

**This passage almost kept me from going into the ministry.  
Matthew 23:13 – 36**

**1. This passage almost kept me from going into the ministry.**

“But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!

**2. Do you have the courage to confront soul destroying error?**

“Woe to you... Hypocrites... Blind... Fools... Brood of vipers... Whitewashed tombs...

**3. Will you pray for our spiritual leaders to be delivered from the sins Jesus confronts and that they would grow in grace in the opposite virtues? (V. 13 – 33).**

**a. The wicked keep people out. The godly seek to bring them in. (v. 13)**

“But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! 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.

**b. The wicked practice religion out of greed. The godly serve the gospel because of love to God. (v. 14)**

[ Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses and for a pretense you make long prayers; therefore you will receive the greater condemnation.]

**c. The wicked make their converts into worse hypocrites. The godly help people grow in grace and truth. (v. 15)**

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel across sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves.

**d. The wicked make subtle distinctions which undercut the truth. The godly keep people on track. (v. 16 – 22)**

“Woe to you, blind guides, who say, ‘If anyone swears by the temple, it is nothing, but if anyone swears by the gold of the temple, he is bound by his oath.’ 17 You blind fools! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that has made the gold sacred? 18 And you say, ‘If anyone swears by the altar, it is nothing, but if anyone swears by the gift that is on the altar, he is bound by his oath.’ 19 You blind men! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that makes the gift sacred? 20 So whoever swears by the altar swears by it and by everything on it. 21 And whoever swears by the temple swears by it and by him who dwells in it. 22 And whoever swears by heaven swears by the throne of God and by him who sits upon it.

**e. The wicked major on minutia. The godly embrace the central matters of law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. (v. 23 – 24)**

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. 24 You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel!

**f. The wicked appear to be holy, but are self-indulgent. The godly minister with personal honesty and self-denial. (v. 25 – 26)**

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. 26 You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean.

**g. The wicked appear to be holy but are actually lawless. The godly minister with integrity and love God’s ways. (v. 27 – 28)**

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people’s bones and all uncleanness. 28 So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness

**h. The wicked actually hate God’s messengers because they hate God’s message. The godly love God’s message and his messengers. (v. 29 – 33)**

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and decorate the monuments of the righteous, 30 saying, ‘If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’ 31 Thus you witness against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. 32 Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers. 33 You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell?

**4. How will you respond to the faithful messengers the Lord Jesus sends to you? (V. 34 – 36)**

“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, 35 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 Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar. 36 Truly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.”

*In preparation for this message Pastor John is grateful for the insights of Ligon Duncan, Dan Doriani, and William Hendriksen.*

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