

## 37. Religious pride

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In my opinion, I am sure that many people who are smarter than me will say differently, but the pride that comes from religion is at near the peak of its echelon, because the people with the religious pride think that they have cornered God and He is their backdrop to boast about their religious superiority to others. Then, the pride of these religious people continuously gets bigger and eventually they start to think that they are better and know more than God. Now that is the ultimate pride.

Jesus is going to compare two groups of people to give us a lesson of repented heart and humility. Then He will introduce two individuals to us: one with the religious pride and the other, just a sinner with a broken spirit and a contrite heart, but she was forgiven by the Lord.

Let's open our hearts to receive what He has for us.

### A. NO EXCUSES

*Matthew 11:20-24 Then He began to rebuke the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent: 21 "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. 22 But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. 23 And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. 24 But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you."*

How tragic that these cities should treat lightly their opportunities to see and hear the Christ, the Messiah, and be saved! The Gentile cities of Tyre and Sidon, and even the godless cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, would have repented, if they had seen the miracles that Jesus and His disciples performed. Guess what, five out of the ten miracles recorded in Matthew 8 and 9 were performed in Capernaum. No repentance from them.

Can we exchange the names of these cities, Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum to San Francisco, New York, Sahuarita, and Green Valley? Are we better than them? No. We can exchange any of American cities' and towns' names to these cities without losing the context. Why? Because that is exactly what the majority of Americans are doing. Americans have no excuse to God about not knowing Him, or not following Him. There are more Bible teaching churches, organizations, and resources available in this country than any other nation in the world, not just now, but throughout the entire human history.

*Luke 12:48 But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.*

From v22 we get the feeling that there will be different levels of punishment in hell, eventually in the Lake of Fire, for those who reject Christ while they were alive on earth. Yes, that is exactly what it means. More knowledge comes with more responsibilities.

*Revelation 20:14-15 Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. 15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.*

The majority of the American people want God's blessings, but they don't want His truth and holiness. They want His protection, but they have nothing to do with His Son Jesus. Hollywood movie production companies are the leading flagship when it comes to using God's name in vain and blasphemies. And we, even Christians endorse what they do by going to see their foul language movies under the excuses of "It's-such-a-good-movie-except-the-language."

City and state government, and federal officials and judges are against the Word of God, they reject God's commandment every possible way they can with a lame and flimsy excuse "separation of church and state" that is not even in the US Constitution. But yet, they want God to bless America. It is time to repent, it is time to stop playing games with God, it is time to pray to God with repentance.

## **B. NO SON, NO FATHER**

*Matthew 11:25-27 At that time Jesus answered and said, "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight. All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.*

The Israel religious people were so bound by their own religious performance and work to please themselves and to impress others, thinking how religious they are, that they didn't want anything to do with the Gift of God that is Jesus.

Why did the religious leaders rebel against John the Baptist and Jesus? Because they, the leaders were too intellectually and spiritually proud that they would not become little babes in humility, honesty, and dependence.

The following verses indicate both the sovereignty of the Father and the responsibility of the sinner. Three commands summarize this invitation and applications to implement in our lives.

### **1) Come**

*Matthew 11:28 Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

The Pharisees all said "Do!" and tried to make the people follow Moses and their own traditions which they placed above God's law. But true salvation is found only in a Person, Jesus Christ. And He says, "Done!" on the cross. To come to Him means to trust Him simply. This invitation is open to those who are exhausted and burdened down with religious rituals. That is exactly how the people felt under the yoke of religious legalism. We cannot earn His gift of salvation.

*Ephesians 2:8-9 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.*

### **2) Take**

*Matthew 11:29a Take My yoke upon you*

This is a deeper experience. When we come to Christ by faith, He gives us rest. When we take His yoke and learn, we find rest, that deeper rest of surrender and obedience.

The first is "peace with God." Without surrendering our will to Him, we cannot have the salvation through Jesus which means we are still the enemy of God.

*Romans 5:1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,*

The second is "the peace of God". Once we become His children through salvation, we can find the peace of God that gives us rest, comfort, and encouragement in the midst of the difficulties of life.

*Philippians 4:6-8 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*

The ancient Jews commonly used the idea of yoke to express someone's obligation to God. There were the yokes of the kingdom, the law, the command, repentance, faith, and the general yoke of God. In this context, it is easy to see Jesus simplifying and saying, "Forget about all these other yokes. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me." The yoke of Jesus is easy and light as it is compared with the yoke of others, because it does not include the man-made religious burdens.

To "take a yoke" in that day meant to become a disciple. When we submit to Christ, we are yoked to Him. The word "easy" means "well-fitting"; He has just the yoke that is tailor-made for our lives and needs. The burden of doing His will is not a heavy one, because we will have a desire to do it and the Holy Spirit will empower us to do it.

### 3) Learn

*Matthew 11:29b-30 and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."*

The first two commands "Come" and "Take" represent a crisis as we come and yield to Christ. But this step requires a process in life. As we learn more about Him, we find a deeper peace, because we trust Him more. Life is simplified and unified around the person of Christ. This invitation is for "all", not just a few "elites."

## **C. AN EXAMPLE OF A PROUD RELIGIOUS MAN AND FORGIVEN SINNER**

We now are going to see the actual examples of people who display a couple of the different hearts we've just learned.

*Luke 7:36-50 Then one of the Pharisees asked Him to eat with him. And He went to the Pharisee's house, and sat down to eat. 37 And behold, a woman in the city who was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at the table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil, 38 and stood at His feet behind Him weeping; and she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head; and she kissed His feet and anointed them with the fragrant oil. 39 Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he spoke to himself, saying, "This man, if He were a prophet, would know who and what manner of woman this is who is touching Him, for she is a sinner." 40 And Jesus answered and said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." So he said, "Teacher, say it." 41 "There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. 42 And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both.*

*Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?" 43 Simon answered and said, "I suppose the one whom he forgave more." And He said to him, "You have rightly judged." 44 Then He turned to the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head. 45 You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in. 46 You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil. 47 Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little." 48 Then He said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." 49 And those who sat at the table with Him began to say to themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" 50 Then He said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you. Go in peace."*

We see two individuals in this incident:

### **1) Simon**

Here is a Pharisee who invited Jesus to a dinner. But He didn't treat Jesus with the common courtesies between a host and a guest – washing the feet, a kiss for a greeting and anointing the head with oil. He would be the one with a hard heart who conscientiously rejected the truth of God so far. How can I say that? Obviously this Pharisee has heard Jesus' teachings and seen His miracles. He, in a way, admitted that Jesus had something to do with God, but he didn't want to put his faith in Jesus. That means "rejection." But we don't know that he might have repented after this confrontation with Jesus.

### **2) A sinful woman**

Let's not confuse this woman with a similar one involving Mary, the sister of Lazarus of Bethany in John 12, and do not identify this woman with Mary Magdalene in Mark 16:9 as many continue to do.

According to the timeline of the harmony of the Gospels, you will discover that just before this event, Jesus had given the gracious invitation in Matthew 11:28-30 we learned. Perhaps that was when the woman turned from her sin and trusted the Savior. Her tears, her humble attitude, and her expensive gift all spoke of a truly changed heart.

The parable that Jesus mentioned here does not deal with the amount of sin in a person's life, rather the awareness of that sin in one's heart. How much sin must a person commit to be a sinner? Just one. Simon and the woman were both equal sinners. Simon was guilty of sins of the spirit, especially pride, while the woman was guilty of sins of the flesh. Her sins were known, while Simon's sins were hidden to everyone except God.

Simon's real problems were pride and spiritual blindness. He could not see himself, the woman, or the Lord Jesus. It was easy for him to say, "She is a sinner!" but impossible for him to say, "I am also a sinner!"

Today, many people think that as long as they are generally good people and do their religious duty – such as attending church service at least a couple times a year, Easter and Christmas – should earn enough merits to go to heaven. Like this spiritually blinded Simon, they don't see themselves as sinners who desperately need the Savior.

## **D. A SELF-EXAMINATION**

So which type of heart do you have?

1) Whatever you have is temporal except one thing. It is your soul. You need to make up your mind where you are going to spend your eternal life – heaven or hell. The choice is yours. Don't believe the devil's lie – "The loving God will not send you to hell." In reality, you send yourself to hell by rejecting Jesus from your heart.

2) Did you once receive the truth of Jesus excitedly, but you are now interested in something else? In other words, your faith went from sizzle to fizzle in a short time. Some of you know that you have backslidden. Remove all that hinder your walk with Christ from your heart and get back to the Lord. He will truly bless you for that.

3) Do you feel the Lord's presence in your life everyday? Good for you, but don't be haughty. It is not because you are special. Be sensitive to the Holy Spirit and stay humble.