LIFE BIBLE MINISTRY

Matthew 23

Jesus Denounces Religious Leaders

Pastor Paul LeBoutillier · April 18, 2026

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

Good morning to you We're in Matthew, and we are progressing praise the Lord. We're in the 23rd chapter so open your Bibles and turn it there, please You know what we're gonna pray quick, and then I'm gonna show you a very brief two-minute video that it kind of Dramatizes what we're gonna be looking at here today, so Heavenly Father Open our hearts today to your word may your spirit Just touch our lives and may you speak to us Lord as you are so perfectly capable of doing Use this time we pray Jesus precious name Amen For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against man you do not go in yourselves nor do you let others enter blind guys You strain at a nut and swallow a camel You bow before the letter of the law and violate the heart of the law justice mercy good faith You are like whited sepulchers all clean and fair without but we live Full of dead men's bones and all corruption You see these stones do not I? Tell you they will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down yours is a house of desolation the home of the lizard and the spider Serpents Bruder vipers, how can any of you escape amnesia? You shall not see me here again Not until you learn to cry Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord For I and my father are one and the same This is the man Well now keep in mind that's a bit of a Hollywood rendition of what we're looking at here In this chapter, and frankly, we don't know if Jesus even raised his voice As he as he spoke these things and and you can and you know if you as you read through this chapter You're gonna see that there are some things that that they threw in from some other gospel accounts And then there was even a little bit of Hollywood license that went in there as well to kind of just increase the dramatic effect And you have to understand that whenever you're watching you know kind of any sort of a Hollywood rendition of a film or a movie that you're going to watch Hollywood rendition of something related to the Bible I remember this this you know was made Jesus of Nazareth came out back in the 70s and Yeah in the 70s And and I had just really kind of started walking with the Lord at that time and remember watched The church we were attending watched the whole thing in a day It's like six hours worth and and so we had this marathon thing and I remember watching it, and I really wasn't that Strong in the in the Bible yet at that stage and I remember taking a lot of what Jesus of Nazareth the movie said as Gospel truth and quoted things you know and it was all very embarrassing as I

think back on it now, but You know several things. I said were We're we're quite wrong, but anyway It gives you a sense you know I wanted to share it a little bit this morning because it gives you a sense of just The the tension you know the tension that I'm sure rose In in that situation Matthew chapter 23 is we're gonna look at here It covers in detail what we just saw in that video in essence a sharp denouncing of the Jewish religious leadership which had obviously You know fallen into great corruption and sin and rebellion and so forth and while it's always kind of fun to see the bad guy Get his you know and hear Jesus Gonna taking these guys to task For all that they've been doing you know this morning there might be some who are here Thinking about this chapter and thinking about studying through it and wondering To themselves what if anything they they might take from this passage for themselves in other words They might be thinking isn't this chapter kind of all about what Jesus said to the Jewish religious leaders Well, I'm not a Jewish religious leader I you know I'm I'm a Christian I'm you know doing walking with the Lord and this and that so what is it about this chapter that really is?

relevant to me and or Applicable you know to my life and so forth so before we go any further. Let me answer that question because I guess I'm anticipating From from some of you the reason we study this chapter It is because quite frankly the same Sinful heart that plagued those Jewish religious leaders is beating strong and hard inside you and I and that's just the sad reality Although the Jewish religious leaders through the scriptures are kind of the guys we love to hate You know We do ourselves a disservice if we allow our hearts to think that what Jesus said to them Couldn't possibly be applicable to me in any capacity You know I mean, I think I think I that that that's a that's a dangerous place that we that we stand on you know whenever we basically Think ourselves kind of to be beyond what Jesus might be saying to somebody else in fact There are several sins that he brings out in this chapter that the Jewish religious leaders were guilty of that I think we would do good to take note of and we're going to take note of them this morning as many as we Can get through and and we'll even put them up on the screen for those of you that are taking notes So that maybe it'll make a little bit easier for you to jot them down and or or and or make mental notes But let's begin verse 1 of chapter 23 It says then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples So you can see that in at least initially Jesus is directing this to the crowds and to his disciples And he says the scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses's seat So do and observe whatever they tell you but not the works they do for they preach But do not practice and that is where we're going to begin and let me go ahead And we'll start just we'll start putting these up again for those of you jotting down or making mental notes We'll put up our first note here is that we're dealing with the sin of saying but not Obeying okay the sin of saying but not obeying. This is that the kind of that whole idea of of You know talk is cheap You know and any and there's a lot of people that can talk a good fight And I don't know if you've ever run into people who just like to talk about the Bible But they do absolutely nothing toward walking in

any kind of obedience toward the Bible in any way and Talk is so easy talk is extremely cheap and the religious leaders You know Talked a good fight. I'll never forget 30 some 30 years ago of whatever it was it was almost 30 years ago I was sitting and I was up in the Washington Pastoring up there and There was this guy in our church that he struggled with with alcohol and and this particular day he struggled more than other days, and he came into my office and Just started preaching at me, but he was inebriated But he was preaching. I mean he was preaching up a storm, and it wasn't that anything He was saying was bad in fact.

I remember thinking and reflecting on the stuff He said that day, and it was like you know it's pretty good stuff You know you do pretty good when you're drinking there, buddy, and and it wasn't bad at all It was a pretty good message all in all I was tempted to take notes Being a young man and at the time myself and and and yet the the whole of his life Expressed something other than what was being said through his mouth you know The whole Activity of what was going on in his life You know betrayed what was coming out of his mouth and so forth and that's something that the religious leaders were Guilty of and something that we have to be very careful Not to not to also do Paul writes to the Romans And he said those of you who are preaching against such-and-such are you doing that yourself those of you who say don't steal Are you stealing those of you who say you know the Bible says about adultery? Are you committing adultery and so forth? You remember? so Very important thing to remember look at verse 4 in your Bible it goes on to say they tie up heavy burdens Hard to bear and they lay them on people's shoulders But they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger and that is the second Point that we're putting up on our screen here, and that is the sin of Burdening people with man-made rules that can't be carried out. It's it's it's so incredibly Sad to see that happen You know Jesus said come to me all you who are weary and heavy-laden And you will find rest rest for your souls, and then he went on to say for my yoke is easy and my burden is light Did you guys ever read that in light of?

The burdens that are sometimes placed on people's shoulders in following Jesus You know just it's funny that this should even be kind of coming up because just yesterday I was I was sitting in our den and I was kind of clicking through the channels I was hoping to find some Olympics on earlier in the day, and and they weren't on yet So I started to kind of just and I found this PBS channel and there we get several But there was this there was and maybe some of you might have seen it But there was a special yesterday on people who had left the Amish Church It was quite interesting, and I I usually don't like to watch those things But I I tuned in on this one because it was very interesting And they were kind of following the lives of these people who had left the Amish community and had kind of Well in all for all intents and purposes kind of taking their spiritual lives in their hands because these these people talked about how

regularly in church the the preachers they called them Would tell them that if they don't maintain the Amish lifestyle living within the community separating from the world Wearing the exact clothes that they were supposed to wear and doing all the things that they were supposed to do that was that meant I mean that was redemption that was salvation That was eternal life And they would tell them that one young man was talking about how when he was a teenager another very very good friend of his just left the church walked away from the community the Amish community and he says he Contacted him at one point and said I want you just to think about what it would like be like to be in hell and You see walking away from the Amish community is Literally walking away from God in in their understanding and and and giving up your salvation and Being willing to say you know I will suffer the fires of hell For this freedom and so forth and I I I watched that specially you guys in my heart just broke As I thought oh The burdens that we put on people not we Specifically, but in a general sense the burdens we put on people That we tell them they have to follow or you're going to hell I mean You know who I'm afraid for I'm afraid for the people that are preaching that message I'm afraid for them when they stand before the Lord God of the universe and And they come to find out that all of the rules and all of the regulations. They burdened and heaped on people and Said do this or you're going to hell and so forth When they find out that that that was of their own doing of their own making You know that they that they did exactly what Jesus said here they tied up heavy burdens on people It's just it really is incredible He goes on in verse 5 to say they do all their deeds to be seen by others For they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long phylacteries were little boxes that they would literally tie to their forehead and they did it because there was a passage in Deuteronomy where God said Bind this word to your forehead and so forth and and he was using a symbolic statement to talk about So identifying with the Word of God and so embracing the Word of God that it becomes a part of us well They of course being you know a very legalistic people the Jews took a very legalistic approach to Obeying that and they literally made these little boxes called phylacteries and they tied them to the to their heads and put scriptures in them little rolled-up scriptures and And so forth and and it says here that they make their phylacteries wide Meaning you know they want to look extra spiritual I've got more scripture in my you know thing than you do sort of a thing You know and then this thing about tassels you know God commanded the Jews to wear the the men to wear tassels on the bottoms of their garments as a Reminder that God had redeemed them and that they were to remember to obey the commandments that he had given them in in the in the word and The religious leaders would they they basically came to the conclusion that if my tassels are longer than your tassels Then that kind of proves that I'm More obedient than you are and I'm more righteous than you are and that's going to be impressive You know I'm going to make my tassels my tassels are bigger than your tassels sort of it's stupid but that's exactly what you legalism you know gets you and This is the the third thing that we're

going to put up on our list It's the sin of living to just impress others and not living to please God But just I'm doing stuff just to kind of get the reaction of people to go ooh Isn't he spiritual? Which is you know so incredibly ridiculous? He goes on in verse 6 and following and says and they love the place of honor At feasts and the best seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces and being called rabbi rabbi Come and sit here by others He says but you're not to be called rabbi for you have one teacher, and you're all brothers and Call no man your father on earth for you have one father who is in heaven neither be called Instructors your Bible may say teacher for you have one instructor the Christ let me explain what Jesus is saying here He's talking about Well, let's put up the fourth point and that'll help he's talking about the sin of loving title and position And that's what this is largely about There are some people who just love their titles, but I tell you if I can somehow work the word executive into my title I'm gonna feel a whole lot better about myself. I'm the executive something you know I don't really care what just something and You know we're very prone to that we're very prone to To to loving that sort of recognition that we get by being Somebody and and we're kind of our Identity becomes kind of tied to those things, but Jesus says you know you got to really war against that and be careful about titles don't go around calling people rabbi and and that was a way of really just saying teacher and he References that later on in these verses He says because you're brothers It's not that it's a sin to call somebody a teacher It's just that look what it does to him it puffs them up You know I did it.

We're so prone to that in our egos to get puffed up He did you notice he said don't even call anybody father now. He's not talking about Moms and dads okay. He's talking about titles that are given in a religious setting I I don't know about you, but when my kids called me father it never puffed me up I don't remember them actually ever calling me father. We're a pretty informal family It was like daddy when they were little and then dad and then once in a while pop Which I love you know Give him a backhander when they pull out one, but or dad dad daddy. Oh was one of the Favorite things they like to do but He's not talking about that.

He's talking about when we exalt people with these with these kind of names Kind of interesting in light of Roman Catholicism, isn't it? Don't call anybody in a religious context father. Don't do it. Why puffs them up and You only have one father who is in heaven and so when you're looking From that sort of a perspective of a father look to your heavenly father. He's it sort of a thing You know don't go around calling someone Oh Father and and and he even talks in the end here about you know don't don't call somebody Instructor or teacher and you might say well now wait a minute doesn't Paul say in Ephesians that God gave some to be Teachers in the body of Christ.

Yeah, he did he gave the spiritual gift of teacher But that doesn't mean we go around putting that on their title you see You know that's where we puff people up. Yeah, there are teachers in the body of Christ That's there's nothing wrong with that, but when we go around and say teacher We're just we're exalting them in a way that is just is not gonna be good Ultimately because the ego just gets a hold of that thing you know I remember years ago telling people I said you know I Honestly, I just seen you didn't even call me pastor. I would rather just be called Paul because that's my name and oh it really created kind of a Buzz you know I mean people were really bugged by that for a while I was like okay Call me what you want to call me, but just just know this it's not important to me you know and Anyway, but there's this thing about just this Loving title and position that Jesus called out the the religious leaders on and we have to be careful of the same thing Be careful that you're not striving for a title and so forth verse 11 says And this is kind of just a reminder Greatest among you should be your servant. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled. Whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

Verse 13 says, but woe to you, scribes and Pharisees. This is where Jesus kind of turns the corner and begins to speak directly to them, and he uses that word woe. And I don't know if your Bible includes the word woe, but it's in the ESV that I'm reading from here. And it's an important word that I'm glad that they introduced because he begins this process of these like seven woes that are that are given in the remainder of this passage. And it's a it's it's a word that's used in the Greek to either describe grief.

Like, woe is me. Or it's used to describe impending judgment. And that is the case, obviously, that Jesus is using here. He says to them, woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, for you shut the kingdom of heaven in people's faces, for you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in. And this is the fifth thing that we're bringing up, and it's the sin of hindering others from coming to Christ.

Honestly, I'm not even I'm not totally positive that this is even possible for a believer to do, but all I know is that God cares a lot about it. There is an open door policy that God has as it relates to salvation, and he does not want you and I limiting that at all in any way to any person. And we even have to be careful as believers how we live and how we react to people. I mean, if I asked you right now to raise your hand if you know someone who is staying away from church because they've been hurt by someone in church, I'm willing to bet I would almost get a unanimous response of hands. And we can sit here all day long and we can say, well, those people.

We were never told to get our eyes on other people. We were told to put our eyes on Jesus, and we all know that, but people get hurt. And sometimes they get hurt because we're being careless and reckless with people's hearts. And we need to be very careful because eternity is on the line here. And if we shut

the door in someone's heart and mind as it relates to understanding Christ and the gospel by our own stupidity, that's a problem, you know.

We just need to be careful. We need to be loving. It's incredible to me how many Christians feel like it's their ministry calling to preach and be angry and judge people for their sin. It really is amazing. We act very judgmental sometimes toward unbelievers.

And that, in the light of the fact that Paul said, who am I to judge those outside the church? He wrote to the Corinthians. He said, who am I? Who am I to judge those outside the church? God's going to judge those outside.

Now, when it comes to inside the church, if there's disobedience and stuff, the church should make a response. But outside, no. And what did Jesus say? He said, God did not send me to condemn the world, right, but to save the world. So if Jesus didn't come to condemn the world, why is it we feel it's our ministry to walk around and condemn people for their sinful lives?

You know, I came to a conclusion at one particular point. It was a very freeing conclusion. I came to the conclusion that unbelievers are going to act like unbelievers. I know that sounds incredibly simple, but when we have an expectation that an unbeliever, a person without the Holy Spirit is going to act somehow different, and they should be living up to some kind of a standard, and we condemn them when they don't, I mean, how dumb is that? We know we, as in Christians, we know it takes the Holy Spirit to live a life of righteousness and grace and goodness.

We can't even do it ourselves. And if you're trying, you're involved in religion, not in the grace that is expressed through Jesus, you know? If you're trying to live a good life as a Christian, you're involved in religion, not what the Bible teaches. You and I recognize it's only by the Spirit, right? How is it possible for you and I to bear good fruit?

Only by staying connected to the vine, right, and walking in the power of the Holy Spirit. We're to walk in the Spirit, and then we won't fulfill the lusts of the flesh, it says. But what are you going to expect out of somebody who doesn't have the Holy Spirit in their life? You're going to expect perfection, and then condemn them when they don't reach it? We shut the door in people's faces when we do that.

Now, am I saying that we should condone sin? Not at all. I'm not talking about you and I going, you know, just condoning it or winking at it or just going, yeah, that's okay, you're an unbeliever, it's all right, don't worry about it. That's not what I'm talking about. But, you know, you can recognize the situation a person is in without condemning them, without expressing some kind of condemnation.

It's like, I don't condemn you, it's not my job to condemn you, it's not my calling to condemn you. My calling is, in fact, to love you, right? We're called to love those people outside the body of Christ, that they might come to Jesus, that they might be drawn by the love that you and I have for them, and so forth, rather than us being kind of this holier-than-thou sort of a thing, you know? I, you know, yeah, anyway, all right. I could say more, but I won't beat that dead horse.

It goes on and says, in verse 15, "'Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you travel across sea and land to make a single proselyte,' which is a convert, and that would be a convert to Judaism. And when he becomes a proselyte or convert, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourself.'" Now, this is one of the sins that they were guilty of, that I don't believe is possible, frankly, for a believer, but I'm going to throw it up here anyway. It's the sixth point that we're putting up, and that is the sin of perpetuating one's lost condition, rather than bringing people to a knowledge of the Savior. They just perpetuate, yeah, their own lostness, if that's a word. Verse 16, "'Woe to you, blind guides, who say, if anyone swears by the temple, it's nothing, but if anyone swears by the gold of the temple, well, now then, he's bound by his oath, you blind fools.

For which is greater, the gold or the temple that made the gold sacred? And you say, if anyone swears by the altar, it is nothing, but if anyone swears by the gift that is on the altar, now then, he's bound by his oath, you blind men. For which is greater, the gift or the altar that makes the gift sacred? So whoever swears by the altar swears by it and by everything on it, and whoever swears by the temple swears by it and by him who dwells in it, and whoever swears by heaven swears by the throne of God and by him who sits upon it.'" By the way, as Christians, we're told in the Word, you know what, let's not even get into that whole swearing thing, because it's just let your yes be yes and your no be no, and don't think that you have to punctuate it by swearing an oath and that sort of thing. What's this all about?

I'm going to put this up as number seven on your list here. It's the sin of perverting what is truly valuable. See, that's the thing that was really going on with the religious leaders, and it surrounded this issue of how they took oaths and what really was a binding element that you could take an oath by. But ultimately, what it came down to was, they were placing value on the wrong things in life, and that is something that we can very much be guilty of doing. We do it, I think, all the time.

Think about your life and think about how your unsaved neighbor sees your life and sees what you're doing, how you do it, and so forth, and what you consider valuable. I've said this before, and I think it's a good illustration. I think you can tell what somebody thinks is valuable by looking at their checkbook register. I mean, what you are willing to spend your money on is usually a good sort of a picture of what's

valuable to you. So as believers, are we conveying things that are truly valuable to people in the world, and so forth, or are we perverting what is, in fact, truly valuable?

Let's read on, verse 23. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law, justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done without neglecting the others, you blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel. You might have recognized that phrase from the video that we showed. The Pharisees were, boy, they were tithers, let me tell you.

I mean, they would tithe, even giving 10% of, even down to the herbs in their pantry, and that's what he mentions here in this passage. Even down, can you imagine tithing even your herbs? Let's take 10%, you know, of this herb and set it aside, and so forth, and give it to the Lord, but Jesus said, while they were so busy straining out a gnat. that they were swallowing a camel. What he means by that is that you have to remember that under the mosaic law, there were certain animals and things that if you ingested, they were considered unclean.

Insects, gnats, were unclean. You were not to swallow them. We all have. You ever gone for a walk, talking with somebody and all of a sudden, I just swallowed a bug. I remember being on a ride at the fair and getting a bee in my mouth.

That was fun. Taught me to keep my mouth closed on the ride. I was just having a good time going, yeah, going about 70 miles an hour. It was really fun. But these were considered unclean.

So what the Jews would do is when they poured water or wine is they would put a cloth over their cup and they would pour their water or wine through the cloth so as to strain out any possible bugs that might've gotten into the drinking water or into the wine so they wouldn't ingest something. This made them appear very righteous and very holy. Oh, they don't want anything unclean or impure to enter their lives and so forth. Oh, they're just so wonderful. Jesus said, yeah, you guys take all the time to strain out a gnat and all the while, you're swallowing a camel.

And it's obvious hyperbole because a camel, it was the largest animal in all of Palestine. It too was unclean. It was not to be eaten. It was considered an unclean animal to eat one would defile you, make you ceremonially unclean according to the Mosaic law. And Jesus is using hyperbole to say you're going to all this trouble and yet you have allowed such things in your heart that would defile you completely, you know.

And so this is, is this number eight? Wow. The sin of becoming lost in legalistic detail while ignoring the heart of God's word. By the way, if you ever have a hard time recognizing legalism when you see it, here's a great way. Legalism is always just placing some kind of overemphasis on irrelevant details.

That's how you can tell, you know. It's just majoring on the minors and making it the point. Verse 25. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you clean the outside of the cup and plate, but inside you are full of greed and self-indulgence, you blind Pharisee. First, clean the inside of the cup and the plate that the outside also may be clean.

And this is number nine, and it is the sin of making one's righteousness a merely external pursuit. Guys, we in the Christian church are guilty as charged with this one. We have taken all kinds of external things and made them the focal point. You know, you guys, most of you know that Calvary Chapel got its, really its big start in the Jesus movement back in the 60s when the hippies were starting to find Jesus. Some of them were going into Eastern religion, some were just doing drugs or sex or free this or that.

And some of them were finding Jesus while they started coming to the Lord and Mass, you know. And a lot of this was happening down in Southern California. Some of it was happening on the East Coast as well. And they were coming to churches because they wanted to see if there was something significant there. They were looking for Jesus Christ.

Do you know what they got met with by a lot of the churches down in Southern California? A shut door. They found that there were many churches they went into where people said, you go clean up first. You go cut your hair. You go take a bath.

Then you can come to church. You're not fit to be in church. See we all have suits and ties on here in this place. So you go clean yourself up. And oh, how would you like to be those leaders standing before the throne of grace one day?

Where God through His Spirit says, I drew the hearts of these thousands of young people to my own self. And when they came and approached your church, you turned them away. You know, Calvary Chapel wasn't the only church that did it. But thankfully, they opened their doors to those stinky, dirty, long-haired kids who came in and sat on the floor because there wasn't enough room. And the church grew to the point where at one point, Calvary Chapel had a membership down there of 30,000 people.

But that's just simply because at least in that church, there was an openness and I thank God for it. Because it placed an emphasis where it needed to be placed. And the people of Calvary Chapel, when all

this stuff first started, I want you to know something. They were not paragons of virtue. Some of them were kind of looking at these dirty hippies and kind of going, what are they doing here?

You need to know that. They were not perfect people. But they came to understand that if God was going to do a work in these kids' life, it had to start on the inside. You with me? It had to start on the inside.

It had to start at the heart level and go out. You see, whenever we take the outside and we make it the point, now we're doing religion. We're doing empty religion. If we say to people, well, you know what, Christians don't wear their hair like that. Or Christians don't do that.

Christians don't get a tattoo. Or Christians don't. And we're focused on all these externals. What we're doing is we're putting the law on people. What we've got to be doing is bringing people to understand that the kingdom of God begins in here and it grows outward.

And don't worry about how somebody looks on the outside. It doesn't matter. This is not an issue. I know that there have been people who've come to church dressed as provocatively as they could just to try to get a rise out of people. We had this gal who came to our fellowship, some of you might remember a number of years ago, and a man, boy, she was rough.

And she had all her side of her head all shaved and this big, tall mohawk thing with her hair, black, spiky thing, and wearing all kinds of black studded, and came in just kind of like daring us to kick her out or something, you know. And we just loved on her. And she then moved to Boise, got involved at Calvary Chapel, Boise. I'm friends with her on Facebook. She just got married.

Lovely, lovely gal, you know, who's just seen such a tremendous work of Jesus in her life. But that's what we ought to be doing, you know what I mean? Focusing on the heart and not on the externals and so forth. Verse 27, "'Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs.'" That's in the video, they called them whited sepulchers.

We don't use the word sepulcher for a tomb or a grave or something like that. He says, "'Which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness. And so you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.'" You have to understand that under the law of Moses, touching a dead body would defile you. You just don't touch a dead body, you know? And if you have to, because somebody in your family died or you're the person that deals with dead bodies, there was a period of uncleanness that a person would go through before they could enter back into the religious community and into the worship community of Israel and so forth.

All the Jews knew that that was a picture of becoming unclean, it was a picture of corruption. The decay process that is involved with a dead body is a picture of the process of sin, and it's decaying, corrupting influence in our lives. So God said, don't touch a dead body. Well, notice what Jesus says to them. He says, you guys are like whitewashed graves.

You look really pretty on the outside, but you open the lid and you find there's corruption. There's decomposition. It's stinky, smelly, rotten. Well, do you know what the point of this whole thing is? It's the corrupting influence that we become to other people.

It's not just that they are corrupted on the inside, it's that those whom they touch are also corrupted. And so this is the next point that we're putting on the list here. It's the sin of conveying an outward spirituality while actually corrupting others. I might appear to be spiritual, walking with God, but I'm actually corrupting people. Verse 29, Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you build the tombs of the prophets and decorate the monuments of the righteous, saying, Well, if we'd lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.

Thus you witness against yourselves that you are the sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers, you serpents, you brood of vipers. How are you to escape being sentenced to hell? That's a rhetorical question, by the way, and the answer is, you can't. Therefore I send you prophets and wise men and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify and some you will flog in your synagogues and persecute from town to town so that may you be saved.

So that on you may come all the righteous blood, shed on earth from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar." That's a way of saying from A to Z, all the ones. Truly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation. This is the 11th point that we're putting up on our...and this is the last one, by the way. It's the sin of self-righteous superiority because the religious leaders were basically saying, well, if we lived back in the days of our forefathers, we certainly wouldn't have done that. We wouldn't have persecuted the prophets.

We wouldn't have thrown Jeremiah in a well. No. We wouldn't have done this. We wouldn't have done that. No.

And Jesus said, you know what? First of all, number one, you testify that you are the children of those who did it. And second of all, you know what? I'm going to send you people. I'm going to send you prophets, and I'm going to send you messengers, and you'll kill them.

You will crucify them. You will persecute them, and you will prove that you are no different from your fathers. This, by the way, is the sin of that self-righteous superiority. It somehow says, looks at the sin of others and says, well, I'd never do that. I would never do that.

Do you know, I think the smartest thing to say when you and I are seeing sin is to say, yeah, I see how you could do that. You know, it doesn't do anybody any favors to have them confess a sin in front of you and for you kind of to go, really? I mean, what does that say? It says you're righteously superior to them. But instead for you to look at them and just go, yeah, you know what?

I got one of those hearts, too. I got one of those corrupted sinful nature hearts, too. Yeah, I understand that. I understand how sin can happen in a person's life. I understand completely.

Jesus ends this with a final impassioned refrain. Verse 37, he says, O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it, how often would I have gathered your children together as hen gathers her brood under her wings and you are not willing. See, your house is left to you desolate, for I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. You know, one of the other gospel accounts that records Jesus saying these words tells us that he actually cried while he said this. Jesus actually wept over the city and he said this while weeping, which kind of tells you where the heart of the Lord is.

But that last statement is very interesting. He says, you'll not see me again until you say, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. That is a, it comes in the form of a prophetic statement outlining how Israel is going to receive their Messiah. When Jesus comes a second time, they are going to say to him, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. But you know what they're also going to do?

They're going to, it's going to be their turn to cry. He wept over the city saying, you wouldn't receive me. He's going to come a second time. They will receive him and they will weep. Nationally, they will weep.

Let me show you quickly. This is our last passage. From Zechariah, let me show you this passage on the screen here. And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and please for mercy so that when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him as one mourns for an only child and weep bitterly over him as one weeps over a firstborn. On that day, the mourning in Jerusalem will be great.

Why? Because they will realize at last. They crucified their Messiah when he came the first time. And they will be delighted by the fact that he is coming the second time. But they will realize how much they

missed and how much they gave up and how unwilling they were to believe and how stubborn they were to embrace the word of God.

And they will weep for the Lord. Let's make sure you and I aren't involved in any of the sins that Jesus pointed out to the religious leaders. Let's stand and let's pray together as we close.