

## 1. Integrity Doesn't Fear Truth Being Heard

- a. Who were the Scribes?
  - i. They were the studious class, the learned experts of the Law who wrestled with the Book. Scholars.
  - ii. They are often aligned with the Pharisees and elders, because some of the Pharisees were scribes. Thought not all Pharisees were scribes.
  - iii. The Sanhedrin relied on the expert scholarship of scribes in order to rule according to the Scripture. Thus, scribes are often included with priests and elders of the people as well.
  - iv. Title is also applied to some of Jesus' followers in Matthew 13:52 and 23:34
    1. Thus, there are good scribes, i.e. interpreters of the Scripture, and poor scribes, i.e. interpreters of the Scriptures
    2. The good scribes will be markedly different than what Jesus describes in vv46-47, **thus the need to “pay close attention”**.
- b. Jesus speaks to His disciples *where everyone else can hear what He is saying*.
  - i. This indicates that Jesus is fearless in His condemnation of the **experts'** actions.
  - ii. We, too, should not be afraid to speak what Jesus speaks, even when it is condemning of our **own actions or of others' actions**
  - iii. Even when His words bring hatred, even imprisonment, and even death, as it did for Him
- c. It also means that this teaching is good for all, not merely His disciples, i.e. Truth is Truth
  - i. The foundational requirement to draw near to the Lord and to please Him is the characteristic of humility: I NEED Jesus and have no goodness of my own.
  - ii. I should expect to be corrected by God!

## 2. Beware of Experts Who Esteem Themselves Worthy of Honor

- a. The governing imperative of this section is the word, "Beware" or "Pay attention to"
  - i. The word comes from a compound meaning, "to draw close" or "to pull in near" and has the idea of a ship landing at a dock.
- b. The basic idea in this passage is that Jesus is telling his disciples to keep a close eye on the Scribes, to watch their behaviors and to watch close enough as to discern their underlying values that give foundation to their actions, i.e. craving reputation and honor.
- c. We, too, need to learn discernment of heart from the types of actions that we perceive around us.
  - i. There is a time to judge good from evil, wisdom from foolishness, and godliness from pretense based upon behaviors
  - ii. This goes against the flow of what we hear from our society, who tell us not to judge anyone though they judge the ones judging.
- d. We all follow somebody, entrust ourselves to someone, and Jesus is warning us watch whom we follow, **particularly the “experts”**

## 3. Beware of Experts Who Crave Esteem and Power

- a. The principle verbs describing heart motivation (participles):
  - i. desiring/wanting, loving/having affections for
    1. These controlling verbs indicate the heart motivation of *craving*
    2. It is a strong and intense desire, a **“have to have”**, a **love for**
    3. The issue is not the intensity of the desire, but rather the object of the intense desire
      - a. Status, power, recognition, honor

- b. Something that they want so badly they are willing to sin to get it (devouring the poor and pretentious prayers)
  - ii. Crave *recognition* as wise and knowledgeable (long robes)
    - 1. They desire *status*
    - 2. **It's not just to be noticed, but to be noticed and applauded** by other men as superior in their dedication, their achievement, and their righteousness
  - iii. Crave *status* as socially important (greetings and seats)
    - 1. Particularly in socially important institutions such as markets, synagogues, and suppers
      - a. The business world, the religious world, the personal world
      - b. EVERYWHERE in society!!
    - 2. They crave power in society, in social circles, to wield such power over others
      - a. **They don't just want the best seat, they want the best seat *in comparison to others***
      - b. The honorable positions only have value in that they are *more* honorable than others
        - i. **What's the point of being a Captain, if the whole ship is Captains?**
        - ii. They want honor and authority over others, influence because of their perceived honor, wisdom, and righteousness
          - 1. Thus, each element that Jesus points out is an element that is intended by the Scribes to point out how wise, successful, righteous, and near to God that they are
          - 2. This is intended to gain them influence, which, apparently, they use to further their own influence rather than show compassion to the weak
    - 3. They protect this turf jealously, *seeking* the places of honor
      - a. It is this craving that leads to actively seeking honor, protecting honor, defending honor
      - b. We act out towards others based upon this craving
        - i. When our honor is threatened by accusation, criticism, or correction we seek our honor by pretense
          - 1. **We don't want to be found out**, so we *pretend* that we are close to God, when we are not
          - 2. **We don't want to be criticized, so we attack our critics by** gossiping about them behind their backs
          - 3. We hate correction, for it implies our lack of honor, so we bite and devour those who seek our growth by fighting against them by making character accusations against them
            - a. Not for the purpose of edifying them, but to tear them down
            - b. That way, we appear better *in comparison*, and they appear worse *in comparison*
  - c. **"Pride is something that is essentially competitive. Pride gets no pleasure in having something, only in having more of it than the next person. You may think you're proud of being successful, intelligent, good-looking, but you really aren't. You're only proud of being more successful, more intelligent, more good-looking than other people and when you are in the presence of**

other people who are much more successful, intelligent, or good-looking than you, you lose all pleasure in what you had. Because you never really had pleasure in it, you were proud of it. Pride is the pleasure of having more of it than the next person. Pride is the pleasure of being more than the next **person.** ” (C.S. Lewis)

- b. The active verbs indicate their *behaviors* which we are to notice, discern, and avoid
  - i. Devour widows' homes
    1. This word has two aspects involving consumption: rip apart and to build up oneself
      - a. Eating destroys the food in order to strengthen my body
      - b. In the same way, these scribes were destroying the poor (widows) and powerless in order to fatten themselves
        - i. Whatever the specifics were in the process, it is apparent that the leaders of the people were gaining influence, wealth, status, or power by taking advantage of the poor
        - ii. This may have been financial, political, or **emotional**, but **Jesus' point** is that the heart craves power so much that it is willing to use and **destroy the weak to further one's own goal**
    2. Want power over others
      - a. Not only do they desire power through envy (**others' recognition and imitable**), but also power over the weak
      - b. This analogy that Jesus is drawing is related to Isaiah 3 (v14) and the judgment of the LORD upon the elders and rulers of the people for oppressing the poor
        - i. Read also chapters 4-5 for the destruction of Jerusalem mentioned in Luke 21, the parable of the vineyard earlier in Luke 20 and the condemnation for oppression by leaders.
        - ii. There is a strong allusion to the teaching here by Jesus and the prophecy by Isaiah in 3-5 (Luke loves Isaiah).
    3. And this is completely unlike God!
      - a. Thus, it receives the strongest condemnatory words in Scripture (v47)
        - i. “They will receive (future) an exceeding (more than necessary) judgment.”
        - ii. Whoa! This is exceedingly strong language!
  - ii. Pray pretentiously
    1. The word indicates pretext, an affirmation of oneself before others, pretense
      - a. Thus, their prayers were made not of sincerity before God, but for the impressing of others
      - b. They wanted to be seen as close to God, righteous, godly, *by others*
    2. long prayers
      - a. **the word is more accurately “great” prayers**
      - b. This may indicate the length, but also the impression intended of quality, making use of great religious fervor or language, but the intention was to be recognized as greatly honorable
      - c. **It is the “look at me” or “notice me” prayer indicated in Luke 11 of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector**
        - i. Look-at-me versus Look-away-from-me prayers
      - d. Want honor as righteous (long prayers)

- i. Part of this power is the power of envy
- ii. They want to be seen as others as laudable, righteous, and imitable
- iii. They want to be seen as close to God, yet they are *pretending* to be close to God
  - 1. See Acts 5, Ananias and Sapphira
  - 2. God hates pretense

4. Gospel: Jesus Gave Up His Esteem to Death For the Sake of the Powerless (Phil 2:4-11)

- a. This is what the Cross of Christ means: The Son of God emptied Himself of His deserved honor in order to die as a criminal, becoming the sin which we loved and God hates, so that you and I might share in His great honor for all eternity.
- b. This is what changes our cravings!
  - i. When we see that God the holy, God the almighty, God the righteous One, surrendered His honor to die the death that I deserved, endured the suffering that I had earned, became the **sin which I threw in God's face, then I am moved by such absolutely astounding love.**
    - 1. This is not self-protecting love for Himself, but self-sacrificial love for enemies, traitors, betrayers, haters, and self-centered failures!
    - 2. This is what we remember in this sacrament of Communion, this holy remembrance **of God's incredible mercy and infinite mercy which He set forth before the foundation of the world for joy.**
  - ii. When I see that God gives all the honor that I need in the gift of His Son, that I am united to Jesus by faith alone, not by my own performance or my own righteousness, then I am freed from honor-craving and power-craving
    - 1. I **don't NEED the approval** of man, but can be seen as the failure that I am and the needy person that I am
    - 2. Jesus saves sinners! God loves and redeems the needy! **GOOD NEWS!!**
    - 3. God chose to bind Himself to the needy so I am deeply humbled
- c. What does this look like?
  - i. This person is never **hurt badly by criticism (doesn't bother him, isn't devastated, doesn't keep him up late)**
    - 1. My personal and particular sins are *so great that Jesus had to die* to remove them
    - 2. Jesus loves me enough that *He did die* to remove them
    - 3. Therefore, it is not thinking highly of oneself, but highly of Jesus and resting in His delighting love for me – deep soul rest!
  - ii. This person steps out and takes risks for Jesus, because even if he should fail, his performance does not determine his acceptance before God.
    - 1. When he is successful, he is not proud or harsh, but rather humble and gentle, seeing that Jesus is the one who is performing any real and lasting change within others, not him.
    - 2. When he fails, it is because he is inadequate in himself, so he merely turns to Jesus once again and finds that Jesus has never left him, and his verdict is still secure in His redeemer. Jesus dines with those who acknowledge their deep need of Him.
  - iii. This person points away from herself and points to Jesus, boasts of Jesus, sings of Jesus, glories in Jesus, and esteems Jesus.