

LUKE

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Luke chapter 11 as we continue our study through the Word of God. Now keep in mind that back in Luke 9:51 we were told that Jesus, **“steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem.”** The cross is less than 6 months away and He is going to continue to instill in His men faith lessons so they can carry on the work when He is gone.

And Jesus will start out this chapter by answering a question that one of His disciples had regarding prayer and then Jesus will give two parables that relate to this question once He answers it.

With that said, let's begin reading in Luke chapter 11, beginning in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word this evening.

LUKE 11**VERSE 1**

What prompted His disciples to ask this question about prayer? The example that Jesus was showing them day in and day out! Jesus prayed often: at His baptism, Luke 3:21; choosing His 12 men, Luke 6:12; when He was alone, Luke 5:16 & 9:18; around others, Luke 9:28-29; for Simon, Luke 22:32; in the Garden of Gethsemane, Luke 22:40-44; on the cross, Luke 23:34, 46. So as the disciples watched Jesus pray, they wanted to pray like that, to pray trusting in the power and faithfulness of God.

What an example here of how our lives should be seen. In other words, when our children, when others look at our life do they want to emulate what we have? And what I mean by that is this. Since we are living our life for Jesus they desire to have what we have, Jesus!

Thus, they see us praying, they see us living out our faith and they want that and we can share with them these things.

Now it does say that they said to Jesus, “**Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.**” I think the idea here is that John and his disciples prayed as Jesus prayed and they wanted to be able to pray like that!

I like the way Murray put it. He said, “It is on prayer that the promises wait for their fulfillment, the kingdom is coming, the glory of God for its full revelation. . . . Jesus never taught His disciples how to preach, only how to pray. He did not speak much of what was needed to preach well, but much of praying well. To know how to speak to God is more than knowing how to speak to man. Not power with men, but power with God is the first thing.”

So let’s look at what Jesus said to His men regarding how to pray.

VERSES 2-4

First of all, let me make this clear. This is not the same occasion as Matthew 6:9-13, the Sermon on the Mount. Keep in mind that these principles were taught often by Jesus. And notice it is not the exact same prayer as we find in Matthew which tells me this is a model for prayer and not a formula to be repeated over and over again!

And yet, many will say this prayer over and over again and when you think about it, that is just foolishness. When you talk with your spouse or friend, do you repeat the same thing over and over again? Of course you don't and yet, with God we think He is pleased with that kind of prayer. He is not!

In fact, Jesus said in Matthew 6:5-8, **“And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.”**

We are not to pray to impress people. In fact, our prayers should be between us and the Lord. It is not that we can't gather together and pray together but if you are praying to impress people, God is not impressed.

And then there are those **“vain repetitions”** or repeating something over and over again. That is what the heathen do and God does not want us to do that! I hope that is clear. Then what are we to do? The Lord gives to us a model or pattern for prayer, not a formula like I have said!

Also, this is not really the prayer of Jesus, if you want to see Jesus praying go to John chapter 17 and you will see how He prays, not only for Himself, but for His disciples, and He finishes up praying for all believers, you and me!

Also, this prayer is for the saved not the unsaved. The prayer for the unsaved is found in Luke 18:31, which says “... ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’” Why can’t the unsaved come before God with this prayer here in Luke chapter 11? Let’s examine the prayer and you will see why.

The prayer starts out very simply with these words, “Our Father” and thus, the first thing is relationship, He is our Father by the new birth in Christ. Thus, if Jesus Christ is not Lord and Savior of your life, you have not been adopted into the family of God and you can’t call Him Father!

In fact, Jesus said in John 8:42-47 as we see this played out for us and we are told, “Jesus said to them, ‘If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me. Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word. You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it. But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me. Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me? He who is of God hears God’s words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God.’”

So this prayer or pattern for prayer is for believers only – *OUR FATHER!*

Secondly, we see His position, “in heaven.” It is as II Chronicles 20:6 tells us, “... ‘O LORD God of our fathers, are You not God in heaven, and do You not rule over all the kingdoms of the nations, and in Your hand is there not power and might, so that no one is able to withstand You?’”

So we pray to our Father who is – ***IN HEAVEN!***

The third thing is His Name is to be “hallowed” or set apart. Today names don’t mean much but in antiquity it summed up a person’s whole character, who they are. In fact, the Jews considered the Name of God to be so holy that as they came across it in their Scriptures they would not pronounce it but only bow and say, “***The Name!***” The Lord is not some good buddy we hang out with, He is Almighty God and that is how we should come before Him, with that kind of reverence or respect!

David wrote in Psalm 72:19, “And blessed be His glorious name forever! And let the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen and Amen.”

We are to reverence the Lord as we come before Him – ***HALLOWED BE YOUR NAME!***

Then Jesus says, “Your Kingdom come” and that is the fourth point, our longing and prayers for God’s Kingdom to be established here on the earth. That is something that we see lacking today in the church, people longing for the return of Christ and the setting up of His Kingdom!

Paul said in Titus 2:13, “looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.” May we be looking for His return and ultimately the establishment of His Kingdom on this earth where righteousness will fill the land!

This is the perspective we are to have as we pray – ***YOUR KINGDOM COME!***

The fifth thing is, “Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven” or that we pray for God’s will to be done on this earth and in our lives and not our own. Why is God’s Kingdom and His will so important to pray for?

Think about it. If we prayed for our kingdom and our will to be done it would make us into dictators, tyrants, it wouldn't be pretty and there is a lot of that going on in churches across America, ***“My will, not His!”***

It is as Geldenhuys said, “In heaven God’s will is obeyed by all, spontaneously, with the deepest joy and in a perfect manner without a shadow of unfaithfulness. And the believer must pray that such a condition should also prevail on earth.” Yes, on the earth and in our own lives! We long for that day of His coming Kingdom and thus we pray for it but also that His will is done in our lives, that we let Him in to work!

May we be able to pray – ***YOUR WILL BE DONE ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN!***

Now one side note before we move on in this prayer. In these requests, it seems like we also see the Trinity come through. Let me explain. The source of all holiness is the ***Father***. ***Jesus*** is coming to establish the Kingdom of God on this earth. And lastly, it is the ***Holy Spirit*** who helps us to accomplish God’s will in us and through us. Something to think about.

As Jesus moves on, the sixth point, He now speaks of our own personal and practical daily needs, ***“Give us day by day our daily bread.”*** And yes, we are also to pray for our daily needs, we are to depend upon God to provide for us.

First of all we are to pray for our daily bread, speaking of our physical needs to sustain life.

May we learn to trust God for all our needs – ***GIVE US DAY BY DAY OUR DAILY BREAD!***

The seventh point deals with our spiritual needs, **“and forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us.”** You see, this forgiveness of sin speaks of our spiritual need and that need is met in Christ. Only God can forgive sins, but we are to forgive those who are indebted to us. In other words, since God has forgiven you of all your sins, you need to forgive others!

It is as Paul said in Ephesians 4:30-32, **“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.”**

We can't do that on our own because the flesh gets in the way but as we surrender our will to the Lord's, we can forgive. You see, forgiveness is not a matter of someone not being able to do it, it is a matter of the heart and surrendering to the will of God! It is not that we can't, we won't!

May we look at what God has done and then do likewise, forgive – ***AND FORGIVE US OUR SINS, FOR WE ALSO FORGIVE EVERYONE WHO IS INDEBTED TO US!***

And lastly, the eighth point, **“And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.”** Our prayer is that God would not allow us to go down a path of destruction but would awaken us before it is too late!

And please understand that God does not lead us into a path of temptation but He will use temptations that the Devil places in front of us to test our faith! One writer put it like this, “God, while he does not ‘tempt’ men to do evil (James 1:13), does allow his children to pass through periods of testing. But disciples, aware of their weakness, should not desire such testing, and should pray to be spared exposure to such situations in which they are vulnerable.” (France)

Thus, our prayer and our stand should be – ***AND DO NOT LEAD US INTO TEMPTATION, BUT DELIVER US FROM THE EVIL ONE!***

A very short and powerful prayer. Today, as well as back then, people feel that you need long, drawn out prayers, as if God doesn't know what you have need of. He understands exactly what you need and He wants us to bring it before Him!

I like the way Solomon put it in Ecclesiastes 5:2, **“Do not be rash with your mouth, and let not your heart utter anything hastily before God. For God is in heaven, and you on earth; therefore let your words be few.”** Amen to that!

To continue on with this idea of prayer, Jesus is going to share two parables. Let's read on and see what He is saying to us!

VERSES 5-8

In those days, they all slept in one room and to get up when everyone is tucked in would disturb everyone. And yet, because of this friends persistence, he got up and gave to him that which he needed.

Now some read this and think we must pester or badger God, weaken Him until He finally gives in and gives us what we want. Obviously, that is wrong because Jesus just got done saying that when we pray we need to ask for God's will to be done and not ours. And think about it. Do you really want your will to be done? I don't think so because God has what is needed, that which is perfect for your life! So what is this story all about? Let's read on and see.

VERSES 9-10

Now in the Greek, all three of these verbs; *ask*, *seek* and *knock* are to be a continuous action and not just one time. Morris writes, “All three verbs are continuous: Jesus is not speaking of single activities, but of those that persist.”

Again, this does not come across in English but in the Greek, it is saying “*Ask and keep asking . . . Seek and keep seeking . . . knock and keep knocking.*”

In other words, don't give up. **ASK** the LORD for what you need and He will provide for you. Ask Him to open up His Word to you as you **SEEK** His truth and He will. Ask Him, that as you **KNOCK** upon the doors of opportunity that He would open those doors for you so that you may walk through.

You see, the reward for asking is that you will receive. The reward for seeking is that you will find. And the reward for knocking is that it will be opened up to you!

As you can see, these descriptions speak of an earnestness and intensity and all too often, our prayers are merely wishes cast up to heaven, and this is not real prayer.

And please understand that this is not speaking of breaking God down but a passion in our heart over a situation, such as a wayward child, and seeking our will to be conformed to His will to bring this child back, to know what to pray for.

You see, prayer not only conforms our will to His, but also, prayer opens the door for God to act, it is just the way He has chosen to work. And let's read the example of something God wants to give us as we keep asking, seeking and knocking as we read on.

VERSES 11-13

I like what Jesus does here. Jesus wants us to think about this for a minute. Some are fearful of what God may give them. Others just stand at a distance wondering what to do. And Jesus makes it simple for us.

He says if our earthly fathers, who are not perfect, give to us good things, then how much more will our heavenly Father who is perfect! You see, Jesus moves from the lesser to the greater, from our earthly father to our heavenly Father.

We see this spoken of in James 1:16-17 where James tells us, **“Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.”** I think we need to understand that.

God gives to us that which is perfect and here in Luke 11:13 we are told that this good thing, this good gift, is the Holy Spirit! God wants to empower us with His Spirit, all we must do is ask! God has what is best for our life, all He wants us to do is ask!

Now some say this speaks of salvation when the Holy Spirit comes into a person’s life. I disagree. Why do I disagree with that? Because salvation is not something that you need to keep asking for!

Also, in the Greek it does not say, **“give the Holy Spirit”** but **“give Holy Spirit”** without the article. Is that important? You bet it is! H. B. Swete tells us when the article is present it refers to the person himself, but when the article is absent, it refers to His gifts of operations on our behalf.

You see, it is not a prayer for the person of the Holy Spirit, but His gifts! And the point is simple. If our earthly fathers know how to give us good gifts, how much more will our heavenly Father if we would ask, seek and knock. Those gifts are given by the Holy Spirit for His will to be done!

And in regards to the empowering of God's Spirit, Paul said in Ephesians 5:18, "**Don't drink too much wine, for many evils lie along that path; be filled instead with the Holy Spirit and controlled by him.**" TLB. And in the Greek, it speaks of being continually filled, controlled by Him. You see, we never need doubt God's desire to pour out His Spirit. The problem is in our receiving, not in God's desire to give! Thus, may we *ASK*, may we *SEEK* and may we *KNOCK* because God wants to answer our prayers!

VERSES 14-16

We see Jesus free this man from demon possession and as you read through this the response by these religious leaders is strange. Jesus frees a man who was demon possessed and one group said He was doing this by the power of Satan. The other group said they wanted a sign from heaven so they could believe.

And as you think about this you have to come to the conclusion that they refused to believe because the evidence of who Jesus was, God Incarnate was before them. Think about it. Why would Satan cast out Himself or his power from a person's life? He wouldn't!

And the other group wanted a sign from heaven and this was not enough, the freeing of this man from this demonic possession? In fact, His whole life was a sign to them! They just refused to believe!

And Jesus is going to expose the foolishness of their accusation of Him doing this by the power of Satan and then He will give them a sign from heaven showing who He really is and this sign given to them is the result of their unbelief! Let's read on and see what Jesus has to say!

VERSES 17-20

First of all we see Jesus knowing their thoughts and I think the idea here is that Jesus had the gift of the word of knowledge. So Jesus is going to get to the heart of the matter and we see that Jesus challenges them on their accusations.

His first point is that if He is an agent of Satan who is working against Satan, then civil war has broken out in his army and he will be defeated. That just makes sense but if you are rejecting the truth what you end up believing is just plain foolishness as we see here! It is as Bruce wrote, "Satan may be wicked, He says in effect, but he is not a fool." And Spurgeon put it like this, "Whatever fault the devils have, they are not at strife with each other; that fault is reserved for the servants of a better Master."

Also, if the Jewish leaders have exorcists, are they too casting out demons by the power of Satan? That just makes sense. Why is what Jesus is doing of the Devil and yet, what they are doing is of God? That does not make sense. The reason once again is that they rejected the truth that was before them and thus, what they were believing, what they were accusing Jesus of doing was just plain foolishness!

And then Jesus nails them by saying He is doing these things by the power of God and thus, the Kingdom of God is before them. Their own statements showed how foolish they were and they couldn't argue their point any further.

VERSES 21-22

Look at this picture that Jesus is painting for them to see. First of all, He speaks of the strong man and that is the Devil. You see, the Devil is the strong man who has come to destroy people's lives and he watches over his possessions, people. But there is a stronger one than the Devil and that is Jesus and we see that Jesus comes and set's those people free! Make no mistake about the message that Jesus was giving to them, it is simple, "I'm not under Satan's power. Instead, I'm proving that I am stronger than he is by casting him out of those he has possessed." May we not forget that!

It is as Paul said in Colossians 2:15, "**Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.**"

And also, as John tells, in I John 4:4, "**You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.**"

As one writer put it,

Jesus looks at every life delivered from Satan's domination and says, "I'm plundering the kingdom of Satan one life at a time." There is *nothing* in our life that *must* stay under Satan's domination. The One who binds the strong man and **divides his spoils** is our risen Lord.

- David Guzik

VERSE 23

Now Jesus gives them a choice to make and there are only two choices to make here. Thus, whose side are you on? There is no neutrality here. If you are not for Jesus, then you are against Him. Thus, to be undecided you are decided, and you are not for Jesus!

And for those who like to sit on the fence in regards to their faith, you can't do that! Not because I said so but Jesus did! Like I have said, you are either for Jesus or you are not! You see, you don't have to oppose Jesus to be against Him, you only have to be not with Him!

Listen to what Paul says in Romans 5:9-10, **“Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.”** Notice, if you are not with Jesus you are His enemy! And thus, Jesus is saying that these religious people were His enemies because they were not with Him!

Morgan puts this all into perspective for us as he wrote, “Only two forces are at work in the world, the gathering and the scattering. Whoever does the one contradicts the other.”

What side are you on? May you be on the Lord's because you have come into a relationship with the Father through Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the Savior of the world! If you reject Him, well then what Jesus is saying to these religious leaders He is saying to you! There are only two strong forces at work, trying to win our allegiance. We will embrace one or the other, either intentionally or unintentionally.

VERSES 24-26

Here is a person who gets cleaned up, has been set free from demonic possession and yet there is still a void in his heart, a vacuum. They have not filled it with Jesus and thus, this demon returns with others and they possess him and his condition is worse than it was before. You see, your life will be filled, either by Jesus or by the powers of darkness. Don't let the strong man control your life, give it to Jesus and you shall be free!

Now notice how Jesus answered those who were accusing Him of doing His work by the power of Satan. Jesus not only came to fight against evil but to bring God into the hearts of the people. He did not come to empty the house but to fill the house, the person with Himself!

VERSES 27-28

Even back then there were those who wanted to worship Mary, but Jesus gets her re-focused and says that all are blessed who not only hear the Word of God but do it! As James said, “**But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.**”

You see, it doesn't matter how much of the Word of God you hear, you must also apply it to your life, you must live what you say you believe. For the Jewish religious leaders, they knew the Word of God, they knew what was said, but they didn't apply it to their lives or if they did they applied it in the wrong way.

God's Word is not open for our own private interpretation. God means what He says and says what He means whether we agree with it or not. Thus, we must hear and correctly apply God's Word to our lives!

VERSES 29-32

Here we see Jesus responding to those who were seeking after a sign from Jesus to believe that He is the One! But remember what Jesus just said, “. . . **More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!**” Notice the blessing in hearing and obeying God's Word as opposed to seeking after a sign!

I wish more people today would understand that. And as Jesus rebukes them and speaks of their coming judgment for their unbelief, He tells them the only sign they will have is the sign of Jonah, which points to the Lord's resurrection. If you can't believe that, you are lost and no other signs will change your view of things! In other words, Jesus is our sign, we need to look to Him, believe in Him.

You see, death is not the end, in fact it is just the beginning. There is coming a judgment for all those who have rejected Jesus.

The first point is the Queen of Sheba who came to hear the wisdom of Solomon and she received it. Now, Jesus is before them and they are rejecting Him, one who is greater than Solomon!

Secondly, the people of Nineveh were wicked and yet when Jonah told them, "***In 40 days you are toast!***" I am paraphrasing here, but the people of Nineveh responded and repented not knowing if God would spare them, and He did! Now a greater than Jonah is here and they have rejected Him and thus they will be judged for their rejection!

And think about this, both the Queen of Sheba and the Ninevites were Gentiles and yet they received the things of God while we see how the Jews rejected the things of God. What a sad story and yet, how many religious people are heading down a path towards Hell because they have rejected Jesus!

Today, we have the life, the death and the resurrection of Jesus for all to read and see and still people reject Him. They are looking for this miracle and that miracle or whatever and it is all about Jesus, look to Him. Apart from Him you will be judged!

Now, let me ask you this question. Why, as Christians, are we not judged like this? Because Jesus took that judgment for us on the cross of Calvary. He paid the penalty for our sins, and by receiving Him we have been made as white as snow.

It is as Paul said in Colossians 2:13-14, **“And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.”**

We were all spiritually dead in our trespasses and sins before we came to Christ! Think of it like this. We were not sick in need of a doctor, but we were dead in need of a Savior, in need of Jesus!

And thus, God stepped in; paying in full the penalty for our sins and brought our spirits back to life so we could have fellowship with God once again! In Isaiah 1:18 we are told, **“‘Come now, and let us reason together,’ Says the LORD, ‘Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool.’”**

The Living Bible puts it this way, **“‘Come, let’s talk this over!’ says the Lord; ‘no matter how deep the stain of your sins, I can take it out and make you as clean as freshly fallen snow. Even if you are stained as red as crimson, I can make you white as wool!’”**

This is a rational choice on our part. Once we see ourselves as sinners separated from God, our only hope, our only answer is Jesus, the Savior of the world and it doesn't matter how bad you were, you are cleansed by Him, washed as white as snow! Not only that, but God forgave us of all our transgressions, all our sins. Paul uses the Greek word CHARIZOMAI (khar-id'-zo-ahē) and it is the verb form of the ancient Greek word CHARIS or grace! Thus, we are forgiven or saved by grace through faith!

Now this "**handwriting of requirements**" was the debt a person owed and the debt of sin condemned us to Hell, it "**was against us.**" And God has come, taken all our sins, nailed them to the cross, and they are completely taken away, and the paper which contained all our debts has written on it *TETELESTAI* or paid in full! But what about this sin or that sin?

TETELESTAI! Jesus completed the work for us and all we must do is receive the free gift by faith! But apart from Him, we are still dead in our trespasses and sins and thus, we will be judged for our sins!

VERSES 33-36

First of all, we see that Jesus is telling them that the Word and work of God should not be hid but put on display for all to see. It is then up to each individual to accept it or reject it. We are to let our light shine that they may see our good works and glorify our Father who is in heaven!

Then Jesus speaks of the eye and the idea here is this. What are you allowing into your life through the eye-gate? The media knows that if they can catch your eye they have you and tragically that goes for the world of pornography. Don't allow those things to be taken in but fill yourself with the things of God, and as you do, you will be a light to a world in darkness, shining bright for Jesus.

It is as Paul said in Philippians 4:8-9, **“Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy - meditate on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.”**

You see, we don't have to walk in spiritual darkness but, tragically many do, but it is their choice. What are you filling your life with?

VERSES 37-41

I love this about Jesus. This Pharisee asks Him to come and dine with Him and He did even though these religious leaders were opposed to all that Jesus was doing! And as Jesus came in it says that, **“. . . when the Pharisee saw it, he marveled that He had not first washed before dinner.”**

Now please don't come to the conclusion that Jesus was eating with dirty hands, not at all. Luke is speaking of the rigid ceremonial hand washing that was done before they ate and Jesus didn't follow their rules and regulations. And it seems like this Pharisee was a little put off by this!

Why was he so upset? As Trapp tells us, “This the Pharisees deemed as great a sin as to commit fornication.” That is why he was so upset with Jesus! What was this all about? We are told,

For these ceremonial washings, Barclay described how special stone vessels of water were kept because ordinary water might be ceremonially unclean. In performing the ceremonial washing, one started with at least enough of this water to fill one and one-half eggshells. One began by pouring the water over the hands starting at the fingers and running down towards the wrist. Then each palm was cleansed by rubbing the fist of the other hand into it. Water was poured over the hands again, this time from the wrist towards the fingers.

A *really* strict Jew would do this not only before the meal, but also between each course through the meal. The rabbis were deadly serious about this, saying that bread eaten with unwashed hands was no better than excrement. A rabbi who once failed to do this was considered excommunicated. Another rabbi was imprisoned by the Romans and used his ration of water for ceremonial cleansing instead of drinking, nearly dying of thirst – but being regarded as a great hero.

- David Guzik

The problem for these religious leaders and many today is that they are more concerned about cleansing their hands and not their hearts! And thus, they may have looked good outwardly but inwardly, their hearts were far from God! They truly believed that their outward actions gave them the right to do whatever they wanted, their religious position gave them the power to justify their wickedness, and Jesus tells them they are wrong.

VERSES 42-44

They were so meticulous in their tithing that even their tiny herb gardens they would tithe to God from. And they took this to the extreme and yet, when it came to justice, mercy and faith, they did not balance out. Thus, this was nothing more than an empty ritual because on a practical level, they were cheating the people, they were unmerciful, their faith was built upon the keeping of the Law and because of that they burdened the people with its weight! Isn't it amazing how we can major on the minors while negating those issues that are the most important!

Next, they loved the best seats in the synagogues, they loved the greetings that drew attention to them in the marketplaces!

And Jesus nails them by telling them they are defiling all those who come in contact with them, like walking over a grave would do! Ouch, that had to hurt! Did they understand what Jesus was saying to them? Let's read on and see!

VERSE 45

I think they got it. We see here a lawyer of the Mosaic law who is objecting to what Jesus is saying. Why? Because they were the experts of the Law and how it applied to a person's life and Jesus is saying that they are using the Law to justify their evil, they have taken the Law to a place God never intended it to be taken.

Now sometimes it is better to just keep silent, but this lawyer speaks out and now Jesus is going to respond to these lawyers of the Law and expose their hypocrisy. Look at what Jesus says next.

VERSE 46

Jesus does not hold back and He blasts this lawyer of the Law for mishandling the Law! You see, they used the Scriptures as a tool to control and oppress people, telling them to do things they themselves didn't even do!

To show you what I mean, listen to what one writer had to say about how they mishandled the Word of God. He wrote,

. . . they taught that on the Sabbath, a man could not carry something in his right hand or in his left hand, across his chest or on his shoulder. But you could carry something with the back of your hand, with your foot, with your elbow, or in your ear, your hair, or in the hem of your shirt, or in your shoe or sandal.

On the Sabbath it was forbidden to tie a knot – except, a woman could tie a knot in her girdle. So, if a bucket of water had to be raised from a well, you could not tie a rope to the bucket, but a woman could tie her girdle to the bucket – and raise it from the well.

Another example is how ancient Rabbis took the command to respect proper sanitation in the army camp of Israel (Deuteronomy 23:12-14) and applied it to Jerusalem, considering it the “camp of the Lord.” When this interpretation was combined with Sabbath travel restrictions, it resulted in a prohibition against going to the bathroom on the Sabbath.

It is possible to wrongly use the Scriptures as a tool of control and oppression, all while evading one's true responsibility before God. To do so puts one under this same woe and condemnation of Jesus.

- David Guzik

We see that today with the shepherding movement, which is still around. The premise is you are not smart enough to make godly decisions so you need to bring everything to the pastor or elders to decide for you.

That goes from marriage, to buying a house, a car, taking a job and-so-on. That is oppressive and it is obviously wrong. You see, there is no room for a person to grow, to listen and be guided by God, but you have to rely on others. That is just one example of how some use their position and the Scriptures to try and control people. And the Scriptures don't justify their actions!

VERSES 47-52

This is how crazy things were. They were honoring the dead prophets that their fathers killed and they were persecuting the living prophets like John the Baptist and Jesus Himself! In fact, it was the prophets that were speaking of the coming Messiah and now He is here and they are rejecting Him and will eventually put Him to death.

Remember when Stephen preached to the council before they put him to death for his faith in Christ, and he said, **“You stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers, who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it.”** Acts 7:51-53.

How did they respond to what Stephen said? Listen carefully, **“When they heard these things they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed at him with their teeth.”** Acts 7:54. You see, they didn’t want to hear negative things, that they were doing wrong, doing evil, but only good things like many today want to hear, that they can do whatever they want. And you know what, that is true, you can do whatever you want, but don’t blame God for where you end up! They, as we are, are accountable for what we do with Jesus and His Words. You can try to silence God’s people but in the end, you will be judged!

Now verse 51 is a little tricky. It says, **“from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah who perished between the altar and the temple. Yes, I say to you, it shall be required of this generation.”**

Jesus goes back to the beginning and the first man of God who was killed, murdered, martyred for his faith, and that was Able. Jesus speaks of the first Old Testament martyr - Abel, who was slain by his brother Cain in Genesis 4:8. From his blood onward to the blood of Zechariah that was shed these Jewish leaders were accountable.

Jesus takes them from the beginning of the Old Testament to the end of the Old Testament with the death, the murder of Zechariah. Now I do realize that Malachi is the last Old Testament book in our Bibles, but not in the Jewish Bible!

First of all let me share with you who this Zechariah is and then I will show you what book is the last book in the Hebrew Bible.

In II Chronicles chapter 24 we read of the godly King Joash, who took the throne at an early age and was guided by the priest Jehoiada, who had a son by the name of Zechariah.

Now after the death of Jehoiada we read in II Chronicles chapter 24, starting in verse 17, **“Now after the death of Jehoiada the leaders of Judah came and bowed down to the king. And the king listened to them. Therefore they left the house of the LORD God of their fathers, and served wooden images and idols; and wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem because of their trespass. Yet He sent prophets to them, to bring them back to the LORD; and they testified against them, but they would not listen. Then the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, who stood above the people, and said to them, ‘Thus says God: “Why do you transgress the commandments of the LORD, so that you cannot prosper? Because you have forsaken the LORD, He also has forsaken you.”’ So they conspired against him, and at the commandment of the king they stoned him with stones in the court of the house of the LORD. Thus Joash the king did not remember the kindness which Jehoiada his father had done to him, but killed his son; and as he died, he said, ‘The LORD look on it, and repay!’”** II Chronicles 24:17-22. Even godly men can be lead astray, be careful and don’t fall for Satan’s schemes!

This is the Zechariah I believe Jesus was speaking of! Now in the Hebrew Bible Genesis is the first book, just like ours, making Able the first Old Testament martyr. Also, Zechariah was the last Old Testament martyr for in the Hebrew Bible they have II Chronicles as the last book. Another good fit to what Jesus is saying! (See order of books in the Hebrew Scriptures and web site for more information)

And then in Luke 11:52 we see how horrible things were, what they were truly doing to the people as Jesus says, **“Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter in yourselves, and those who were entering in you hindered.”**

They were keeping people from encountering God by their actions, by their teachings. They gave people lists of rules and regulations to get saved by and it not only kept them out of the Kingdom of God, but those who followed their teachings.

And make no mistake about it, we continue to see that even today and the reality is, you are not helping people, you are hurting them by these things! It is as Paul said in Romans, **“that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. . . . So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”** Romans 10:9-10, 17.

We are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone and thus, don't add to the finished work but receive it by faith!

ORDER OF THE BOOKS IN THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES:

TORAH (The Law):

1. Bereishith (In the beginning . . .) (Genesis)
2. Shemoth (The names . . .) (Exodus)
3. Vayiqra (And He called . . .) (Leviticus)
4. Bamidbar (In the wilderness . . .) (Numbers)
5. Devarim (The words . . .) (Deuteronomy)

NEVI'IM (The Prophets):

6. Yehoshua (Joshua)
7. Shoftim (Judges)
8. Shmuel (I & II Samuel)
9. Melakhim (I & II Kings)
10. Yeshayah (Isaiah)
11. Yirmyah (Jeremiah)
12. Yechezqel (Ezekiel)
13. The Twelve (treated as one book):
 - a. Hoshea (Hosea)
 - b. Yoel (Joel)
 - c. Amos
 - d. Ovadyah (Obadiah)
 - e. Yonah (Jonah)
 - f. Mikhah (Micah)

- g. Nachum
- h. Chavaquq (Habbakkuk)
- i. Tzefanyah (Zephaniah)
- j. Chaggai
- k. Zekharyah (Zechariah)
- l. Malakhi

KETHUVIM (The Writings):

- 14. Tehillim (Psalms)
- 15. Mishlei (Proverbs)
- 16. Iyov (Job)
- 17. Shir Ha-Shirim (Song of Songs)
- 18. Ruth
- 19. Eikhah (Lamentations)
- 20. Qoheleth (the author's name) (Ecclesiastes)
- 21. Esther
- 22. Daniel
- 23. Ezra & Nechemyah (Nehemiah) (treated as one book)
- 24. *Divrei Ha-Yamim (The words of the days) (Chronicles)***

Written Torah is often referred to as the Tanakh, which is an acronym of Torah, Nevi'im and Ketuvim.

- <http://www.jewfaq.org/torah.htm>

VERSES 53-54

Jesus put the light on these Jewish religious leaders and instead of repenting they are mad at Jesus and want to bring Him down! Isn't it amazing how people respond to correction, how we respond to correction. Some receive it and there is blessing in that. Others reject it and lash out at those who come against them and the things they are doing.

Several years back there was someone who was living in a sinful condition and when he was confronted he lashed out at those who confronted him and then cut himself off from those that were exposing his sin. That is a sad place to be, for if you are living in sin, you are not only fighting against your brothers and sisters in the Lord who love you, but against God who loves you!

It is as Proverbs 15:12 we are told, “**A scoffer does not love one who corrects him, nor will he go to the wise.**” You see, he hates those who correct his lifestyle.

Also, they refuse to listen to godly counsel, “**...but a scoffer does not listen to rebuke.**” Proverbs 13:1b.

And the reality is they hate their own soul, “**He who disdains instruction despises his own soul . . .**” Proverbs 15:32a.

Now what kind of people are those that refuse correction? Proverbs 12:1b says “**... but he who hates correction is stupid.**” And in Proverbs 15:5a says, “**A fool despises his father’s instruction . . .**”

I think it is pretty clear. The Lord is saying if you refuse correction you are stupid and foolish. I didn’t say that, God did! May we not be like that but be open to what God is doing in our lives. Because, like Proverbs 14:12 says, “**There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.**” That is where the religious people were heading, down a path of death and destruction while Jesus wants to give life and to give us that abundant life that is only found in Him!

What kept these religious leaders from receiving that abundant life? **PRIDE!** And it is that same pride that keeps people from Jesus today. “I am right and you are wrong!” “You mean to tell me that I have been wrong all these years in what I believe? No way!” And the list goes on as **PRIDE** gets in the way of not only coming to Christ but many times, after we have come to Him we refuse to listen to what He is saying to us and we wonder why all these things are happening in our life!

Remember what Proverbs 14:12 says, “**There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.**”

And remember what Jesus said, “**... ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’**” John 14:6.