

Christ's Woes On False Religion

Luke 11:33-54

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I'm amazed by the way Jesus dealt with people—with people who were repentant and sorry for their sins, He was patient, kind, loving and merciful. I think of John 8, when Jesus was meeting with the woman who was caught in the act of adultery. Moses, in the Law, and the legalists said that she should be stoned. And they asked Jesus, "What do You say?" Jesus stooped down and began to write with His finger in the sand. Then Jesus said, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first." And He turned to the woman and asked her, "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?"

She said, "No one, Lord."

"And Jesus said to her, 'Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.'"

But whenever Jesus was dealing with the hypocrites—the religious Pharisees, scribes, legalists and externalists—He had words of "woe" for them. And we'll cover Christ's stern words of woe in our text.

The woes are not words of anger but words of anguish. It is the anguish of a broken-hearted Messiah, Savior, whose people have rejected Him and gone into darkness. Jesus is going to pronounce six woes, three on the Pharisees and three on the lawyers or scribes.

There are three sections in our text. The first section is the challenge to receive God's true light, verses 33-36. Jesus said, "No one, when he has lit a lamp, puts it in a secret place or under a basket, but on a lampstand, that those who come in may see the light." He's implying that it is in a house, and you put your lamp in a prominent place to light up the whole house.

Verse 34, "The lamp of the body is the eye. Therefore, when your eye is good..." or "set on God" "...your whole body also is full of light. But when your eye is bad..." or "divided, evil" "...your body also is full of darkness. Therefore take heed..." this is the key "...that the light which is in you is not darkness." The Pharisees thought they were in the light, but they were in the darkness. The sinners were in darkness, but when they came to Christ they were truly in the light.

Verse 36, "If then your whole body is full of light, having no part dark, the whole body will be full of light, as when the bright shining of a lamp gives you light."

"The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here" (verse 32). And the queen of Sheba went from modern-day Yemen all the way to Israel, hundreds of miles, to hear the wisdom of Solomon. Yet the people Jesus was talking to right there would not believe Him or receive Him. He was the "greater than Solomon" right before them.

So the problem was they had divided eyes; they weren't looking at the light, and they weren't receiving the light. So they weren't full of light; they were full of darkness. The light they thought they had was, in reality, darkness. Jesus will expose that in the next two sections.

In verse 33, Jesus is that light. He came as "the light of the world. He said, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life" (John 8:12).

When our eye is "good," verse 34, or "set on God," that means you are looking to God, trusting in God, hoping in God, focused on God. You're not divided in your focus. Then "your whole body is also full of light." But when your eye is evil or divided, "your body also is full of darkness. Therefore take heed that the light which is in you is not darkness."

So basically Jesus is saying to them to make sure they were in the light. Make sure you have trusted Jesus Christ, who is "the light of the world." Make sure your eyes are set upon Him, that you are receiving that light and that your whole body is full of light rather than darkness.

How do we do that? First, when we pray, we are to confess our sins, set our eyes on Jesus Christ and receive Him as Lord and Savior. Second, we need to have self-examination or contemplation; we need to have time alone with God, and as the psalmist said, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalm 139:23-24).

The most important part of you is not the part that you spend a lot of time on before coming to church. You fix up the outside, but what about the inside? You prepare yourself physically, but what about spiritually? Did you say, "Lord, speak to me in Your Word; I'm listening." Did you, like the boy Samuel, say, "Speak, for Your servant hears" (1 Samuel 3:10).

Do you pray before coming to church? Do you pray on your way to church? Do you pray when you sit in the pew and wait for the service to start? "Lord, speak to me in Your Word. Transform me by Your Word. Help me to hear Your voice. Help me not to let my mind wander off and be divided. Help me to have a single focus on You, so I can hear the Word of God."

The authority is the Word; not the preacher. I'm not here to entertain you or razzmatazz you. I couldn't do that if I wanted to. I'm just the delivery boy. This is why I read the verse, explain the verse and apply the verse, because "The Word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword" (Hebrews 4:12). That's the light: the Word of God, the Scriptures.

And we'll see that the key to the Scriptures is Jesus Christ. So every preacher who is worth his salt should be preaching Jesus, Christ crucified and Christ the Savior.

So He said that we are to receive the light, and Jesus is the light. And we are to dispense the light to all who are in the house. We don't light a lamp and put it in a closet or put it under a bushel, which was a basket used for measuring wheat or grain. We put it on a lampstand, so all who come into the house can see the light.

What you did when you came to Christ was that you prayed and confessed your sin. So now you should share it with others. You should tell others about the goodness of the Lord. And you have contemplated, "Search me...try me...know" me." Then by opening the Bible, the Word of God, and reading it with expectancy—when you read the Bible you should hunger and thirst for God's Word.

I heard the story of a group of Christians during the French Revolution that was imprisoned in a dark, prison cell with one little window up high on the wall. Every day at a certain time when the sun was at the right angle, a ray of light would come into their cell. The group of 15 had only one Bible. So at that time every day, someone would be hoisted on shoulders, so they could reach the light. They opened the Bible, put it in the light, and that person would read from it to everyone in the cell. Then the person would be let back down, and they would discuss what was just read. "What did it say? How do we live out the Word of God?" They were reading the Word of God with the light of God shining on it.

What a beautiful picture that must have been! They read the Word and responded to the Word. We should also have the light of God shining in our hearts.

Now our text moves to the second section, verses 37-44, the confrontation with the Pharisees. The first thing Jesus did was to expose the folly of the Pharisees. The word "Pharisee" means "separate one." This was a Jewish sect, the most religious Jews ever. They were devoted entirely to doing nothing but keeping the Law. The lawyer, who also was a Pharisee, we'll talk about, which was a scribe, interpreted the Law and wrote the Law, but he added to it man-made rules. So he added man's precepts to God's Law, which clouded the Law, confused it and hid it from the people. That was burdensome to the people. So Jesus pronounces woes upon them.

In verses 37-41, He exposes their folly. "And as He spoke, a certain Pharisee asked Him to dine with him." We don't know this Pharisee's motive. There were some Pharisees who had right hearts; Nicodemus was one, and Joseph of Arimathea was probably another. Paul the Apostle was one, and he was persecuting Christians until he got saved. Then he said, "What things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ" (Philippians 3:7).

Jesus accepted the man's invitation. Jesus always accepted a dinner invitation. I do as well. Jesus didn't say to him, "No! You're a hypocrite! I'm not going to eat with you!" They believed that if you ate with someone who was unclean, you became unclean.

"So He went in and sat down to eat." That means they inclined on a dinner bed. The table they ate off of was probably just a foot or two off the ground. It was u-shaped, three-sided. Around the outside of the table was the bed that came up to the table. The servants came on the inside of the table to serve the food. Everyone reclined on the dinner bed around the outside of the table. They laid on their left side with the dinner table at their head, and with their right hand would reach onto the table for the food and pop it in their mouth.

I think we should revive this concept of the dinner bed. Have you ever eaten a big meal and

said, "I have to go lay down."

"You're already laying down!" This is awesome.

brunch and late afternoon.

Verse 38, "When the Pharisee saw it, he marveled that He had not first washed before dinner." This Pharisee was appalled! This washing was not hygienic; it was ceremonial.

You have to be careful when teaching this in a child's Sunday school class. "Did you wash your hands before you ate?"

"No. Jesus didn't! I learned it in Sunday school."

People had this superstition at this time that at night when you slept, demons could get on your hands. Then when you ate your food, the demons got on your food and inside your body. I heard of one rabbi who couldn't do the ceremonial washing, so he wouldn't eat and starved to death. How stupid is that?!

So they would place their hands in an upward position, sprinkle their hands with a set amount of water, it would run down their hands and drip off their wrists. Then they would turn their hands down and pour the water from the wrists down. This was their ceremonial washing. And some were so strict about it that they would wash between each part of the meal.

This Pharisee was freaking out. And I think Jesus didn't do this ceremonial washing on purpose. "Then the Lord said to him, 'Now you Pharisees make the outside of the cup and dish clean...' setting the stage for this whole text; they were externalists, legalists "...but your inward part is full of greed and wickedness." Everything on the outside was clean, but the inside was dirty.

Jesus said, "Foolish ones!" And they thought they were so wise. "Did not He who made the outside make the inside also? But rather give alms of such things as you have; then indeed all things are clean to you." If you have a right heart and giving to others generously, it is because the light has shined into your heart and you are truly a child of God. So theirs was a religion of external rites; the outside was clean, but the inside was full of corruption.

Christianity is not about rites or rituals; Christianity is about Christ. It's not having a certain rite or ritual or doing things a certain way. It's having Christ in your heart, which becomes His home.

God is concerned about your heart. And when your heart is right with God, you've been born again of the Spirit and Christ lives in your heart and it will change the outward, the way you live your life. "Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7). That's why David said, in Psalm 51:6-10. "Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts. And in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom....Purge me...wash me....Create in me a clean heart O God."

We will cover all six of the woes Jesus pronounced. The first three are for the Pharisees that Jesus pronounced at the dinner meal, verses 42-44. Talk about blowing up a dinner party! Jesus doesn't mess around!

Today we have this idea that all religions are equal; that you have no right to tell somebody else they're religion is wrong and yours is right. Jesus didn't go by that. Jesus told them they were hypocrites, they were the blind leading the blind, they clean the outside of the cup but the inside is full of extortion and evil. Jesus laid it on the line. He "[spoke] the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15), and so should we.

The first woe, in verse 42, was a woe over their priorities. "But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass by justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done..." meaning "tithing" "...without leaving the others undone." They had their priorities wrong. They were tithing their spices and mint, but they didn't show justice or love to those in need. So they were foolish because they only paid attention to the outward. They also had false priorities because they majored in minors and minored in the majors. They made a big deal about little things like tithing.

God gave the Jews in the Old Testament a law of tithing from the book of Malachi and other passages that they were to give one-tenth of their income, of their food, to be devoted to God. I believe today, as New Testament believers, we are not under the Law, that we don't have to be legalistic, that we are not required to give God 10% of our income.

Some people say, "Oh, amen! Preach it, brother!"

But when I say that, some people get upset with me; they believe we must tithe. But it's not taught in the New Testament; this is not a support text for tithing. Jesus rightfully said to these Jews, who were living under the old covenant, that it was right that they did that. But their focus was on all these minute spices that God never required them to tithe on. They were sorting out all these little spices.

But did they show justice and mercy to others? No. The things that God is really concerned about? No.

If you tithe, that's wonderful. Great! Are you doing it cheerfully? Are you doing it voluntarily? Are you doing it joyfully? That's New Testament giving.

As a principle, I do believe that under the old covenant, they were to give 10%, so how can we do anything less? We should give that plus—joyfully, thankfully, lovingly, sacrificially giving to God. But it's not a mandate in the New Testament that you have to give 10%.

So I don't believe this is a support text for New Testament Christians; that we have to give 10% of our income to God, but we should give to God as He has required us in the New Testament.

So Jesus exposed their folly, verses 37-41, and then his first woe is over their priorities. Micah

6:8 says, “He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of You but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?” What God wants from us is to show mercy, to show justice, to walk humbly before Him.

The second “woe” is in verse 43: “Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the best seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces.” They loved to sit in what’s called “the chief seats” in the synagogue. And they loved to be greeted—“Rabbi! Rabbi!”—in the marketplaces. They didn’t love God; they loved themselves. They loved the recognition and the veneration.

“The best seats” was a problem of pride. So this is the woe of pride. They had the woe of priorities and the woe of pride. The chief seats in the synagogue were those that were on the stage or the platform looking back at the congregation. Some churches still have the chief seats in the sanctuary, where the pastors, the preachers, the speakers sit on the stage and look out at the congregation.

That doesn’t mean their hearts aren’t right with God. I’m sure in many cases that their hearts are right. But who wants to sit on the stage for people to look at you when we’re supposed to be looking to God, worshipping God?

The same is true of the worship team; they’re not up front to perform. They’re not rock stars; they’re worship leaders. And we’re looking to Jesus. So let’s not be critical, fault-finding or praising people who shouldn’t be praised. Let’s give thanks, praise and glory to God!

In pride, the Pharisees put more emphasis on reputation than on their character. They loved the “greetings in the marketplaces.” They loved to be called “Rabbi! Rabbi!” Some pastors today want to be called “Reverend.”

I had a friend I did a wedding for years ago who wanted to “get me,” so he gave me a thank-you, honorarium check for doing his wedding. I didn’t look at how he filled out the check to me; I just went to the bank to cash it. And the teller said, “Ah, Pastor Miller, you’re going to have to endorse exactly the way it’s made out.” I looked at the front of the check and it was made out to “The Most Holy, Right, Reverend J.P. Miller.”

I thought, Wait until I get my hands on this guy! He knew that would freak me out. So I had to write out “The Most Holy, Right, Revered J.P. Miller.”

But the Pharisees loved their titles. They loved to be venerated, worshipped and recognized. So Jesus said, “They have their reward” (Matthew 6:5), which was the applause of men and not the praise of God. They were proud.

If you are a servant of Jesus Christ, you are a slave, and you are to serve Him and others. You are not to use your position for self-advancement; you are to use your position to direct people, to encourage people, to set their focus on Jesus Christ.

Read about Jesus in Philippians 2. Though He was God, He did not consider it something to

hold on to, “but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:6-8).

So we are to humbly serve others. If you aspire to spiritual leadership, you are to be a humble servant like Jesus.

The third “woe” is in verse 44. “Woe to you, scribes...” He adds them here, the lawyers “...and Pharisees, hypocrites!” “Hypocrites” is the Greek word “hupokrites,” which literally means “to speak from under.” It is taken from the Greek acting stage. In the Greek theater, they would wear a mask to play a part, so they were called “hupokrites,” because they spoke from under a mask. When they changed parts, they changed masks.

So these people were hypocrites, as He described them. He says, “For you are like graves which are not seen, and the men who walk over them are not aware of them.” What He means by that is if they touched a dead body as a Jew, as a Pharisees, a religious leader, or a corpse or even a grave, they would become ceremoniously unclean for seven days. Then they would have to go through a rite or ritual for cleansing. To avoid having to go through that, they would white-wash the graves, so they could clearly be seen and you could walk around them and not touch them and be defiled.

Jesus was saying these people were like graves that were not white-washed and didn’t warn the people, so unbeknownst to the people, they were being defiled by the religious leaders’ teachings and contact with them. The Pharisees and scribes thought they were helping people but were actually hindering people and defiling those they had contact with.

It’s a pretty sad day when spiritual leaders are hindrances to people rather than a help, when they are hurting them rather than blessing them!

Matthew 23 is a parallel account with Luke 11:33-54 and is more in depth and has seven woes. In it, Jesus said they were “like whitewashed tombs, which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness” (Matthew 23:27). But in Luke 11, Jesus said the religious leaders weren’t like sepulchers that were white-washed, so unbeknownst to people, they were being defiled by the teachings of the scribes and Pharisees.

Be careful what spiritual leaders you follow; they can be helping you or hindering you. They can be leading you into deeper holiness by setting your focus, your eye, your sights upon God or they can be leading you into sinfulness and separation from God. Matthew 23:15 says, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.”

Taking these first three woes, first, they majored in minor issues, while ignoring what God desires most. Let’s not do that; let’s not major in minor issues. Don’t get all hung up on how much you tithe, all hung up on rites and rituals, all hung up on things you need to do for God as opposed to what God has done for us.

And, second, the scribes and Pharisees used their leadership for personal gain rather than service to God's people. Every leader in the church should be a humble servant of the Lord. Every one of us in leadership in the church should say, like John the Baptist, "He must increase, but I may decrease" (John 3:30). You can't glorify Jesus when you're trying to glorify yourself. You must get behind Christ and the Cross and see that you present the clear teaching of God's Word, which is the light, so that people will be brought to Christ, and their whole body will be full of light.

Third, they became agents of defilement rather than mediators of redemption. How sad is that!

The third and last section, verses 45-54, is the condemnation of the lawyers or scribes. In this section, we are still at dinner in the Pharisee's house reclining around the dinner bed. "Then one of the lawyers...." Who were the lawyers? A lawyer was a Pharisee who went deeper; he was a theologian. He wasn't a civil lawyer; he was a religious theologian. He translated and interpreted the Scriptures. What they did was take God's Law and add to it man's traditions and man's law so that it was clouded, which kept people from understanding the truth of God's Word.

So one of those lawyers at the dinner "answered and said to Him, 'Teacher, by saying these things You reproach us also.'" When I read that I realize that this lawyer just invited Jesus to rebuke him as well. He was saying to Jesus, "You have insulted us! You have indicted us as well!"

Then Jesus lights into him with three more woes, so there are a total of six woes. And remember that Jesus' woes were spoken in anguish, not in anger. This is a broken-hearted God over the rejection of their Messiah.

The first woe, verse 46, is the woe of legalism. "And He said, 'Woe to you also, lawyers! For you load men with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers.'" These "burdens" were man-made laws and traditions; they were not the Word of God but man's interpretation of the Word. God says to "rest on the Sabbath day, not to carry a burden" (Exodus 34:21), so they had to figure out what a burden was, how much a burden weighed, how far you can walk on the Sabbath day, what you can eat, what you should do. So they created 6,000 laws and put them in the Mishnah and added them to God's laws.

By the way, God's law says, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength....You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:30-31). All the Law hangs on those two precepts—loving God and loving people.

So all these man-made laws were difficult to fulfill, but the scribes didn't hold to them. These were about Sabbath-keeping and other laws regarding rites and rituals.

Jesus was consciously violating their Sabbath-law standards but never God's Laws. Jesus never broke God's laws, only man's traditions. So in saying, "woe" to the legalist, to the scribe, Jesus was inviting him to come to be forgiven.

The people, in verse 46, were under that burden. And if you come under the influence of a legalistic teacher, he weighs you down with burdensome laws and rules of man. If you are following a false teacher, who puts you under legalistic laws, your burden is heavy; you lose your joy and the liberty that you have in Christ Jesus.

These are the people who Jesus said, "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matthew 11:28-29). So if you follow Jesus, your burden is light.

So be careful of the legalists. In the New Testament, there were Judaizers. These were Jews who became followers of Jesus. But what they told the Gentile believers was that they had to become Jewish in order to be saved; they had to be circumcised, they had to keep the Law of Moses, they had to obey dietary laws and worship on particular days. They were burdens they were placing on the early Christians that God never intended them to bear. Even in the book of Acts when the believers met about this issue, they questioned why they should place these burdens on the Gentiles which they nor their fathers were able to bear. These were man-made rules that weren't God's design. So this is the woe of legalism; beware of legalism. It's so dangerous.

Galatians 5:1 says, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage." The Bible says that we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone in Christ alone. We are not saved by our righteous works or our good deeds.

In verses 47-51, we have the woe of memorializing. "Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets, and your fathers killed them." They memorialized and venerated the prophets, but it was their fathers who killed them. And they are following in their fathers' footsteps. "In fact, you bear witness that you approve the deeds of your fathers; for they indeed killed them, and you build their tombs."

What Jesus was saying is that they were doing the same thing their fathers did. Jesus was the Son of God, God in the flesh, the Messiah, and they would have Him crucified. This was leading up to His Crucifixion. Jesus "steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem" (Luke 9:51). This is how it will culminate; their hostility, their rejection, their blindness will lead to Christ's crucifixion. So they were following the same patterns that their fathers did.

Verse 49, "Therefore the wisdom of God also said, 'I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and persecute.'"

The parallel verse is in Matthew 23:34. And "the wisdom of God" is the Word of God and the Word made flesh (John 1:14) or Jesus Himself. He said they would "kill and persecute" "prophets and apostles," future tense. And that's exactly what they did. All the apostles would be persecuted, Jesus would be rejected and the early believers would suffer for their faith. So

Jesus said they would reject Him, reject His followers and reject His message.

Verse 50, "...that the blood of all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world may be required of this generation, from the blood of Abel..." which goes back to Genesis 4, the beginning of time "...to the blood of Zechariah..." in 2 Chronicles 24:21, which is the last book in the Jewish, Hebrew canon "...who perished between the altar and the temple. Yes, I say to you, it shall be required of this generation." So they persecuted the righteous deliverers.

Jesus was saying they killed the prophets, just like their fathers did. Jesus was not only the prophet, but He was the Son of God, the Messiah, the Savior of the world. They would reject Him as their fathers did.

The third and last woe is in verse 52. "Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter in yourselves, and those who were entering in you hindered." This is the sternest and most grave, warning rebuke that Jesus gives.

What we have seen throughout church history and in the time of Jesus with the religionists, the legalists, the externalists, the Pharisees, the scribes, we still see today; "spiritual" leaders who take away "the key of knowledge" from God's people. They're not saved, not born again, their religion is all external, they don't know God, yet they stand in a pulpit on Sunday and expound the Scriptures. But they so pervert, dilute and twist the Scriptures with their own ideas that they take away the Word of God, "the key of knowledge" from God's people.

to simply teach the Bible, to let the Word of God have its rightful place in our church and in our lives. My passion is to preach the Word by reading the Scriptures, explaining the Scriptures and applying the Scriptures instead of getting in the way and confusing them and clouding them, instead of omitting them, twisting them or taking them out of context.

don't take away "the key of knowledge" of the Word of God. Whether I am the senior pastor of this church and am preaching or not, whether you go to this church, or any church you go to, you should be in a church where the pastor is giving you the unadulterated Word of God—nothing more, nothing less. There are a lot of pastors who would do well if they just would read the Bible from the pulpit. "Thus saith the Lord..." Instead, they read one verse, out of context, and do what's called "eisegesis," or put their ideas onto the text to twist it to give their pep talk from the pulpit.

What the text means is what the original author intended the text to mean—nothing more, nothing less. So don't impose your own ideas into the text or cross-reference it with other verses used to support your own ideas taken out of context. I hear this all the time from preachers; they take verses out of context, they misinterpret the verses so they can misapply it to gain their own ideas to advance their own program and ministries. Rather, they should be humble servants of the Word of God and good stewards of the Word of God in sharing the Scriptures.

I'm passionate about this because "the key of knowledge" in the Scriptures is Jesus Christ. Any

preacher worth his salt preaches Jesus and Him crucified (1 Corinthians 1:23). Jesus said to the religionists, "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me" (John 5:39). The Scriptures testify of Jesus, but they still refuse to come to Jesus to have eternal life.

All the reading and preaching of the Bible won't do you any good if it doesn't bring you to Jesus Christ in salvation, if it only gives you a big head but not a burning heart. If it doesn't bring you to salvation, it doesn't do you any good. I'm not interested in just bringing up a bunch of theologians in our church. I want people whose hearts burn within them for the Word of God; to hear the Word of God, to receive the Word of God and to be changed by the Word of God.

So "the key of knowledge" that people take away from the Word of God is about Jesus Christ, who said He is "the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6). Jesus is the way; without Him, there is no going to heaven. Jesus is the truth; without Him, there is no knowing. Jesus is the life; without Him, there is no eternal living in heaven. Jesus said they take away "the key of knowledge"; they weren't preaching the Gospel.

It's so sad that in church history, there have been times when the clergy, the people in the pulpits, have told the parishioners, the laity, that they were not to have Bibles, they were not to read the Bible and they were not to interpret the Bible. That was for the priests, for the pastors to do. That is not true! You all have the Word of God. You all have the Holy Spirit. He is our teacher (John 16:13). So make sure your eye is single, that it is set on the light; then your whole body will be full of light. Otherwise, the light that is in you will be darkness.

Make sure you are discerning when you listen to preachers. Are they preaching the true meaning of the text? Is that really what it means by what it says? What does it say, what does it mean, how does it apply? There is only one meaning to every text, and the preacher's goal should be to get to that meaning.

There are some verses for those who are preaching the Bible. 2 Timothy 2:15 says, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God; a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." Preachers should "cut" the Bible straight. And in 2 Timothy 4:1-4, Paul said to Timothy, his protégé, "I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word! Be ready..." or "eager" "...in season and out of season" or "when it's popular and when it's not popular." How does he do that? "Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching."

And why should he do this? "For the time will come..." and has come "...when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables."

I want you to notice how this section closes, in verse 53. "And as He said these things to them, the scribes and the Pharisees began to assail Him vehemently..." hey turned against Him

violently "...and to cross-examine Him about many things..."why? Because they were "...lying in wait for Him, and seeking to catch Him in something He might say, that they might accuse Him."

Jesus finished His seven woes, in Matthew 23, by weeping. He went out and looked over the city of Jerusalem and said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house..." or "your nation" "...is left to you desolate; for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!'" (Matthew 23:37-39). He said this with tears streaming down His face.

These woes were not woes of anger but of anguish for the lost. And we should have the same passion and compassion for people who need the light of God's Word.