

Beware of the Yeast of the Pharisees

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[0 : 0 0] them a sign from heaven. He replied, when evening comes you say it will be fair weather for the sky is red and in the morning today it will be stormy for the sky is red and overcast. You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky but you cannot interpret the signs of the times. A wicked and adulterous generation looks for a miraculous sign but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah.

Jesus then left them and went away. When they went across the lake the disciples forgot to take bread. Be careful, Jesus said to them, be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

They discussed this among themselves and said it is because we didn't bring any bread. Aware of their discussion Jesus asked, you of little faith why are you talking among yourselves about having no bread? Do you still not understand? Don't you remember the five loaves or the five thousand and how many basketfuls you gathered? Or the seven loaves for the four thousand and how many basketfuls you gathered? How is it you don't understand that I was not talking to you about bread? But be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Then they understood that he was not telling them to guard against the yeast used in bread but against the teaching of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. Let's hear the word of God preached.

If you were walking a trail at Potato Creek State Park and you saw a sign posted, beware of Tyrannosaurus Rex. You might just laugh it off and say, I wonder who's having some fun here because they have been extinct for centuries. And it could be that you and I come to a passage like we've just read from our Savior with his little sense of danger when he says, beware of the Pharisees.

[2 : 1 7] And we assure ourselves, there's no danger here. They have been extinct for centuries. But are they? Here in Matthew 16, the Sadducees and Pharisees are testing Jesus and asking him for a sign.

And then he and his disciples cross the lake to the other side. And Jesus says, be careful, be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees. And they think, oh no, we forgot bread. And that's what he's talking about. And Jesus has to correct them. How is it you don't understand that I was not talking to you about bread, but be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees. And only then does Matthew record in verse 12 that then, then they understood that he was not telling them to guard against the yeast used in bread, but against the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

So although the religious party within Judaism called Pharisees is no longer with us, their teaching is by no means extinct and remains a current danger that we need to be warned against.

So today we're starting a series of biblical studies on the Pharisees. You might be asking, why study the Pharisees? Let me give you three quick reasons. First of all, because Jesus' warning requires it. Not all errors are damning errors. But as we'll see, according to Jesus, the teaching of the Pharisees is a false religion that leaves people in their sins and on their way to hell.

So we need to know the difference between true and false religion. We need to know what the teaching of the Pharisees is if we would rightly guard against it. So it's no historical curiosity that brings us to this study. It's rather a concern for our eternal souls. Secondly, why study the Pharisees?

[4 : 44] Because of the contagious nature of their heirs. The contagious nature of their heirs. Significant that Jesus regards their teachings and compares it to yeast or to leaven. Now, in the Bible, yeast sometimes refers to that which is evil and that certainly is applicable here. But it also refers in the Bible to that which spreads and emphasizes its spreading nature. In other words, you don't need cupfuls of yeast to make a loaf of bread rise. But rather, as the scriptures say in more than one place, just a little leaven leavens the whole lump. And that's exactly what Paul said and wrote to those in the Galatian churches concerning this very doctrine of the Pharisees. That they spread, that they're contagious, more so than we realize, and that we have no natural immunities against them. Rather, there's much in our flesh that finds the teaching of the Pharisees appealing to us. So that's a second reason to study the Pharisees, because of the spreading, contagious nature of this teaching. And then lastly, because of their assault on the glory of God.

Not only does the teaching of the Pharisees destroy men forever, it also would steal glory from God, who sent his one and only son into the world to save sinners. And this teaching would ignore that great work of God through Jesus Christ. So there's three reasons, and I trust with that introduction, we'll have something of a sense of the importance of this study as we head into it.

So let's dig in and trust the Lord to teach us what we need to know about the Pharisees. Who were they? Well, they were a strict religious party within Judaism. And they rose up during, just after the Jews returned from Babylonian exile, during that period between the Old and New Testament, about 150 years to 200 years before Jesus was born. And their concern was that during the exile, too many of the Jews who had been scattered all among the nations had learned their ways, had become conformed to the world, had adopted their sinful beliefs and practices, and so had been compromising on the word of God, the commands of God. So they were a reform movement calling Israel back to God. They emphasized strict obedience, not only to God's law, but also to the traditions of the rabbis, which they thought were consistent with God's law.

And so they wanted a clear cut separation between the world and Israel, the people of God. They became known as Pharisees, which means separated ones. It was probably a derogatory term that was given to them by their enemies rather than a name that they took to themselves. Even today to be called a Pharisee is to be accused of being a self-righteous person, isn't it?

To be one who belongs to that party of the holier-than-thou club. So though the party of Pharisees may have begun with some legitimate concerns, it soon morphed into something bad. Indeed, very bad. Because as we find them in the days of our Lord's ministry on earth, they're a very powerful party within the spiritual leadership of the Jewish nation, and they were Jesus' most bitter critics.

[9 : 09] Josephus, who lived in that first century, estimates that there were over 6,000 of them during Jesus' time on earth.

So you had two of the most powerful religious parties who were the spiritual leaders of the nation of Israel at that time.

They were the Pharisees and the Sadducees, perhaps similar to our political parties of Republicans and Democrats. These were a religious party.

And the priests in Israel were generally from the Sadducees. They were the aristocracy, the more wealthy, and they were usually the ones who were the priests in Israel.

Whereas the scribes and teachers of the law came generally from the Pharisees, the parties of the Pharisees. And these two parties had conflicting doctrines, and they were often found at one another's throats, but they found common cause in their opposition against our Lord Jesus Christ.

[10 : 19] So very early on, the Pharisees had come to the conclusion that Jesus was a false prophet, a phony Messiah, a sinner deceiving the people, and therefore should be killed.

And that conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees began just as soon as Jesus started preaching. So Jesus starts His public ministry at the end of Matthew chapter 4.

He's preaching the gospel of the kingdom of heaven to great crowds. And then in chapter 5, we have what we call the Sermon on the Mount, chapter 5 through 7.

The king talking about the kingdom of heaven. And in Matthew 5 and verse 20, Jesus says to the crowd before Him, I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses the righteousness of the Pharisees and teachers of the law, you will in no way enter the kingdom of heaven.

Now what was Jesus saying about the Pharisees then? Well, in spite of all their religion and supposed righteousness, they're going to hell, not heaven.

[11 : 46] And if you follow them, the place you will end up will not be heaven either. Now those words of Jesus must have hit the ears of those Jews like a bomb going off.

Because there was a proverb, a commonly held saying in Israel that if only two men ever made it into heaven, surely one of them would be a Pharisee.

And Jesus says, not so. Not so. You see, He's upsetting the apple cart. He cares too much for the eternal destiny of the crowd to let the game play on.

Now these men, the Pharisees, held a powerful influence upon the people. They were the experts in the law. They were the Bible scholars. They were the ones that knew the answer to any spiritual question you had about how to get to heaven.

The most important questions in life. And so the people trusted them as their spiritual guides. Jesus was knocking heads with the Pharisees all through His three years of public ministry.

[12 : 59] That can be seen in the fact that the book of Matthew has 28 chapters. Pharisees are mentioned in that book 29 times.

This is a major problem, the Pharisees and Jesus. And it comes out in this first book of the New Testament. But Jesus' most scathing portrait of the Pharisees comes at the end of His public ministry in Matthew chapter 23, where He pronounces seven woes of judgment upon them.

So please open your Bibles to Matthew chapter 23. We're going to be working our way through this chapter in weeks ahead as we're studying the Pharisees. We want to hear what Jesus had to say about them and about their teaching.

But for today, we're just going to look at verses 1 through 4 of Matthew 23. Now, the first thing I want you to notice is the timing of these words of Jesus.

Verse 1 says, Then Jesus said to the crowds and to His disciples. Then. Now, this is after certain events have taken place.

[14 : 12] This is after the triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Jesus is in His last week leading up to the crucifixion. The cross is just a couple, three days away.

And Jesus is in the temple for the last time there in Jerusalem. And He's been teaching parables to the crowds that are gathered there. Back at the end of chapter 21, If you look at the last two verses, verses 45 and 46 of chapter 21, It says, When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard Jesus' parables, They knew He was talking about them.

They looked for a way to arrest Him. But they were afraid of the crowd because the people held that He was a prophet. Then in chapter 22, He tells another parable about them.

And then the Pharisees and Sadducees form a tag team of efforts to question Jesus. To try to trip Him up in something that He says that will embarrass Him in front of the crowds.

Or will get Him into trouble with the authorities. Each time, Jesus' wisdom silences them. And then at the end of chapter 22, Jesus has a question for them.

[15 : 35] Verse 41, Finally, while the Pharisees were still gathered there, Jesus asked them a question that stumped them and did the very thing to them that they were trying to do to Him to make them look foolish before the crowd.

The last verse of chapter 22 says, No one could say a word in reply. And from that day on, no one dared to ask Him any more questions. They had met their match.

Then, verse 1 of chapter 23, Then Jesus said to the crowd. So you see the background of what's gone into these words of Jesus.

Then Jesus said to the crowds. So He's still in the temple. He's still preaching to the masses. And chapter 23 gives us the last words of Jesus to the crowd.

From here on out in the gospel, it's to His disciples, His 12. He meets with them alone, instructing them in the kingdom. So this is the last thing Jesus has to say to the crowds.

[16 : 42] And what is it? It's a sober warning against the Pharisees. Does that not indicate how important this is that we understand the yeast, the teaching, and beware of the teaching of the Pharisees?

So what follows in chapter 23 is all about the Pharisees and teachers of the law. In other words, Jesus would save His hearers from their damning religion.

In the first 12 verses, Jesus warns people about the Pharisees. From verse 13 on, He speaks directly to the Pharisees.

There's a noticeable shift in the pronouns from they and them to you. We see that in verse 13 where He starts the you. Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites, you shut the kingdom of heaven in men's faces.

You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to. So, six times in this chapter, Jesus will say, woe to you, teachers of the law, Pharisees, you hypocrites.

[17 : 58] He calls them by their real name. They're not truly separated ones. They are hypocrites. That's their true identity.

That's what they are. Earlier, on a different occasion, in Luke chapter 12 and verse 1, Jesus warned that crowd, be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

So, Jesus can summarize the religion, the teaching of the Pharisees in one word. Hypocrisy. That was the leading sin of the Pharisees and the summary of their teaching and Jesus here in our chapter will call them that six times.

So, what is the meaning of the word hypocrite? Well, it comes from the stage. It comes from the theater and from the Greek word for an actor on the stage who's impersonating or playing the role of another.

So, they would put up a mask over their face to identify which person in the play they were impersonating. And the same actor may later put up a different mask to impersonate someone else in the play.

[19 : 24] Someone he's pretending to be. And so, this word came to refer to anyone pretending to be someone or something that they were not. It means to fake and to feign, to wear a mask, hiding what you really are behind that mask, trying to project a different image.

And the Pharisees were the masters at this art and well-deserved the identity of hypocrite. So, in verses 2 and 3, Jesus says, the teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat.

So, you must obey them and do everything they tell you. Now, that's a strange introduction into a chapter where he has woe after woe to give to these men. And now he's telling the people, obey them, listen to them.

That is, as they sit in Moses' seat. Now, that could refer to a literal chair that's been found in unearched synagogues.

A chair that was there for the highest ranking teacher of the law from which he would sit and instruct the people about the law. Well, the law of Moses, but it could also be a figurative expression, meaning something like we use of a professor holding a chair in a certain university.

[20 : 52] And that all the Pharisees and Sadducees were teachers of, or Pharisees, I'm sorry, and teachers of the law were there to give the interpretation of the law of Moses.

And so, what Jesus is saying is that they're teaching you, when they're teaching you the law of Moses, you must obey them.

For as he said in Matthew 5, I have not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill it. Jesus does not want to let the people think, oh, this new rabbi, Jesus, is trashing the law of Moses.

No, no, he says, when they sit in Moses' seat, you obey them. Much like I would say to you, when I teach you the word of God, you should obey it, but you need to listen with discerning ears.

I don't want you just following something I say if it's not found in the word of God. So, Jesus is saying the same to them. You know, there was much that the Pharisees taught that Jesus didn't obey, so he's not just giving a blanket statement, obey whatever they say.

[21 : 58] But when and insofar as they are teaching you the law of Moses, you must obey them. So what follows in verses 3 and 4 is a further limitation that he places on their obedience to the Pharisees.

He says in verse 3, at the last half of it, do everything they tell you, but do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach.

Literally, they say and do not. And therein is the hypocrisy of their religion. Here, seen in the difference between what they say and what they do.

They say one thing and do another. They preach one thing and they practice. Their practice is not the same as what they preach. They preach the first commandment.

Well enough, you shall have no other gods besides me. And then when Jesus is preaching that you cannot serve God and man, therefore, the Bible says the Pharisees who loved money sneered at him.

[23 : 12] They had another god. It was money. And they preached, you shall not murder. And in just a few days, they're going to murder the Lord of glory, the most innocent man that ever lived.

They also wanted to murder Lazarus because on account of Lazarus being raised by Jesus, many of the Jews were going over to Jesus. They preached, you shall not give false testimony.

And when they set up their kangaroo court, they're going around trying to find witnesses who will give false accusations against Jesus. And they can't even find two of them to agree. And later they pay the soldiers at the tomb to lie about what happened, saying that the disciples of Jesus came and stole them away while we were sleeping.

They preached, you shall not steal. And then they devoured widows' houses. Hypocrites. They say and they do not.

They preach and they do not practice what they preach. The Apostle Paul would later make the same charge in Romans 2, 21 to 24.

[24 : 22] You then who teach others, teachest thou not thyself? Don't you teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal?

You who say that people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who brag about the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law?

As it is written, God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you. You preach one thing and you do the opposite.

And it's all your fault that the unbelieving world is blaspheming the name of God. It's because of your hypocrisy of not practicing what you preach.

The world knows your life doesn't even come close to what you say. They know your holy talk is just a mass, just a covering of an impure heart and life.

[25 : 28] And that's why the world blasphemes the name of God. It's why the world writes off the whole of Christianity and its teachings as a bunch of nonsense because of the hypocrites in the church.

So it's not just pastors today who are often found in adulterous and inappropriate relationships while preaching against the same in the pulpit. It was going on in Old Testament priests.

It was going on in the Pharisees in Jesus' time. Watch out. Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

So they say and do not. There's something else that they do, and that's in verse 4. They tie up heavy loads and put them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them.

Maybe you've seen pictures of men or women in the East, and maybe they've got a yoke, a bar on their shoulders, and on each end of that bar are these huge bundles of weights, of something that they're carrying, these loads that they're carrying.

[26 : 50] That's the picture Jesus is employing here. Somebody helped load them up, and then they left them to carry the load alone.

That's the Pharisees, piling heavy burdens on people by their preaching. And insofar as they were teaching the laws of God, that was a legitimate load.

But they added to the laws of God their own traditions, the rabbinical traditions of what the law meant and how it's to be applied and how we're to guard ourselves from breaking these laws.

They had a long tradition of these teachings of the rabbis, and they were given equal authority with the laws of God themselves eventually.

That's how it morphed in, that's what it morphed into. And the real laws of God were soon buried under this huge heap of additional laws that the Pharisees, these rabbis, these teachers of the law would quote the rabbis and heap these upon the people.

[28 : 09] dozens after dozens of man-made laws. Sometimes traditions that not only buried the law of God out of sight, but actually contradicted the law of God.

Remember Matthew 15. Some Pharisees and teachers of the law came to Jesus from Jerusalem, and they said, why don't your disciples, why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders?

They don't wash their hands before they eat. This wasn't just like you and I do coming in from a hard day's work and we get the muck off of our hands. This was a ceremonial washing that they did with pots and pans and before they ate less, while they were in the marketplace or here and there and going about, they might have touched something that was unclean.

And so they went through these ceremonies to make sure they were pure. Why don't your disciples keep the tradition of the elders? And Jesus replied, and why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition?

Wow. What a comeback. For God said, honor your father and mother, but you say you don't have to help mom and dad as long as you say that the money you have is a gift to God.

[29 : 23] Corbin, well then you don't have to use your money to help mom and dad in their older age and their need. And thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition that you've handed down.

And Jesus says you do many things like that. You hypocrites. Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you. Their worship of me is in vain.

Their teachings are but rules taught by men. You've let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men. And eventually you see these many traditions of the rabbis carried more weight.

Where even is the command of God under this huge heap that they added to it? And they did that as Jesus says with many things.

Jesus illustrated with the fifth commandment but they did it for the fourth commandment more than they did it for any other commandment. The commandment remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.

[30 : 33] Six days you shall labor and do all your work but the seventh is a Sabbath day to the Lord your God. Now what's there not to like about that? A weekly day of rest unto worship.

Rest that we might gather and worship our God. well the rabbis then asked well what kind of work is not allowable on the Sabbath?

They came up with some thirty nine kinds of labor that was forbidden. But then to these the rabbis kept applying it further and further and adding more and more dozens and dozens of these additional rules countless over the ages and and they just some of them contradicted each other but these are just rabbis trying to say this is what the law means now and they applied all of their laws to these people who are now walking around with these burdens on their back not even sure which rabbi to obey so I guess we ought to just try to obey them all to make sure that we're covering our bases after all they're the they're the experts these these rabbis and the the Pharisees the teachers of the law so on the Sabbath one rabbi says you can't light a candle another says the heaviest burden that you can carry on the Sabbath was the weight of a dried fig whatever that might be it's not much

I know that this was interesting you couldn't wear false teeth false teeth on the Sabbath lest they fall out and you be tempted to reach down and pick them up and carry a load home and so that must have been more than a dry fig a forbidden work you see on the Sabbath they had even identified how many cubits how many steps you could take on a Sabbath and it's called the Sabbath's day walk it was defined as 2,000 cubits 3,000 feet it's a little less than two thirds of a mile anything beyond that is too much you're working you're working and of course this just continues with the Orthodox Jews to this day can you imagine the number I mean there's volumes after volumes and they're arguing about what's allowed and what isn't so one rabbi says you can carry an umbrella if it's raining when you head to the synagogue but if it stops raining while you're at the synagogue you can't carry that umbrella home you've got to leave it there and so these are the sorts of things that they started to pile on top of the fourth commandment and there was a whole host of them about healing on the Sabbath what's allowed and what's not allowed and a dominant thought was that healing on the Sabbath was only allowable if the life was in danger otherwise it's forbidden work so you get a flavor of that and we bump into this in the Gospels don't we so Jesus comes into the synagogue on the Sabbath and he sees an unusual amount of these Pharisees you always knew who they were they had their unique dress and garb and they're just there and then there's a man here with a withered hand who's been planted there and they're just watching Jesus not saying anything just watching to see whether he's going to heal this man with the withered hand

Jesus sees what's going on and he says to the man with the withered hand stand up stand up in front of everyone and then Jesus turns to the Pharisees and says which is lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil he has them over a barrel there doesn't he to save life or to kill they remain silent he said to them if any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath that's a little heavier than than a dried fig isn't it will you not take hold of it and lift it out of course you will how much more valuable is a man than a sheep and he said to the man stretch out your hand and he stretched it out and his hand was completely restored and the Pharisees went out plotting how they might kill Jesus that's Mark chapter 3 that's at the very beginning of his ministry public ministry another Sabbath

[35 : 34] Jesus and his disciples are just going somewhere and they're walking through a grain field supposedly less than two thirds of a mile perhaps I'm not sure it doesn't say where they were going but as they walked along the disciples reached down and grabbed some heads of grain and rubbed the chaff out of it and popped them in their mouth and all of a sudden these Pharisees pop up from beneath the between the rows gotcha there they are they're ubiquitous you can't get away from them why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath day they charge Jesus well Jesus takes them to school there's a difference between walking along and popping some grains into your mouth and getting the sickle out and going and having a full harvest on the Sabbath day that would be wrong that's not the day for that that's the other six days you do all your work and then you rest on the Sabbath but they don't understand such distinctions and Jesus ends that discussion by saying the Sabbath was made for man not man made for the Sabbath you see what they had done

God had established this one day and rest and rest and worship for the good of man's body and soul to refresh his body and soul it was for man for his advantage for his benefit for his good and what had these Pharisees and rabbis done they had turned it around and exalted the Sabbath day man what is he he's nothing but a slave down here with these burdens and God doesn't care about that he just keeps piling it on that was the view of God that these Pharisees were given and they totally missed the whole reason God gave us a Sabbath day one day in seven to rest and worship made it a burdensome day well by their man-made rules then they laid these heavy loads on the people but they themselves are not willing to lift the finger to move them well that can have a two-fold application in the first place they were very comfortable laying all these burdensome rules upon others as they taught them but they do not do them themselves what they had bound on others that's the hypocrisy of it all they say but do not you see they not only came up with all these additional rules they also came up with a whole bunch of additional exceptions to the rule we just heard one of them they would somehow figure out that a sheep that weighs more than a dried fig could be lifted out of a pit if one of theirs fell into a pit and they had figured out how not honoring father and mother you didn't have to honor father and mother if you just called your money devoted to

God you see they had their ways around even the commands of God so with all these additional commands like ways to break their oaths because after all they swore by heaven and didn't swear by God's throne well Jesus will take them to task in Matthew 23 later on we'll see that but you see they had made many such exceptions ways of getting around the commands of God as well as all these other rules and they weren't ashamed to use them they excused in themselves what they condemned in others that's the hypocrisy of it all you would expect that they do all that they tell you to do and that's just what they want you to think about them you see they want you thinking better of them than what they really are they don't want you to see the real person behind the mask they want you to see the play act that what we tell you we do let me tell you as a preacher that just because a man preaches something from the pulpit doesn't mean he does it in his own life those are two different things and Jesus is unmasking these Pharisees for their hypocrisy they loaded on others and they don't carry that load themselves but there's another way these poor ordinary Jews didn't know all these exceptions after all they weren't spending their lives studying these things they just had the heavy burdens both of

God's commands and then the additional man-made rules while the Pharisees wouldn't lift a finger to help them so not only would they not lift a finger to do these laws many of them themselves they found their ways around but also they did nothing to help the people with the load they piled on them so their legalistic system was good at making demands but it offered no relief for the people can you imagine that we have ten commandments that they're the summary of God's moral commands and those are those are significantly weighty things to be obeying and yet there was no help for them to obey those commands and then they heaped on all their additional commands and had nothing by way of help to them not even so much as lifting a finger to help them in other words their religion was all law and no gospel all bad news and no good news only the burden of a broken law a guilty conscience oh but there is good news for law breakers that's the gospel of

Jesus Christ that these guys would have nothing to do with that what the law could not do Romans 8 says in that it was weak through the flesh God did by sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin God condemned sin in the flesh of his own son in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us who walk not according to the flesh but according to the spirit no they didn't have any helps they just had the law and it has no power to save you know what the law has power to do to say you're guilty you haven't measured up to me that's all the law can say to you condemn you you've not met the standard whereas it's meant to drive us to Jesus to see that he is the one who can save us law breakers but the law alone is like

[42 : 51] Pharaoh demanding bricks but providing no straw demanding obedience but providing no power to obey oh but in the gospel of the Lord Jesus God provides and enables all that he requires Jesus Christ provides a perfect obedience to the law to apply to any poor sinner who trusts in him to put it to their record the gospel of Jesus provides the perfect sacrifice to take the full punishment for our law breaking even Jesus in his crucifixion and then in the gospel God gives us the Holy Spirit so that the law of God might be fulfilled in us as we walk by the spirit not by the flesh walk in the power of the spirit and so through the gospel of Jesus God accomplished what the law could not do could never do to run and work the law commands yet gives me neither feet nor hands but better news the gospel brings it bids me fly and gives me wings in the gospel

God enables what he requires but the Pharisees piled on all law with no gospel what a contrast is found in our Savior Matthew 11 28 to 30 Jesus says come to me all you who are what weary and burdened maybe wearied from your own sin and guilt that you brought upon yourself maybe burdened down by the loads that those Pharisees have heaped on you not only the commands of God but all their additional commands and you are weary and burdened Jesus has come to me and Jesus is now speaking as a rabbi when he says take my yoke upon you and learn from me and you will be who am humble and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your soul for my yoke is easy and my burden is light that's the language of the rabbi if you became his disciple you would take his yoke upon you you would follow his teachings his commands you would follow him and

Jesus is saying your way down under the burden of these Pharisees yoke take my yoke upon you and learn from me and you'll find I'm different from them I'm gentle and lowly in heart and you'll find soul rest rest for your soul you're laboring and you're burdened down now but I promise you soul rest for my yoke that which I require is easy and my burden is light yes Jesus has a yoke yes he has ten commandments yes he has these rules of the kingdom of God but they're all good commands and there's none of the man made stuff piled on top of it it's all that which is to lead you to the blessed flourishing life like we're learning in the Sunday school hour those are the commands that I have that's my yoke and if you come to me you will be united with me in the yoke so trying to carry the burden no it'll be you and me in the yoke and with me in the yoke you will have grace to help you you will have my spirit to empower and equip you to obey my laws yes his yoke is anyone would come after me and be my disciple let him deny himself take up his own cross and follow me but you'll find my yoke is what a difference this

Jesus is offering from the yoke of the Pharisees so I trust you can see why Jesus gives such a withering exposure of the Pharisees and their religion the last words to the crowds the nation was looking to these Pharisees as their guides in spiritual matters their guides to heaven and Jesus sees them as they really are blind leaders leading a blind nation to hell they're both falling in the ditch and Jesus steps in says no no that's not the way come to me I'll teach you the gospel the gospel way don't miss the heart of Jesus and these are hard words but he's got for these Pharisees but do you see the heart when he saw the multitudes he was moved with compassion why because he saw them as harassed and helpless sheep without a shepherd who were their shepherds scribes and

Pharisees who were no shepherds at all who cared nothing for the flock behind them is Satan the God of this age who has blinded the minds of unbelievers so that they cannot see what the gospel of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ and one of the favorite weapons of Satan to blind men from the glory of God in the gospel is false religion he's been using it from the garden until Jesus comes back and Jesus is reminding us that their religion is not extinct in our day indeed it's the most common religion of the day that by doing good and obeying enough you can earn your way into heaven it's in all the other religions of the world it's in much of

[49 : 23] Christianity as if salvation could be earned by our good deeds outweighing our bad deeds no if we're to be saved it will be only by Christ's deeds his perfect obedience that he has to give to us his death on the cross suffering our penalty for law breaking his glorious resurrection and triumph over sin and Satan and hell and death and now his present intercession for us at the father's right hand it's by what Jesus does and is doing that we are saved so what a good message and it's because that message is so good that he's going to expose that which denies the gospel don't fall for it be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees come to Jesus today just as he welcomes you and you'll find his yoke is easy his burden is light many of us have found it to be so amen amen let's stand and sing my hope is in the

Lord and in what he has done not what I have done not my works but his works from the overhead my hope is in the Lord let's pray father we thank you that though we live in a world full of the devil's lies old lies dressed up in new garb that we have the truth we have our savior who is himself the way the truth and the life the only way to the father thank you for preserving that gospel of your grace in Jesus Christ thank you for opening our eyes to see it that we who believed repented and trusted in you are no longer under that heavy burden of sin and of man's commandments but we have been set free set free now to walk in your ways and to do it by the grace and the spirit that you've given us help us to work from the gospel from grace from mercy and not trying to earn it ourselves we pray in Jesus name amen amen