

- We live in a world in which labeling is commonplace. In football you have the “game-manager” quarterbacks and the “play-maker” quarterbacks. In politics you have the conservatives and the liberals on different sides of the aisle. This is even true in the religious world. . The older generation might remember being labeled as “Antis” or “Campbellites.” People have become much more straight forward as years have progressed and now those who hold the Bible as our sole source of authority from God are labeled as “narrow-minded” or, even worse, we are labeled as the modern day equivalents of the Pharisees of Jesus’ day. I don’t pay much attention to the other labels because they are given out of ignorance, but that last label I take great issue with. I take issue with it because I want nothing to do with being associated with those people who caused Jesus so many problems and who were ultimately responsible for His death. I’m not ok with being lumped in with that group of people.
- This label (or maybe accusation is a more appropriate word) is normally thrown out when there is a discussion on Biblical authority, salvation, or some other matter that is necessary to our spiritual standing before God. We take a stand on a clear Biblical teaching, and refuse to move from our convictions unless there is some Biblical proof that can be shown that would move us. That person we might be speaking with, more than likely, is not going to appreciate our hard stand on the issue and might just throw out this name of Pharisee and accuse us of trying to make people hold to things that the Bible doesn’t teach. They might think we are too strict with the Scriptures because we take it at face value and accept It’s teachings as being literal and true. The majority of the time, the label of “Pharisee!” is given in conjunction with a person who is thought to be “ultra-conservative” in their beliefs. Unfortunately, that is only half of the story with the Pharisees. The Pharisees were not only condemned for being too strict with their laws, but they went beyond that by binding their own traditions as if they were God commanded.
- Unfortunately for the Pharisees, these weren’t their only faults. We should want to avoid being lumped in with the Pharisees like the plague. First, we must know all of what Jesus condemned them for. So let’s turn in our Bibles to Matthew 23 and let’s learn about Jesus’ rebukes of the Pharisees so we can know what to avoid doing ourselves.

## **I. Jesus’ Rebukes of the Pharisees**

### **A. They were arrogant hypocrites. (vv.1-12, 25ff)**

1. They did their deeds to be noticed by men. They broadened their phylacteries, lengthened their tassels, sat in the best seats at gatherings, took the best seats in the synagogues, expected special greetings in the public places, expected to be called Rabbi.
2. We can connect the dots and conclude that Jesus was referring to the Pharisees and scribes when he talks about how they sound the trumpet before performing their good deeds so others might see in **6:2**.
3. They saw themselves as superior to sinners. (**Luke 18:9-14**)
4. Their arrogance was made worse by their hypocrisy. (**v.3**)
5. They were not willing to carry the burdens they were binding on others. (**v.4**)
6. Jesus was very pointed in His language concerning their spiritual hypocrisy. (**vv.25-35**)
  - a) They clean the outside of the cup, but the inside is full of robbery and self-indulgence.
  - b) They were beautiful whitewashed tombs on the outside, but the inside is full of dead man’s bones.
  - c) They appear as righteous men, but inwardly they are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.
  - d) They say they wouldn’t kill the prophets of God as their fathers did, but Jesus foretells that they would be guilty of the exact same thing.

### **B. They kept people out of the kingdom. (vv.13-15)**

1. Because of their arrogance and hypocrisy, they kept people from being righteous before God.
2. They went all over the world looking to convert people, but instead they made them “twice as much as son of hell” as they were.
3. Their burdens were nearly impossible to carry.
4. Their hypocrisy was contagious, and it rubbed off on those around them.
5. Once Jesus came along, they threatened to kick those out of the temple who followed after Him. (**John 9:22; 12:42**)

- C. They were loose with the Law of Moses. **(vv.16-22)**
  - 1. They made distinctions in God's Law where He did not.
  - 2. They said that the gold of the temple and the offering on the alter were greater than the temple itself and the alter, so if you swore by the gold or the offering then you were obligated to keep that oath. God had made no such distinction concerning what oaths were binding of truth and which were not. **(Matt. 5:37)**
  - 3. They condemned the disciples of Jesus for picking heads of grain to eat on the Sabbath, which was a tradition made by the elders and not a command of God. **(Matt. 12:1-8, Mark 2:3-28, Luke 6:1-5)**
  - 4. They also accused the disciples wrongdoing for eating with unwashed hands. Jesus rebukes them for teaching their commands as if they were doctrine. **(Matt. 15:21-28 & Mark 7:1-8)**
  - 5. These were not commands given by God, and they were rebuked for adding to God's Law.
- D. They ignored parts of the Law of Moses. **(vv. 23,24)**
  - 1. They gave more need to the smaller details and forgot to take care of the more important matters.
  - 2. They made sure to tithe their spices, but they were unwilling to take care of the more important matter like justice, mercy, and faithfulness.
  - 3. The greatest example of them ignoring God's Law is when Jesus rebukes them in **Mark 7:9-13** for teaching the giving of Corban to the temple and neglecting God's command to take care of one's parents.

## II. God's Expectations for Us

- A. Be Humble Servants of Christ
  - 1. We are called to humble ourselves as Christ humbled Himself for us, and to regard others as being more important than ourselves. **(Phil. 2:3)**
  - 2. There is no difference between people in the Kingdom of God. There is no higher people and lower people.
  - 3. We play different roles within the body of Christ, but that doesn't make one person more important than another. All people are needed and equal in God's sight. **(I Cor. 12:12-25)**
  - 4. If we make efforts to elevate ourselves then we will be brought down low. **(23:12)**
- B. Be Diligent to Examine Ourselves
  - 1. We must be willing to constantly examine ourselves to make sure we are on the right track. **(II Cor. 13:5)**
  - 2. Without personal examination, we can find ourselves as something we never intended to be.
  - 3. Our fruit will show us if we are on the right track. **(Matt. 7:16-20)**
  - 4. Personal examination shows that we are aware that we can be wrong and we don't want to find ourselves in that place.
- C. Be Diligent to Speak Where Only God has Spoken
  - 1. As humble servants we do not make the rules. We only speak where the Master has spoken. **(I Peter 4:11)**
  - 2. Jesus told His Apostles to teach others all things that He had commanded them to do. **(Matt. 28:19,20)**
  - 3. If The Lord warned those who might add or take away from the Revelation of John, then how much more careful should we be to make sure that we don't do that for the entire New Testament? **(Rev. 22:18,19)**
  - 4. We must be sure that we are only teaching and binding those things that God has given through His revelation to us within the Scriptures.

We should do everything within our power to stay as far away from Pharisaism as absolutely possible. We certainly would not want to have these same things said about us on the day of judgement, and we can help ourselves by being humble, giving careful self evaluation, and by simply sticking to the Word of God as our standard. God knows what pleases Him, and if our goal is to please Him then we simply need to obey what He has commanded within in His inspired Scriptures. It is easy to slip into an arrogant mindset and think that we are perfectly fine and in need of no self evaluation. However, that will land us in the same boat as those who Jesus is rebuking in Matthew 23, and as we have established that is not where we want to be. May God help us to avoid Pharisaism and help us to simply speak where He has spoken and be silent where He has been silent.