

The Outside is All That Matters

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[0 : 00] Take your Bibles and turn to the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 23. The first book of the New Testament, Matthew, chapter 23.

We're continuing to learn about these Pharisees. I will begin reading at verse 25. Matthew, chapter 23, verse 25.

Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence.

Blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.

Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside, but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean.

[1 : 24] In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous, but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.

May God speak to us through his precious word. Amen. Amen. A couple of our church families have been on the receiving end of great mercies from the Lord in these last days.

And in the brief afternoon service, we want to remember those mercies together as a congregation and to praise him for it. I trust you could stay for that. Imagine coming to my house for supper, and you are really quite impressed as you glance into the dining room and see all the sparkling china that I've set out for you.

But when you sit down at the table, you're horrified to see inside the cups and dishes all the leftovers from what I've eaten over the past three months.

Right out of the slop bucket. Disgusting mess. You'd lose all appetite to eat. And even so, our Lord Jesus is disgusted by the so-called righteousness of the Pharisees, which is really filthy rags in God's sight.

[2 : 58] Slop bucket. Rottenness. Not righteousness at all. Now, we've been studying in Matthew 23, Jesus' last words to the crowds gathered there in the temple as they gathered from near and far to come to the annual festival of Passover.

It's the last words he'll have with the crowd before he's crucified. And he takes this opportunity to give a withering exposure of their spiritual guides, the Pharisees, their hypocrisy, their false religion by which they were leading others to hell.

So Jesus condemns them with seven woes of judgment. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites. We've seen four of those woes, and today we're going to consider number five and number six because they really put their finger on much the same problem.

The problem is their thought that the outside is all that matters. Or in the words of Matthew Henry, the Puritan pastor and Bible commentator, they were all for the outside and not at all for the inside of religion.

But according to Jesus, all true religion is heart religion. If it's not heart deep, it's empty.

[4 : 28] It's worthless. And indeed, here we see it was hypocritical worship. And Jesus saved his harshest words of judgment for these men, for their heartless religion.

So the fifth woe pronounced by Jesus is found in verses 25 and 26. Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites.

You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and indulgence. Think slop bucket. Blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.

So their religion had a certain appearance outwardly of respectability and righteousness. But inside it was really rottenness and not righteousness at all.

And we've seen that in our study, haven't we? Their fastidious attention for the outward forms of religion. Bible study, prayer, fasting, tithing.

[5 : 35] And then all their many man-made rules that focused on getting the outward performance right. Outward correctness.

Outward ceremonial purity. And so they condemned Jesus and his disciples for not kowtowing to their extra rules and interpretations.

And more than once it had to do with their failure to wash their hands before eating. Let me give you an example from Mark's gospel, chapter 7, the first four verses.

It says, Kids, it's not just talking about you're outside and your hands are dirty and it's time to eat so you wash up.

No, it's something different. And Mark further explains for his non-Jewish readers. He says, The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing, holding to the tradition of the elders.

[6 : 46] So when they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And they observe many other traditions, such as the washing of cups, pitchers, and kettles.

Now, the rabbis had heated discussions and debates about the intricate details of just how this washing of dishes was to be done.

And Jesus ignored the whole mess. Would have nothing to do with it. When they took him to task about this, Jesus replied, Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you.

These people honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. They worship me in vain. Their religion, their teachings are but rules taught by men.

So though Isaiah was writing 700 years earlier, he could not have described you Pharisees more clearly. Where God says, Outwardly, with your lips, you appear to be honoring me.

[8 : 01] But inwardly, where I can see, your hearts are far from me. So back here in Matthew 23, Jesus refers to such washing of dishes.

And he does it to castigate these Pharisees for their intricate concern about outward ceremonial impurity.

While having no concern about inward moral impurity of heart. Verse 25, he says, You hypocrites, you clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence.

So you guys have your cups and dishes all washed clean with this ritual ceremony you go through. But what's inside them?

What's on the inside of the cup and dish? He's talking about real food that they put inside of these dishes and cups. Well, it was morally defiled food.

[9 : 13] It was the slop bucket. It was rotteness. It was food that they got by greed and extortion. And it was food that would be used in self-indulgent excess.

Let's look at these two vices of the Pharisees that Jesus is putting his finger on. What's on the inside? Well, greed. He's talking now about how they got this food that they put on the inside of their cups and dishes.

Other translations round out the meaning of this word for greed as extortion. Or the actual plunder that they got from robbery. That was what's in their cup.

Their plates. The food that they actually were eating. In Luke 16, Jesus was warning in that whole section against the idolatry of worldly wealth.

And he concludes that section by saying, You cannot serve two masters. You cannot serve both God and money. And Luke says, The Pharisees who loved money heard all this and were sneering at Jesus.

[10 : 26] You ever been sneered at? They sneered at Jesus because he had exposed their inward idol. They were lovers of money, not lovers of God.

And so they sneered at Jesus. And Jesus responds to their sneers saying, You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of men.

But God knows your hearts. What is highly valued among men is detestable in God's sight. Men think highly of your religion and your righteousness.

God says it stinks. It's rotten. It's rotten food. Because of the way they got it. He saw their detestable love for money.

In their hearts. That as a master leads them into sin to get more of it. It was greed. That ever desire for more. Not content with what they had.

[11 : 28] Greed for financial gain. Any way they could get it. And so Jesus says to the Pharisees in Mark 12, 40. You devour widows' houses.

And for a show make lengthy prayers. Therefore you will be punished more severely. So their greedy hearts took them to widows' houses. To pray for them.

And they were long prayers. To show just how concerned they were for these widows. Which of course Jesus says was just a mask. For show.

Hiding their real motives. And what were they? They wanted to prey upon them. P-R-E-Y. To prey upon them.

To plunder them. To devour their houses. By extortion. So that when they went away. They had more money. Than these unsuspecting older widows could afford to give.

[12 : 29] It was as easy as taking candy from a baby. We might say. Showing just how low they would stoop in their greed. That's how they filled. Their clean cups and dishes.

With rotten food. It was food gotten. By extortion. Robbing widows. Slop bucket righteousness. In their fine china. And TV preachers. Praying on the elderly with fixed incomes. Will have to answer to God.

For it. And will be punished more severely. According to Jesus. For using religion. As a means for financial gain. So that's the first word he uses.

What have you got in your clean dishes? Well you've got. You've got greed. And extortion. And stuff that you've robbed. The second word. In verse 25.

[13 : 26] It speaks of how that food. Was to be used by them. And here the word is self-indulgence. Other. Translations have excess.

Lack of self-control. Eating and drinking too much. Of what's in the cup. And the platter. Perhaps even to drunkenness. And gluttony. Serious matters.

Serious sins. In the eyes of God. It was love of self. You see. Self-indulgence. Indulgence. Whatever self wants. That's what I will do. Self had replaced God.

And love of God. And here they are. Ever so careful. Not to be contaminated. With outward ceremonial uncleanness. From contact with the Gentiles.

In the marketplace. Who might not have been keeping. All the. The ritual. Ceremonial laws. Of what's clean. And what's unclean. Maybe they touched a dead body. Or a couch. Upon which a body had lied. And so I might get contaminated.

[14 : 24] Oh I must be very careful. And so I wash. Before I eat. After coming in contact. With Gentiles. In the marketplace. But what I'm eating.

Is morally. Unclean food. Food gained by extortion. Food used. To excess. To indulge. Their flesh. So once again.

They're straining it. Gnats. And they're swallowing camels. They're straining it. Ceremonial uncleanness. And swallowing moral filth. Fastidious about the outside.

While careless about. The inside. So then we have Jesus. Word of correction. There's his. His assessment. Of what's going on. And now his word of correction.

Verse 26. Blind Pharisee. You don't see. Clearly. You don't see at all. You're blind. First clean the inside. Of the cup and dish. And then the outside.

[15 : 24] Will also be clean. No amount of your ritual purifications. Will ever make you pure in heart. So first clean the inside. And then the outside. Will be clean. So think of a beautiful stream.

That used to be full of trout. And bass. And is now polluted. By the factory. Just a bit upstream. Which is pouring its waste. Into the stream. And so healthy plants and fish are dying.

The stench is putrid. Well the factory. Starts. Initiates a program. With their employees. To clean up the mess. And. And they employ all kinds of.

Measures. To replant healthy plants. And to restock it with. Healthy fish. And they get volunteers. To sign up. To clean up a mile. Of the stream. On either side.

Picking up trash. Dead fish. And fallen trees. And all the while. That hidden pipe. Just continues to spew. Its pollution. Upstream. Into that river. They're not dealing with.

[16 : 25] The hidden source of pollution. Just trying to clean up. The outward effects. How futile. We say. And Jesus says. That's what you're doing. You need to first. Clean up the source of pollution.

The inside. And then the outward stream. Will be. Clean as well. Remember Mark 7. Where they were so concerned. That they might get defiled. From food.

That they would touch. With their hands. That it. Might defile them. Jesus answers them. In Mark 7. Nothing outside of man. Can make him unclean.

By going into him. Into them. Into him. Rather. It's what comes out of a man. That makes him unclean. For from within. Out of men's hearts.

Come evil thoughts. Sexual immorality. Theft. Murder. Adultery. Greed. Malice. Deceit. Lewdness. Envy. Slander.

[17:19] Arrogance. And folly. Thirteen wicked things. All these evils. Come from inside. And make a man. Unclean.

So how. How futile. To be all about. Cleaning up the outside. When. When you've got a. A fountain. A pollution.

Within you. That you're not concerned about. At all. If the inward heart is bad. The outward life. May appear good. But it will be.

Bad. Oh. But if the heart is first purified. Then the life. Also. Will. Be purified. Because as a man. Thinks. In his heart. So is he. What comes out. Is what's in. For out of the abundance.

[18:14] Of the heart. The mouth speaks. The hands move. The body acts. So first clean the inside. Then the outside. Will be clean.

More on that later. Let's move on to the second. The sixth woe. And it addresses. Much the same concern. About outward. And inward religion. Verses 27 and 28.

Woe to you. Teachers of the law. And Pharisees. You hypocrites. You're like. Whitewashed tombs. Which look beautiful. On the outside. But on the inside. Are full of dead men's bones.

And everything unclean. In the same way. On the outside. You appear to people. As righteous. But on the inside. You are full of hypocrisy.

And wickedness. Now this. These two verses. Hardly need explaining. They are so clear. Aren't they? And the illustration. That Jesus gives. Is so clear. But I wonder.

[19:13] If you're familiar. With decoration day. In the south. An old tradition. Where whole communities. Get together. And clean up the cemetery.

And decorate the graves. I mean. It's a big thing. To them. Far beyond what we. Northerners do. On Memorial Day. I remember.

I've only seen it once. And we were traveling. In the south. I think it was Alabama. And all of a sudden. We came upon a cemetery. It looked more like.

A tulip farm. In Holland. The color. Was just exploding. The whole place. Was. Not a grave. Without flowers. It was gorgeous.

Decoration day. Well. In a similar way. Each year. Before Passover. About a month. Before Passover.

[20:08] You know. At Passover. The population. In Jerusalem. Would swell. To about ten times. The population. As pilgrims. Came from all over. To keep Passover. So a month.

Before Passover. The Jews. Would. Whitewash. The graves. The tombs. Whitewash.

What's that remind you of? Reminded me of Tom Sawyer. And Huck Finn. You remember. Every summer. You had to whitewash. The old fence. Why? Because it was rotten. And the wood was no good.

And it. It was turning bad. It looked terrible. And so. Tom and Huck. Would have to. Whitewash. It was some cheap paint. That would last for a couple months. And they acted like they were having fun.

To see that the other kids would want to do it. And then they did. And so Tom and Huck could leave. And leave it with them. But the whitewash. You see. It was. It was nothing. It didn't fix anything. Underneath. It was the same rotten.

[21:02] Fence. But it was just a little dress up. That's what the Jews did with. The tombs. The graves. The lime.

Whitewash. And so. As Jesus is speaking to them. Just. A couple days. A day before. The Passover meal.

They're very familiar with whitewash graves. They've seen it on the way to the temple. From wherever they've come. And Jesus says. Those whitewashed sepulchers. Look so beautiful on the outside.

But you know inside. They're full of. Putrid. Dead men's bones. The epitome of everything unclean. That's you Pharisees.

On the outside. You appear. To people as righteous. But. Inside. Where God sees. You're full of hypocrisy. And wickedness. Jesus is pointing out.

[21 : 57] That with these. Men. There's a huge difference. Between what they appear to be. And what they. Are. Under the thin veneer. Of a painted. Respectable religion.

Is found. The most. Disgusting. Things. And once again. He mentions two. The first. Hypocrisy. They're full of hypocrisy.

Indeed. We learned early. In chapter 23. That everything. They did in religion. Was done. To be seen. By men. It was just an act. Job. An acting job. They were pretending.

They had a mass. It was their religion. Their respectable religion. They were. Wanting. To appear. Righteous. To others. Rather than. To actually. Be righteous. From the heart.

To be. Pure. In heart. And that's why. Jesus. Renames them. In this chapter. You know. They were known. As Pharisees. And Pharisee. Mean. Pharisees.

[22 : 53] Means. The. Separated ones. The holy ones. That was the name. They went by. And in this chapter. Six times. Jesus gives them.

Their true name. Hypocrites. Actors. Because. The outward appearance. Is all that matters. To them. The second word.

Is wickedness. I don't know. What your translation. Says. In the Greek. It's. It's the word. For law. With the negative prefix. Which just means.

No law. Without law. What. What a. What a deceit. These are. The teachers.

Of the law. These are the ones. Who. Who boast about. Having the knowledge. Of the law. And being teachers. To guide. The foolish. Peons.

[23 : 48] That are under them. The people. They know nothing. But we. We know the law. Of God. And Jesus. Strips the mask. Away. And he says. You. Who. Teach the law.

Are without law. You have no law. You despise. God's moral law. The only standard. Of true righteousness. That by which. All men.

Will be judged. You don't have that law. In your heart. Indeed. Your minds. Are hostile to God. And it shows it. Romans 8. 7. Says. By not submitting. To God's law.

Neither indeed. Can you. So under their whitewashed. Respectable religion. Is murder. And adultery. And theft. And lies. And coveting. And abandoning parents. In need. Oh yes.

Some of the greatest wickedness. Throughout history. Has been perpetrated. By. Religious. People. So don't be deceived. It's possible. For those with hearts.

[24 : 44] Full of sin. And to appear very righteous. That was the Pharisees. And Jesus is warning. The crowds. That day. And he's warning us. Through the scriptures.

Today. It's a book. That comes to us. With the same authority. On that day. 2,000 years ago. He is warning us. Don't be deceived.

Don't be majoring. On what only looks righteous. In minor. Minor. On real purity. Of heart. Now why did they do this?

Why did they externalize religion? Well there's. There's. There's several reasons. But let's just consider. It's because man looks on the outward appearance. Isn't that what. Samuel is told by the Lord.

Man looks on the outward appearance. And that's the only audience. That the Pharisees were playing for. Was man. But though man looks on the outward appearance.

[25 : 40] God looks on the heart. And here is God in the flesh. Jesus Christ. And he sees through. The outward appearance. And he exposes them. For what they are.

Men can be deceived. God cannot be mocked. For even if these Pharisees. Managed to forget it. They were indeed living.

Before the gaze of God. 24-7. He missed nothing. And Jesus Christ. Is coming back to do what? To judge the secrets of men's hearts. The Bible says.

So as long as man remains. The primary audience. That one is living for. Well the main concern. Will only be for that. Which appears to be righteous.

Because that's what men see. Oh but if we're more concerned. About what God sees. Then we'll seek first. To get and keep the heart pure.

[26 : 39] And in so doing. Our outer life. Will be pure as well. There's a man. Who wouldn't think of going. Into an adult bookstore.

Of someone he knows. Should see him. But when he's in the privacy. Of his home. He'll click on those. Pornographic images. He shows. He shows. He's living for the wrong. Audience. Of man. And not God. He cares how he appears to men. But not how he appears. Before God.

Whose gaze. He always. Lives. Under. That's Phariseeism. That's hypocrisy. And that's what Jesus is exposing. In this chapter.

So what have we learned. Today. From the Lord Jesus. You know. He's been speaking to us. As I said. He speaks to us. No less than he was speaking. In Matthew 23.

[27 : 36] To the crowd at the temple. This is a living. Word. Your word is spirit. And life. It's living. And active. It's not like. We're just reading about. What Jesus.

No. He's speaking. To us. And those who. Hear his voice. Are his sheep. So what have we learned. From Jesus. Today. Well we've learned. That all true religion.

Is heart religion. Haven't we? That's been the point. Jesus is driving home. A man or woman. Can immerse themselves. In all the externals. Of religion. And still be lost.

Jesus said. In the Beatitudes. Blessed are the pure. In heart. For they. Will. See. God. They. And they. Only. Will. See. God. That's the meaning. The heart. What is it then? If we're talking about. Purity of heart. First clean up the inside.

[28 : 33] The heart. What is the heart? Well it's the mind. As it thinks. It's the affections. As we desire. Love and hate. And it's the will. As we choose.

This. But not that. All together. It. It makes up. The. It makes up. What the Bible calls. The heart. It's the. It's the control center. Determining.

All that you do. And the problem is. Of course. That we're all born. With a bad heart. We come into the world. With a bad heart.

That spews out. Bad thoughts. Bad attitudes. Bad words. Bad deeds. Bad deeds. And so Jeremiah. Tells us. In chapter 17.

Nine. That the heart. Is deceitful. Above all things. And desperately. Wicked. Who can know it. I know a lot of things.

[29 : 29] That are awfully deceitful. I think of the devil. The father of lies. This says. That there's something. Even more deceitful. Than the devil. And it's the human heart.

As it comes into this world. It is deceitful. Above all things. And desperately wicked. Who can even understand it. We deceive ourselves.

And that's why Jesus says. First clean the inside. First get a new heart. And then the outside. Will be clean. Because the heart. Is the problem. That's the polluting.

Fountain. And so don't ever think about. Cleaning your life. Up until that heart. Has been changed. You know the Bible. Likens the nature.

Of the sinner's heart. To the nature of a pig. P-I-G. A pig. A pig that loves.

[30 : 27] To wallow in the mud. There was a song. We played for our children. When they were younger. Written by Judy Rogers. And it. It went like this. Isabel. Isabel. Is a pig.

With a ring. In her snout. You can dress. Izzy up. But you can't take her out. She will jump in the middle. Of a big mud puddle. Since.

Isabel. Is a pig. That's. That's Isabel's nature. And so. So you can dress her all up. You can. You can put a bow on her. But the first big mud puddle.

She sees. She's going in. Why? Because she's. A pig. With a pig nature. A pig heart. So second. Peter 2. 22. Peter says.

A sow. That is washed. Goes back to her. Wallowing in the mud. And that was the Pharisees. Religion. And anyone. Who followed the religion.

[31 : 21] Of the Pharisees. Just come and clean up your life. Work a little harder. At obeying the commands. No. They just plunged. Right back in. To wickedness. Because. They never changed the heart.

The Pharisees. Religion. Was all about. Cleaning up the outside. While leaving the inside.

Unattended. Whereas the gospel. Way of change. Always. Begins.

In the heart. God changes us. From the inside. Out. He gives a new heart. Inside. And then. By his spirit. He works it on out. In our life.

That's the way. All true religion works. In other words. We need a heart transplant. A heart transplant.

Every one of us. Children. You need a heart transplant. That heart will take you to hell. It's spewing out bad things. It's saying. Go this way. And not God's way.

[32 : 18] You're born with your back. Toward God. And your heart. Toward sin and self. That heart. Heart. Has to be changed. You need a heart transplant. That's what Ezekiel says. In Ezekiel 18.

He says. Rid yourselves. Of all the offenses. You've committed. And get a new heart. And a new spirit. Why will you die. Oh house of Israel. You're headed to destruction.

Why. Why will you go on. Get a new heart. Get a new spirit. Your heart. Must be changed. It's only the pure in heart.

Who will see God. Now think how different from the pig. Is the nature. Of a cat. Have you seen a cat. Sitting on the porch. Licking itself. As soon as it gets any.

Little bit of uncleanness. It's all about cleaning it up. So contrary to the. The pig. Who's looking for the mud. The cat seems to have. A different nature. A different heart.

[33 : 14] Heart. So the only way. To really clean. Is the pig up. Is to put the heart. The nature of a cat. Into the pig. A new nature.

A new heart. And that's what. Ezekiel's telling. The Jews of his day. Yes. Very religious. But you need.

A new heart. A new spirit. Okay. Ezekiel. But how do you get. A new heart. We can't change ourselves. We've tried. No you can't.

But God can. And God does. Later in Ezekiel. Chapter 36. 26 and 27. God says. I will give you. A new heart. And I will put.

A new spirit. In you. I will remove. From your heart. That heart. Of stone. And I will give you. A heart. Of flesh. And I will put.

[34 : 11] My spirit. In you. And move you. To follow my decrees. And to be careful. To keep my laws. You see. The real change. Of behavior. In obeying laws.

Starts with. A change. Of nature. A change. Of heart. And spirit. It's. It's. It's. It's. It's. It's. It's. It's. It's. It's as supernatural.

It's creation. You can't. Change your own heart. God must change it. And it's called. A new creation. It's called. A new birth. no amount of human effort or ritual can ever give you a new heart only God by his Holy Spirit it is the supernatural work of God you are dead in your sins Ephesians 2 says and a dead man can't give himself a new heart you need God to come and speak life and give that new heart to you well that's awfully humbling for a Pharisee to admit there's enough of the Pharisee pride in all of us that many still stumble over that you mean that I'm dependent on God to be right with God that's exactly what I mean you're depending on God to give you a new heart or you'll never get one you need Jesus Christ to give you righteousness or you'll never have a righteousness that will stand up in the day of judgment you are you're dead meat left to yourself it's only God who can save you and give you the new heart you know in John chapter 3 there was a Pharisee interestingly enough named Nicodemus and Jesus in his conversation he comes to Jesus at night we don't know why but you do know that the Pharisees hated Jesus from the very get-go so Nicodemus is wanting to learn more about Jesus and yet he doesn't want his cronies seeing him show interest so I do believe that's the best explanation why he comes to Jesus at night it's mentioned twice in John's gospel it was at night that he came so here he is at night and he he starts out and says some kind words to Jesus and right out of the the gun Jesus said unless you're born again Nicodemus you will never even perceive understand see the kingdom of God much less enter it Nicodemus Jesus tells him in this you are the leading teacher in Israel and the leading teacher leading the people says what do you mean you don't mean

I can get back in my mother's womb and be born again do you he's totally unaware of the need of man to have a new birth and he's the teacher of Israel no wonder the people were in such a dismal condition these are their teachers they don't even know there is such a thing as a new birth Ezekiel spoke about it lost friends you must be born again you need a new heart and only Christ can give a new heart come to him confessing your bad heart that's a good place to start own the fact that you have no righteousness of your own to stand before God and that your heart is that polluting fountain and pipe and that you need God to give you a new heart and plead that plead it from his mercy confessing your sinful heart and asking for a new one trust in his blood Jesus blood to cleanse you for the blood of Jesus

[38 : 04] God's son cleanses from all sin even heart sins even hypocrisy sins even neglecting Jesus sins and if we confess our sins he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and what

purify us from all uncleanness there's the purifying work that you need done it's it's God's work and only then with a new heart will your outer life truly be clean and purified for the same grace of God that appears to all men Titus 2 teaches us the same grace of God unto salvation that has appeared to all men teaches us then to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled upright lives in this present age the same grace that changes your heart will change your life the same grace that changes your status in heaven from condemned to righteous in God's sight that same grace will teach you to say no in your lives to worldly passions self-indulgence you see Jesus so get the inside

James and the outside will follow brothers and sisters this word is for you and for me as well what will we do with this word from Jesus the message is the same all true religion is heart religion and when Jesus says first clean the inside that word first is a word of priority like this make this your priority Christian your priority concern the main business that you're about make sure it's your heart your heart and not just your outward religion oh how we need this how easy it is for our heart just to revert back to just being concerned about being at the right place at the right time with the right people doing the right things and we go through the motions and our hearts can be far from us so is purity of heart your priority concern we say how would I know well you're not content just to be baptized in a member of a church no you want your heart more and more like Jesus heart you're not content just to come and attend church and say okay I've checked that box and it all happens too easy as we slip into this going through the motions of religion no that won't do for you your main business is the heart you want to meet with God you want to have heart to heart dealings with the living God that's why you're here you want to worship him in spirit not just the body in the pew you want to worship him as God is looking for worshipers who worship in spirit spirit to his spirit God is spirit and you want to have dealings with that God from the heart you want to have your heart searched by his law and warmed by his gospel you want to have your heart shown to you and changed brought that you might confess and might have it changed from the inside out you want Jesus heart you want to love like Jesus loves you want to desire like Jesus desires you want to think like Jesus thinks you want to choose like Jesus chose you want to live like Jesus lived and this transformation of heart and life begins and is carried forward by mind renewal we get a new mind we get a new heart but then that mind needs to be more and more renewed we still have so much of the world's way of thinking we were that world and so Romans 12 2 says don't let the world squeeze you into its mold don't be conformed any longer to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind it starts with the mind and so this book is everything to you

I want to be renewed I want my heart my mind renewed that the whole of my life might be transformed so you're going to be here when God's word is taught and preached and you're going to read it and memorize it and meditate on it you're going to receive it in the love of the truth because you want the word of God to change your inside and then to change your outside is heart religion the priority of your life then as Proverbs 4 23 says above all else guard your heart above all else there's a lot of things to guard against there's the world trying to but above all else guard your heart because out of it is the wellspring of life in other words what's in the heart is what comes out so guard that wellspring of the heart it's the fountain from which the entire life flows so as goes the heart so goes the mouth as goes the heart so goes the eyes so goes the ears so goes the hands and feet and all that you are so goes your time your money your actions so we guard our hearts not letting the things of this world defile our minds and pull our hearts away from Christ you're careful about what you look at what you listen to what you take into the ear gates you know the heart has ear gates and eye gates and so you're very careful to guard what's getting in to the heart through those gates you keep a jealous eye on your heart do you ever ask your heart where have you been today heart you know we're busy all day long and we ought to come back at the end of the day and say no heart where were you today what did you drift toward where did you wander what paths did you go down the heart where have you been the last two hours heart have you been engaged in every song that we sang in every prayer that men led us in prayer in the word of God as it's taught heart where have you been because that's true religion a relationship of heart to heart we must guard our hearts lest we find ourselves just giving to God the husk without the kernel you know what he's after give me your heart he said give me your heart [45 : 17] I trust we don't miss the heart of Jesus in this hard hitting passage is it not a wonder that Jesus wants your heart my heart does he know what my heart is like even as a Christian does he

know the thoughts that go through that heart the attitudes the desires give me your heart there's the heart of Jesus beating in this passage true religion is heart religion I'm after not just some performance of you I'm after you and if I have your heart I've got everything and so I want to leave you with that he's given us his heart shall we withhold ours from him you know how bad he wants your heart he complains when you're not giving it to him

Revelation chapter 2 he sees and he complains when you're no longer loving him with that first love now that's a husband who wants more than just a quiet comfortable relation he wants your heart that's the savior you see so behind the Pharisees behind them honoring him with their lips but their heart being far let's give him our hearts after all he's given us you know David's way of guarding his heart against hypocrisy and living as if the outward is all that matters is Psalm 139 if you've got any problem with this matter of seemingly dealing more with just outward actions that we go through rather than really focusing on the heart I would just encourage you to read and read and read and memorize Psalm 139 it's the way David dealt with his straying heart to remember that oh Lord you have searched me and you've tried me you know me you know when I get up you know when I go out the door you know when I come back you know my thoughts before I speak a word you know it all together and so with this vast chapters telling about the vast knowledge of God of our hearts David comes to the end of it he says search me oh God and know my heart test me and know my mind and see if there be any offensive way in me you know that's what sin is it's offensive to him oh God I don't want to be offensive to you see if there be any offensive way in me and show it to me and lead me in the way everlasting lead me out of those snares that lead to death like we memorized this week lead me in the way everlasting I've said before you can be guilty of the sin of hypocrisy without being a hypocrite and one of the ways that I think you can discern it I don't know that a hypocrite could ever pray from the heart that prayer of David search me oh God he doesn't want his heart searched you might be guilty of hypocrisy like I am yet if we pray search me try me because I don't want to be that I want to have a heart that's pure before you that's a good sign so would you join me in saying search me oh God try my heart standing as we sing from the overhead Lord we thank you for your word it is living and active it searches the hearts and the intentions of the heart the motives of the heart the thoughts of the heart and so we thank you that when it exposes sin that we are not left to gravel and grovel in our sin but that we are led to Christ and we have a savior who died for sin and that if we confess our sins you are faithful and just you would have to deny yourself not to forgive us and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness make us those people that pant and hunger and thirst after righteousness after true religion after a heart that reflects the very heart of our savior Lord search out those that are still with a bad heart and make them to long to be right with you Lord give them a new heart even as you've done to many of us here words on to say you were in love we are ew go don't