the book of Acts. It has to do with converting over. And apparently proselytizing was aggressively being done around the time of our Lord and that's as it should be historically. In other words, in the Old Testament, God mandated Israel to go out and reach people. Israel wasn't to be anything more than a channel to reach the world. God revealed Himself through Israel to the world, not just to Israel.

You remember the reluctance of Jonah, don't you, to do that? And when the Gentile city of Nineveh repented he wanted to do because he couldn't stand Gentiles getting in on the covenant. So they had become very preventual in their thinking. But during the time of our Lord it seemed as though there was a little bit more aggression in that area. And they were reaching out and trying to bring converts in. In fact, we know historically that many of the synagogues were attended by pagans who had turned from their pagan worship and were now coming to the true God and they were going to the synagogues. They were converts to Judaism.

And so the Lord looks at these Pharisees and scribes and says you're busy at this. You're compassing sea and land. You're going everywhere. You're just surrounding the whole part of the world you live for one convert, for one proselyte, which is to say they were busy trying to add to their numbers. You know when you're in a false system it helps if other people join. It sort of gives you a feeling that you must be right, because look at the folks that are joining.

I really believe that people flourish sometimes in the cults for no other reason than they think it must be right because of all the people who are in it. And so the Pharisees in order to sort of stoke the

fires of their own doubt turn it into some kind of confidence, were adding people to their movement. Now you need to know two things about the proselyte. One is there were two kinds of proselytes. One is there was what was called the proselyte of the gate to the proselyte of righteousness. Now the proselyte of the gate was a Gentile who just attended the synagogue. He just barely got in the gate. That's the way they referred to him. He just came in the gate. He stopped worshipping his pagan deities. He started worshipping the true God. He showed up at the synagogue. He is called, for example, two things in the book of Acts. He is called in some places in the book of Acts a worshiper of God, Acts 16:14 and Acts 18:7.

He's also called just plain worshiper, Acts 13:50 and Acts 17:4 and 17. So he was called a worshiper of God or just a worshiper. He came to worship God. The true God as opposed to his pagan idols. But he never got into the full blown swing of things. He was not a proselyte any more than just inside the gate. So he became known as a proselyte of the gate. Now there were many of them, there were many of those. But the other proselyte was the proselyte of righteousness. This was the guy who took the whole thing hook, line, and sinker. He bought it all. He became a self-righteous, legalistic, tradition keeping, law keeping, circumcised proselyte. This is what the Pharisees were after.

Now there were many who became proselytes of the gate. Very, very few proselytes of righteousness. And that's why it says you zealously go everywhere you can go making a great effort to get one convert to Phariseism. To get one proselyte of righteousness. To get one guy who joins your movement. One convert. And by the way when a game came all the way to that proselyte of righteousness point, they even gave him a new Jewish name to cut off everything from his past. It was the whole thing, circumcision, purification, full ceremony, adherence to the mosaic tradition law and all that. It was not very usual that it happened, but now and then it did and so you go to all that effort just to get one in your movement.

And look what happens when that one comes. You have made him two times more a child of hell than yourselves. Have you ever noticed that a convert to a cult is more zealous and aggressive for the cult than somebody raised in it? That's pretty much routine. That's almost true of anything. That can be said of Christianity. Very frequently people saved out of the world and brought into Christ from an ungodly, un-Christlike background are more zealous for their newfound faith than people that are raised up in it.

There's something about that tremendous transition that is made. That euphoria of coming into the movement that gives you a great amount of zeal. And so here this new convert is filled with more fanatical zeal for his newfound system than even the ones that brought him in. And naturally there's a euphoria about having discovered what he thinks is the truth and the newness and he's not been in long enough to find out all the problems with it. And he becomes a double son of hell in the sense that he is perverted even beyond his teachers. And more zealous even than they are. And so they

make a spiritual convert who turns out to be perverted instead of finding God, instead of finding heaven, he becomes a son of hell.

What a statement? Twice as hypocritical, twice as damnable. You see when false religions convert people, they're making them double children of hell. Now what does it mean to be a child of hell? It's a genitive, which means it refers to character and deeds which mark one out as belonging to hell. A hellish person, one who ought to go there because that's his character. A double child of hell would be doubly worthy of hell. Doubly worthy of damnation, very strong language.

Now what is the word hell? It's the word in the Greek, it's Gehenna. Now Gehenna's an interesting word. It really kind of is a shortened form of Gebenhenna. But it comes from a term having to do with a valley. There was a valley near Jerusalem called the valley of Hinnom. And in that valley in the Old Testament time the worshipers of the god Molech burned their children alive. In other words, part of the sacrificial system of the worship of Molech was to burn children. You can read it in 2 Chronicles Chapter 28, verse 3. I think Jeremiah talks about it in Chapter 2 and also in Chapter 7, verse 31. That the offering of children to the god Molech in the fire.

That valley then became identified with the worst kind of paganism, with the burning of human flesh of infants. And later on Josiah in 2 Kings 23:10 declared it unclean. He declared it an unclean place. And so it became a dump. It became, in fact, the dump, Jeremiah 7:32. And all the garbage and refuse and trash and filth of the city would go into that place and it would be constantly burning, constantly burning, constantly burning. The valley of Hinnom, Gehenna. And so that became the symbol of eternal burning where the flesh of children had burned that was desecrated by idol worship, the city dump, the place of constant fire. It became synonymous as it were with what hell is like as a place of continual burning of those who are desecrated, the waste of humanity, the God and Christ rejecters.

And so he says when you make one of your perverts, you make him twice the son of Gehenna. Twice hellish person than you yourselves are. And the comparative does speak of degrees of hellishness and degrees of the manifestation of hellish character as well as degrees of the manifestation of a hellish punishment. And I have to say that today it's no different. You see these systems which are the real threat to the eternal souls of men must be confronted as what they are, hellish systems.

People searching for religion, searching for God, searching for answers in life, the kingdom is shut to them and they're herded in to a damning system. I trust you have the right perspective on these systems and these leaders who keep people out of heaven on the one hand and usher them into hell on the other hand. Oh my. To stand before God having done that is inconceivable to feel the wrath of His fury. Now let me close with just two things. One is this and we're going to save the rest of the pastors next week and we'll share some of it with them, because I want them to preach this message

too to their people. But two things I want to comment on. One is this, listen, if you're a Christian first thing is this, you ought to be thankful that somewhere along the way in your life you met somebody who was a door opener, not a door closer, right?

Because you're not where you are because of anything you deserve or anything you merit. You're where you are because of the grace of God and so am I and I can tell you right now, I thank God that I was raised in a Christian home with Christian parents who taught me the truth. And that I have sat under men of God who taught me the truth and that I have not had the kingdom door slammed in my face and been ushered into hell by some false religious leader. And I think all of us ought to have that perspective. And sometimes when you get a little uptight about the church because, you know, you didn't get the seat you wanted at the banquet or you couldn't find a place to park your car or you quival because you don't like the wallpaper in the ladies room or the men's room or whatever. Or you didn't particularly care about the solo or the pastor wasn't very good that day. Get things in perspective will you?

The one thing you can bless the name of God for is that at this place you're hearing the truth and you have heard the saving truth. And it may have been not here, but somewhere else that someone gave you the saving truth. And you have a tremendous responsibility to offer your praise and thanks to God for the place you are where the truth is preached and taught and lived and believed. And I hope you're grateful for that. With all of the imperfections.

Secondly, dear friends, if you're a Christian, you are a kingdom door opener. Do you understand that? Then you've got to be out there calling people away from the closed doors to the open one. In other words, we have the keys to the kingdom. We know how people are to come in. We understand the truth of the gospel. And it's our tremendous responsibility to open that door to folks and to call them out of those damning systems. Don't be pussyfooting around that stuff. Call it what it is.

Sometimes if you just say what it is to people, you'll plant a thought in their mind they can't get away from. I've done that on several occasions at the doorbell ringers that come and want to teach about some cult and just give them a fast list of the things that Jesus called these people. You are a, blah, blah, blah, and just go down the line and say and I'm not interested in talking to you. I will be happy to open the door to the kingdom and share with you the truth. I will not listen to your damning lies and let them go away with that in their mind for a while. Instead of going away thinking they've defeated you in a debate. There needs to be a confrontation. And you have to be sensitive to the Spirit of God as to how you should do that, but we need to be calling people away. As Jude talks, we need to be snatching brands from the burning. Well, let's pray.

Father, these are such strong things that our Lord said and we are anxious that we should carry His same spirit and yet not without the balance that He demonstrated of sympathetic love, but Lord we seem easier able to handle that side than the courage of bold confrontation. So help us Lord to find

that balance. And Lord save this generation from false spiritual leaders. Lord save Your church from the encroachment and corruption of those who deny the faith and are within the church. Save us from damnable heresies, hellish doctrines. Save us from the hypocrites who have theatrical goodness who appear to be men of God and inwardly are ravening wolves seeking only to devour the souls of men in eternal perdition.

Save us Lord from these who would deny me Your kingdom and usher them to hell. And Lord make us thankful, thankful that You have brought us the truth and thankful that we can call others to the truth. That we can open the door for them, because we know the saving gospel. We anticipate Lord that You'll give us opportunity to apply these things we've learned this day. In Christ's name, Amen.

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