

What's Missing in False Religion, Part 1

Scripture: Luke 11:46-50

Code: 42-166

We come back to Luke chapter 11 again in our study and to the words of our Lord Jesus Christ with regard to hypocrites. I've entitled this section, "Jesus curses hypocrites," and it actually starts in verse 37 and runs to the end of the chapter, a fairly prolonged discussion by Jesus that took place at a lunch that He was invited to by a Pharisee. And since they were the quintessential hypocrites and false religious leaders of Israel, He took the opportunity to expose them as such to their faces on their turf in the home of one of them at what was perhaps a somewhat benign event, a lunch. And in exposing their hypocrisy, He also gave us a pattern by which to understand all religious hypocrites. This then becomes very formidable teaching, very, very important teaching. And behind that, behind understanding that this is a very general lesson that our Lord gives here, even though it is drawn out of a specific occasion and a specific group of hypocrites, it extends to all false religion, but behind that is also the reality...and you have to keep this in mind all the time when you're studying the life of Christ...Jesus is God, Jesus is God. He is not partly God, He is not a reduced version of God, He is not sort of mini-God. He is God. So every attitude that Jesus conveys is a divine attitude. Every thing He says is reflective of the divine mind. Every thing He demands is an expression of the divine will. Never is God the God of heaven, the Creator God, the Almighty God of the universe more clearly manifest than in Jesus Christ. And so we are literally seeing how God Himself addresses false religion. This is the divine view. This is not the opinion of Jesus who somehow is a few steps below God, this is God in human flesh and the view of false religion that is rendered here is the divine perspective. This is how God feels.

And as I have been telling you in the last couple of weeks as we've been looking at this little section of Scripture and now we come to it for the third time, all false religion is hypocrisy and all false religious leaders are hypocrites, all of them. You either know God or you don't. And since the only way you can know God is through the true gospel, if you don't believe the true gospel, you don't know God and to say you do is a lie and deception and hypocrisy. The world is literally a wash in hypocrites. All those people except those who teach and preach the truth of Scripture represent some form of hypocrisy. The Greek word from which we get the English word hypocrisy is *hupokrisis*, it's a transliteration...*hupokrisis*, hypocrisy. And it's...it basically means an actor's role, or an actor's response. The idea of a hypocrite is somebody who deliberately plays a part. In other words, he's creating an illusion, he's conducting himself as if he is someone or she is someone she is not. It's a role they play. And you can look up lexicons that give definitions to Greek words and you will see this kind of explanation of the word *hupokrisis*. But there's an interesting note in most lexical studies of it. When you use the word in a religious sense, or when you use the word in a spiritual sense, it goes

beyond just the simple idea of acting or playing a role. It is an insincere act of godliness to cover up wickedness. That's what it is. It is an insincere acting the part of holiness as a coverup for wickedness. So what you have then is not only an act going on, but an act that endeavors to convey deception about one's true condition. This is a very precise description consistent with our understanding of the Bible. The Bible describes false teachers always as hypocrites, always...and always playing a role that they know God, they know the truth to coverup wretchedness and wickedness. And as I say, all false religions in the world are hypocrisies and all false religious leaders are hypocrites. They pretend to be righteous and they're unrighteous. They pretend to be good and they're evil. They intend to be moral and they're immoral. They pretend to be virtuous and they are basically wicked. They pretend to be holy and they are full of transgression, they are not what they appear to be. And that's the game. And always the hypocrisy is to look righteous, look moral, look virtuous, look holy to coverup what you really are. And what you really are is perverse and corrupt and wicked and evil.

And since it is the nature of the human heart, according to Jeremiah, that the heart of man is deceitful above all things. But on top of everything else, the heart of man is a deceiver. Hypocrisy works well because it is the best of deceitful covers to appear to be religious...to wear religious garb, to conduct yourself in a religious life, to make a commitment to religion, to carry out religious ceremonies, to have a superficial kind of devotion to morality, etc., etc. It is these kinds of people and these kinds of systems that control the mass of humanity in the world and always have. And there is no disaster equal to this. As I've been saying in the series in Jude, the most disastrous kind of terrorism in the world is religious terrorism, far worse than any other kind. And the worst terrorists in the world are not the Al Qaeda, they're not the people who blow themselves up, suicide bombers, the worst terrorists in the world are in religion. The worst terrorists in the world are false religious leaders because they don't blow people's bodies up, they blow people's souls up. They are far worse. Just sitting down and contemplating this reality, the disaster of having your life cluttered and controlled by false religion is the ultimate disaster. Its leaders pick your pockets, deceive your mind and damn your soul, all in the name of morality and religion. There is no equal tragedy to that tragedy because of its eternal consequence. And thus the God of truth makes an issue of this and therefore God in flesh, Jesus, makes an issue of this. And God confronts it from the beginning of Scripture to the end of Scripture. It's everywhere in the Bible, it's unavoidable. In fact, for those people who don't want to teach discernment, for those people who don't want to expose false religion, they have to avoid the Bible so they have to build a ministry from something other than the Scripture because if you're going to build your ministry around the Scripture, you're going to collide with false teachers constantly. And God warns us about false teachers and does all He can to expose them so that we can be discerning.

Now that's what's happening here. In our text, verse 37 says, that a Pharisee invited Jesus to lunch. This was a sort of late morning kind of brunch meal that the Jewish people had after some hours of work. And Jesus went in and sat down at the table. This was a Pharisee that hosted Him. There were other Pharisees there and there were scribes there called lawyers or law experts in this narrative.

They were all collected there to hear from Jesus who had attracted no small crowds and no small stir and had attracted great interest from the Pharisees and scribes basically who wanted to somehow eliminate Him. And they were already planning some way to execute Him or bring about His death.

So He is invited to lunch at the house of a Pharisee. And in a very blunt confrontation, He immediately pronounces curses on the Pharisees. In fact, He says to them in verse 39, and I'm just reviewing, that you are classic, you clean the outside of the cup and the platter inside you're full of robbery and wickedness. You are the classic hypocrite, clean on the outside, filthy on the inside. Sitting at lunch looking at the dishes in front of Him, He sees the illustration or the metaphor. You're like somebody who washes the outside of the dish, the part you don't eat off, and the inside of the dish is filthy and vile. You really are fools if you don't understand that the same God who cares about the outside also cares about the inside. And then He pronounces three curses on them, verses 42, 43 and 44. First He curses them in verse 42 because they pay their little minuscule tithes of tiny little seeds and they ignore justice and the love of God. That is because they do what is superficial, not what is deep. Their insides never having been changed, of course they are left with nothing but tampering with performance.

He then curses them in verse 43 because of their pride. All they care about is the front seat in the synagogue and complicated and respectful greetings in the marketplace. And then thirdly, curses them again, verse 44, because they pollute anybody who comes near to them. The Old Testament, there was a ceremonial uncleanness if you touched a dead body. The Jews extrapolated that, that you got ceremonial unclean if you touched a grave. And He says, you know, you're like concealed tombs that nobody knows is there, people are walking over them all the time, you're defiling everybody that gets near you. So He has severely confronted them. You are hypocrites. You are superficial. And we went through that in detail.

Now as a result of that in verse 45, one of the lawyers...and I told you that lawyers or law experts are the same as scribes, they're called scribes down in verse 53. One of the lawyers who was there responds and he said to Him in reply, "Teacher, when You say this You insult us, too." I mean, they saw it for what it was, it was an insult to them because they were self-righteous and he says, "You just insulted us." You remember last time I told you lawyers or scribes were the ones who were the theologians in the Pharisaic system. They were the ones who developed the system. They were the sort of brains behind the system. The Pharisees in general were the practitioners and these men were the theologians. They were the ones who put it together. They were students of the Law. They had developed this corrupt Judaism, this apostate, empty, false religion. And the indictment of all indictments that He brings against them is down in verse 52, in the middle of the verse, "You didn't enter in yourselves, you didn't enter into the Kingdom of God, you don't know God, you are not saved, you don't belong to God, you didn't come in and those who were entering you hindered." And there, friends, is the real issue in false religion. They're not in the Kingdom and they're not going to take anybody else into the Kingdom, they're just going to prevent people from getting there. They are

obstructionists. They obstruct people from the Kingdom and that's exactly what Satan wants to do. Satan is in charge of them. They belong to Satan. Jesus even said to them, "You're of your father, the devil," in the eighth chapter of John. It is very clear who you belong to. Satan's ministers are disguised as angels of light. The Apostle Paul said they appear to be religious and moral and know God, and all of that. They offer themselves as the ones who will lead you to God and lead you to salvation and lead you to the Kingdom and lead you to heaven. They're not in themselves and those who are even attempting to get in they will prevent. And there, my dear friends, is the ultimate, the ultimate denunciation of false religion...it stops people from the Kingdom of God. You don't get in by false religion, you only get in by Jesus Christ. No other way.

And so the indictment comes then that the lawyers, the architects of this system, and all the Pharisees who practice the system are all obstructing people from the Kingdom, just like all the other false religionists on the face of the earth. And I remind you that among the Pharisees, some of them were lawyers. Not all the lawyers were Pharisees, the Sadducees had some of their own scribes, too. Not all the Pharisees were lawyers, but among the Pharisees there were some who were the theologians in the group. And He says you're in the same boat. In fact, in verse 46 He curses them. This man says, "When You say this You insult us, too." And He said immediately, "Okay, woe to you, too." He got that exactly right. You heard Me right. He gave three curses to the Pharisees and now He gives three to the lawyers. Verse 46, "Woe to you lawyers as well." Verse 47, "Woe to you..." And then down in verse 52, "Woe to you, lawyers," again. And really all six go to all of them because they were really in one religious system, it's just that they had different roles in the system. But they all deserved the same denunciations. And so here you have six curses, six declarations of damnation pronounced upon THE most religious people in Israel. They were obstructionists. They were keeping people out of heaven, out of the Kingdom of God, away from the truth that saved. That terrible, terrible statement at the end of verse 52, "You didn't enter in yourselves, and those who were entering in, you hindered." This is the denunciation universally of all false religion. And since they aren't in the Kingdom, they don't know God, they aren't headed for heaven, they can't help anybody else. So everything is a deception. Their hearts have never been changed, therefore they're corrupt on the inside, their hearts are wicked, their hearts are deceitful, they've never been transformed, they've never been changed. And yet they wear the facade of religion and they are the classic hypocrite. They appear spiritual as a means of covering up the corruption of their heart.

Now our Lord answers this lawyer in a very, very powerful way. The language here is at first somewhat difficult to sort out. By the time we're through with it, I think it will be clear to you. In verse 46 through 52 Jesus speaks and here He gives three essentials of true religion that hypocrites don't possess. Here's what's missing, folks, in false religion. Here's what's missing, and they're implied here. First of all, what is absent from all false religion is spiritual power...spiritual power. And by that I mean power on the inside to change, power on the inside to be what you should be, power on the inside to obey the Law or God, power on the inside to please God, power on the inside to become righteous. All false religions are void of spiritual power and Jesus points this out, verse 46, "But He

said instantly, 'Woe to you, lawyers, as well. You've got it exactly right. You also I will curse and I will curse you specifically. You are the ones that weigh men down with burdens hard to bear while you yourselves will not even touch the burdens with one of your fingers.'"

They were the ones who invented the systems. They were the ones who made all the rules. They were the ones who interpreted all the Scriptures and held people to their interpretation. You weigh men down with burdens hard to bear and you give them no help. Therein, dear friends, is the problem, the first problem in all false religion, it has no power to produce what it requires. All the Law can do, even the Law of God, even the Law of Moses, all it can do is show us how sinful we are. There is no power in the Law to change anybody...none. I mean, that's virtually true of any law. Whatever law it is, there's nothing in the law itself that empowers a person. The law just draws the line that tells you what's going to happen when you cross over that. What drives the person is on the inside. It's not what comes into the man from the outside, not the rules that somebody makes, it's what's in his heart that defiles the man. The Law can't change the heart. So all the Law can do is make the rules that prove to you how filthy your heart is. The Law of God then just reveals how sinful you are because you can't keep it.

So the Law can't help you. The Law can't empower you. And that's what's wrong with all religious systems in the world. They can make all the religious rules, all the righteous rules they want, all the moral, virtuous things they want, they can create all the ceremonies but they cannot do anything to empower the person to please God cause the best that we can do, even our righteousness before God is filthy rags. "By the deeds of the Law, no flesh will ever be justified," Romans 3 says. No one. And here's a perfect illustration of it. He curses them, a woe is a declaration of judgment from the Judge Himself, Jesus according to John 5:22 and 27 has been given all judgment, He is their judge that day at lunch and He is their judge eternally. They will come before His bar finally to be sent into eternal hell and the judgment is that you are hypocrites, you require people to bear burdens they can't carry and you can't carry them either and you can't relieve them from the burden. There just is no power in false religion. That's why the people who are in false religion are one thing, let's say on Sunday, and something else all week long. That's why even the leaders of false religion are so sinful. I'm never surprised when some false religious leader or some priest or pastor in some false system blows up morally or is discovered to have been a child abuser, or sexual deviate or...it doesn't surprise me because there's nothing in the system to empower them to be anything different. Not everybody is as bad as possible to be, not everybody is equally evil, but they all are impotent to please God and to be anything other than sinful fallen people. You weigh men down with burdens. The word burdens, *phortion*, that word, I chased it around a little bit in the Greek New Testament, I found it in Acts 27:10, is talking about a ship's cargo. It's about a big burden is what it's about. They literally put a shipload of cargo on your back and expect you to carry it. In Acts chapter 15 at the Jerusalem council, it was determined that the gospel doesn't do this and so in verse 10, "So now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing on the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?" What they're saying is...Look, we're not going to bring

out a bunch of rules, we're not going to bring out a bunch of Jewish tradition and law and impose it on these people, we couldn't bear it, our fathers couldn't bear it, nobody can carry that load. And I love the next verse, verse 11, "We believe that we are saved through grace...grace."

We're not going to put a pile of things on them by which supposedly they earn a righteous standing with God. So the word is a word that means a massive amount, a cargo load and hard to bear. That verb is only here in the New Testament and it means a burden which inflicts injury. You're breaking their backs with a cargo they can't carry. That is the idea. And at the same time, you yourselves will not even touch the burden with one of your fingers. This is the interesting thing. There's nothing inherent in the religion, I don't care what religion it is, there's nothing inherent in the ceremonies, there's nothing inherent in the rituals, there's nothing inherent in the system that has the power to change their lives and to make them good people who are bad. Secondly, there is no power in the leadership to assist them. I mean, it's just a total disaster. The religious leaders are as impotent as everybody else. In fact, that verb "will not even touch the burdens with one of your fingers," interesting verb, *prospsauro*, to touch slightly, to literally pass your finger barely over something. You don't move your little finger to help these people. They can't. All spiritual systems apart from the truth are satanic, hypocritical, and impotent. That's why it's so ludicrous for people, even evangelical people, to say that you don't have to be a Christian to go to heaven. It's an absolute lie to say that, that God's going to overlook the fact that you lived in deception and accept your efforts, your attempts to do good as sufficient enough. We all know there's only one way to be saved, and that's through Jesus Christ. And this was the indictment of if anybody should have been accepted, it should have been the Jews at this period of time, it was even before the cross and the resurrection. Surely with all their effort and all their work at being religious, there's some merit that God would accept and God showed up at lunch and cursed them six times. And they were the religion nearest to the truth. What does it say for the ones farthest away?

If you go over to the twenty-third chapter of Matthew, backing up, it's forward chronologically, it's backwards in your New Testament. A little later in Jesus' ministry, He said the things that are recorded in Matthew 23, but they give us a parallel teaching that the Lord gave later on. He was speaking in Matthew 23 to the multitude and the disciples. He was talking about the scribes and Pharisees...verse 2...the scribes and Pharisees who seated themselves in the chair of Moses. Nobody put them there, they usurped that authority. They took over. And He says, "When they tell you do and observe," what He means by that is if they repeat the Law of Moses, do that. "But do not do according to their deeds for they say things and do not do them." Why? They can't. They can't. We can only obey the Law, we can only fulfill the Law when our hearts have been changed, right? They can't. So they tell you these things, they say these things and they don't do them. They can't do them for themselves.

End of verse 4, they tie up heavy loads...heavy loads, lay them on men's shoulders and they themselves are willing to move them with so much as a finger. I mean, what a terrible, what a wretched thing, these are plunderers of the souls of people, everybody from pastors to priests to gurus to religious leaders to Mormon elders to you name it and everybody in between...all the false religious leaders are impotent, powerless. They can't make a difference in your life and they can't make a difference in their own lives. They can't do anything. They're the blind leading the blind and they're going to both go in the ditch, the eternal ditch. And I told you when we were studying this a couple of weeks ago that when there's nothing there, when there's no power there, and everything is external, they proliferate the symbolic, don't they? And they proliferate the secondary and they proliferate their status and the images and they make more of what's external. And that's what the Jews had done. I mean, it was bizarre, there were tens of thousands of little deals that you had to follow, burdens that were just way beyond anybody's capability.

For example, let's say it's the Sabbath and everybody worked six days and on the Sabbath day you rested. So Sabbath day must have been a tough day because if you had worked all six days, on what day do you do what your wife wants you to do around the house? What day do you take the chair down the street to the kids that they needed, or what day do you move this deal over here, or what day do you fix what's broken or...if you could only do certain things on the Sabbath? So on the Sabbath, they said, a man could carry a burden...listen to this...but he couldn't carry it in his right hand and he couldn't carry it in his left hand. He could not carry it on his chest and he couldn't carry it on his shoulders. However, he could carry it on the back of his hand. Now that would be a small item, wouldn't it? He could carry it with his foot. He could carry it hanging out of his mouth, or tied to his ear, or tied to his hair. Or he could carry it like this with his elbow...you wouldn't go very far in that position. He could carry it inside his sandal. What is that? What is the point of that? If you violated that, he was unholy. You see, what happens is if there's nothing in the heart, it proliferates the external, it just gets multiplied ten thousand times, these little ways that these deceivers perpetrated on people an illusion of righteousness. But there were also a multitude of loopholes and the lawyers who knew the traditions knew them well enough to work their way around them. And they weren't about to help anybody. That's why when Jesus in Matthew 11 said, "Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me." He said that to all you who are weary and...what?...heavy laden. This is just impressive. Take My yoke and learn of Me for I am meek and lowly, you'll find rest for your souls. I'll give you rest, I'll give you a burden that's light. My yoke is easy. My burden is light." He was saying, "I'll deliver you from false religion. I'll deliver you from all the rules and rituals and externals and impotent system." Any kind of legalism, any kind of external religion, any kind of self-righteous system, works system, system of morality, of ceremony, or whatever, gives no power, offers no help and its purveyors are as helpless as its victims. Do you understand that? Its purveyors are as helpless as its victims.

That's why there's so many scandals. I'm never surprised when we find out that liberal pastors in denominations deny the Bible and the deity of Jesus Christ want to ordain homosexuals. It doesn't surprise me. They haven't got any power to deal with homosexuality. I'm not surprised that Catholic

priests turn out to be homosexuals or pedophiles or child abusers or whatever, they don't have any help for themselves, let alone anybody else. It's an illusion, all these people pouring in there have the, I guess, the honesty to one degree or another to sit in the confessional and unload all their iniquities on the priest and he's supposed to be able to offer them from God the power of forgiveness, which he can't offer them because he doesn't have and can't give and he goes out of there to live a completely sinful life. In one sense you're outraged by that, and in another sense, what do you expect? Well what do you expect? In one way what the Catholic Church has done to priests is a scandal beyond belief, that you would take people like that and force them into celibacy and then put them in a booth to listen to all people's sexual escapades all day long and expect them to walk out of that and not have some kind of deviated thoughts that get acted on. False religion has no ability to restrain the flesh, it can't...it has no power...none at all. All it can do is what verse 39 says, "It cleans the outside of the cup and the platter, and inside it's robbery or plunder and wickedness."

I'm never surprised when I see these TV false teachers fall into immorality of one kind or another, or whatever. And I'm always suspicious of them. And I'm always suspicious even of the most moral cult people who appear on the surface moral because I know the heart's never changed and external religion can't change the heart, it can't subdue the flesh. And not everybody acts it out, but Jesus said it's what's in your heart. Hate is the same as murder, lust is the same as adultery.

Now there's no spiritual power. Second, the reason there's no spiritual power is the second deficiency of false religion and that's because there's no spiritual life. Where there's life there's power. Where there's energy, it has to come from life. They have no power because they have no life, they are dead in trespasses and sin. They do not have a new heart, they do not have a new spirit, they do not have the Holy Spirit, they do not have a love for God for righteousness. They do not have a new creation. They do not have a capacity to honor God. They do not have the ability to serve God. The power of sin, the dominion of sin has not been broken and Jesus points that out in the next section. Verse 47, "Woe to you, for you build the tombs of the prophets and it was your fathers who killed them." Consequently, you are witnesses and approve the deeds of your fathers because it was they who killed them and you build their tombs. This is on the surface apparently difficult passage to interpret. But I think if you just take it in the simplest sense, it comes across very clearly. There's irony in it. There's a way in which Jesus sort of turns it on its head and I think I can show you what I mean by that.

One of the things that the Jews of Jesus' day did, one of the things they were committed to was the fact that they were a lot better than their forefathers. They believed that they were much better than their forefathers. Now their forefathers in the past had killed the prophets, right? And you can read about that in Nehemiah chapter 9 verse 26, Jeremiah chapter 2 verse 30, and other places. They killed the prophets. And they persecuted the prophets that were sent to them. They were apostate. Israel of the Old Testament, if you're reading through the Old Testament with many of us, you know that they had killed the prophets and they were apostate and all the kings in the north were bad and

all the kings in the south were bad and wickedness was rampant everywhere. And you know the whole story. It...and when men came from God with a message from God, life was tough, they were persecuted, they were rejected, they were thrown in pits, they were sawn in half. Read Hebrews 11, it's all there.

Well these Pharisees in the time of Jesus fancied themselves to be more holy than their fathers. And so what they did, according to verse 47, was they built the tombs of the prophets, built or embellished. In other words, they went out and decorated them, or enhanced them, or enriched them and this was their way of saying we are better than our fathers, our fathers killed them but we honor them. So this was more of their pretense. And back in Matthew 23, verse 29, Jesus says, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, you build the tombs of the prophets, you adorn the monuments of the righteous," and here's why, "and you say if we had been living in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partners with them in shedding the blood of the prophets." We never would have done that, we're better than they are. And so, to distance yourself from your apostate fathers, to distance yourself from Israel in the past, you instead of killing the prophets go out and you embellish their tombs and you that way give honor to the prophets as a way in which to affirm that if you had been alive then you would never have done to them what your fathers did. You build the tombs of the prophets, and it was your fathers who killed them.

Then He turns that whole thing on its head in verse 48. "Consequently you are witnesses and approve the deeds of your fathers because it was they who killed them and you build their tombs." It's accomplishing the opposite. You think that by building and embellishing these tombs you're proving to be different than your fathers, I'm telling you, you are no different than your fathers. You actually are witnesses who approve what your fathers did.

Why did He say that to them? Because what were they plotting while He was right there with them? To do what? To kill Him. Verse 54, "They were plotting against Him, plotting His murder." And He just turns it on its head. He says, "You're no different, you're embellishing the tombs of the prophets is a kind of hypocrisy that makes you as guilty as your fathers." If you really wanted to show honor to the prophets, you'd obey the message the prophets gave, which they still rejected the message of true heart righteousness. And if you really wanted to honor the prophets, you would honor the one of whom the prophets spoke who stands right here." So they pretend to honor God's prophets. They pretend to be righteous, to be holier than the generations of the past. But they were no different. They thirsted for the blood of the greatest prophet ever. And in verse 31 of Matthew 23 Jesus says directly to them, "You are sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up then the guilt of your fathers." You're in the same line, nothing changed. The history of Israel is just horribly sad. Apostates through the Old Testament all the way, apostates in the New, pretending to honor the prophets while not believing their message nor believing on the one they predicted would come. They were so spiritually blind, they were so spiritually lifeless. That's the word, they didn't have any spiritual life and that's why they couldn't know who was in their midst, they were so dead. It was as if a live person walked into a

mortuary amidst a whole group of corpses. They couldn't connect. There's no way corpses would know who's there. They possessed no spiritual life, therefore no spiritual perception. And so they wanted to kill the prophet of all prophets. Later Jesus will tell them a parable about a man who had a vineyard and he sent his servants to collect from the man who was managing it for him, and the man killed all the servants. And finally he thought I'll send my son, and he sent his son and they killed his son. And Jesus says that's what you've done, you've killed all the prophets, and I sent My Son, you killed My Son. That's God's view.

The truth of the matter is, your decorating the tombs becomes ironically a way to identify with your fathers. You are the same as they. You think your veneration of their tombs shows you're better than your fathers who killed the prophets. But the reality is your attention to their graves just links you to what your fathers did which is what you're planning to do to the prophet of all prophets right now.

False religion always hates the true Christ. Have you noticed that? It always manufactures a false Christ and a false gospel, to one degree or another. It hates the truth. Muslims hate Christ and they hate Christian truth. The Roman Catholic Church through the ages has hated Christian truth, martyred true believers through the ages, particularly the Dark Ages. Error always seeks to kill the truth and those who proclaim it.

Well, our Lord is not done. Verse 49, and we'll stop here. "For this reason," that is since you and your fathers are the same, since your attitude toward the prophets is no different than your fathers were, "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.'" This is a most interesting statement. You're just like your fathers, that's why Matthew 23:32 I read you a moment ago said, "Fill up the guilt of your fathers." You and your fathers are the same, you kill those who bring you the truth. Your tomb program, your tomb enhancement program is not an act of repentance. In fact, you're just like your fathers, that's why you're plotting to kill Me. And so He goes further, "The wisdom of God said," this is, by the way, not a quote from the wisdom literature in the Old Testament, this quote doesn't appear in the Old Testament anywhere, not a direct quote. It would be better to translate it this way, "God in His wisdom said..." He's just saying God in His wisdom said, and here's what God said, "I'll send to them prophets and Apostles, among them some they will kill, some they will persecute." Jesus is simply saying God said this would happen and it will.

Who are the prophets and Apostles? New Testament preachers. Prophets and Apostles were the leaders of the early church. They were the preachers of the gospel and the messengers. And Jesus says to them, "Not only are you just like your fathers and had the prophets come today you would have killed them, but you are going to show that you're like your fathers because the prophets that God sends to preach the gospel, the apostles that He sends to preach the gospel, you're going to kill some of them and persecute others of them." And that is exactly what they did. You're no different. They would kill Jesus and then they would kill James and then they would kill Stephen. They would

kill Peter. They would kill the rest of the Apostles, for the most part. The purveyors of false religion would carry on their killing from the prophets of Old right down to the prophets and apostles of the New. And this still extends today. Across the world preachers of the true gospel are persecuted by false religion and slaughtered here and there as men fill up the guilt of those who originally rejected.

False religious leaders and all who follow them may talk sentimentally about Old Testament prophets, they may talk sentimentally about Jesus and the Apostles and all of that. But all who reject the gospel, the true gospel, really do bear the guilt. Hebrews 6:6 says, "They crucify the Son of God afresh and put Him to open shame." In other words, they become like 1 Corinthians 11:27 says, "Guilty of the body and blood of the Lord." I think about that with regard to the Catholic Mass and to liberal Protestants in denominations that deny the deity of Christ. Every time they carry on the Mass, or every time they serve a Communion, they are guilty of the body and blood of Christ. If they reject the true gospel of Christ to carry out the service of the blood and the cup in a perverted way is to heap guilt upon guilt upon guilt upon guilt. To be religious, particularly in a Christian framework, but not to know the truth and to be spiritually impotent because you are spiritually dead, but to carry out all the emblems of the cross is to compound one's judgment beyond comprehension. And anybody that comes to the Lord's table has to examine himself that he doesn't bring chastening upon himself, right? Judgment. You go in there and give a perverted demonstration at the table of the Lord from an unbelieving heart that belongs to the enemy, perpetrating some kind of lie and deception on the people who are engaging in this and the guilt is just immense. And so it's a warning to those in false religion. He says you are just like those in the past and you're not only linked to the past but to the future. You're going to do it to the apostles and the prophets, just the way your fathers did it to the prophets of old. And they did...and they did. False religion has always been the greatest persecutor in the world of the truth, and it always will be because it's under the total control of Satan whose goal is to destroy those who proclaim the truth.

Well, we'll leave it at that. One comment, verse 50, "The blood of all the prophets shed since the foundation of the world is going to be charged against this generation." Is that not a fascinating statement? He says to those people that day at that lunch, this generation right now alive in Israel in this very hour is going to feel the heel of God, the wrath of God and bear the punishment that's been accumulating from the blood of all the prophets since the foundation of the world.

You say, "Wait a minute, how can you hold one generation responsible for the whole history of apostasy and the murder of the prophets?" I'll give you an Old Testament illustration. One generation in the Old Testament bore the fury of God's wrath for all the accumulated sin of all the generations prior to that generation. Do you know what generation that was? The generation that drowned in the Flood. By that time, sinners had come and gone and come and gone and lived and died, but that generation took the full blow. That's a principle you see in Israel and it's not far away that the wrath of God falls on this people. And as a nation in total, they will feel the blow for the accumulated guilt of rejecting God's messengers. And we'll look at that next time. Let's bow in prayer.

Father, we thank You now as this comes to an end today to...we thank You for giving us such insight. There really is no excuse for us to be led astray and to be, as it were, seduced from the simplicity that is found in Jesus Christ, as the Apostle Paul put it. I just pray, Lord, for those people who might be sitting here this very moment, or listening to this message on tape or radio who are among those deluded and deceived and are having their souls plundered and led astray, Lord, I just pray that the light will dawn and the truth would come shining through that there is no salvation in any other than Jesus Christ, that there's no one who can earn his way to heaven by any ceremony or any sacrament, or any prayer or any work, or any virtue, but that only when we come as sinners pleading for forgiveness through the gift of salvation that comes through the sacrifice of Christ will we ever be forgiven. And then we by grace is given a new life and the burden is light and the yoke is easy because we love the Law of God and the Spirit enables us to keep it. We pray, God, that You would work that work in hearts and to Your glory. We ask that You would help us to realize how we're surrounded by people who are trapped in these systems and how desperately they need to understand where they're headed. How vital is the ministry of warning them. Give us those opportunities, Lord, even this week to snatch brans from the burning, to rescue people, to confront people as Jesus confronted in order though it seems harsh and it is, on the other hand it's merciful to tell the truth that others perhaps can hear the truth and escape. We pray You'll use us to that end, that You will continue to bring people into Your Kingdom through the ministry of this congregation in order that more and more praise would redound to Your eternal glory. We thank You in Christ's name. Amen.

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2015 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright>).